

A New Broom Goes To Work

The current burst of activity down at the Mecklenburg Courthouse is as heartening as it is startling. It's been a long time since the number of cases ready for trial equalled the number of prayers for continuation of judgment, and an even longer time since a judge issued capias for missing witnesses and jurors in such wholesale lots.

The pounding of Judge Clement's gavel and his accompanying, "Put them in jail, Mr. Sheriff, then we'll know where they are," is a pleasant sound indeed. The Judge summed up Mecklenburg's haphazard court procedure with, "They've been pampered too much in this county... We don't have time for so much foolishness."

The Judge, of course, is responsible for a great deal of the scurrying around in the Courthouse, but the instigator was apparently Ben Whitener, the newly appointed Solicitor. Young Mr. White-

ner, with one eye on the mass of ancient cases confronting him, the other on the new Sumner's election, has been heaving in the traditional fashion of all new brooms.

We doubt if any young lawyer ever had a more formidable task assigned him than Mr. Whitener's. He has inherited the residue of 20 years of lax prosecution, and a tradition of leniency that has reduced capital crime in Mecklenburg to the level of a minor misdemeanor.

The new Solicitor has demonstrated his vigor by calling up the Stacks case, one of the toughest on his vast docket, for trial in his first week of court here, even though he could logically have postponed it. He has also disposed of a good many lesser cases, and has announced that he will keep the court machinery busy throughout the term.

Mr. Whitener is off to a flying start. We wish him well.

Old Muley Stays In Harness

AT 63, Representative Robert L. Doughton has declared himself a candidate for re-election to Congress, and in view of his record, and the deep personal affection his constituents have for him, he is apparently immune to opposition, Democratic or Republican.

The North Carolina press, and many newspapers elsewhere, have expressed pleasure at his decision "to stay in Washington until the end of this Administration." The Atlanta Journal sums up the sentiment: "Old Muley comes pretty near to being the most important and influential member of the House, and requests have come to him from colleagues of all political beliefs to stay in harness until reconversion is affected."

Although we agree with the general estimate of Representative Doughton's integrity and ability, we wonder if The Journal's statement isn't a little too inclusive. It would be interesting to see just who the left-wingers are who are urging "Old Muley" to hang onto the chairmanship of the Ways & Means Committee for two more years.

It is true that Representative Doughton campaigned vigorously for the New Deal in the early days of the Roosevelt Administration. But it is also true that he has, in the name of economy, turned a cold eye on virtually all new domestic appropriations offered in the last few years. Only a few months ago, in one of his few public bills as a Congressman, President Truman singled out Mr. Doughton's Ways & Means Committee as one of the principle stumbling blocks in the way of his recommended legislative program.

Mr. Doughton, as a result of his years and his natural instinct, is a highly con-

servative gentleman. The public debt is, to him, the number one problem on the Congressional agenda; as he stated with refreshing frankness in announcing that he would stand for reelection, "we have got to cut out all unnecessary spending and maintain high wartime tax rates in order to renew the trend toward a balanced budget."

As a general statement, this would, we suspect, be endorsed by any Democrat. But there is a wide variation between Harry Truman's definition of necessary spending and Bob Doughton's. Old Muley has indicated his disagreement with virtually every major measure recommended by the President. Since, by virtue of his Congressional seniority, he will continue to hold a key position in the Administration with which he so violently differs, his reelection will help guarantee a continuation of the Congressional deadlock that has marked the transition from war to peace.

Conservatives as well as liberals have condemned the Government for the drift that has replaced orderly reconversion with industrial chaos. However right they may be in principle, Bob Doughton and those Congressmen who share his views are due a heavy share of the responsibility for the lack of positive Federal action in this period of crisis. They have, as Mr. Truman complained, rejected the Administration's proposals without substituting any of their own.

"I am a Democrat but not a Party slave," Mr. Doughton once said. "I am neither a reactionary nor radical, and I am bound to no party or group." In living up to that credo he has attained the rank of statesman. It is tragic that the Congressional seniority system should have cast him, in his last years, in the role of obstructionist, making his every gesture negative.

Counteracting A Caricature

SOME of the more provincial reporters from the Deep North are already applying the term "quaint" to the speech of Helen Douglas Mankin, Georgia's new Congresswoman. It began when Mrs. Mankin opened the door of her hotel suite to admit the reporters assembled for her first press conference. "You all come on in and make yourselves at home," she said.

Well, maybe "you all," that perfectly correct and uncommonly gracious Southern term, is quaint in Washington, in the sense that quaint means unusual. So, we fear, is the disarming courtesy with which Mrs. Mankin greeted her visitors. "Wish I had something to feed you," she told the reporters. "Never had this many people around before without something to eat."

Small wonder the capital press corps found such a reception remarkable. They have never known a Congresswoman to press conference marked by cold formality, false heartiness, or the blustering of a thin-skinned office-holder. A reporter, trained to extract information by main strength, is certain to be thrown off balance when he is treated as a welcome and honored guest.

And Mrs. Mankin added complete candor to her courtesy, another gesture

that unnerved the visiting journalists. When a reporter for one of the Washington papers, dragging an extraneous but red hot local issue in his heels, asked her what she thought of suffrage for the District of Columbia, Mrs. Mankin replied, "Why, to tell the truth, I don't know a dog-gone thing about it."

This, by any definition, was a quaint remark. The spectacle of a member of Congress publicly confessing ignorance on any subject is enough to pop the oldest correspondent's eyes. It doesn't seem likely that Mrs. Mankin, a veteran member of the Georgia legislature, spoke out of political innocence. She must have been acting on an instinct as rare in Washington as her courtesy, the knowledge that voters actually appreciate frankness.

We're delighted with Mrs. Mankin's initial appearance in Washington, and we can't help but hear a great deal more of her. She has a chance to make a name for herself in the country at large that the peculiar brand of charm, courtesy, and candor that is labeled Southern is, after all, a national asset. And perhaps she will counteract to some extent the influence of the pompous old Southern Democrats who for so many years have caricatured the manners and morals of the region.

Another Voice

WE confess to having very little sympathy for some of North Carolina's wet counties which have called upon the state board of alcoholic control to help them solve a problem.

These are the legal-liquor counties which are adjacent to the state's dry territory. They complain that in these days of shortage of legal liquor, with return to rationing being considered, visitors from dry counties are depleting the supplies as fast as they are put on the shelves. As a result, the counties on the border of wet territory say that they

can't supply the demand of their citizens as well as the counties which lie close to wet territory.

Before lavishing too much sympathy upon the complainants it would be well to remember that for many a year they profited enormously by the "foreign" trade. Their taxes were further reduced thereby; their county treasuries swelled. And, did they most assuredly did, the outsiders? They most assuredly did. No wet county protection from the trade they once warmly welcomed.—High Point Enterprise.

Thirst Without Sympathy

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People's Platform Subtle Campaign For Liquor?

THE highly esteemed editors of The Charlotte News have been for some time subtly suggesting legal liquor for Charlotte and Mecklenburg.

The editorial, "32 Caliber," declaimed the intoxicating effects of beer and with mild tolerance suffered the WCTU to exist, but with disrespect and intolerance proclaimed that "the whole role of Drys would never be convinced that prohibition was a failure."

NOTE: There followed five other quotations from editorials appearing in The News, which we have deleted to save space.—Eds., The News.

If Charlotte became a den of legal liquor stores, would our Charlotte News editors have compassion for the victims in Monroe and other neighboring towns, because the Charlotte drinkers voted to quench their thirst at home and supply their neighbors to their detriment?

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Samuel Grafton New Nationalism

SOME of our reporters are disturbed to find that there is still a great deal of nationalism rampant in the German ranks about the rebirth of Germany, nations pressing territorial claims upon each other, etc. American opinion is decidedly more idealistic of all newspapers, and these discoveries depress them: "It is not nationalism, it is a nationalistic feeling; but it's just as it was before the war," they often hear.

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By Better Minds

THE gist of last night's column, and the Editor's parenthetical remark and the gist of the leading column of this evening's paper leaves me rather in the air. I realize that "People's Platform" is not necessarily the opinion of the paper, but the remark does bring the paper's opinion into same.

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