

# THE YANCEY RECORD

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## School Board Clarifies Intent

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after an hour-long presentation of views by representatives from the several school districts. The views were conflicting, and the applause accorded the different speeches showed the emotion-charged atmosphere of the meeting. Most of the speeches, including the introductory remarks by Dover Fouts, attorney for the school board, expressed the hope for reasonable, unprejudiced solutions in the best interests of the children of the entire county. Several references were made to past mistakes, and that the present difficult school situation is an inherited one, for which the present school board is not responsible.

The school board's "mediate plan", involving the consolidation for the present of the two high schools at the Cane River location, was both defended and attacked. This controversial plan has clearly been shelved by the school board, at least for the present. Should the bond issue be defeated, it might, of course, be revived.

On one point, at least the large audience seemed to be in agreement--that improvement in the County's school facilities is desperately needed. Following the proposals for the bond and one cent sales tax elections, Mr. Fouts asked all those who would support the proposals to stand up. All but a small handful responded.

There was a stir of uncertainty after the adoption of the motions for the elections. Nothing had been stated specifically as to how the money would be used until G.D. Bailey asked from the floor whether the school board believed voters would support such heavy borrowing without knowledge as to the use of the funds. After a brief huddle of the board, Chairman Clevenger stated that the intention was definitely to use the funds for construction of a new consolidated high school, and that the motion was being amended accordingly.

Dr. J. L. Pierce, director of the division of planning for the state board of education, who attended the meeting, made several clarifying remarks relative to the role of his division in offering plans for Yan-

cey County. His planning work had been previously criticized by Yates Bailey, a former school board member, who declared that the planning seemed more suitable for the Piedmont, than for Yancey County.

Pierce, who seemed nettled by this criticism, pointed out that several misstatements had been made from the floor. He emphasized that the state planners were not attempting to impose or dictate a plan for Yancey County, and that his division had studied Yancey at the invitation of the Yancey board of education. He reiterated that in a large majority of cases the recommendations of his planners get adopted sooner or later, because, he added "They make good sense".

The state school planners have now twice reviewed the problems of Yancey County schools--first in 1966 and again in 1969. They strongly recommend that the long range plan should call for a single, new high school. If the proposed elections pass the voters' hurdle, it appears that the school board action is consistent with the long range recommendations of the state planners.

Dr. Pierce called attention to the small contribution of local tax money made by Yancey County toward support of the schools. The figures show Yancey is spending only \$22.67 per pupil for current school expenses, which compares with a state average of \$69.02, the latter figure excluding the larger cities, which spend more.

Dr. Pierce cited the actions of a number of other N.C. counties which in recent years have made heroic efforts to improve their schools. Some have even doubled their tax rates. The suggestion was clearly implied that Yancey could give far more financial support to our schools provided our citizens have the determination.

Dr. Pierce stated that the \$338,000 allocated to Yancey County from the 1963 bond election will continue to lie unused and unavailable until we adopt a school plan which is approved by the state planners. Presumably, if the County votes the bond issue, the \$338,000 could be released to be applied toward the new high school.

## Girls' Haven

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has already picked the name "Girls' Haven" for such a home. Since Boys' Home is located in the far eastern part of the state, he believes that a location in a western county would be appropriate for the girls.

At a lunch at the Amberjack, some twenty five interested men and women discussed the possibility of Yancey County as a site, and the exploratory steps that would be in order. The sentiment of the group was strongly in favor of proceeding with a careful investigation of the feasibility of the project. A temporary organization was set up with Carolyn Yuziuk as the secretary, and Alma Holcombe as treasurer.

Peacock, with the experience of having successfully launched such an institution, is volunteering his services as consultant. The local group who have conferred with him are impressed with the invaluable contribution his guidance would lend to the project.

Peacock emphasizes that much preliminary groundwork would have to be done prior to starting the project, and that in any event it would be desirable to start on a small scale. In line with his advice it is planned as a first step to write to all social service departments in the state, as well as court judges who handle juvenile cases, to obtain their views relative to the need for a "Girls' Haven".

## Veterans

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imagine ourselves as Veterans for a moment in a time when, unfortunately, society leaves little time for reflection and meditation, we would surely deeply appreciate the Veteran, his family who had to do without him for long months or for those who never returned. Some still bear visible and invisible scars of combat in order that our country can remain the "land of the free and the home of the brave".

Let's not let the Veteran be the "Forgotten Man". In our American Legion and Legion Auxiliary, we try to keep this spirit alive of patriotism and tribute.

Some have abused our flag, have defied our laws and have shown little pride in being an American. Turning to God would solve these problems. Can't we help preserve our great nation so that this extremely important man, "The Veteran" will not have made his efforts in vain? He should not and must not be forgotten. It is because of our great leaders and servicemen that this nation, under God, still prevails.



## The Man In The Middle

By Carolyn Yuziuk

Throughout the crisis in the Yancey County school system there has been one man "caught in the middle", so to speak. He has had the unenviable job of working together with irate parents who want immediate action, long overdue, on the Burnsville school situation and with cautious school board members who hesitate to apply extreme measures to satisfy one group of parents, knowing perhaps that these crises could be repeated again and again with each elementary school in Yancey County which can legitimately gripe about poor educational facilities. C. Landrum Wilson, County School Superintendent since July 1, 1969, is Yancey County's "Man in the Middle".

With a solid background of experience in school systems all over North Carolina, having served as teacher, principal and School Superintendent elsewhere, Wilson comes well equipped for his present job. He has been responsible since his appointment for securing federal and state grants for many important school programs. The grants he has obtained for Yancey schools include these listed below:

1. State Competitive Project under the Vocational Education Act, \$8,880.
2. Federal Grant to help pay for lunchroom equipment at Bee Log School, \$8,483.
3. State Grant to take over Trainable Class that had been operated by the Yancey County Mental Health Association, \$7,863.
4. Federal Title II ESEA Project, \$2,500 for school libraries in Yancey County.
5. Federal Title VI-A ESEA Project for handicapped, \$4,000.
6. Federal Educational Development and Professional Act--to assist in upgrading teaching certificates, \$2,000.
7. \$2,500 from the State for additional utilities, granted on request.
8. \$4,200 tentatively approved at this time to help finance a breakfast program in a needy school.
9. Increased the assistance reimbursements to the lunchrooms in Yancey County by \$18,744, over the previous year. This is due to getting East Yancey, Cane River and Burnsville Elementary on special assistance.

The grand total of Federal and State grants received during the year and a half of Wilson's tenure as Yancey County School Superintendent is \$59,170. And in addition, the State school planners from Raleigh, who follow the grant program closely, have stated that Yancey now ranks among the ten top counties in effective utilization of the aid available under Title I.

The Yancey school situation, which has been fermenting for many years while nothing was done to relieve dangerous and unsanitary conditions, finally exploded in late 1969, just a few months after Wilson was appointed to his present position. He has, during this period, become the target for criticism by many people who do not understand what the job of School Superintendent entails. He has been blamed for actions, or no action, taken by the Yancey County Board of Education, even though the Superintendent of Schools has no vote in this body, but serves only as an ex-officio member of the board. And laid to his account by many uninformed citizens is the decision to move Burnsville students into the old agricultural building--a decision which the Board of Education kept entirely out of his hands.

A hard-working, unassuming man, Landrum Wilson chose to avoid being personally involved in the Yancey School System controversy in order to be able to continue working behind the scenes for federal and state aid for our schools--a job in which he has had excellent results.

Now that Yancey County has had its problems aired outside the county, Landrum Wilson is even more a target for criticism and blame by casual observers who know nothing of either past or present school regimes. The truth of the matter is that the problems in Yancey County schools are inherited ones. Neither the Superintendent of Schools nor the present Board of Education can be held responsible in any way for the past mistakes and neglect which have brought our school situation to such a crisis.

With the type of foresight and ingenuity shown by our "Man in the Middle", and with Yancey Countians working together to reach a solution to our problems, Yancey schools may yet come out on top.