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THOMAS L. ROBINSON, Publisher
J. E. DOWD, General Manager
B. S. GRIFFITH, Executive Editor

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A New Look At Secrecy

The Hushed Halls Of Raleigh

By JULIAN SCHEER
Charlotte News Staff Writer

The 1955 Legislature In Retrospect: Clanking Gears In The Powerhouse

THE 1955 General Assembly was long on pageantry, short on accomplishment.

For nearly five months, it was a powerhouse of clanking gears. Vast and essential chores were left undone. Wearisome or ludicrous minutiae often received attention far beyond what was necessary.

This is not to say that nothing of importance was done in Raleigh or that the legislature's record was all cloudy. Certainly, the body deserves some gold stars. But too often, the effectiveness and integrity of individual lawmakers were diluted by the group too often worthy of legislation perished because of dashing sectionalism and political brawling. All in all, the General Assembly failed to deal realistically with some of the most important socio-economic problems of the day.

Specifically, legislators yielded to the pressure of lobbyists in shaping its tax program and studiously avoided some of the more logical sources of new revenue—luxuries like tobacco, for instance. It yielded to the fears of Black Belt legislators and adopted an unnecessarily blunt "noisy" resolution on segregation before it knew exactly what the decrees implementing the Supreme Court's 1954 decision would be like. Furthermore, it generally ignored the governmental reforms suggested during the session by the governor and other.

MORE important, perhaps, the 1955 General Assembly refused to obey the constitution regarding redistricting and reapportionment of legislators. Thus, incumbent counties like Mecklenburg are still deprived of their fair share of representation in Raleigh's legislative halls.

In addition, the high-handed and thoroughly undemocratic secrecy rule was extended to all legislative committees by 1955 lawmakers. In all fairness, it must be mentioned that this broad power to hold executive sessions was rarely invoked (see "The Hushed Halls Of Raleigh" by Staff Writer Julian Scheer elsewhere in this issue). The precedent, however, is no less dangerous.

The refusal of the legislature to enact a state minimum wage law was another disturbing highlight of the session. Reactionary foes of the old 55-cent proposal were again successful. A similar bill—backed by Gov. Umland—died in committee two years ago.

Another notable failure was recorded when legislators shied from efforts to reform the much-abused absentee ballot system in North Carolina.

The same harsh treatment was given Rev. Clyde Sherwin's bid to let Tar Heels vote on constitutional amendments authorizing more home rule. As a result, the legislature must continue to waste its time on hundreds of purely local problems which should be handled by back-home governing bodies.

A conscientious attempt to reform North Carolina's antiquated justice of the peace system was hacked to death by exemption amendments.

Furthermore, the legislature failed to provide a state urban redevelopment law strong enough to enable cities to condemn and redevelop blighted areas, failed to enact an automobile inspection law to promote greater safety on Tar Heel highways, failed to establish a withholding system for the collection of state income taxes, failed to meet fully the state's needs for a better primary road system.

ON THE other side of the ledger, the General Assembly's achievements were modest.

Perhaps the most important bill to emerge in 1955 provided for judicial redistricting. It was designed to help counties with congested dockets—like Mecklenburg. This was not an extra judge under the new setup.

Legislators also rewrote the state's corporation laws but the changes will not take effect until July 1, 1957—giving time for further adjustments.

The legislature failed to adopt an adequate and effective water control bill. But it did take several steps in the proper direction—extension of the State Water Board's authority, anti-pollution laws for three rivers, legislation permitting separate municipalities to cooperate in securing a water supply.

Prisons were not severed from the State Highway Department—as they should be—but at least ground was broken for such a move later.

The new school law—turning pupil assignment authority over to local school boards—was not as extreme as it might have been, considering the segregationist attitude of the state's legislators.

Fortunately, some obviously bad bills were beaten down—like the one to restrict the use of the whammy—but only after long and bitter debates.

Mecklenburg County received authorization for the small claims court it needs—a major achievement on the local legislative front.

Charlotte won approval for some minor tax collection procedures and perimeter zoning subdivision control legislation.

NO ONE expected the General Assembly to play the role of St. George, to slay the dragon of legislative combat and to come up with a clearcut victory over every problem in sight.

But the 1955 legislature could have accomplished more, we believe, with firmer leadership, less hollow hickering, and a more realistic, less idealistic, attitude. Legislative chambers are not shaped solely for The Great Haranueu. They are designed for decision-making, not demagoguery. Ideally, the General Assembly is a team working in the public interest. In the teamwork dent, the 1955 legislature suffered its greatest shortcoming.

Our own radical suggestion is that this good word of the nation, the arsenal of political weapons and given the honor that it deserves. Someday we would find peace and we want a good, clean, smiling word to describe that state of affairs, a word like radical.

"In politics," Webster defines radical, "one who advocates sweeping changes in laws and methods of government with the least delay."

Radicals Byrnes and Talmadge would sweepingly abolish public school systems in their states if the segregationist decision of the radical Warren is enforced. Radical Hoover, his friends often argue, tried and failed to get from a Democratic Congress the sweeping changes in law that the radical Roosevelt later put through. And the radical McCarthy wanted to make black men white, good mean evil, and evil good.

And only recently our radical Sen. Ervin, who did such a good job curbing the radical McCarthy, put forth the sweeping suggestion that the Supreme Court promise of equal justice for all be chipped away from the marble halls of the Justices.

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TO understand the whole involved, mixed-up story of the Salk vaccine you have to go back about a year ago when Dr. Salk first gave his "field" tests to about a quarter of a million children.

Before that he had given the vaccine to his own children and shortly after the field tests he became so confident of its success that he approached various drug concerns asking them to begin preparing for large-scale manufacture.

He knew that to extract and treat monkey kidneys in such a way that no live virus remained in the serum would be complicated when done by newcomers and done on a large scale. He also knew there would be a tremendous demand for the vaccine once its results were announced.

So he patiently propositioned some of the top drug companies of the nation. Most, however, turned him down. They weren't ready to invest any money in the vaccine until they were sure they had a hard-and-fast proposition.

Only exception was Parke, Davis in Detroit, which did make a sizable investment and which, as a result, was the

first company to have its vaccine completely cleared by the Public Health Service.

O'Connor's Faith After Dr. Salk had knocked his head against the stone wall of pharmaceutical inaction, Basil O'Connor, head of the infantile paralysis foundation, made a daring move. He had faith in the vaccine, even before the final evaluation was announced. He also knew there would be a terrific demand for the vaccine once the final results were announced.

So he invested \$9,000,000 of the foundation's funds in advance orders with the drug companies. He even borrowed the money to do this.

It was only after the drug companies got this \$9,000,000 order that they began to develop the new vaccine.

However, out of the first amount they produced they reported \$20,000,000's did not go to the polio foundation which had borrowed the money to make possible the manufacture, but was shipped to the drug companies' regular commercial distributors.

That was how Cutter Laboratories' vaccine happened to be found a few days

after the release on April 12 all the way from Mexico to Arlington, Va. That was also how, out of the first fatalities resulting from the inoculations, it was the children of doctors.

Doctors got the vaccine first and used it on their own children. Unfortunately some of it was Cutter vaccine which has now been withdrawn.

Note—The Cutter Laboratories had had one criminal conviction in 1949 as a result of a Food and Drug Administration complaint that they failed to sterilize certain water solutions.

Drug Profits Senate investigators have learned that stock-market speculators got an advance tip on the Salk vaccine and invested heavily in the six drug companies. These companies are expected to make \$20,000,000 profit this year alone.

Tromically, Dr. Salk will get nothing. He may not even get some of the rewards proposed for him in Congress. Many congressmen have introduced bills suggesting resolutions of thanks, or pensions, or medals for Dr. Salk. But all such House resolutions have gone to the Labor and Education Committee.

times weekly, appropriations and finance met several times a week and then such committees as wildlife resources, insurance and others met nearly as often.

THE NEWS NOSE There is little question that much of the secrecy business in Raleigh was sparked by the attitude of newsmen covering the State Capitol, say a number of legislators.

Rep. B. T. Falls Jr., House Insurance Committee chairman, said: "There never was any desire to 'close up,' but certain representatives of certain newspapers make this necessary."

Rep. Philip R. Whitley, chairman of the committee on military affairs, has voted against secrecy, he says, and thinks the matter has been "greatly exaggerated."

"He makes a stand for executive (closed) sessions, this way: 'Executive sessions simply provide opportunity for members to blow off and say what they can't in open meetings. For instance, an ex-convict, known to several members, testified heatedly and impressively in a hearing bill. Members who knew him state that he has been repeatedly convicted of illegal hunting. He impressed other members but those who knew him did not care to argue with him in open meeting, but they were anxious to tell other members in private what they knew of his character and reputation.'"

Members of the Capitol press corps are, by inference, therefore, unable to handle the situation with discretion.

Some senators become heated about the matter which is an indication of how tempera have flared on Capitol Hill. Sen. Wade Paschal says, "The subject has been carried to vast extremes... Political newsmen are more dangerous than secrecy bills when weak men become their victims."

SOME OTHER VIEWS There is some sentiment for subcommittee executive sessions as expressed by Rep. J. Raynor Woodward.

He says, "There are times when a subcommittee, in order to expedite business of the committee, should be privileged to go into executive session. I favor the privilege for only subcommittees."

Others approved "limited right" of committees to hold executive sessions, another points out that

proper function of government. It was stacked against the New Deal. But the counter-revolutionary liberal Democrat, Rep. C. Hollifield of California, being appointed to it. Hollifield has consistently dissented from its findings.

The situation now shaping up raises anew the question of former President Hoover's stature and standing with the American people.

It was a political imperative for the Republicans to re-habilitate him. So long as the last Republican president was a symbol only for bitter depression and governmental inactivity in the face of it, it was improbable that a Republican could be elected President.

They got a break they could not have expected when former President Harry Truman himself well acquainted with the vicissitudes of politics, helped by appointing Hoover head of the first governmental reorganization commission. It was a generally popular project and the former President's comeback began.

Democrats at the time argued it was a political mistake. But Truman knew what it was to be down and to be kicked when you go down. He overruled the protests.

Harry Truman incidentally has still to be even invited to the White House by the general he appointed to be Supreme Commander of the NATO forces.

President Eisenhower himself has repeatedly accepted the New Deal framework. Right wing Republicans have tried openly that his last State of the Union message was a New Deal speech, and Democrats agreed. It is the reason why they have so much trouble making a case against him.

In actual performance his record is mixed. He has made no new starts in public power and sponsored the gift of the marginal oil deposits to the states, but he keeps promising not to wreck TVA. He has weakened the independent agencies with the frequent appointment of administrators not in sympathy with the original aims.

He got the GOP Congress in 1953 to expand Social Security.

In no case has he proposed fundamental reversals like those now bearing the imprimatur of the Hoover Commission. In fact, when it became apparent that his first chairman of his Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, Clarence Manion, was committed to the Hoover philosophy, Manion was asked to resign.

TRUMAN BEGAN IT What may confuse the public as the new fight shapes up is that the first Hoover Commission was announced. He also knew there would be a bipartisan affair to which, for example, Dean Acheson made a major contribution.

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the way chairman, Rep. Graham Barden, North Carolina, says privately that he won't let a single Salk resolution out for a vote on the House floor.

Cost In Canada Meanwhile, Canada, according to Sen. Neuberger of Oregon, is charging only \$150 for three Salk vaccine shots, a contrast to the wholesale cost in the United States of \$420 to \$450.

The announcement of Salk polio success on April 12 found Canada with a program. Sen. Neuberger says, "The government of the great United States had none."

"The Canadian government bought up the entire production of the Connaught Medical Research Laboratories, and as a result sufficient supplies have been available in Canada."

Neuberger might have added that one month prior to April 12, Dr. Martha E. Eliot, director of the Children's Bureau under Mrs. Hobbs, warned that such action should be taken to prepare for the national distribution of Salk vaccine. So did Dr. Leonard Scheele, the surgeon general. Mrs. Hobbs, however, ignored the advice.



"It's some subcommittee from the legislature... They don't want it said that they hold 'secret sessions'..."

"Churches and other organizations have some secret meetings," another says, "closed sessions" definitely needed on appropriations and other rare occasions while another adds that closed meetings are "at times best for everyone concerned."

And there is a small CARE action. Sen. H. M. Moore writes, "I always voted against secrecy. I think people should at all times have the right to know how and where their money is taxed."

Generally, there appears to have been little secrecy in Raleigh in 1955.

But the state's press has maintained, the precedent is not good and a little secrecy can be a dangerous thing.

Warm Praise, Cold Shoulder Forecast For Hoover Report

By DORIS FLEESON

WASHINGTON proper function of government. It was stacked against the New Deal. But the counter-revolutionary liberal Democrat, Rep. C. Hollifield of California, being appointed to it. Hollifield has consistently dissented from its findings.

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'I'm Beginning To Think That's A Great Idea'



HER BLOCK BY THE WASHINGTON POST CO.

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

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A Country Full Of Radicals

IT'S a wondrous thing how big men flee from little words.

The little word "radical" it seems, is a real ope to politicians in particular. They treat the word like it wears a long, black beard, carries a bomb in a satchel and reads the DAILY WORKER. They fling it at their enemies and run like rabbits before it comes bouncing back.

Sen. Sam Ervin the other day tossed it at Republican supporters of the Eisenhower highway construction program which would finance trunk routes outside the federal budget by creating an authority to issue bonds. The Tar Heel noted that in this case Democrats own the bill "are the conservatives and the Republicans are the radicals." True enough, but we suspect the senator would rather be called a "conservative" even if he favored it the bill.

The truth is we've got a country full of radicals. Some of them are Eisenhower, McCarthy, Truman, Warren, Byrnes, Talmadge, and Sen. Ervin himself. Nor should Herbert Hoover go unremembered. Roosevelt was a radical. So was Washington.

From The Greensboro Daily News

DAVY CROCKETT & THE MEC DEC

THE more we hear about Davy Crockett the more suspicious we get. He is said to have been born in three states—Tennessee, North Carolina and Franklin—thus bettering the record of Andrew Jackson who was born in only two.

We have concluded on the historical evidence, that Mr. Crockett was not born at all. No birth certificate, not even a copy. No death certificate, or copy of one. No home address. No telephone. No tax receipts. No hunting license.

The events of his life are those of a legendary character, such as: He kills a bear when he was only three. And lost his mama in the A. and P. He is known as "king of the wild frontier," but there is no record of his coronation. He is said to have served several terms in Congress. But plenty of

nonentities have done that.

The only plausible evidence of his existence is that he wrote four books, though entirely illiterate. We have known of illiterates who wrote books by the score; once they find they can do it there's no stopping them.

But evidence of authorship is not enough. Look at Shakespeare who, though illiterate, "wrote" a number of plays. He turns out to be Lord Bacon or the heir of something—though we hazard a guess that the plays will finally be pinned on Queen Elizabeth who dictated them while washing her stockings or jotted them down while waiting for her hair to dry.

Like the Mecklenburg Declaration, Davy Crockett is obviously a figment of the imagination.