

Rescue Squad Controversy.....

Facts And Allegations

By TOM McINTYRE Editor, Mirror-Herald

Coming out of a public meeting last Wednesday night concerning rescue and ambulance service in Kings Mountain were some facts and some detrimental allegations.

The facts are:

- (1) Kings Mountain Emergency Services (a second rescue squad) is chartered; (2) KMES has a board of directors and slate of officers; (3) The squad has a headquarters; (4) An ambulance ordered to N. C.

State specifications is being built in LaGrange, Ga. at a cost of \$18,892 for the squad is on order and delivery is expected within 30-45 days; (5) Some Kings Mountians are highly dissatisfied with the fees charged for transport by Kings

Mountain Rescue Squad;

(6) At least one County Commissioner is on record as being in "verbal and financial" support of Kings Mountain Emergency Services "if it proves as an all volunteer organization it can get the job done."

(7) The same commissioner will, if the above proves true, use his influence with the county board to get KMES a franchise to operate in the Kings Mountain Rescue District. The allegations are that many people who cannot afford to pay for ambulance transports are being charged; that callers are being asked in advance whether they can pay for the service or not; that service is slower or poorer than prior to the paid-personnel system; that some callers are being turned down for service; that garbishment proceedings are harrasing people who can't afford to pay for transport service; and that members disagreeing with the fee policy are being harrassed into quitting.

County Commissioner L. E. (Josh) Hinnant appeared at last Wednesday's meeting at the Kings Mountain Community Center to "clear up" what he termed misunderstandings on the part of the people concerning the county's role in ambulance service in Kings Mountain.

"The county commissioners have been chewed out about taking over the Kings Mountain Rescue Squad and its equipment and charging people fees for ambulance transportation," Hinnant said. "I want you to know the county has not taken over anything. In fact we don't want any part of the rescue and ambulance service in the county."

He said the state of North Carolina didn't give the county any choice in being responsible for fulltime ambulance service on July 1, 1977. He said there are three ways to have an ambulance service, by tax funding, by charges for transport, or by an all volunteer method.

"The county manager (Joe Hendricks) began negotiating with all five of the units in the county to determine if they would continue serving as before or what it would take to continue service."

Kings Mountain and Sheiby reported back they could not maintain daytime service without fulltime paid personnel. Grover, Boiling Springs and Upper Cleveland units chose to continue as volunteer units with no paid personnel and no charge for transports. Hinnant, while he personally would rather see an all volunteer rescue unit, defended the charge system because "the money to pay the salaries and operating expenses has to come from somewhere."

The commissioner also said that the two units charging transport fees were instructed to use their own judgment as to whether or not a person being transported could pay the fee before submitting bills to the County Emergency Services offices. Also not to charge heavy contributors to the rescue squads nor elderly persons without insurance coverage.

When questioned about what right the head of the Kings Mountain Rescue Squad had to negotiate with the county on a fee schedule to use the equipment and building bought and paid for by public donations, Hinnant replied that the commissioners accepted whatever terms the rescue units wanted, "which were voted on by that unit's board of directors. It wasn't a matter of one man making up the rules."

Some audience members present argued that the Kings Mountain Rescue Squad building and equipment belongs to the people of Kings Mountain and not to the men now running the service, and asked how the people could go about getting it back.

Hinnant said the county has not taken over the building nor the equipment. "The county owns one ambulance, which we purchased for Kings Mountain last year," he said.

Mickey Corry, attorney for Kings Mountain Emergency Services said the building and equipment belongs to Kings Mountain Rescue Squad. "If the county should franchise the new unit and the first unit's fran-



Photo By Tom McIntyre

KM ROTARY SPEAKER - Ledford Austin, regional acting director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in North Carolina, gave Kings Mountain Rotarians a brief outline of the various funding programs since the first Congressional action in 1937 Thursday.

These Are Best And Worst Times

By TOM McINTYRE Editor, Mirror-Herald

These are the best and worst of the times.

Charles Dickens penned that line in one of his novels and Ledford Austin repeated it Thursday to underline the Department of Housing and Urban Development's viewpoint of housing in America today.

Austin, a native of Lenoir, is acting regional director of HUD in Greensboro. He was speaking to the Kings Mountain Rotary Club.

"What is HUD doing about the housing situation?" he asked. "Ride through Kings Mountain and you get a good idea of what is being done."

Austin gave the Rotarians the background on public housing, stating it began with one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats. "He said the people are 'ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed.' In 1937 the Congress created the Federal Housing Administration."

Austin said this is a "bread and butter program," and that it is primarily geared to assist people who want to own their own home. The Federal Housing Administration not only helped Americans buy homes, but paid them a dividend when the loan was repaid.

He said this program did not answer the needs of the low income Americans and in 1939 Congress enacted the first low rent housing laws. There were amendments added in 1949 and again in 1964.

"Out of those two laws there came urban renewal, open spaces and neighborhood beautification funding," Austin said. "These programs continued until 1974 when all of the categorical programs were abolished. In their place came Community Development Block Grants."

Austin said the CD program was designed to allow the participating communities have more say-so on where and how the funding should be spent, instead of having the federal guidelines spell out specifically what the money was to be used for.

Kings Mountain was one of the few communities in North Carolina

ruled eligible to receive CD funds. The city was termed a "hold harmless" community and received \$4,160,000 to be funded over a five year period. "Hold Harmless" comes from the fact the city had on-going programs in the works on which a portion of each year's allocation could be spent.

"Due to the foresight of the leadership in Kings Mountain," Austin said, "the city was assured of getting the CD money."

He said the CD programs stipulate that maximum feasible attention be paid to housing, but that during the first three years of the funding HUD took a liberal viewpoint. Austin said the final two years of funding will see more emphasis placed on housing before applications are approved.

"And as CD phases out the federal government has come up with the Small Cities programs," he said. "It is really a continuation of the CD program, but with wider latitude on the local level. One of the Small Cities funding programs is for a three-year period. HUD takes the posture that only five or six cities ruled eligible will be funded for three years."

Kings Mountain will seek one of the comprehensive three year programs.

Austin also touched on the Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG) program, which Kings Mountain has also been ruled eligible to seek. Under the UDAG program the revitalization of the city's business community is the theme. The Small Cities grant will be geared toward the revitalization of a neighborhood.

Section Eight Housing is another program HUD is fond of now, according to Austin. This program involves the private builder as well as federal funding. Under this program the builder can build and serve as manager or negotiate with a private agency or a local housing authority to manage the housing complex.

Austin said, "All of these programs puts HUD into a closer partnership with the community. I hope our relationship can remain a cooperative one."

SAMPLE NON-PARTISAN BALLOT for Cleveland County Board Of Education. Includes instructions and candidate names: MARY LOU BARRIER, DIANE S. HOLLAND, KENNETH A. LEDFORD.

THIS IS ELECTION DAY. SAMPLE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY BALLOT for State Senate, State House of Representatives and County Officers. Includes instructions and candidate names: HELEN R. MARVIN, HALL A. RAUCH, P. W. BAILEY, OLLIE HARRIS.

Official Democratic Primary Ballot for United States Senators & Judicial Officers. Includes instructions and candidate names: McNEILL SMITH, LAWRENCE DAVIS, JOSEPH (JOE) FELMET, WILLIAM B. GRIFFIN, LUTHER HODGES, JOHN INGRAM, DAVID P. (DAVE) McKNIGHT, THOMAS B. (TOM) SAWYER, ROBERT M. MARTIN, WALTER E. BROCK, REGINALD (REX) FRAZIER, DAVID M. BRITT, RICHARD C. ERWIN, AUSTIN B. CAMPBELL.

For Member Of State House Of Representatives - 40th District. Includes candidate names: ROBERT Z. (BOB) FALLS, EDITH LEDFORD LUTZ, ROBERT A. (BOB) JONES, JOHN J. (JACK) HUNT, J. D. (DOC) TURNER, TOMMY P. BRIDGES, C. M. PEELER, JR., DAVID M. (PETE) STAMEY, L. E. (JOSH) HINNANT, BENNETT J. MASTERS, DWIGHT TESSNER, J. HAYWOOD ALLEN, CHARLES L. PEELER.

Signature of Ralph L. Gilbert, Chairman, Cleveland County Board of Elections.

(Turn To Page 3)

Choose from Our Wide Selection of Sofa-Sleepers!

Sterch's and Sealy... Names You Can Depend On For Fine Bedding