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SECURITY LOOPHOLE SHOULD BE CLOSED

TWO and one-half years ago the General Assembly passed a law which reduced the notice required for special sessions of county commissioners in North Carolina. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Tom A. Williams of Nash and the late Rep. Kerr Craige Ramsey of Salisbury. The attorney general's office, which is frequently called upon to draft legislation, had written their bill.

This 1951 law did not include, as did the section it replaced, the following sentence:

"Every meeting (of boards of commissioners) shall be open to all persons."

Last week the commissioners of New Hanover County took advantage of this omission, and held a secret session.

Secret sessions of county commissioners are as unwarranted as undesirable as secret sessions of a legislative committee, which were sanctioned by law by the General Assembly this year. However, important distinctions should be made between the Assembly's 1951 and 1953 sessions.

The 1953 law, which permits the joint appropriations committee and its subcommittees to hold executive sessions, was a

willful act, passed in spite and over the strong objection of public and press. On the other hand, the omission in the 1951 law appears to have been an oversight. One can scarcely conceive of the late Representative Ramsey knowingly sponsoring any legislation that would permit secret meetings of county governing bodies. Furthermore, the fact that no board of commissioners chose to rely on this omission in the law, until last week, indicates the willingness of most commissioners to conduct public affairs in public. Of course many commissioners, like press and public, probably did not realize that public sessions were no longer required.

Now that the loophole is spotted, one may hope that all commissioners will take forthright stands against secret sessions, as Mecklenburg's Chairman Sid McAden and Guilford's Chairman Lloyd C. Amos already have done. However, in order to guarantee against secret sessions, the loophole should be removed by the next General Assembly, which should likewise repeal the secrecy law regarding committee meetings. In this respect, the views of candidates for the next General Assembly on these secrecy issues ought to be considered carefully by all voters.

PERCENTAGE RULE IS AN IMPROVEMENT

THE minimum percentage plan for assessing household possessions adopted yesterday by the county commissioners will be a cure-all for the problem of collecting personal property taxes equitably. It is, at best, a sort of rule-of-thumb which measures what the county believes to be the fair average value of household possessions, and gives the taxpayer the option of accepting the percentage listing or of convincing the authorities that his property is worth less.

The Mecklenburg board set its figure at 10 per cent of the assessed value of the real estate—less the \$300 exemption provided for by the state constitution. For example, a man owning a house and lot assessed at \$10,000 will have to pay at least \$1,000 of personal property tax \$300, giving him a taxable assessment of \$700.

State law provides, however, that tax authorities must hear any protest against application of the percentage rule and, if the facts justify it, lower the assessment accordingly. On the other hand, if tax authorities believe a percentage listing to be too low in a given case, it is their duty to revise the assessment upward.

Popularity of the percentage plan has been growing in North Carolina in recent

years. The highest figure used by any of the counties is 20 per cent. Others use 15 and 10 per cent. Hence, the figure adopted by the commissioners is in line with prevailing practices elsewhere.

There will undoubtedly be many wrinkles in the operation of the new rule that must be smoothed out. In the future, for instance, specialized procedures must be developed for assessing family and uniformly the possessions of persons living in the quarters. In the case of multiple-apartment houses, the rule poses quite a knotty problem for Tax Supervisor Rufus Grier's department.

But the move represents a sincere and well-intentioned effort by the county commissioners to ease the personal property load, and to assure the honest taxpayer that he is not being unfairly penalized. Commissioners McAden, White and McVinchner merit approval for their affirmative vote. Brown was quite vocal against it, but had nothing else to offer. The fifth member of the board, Craig Luning, was absent.

It would be better to abolish entirely the listing and assessing of personal property, excepting automobiles. But that would require a constitutional amendment.

WAS THIS KILLING NECESSARY?

ARRESTING a bawdy drunk can be one of the most dangerous assignments handed a policeman. The right combination of alcohol, fear and anger may cause a man to lose all sense of caution and may give him surprising strength. Any news reporter who has ever covered a Saturday night police beat can testify to the difficulty officers have in handling wild drunks.

Even so, the killing of an Asheville Negro by a Charlotte policeman Sunday night raises some questions that news stories have not adequately answered.

According to the officer's account of the incident, he had frisked the Negro while he was slumped over a counter at a grill at 804 S. McDowell St. Finding that he did not carry a gun, he then woke him and asked him to leave the place. The Negro grasped with him, and the officer went to call for help. Three policemen came on hand when the man left the restaurant, pulled a knife from his pocket, and started for the officers. Two bullets were fired in an effort to shoot the knife from his hands, and one of the officers hit the man on the head with the butt of

his gun before the third shot was aimed at and hit, his chest.

Would not a more careful search of the man have revealed the knife? Is it the usual custom to ask drunks to leave, instead of taking them to the police station? Was not there some way for three trained officers to disarm a man without killing him—especially when one of them was close enough to use the butt of his gun? And if it was necessary to shoot him, was it necessary to aim at vital spots as the left side of the chest?

Police Chief Frank Littlejohn tells News that he investigated the incident and that the officer's account appears to be the true facts. He added that the event prompted him to reiterate firmly to all members of the Police Department his standing rule that they must use no more force than absolutely necessary in carrying out their duties. He says that in the past he has suspended men for violating the rule.

Unless new facts come to light, we shall accept Chief Littlejohn's decision. But the question still remains: Was this killing necessary?

From The Greensboro Daily News

SERENDIPITY

SERENDIPITY is, as the dictionary says, "the gift of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for. . . a word coined by Walpole, in allusion to a tale, that three Persian princes, on their travels were always finding things of chance or sagacity, which they did not seek." It comes from Serendib, the ancient name for Ceylon, that land of apes, ivory, elephants and peacocks; jackfruit, cinnamon and balm trees; marmosets, ambergris, sea serpents and the Temple of Buddha's Tooth.

The "gift of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for" must be the most desirable gift of all. It is written in the Bible: "Saul seeking his father's asses, findeth Samuel." Columbus by chance found something which turned out to be quite valuable and in some ways changed the American. Some one day stumbled upon Chapman's Homer. Benvenuto Cellini, with Cortez, looked down on Tenochtitlan and whispered to himself: "Ah, not these things we see a dream!" Columbus looked for or pretty well known to us in pictures or books, but not counted as the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal.

But the bridge in Prague: the temple of Bangkok, called the Wat Arun; the sight of Hong Kong by night rising from the sea like a jeweled beehive; the skyline of Rome at twilight from the Piazza del Popolo; the things seen for the first time may induce a state of serendipity. So may the discovery of the medieval tale of Aucassin and Nicolette, the adventures of Brother Juniper in The Little Flowers of Saint Francis, or a movement of a Mozart's string quartet. So may the blossoming of a pear tree or a little girl in March.

There are plenty of examples of serendipity besides love at first sight.

Among other people we don't have too many serendipity men who phone or write the disc jockey and request songs that should have been allowed to die a lonely death years ago.—DALTON (GA.) NEWS.

Utopia must be the place where every one has good telephone manners.—CHANNING (GA.) ADVOCATE-DEMOCRAT.



Nationwide Survey Result

Democrats Still Formidable

NEW YORK — Fortune magazine asserts today, after a survey of political leaders and political reporters in all 48 states, that "there has been no nationwide trend toward Republicanism as such."

"In the fourteen months since the election the Republicans have failed to consolidate the Eisenhower margin into any sort of enduring and reliable Republican strength."

Although the Democrats are "out of power and out of ideas," and "speak with dozens of voices," their party is still formidable. Fortune says:

"Republicans are admitting that the Democrats could win Congress this year, and regain control of the whole government in 1956." Depending to a large extent on the record made in the second session of the 83rd Congress, starting Jan. 6.

Old Patterns Re-Emerging

THE most important impression to be drawn from a study of the political map today is that the Eisenhower victory was a personal endorsement of him (combined with a sidekick, Mr. Truman), and that the country has settled back into fairly familiar patterns of local strength."

Fortune's editors report that "The South is still pretty much the solid South, more Democratic than any other section of the U.S."

"Texas tells a good deal about the party in the South. Governor Allan Shivers and his faction oppose Eisenhower because Shivers would make even a qualified statement in favor of state control of offshore oil lands. That issue has now been settled to Shivers' satisfaction by the Eisenhower Administration. Far from making Republicans out of the Shiversites the Republicans' prompt delivery on this campaign promise means that the Shiversites can now go back to being Democrats. The Governor himself states that he hardly expects a Republican from Texas to be elected to the U.S. Senate or the House for a long time to come."

"The Midwest is still essentially Republican, although more prone to wide swings. Farm 'revolt' so far is mostly Democratic propaganda, which the Democrats have come to believe. The Republicans will be designed to reassure the farmer and keep him reassured through 1954. The Midwest farmers are aware of that and have been away from the Eisenhower Administration—yet."

No Parallels to 1934 Trend

THE national political situation today is "quite different from the one that developed almost immediately after the last previous upheaval in U.S. politics," Fortune asserts:

"In 1934, in the first off-year election after Roosevelt's triumph, the Democrats increased their Senate strength by nine (to 69) and increased their House strength by nine (to 322). There is

certainly no trend like that visible for the Republicans in the first off-year."

"Some guesses have been made that the Republicans will see the Senate next November, since there are fewer shaky Republicans up for re-election than shaky Democrats. But the Democrats will overturn the House (the guess goes), since Democrats actually polled a majority of congressional votes in the 1952 elections, and some falling away from the party in power almost always takes place in the off-year."

(Fortune says that if 270,000 Liberal party votes in New York City are counted on the Democratic side, the Democrats come out with a margin of around 175,000 in the total congressional vote.)

Next Session May Be Decisive

THE Democrats have a numerical advantage in the national registration and great concentrations of local power. On the statistical chart they are ahead before the polls open. But the balance is so close that very little will swing it either way, and it looks now the outcome will largely depend on the results in the House.

"One Republican hope of producing a good political record in the 83rd Congress lies in forthright action by Mr. Eisenhower. He can, if he will, take complete responsibility for the results of the election and the results of the campaign to whip balky Republicans into line."

"The Eisenhower legislative program will afford fertile openings for attack that the Democrats might have hoped for."

"The Administration has indicated that it is ready to recommend changes in those sections of the Taft-Hartley Act that, according to Labor Secretary Mitchell, are 'really loaded and really labor in labor.' In farm legislation, it is clear that the Democrats are going to be much less generous to the farmers than the Republicans."

"Civil rights will be pressed in a quiet fashion that has already gone beyond anything accomplished in this line by the Truman Administration. Legislation affecting public power will not be permitted to prejudice a majority of voters in any state against the Republican party."

"The budget will remain unbalanced, but it is hard to think of any area in which the Democrats would look more unbecomingly, criticizing. The Democrats will now consider what will the Democrats on the Hill talk about?"

"In the end, the Democrats' best opportunities for attack will grow out of possible brazenness in the House. The Democrats' leadership whenever it blunders into their hands, and Eisenhower should not expect that he will be shown a more lenient construction. The Democrats' best hope will be the sharpest change of Democratic tactics from last year. Democrats are asserting one another that Ike's state has changed and that he can be attacked now with impunity."

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

WASHINGTON — The fact checker, Texas oilman H. R. Hunt, has just been made a matter of national public record. Oilman Hunt has just been awarded a television license at Corpus Christi, Texas, and in order to get it, had to list his approximate net worth.

Hunt filed a sworn statement that his net income after taxes was "in excess of \$1,000,000" for the year 1952.

A few people in the U.S.A. have an income before taxes of \$1,000,000 a year. But by the gross they pay taxes in the 40 to 50 per cent brackets there isn't much left. Hunt, however, testified that his net income "in excess of one million dollars" after taxes for each year of 1951 and 1952.

Of course his taxes are a bit lower than some people's because he gets the benefit of the 37 1/2 per cent depletion tax allowance on oil wells.

But if Hunt were in a nonpetroleum industry he would have to make a gross income of \$1,375,000 a year in order to have a net income in excess of one million dollars. The 37 1/2 per cent oil-depletion allowance which helps him is a most attractive industry, gets only a 10 per cent depletion allowance, while granite, gravel, and sand are taxed at 25 per cent.

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Millionaire Texas Oilman Gets TV Permit

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The State Of The President Is Good And Getting Better

By STEWART ALSP

WASHINGTON — Little White House in Georgia, has been putting the finishing touches on his State of the Union message. Meanwhile, as he nears the end of his first year in office, what is the state of the President?

According to those who have almost daily contact with him, the state of the President is good, and getting better all the time. During Eisenhower's first month in office, there were many reports that he detested Washington and his truth to these stories was not enough truth so that friends and supporters became convinced that he would under no circumstances return again.

He still takes no pleasure in the awful isolation and terrible pressures of life in the White House. "I am not going to be mad at anyone today," he remarked one Christmas Day. "I was so happy to get away. The chances are I won't probably have to ever come to love the presidency as Franklin Roosevelt loved it — or Harry Truman, after his first fumble and awe-stricken months."

WORRIES MUCH

Eisenhower, according to those who know him well, does not relax easily under the weight of tremendous responsibilities as a "workaholic," one of his aides has remarked. His tendency to worry probably has a great deal to do with the stomach cramps which briefly troubled him in the spring of 1953 in the early autumn.

But these cramps had no organic origin at all, and it can be reported undoubtedly by those who know the President's health is amazingly good. The reason is quite clear, Eisenhower is now really getting on top of his job. The country knows it, and he knows it, and both are relieved.

All those who participated are agreed that the President put a downright remarkable performance during the recent conferences with the Congressional leaders. He played charm, tact, force and a surprising knowledge of the substance of issues which were completely unfamiliar to him a few months back. He also displayed great shrewdness in his handling of the situation centered on himself, despite the almost instinctive efforts of the Capitol Hill politicians to grab the President.

Those who work with him rate him a first class administrator. It is significant that he has never met the National Security Council the

chief instrument of decision on matters of vital importance. Unlike Truman, who attended only occasionally, Eisenhower takes the chair at almost all Council meetings. The Council has still but replaced the unwieldy cabinet system to a shadow.

The President has certainly very well-mannered ways of conducting his business. He has been running the show so far that he has not read anything but Westerns. It is true that he reads much less than Truman (who, surprisingly, read a great deal) — he had a special fondness for pulp magazines. Confronted with the inevitable pile of papers on his desk, Eisenhower has learned to read Adams or another aide, and say "tell me what's in them."

His aides have learned to be ready to brief him concisely and in detail — and to be ready for searching questions. But they have also learned to be ready to tell him, where necessary, "Mr. President, this is one you've got to read."

When this happens, the President will cheerfully read the paper in question.

He is according to one of his aides, "a quick, tight reader, with remarkable recall." If a paper is presented to the National Security Council, and even a very slight change has been made in the wording since the President read it, Eisenhower instantly spots the change.

It has also been rumored that the President has little trouble with his own speeches — that he merely repeats whatever his aides give him. It is true that one of his great while he will accept a draft virtually unchanged. But far more often, he will send back a draft prepared by C. D. Jackson, Bryce Harlow, or another White House aide, with pencil marks and instructions, so that the speech as finally delivered will be almost wholly in his own words. "After the President has read a speech, it is accurate," remarked one of his aides. "It is as if it were a ghost himself."

It is too early to say who will win in the inevitable struggles between the White House and the Congress. He is ahead. But it is beginning to be very clear that President Eisenhower is a man who is by no means prepared to see the power of the President slipping away during his tenure of office. His enemies on both right and left may find him more formidable than they had counted on.

Other Factors May Upset Ike's Hopes For '54 Issue

By JAMES MARLOW

WASHINGTON — President Eisenhower is pinning his hopes on a situation which may turn to be more ideal than real.

This is his expressed ideal:

"This Congress will approve the program he offered last year. He has talked of it as a dynamic and progressive program."

2. That this program will vote the main issues of the November congressional elections—the voters' first chance since 1952 to pass judgment on his administration.

Yet, even if Congress should pass his program just as he wants it, by election time the voters may be influenced more by something else.

For example, a turn for better or worse in foreign affairs, a business slump which would involve production, prices, wages and jobs.

Yesterday a majority of 300 economists at a forum conducted by the American Statistical Association believed that the country was in a "recession" but that it would last through 1954.

(Later, Under Secretary of Commerce Walter Reuther predicted business will maintain its growth in 1954.)

Q. Sen. McCarthy (R-Wis) predicted, the public may be so steamed up over the Communist-government issue that that will be the main one.

Since Eisenhower can only hope for what he'd like to see in 1954, the best he can do is go ahead and make his case, though his plans don't work out.

The irony of Eisenhower's situation is that he can't put his program forward the help of some Democrats.

In the Senate, there are 48 Democrats, 41 Republicans, and 1 Independent. Only 10 Democrats will follow the President down the line on everything, so he'll need more Democratic votes.

The same thing will be true in the House, where there are 219 Republicans, 215 Democrats, and 3 Independents.

The President particularly will need Democratic support for his foreign program, his military, economic and diplomatic. A realization of this, no doubt, is why he has urged more Democratic leaders to the White House Jan. 5.

Earlier this month for three days he went over his program, point by point, with his Republican leaders.

He imposed a rule of silence on them when they left the White House. Because there's no rule to the rule not much is known about how much they agreed or disagreed.

He has their views known after he delivers his State of the Union message, outlining his program, to Congress Jan. 7.

Morse Sets Precedent

THE Senate Committee on the District of Columbia seldom makes headlines. Probably the only time it has done so, so no politics are at stake and there is no incentive to stage oratorical symphonies.

The other day, however, Sen. Wayne Morse of Oregon made an unpublished statement before the D.C. committee which may set an important precedent. The committee had ordered Commerce Secretary Charles Mahallie of the Interstate

Commerce Commission, plus two ex-commissioners, to appear before it to testify to the cause of the Interstate Commerce Commission. They were to appear before the committee on the Interstate Commerce Commission. They were to appear before the committee on the Interstate Commerce Commission.

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