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Boards Provide Leadership

County commissioners acted with commendable dispatch in setting in motion machinery for a special election in which Burke County citizens can approve a comprehensive community college.

The action was expected and therefore, in a sense, routine, for the county's governing board early became aware of what an educational institution of this type would mean to future generations of Burke young people.

Along with the three school boards, county commissioners became interested even before the Commission on Education Beyond the High School crystallized in its proposals a new concept of a comprehensive educational unit to bring to the people vocational or trade training, a technical institute and the college parallel or academic instruction.

These same four boards went on to favor of a survey which they knew would show that Burke had both the need and resources for such approval by the State Board of Education, charged with administering the community college program.

As far back as last August 9, county commissioners made that endorsement official in a resolution declaring that a special election would be called as soon as the State gave its approval.

It was not surprising that after State approval was given last Thursday, the board met the next day and set March 21 as election day.

But because the action was history-making, it cannot be dismissed as routine.

The meeting had several significant features. It reflected the non-partisan or non-political nature of the movement when, in various motions and secondings, one was made by a Democrat and the other by a Republican.

Noteworthy were the comment by commissioners who see a community college as a money-saving enterprise: If drive-in colleges are not provided, the State must spend more and more for dormitories at existing residential colleges and universities, and the relatively small amount that Burke County must pay for its share of a college would be less than the State would assess in taxes for expanding other institutions. Therefore, we are saving money by establishing a college here, in addition to the immeasurable benefit of enabling many students in this area to pursue education beyond high school who do not have the financial resources to go off to college somewhere else.

The county commissioners, as with the school boards, have provided the sort of official leadership which has brought to Burke citizens their greatest opportunity of their generation. The State Board of Education, responsible for spending large sums for comprehensive community colleges, was impressed by the attitude of these county and educational leaders, which became an important factor in the decision favorable to Burke County.

The people should be grateful for this leadership.