

Chamber Of Commerce Sponsors Exchange Of Views

Youth's Questions Are Aired At Symposium

By EDNA MAE HERMAN
News Herald Staff Writer

Burke County youth shared their interest and concern on vital issues with business and governmental leaders at a student-business symposium held at Western Piedmont Community College Friday.

About 225 students, including juniors and seniors from the county's eight high schools and WPCC students, attended the three-hour event sponsored by the education committee of the Burke County Chamber of Commerce.

The objective of the symposium, as stated by Paul Felker, symposium committee chairman, was "to create a better mutual understanding of problems, issues and concerns between business and youth in Burke County."

He told the students the topics for discussion had been selected by their student representatives in a series of meetings. He said the symposium was intended to be more student-oriented than adult-oriented.

Recreation, welfare, health, finance, governmental responsiveness, industry and environment, employment practices and manpower development were among the issues explored during two panel discussions. Both panels were made up of both students and adults.

Dr. Gordon C. Blank, WPCC president and chairman of the Chamber of Commerce education committee, in welcoming the students explained that "The symposium grew out of the interest of the Chamber of Commerce to establish communication with young people."

He said there seems to be ample communication between young people between people in business, between older people but very little communication between young people and older people. "This is true not only in Burke County but nationwide," he noted.

"This symposium is an effort to establish more effective communication between young and old," Dr. Blank stated.

Governmental and human services issues were discussed by the first panel which consisted of Sam Avery of Morganton High School, Kevin Brittain of George Hildebrand High, Bill Poteat of Drexel High, Gary Miller of WPCC, Roger McFalls of Glen Alpine High, students; John Bleynat chairman of Burke County Board of

Commissioners; Clinton Foust, City of Morganton recreation director; James M. Culberson Jr., senior vice president of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company who also is president of the Burke County Chamber of Commerce; and Dr. Lewis Bock, director of the Burke County Health Department.

During both panel discussions, it was mainly a matter of youth tossing questions at the adults, with Felker moderating.

Beginning with the subject of recreation, Felker began the discussion by asking Foust what has been done and will be done to make their recreation group more countywide, not just for Morganton. Foust explained that the Morganton Recreation Department is just that, the city's recreation department, financed by the city, and that a county recreation commission had been appointed but just was getting off the ground. He said, however, that no one has been excluded from taking part in the Morganton department's activities.

Foust said it had been a matter of funding that counties haven't gotten into recreation before. "Cities and counties have a problem getting money that is not tax money," he stated, pointing out that tax money can't be used for recreation since the courts have ruled that recreation is not a necessary expense.

McFalls asked Bleynat if there was any way the county commissioners could change this and if he thought recreation was vital. Bleynat replied that recreation was vital and that the county had established a recreation commission represented by people from all parts of the county which is working out a program. "It just started last summer ... and we want to try to broaden it ... but it will take a few years," he emphasized.

He pointed out as Foust had that now the courts determine that it is a necessary expense but that another way to get tax money for recreation would be by a vote of the people. "Tax funds cannot be expended for recreation except by vote of the people," he said.

Foust added that a constitutional amendment which becomes effective July 1, 1972 will empower the N.C. General Assembly to determine what is and what is not a necessary expense. He advised that those interested in having recreation made a necessary expense should contact their legislators and ask them to do this. If recreation is made a necessary expense then the county commissioners can spend money for recreation.

Culberson told the young people that the recreation centers in Morganton, Valdese and Drexel are not owned by the municipalities but by recreation foundations which built them with money from private donations, mainly from industry. He said that in Morganton the city leases the

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recreation center from the foundation. He stated that one reason some communities in the county didn't have recreation centers was because they weren't able to get the money to build them.

Avery asked why not drives to support recreation program and Culberson told him, "You can only go to the well so many times and the well gets dry ... industry only has so much money they can allocate ... there are so many needs for it and it will only go so far." Foust added, "Two-thirds of the money for our building came from industry ... but they feel city money should support the programs." In Valdesse, the United Fund has donated to the recreation program, Bleynat advised.

The youth were asked what they would like in recreation and "do we have what you want."

Miller said that most recreation directors stick to traditional recreation such as basketball and sponsoring dances, and weren't getting to all the young people. "They're about 20 years behind time," he declared, then asked Foust if he was offering activities to all the people and for those not interested in traditional recreation.

"I believe our teenage program is the weakest it's been in 10 years," Foust said. "The biggest problem we have is understanding what you want. For instance, the bands we selected for dances a year ago the kids wouldn't go to now if we had them."

"We try to reach all age groups. Five years ago the foundation spent two or three thousands dollars providing a room for those who want to just sit and do nothing."

Foust said that the center has a teenage planning committee but that last year there was a problem in that half the planning committee didn't attend the dances.

Avery said that since there seemed to be some change in student thinking as to what they wanted why not establish a countywide youth council and get ideas from everyone. "This would benefit the recreation programs as well as the students," he affirmed. He then asked Bleynat if the county commissioners would consider establishing a youth council and paying the salary of a coordinator.

Bleynat said the ordinance providing for the county recreation commission provides for an advisor and that when the program begins to move, it is hoped that youth and adults both will get involved.

Turning to the health field, the leadoff question was why does the drug situation seem to be getting worse than better.

Dr. Bock fired back, "I think the American people are too concerned with problems and too indifferent to their causes...Drugs and drug abuse have always been with us ... alcoholic consumption is a drug abuse ... overeating is an abuse of the body ... most of you young people are concerned with ecology and pollution but do you stop to think you are contributing to it when you drop gum wrappers... People are interested in problems but not doing much about them."

"Why do kids take drugs? We need to wrestle with this," he said.

He pointed out that the major prescription item in the U.S. is tranquilizers. "What's wrong with a population that has to take pills to face life?" he asked.

A student in the audience called attention to the growing incidence of venereal disease and asked Dr. Bock "Are we ready to handle VD in Burke County?"

"If we're going to handle VD in Burke County, we're going to have to handle our sexuality," the health director told the students.

He said "We've got everything here to handle it," but noted that he had run into two or three cases in the past month which he couldn't cure. He stated, too, that he had seen two cases just that morning.

"We're dealing with the problem but let's get to the cause," he again asserted.

"If you don't want to have VD, don't have intercourse with someone who has it," Dr. Bock told the students.

Moving on to the subject of economic and financial pitfalls, Banker Culberson was asked what young people with no property should have to get loans. Culberson listed the three main criteria of credit: character (must be sure person is of high character); capacity to repay loans; and capital (does borrower have necessary capital to fall back on if something happens to his primary source).

Brittain asked if collateral was necessary to get a loan. The banker said it was not necessary but if the borrower did have collateral the risk was less. "A large percentage our loans are made without collateral," he said, "but the person must have some way of repayment. Most young people usually start out with their parents signing notes ... or you can use your savings account as collateral."

Avery wanted to know if anyone offered programs to help teach young people how to handle money. Culberson said he was sure WPCC would be glad to have such a program and that schools frequently had bankers to speak to classes, but "the real problem is up to each individual."

When asked how the population here stacks up as loan risks, Culberson stated that people here and in Western North Carolina have an outstanding reputation as workers and credit risks.

Turning to governmental responsiveness, Felker noted that most communities, cities and state are recognizing that there are frustrations among young people and asked Bleynat what is being done in Burke County on a county basis directed toward considering involving, influencing or bringing to bear recognition of the frustrations that might exist in this county.

Bleynat said the county was attempting to meet needs of the young people through the schools and he believed that through the improved school program they would be able to give the youth more information in many areas, how to do things, and how to reach government.

Miller wanted to know if the commissioners had done anything such as hiring more law enforcement personnel to combat the drug problem. Bleynat told him the sheriff's department personnel had been increased by over 50 per cent in the last four years and this was partly due to the drug ... "but I don't know if hiring more law enforcement officers is the answer."

In later questioning, Bleynat pointed out that law enforcement is not a primary function of the county commissioners, who only supply the money for law enforcement. He said the sheriff is the elected official heading up law enforcement in the county and would be the one to go to concerning drug violations.

Poteat asked about the number of people on welfare and Bleynat advised that Burke is next to the lowest among counties in the percentage of people on welfare ... in Burke 1.55 out of 100 with the state average being 4.18. He also gave statistics about the number of people receiving assistance in the various categories. He said they had the department and staff to rehabilitate ... taking people who need help and helping them to help themselves...which he felt was an aim of the program.

Questioned about any specific programs planned by the county for the revenue-sharing funds, Bleynat indicated the commissioners didn't have any programs specified for this money but he was sure groups in the county did have programs. He said he hoped the commissioners would hold this money for several funds and find the best way to use it and put it in next year's budget... "There are many areas in which it can be used well," he stated.

Avery asked why the commissioners hadn't taken a stand on the closing of Highway 181 and attended a hearing on it, since it would affect the county and put an economic stress on some people. Bleynat told him they hadn't known about it until they read it in the paper.

Culberson said the chamber of commerce had met with the State Highway Commission and industry to try to find an alternate route and keep the road open most of the time. He said the SHC stated the cost would be multiplied if it wasn't closed all the time and that if the work wasn't done now it would be worse in 20 years ... it was something that needed to be done and done now.

He said the latest information was that the road will be open in one year and not two years as previously announced.

More about the symposium and the second panel discussion will be carried later.



Symposium Panel Takes Up Industry-Related Issues

About 225 Burke county high school and college students attended the student - business symposium held at Western Piedmont Community College and had an opportunity to take part in two panel discussions. Students and adults made up both panels, with Paul Felker serving as moderator. The second panel discussed industry and environment, employment practices and manpower development. Panel members were (left to right)

students, Bruce Huffman of Hildebran High; Joy Kincaid of WPCC; Julia Waters of Salem High; Sarah Gardin of Oak Hill High; and Libby Braswell of Valdese High; Felker; Blake Watson, manager of Great Lakes Carbon Corporation's Morganton plant; C. P. Reinhardt, vice president for industrial relations for Drexel Enterprises; and Philip Garrou, vice president of Alba-Waldensian Inc. (Staff photo)



Panel Discusses Human Services, Governmental Issues

The first panel discussion at the student - business symposium sponsored by the education committee of the Burke County Chamber of Commerce Friday centered a round human services and governmental issues, including recreation, welfare, health, finances, and governmental responsiveness. The student panel members (at left) are (left to right) Gary Miller, Western Piedmont Community College; Roger McFalls of Glen Alpine High School; Bill Poteat of Drexel High; Kevin Brittain of George Hildebrand High; and Sam Avery of Morganton High.

Paul Falker (center) chairman of the symposium committee, was moderator. Behind him is Dr. Gordon Blank, WPCB president and chairman of the education committee. At right are the adult panelists: James M. Culberson Jr., senior vice president of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company and Chamber of Commerce president; John Bleynt, chairman of Burke County Board of Commissioners; Dr. Lewis Bock, director of Burke County Health Department; and Clinton Foust, City of Morganton Recreation Center. (Staff photo)