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FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 1951

STAGGERED COMMISSION TERMS

THE axiom that there are two sides to every question applies to the proposal to stagger terms of the members of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners.

The current board thinks that terms should be staggered, so that there will always be one or more members with some experience in running the County's business. It has asked the County Attorney to draw up such a bill.

One or two other points about the proposition immediately present themselves, and the Mecklenburg legislative delegation will want to consider them before introducing such a bill.

First, there is the length of term. Under the present system, the five board members, including the chairman, are elected every two years. If the term of office remains the same, the only way to stagger the terms would be to hold a County election every year. If elections are held every two years, as they are at present, four-year terms would be required to get a staggered effect.

Second, the longer terms and the staggered arrangement would make it much harder to "turn the screws out" if it ever

happens that, by accident or otherwise, a group of incompetents gets in power. The short term has its disadvantages, but it does afford the voters a measure of protection against incompetency or waywardness.

While the delegation is working on the County Commissioners' proposal, it might consider another—the establishing of a Commission-Manager form of government for the County like that of the City.

As it is today, the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners is an active member of the board. He is also the County Manager, in charge of administering the County's business affairs. His dual role gives him an influence with the board that appears to Tar News to be somewhat irregular, just as if City Manager Henry Yancy were also a member of the City Council.

Without implying any criticism of the present Commissioners, Tar News believes that the Commission-Manager form would be just as sound for the County Government. Then the County Commissioners would set policy, and would employ a County Manager as administrator.

ON CHANGING THE VOTING AGE

IN CONSIDERING the extension of the ballot to 18-year-olds, North Carolinians should remember that the change can be made only by popular approval of a constitutional amendment. The General Assembly has no voice in the matter, other than deciding whether to submit the question to the people.

Nonetheless, it is not too early to put the issue in proper focus. So far as Tar News has been able to find out, the argument for changing the state voting law hammers down to this: If he's old enough to fight, he's old enough to vote.

That argument has a persuasiveness that is difficult to combat, especially in a time of crisis when these young men are being called upon to defend their country. But it is not quite so simple as that. If you examine it closely.

The Franklin Press notes the ballot is not so much a privilege, conferred as a reward, as it is a responsibility, and carries the argument to this conclusion: "If the boy who merely spends a few months or years in the armed forces is entitled to the vote, why not the boy who is surely entitled to several votes; and the boy who is permanently disabled is entitled to a score or more votes."

Some one else has pointed out that this

line of reasoning would lead to the conclusion that a man who is too old to fight should be denied the privilege of the ballot.

Furthermore, if the ballot privilege is to be conferred on a youth because he is old enough to fight, how about girls who are not subject to military service? Do they get the ballot too?

And what about the great bulk of North Carolina law that establishes the age of 21 as a legal majority. Shall the laws be rewritten to permit 18-year-olds to buy and sell real estate? To inherit money without a guardianship? By this line of reasoning, if he's old enough to fight he's old enough to be legally responsible in every sense of the word.

And finally, there was great demand among 18-year-olds for the right to the ballot? Or, rather, is the impetus coming from political leaders who may be planning to run for office a few years hence?

The Tar News has no ideas as to where the line should be drawn—18, 20, or 21, as at present. But it does feel that voting responsibility is not different from other fundamental legal responsibilities, and that a change in the present voting age should be based on sound logic instead of the gift and seductive argument that "if he's old enough to fight, he's old enough to vote."

PEARSON'S PENTAGON PIPELINE

HAVING noted through the years Drew Pearson's penchant for drama, or rather melodrama, we have generally taken with a grain of salt some of his "secret" and "top-secret" revelations. They are none in about the same vein as the "confidential" tips that the Army has the hundreds from any Washington newsletter.

And having become thoroughly disgusted with Senator Joe McCarthy, whose abuse of Senatorial privilege and plain decency has done irreparable damage to the stature of the U. S. Senate and wreaked great harm on the reputations of his targets, we are inclined to view him as a sore on the body politic that should be treated with strong medicine.

From The Raleigh News & Observer

WHO DID IT?

SOME time ago, when Governor Scott was pressing his campaign for more and better rural electrical service, one of the replies of the private utilities was that over 80 per cent of North Carolina's farms already were electrified.

This is true, according to a report made by the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority. However, the report raises the question of whether the private utilities have any real reason to beat themselves on the chest because of the accomplishment.

The utilities fought the REA when it was established some 13 years ago, despite the fact they had their own accord extended electrical service to only 32 per cent of the State's farmers by Jan. 1, 1935, the year in which the REA began operation. Without the threat of competition from electric lines, the private utilities, which soon dotted the State, would the expansion of power service have been nearly so great as it has been in the last decade and a half?

Of the more than 70,000 miles of lines added to the rural power system since 1935, or authorized for addition at the time the report period ended last June 30, the REA membership corporations themselves had accounted for 35,000 miles, while private companies were credited with 30,000 miles.

From those facts, it is apparent that the REA carried the load in the sparsely settled regions, adding more than half of the line miles to connect with less than one-third the customers.

The facts also present the point that, even had they continued at the rate they did with no REA to spur them on, the private companies could have answered Governor Scott with the claim that some 67 per cent of the farms were electrified. And they could claim responsibility for only 58.7 per cent.

Maybe they owe a vote of thanks to the REA for helping bolster their position in the argument. But while they're about that, let's not forget the 32,854 farms which still lacked electric power on last June 30.

A city out in Washington has 187.45 inches of rain during the year. Must be trying to compete with Los Angeles. —Fort Myers (Fla.) News-Press

Judging by the looks of things on Christmas morning Santa Claus must have been overloaded with cowboy suits and cap pistols and dumped them all in Omega-Omega (Ga.) News

Communists Make Capital
Of Our Foreign Policy

By MARQUIS CHILDS

WASHINGTON

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Without implying any criticism of the present Commissioners, Tar News believes that the Commission-Manager form would be just as sound for the County Government. Then the County Commissioners would set policy, and would employ a County Manager as administrator.

Pravda's analysis

The New York Times dispatch from Moscow puts emphasis on a quotation from Pravda's own letter, "The Tar speech stresses the statement by Taft that he sees 'no unquestionable proof' that the Soviet Union 'intends to begin war with the United States.' And the Times correspondent at a story page by Pravda says that the Tar speech is 'a statement of the head of the Republican Party has no prima facie evidence the Soviet Union in-

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