THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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Consolidated School System Can Open New Era Of Progress In Mecklenburg

Voters who overwhelmingly endorsed city-county school consolidation yesterday raised the curtain on a new era of significant progress in metropolitan Mecklenburg.

Archaic formal boundaries and conflicting jurisdictions were dissolved at last by a larger dedication to the welfare of the whole community.

Even though the turnout was small, the results of the balloting indicated a revision of tired attitudes, a sounder understanding of common needs, a clearer appreciation of mutual benefits.

Together with the approval of an $8 million bond issue for new classrooms, it represented a good day's work for Mecklenburgers who care about the future of their children.

Meanwhile, the community owes a debt of gratitude to its leaders today — men and women who recognized both the need and the opportunity. It was a ten-year struggle but, through vigor and persistence in knocking out the inevitable kinks and doubts, they finally triumphed over the status quo. A system of public education can now be organized in accordance with the best interests of all of the county's children, regardless of where they live.

* * *

Lewis Mumford, the famed planner, once warned that Americans are as unprepared to understand their country's headlong metropolitan growth as the inhabitants of Ur or ancient Babylon. We don't believe that is true any more — certainly not in Mecklenburg. There is a new awakening here, an awareness that Charlotte is outgrowing its artificial boundaries and a realization that no over-all governmental authority exists to minister to the needs of the metropolitan area population.

The situation here is not unique. Everywhere, conflicting jurisdictions are the rule. Two years ago, the Bureau of the Census reported that 102,353 separate governmental units shared authority in the land.

The obvious solution is to dissolve the artificial barriers, which are expensive to maintain, and to accept a policy of positive and coordinated action.

This is what Mecklenburgers have chosen to do in the field of public education.

* * *

As the metropolitan sprawl of Charlotte continues to overlap the city limits, the technique of city-county consolidation will become, more and more, an essential instrument of progress.

But much will depend on the success of school consolidation. Earlier experiments in joint administration — health and planning — have not offered a really dramatic example of mutual benefits. In public education there is a perfect testing ground.

This means school administrators will face responsibilities of more than ordinary significance. They will be called upon to prove, and prove conclusively, that consolidation is indeed an essential instrument of progress and that it offers the soundest solution to problems two separate school systems would find unbearable.

We firmly believe they can do just that. Furthermore, we believe that they must.

A school system designed to educate every child in Mecklenburg to the limits of his capacities is not impossible to build or beyond the resources of the county. Its construction is a matter of will: we must want it. There can be no doubt that if we want it we can have it.

Is The American Economy Hibernating?

President Eisenhower's Cabinet Committee on Price Stability for Economic Growth released its first report this week, and the public climate was right for it. Yesterday the fiscal year ended, a year that began in recession and ended in boom —but with an estimated budget deficit of over $12 billion.

Elsewhere, public concern over price stability grows. In Albert Lea, Minn., the bugles of war have been sounded against inflation. Newspaper readers are clipping and sending off coupons that read: "Let's stop inflation! I, the undersigned, urge you in 1959 to negotiate for price decreases, not wage increases."

Along with bill payers everywhere, we worry about the rising cost of living; and we agree with Mr. Nixon and the other members of the committee that ideally the budget should be balanced for the coming fiscal year. That, with other measures it recommends, would help put the bite on inflation.

Yet economists, who normally deal in these mysteries, make repeated use of a Latin phrase, **ceteris paribus**—"other things being equal" — when they talk about isolated parts of the economy. We would be wise to keep this in mind when we talk about the price level, or about "inflation." The price level is vitally important; but it is only one of countless signposts indicating health or sickness in the economy, and is delicately related to other, equally important, signposts.

The President's cabinet committee, like the President himself, has failed to keep this in mind. For instance, nowhere does the Nixon Committee's report discuss the main reason why Uncle Sam has a $77 billion budget this year, a gigantic bill that cannot be completely covered by income.

That main reason is that $40 billion, over half, go into the national armaments program, which has as its objective guarding the United States and the Western world against military blackmail by the Soviets. This is one of the "other things." If there were some way we could get rid of the Russian threat, or redesign our defense program, we might get rid of some "spending." But there seems no easy way out.

The Committee grants that "in the long run . . . the most effective antidote to inflation is increased efficiency and productivity in the economy." True. Why, then, does the committee nowhere point out that our national economy has grown, on the average, less than 2 per cent per year over the past five years? This is another of the "other things" that must be considered in any sensible talk of inflation — not just wage increases or banking and budget policies alone. Our stagnation is particularly alarming when you consider that the Communist nations — against whom we "compete" economically — report growth that quadruples that percentage (in Russia) and rises to the unbelievable figure of over 60 per cent this year (in Red China).

The truth is that the American economy, like a hibernating bear, is living on the fat it accumulated in the "summers" of 3 to 4 per cent annual growth; today we are growing little. Perhaps Congressman Chester Bowles is right when he charges that our national economic fears, which President Eisenhower has expertly used in his fight against "inflation," result from "the atmosphere . . . created by the stagnating economy."

To be true, accurate, and sensible, a national economic program must take account of every sector and index of the economy's health. It must assign priorities. Is price stability at the risk of stagnation preferable to continued growth at the risk of inflation? Which should come first: Our national defense and domestic welfare, or price stability at any cost? These are questions that require answers. The President's committee has not given us material to answer them.

From The New York Herald Tribune

A LITTLE BROOK AND A BIG POOL

A farm brook can curve openly now in a wide meadow. Or it can retreat at length to more hidden places where full-leaved trees bank it for rods of shade. When hay has been cut, the brook shows up in shallow, sunny stretches of easy wading for a boy or a cow. Along timothy-clipped edges there are only a few clumps of alders and elderberry bushes. There is nothing to keep noonday heat from rippled water. There is nothing to conceal a trout who makes his own shadow going places in a hurry. A trout is on his way to where there is deeper water in the brook's one big pool. Except for a few fishermen, not many seek out the pool in its wooded place. They find a swimming spot nearer by—perhaps a man-made on with three diving boards and a concrete toasting rack. But at night a man likes to think that stars come to bathe in the brook's one wide place. Without splash or shout, there are bright plunges by truants of heaven. They dive in the lonely water and swim unchallenged. Light-footed, they have escaped the classrooms of space.

A countryman somtimes wishes that his brook was a bigger stream — that it had more room for trout or bullfrogs, that it had more pools like the one the stars find so handy on a hot night. But there is no easy way for a man to grow a brook into a creek or a small river. Water, he knows, is a valley seeker. A creek or a river is a thing of lower valleys. It is a hill country farm that has the little brooks that come down a mountain, thread a meadow and offer now and then a good-sized pool. If a brook can have a wide pool which is big enough for a star to swim in, it ought to satisfy anybody. Probably when it comes to a brook, a countryman doesn't know when he is well off. He has seen sluggish, muddy creeks that never had his brook's clear and silvered water. What star wants to bathe in a muddy stream? What trout wants to be kept awake by too many bullfrogs?

The city has had to send a crew around town getting rid of old paint on the streets, digging up parking meters and resetting them. Reason: Automobiles are just too long for the old parallel places. Here is another sign that the Detroit people ought to heed. Really, do we have to have these things longer and longer? What does it prove?—Birmingham News.

—A LEGISLATOR GRADES THE LEGISLATURE—

Fundamental Issues In Education Remain Unsolved

By REP. WATTS HILL JR.

(Last In A Series)

Editors' Note: A brilliant young Durham legislator who was one of the stars of the 1959 General Assembly tells today how his colleagues failed to come to grips with the long-range educational issues which must be solved if North Carolina is to continue to progress. Rep. Hill, who is chairman of the House Committee on Higher Education, outlines in detail the opportunities for "bold and constructive action." This is the final installment of a candid survey of the 1959 legislature's record, written exclusively for The News.

DURHAM

Education, meaning both public schools and higher education, will continue to be the major topic of discussion by future general assemblies due to the fact that it is the largest single item in the state's budget. The 1959 session, as has been true with every session since the early thirties, did not resolve long term basic issues fundamental to our whole concept of public education but rather dealt with immediate short range problems. It is the contention of those most directly concerned with education that until long range basic policy decisions are made, education will not receive "satisfactory" treatment by any General Assembly.

HILL

It is not that the legislature is not willing to do its best for education but rather that it is not clear as to exactly how it should proceed. Bold and constructive action may begin with the study commissions authorized by the 1961 session but it will probably be many years before the basic issues are resolved and education can make the amount of progress which the state both needs and deserves.

HIGHER EDUCATION

As background for these remarks, look at higher education first. The Advisory Budget Commission in its original recommendations to the General Assembly sought to raise the level of the institutions of higher education outside of the Consolidated University, unintentionally at the expense of the Consolidated University. In their initial recommendations is to be found a clear example of educational policy decisions by indirection, i.e., through the appropriation of funds.

On the other hand, recommendations adopted by the General Assembly provided sufficient additional money to allow both the colleges and the Consolidated University to go forward.

EQUALIZATION

As a consequence, the situation today is that every state institution can, for the first time, pay its teaching staff the same salary from state funds if they so desire by the simple, but perhaps undesirable, expedient of charging the same tuition at every institution. In a very real sense, the 1959 General Assembly equalized state appropriations between institutions of higher education for the same level of instruction. In the opinion of many, the state has gone about as far as it should go in such equalization considering the assignment of duties to the various institutions by the Board of Higher Education. Here it should be understood that the Board of Higher Education supports the existing system whereby 89 per cent of the graduate degrees are given at the Consolidated University with the colleges providing primarily teacher training.

This is the current situation but there have been major differences of opinion as to whether this concept should continue. For years, the institutions outside of the Consolidated University have sought to upgrade their institutions from the college to the university level. For example, East Carolina College has sought to give a Ph.D. in Education and the 1959 session established a four-year nursing school there.

CHARLOTTE'S HOPES

Even at the community college level, there is great demand for upgrading into full college status. It certainly is not unknown that some of the members of the board of trustees of the Charlotte Community College System look forward to the day when it might become a full-fledged branch of the Consolidated University. This may or may not be the proper future for Charlotte College. Certainly, at the present moment, it does not fit in with the Board of Higher Education's concept of the community college program in the state.

The real question is not whether these aspirations are good or bad but whether they are what is most needed at this time. For example, is it not possible that extension of the community college approach to students at private colleges might well result in a greater educational opportunity for more people in the state? By the same token, should there not be improvements in quality in offerings at the state-supported colleges in areas now covered before they expand into new areas? More time is probably needed before the state will have proved or disproved four-level concept of higher education (university, college, community college and technical institute) and the whole area of the relationship between college preparatory work at the high school level and freshman level work in the colleges is still to be resolved.

POLITICAL PRESSURE

The key point in all of this discussion is that today the state faces an expansion of the college (as opposed to the university) program, not to meet clearly stated and understood educational goals of high priority but rather because of political pressures stemming from local pride. Unless basic issues are discussed, a statewide educational concept may never have a chance to develop. The basic question, the basic issue, which was not faced by the 1959 General Assembly was the development of and agreement to a statewide educational concept. There is a real challenge posed to the Board of Higher Education and the trustees of the universities and colleges in the next few years. The development of and agreement to a statewide concept really rests in their hands. If such a concept is not developed, the state will be the loser.

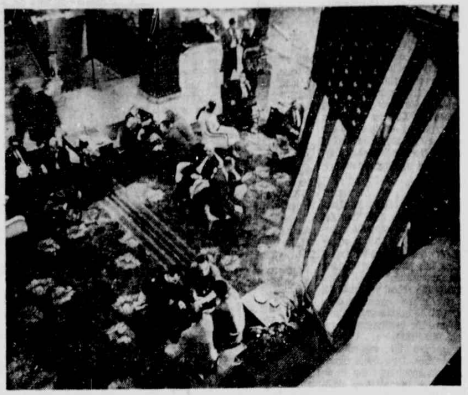
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The lack of a statewide educational concept is even more apparent in our public school system and here, again, the 1959 General Assembly, like most of those of the past 20 years, failed to grapple with the basic issues. As a consequence, funds were appropriated primarily to provide only a moderate increase in the "status quo."

The basic issue which faces the state in the public schools is determining what is the state's role and what is the local role in both policy and finance and then agreeing upon it.

Almost all North Carolinians accept the concept expressed in the Constitution that the state is responsible for a "general and uniform" system of public schools. But North Carolinians seem unable to agree upon the meaning of the word "uniform" and perhaps even upon the word "general." If we agree that "general" means that it is state policy that a school shall be available to every child regardless of where he lives, then the real problem is limited to agreement upon the meaning of the word "uniform."

Here we run into a matter of fundamental policy. There are two basic and apparently contradictory concepts of "uniform." Many people in the state and many legislators interpret "uniform" to mean that education is the sole responsibility of the state and that, ideally, there should be no need for "supplementary" taxes. This was, of course, the original concept of the word "uniform" in the 1930s and it will be recalled that earlier in this century local supplementary taxes were prohibited for a short time. Now even the strongest proponents of this interpretation would not have us do away with supplementary taxes in the next few years but fundamental to their thinking is that the day will eventually come when state support will be adequate and supplementary taxes no longer needed.



The Lobby Of Raleigh's Sir Walter Hotel Is Legislature's "Third House"

OTHER INTERPRETATION

The other interpretation of the word "uniform," which is also held by a large segment of the public and many legislators, is that "uniform" means that the state should provide a uniform "minimum" and that "enrichment" of the educational offering should come from local taxes which, of course, include supplementary taxes.

Both systems have been tried and neither has proven to be the complete answer and yet both have their strong supporters. The concept of all support coming from the state level carries with it the danger that nothing will be done well as a result of attempting to do everything, even if poorly. There are a great many people who feel that we have already arrived at this end result. Even with the supplements, two-thirds of the school children of the state are taught in administrative units with no supplements and are not receiving an opportunity to "burgeon out all that is within them." Likewise, any realistic appraisal of North Carolina's economic resources at the state level indicates that it will be many years, if ever, before the state will be able to compete with other states in such vital areas as teachers' salaries. In other words, neither concept of the word "uniform" is proving to meet the educational needs of the state and the very fact that there are two concepts makes it difficult to obtain even the full financial backing for education of which the state is capable.

And yet, an agreed-upon, fully understood policy by the majority of the people of the state and the majority of the legislature must be found. Perhaps there is a new approach which may answer the weaknesses of the two existing ones. Has consideration been given, for example, to establishing a "basic" curriculum which would be supported 100 per cent out of state funds plus the establishment of a "recommended" curriculum which would be paid for in equal amounts by local taxes and state contributions? Such an approach might well make it possible for substantial improvements in quality in the "basic" curriculum and substantial increases in the salaries of the teachers responsible for the "basic" curriculum within the funds now appropriated for education and those likely to be appropriated in the near future.

Such a "basic" curriculum would truly provide an equal but not minimum educational opportunity for every child in the state regardless of where he lived. The "recommended" curriculum concept would lead to the determination by each local school unit of what desirable but not essential courses they would offer.

The fundamental problem would be to establish a "basic" curriculum but this not an impossible task. Indeed, we have a Curriculum Study Commission doing excellent work at this very moment.

This new approach may or may not provide the answer but it is indicative of the type of inquiry which must be made if we are to resolve the basic issues and proceed to strengthen our system of public education.

A DOLLAR'S VALUE?

That the need for consideration of such basic issues actually exists is proven by the action of the 1959 General Assembly when it directed the State Board of Education to complete its study of "teacher education, certification and pay," authorized a legislative study commission to deal with "merit pay and implementation of a revised curriculum" set up a study commission to investigate greater utilization of our school buildings and appropriated money to continue experiments in educational television. Both the public and the legislature are asking, "Are we getting a dollar's value for the dollar spent on education?", and, "Is quality as opposed to quantity being given sufficient attention?"

When it comes to our public schools, the point is that it is not so important which course is chosen but it is vitally important that we weigh the different approaches and consciously make a choice between them. The great danger is that we will not make a choice thereby leaving the conflict unresolved. Our school children will only be the first to suffer as ultimately education or the lack of it will be the deciding factor in the future of this state.

'By A Coincidence, Our Group Has Arrived At The Same Conclusions'

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

Senate Conservatives Rewrite Tax Bills

WASHINGTON

The Senate of the United States met until 1 a.m. last week voting on taxes scheduled to expire at midnight last night (June 30). The debate was preceded by a secret huddle between Sen. John Carroll of Colorado and Sen. Lyndon Johnson of Texas, at which the Democratic leader emphatically agreed that the liberal Democrats should bring up for a vote certain tightening of tax loopholes and tax provisions favoring big business.

Three Down

During the subsequent voting, three of these were voted down as follows:

1. Sen. Paul Douglas (Ill.) lost a move to cut the oil-depletion allowance.

2. Sen. Joe Clark (Pa.) failed to plug the loophole permitting big taxpayers to deduct yachts, private airplanes, World Series boxes, and other entertainment.

Humphrey Amendment

3. Sen. William Proxmire (Wis.) failed in his proposal to put those who received dividends on the same withholding basis as wage-earners whose taxes are withheld from payrolls.

However, one important proposal by Sen. Eugene McCarthy (Minn.) won. It was to abolish the 4 per cent tax deduction given those who make their money from stock-market dividends as against those who earn it from salaries or government bonds. This so-called George Humphrey amendment proposed by the recent secretary of the treasury in order to stimulate the stock market, was abolished.

Pen Stroke

But one day later, the Joint Committee of the House and Senate, with a stroke of the pen, wiped out the Senate vote. It reinstated tax favoritism for stock-market investors — despite the fact that this favoritism costs the treasury $335 million annually.

Closed-Door Pattern

This closed-door committee action is important because it follows a pattern of what has been happening all during the current 86th Congress. Both houses will carefully debate and pass a bill on housing, unemployment compensation, taxes. Then a joint committee, usually stacked with conservatives, will completely rewrite the bills voted by the two houses of Congress.