

File Copy

KING NICOTINE WEARS HIS CROWN UNEASILY AS 1968 TOBACCO SELLING SEASON OPENS

by Jack Rider

For over a half century King Nicotiana Tabacum has ruled the economy of Eastern North Carolina, and to an only slightly lesser degree has held sovereignty over a very large part of Dixie.

But this year the aging ruler sits uneasily on his throne, plagued by a multitude of problems from within and without his

realm.

Most publicized of his enemies is a coterie of statisticians . . . some posing as doctors who are blaming use of tobacco for every disease known to man from dandruff to ingrown toenails.

Some of the many billions of dollars pumped into the nation's economy by tobacco is being used to spread the wildest kind of anti-tobacco propaganda. And

as Joseph Goebbels proved in Hitlerian German; a big enough lie told frequently and loudly enough ultimately becomes the truth in the minds of people who refused to think for themselves or simply cannot think for themselves.

But these medico-statisticians are not the only problem King Nicotine suffers. There is trouble in the palace. Buying and

processing companies are busily trying to cut the throats of tobacco sales warehousemen and somewhere in the middle of this palace brawl the poor peasantry who tend King Nicotine in the fields are caught.

Perhaps even worse than the combined wounds inflicted by the witch doctors and the palace feuding is the almost unbelievable pain of inflation that has hit tobacco farmers.

The worst area is in labor costs, which have had an inverse ratio: The more labor is paid the sorrier it becomes in both quality and quantity of total output.

In 1939 it took 415 man hours of labor to produce an acre of tobacco. In 1964 it took 493 man hours of labor per acre of tobacco. True; production per acre increased from 886 pounds to 1880 pounds in that period.

This was enough increase in productivity per man hour to keep the tobacco farmer about in pace with the overall inflation of taxes, fertilizers, oil, seed, insurance and the other factors that add up in the production of this fabulous weed.

In 1965 a lid was put on the increase of tobacco production per acre, but nobody bothered to put a lid on labor, or taxes or any of the other things that go into production of a pound of tobacco.

And in addition to the price of tobacco going up and its quality going down, labor, to a very large extent, is not available at any price.

During the same time that man-hours per acre of tobacco production went up other Eastern North Carolina crops began to react more favorably.

Corn, for instance, which is the biggest crop in North Carolina in acres, required 28.1 man hours per acre in 1939, but only 6.8 man hours in 1964 and the decline continues as mechanization increases and per acre production goes higher.

In 1939 it took 3.2 man hours to produce 100 pounds of pork, and this had fallen to 2.1 man hours in 1964, and this ratio is still falling.

Even more amazing as technology moved into the chicken business was the drop from 8.5 man hours per 100 pounds of broilers in 1939 to only .9 man hours for the same result in 1964.

Man hours per 100 eggs fell in the same period from 1.7 to 0.6.

Man-hours per 100 pounds of milk fell from 3.4 to 1.3 in this same 15 year period, and all of these production figures in the realm of corn and meat production are still falling, while tobacco's scot per 100 pounds in many hours is frozen, while the price of those man hours of labor has skyrocketed.

The modern tobacco farmer has had these very hard facts of life forced upon him over a period of about 25 years — roughly since the end of World War II, and each year a growing percent of farmers who once limped uneasily along on that single crutch of tobacco are balancing their production with less costly-to-produce, more readily marketable, less controversial items.

At the turn of the century Kinston's main industrial life blood was textiles. There were five large processors of cotton, and in that day Cotton was King of the Dixie economy. Today only one textile plant of that five survives, and it processes more synthetic fibers than cotton.

From the end of World War I until the early sixties tobacco processing plants were a major part of the industrial activity in Kinston. At their peak there were five major tobacco processing plants in Kinston. Today only two survive.

This year the treasury department reports a slight drop in gross sales of cigarettes. Is this a trend, or just a nervous reaction of the public to the propaganda of such organizations as the United States Public Health Service, the American Cancer Society, The American Heart Society and the National Tuberculosis Association?

Billions of dollars hangs on the answer to these questions, but nobody knows the answer.

Only one thing is surely known: That in this year of his reign His Imperial Nicotinish Majesty wears his crown less surely than at anytime since he snatched it from aging hands of King Cotton some 50 years ago.

The King is not dead . . . far from it . . . but Crown Prince Corn is growing restless and the feeling among those familiar with the palace politics agree that the King shall not rule forever, and the Crown Prince is anxious to take over and bring to his subjects a much better life than was ever provided by his aging, and still respected father.

THE JONES COUNTY JOURNAL

NUMBER 18 TRENTON, N. C., THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1968 VOLUME XXI

Sorry Tobacco Selling Fabulously as Market Opens



This was the scene this week on one of Kinston tobacco sales floor as buyers paid good prices for good tobacco and fabulously high prices for the sorriest kind of trash on the floor. Well over a 60-cent average was paid for tobacco that once was used for bedding in stables and is now converted to fast-burning, flavorless filler for filter-tipped cigarettes. Farmers were not complaining, but many reflected on what high priced beds their mules once slept on when the scrap tobacco was put to less expensive uses.

Private Elementary School Opening September 16th in Pollocksville; Students and Teachers Are Needed

A private elementary school has been chartered and will begin operating September 16th in Pollocksville under the name: Jones Academy, Incorporated.

C. R. Hughes of Maysville is president of the recently chartered corporation which will operate the eight-grade elementary school.

Registration through Wednesday of this week has reached 78 students, but spokesmen said Wednesday there were vacancies in all eight grades.

Registration fee for all grades is \$50 per child and annual tuition

will be \$300 plus book costs and insurance and the registration fee, of course, will be part of the total tuition cost.

Children will have to be provided with their own lunches and transportation.

The actual location of the school has not yet been decided upon, insofar as building is concerned, but it will be located in Pollocksville.

Registration so far has been held in the Pollocksville Community Building, but that ends Thursday night of this week, but parents who wish to enroll stu-

dents between now and opening day of the school may contact Mrs. R. L. Bryant of Maysville, who is secretary to the corporation.

Mrs. Jesse Eubanks of Pollocksville is treasurer of the organization.

Teachers who are interested in working in the school are urged to contact Hughes at his home. His phone number is 743-6376.

Persons who would like to become charter members of the group may do so by paying a \$50 fee, which gives them the

Three Massachusetts College Boys and Kinston Teenager Killed in Traffic Accidents in Kinston Area Last Week

The tragic traffic toll in the Kinston area for the week ending Saturday grew to seven dead with the Thursday death of a 13 year-old Kinston youth and the Saturday morning death of three college students from Massachusetts.

Donald Lloyd Price, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert H. Price, who live just north of Kinston off of NC 91 died Thursday from injuries he suffered when he swerved his bicycle into the path of a car driven by Elbert A. Murrill of Brooklyn, N. Y.

A two-vehicle crash at 12:45 Saturday morning just east of Wyse Forks on Highway US 70 claimed the lives of Glen Lawton, 20, Elmer Slioski, 22, and Thaddeus William Miss, 20.

right to vote on all school matters.

Also it is stressed strongly that donations of any size from anyone will be greatly appreciated.

Lawton, driver of a Volkswagen camper, was dead on arrival at Lenoir Memorial Hospital. Slioski died about an hour after reaching the hospital. Both were from Falls River, Mass.

Miss, from Swansea, Mass., died in Pitt Memorial Hospital at Greenville at about Noon Saturday.

John Cederberg, 20, of Rocky Mount was driving a small sports car that crashed into the college boys' camper. He suffered numerous serious injuries, for which he received emergency care in Kinston before being transferred to a Rocky Mount Hospital.

Patrolman R. R. Mason says Cederberg's car headed west toward Kinston drifted over into the eastbound lane and caused the tragedy.

These four deaths made a total of seven in the Kinston vicinity from Saturday the 17th through

Continued on Page 8