

General Assembly On Schedule In Readying Stage For Session

(Ed. Note: This is the first of a series of weekly summaries of the work of the 1949 session of the General Assembly of North Carolina. These summaries are not intended as a report on all legislation, but are confined to discussions of matters of general interest or of major importance.)

Eyes which have seen the opening and organization of a good many sessions of the General Assembly saw nothing very unusual about the opening of the 1949 session. Typical is the session which holds its caucuses on Tuesday after the first Monday in January, convenes on Wednesday and elects its officers, meets in joint session on Thursday to receive the inaugural address of the Governor in inaugural years, adopts its rules before the week is out, receives its committee appointments early in the next week and sees the introduction of the appropriations bills (the product of months of work by the Advisory Budget Commission) before the week is out — typical because those are the things that HAVE to be done before a legislature can begin to conduct its regular business. The 1949 legislature has done just that. Anticipated contests for some of the offices in both houses developed in only one instance in which J. C. Pittman won out in the race for President pro tem at the Senate's Democratic caucus. Kerr Craig Ramsey of Rowan was nominated for Speaker of the House without opposition at the caucus of House Democrats, and both caucuses named the same people who served in 1947 to their other elective offices. There being only two Republicans in the Senate and eleven in the House, the Democrats were naturally elected. In his inaugural on Thursday, Governor Kerr Scott revealed a multi-point program of action, discussed below. Most of the points were generally received as forward-looking, most of them call for the spending of more money than has ever been spent before, and many of them are from the standpoint of many legislators, controversial. The rules adopted by the Senate represent no major changes from

the 1947 rules. Since 1941 the House has had the so-called "gag rule" governing the removal of a bill from a committee and the adoption of a minority report of a committee. Whether the House rules adopted this year making changes in this respect represent significant changes is a matter on which reasonable men have already differed. Monday's committee appointments placed experienced men in the chairmanship of the committees which, in view of existing commitments and circumstances, seem to constitute the more important committees for this session. These committees, with their chairmen, are as follows: Appropriations — Pate, Senate, Taylor of Wayne, House; Finance — Rankin, Senate, Moore, House; Education — Pittman, Senate, Edwards of Greene, House; Roads — Ward, Senate, Hatch, House, Propositions and Grievances — Vann, Senate, Caviness, House. The appropriations bills, introduced on January 13, receive a detailed treatment below.

Governor Scott delivered his inaugural address on January 6, giving precedence in his program to rounding out the all-weather road system, \$2400 minimum salaries for teachers, state aid for school building construction, and general implementation of the Medical Care Program. A week later the money bills embodying the recommendations of the Advisory Budget Commission were introduced. The Supplemental Appropriations Bill sets up \$13,560,000 with which to pay teachers and state employees a salary raise of about 20 percent retroactive to November 1, 1948. The Appropriations Bill for the next biennium provides for salary increases at the same rate and divides the funds as follows:

	1949-50	1950-51
Operating the General Assembly	\$ 523,449	\$ 523,449
The court system	8,384,354	8,380,881
Executive & Administrative offices & agencies	11,039,978	11,160,501
Educational institutions	10,929,988	11,401,227
Hospitals, orphanages and correctional institutions	12,634,647	12,704,722
Teachers & employees retirement, aid to dependent children & the aged, and other contributions	235,512	221,608
Pensions	1,000,000	1,000,000
Contingency & emergency fund	83,040,057	84,481,470
Support of public schools	100,788	243,183
To redeem special school building bonds	1,142,791	1,145,091
Department of Agriculture (from Agriculture Fund)	56,018,279	55,334,779
Highways and public works	4,037,802	4,440,458
To pay highway bonds and interest		
Grand Total	\$189,348,253	\$191,522,979

On the same day the money bills were introduced Governor Scott sent a special-budget message to the Legislature carrying his comments on their provisions. He pointed out that the road appropriation for the next biennium falls far short of the amount needed for his program, and stated that he will prepare a special message on that subject. He also pointed out that the Appropriations Bill fails to provide the teacher salaries and school building aid advocated by the State Education Commission and endorsed in his inaugural address.

With the new Governor's apparent approval, the Permanent Improvement Bill would appropriate \$27,453,282 to finance the completion of projects authorized in 1947 and \$44,346,952

for new permanent improvement projects at state institutions.

Discussing the Revenue Bill in his budget message, the Governor noted that provision was made for reducing the sales tax on farm machinery to the rate on industrial machinery, but that no provision was made for removing the sales tax on meals or for adjusting Schedule B license tax revenue between the state and local governments as he had advocated. He also drew attention to the bill's proposal to lower corporate franchise taxes, thus cutting receipts \$800,000 in the coming plennium.

With these major differences apparent at the outset, it is reasonable to expect considerable debate and amendment before the money bills

are enacted. Opening salvos have been fired by the introduction of separate bills designed to carry out some of the Governor's recommendations. On opening day two bills were introduced calling for state aid to counties for school building construction: HB 3 provides for the distribution of \$50,000,000 to the counties by the State Board of Education, 35 percent on the basis of school membership and 65 percent on a need-ability to pay formula; HB 4 would distribute \$40,000,000 for similar purposes under regulations to be worked out later this session: This week three identical bills were introduced undertaking to fix teacher, principal and superintendent salaries for 1948-49 at the minimums recommended by the State Education Commission and endorsed by Governor Scott. Sales tax exemptions were asked for restaurant meals in line with the Governor's program (HB 8), as well as for fuel sold to farmers for agricultural purposes (HB 11). HB 7 proposed a raise in the income tax exemption for dependents from \$200 to \$600.

A drastic form of the much-discussed statewide liquor referendum is proposed in SB 38, under which the voter would express himself on whether beer, wine and liquor would be banned in every county or whether its sale and manufacture should be introduced into every county, ending local option in any event. Other bills would: repeal the motor vehicle inspection law, launch the State on a program of general assistance to the needy, and require administrative boards to file certain regulations with the General Assembly.

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Over \$5,368,000 Paid State In Beer Taxes

Raleigh — Beer excise and license taxes collected by the State in 1948 totaled \$5,368,517.46, figures obtained from the State Department of Revenue revealed today.

The total does not include sales taxes paid on beer or beer license taxes paid to local and Federal agencies.

Half of the excise taxes collected by the State on beer are distributed annually to counties and municipalities in which beer sales are licensed. The beer tax year ends each September 30. Local governments received a total of \$2,959,665.86 as their share of the tax for the year ending last September 30.

In December, the State collected \$339,928 in beer taxes.



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