

Governor's Road Program High Spot Of Assembly's Third Week

(Ed. Note — This is the second 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.)

The 1949 General Assembly ended its second full week slightly ahead of its immediate predecessor in the number of bills introduced. It is

now entering the stage when bill introductions should reach their peak; the sessions will be relatively short and most of the work of the legislators will be in the committees. It has been a very quiet legislature to date. There has not been the usual amount of speculation, either public or private, on the date of final adjournment, and such predictions as have been offered differed greatly. Only one pattern seems definitely to have been set, and that is that all legislation relating to alcoholic beverages will go to the Propositions and Grievances committees; from there all prohibition measures will have to go to the Finance committees because of their revenue features. The wide variety in the types of legislation introduced thus far will be observed from the comments below.

Roads

On Monday night Governor Scott delivered his "special message on roads" to a joint session of the Senate and House calling for a \$200 million bond issue to finance the hard-surfacing of 12,000 miles of the

state's rural roads. He proposed that the debt service on these bonds be met by money to be raised by an increase of 1c per gallon in the gasoline tax and from amounts now budgeted to pay the debt service on the old highway bonds which will have been substantially retired by the time the new bond requirements become large. He also proposed that an anti-diversion clause be written into the law which would prevent highway funds from being used for any purposes except those for which they are now used, during the life of these bonds.

Shortly before the Governor spoke, the advocates of increasing the "funds allocated to cities" for maintaining state highways within city limits put in HB 54, which would give municipalities 1c of the present gasoline tax, one half of this fund to be distributed on the basis of population and the other half on the basis of state highway mileage within the cities and towns.

SB 52 and HB 89, identical bills, were introduced on Wednesday embodying the proposed \$200 million of 20-year bonds to be voted on by the people of the state on a date set by the Governor prior to July 1, 1949, with the anti-diversion clause included in the bills. So far, these bills remain in the Roads committee.

Public Welfare and the Family

Reflecting sentiments aired in district meetings of county commissioners last summer, SB 45 introduced on Monday night seeks to discourage old persons from going on the relief rolls if they have children able to provide for their needs, or at least to give the contributing governments a chance to recover what they have spent in "Old Age Assistance" if the recipient owns real property. The bill would create a lien against any real property a recipient may own for all Old Age Assistance payments received after October 1, 1949. To safeguard against possible hardship, it is provided that this lien cannot be enforced so long as the property concerned is occupied as a homestead by the surviving spouse or dependent minor child of the recipient.

SB 22 and HB 22, companion bills designed to have the state government provide assistance to those "needy persons" who do not come within the statutes granting aid to dependent children and the aged, a field presently left to the local governments, are still under committee consideration.

Under the present law the domestic relations court judge must investigate concerning children whose parents are involved in a divorce action; HB 79 would transfer this duty to the county superintendent of public welfare and require him to report his findings to the judge who must determine "the custody question." The same bill would reduce the waiting period required for "divorce" from an insane husband or wife from ten to five years. Further protection of the family motivates HB 81, which would make the "abandonment of an adopted child" equally criminal with abandonment of a natural child, and make criminal the "abandonment of a wife" physically or mentally unable to support herself, as well as the "abandonment of a defective child" even after it reaches the age of 18.

Building on the foundation provided in existing law for "segregating youthful first offenders" from hardened criminals in state prisons, HB 76 would convert the Prisoner of War area at state-owned Camp Butler into a prison for 100 persons below the age of 25 serving their first sentences.

Court Salaries

The recommendations of the Advisory Budget Commission indicated sympathy for increases in judges' salaries but pointed out that no statutory authority existed for such raises. SB 46 and 47 would provide that authority. The former calls for "Superior Court judges" to receive \$10,000 a year instead of the present \$6500 and leaves the \$2500 allowance in lieu of traveling expenses unchanged. Under the latter, "Supreme Court Justices" would receive a 100 percent boost, from \$7500 to

\$15,000 but it would take away the \$2500 now authorized for expenses. Both bills were reported favorably by Judiciary 1 on Friday for calendar action on Monday, January 24.

Motor Vehicle Laws

The motor vehicle inspection law, doomed to complete repeal if HB 5 is approved, would receive a kindred fate from SB 59, which would cut the number of annual inspections required from two to one. Relief from licensing would be accorded farm tractors under identical bills, SB 54 and HB 92, but to be eligible the tractors would have to be used only in transporting farm implements, supplies, and products.

Counties and Cities

The requirement that "real property be assessed quadrennially" received attention in HB 86 providing that it may be postponed for the years 1949 and 1950, in the discretion of the county commissioners. The present law (G.S. 105-278) originally required reassessment in 1941 and quadrennially thereafter, but the Legislature has consistently authorized postponements since the statute was enacted. The most probable interpretation of the proposed amendment is that a county may defer the scheduled 1949 reassessment to any year prior to the next mandatory reassessment in 1953.

Local governmental officials came in for their share of legislation. SB 49 would allow municipal governing bodies to appoint a "deputy city clerk" to act in the absence or disability of the regular clerk. Two proposals affected "clerks of the superior court: SB 62 would authorize the clerk to administer all oaths, not just those necessary in the exercise of his office; SB 65 would make their office hours and holidays the same as those prescribed by the county commissioners for all county officers; this bill also would remove the requirement that the permission of the resident judge must be secured for a leave of absence if the clerk has an assistant, but would require permission if he has a deputy and requests leave in excess of 48 hours.

Miscellany

This week also saw the introduction of the following bills: HB 82 (SB 51) creating a State Personnel Department, SB 42 authorizing the establishment of a dental school, and HB 114 amending the license tax provisions with respect to theaters.

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JANUARY 31st

All Owners of Property are Required to List. Male Persons between the ages of 21 and 50 are required to list for poll tax. You are required to make farm report also, if you live on farm. Dogs must be listed.

See Mr. Ratterree at City Hall in Kings Mountain every week day from 8:30 a. m. to 5 p. m. except the following: Mr. Ratterree will be at Harndon's Store in Grover Monday, January 17 Monday, January 24

MAX HAMRICK,

Cleveland County Tax Supervisor