

## Legislative Calendar Now Cleared For Action On Controversial Issues

(Edi. Note — This is the sixth of a series of weekly summaries of the work of the 1949 session of the General Assembly of North Carolina. 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 legislative spotlight wavered back and forth in this sixth full week of the 1949 session. No item of business stayed in focus for any length of time, nor did any item come into focus twice. Actually this did not mean that little was going on; on the contrary a tremendous volume of work was transacted during the six legislative days. Local bills by the score were ground through the legislative mill, as well as a number of public bills designed to correct imperfections in existing laws that have come to light in the last two years. In all, 99 bills were introduced, 176 were reported out of committees, and 125 were either defeated or passed in final action by one house or the other. By the end of the week the calendar had been cleared for action on matters of predominant interest: schools, roads, liquor, and money.

### Schools

Early in the week the Joint Finance Committee indicated that it was suspending action on major tax measures in anticipation of bills incorporating some of the tax suggestions made by the Governor last week. On Tuesday Representative Harris read a prepared statement to the House in which he reiterated his concern for schools and indicated his disagreement with what he termed the movement to "spend with abandon the accumulated surplus, the reserves, and the anticipated tax receipts" without providing school building aid for the counties. On Friday the House Education Committee offered a substitute for HB 3, HB 4 and HB 221, which apparently embodies Mr. Harris' thinking: It would appropriate \$50 million from the "General Fund surplus" for county school building construction to be distributed by a formula to be set later by this Legislature. Such an outright appropriation is sure to draw fire from legislators who believe that the permanent improve-

ments recommendations of the Advisory Budget Commission should not be disturbed.

### Roads and Motor Vehicles

The two Roads committees ended their joint meetings on the \$200 million road bond issue on Thursday. The House Committee immediately reported favorably a substitute rewriting the original bill without destroying its purpose. This measure was then re-referred to the House Finance Committee. The Senate Roads Committee has committed both the bond referendum and the proposed increase in the gas tax to a sub-committee for additional study, anticipating a report next Wednesday.

Earnest attempts to refer HB 5, which would repeal the motor vehicle inspection program outright, back to committee for modification of the present program, proved fruitless as the House passed the measure by a resounding voice vote on Friday. The debate indicated that some of the repeaters might join with the supporters of modification to back a substitute program. Having already passed a bill to retain the present program with only one inspection a year, it will be interesting to watch the Senate's reception of HB 5.

### Investment of State Funds

A hot campaign issue received treatment in SB 144 which would provide authorization for the investment of surplus funds in interest-bearing securities or their deposit at interest in banks of the State.

### Liquor Referendum

The proponents of a liquor referendum offered in "all-or-nothing" SB 38 or "present status vs. dry" HB 270 turned out on Thursday in such numbers that the Joint Propositions and Grievances Committee moved its hearing from the Hall of the House to Memorial Auditorium. The opponents get their day next Tuesday in a meeting set for a committee room in the Revenue Building. Whether this indicates that a smaller anti-referendum crowd can be expected to use the opportunity to speak is not known. The progress of these bills will be watched with care. There has been sufficient vocal pressure on both sides so that when final action is taken, it may be possible to judge the exact effect of those elements in the legislature

rules about which so many charges and counter-charges have been heard.

### Matters of Interest to Local Officials

The Legislature faces pretty much the same question municipalities and counties face back home: where is the money coming from? The question for the Legislature, however, carries an additional complication; the local units are asking for State assistance. The proponents of HB 358, introduced this week, maintain they have offered a partial solution to the problem. The bill would prohibit cities and counties from licensing coin-in-the-slot machines. Instead the State would collect a \$20 county and \$30 municipal license on every juke box, cigarette dispenser and soft drink dispenser; of this the State would turn over \$10 to the county and \$10 to the town in which located.

The prevailing hesitation to conduct quadrennial reassessment this year influenced the passage of HB 96 permitting counties to postpone the 1949 reassessment for another two years.

HB 370, introduced Tuesday, would declare the following county functions now met from the general fund to be special purposes and approve the indicated maximum special tax rates: quadrennial reassessment (10c), public health clinics (8c), farm and home demonstration agents (8c), holding special elections (5c), holding special terms of court (5c), county accountant (4c), forest and fire wardens (4c), and county attorney (3c). HB 359 would raise the permissible maximum rate for county and city recreational facilities from 10c to 15c.

The municipal picture is hazy. The House Roads Committee still holds HB 54 which would give the

towns 1c of the GAS TAX. The Joint Finance Committee has heard an appeal to revise Schedule 2 to help the municipalities, but no bill has been introduced embodying this request.

### State Boards

Special attention was directed to the State Board of Accountancy this week. HB 393 would settle a dispute of long standing by separating public accountants from Board control, while HB 407 reflects a different point of view by adopting to the Board a public member who is not engaged in the practice of accounting and exempting from Board supervision persons who do accounting work for their employers with out intending that third parties rely on the work.

### Public Utilities

This week another bill joined the imposing number dealing with public utility regulation already introduced. HB 384 would replace present laws regulating common and contract motor carriers transporting passengers with a comprehensive plan for Utilities Commission operation in this field. The Commission's powers and duties are extended, with particular emphasis on matters pertaining to rate adjustment. The administrative procedures by which certificates and permits are to be granted, amended and revoked, and by which hearings on the reasonableness of challenged rates are to be conducted are detailed with great particularity. Of special interest is a section, explicitly excluding interstate companies from the purview of the Commission, but at the same time prohibiting any activities on their part which could operate as effective competition with normal business operations.

### Courts and the Judiciary

Possibly as a result of recently publicized instances where a judge defied jurors for returning a verdict not in line with his idea of accuracy, HB 372, introduced Tuesday would make such action by members of the Judiciary unlawful. Violation would carry the imposing sanction of a \$500 forfeiture to the school fund of any county in which a judge might vent his feelings in this respect.

Civilian per capita consumption of food in the United States this year is expected to continue at about the 1948 level, which was 12 percent above the pre-war average. Retail food prices are likely to average somewhat lower in 1949 than in the past year, when they set a new high. However, no sharp decline is anticipated.

## Vic Vet says

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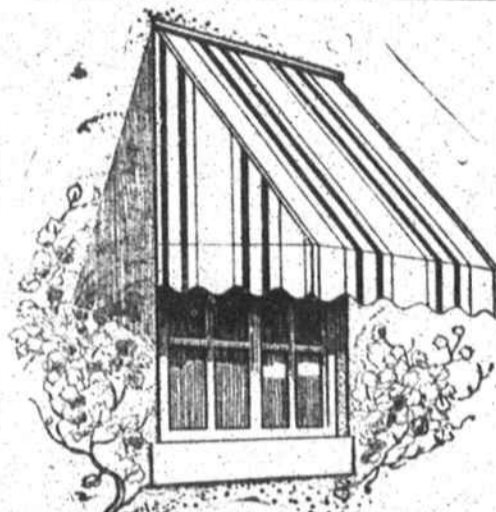
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