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SB 23: an unacceptable 'alternative'

Editor's note: The following article on Senate Bill 23, which will be considered by the 1980 session of the Kentucky General Assembly, was prepared by Mercury editor Jeff Kerr. The article contains some analysis and opinion and is intended to reflect the views of this newspaper.

"Senate Bill 23 — Amend KRS 424.120 to make newspaper publication of legal notice optional; redefine the 'largest bona fide publication'; amend KRS 424.190 to revise the limit on the rates newspapers may charge; amend KRS 424.170, relating to affidavit of publication; amend KRS 424.190, allowing hand delivery or first class mailings of legal notices; amend KRS 424.220 to exempt cities from publication of annual statements."

The above bill, which was pre-filed for the 1980 session of the Kentucky General Assembly with a recommendation for passage by the Interim Joint Committee of Cities, is seen by Kentucky newspapers as a serious threat to the public's right to know how tax funds are spent.

Boiled down into simple language the bill would no longer require taxing districts to publish legal notices or financial statements in the newspaper of largest general circulation in the district.

Instead, they may opt for either hand delivery or first class mail. The bill is supported (and was requested) by the Kentucky Municipal League. The purported aim of the measure is to reduce costs to cities. The real target is the state's newspapers and the people's right to know.

Besides the Kentucky Municipal League, support for Senate Bill 23 will most likely come from three school-related groups as well as some fiscal courts and other types of taxing districts. All of the bodies concerned get money for their operations by taxes, mostly direct

property taxation. None of them, it seems, are very anxious for the public to know what is being done with that money and SB 23 is their idea of a smokescreen.

At present any taxing district in the state is required to periodically publish legal notices, financial statements, notices of hearings and other actions in the largest bona fide newspaper in the county.

"Costs too much"

By law a city the size of Carlisle is required to publish a financial statement "as soon as possible" after the end of the city's business year.

For three years — 1977, 1978 and 1979 — the Carlisle City Council failed to publish a financial statement. About a year ago, it was announced at a council meeting that the city was in financial trouble, caused by a number of reasons. The city underwent an audit, which showed among other things that funds had been transferred from reserve accounts to cover general expenses.

The reserve accounts were supposed to be used to either retire utility bonds ahead of schedule or make improvements to the utility system. The notes accompanying the audits left little doubt that the practices the city had been engaged in were questionable at least.

In November of 1979 the Mercury offered to publish the city audits free of charge in response to a statement by Mayor Bill Power that "it costs too much" to publish a financial statement. But the Mercury felt, especially after 10 months of silence on the matter, that citizens of Carlisle should be given a chance to see what the books said.

The audit was just that, an audit. It was not a financial statement,

which would have meant that each check written by the city would have been listed. But the audits by themselves showed that many city services were running at a deficit, which was corrected by the simple maneuver of transferring funds from one account to another — even though that step conflicted with the regulations governing the bond issues, which were sold to make improvements in the city's utility system.

Keep in mind that under Kentucky law the city is required to publish a financial statement each year. If this law had been obeyed would the city still have become entangled in a financial maze's nest? Perhaps not, but it is just possible that someone would have noticed the discrepancies and started asking questions. As it was the city was forced to borrow \$160,000 in the space of a couple of months last year to correct the deficits, gas, water, sewer and trash collection rates were raised several times during the year and at one point the city was faced with the very real possibility of being run by the people who bought the above-mentioned utility bonds, simply because the city was in default of the regulations under which they were sold.

Oh, yes one last detail: The last financial statement printed by the City of Carlisle ran in the July 29, 1976 issue of the Mercury. The printing cost the city about \$125.

What kind of financial condition is the city of Carlisle in now? It's hard to tell but last year, when the revelations were following one after another the statement was made that the city would be in good shape "in a couple of years", just in time for the election.

Anonymous comments

Let's take a look at another local situation that reflects on SB 23. In the 1978 session of the legislature the law requiring the annual publication of the financial statement of a school district was amended to allow the districts to publish teacher salaries in a lump sum, rather than individually.

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Mason nips NCHS in tourney finals

By Kay Conley

So close it hurt. The Nicholas County Bluejackets felt the hurt Sunday afternoon when they were overcome 6-43 by the Mason County Royals at Maryville. Nicholas was weighed down with obstacles that made "the hurt" that much worse: they had traveled a much stiffer bracket with wins over Maryville and Fleming County compared to Mason's wins over St. Patrick and Tullahoma; excessive fouling caused two Bluejacket starters, David McGuffey and Mike Hutton, to foul out of the game in the second half, and of course the biggest hurt was runner-up. It was a close game all through the

first quarter. Hutton scored a layup with Jerry Edwards' help on the opening tip-off to give Nicholas the first two points of the game. A three-point play by Hutton put the Jackets up by three. Allen Felkhan of Mason made a shot to lessen the edge, 3-4. With 3:36 left in the quarter, each team had eight. A turnover by Nicholas and goal by the Royals gave them an 11-9 lead. The quarter ended with Mason on top 16-14.

"We hustled real well," said Coach Mike Kenney. "Everyone played their best."

Everyone did play their "best" in the

second quarter as Nicholas soon began playing points on the board. A basket by Vice with McGuffey's assist tied the score again at 18 in the quarter's opening seconds. An outside jump shot by Mason was good as the Royals attempted to close in on Nicholas County's 25-21 lead. A bucket by Steve Davis gave the Bluejackets a six-point advantage, 29-23. Two free throws by Mason County soon shortened the lead, 29-23. A steal and assist by Mike Sewell to Hutton was good for a Nicholas goal, 31-27. The half ended with the Bluejackets sporting a two-point, 31-29, lead.

The excitement never ceased in the third quarter as each team battled to stay ahead. Two consecutive goals by the Royals soon moved them within two of Nicholas, 33-31. Hutton, hitting a game total of nine for 11 free throws, went to the line and tossed in two to make the score 37-33. A goal by Mason tied the score 37 all as the clock read 5:08.

Baskets by Hutton and McGuffey put the Jackets up by four, 41-37. Again, this time the clock reading 2:30, the game was tied at 43 all. A one-and-one by Donald Markland marked the score 47-43. Time lapsed as the third quarter ended 47-47.

"Nicholas was in the game up until the final seconds," said Coach Kenney, "with 27 seconds left we were behind by four points and had the ball. We had a struggle all the way."

Struggle was definitely an understatement in reviewing the fourth quarter. Fouls by both teams seemed to dominate the game for two by Vice put the Jackets up one, 51-50, still behind. The combination of the two events would lead to a life-long love affair with curlicues and music that is undimmed to this day.

Griffin, who retired Dec. 31 as senior member of W. B. Griffin and Son Insurance Administrators in Lexington, is known to more circus people than perhaps any other Lexingtonian. His association with the circus began that day in Carlisle more than 50 years ago when the troubadour for the Rhoads Royal Circus fell ill and Griffin was



Griffin retires

W. B. Griffin retires —but not from music

W. B. Griffin was studying the trombone among other things while a student at Carlisle High School more than 50 years ago when the Rhoads Royal Circus came to town.

"Little did Griffin know at the time that the combination of the two events would lead to a life-long love affair with curlicues and music that is undimmed to this day."

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W. B. Griffin, shown with his collection of band music and circus mementoes, is retiring from full-time work in the insurance business effective Jan. 1. Griffin assembled what was called the most complete collection of circus memorabilia in central Kentucky. The Carlisle native started in the insurance business in 1925, the year he graduated from Carlisle High School. —Photo submitted

invited to sit in for him.

And although insurance took up most of his time after graduation from Carlisle High, he never got the circus out of his blood and it was an honorary Ringmaster (named in 1975) for the Ringling Brothers-Barclay and Bailey Circus, an honor that grew out of his association with Merle Evans, who for many years was ringmaster for that circus.

That love for the circus was combined with his love for music to create a valuable collection of band music and circus memorabilia, which he has donated to the University of Kentucky Margaret King Library and the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wis.

*Please turn to page 3

Washington named Carnico manager

Now that winter is here and it's hard to find those little white balls in the snow, Nicholas County golfers are turning their thoughts to spring and waiting for that first day of play.

Already planning that day is Hal Washington, golf professional at the Carnico Country Club. But Washington has to fit that planning into a busier schedule than he's had lately. Effective Jan. 1, he was named club manager as well as "professional" at the club, assuming the duties of running the dining room and special dinners at the club.

His new responsibilities won't be entirely new for the Lexington-born Washington. He once built a golf course at the Meridian, Miss., naval air station. Washington, who had just retired from the Marines, built the nine-hole course from scratch, one way for the boys from Parris Island to get one up on the Navy.

A 16-year pro, Washington captained several Marine teams during his career and has also served as golf professional at the Forest and Philadelphia, Miss. golf clubs.

He and his wife, the former Janice Hardin of Nicholas County, returned to Carlisle in 1967 and in 1971 Washington started working for the fledgling Carnico Country Club.

"Very testy"

What does Washington, who has seen many golf courses in his day, think about the Carnico layout?

"It's a very busy, hilly course," he replied in a recent interview. "One of the pros is that the course record is

67, and that is high for a nine-hole course."

(Andy Dudley of Carlisle holds the course record at Carnico where par for the nine-hole layout is 36, and 71 for an 18-hole game.)

Washington says the club, which is in its sixth year, is on the upswing and calls the annual member-guest tournament, usually held in August, "one of the finest I've ever seen."

He says the club is now planning future improvements to the course, possibly including more sand traps (there are two now) and water hazards. To help members get around and over those "improvements" Washington offers both group and individual lessons in the summers which he says are most popular with the ladies and children at the club.

Busiest Year

Now that he is club manager Washington is turning his attention to the club's activity schedule. Last year saw several new attendance records set for club functions and he anticipates an increase in the activity calendar for this year.

The club, which closed Sunday evening for a two-week period, will reopen Jan. 22. The golf course will officially open in March. For those who can't wait, a golfing vacation in Florida is planned by some of the men of the club next month.

Washington hopes to keep the public informed of developments at the club and will be writing a column on golf for the Mercury beginning in April.