

"Grand Jury Investigations in 1950"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Fifty years ago a local grand jury reported its findings in several investigations ranging from the sale of alcohol to minors to the care of residents at the County Home. The November 17, 1950 issue of the Democratic Advocate newspaper included the grand jury's report to James E. Boylan, Jr., Judge of the Circuit Court for Carroll County:

"Your Grand Jurors empanelled for the November, 1950 Term report that they have been in session three days, and have examined 23 witnesses, and returned seven presentments and true bills.

This Grand Jury carefully investigated the conduct of the sale at retail of alcoholic beverages in this County, with particular emphasis on the alleged sales to minors. We have found that other than the sight inspections made constantly by the members of the City of Westminster Police Department, in Westminster, no regular official control is exercised. We have interrogated the Board of County Commissioners in their capacity as License Commissioners, and the Sheriff, and we have determined from these officials and from open discussion among the members of the Grand Jury, that there are no flagrant violators among the licensees, and that in those instances where violators have been reported the offenders have been duly prosecuted. We recognize the ramifications involved in controlling the sale of alcoholic beverages in general, and we recommend that the Board of License Commissioners provide for periodic inspection of the licensed premises by the use of resident Deputy Sheriffs on a fee basis, or by other persons or means to be determined by said Board, after conferring with the State's Attorney and the Sheriff.

This Grand Jury has further investigated by open discussion among the Jurors the problem of gambling and gambling devices and practices within the County. It is the opinion of this Grand Jury that perhaps some minor unorganized forms of gambling may exist although no definite information concerning the existence and operation of slot machines, punch boards, and associated practices could be determined. In so far as your Grand Jurors could ascertain coin machines, commonly known as Pin Ball machines, are prevalent throughout the County and are licensed for amusement only. While no doubt in isolated instances "pay offs" may be made, no evidence was produced before, or is known to exist by this Jury.

The considered conclusion of this Grand Jury after deliberate inquiry, is that the laws pertaining to the sale of alcoholic beverages and gambling are being respected and observed, and that the existing law enforcement bodies of the County are exercising all reasonable efforts to enforce them.

This body inquired into the public assistance program as administered by the Carroll County Welfare Board, and interrogated the members of the Board of County Commissioners and the Director of the local Board. We have determined that the public assistance funds are appropriated by the Board of County Commissioners according to existing statutes with certain appropriations being made by the State and Federal Government. In so far as we could learn by inquiry the funds are disbursed in accordance with the State statutes and regulations of the State Department of Welfare. The majority of the Grand Jurors are opposed to the prevalent theory of governmental welfare activities.

We have determined that Carroll County's appropriation for welfare purposes, apart from those funds appropriated to the Children's Aid Society for Carroll County, have increased from \$5,000 in 1935 to \$43,144.89 in 1950. We recognize that this increase is due in some measure to the increased costs of family maintenance. We further recognize the need for public assistance for a certain percentage of our population, and we are in sympathy with the charitable aspects of the program. We are cognizant, however, of the tendency to annually increase the scope of welfare assistance and the benefits available thereunder.

Considering that the total expenditure for welfare purposes in Carroll County has risen from approximately \$10,000 in 1936, to more than \$210,000 in 1950, and further considering that this latter figure, according to advices from the Director of the Local Board, will no doubt be subject to the word revision in the future, it is strongly recommended by this Grand Jury that legislation be considered tending to give greater control to the operation of this Agency in the County Commissioners, or such other Board that may be constituted to more closely supervise the expenditure of County funds.

It is further recommended that periodic reports of the Welfare Board activities be communicated in detail to the said County Commissioners, and that copies of said report be published annually in the newspapers in Carroll County, and that said report be maintained as a public record.

Your Grand Jurors inquired into the operation of the local unit of the Unemployment Board, and found that this agency appears to be efficiently managed, and further find their unemployment benefits appear to be distributed in accordance with existing legal requirements.

As required by law your Grand Jurors inspected the County Jail, and found five prisoners confined there. Two of these prisoners were awaiting the action of this Jury and the other three were serving sentences. The report of the former Grand Jury was examined and it was found that the repairs recommended therein had not yet been completed. This Grand Jury concurs in these recommendations as formerly made. In addition, it is suggested that the two toilets in the prisoner's quarters be replaced by modern institutional type toilets. It is further suggested that the plaster be repaired around the chimney and windows in the cell set apart for the confinement of minors.

The Jail was found to be in a clean and orderly condition and the Sheriff and his family are commended for the manner in which the property is kept.

Upon visiting the County Home, your Grand Jurors found 19 men and 5 women being cared for. It is recommended that the hand rails on the steps in the women's quarters be repaired, and it is recommended that the large fire extinguisher now in use be replaced by small extinguishers. The outside hog pen and partitions were found to be in need of repair, and it is suggested that this work be done as soon as practicable. The property in general presented an orderly appearance and the Grand Jurors desire to commend the Steward and his wife for the excellent care they give to the inmates and the County property.

The Grand Jury further wishes to commend the State's Attorney, the County Commissioners, the Sheriff, and the Directors of the Welfare Board and Unemployment Service for the excellent cooperation and intimate knowledge of their duties.

Knowing no further matters upon which any specific recommendation should be made, and having concluded all things brought to their attention, your Grand Jurors beg leave to be excused from further service for the time being, subject to the further call of this Honorable Court.”

Although the jurors expressed concern for the growing costs of public welfare, they found no serious problems in Carroll. The jurors also gave high marks to the various county officials for their management of local programs and services.

Photo caption: Judge James E. Boylan, Jr., photographed during the Westminster Bicentennial, received a grand jury report in 1950 regarding several local investigations. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Charles O. Fisher, Esq., 1997.