

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

By The Institute of Government

NOTE: This is the sixth of a series of weekly summaries prepared by the legislative staff of the Institute of Government on the work of the North Carolina General Assembly of 1953. It is confined to discussions of matters of general interest and major importance.

The General Assembly waited for the Governor's budget message during this seventh legislative week and turned for diversion to other subjects, such as girls' basketball, automobile racing, and roasted oysters. Pamlico County officials and the state prison were hosts on Wednesday to legislators and other guests at an oyster roast at the prison; Wake County citizens turned out in force on Thursday to oppose legislation which would permit Sunday automobile races at the Southland Speedway; and both houses agreed on Friday that a regulation of the State Board of Education prohibiting girls' basketball teams from participating in tournaments outside their home counties was impractical, no matter how laudable the objective. (Item: the regulation was overruled.)

The Governor continued to confer with legislators in the mansion throughout the week while his budget message was being ironed out for Tuesday delivery. In the meantime it was becoming evident that much important legislation, including the legislative programs of several state departments, was being held up, possibly pending approval by the chief executive.

The rate of bill introduction is ahead of 1951 in the House, slightly behind in the Senate. If legislation of state-wide interest is slow reaching the capitol, it can be said that local legislation is picking up. Through Friday 266 local bills had been introduced as compared with 191 at the same time last session. Speculation next week will center on the Senate, which now has a rule prohibiting the introduction of local bills after March 1. To date 56 local bills have been introduced in the Senate, in comparison with over 250 for the entire session in 1951.

Appropriations
Since January 21 the 89-member joint appropriations committee has been sitting three afternoons each week to hear departments, institutions, and agencies explain why they should get a bigger slice of the pie. By Wednesday, February 18, all had been heard. Total requests over and above the \$638,000,000 in appropriations recommended by the Advisory Budget Commission reached \$145,386,074 from the General Fund and about \$118,000,000 from the Highway Fund. This total includes \$110,595,617 for permanent improvements (of which \$60,000,000 was requested for school building purposes) and \$34,790,457 for operating funds. Next week it is expected that the Governor's budget message will be read to the legislature on Tuesday, after which the appropriations committees will begin wielding the paring knife. As yet no one knows whether there will be a subcommittee appointed to make the first draft of the ultimate biennial money bill. That, too, may be decided next week.

Finance
Despite implications in the \$145 million additional appropriations requests, some legislators continue to direct their attention toward possible tax reductions with emphasis this week on the income tax. Two bills envision increased deductions for gifts made by individuals to organizations operated exclusively for religious, charitable, literary, scientific and educational purposes. Estimated to reduce state revenues by \$500,000 per year, Rep. Falls' HB 309 would permit individuals to deduct up to 20 per cent (instead of only 10 per cent as now provided) of net income for gifts and contributions; still greater deductions would be allowed by Sen. Shuford's SB 161 which would increase allowable deductions from 10 per cent of net income to 20 per cent of gross income for such gifts. Another bill (HB 302) would permit deductions of commutation expenses in computing taxable net income. Designed to attract mining industries to the state but with little immediate effect on state revenues anticipated SB 144, endorsed by 18 senators, would adopt the federal rule of depletion allowances in permitting deductions for depletion of mines, natural deposits and oil and gas wells. To adjudicate questions of liability for state and local taxes a Tax Appeals Commission would be established under provisions of HB 326. The joint finance committee can be expected to withhold final action on all tax bills pending the Governor's budget message and final determination on appropriations.

Two more bills concerning subjects mentioned in the Governor's inaugural message were introduced this week. SB 124 appropriates \$339,720 for each year of the biennium to set up a program of driver training and safety education in all public high schools. HB 367 attacks the school consolidation problem and proposes a solution under which most of the schools closed in recent years could be reopened. An able subcommittee was appointed by Chairman Maddrey of the House education committee to consider all consolidation bills introduced and draft a state-wide bill. The subcommittee now has under consideration HB 84 (Bertie) and HB 310 (Moore), designed to permit reopening of closed or consolidated schools, and will now receive HB 367.

Local Government
Another proposal giving county commissioners authority to fix county employees' salaries has reached the General Assembly, this one with statements that possible unconstitutional delegation of legislative power had been avoided by limiting county commissioners' power to reduce or increase salaries to 20 per cent per fiscal year. Meantime the city of Raleigh requested annual appropriations of \$60,000 to compensate the city for fire and police protection and garbage collection for non-taxable state property.

Judges and Court Procedure
The General Assembly has not forgotten our judges and solicitors. Bills introduced this week would raise salaries of supreme court justices from \$14,400 to \$16,000 (with an extra \$500 for the chief justice), superior court judges from \$10,000 to \$12,000, superior court solicitors from \$6500 to \$7150 (plus an expense allowance increase of \$150), and emergency judges from \$50 to \$100 weekly. HB 163, a Judicial Council bill endorsed by the Governor, to add six additional superior court resident judges, passed second reading in the House on Friday. Rep. Womble of Wake objected to third reading of the bill, stating that no provision was made to relieve the crowded docket in Wake County, where it sometimes takes five years to get a civil case tried.

The Judicial Council (assigned by law the duty of continuous research on means to improve court procedure and administration) has already seen two of its recommended bills pass both houses. However, the General Statutes Commission (assigned by law the duty of continuous research to revise and correct the statutory law) has seen four of its bills reported unfavorably, although five of the original 17 have passed both houses and five more have passed the Senate.

Miscellaneous
The smooth progress of the Governor's highway reorganization bill was jarred slightly as it reached the floor of the House on Thursday. A spirited, if futile, show of opposition by Rep. Kiser, culminating in the first call for the "eyes and noses" of the 1953 session, was crushed as SB 88 was passed with only eight dissenting votes. The bill was ratified on Friday and is now law. Another administration measure, HB 205, creating a commission to study and recommend changes in the state governmental structure, was reported favorably by House Judiciary 1, but floor consideration was postponed until next Tuesday. Agriculture got into the "commission" picture on Monday when a bill was introduced authorizing the Governor to appoint a seven-member commission to make recommendations to the 1955 General Assembly on locating and financing a produce marketing center. At

County's January Bond Purchases Were \$57,093.75

Sale of United States Defense Bonds in Cleveland County for the month of January 1953 totaled \$57,093.75. All in Series E Bonds. This sales announcement was made today by County Defense Bonds Chairman George Blanton, based on the monthly sales report from Allison James, State Director of the U. S. Defense Bonds Division in Greensboro.

The total figures for North Carolina's 100 counties were as follows: Series E \$3,820,217.50; Series T \$281,000.00; Series J & K (combined) \$442,348.00; totaling \$4,543,765.50.

County Chairman Blanton in announcing the above sales, reported that they contributed towards a very successful January for Defense Bonds sales throughout the nation. In a letter to State Defense Bonds Chairman, W. Randolph Burgess, Deputy to the Secretary of the Treasury, make the following statement regarding the nation's sales: "January sales of Defense Bonds are encouraging. To summarize: sales of Defense Bonds on all series were 14 percent higher than in January, 1952, and redemptions were 12 percent lower than a year ago."

dividual statements, they learned the extent to which each has shared in the company's profits last year as members of "The Savings and Profit Sharing Pension Fund of Sears, Roebuck and Co. Employees."

At a meeting of fund members, Harold Love, manager of Sears, disclosed that this local employee group has to its credit in the fund 842 shares of Sears stock plus a cash balance of \$15,345.00. Based on a year-end market value of \$60 per share for the Sears stock, this group now has a total investment worth \$65,865.

Mr. Love said that 114,600 Sears employees throughout the nation are members of this 37 year old fund and they now have a total investment worth \$455,000,000. Of this total, only \$74,000,000 represents the amount deposited into the fund by the employee members from their wages and salaries.

As the largest single stockholder of Sears, Roebuck and Co., the fund now owns 25 per cent of the company's stock, Mr. Love disclosed.

Started back in 1916, the Sears fund is designed to permit employees to share in the company's profits and to assist them in creating a financial reserve to help take care of their needs following their eventual retirement from business. All regular Sears employees are eligible to join the fund after one year with the company.

Employee-members deposit five per cent of their wages and salaries up to a \$500 maximum deposit into the fund each year. Sears annual contribution into the fund is based on an established percentage of its net profit before taxes. This sum is credited to employee-members on a length-of-service basis.

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