

Charlottesville's 'The Smoky City'

By VIC REINEMER, Associate Editor, The News

CALL IT smog, if you wish, or plain old smoke. Whatever the label, Charlotte has had plenty of it, this winter and in winters past.

It crusts buildings and car tops. It irritates asthmatics. It angers robust people.

Last month a blotch of the stuff suddenly descended on three Charlottesvilleans waiting for a bus. A man's white shirt instantly became grey. The two women with him looked like they had the measles.

Smoke is costly. Where there's smoke there's fire, goes the old saying. But it's also true that where there's smoke there isn't enough fire. Smoke represents wasted fuel. U. S. industry loses hundreds of millions of dollars annually because of improper fuel-burning techniques.

Charlotte has a smoke abatement ordinance. It has produced poetry, practical jokes and fireworks at City Hall. That is not abating smoke. That's because the program got bogged down in politics and personalities.

Here's how it all came about. C. O. F. STATED IT. On Sept. 18, 1949 the Chamber of Commerce asked the City Council to do something about the smoke. A Council committee studied the proposal, reported favorably on it. On Dec. 18, the Council adopted an ordinance declaring in part:

"That the emission of dense smoke and fly-ash into the atmosphere in the city of Charlotte creates a menace to the health, comfort and well-being of the citizens of Charlotte, and that it is the purpose of this ordinance to regulate and control the emission of dense smoke and fly-ash so as to minimize their injurious effects upon the health and property of the citizens of Charlotte."

E. Monroe, the smoke abatement engineer in Asheville, was brought to Charlotte and put in charge of the smoke control program. It stayed less than a year, being dismissed Sept. 3, 1951.

Under Monroe's administration some attempts were made to teach improved firing techniques, but his tenure was too short for that. He was dismissed to gauge the worth of his program.

On Dec. 13, 1941, Joe McGuire, whose background was in vaudeville and other varied professions, not including engineering, was hired for the job. He lasted until July 15, 1948.

Old timers around City Hall remember the administration of McGuire, a roly - poly Irishman, more for the stories he told and the jokes that were perpetrated than for the progress made in smoke control. For example, it was his habit to survey Charlotte from the top of the City Hall, sweeping the horizon with his eyes, ever in search of surplus smoke. One day some practical joker covered the binocular glasses with soot, and "Smoky Joe" thought the Queen City's smoke problem was sure enough getting worse.

CAMPBELL CAME IN '48. After McGuire's dismissal the smoke abatement program languished until March, 1948, when James E. Campbell, an experienced engineer, was put in charge of the Smoke Abatement Division. He embarked on a program tailoring for education, equipment and enforcement.

Regarding education, the theme he stressed before civic clubs and to newspaper reporters was this: "The most effective campaign against smoke pollution is born of civic pride. The abatement is a long-range proposition which requires intelligent and continued vigilance. The methods of burning all kinds of fuels."

"It is the responsibility of all citizens, prima rily," he said, "and security of the enforcement engineer."

July 7 per cent of the city's smoke from all sources could easily be eliminated, he maintained, "if plant operators, building owners and a householders would take a personal interest in their furnace operations."

The Smoke Abatement Division put out free booklets on proper firing. It advised plant operators what equipment produced the most energy and least smoke. And it kept track of smoke violations.

Almost every month several new buildings were reported, hundreds, laundries and dry cleaning establishments frequently were the chief violators. Hotels, stores and commercial buildings were added to the list during the winter months.

It soon became evident that persuasion alone would not abate much smoke. The ordinance provisions were weak. In fact, the whole ordinance was weak. So, after months of study by the Smoke Abatement Division and heating engineers and contractors, a new ordinance was drafted. The City Council passed it on Nov. 23, 1949. It became effective Jan. 1, 1950.

The new ordinance set strict standards for operation of fuel-burning equipment. It called for periodic inspection by the Smoke Abatement Division, which was authorized to close down and seal offending equipment if the operator did not make requested repairs within 90 days of the date. Promptly, 30 days after the ordinance became effective, a warrant was signed against the operator of Selsky's heating equipment. It was producing too much soot. The owner claimed that he was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, because zoning restrictions prohibited him from expanding and installing the necessary new equipment. He was found guilty, fined \$50, and thus became the first and last - a person found guilty in court and fined under the ordinance.

Then a less important feature of the ordinance hit the headlines. This was a section which banned the burning of leaves and trash. "The ban angered some citizens who thought such prohibition unnecessary, and also created some resentment against the important parts of the smoke abatement program. Citizens' Board, which is an invertebrate fly-burner who was sick in bed when the Council approved the program, rose to the occasion by composing an imposing on the Council a poem he had written, part of which went like this:

BOYD'S POEM
"I feel a bit sad today
Because last week when in bed
I was deprived of a childhood pleasure
That has followed me through the years
Of piling the limbs, the leaves
and the grass, at the end of a day
Into a heap and a mass,
Lighting the fire and listening
To the pop and the crack of the bonfire
As they lighted the evening skies..."

The poet and his followers won out; the leaf-burning ban was deleted. In 1951 the smoke abatement program went into its death throes. Immediate cause of death in politics and personalities in 1951.

Smoky scenes like this one, showing the midtown section of Charlotte as viewed from S. College St., are familiar sights to local residents these winter mornings. Charlotte's smoke abatement program, which has cost \$200,000 as well as painting and cleaning costs, got bogged down in politics and personalities in 1951.

claimed that 65 per cent or more of the smoke nuisance had been eliminated. Two, he cited instances like that of one laundry which, by a \$18,000 investment, had eliminated its smoke completely and amortized its investment over a two-year period, through savings in fuel consumption.

On Aug. 29, when the Council was again asked to extend the time the laundry would have for making changes, Van Every abstained from voting. The Council chose over the objection of Councilman Claude L. Alba, (Van Every abstained) to grant, the ordinance, which would have abolished the Council minutes say that the program was eliminated, but it was continued, nominally at the behest of the League of Women Voters. Nowadays Harry Sutton, in the City Building and Inspection Dept. as an epidemic. The amount of smoke is on the increase now. People have been more careless since they've been without a real program.

Some Carolina communities are doing something about their smoke problem. This month the Spartanburg, S. C. Chamber of Commerce spearheaded a week-long educational campaign on smoke abatement. Winston-Salem has a smoke abatement ordinance and is making progress in smoke control, although the ordinance is not rigorously enforced.

Doctors disagree on the health menace created by excess smoke, just as they disagree on the health menace caused by smoking. However, a middle-of-the-road opinion concurred by several local doctors, is that the amount of smoke which Charlottesville sometimes have to inhale definitely irritates the lungs and persons with certain allergies.

A smoke abatement program, on a modest scale such as Charlotte's, is not a costly one. It costs about \$170,000 a year. If the program is at all successful the savings in fuel consumption, definitely irritates the lungs, laundry and painting bills, is several times greater than that investment at fault.

A kiln is no more or no less important as a part of educational equipment than a book, a microscope, a piano, a stage, a football, a test-tube. All are important; each has a different emphasis; learning may be achieved through the use of each.

Through art we seek to know the reality which is beyond the vision of the eye and can be known only through the heart and mind. Scholarship in its finest sense is the study of the real. It is a contradictory one, for creative thinking and understanding are implicit if real learning takes place. Minds are not "disciplined by scholarship"; minds are deadened by rote; by the mere learning of facts; by the acquirement of knowledge without understanding.

Wilson also present, and after lunch a group of admirals and assistant secretaries was called in, including Adm. Lewis Parks, chief of Navy press relations. The meeting, including the luncheon, lasted more than three hours.

Wilson first wanted to know why the news story had not been cleared with the Atomic Energy Commission. The admirals had no explanation. Furthermore, more of them admitted leaking the story.

What Wilson did not know was that the story had been leaked verbally by a junior Navy press officer. The admirals had no explanation. Furthermore, more of them admitted leaking the story.

The allegations that the Nautlius wasn't battle-worthy; that her torpedo tubes were added only as an afterthought; and that her delicate equipment would not work at high speeds, was prepared first by Cmdr. Slide Cutler. Later it was put in a memorandum signed by Admiral Parks.

The embargo was supposed to be confidential, but Wilson suspected it had been shown to the press. For he kept reading from it about pointing to quotations in the press which were almost identical.

"It's a strange coincidence," he said, "that the language is so much alike."

At another point he asked: "Why belittle the Nautlius?" There was no explanation.

There's not even much talk about smoke abatement anymore, around City Hall. Councilman Herb Baxter's recent 14-point program for improving the city, for example, did not mention smoke abatement.

The consensus of opinion around the City Hall is that the program bogged down because the Council would not back a permanent smoke abatement engineer who, as one observer put it, "knew how to handle smoke but not people."

What will it take to reinvigorate Charlotte's smoke abatement program?

City Manager Henry Yancey said recently it boils down to this:

"If the people want it they're going to have to make it known. And the Council will have to have a strong back to enforce the ordinance."

There's no formula for getting rid of smoke, he said. "You just keep in there fighting it. It takes education—you'll have smoke as long as you have fire. Smoke is something like a disease. If we did away with the health department pretty soon there would be an epidemic. The amount of smoke is on the increase now. People have been more careless since they've been without a real program."

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The Direct Approach Is Better

COUNTY Commissioner McNinch's willingness to install voting machines in Mecklenburg County, provided the people demonstrate they favor them, is far enough, since Mr. McNinch has been sturdily opposed to the machines. But we doubt that his suggestion for a straw poll to be conducted simultaneously with an election on a half-million dollar bond issue for a new county home is a very practical one.

In the first place, it is plain buck-passing. The county commissioner was elected to manage the affairs of the county government and to make decisions on such matters as purchasing voting machines. It would soon become an impossible state of affairs if the commissioners started referring their decisions to the people.

In the second place, it is unlikely that a very accurate poll of public opinion would be obtained. As a general rule, bond elections attract a very small percentage of the registered voters. Those who take the trouble to vote do so because they are interested in either passing or defeating the specific issue before them. It does not follow that they would be equally interested in and informed about voting machines.

It seems to us that the question of buying voting machines ought to be settled on its own merits. Their record of performance elsewhere is fully established, and we know of no city or county that has ever reverted to the old paper ballots, once it tried voting machines.

The machines are accurate. They are fast. They are easy to operate. They give a quick tally when the voting is over. And—they are not unduly expensive.

The Board of Elections has done much in the past two years to modernize Mecklenburg's election machinery. Purchase of voting machines would complete the job.

In the coming weeks, there will be an opportunity for voters to question candidates for the County Commission about this issue. If enough people favor the machines, they can elect a Board of County Commissioners committed to their purchase.

A Break For The Taxpayers

THE House Ways & Means Committee has made a start in the right direction by proposing more generous treatment of taxpayers with heavy medical expenses.

The present law permits deduction of medical expenses which exceed five per cent of the taxpayer's gross income in any one year. But there is a limit of \$1,250 for single persons, \$2,500 for a taxpayer with one dependent, \$3,750 for a married couple with one dependent, and \$5,000 for a married couple with two or more dependents.

The Ways & Means Committee, following the suggestion of President Eisenhower, has voted to lower the percentage figure from five to three. Thus, a taxpayer with \$5,000 gross income would be able to deduct any medical costs over \$150, instead of \$250 under the current law. The committee also voted to double the present maximum deductions now allowed.

Both of these recommendations make sense. The average family's burden of medical costs has long been the concern of both parties, and it has promoted many different schemes ranging from President Truman's advocacy of national compulsory health insurance to Sen. Paul Douglas's more moderate plan for covering catastrophic illness. Yet all the while these plans were being debated, the income tax law laid a heavy penalty on the taxpayer with large medical costs.

Something To Think About

Though man a thinking being is defined, Few use the grand prerogative of mind. How few think justly of the thinking few! How many never think, who think they do!

SOME of the President's advisers have come up with an interesting idea. Observing his crowded calendar, they noticed he did not spend any time per se for a very important activity. No where was any time allotted for thinking. So they plan to see that he gets half an hour or so, in the morning and again in the afternoon, when there will be nothing for him to do except think.

The idea is not new. Philosophers from Socrates to Horace Williams, had been presidential advisers, probably would have put the "think" period ahead of National Security Council meetings and budget talks. But the idea has suffered from disuse.

We hope the President gets time for a think period. And surely, if he can, cannot people who are less busy do the same? If you're seriously thinking about doing some serious thinking, remember that it is hard work. It is part of a four-

A Lesson

THERE is a clear lesson to be drawn from the story on the smoke abatement fiasco by our Mr. Reinemer, elsewhere on this page.

From the first to the campaign for an effective smoke control program had only limited public support. Charlotte's newspapers plugged it, the Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters backed it.

But there was no public interest in the program. No delegations of irate citizens jammed the City Council chamber, demanding an end to the soot and smoke and fly ash and cinders. And without pressure from the people, members of the Council took the easy way out and let the program die.

And so the smoke hangs heavy these winter mornings, clogging throats, burning eyes, dirtying clothes and buildings and furnishings.

It's not too late for the people to speak out in favor of smoke abatement — if they really want to get rid of the stuff.

People's Platform

Charlotte Editors, The News: THE writer of "Modern School Education," in voicing his displeasure over the purchase of some 40 "kilns" for the local schools, has actually expressed rather strong feelings of displeasure regarding education in general. He is not alone in this expression. The current critics of education are not alone in not without just cause that such is the case as persons most intimately acquainted with the schools would be the last to deny.

However, there is just cause for defense of much that is true of modern education. To undertake such a treatise of great length and breadth, I am specifically concerned with the matter on which Mr. Hurwitz has specifically to base his criticisms, for I use one of the main reasons for it is the reasons for its use.

A kiln is a necessary piece of equipment for the successful completion of any ceramic work. Ceramics—work with clay—is one phase of the art program as carried out in most schools. Art is, along with some of the other

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

WASHINGTON PRESIDENT Eisenhower picked up the early morning newspaper shortly before the launch of the atomic submarine Nautilus last week, and almost spilled his breakfast coffee.

What was read was a newspaper report that the Nautilus was merely a test, but in effect was not an important naval vessel at all.

The President was furious. In the first place, he considered the story false. Second, his wife Mamie was going to launch the Nautilus. Third, he being experienced in the battle of Pentagon politics, he recalled a Navy inspired news leak.

So he telephoned Secretary of Defense Wilson. Charlie Wilson is not the earlier that his boss in the White House is, and the President roared. He immediately he asked Undersecretary of the Navy Thomas Gates to have lunch with him — Secretary of the Navy Anderson, then being out of town, understood that Wilson's own submarine as ship-

FROM THE HIGH HORSE'S MOUTH

NEWSCASTER who announced, "At Panmunjon, in Korea, a high horse said," and then corrected it speedily to "high source," reminded us of something. Workers with the written word are subject to quite different perils from those that beset workers with the spoken word. A typographical error would have changed "high source" to "high source," or "high source," but would hardly have made it "high horse." "High horse," in turn, could easily become "high horse." Or "high horse."

The acoustical error, as we suppose the verbal counterpart of the typographical error would be called, runs into all those baffling complexities associated with the association of ideas. Some words like "high horse" or "saddle horse" or "hobby horse" tend to stick together through prolonged combination, as Frank Sullivan's Mr. Arbutnot, the

When your creditors tell you to relax, it's time to get worried about yourself.—ELLAVILLE (Ga.) SUN.

Washington Whirl

HERE'S the Democrats' new slogan for the year's elections for use especially in farm areas: Vote Democratic in '54 — the farm you save — may be your own.

Revolutionizing Navy

What the secretary of defense knew of currents was that the Nautilus is so fast it is likely to put surface vessels completely out of commission. She can cruise round the world under power without coming up for air. She can run circles round a battleship and can surpass the speed of many destroyers. In other words she can probably catch up with and sink the vessels that are supposed to sink her.

This confronts the admirals with the possibility of junking all non-atomic powered surface vessels in the future. In fact 50 vessels are being mothballed immediately.

Wilson also knew that the proposed atomic carrier, powered by atomic energy would have so fast that no protecting vessels could keep up with her. A carrier is not supposed to move without a convoy of destroyers and light cruisers, but since the carrier is not kept up with an atomic-powered carrier, the proposed atomic power for the new carrier has been temporarily scrapped.

This revolutionary development in naval warfare is why Wilson and Kvale have switched their emphasis to so-called "push-button" warfare, with emphasis on long-range rockets, A-bombs and d-bombs. Naturally some Navy and Army men are opposed.

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Wilson Lectures

Adm. Lewis Strauss, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, also saw the news story and was fit to be tied. He is required to pass on all statements by any branch of the government pertaining to atomic energy, and he, too, phoned Secretary Wilson.

With two phone calls under his belt, one after another breakfast new buildings were reported, hundreds, laundries and dry cleaning establishments frequently were the chief violators. Hotels, stores and commercial buildings were added to the list during the winter months.

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