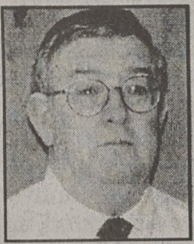


Express your merger feelings at the polls



Gary Stewart

Editor

Some random comments about school merger:

A couple of things have been nagging at me since attorney Gil Middlebrooks released his merger analysis on Cleveland County Schools over to weeks ago.

In a comment made at the commissioners' meeting to receive the analysis, Middlebrooks was quoted as saying something to this effect: "What we have in Shelby is a 4A school serving a 2A population."

I don't claim to be a prophet, but I remember telling several people four years ago when Shelby's state classification for sports was dropped from 3A to 2A, that before another realignment came to pass Cleveland County's school systems would be merged. Shelby loves being a big dog in a little lot.

There was a brief mention in the report of a possible future "magnetizing" of Shelby schools as an option to providing greater academic opportunities for students from all over the county.

I can foresee Shelby High School someday becoming Cleveland County's "magnet" school, drawing the top-ranking students from all over the county, thus increasing Shelby's state test scores and assuring a high academic standing in the state.

I wonder what will happen to other schools in the county when their brighter students opt to attend that magnet school. Would they remain traditional high schools or would one or more become, let's say, a vocational school or a school to serve students with behavioral problems?

The issue that was said to be the basis for merger consideration in the first place - the lack of skills of students entering the workforce - has been barely touched upon during the whole merger process. Oh, yes, you see mention of addressing needs of the lower 25% but I have seen no specific ideas or plans on how to increase the performance of those students.

I believe that is only an excuse for the county powers to force their will on the rest of the county. I have lived in Cleveland County for all of my 54 years and I have never heard of a business or industry that closed its doors because of a lack of workers. Bad times, yes. Businesses moving to foreign countries, yes. Lack of workers, no.

With merger a 99.9 percent done deal (the only reason it's not is because the state law requires a public hearing) what are the options for those who opposed it? Because it has some students who live in Gaston County, Kings Mountain Schools could appeal to the State School Board to deny the commissioners' request for merger based on the fact that they have not received any input, or approval, from the Gaston County Board of Commissioners.

The State School Board is pro merger and would probably approve the request anyway.

Kings Mountain then could sue, and hope for the court system to stop or delay merger.

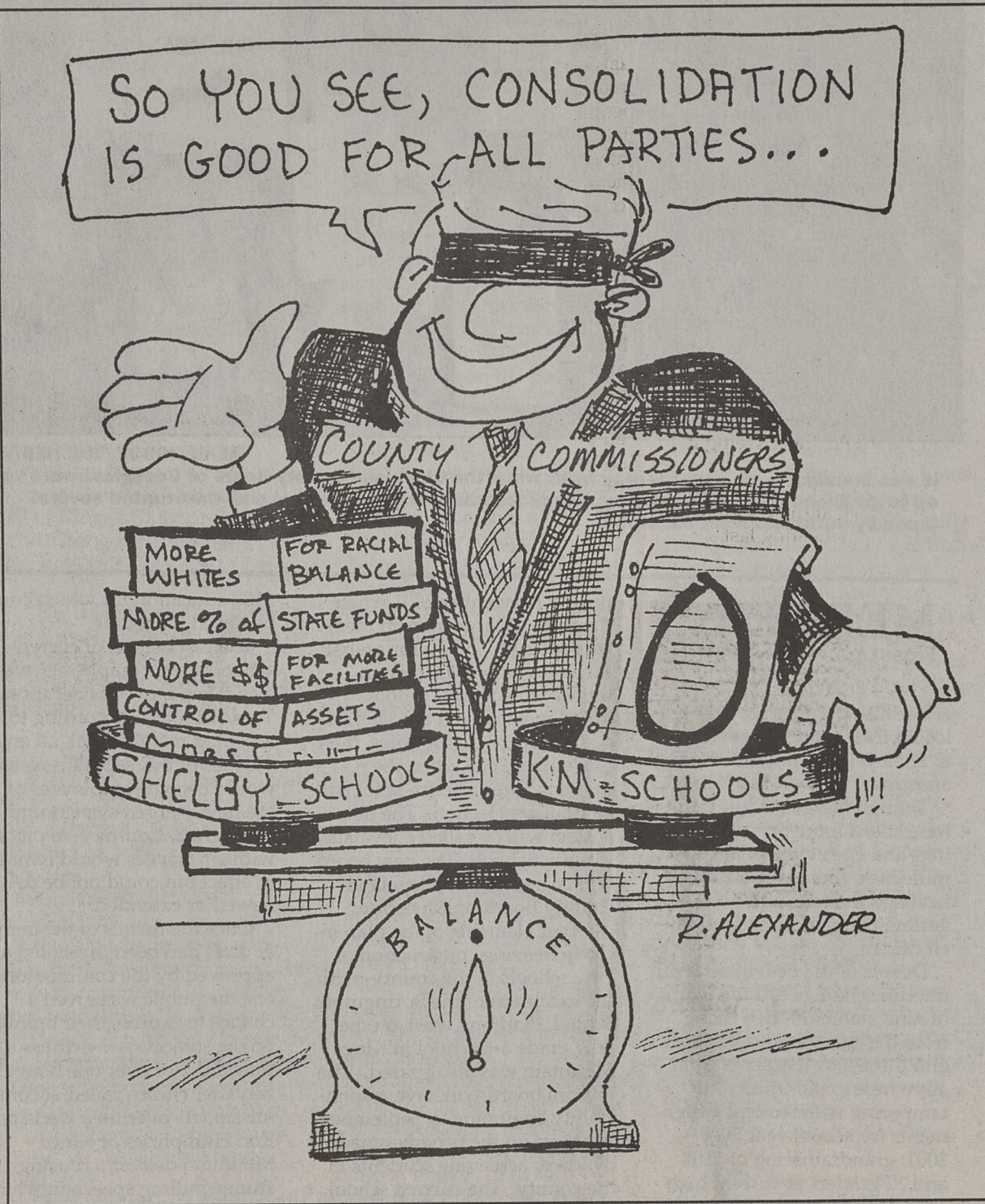
The best thing citizens can do, though, is to be a constant thorn in the side of county commissioners who turned a deaf ear to their wishes. Merger is a done deal, but there are a lot of other issues the citizens can address, such as district representation on the County Board of Commissioners, lowering the property tax, and providing necessary services such as water and sewer to all parts of Cleveland County. Do you know that your tax money funds water and sewer but there are several areas of the county that cannot get it (including the community I live in)?

And, above all, remember that there is a Primary Election coming up on May 2 when three of the four commissioners who voted for the merger plan are running for nomination of their parties.

If you are disgusted with the commissioners over the way they handled merger, let them know it on May 2.

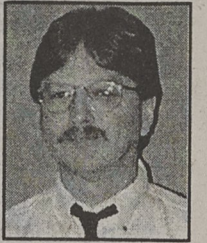
CARTOONITORIAL

by Reg Alexander



COLUMNIST

Service stations are becoming a thing of past



Alan Hodge

Staff Writer

Once a mainstay of any community, the old time service station is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Now, instead of gathering at the local service station to chew the fat, gents go to fast food restaurants in the mornings and do the same thing but in a different context. Once upon a time men took their cars to the corner service station and stood under it on the lift while the mechanic worked his oily magic. Now, hardly anyone can even find the dipstick.

There are a couple of service stations that have played important roles in my life. As a wee'lad in Belmont, I would ride with my grandfather Sinclair Smith to Pete Sellers Texaco. Hanging around Sellers was like going to some exotic country where the aroma of rubber and oil was as heady as any Zanzibar spice market.

The greatest part of a visit to Pete's service station was getting a Brown Mule ice cream bar. How well I recall having to quickly devour the treat before it melted and ran down my hand. Afterwards, I would chew the stick to splinters so as not to waste a single molecule of chocolate.

In high school, I worked for a couple of months at a Phillips 66 in Charlotte that didn't do very much business. My pal Brutus Casey worked there too. We would change a tire now and then, and maybe gas up five or six cars a day. This left plenty of time for other pursuits such as buffing our own cars, or cutting holes in the back of the candy machine with a blowtorch, or playing cards. Once we put wine in the drink box and a lady came in and pulled out what she thought was a soft drink only to discover it was Bali Hai wine.

Service stations are places where boys can see and hear men talk about politics, sports, and women. Sometimes the talk at service stations can get pretty rough - but it's just boys being boys for the most part. I bet talk can get pretty rough in beauty parlors too.

If you patronize an old time service station or even know where one is then count yourself lucky. Take some time one Saturday morning and hang out for a while. Inhale the aroma of tires, hot lubricant, and the sweet aroma of anti-freeze. Get to know the old guys who hang out there - philosophers whose robes are bib overalls. Last but not least, eat an ice cream bar for old times sake.

YOUR VIEW

Kings Mountain will just get Shelby's leftovers

To the editor:

As I think of the most important people affected by this merger (our children) I feel their education should be the number one issue. I don't feel that is the case.

Our children have enough on their minds with school, and the work involved, than to have to worry about what school they will be attending in the future. I have a cousin in high school who is so worried about the outcome of this situation. She is afraid she will have to graduate from another school besides Kings Mountain High. I have a child in elementary school who will also be affected by this merger if it goes through.

I feel it is wrong for the Commissioners to have so much control over so many lives. I don't understand why the commissioners are so eager to merge. Why are the commissioners ignoring all the letters and phone calls from the citizens who are opposed to the merger?

I feel the majority of the people do not want merger. I just wonder if any of the commissioners have children in the school system themselves. If so, would they pursue merger if it would affect their lives?

Kings Mountain has a lot of good teachers in the system, and also a great School Board. I know that if you have a problem or a question you need an answer to you can call up one of them and they will talk with you about it and try to give you an answer, and if they don't have one right away they will find one and get back in touch with you.

Our schools here in Kings Mountain are dedicated to the students, and if the merger takes place will that change? Will we still have the parent/teacher communication that we have now? I don't think we will. I think that Kings Mountain will get lost in the shuffle. I feel all the good teachers will be sent to Shelby schools and Kings Mountain will get the leftovers.

This is just my opinion. I feel if the problem is in Shelby, then the changes should be done in Shelby and leave Kings Mountain out of it.

Sandy Surber
Kings Mountain

How much lower can United States go morally?

To the editor:

I recently watched a debate between two presidential candidates about who supported killing unborn babies first.

I supported killing unborn babies before you!

Oh, No! I supported killing unborn babies from the beginning!

I supported killing unborn babies more than you, check my voting record!

People were laughing, applauding, smiling, and clapping - showing their approval.

This is a little reminiscent of a lynch mob, don't you think? How much lower morally can we get when two presidential candidates debate killing unborn babies as if one were swatting a fly?

The sad thing about the matter is one of these candidates will probably be the next President of the United States.

Bill Blackwelder
Mt. Pleasant

We The People are not being listened to

To the editor:

Over the past few months there has been a great deal of heated debate concerning school merger. I write this not to fan the flames, nor to tell another group of elected officials how to carry out their jobs, but to add the thoughts and concerns of Victoria Dedmon's father.

In my travels around the county I talk to a lot of people and they have made it very plain to me that school merger is not the way to improve education in our county. They feel their government is unresponsive to them over an issue that is near and dear to us all, our children. There is a good deal of discussion over the best uses of schools and more efficient uses of limited resources. We all agree that schools are expensive and everyone has an opinion on how they should be run. The one thing that we cannot forget is that schools are not an industrial plant churning out identical products. Schools have a most unique and special raw material, our children. Being as

individual as children are two things I think should be constant, that their parents love them and give them all the encouragement possible and that we as a community give them a safe, stable environment in which to learn. I cannot see how merger does this nor do I agree that it is the best course of action, especially when student reassignment begins and kids are moved from schools they consider being theirs to new schools outside of their communities.

People have a growing distrust of their government and this issue has not helped this. In the preamble to our constitution it begins WE THE PEOPLE, in larger letters than the rest signifying that the writers considered these words to be very important. In my opinion you can't go wrong when you listen to the people. It is my hope that our elected officials stop to listen to the people and what they really want for their children and act accordingly.

Andy Dedmon
Earl

Send letters to The Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086. Letters must be signed and include full name, address and telephone number.

SIDEWALK SURVEY

By ALAN HODGE
Herald/Times

Who will benefit from the school merger?



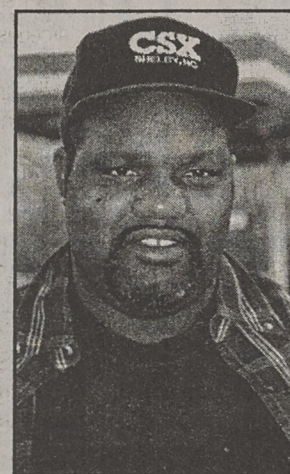
Shelby will benefit from merger.

Wanda Wilson
Kings Mountain



No one will benefit from merged schools.

Barry York
Grover



The whole county will benefit from more equal schools.

Kevin Johnson
Shelby



Not the kids. Maybe the businessmen in Shelby.

Casey Summitt
Kings Mountain



Shelby High School will benefit from the merger.

Kalpana Patel
Kings Mountain