

Opinions

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It's not about the \$12

The question was, "Do you want the Catahoula Parish Police Jury to have the power to tax you on their authority alone?" At the Police Jury meeting on July 12, 2021, the answer from those in attendance was a resounding "NO!"

The subject of the people's attention Monday was an amendment to Ordinance 2975 (which ordinance was passed last December, 2020) that imposed a \$12 monthly tax on homes in the unincorporated areas of the parish. The original ordinance, intended to supplement the Sanitation Fund, contained no enforcement provision in the mistaken belief that people would pay if it were only a voluntary contribution to the parish. And there was some doubt as to whether the Police Jury had authority to demand such a payment in the first place.

As we have learned from District Attorney Burget's helpful review of the law, the Police Jury does in fact have that power in Catahoula Parish. But having it and using it are two different things. It reminds me of having a license to carry a concealed handgun. Your authorization to carry a weapon does not authorize you to shoot anybody. There's much more to the issue.

As I repeat often, "The power to tax is the

power to destroy." I don't think any member of the Catahoula Parish Police Jury would want another Police Jury to have that power over them. It's bad enough that we must suffer it at the state and Federal level. We should not have to endure it at the local level, especially in so small a community as Catahoula Parish.

Rodney Sones of Ward 5 did not hesitate to offer a motion to table the question of whether to amend Ordinance 2975 to adopt an enforcement provision that would have entailed attaching a lien to properties whose owners had not paid the garbage "fee".

Jefferey Estes was equally quick to second the motion bringing the question to a vote and tabling the proposal to a later date.

None of that means the ordinance is dead. Nor does it mean that the ordinance could not be repealed and the question brought back before the people as a referendum. This latter move, repeal and referendum, would be by far the preferable route. I think most of the Police Jury understands this. The mood of the citizens in room 104 of the Harrisonburg Courthouse Monday night, if I read them correctly, was favorable to repeal and referendum.

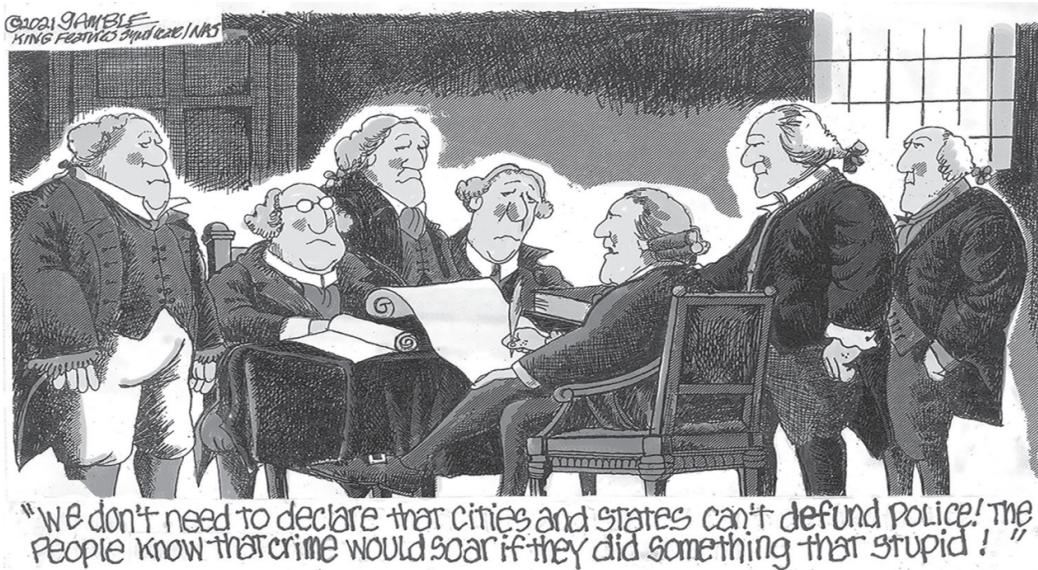
Concerned citizen and taxpayer, Everett Mayo, spoke out challenging the financial logic of the

By: Leo Chappelle

ordinance and seemed to reveal how poorly some of the Police Jury actually understood for what they had previously voted. Mayo had strong doubts about the absolute necessity for the ordinance. He appeared to think that the Health Unit Fund, from which the Sanitation Fund can draw money as long as at least \$250,000 remains in the Health Unit account, still has room left to support garbage service.

When asked about the surplus funds that the \$12 sanitation tax would create, Sones talked about provisions for white goods disposal and other enhancements to waste removal. However, very little was said about that in the previous public meetings, all of which I have attended when Ordinance 2975 was on the agenda. Nothing to that effect is included in the ordinance now.

Perhaps the very worst feature of Ordinance 2975, and that has not been mentioned, is in the third paragraph: "...the Catahoula Parish Police Jury has the right to increase or decrease this service charge if and when necessary..." Think carefully about this. The Police Jury just gave itself a blank check on your personal account. Any referendum submitted to the people that included such a provision would (I hope) be rejected as unacceptable.



JEB Tales

Dynamiting Stumps

A few nights ago, old what's her name found us a new western on TV. Since we had already seen every John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, Audie Murphy, and Randolph Scott movie several times, it was a treat. The show was set in Montana and the main star was Kevin Costner. I have liked Mr. Costner since the 1985 movie "Silverado" and the 2003 movie with Robert Duvall, "Open Range". Another thing I liked about the movie was that actual Native Americans played the Native Americans. Also, an Indian reservation joined Mr. Costner's humongous ranch.

One of Mr. Costner's sons had married a Native American and they had one young son. You could tell the young couple were on the outs with his father because they lived in an old house trailer on a pretty run-down place.

This son of the big ranch owner was trying to remove a tree stump from his place with dynamite. However, he was doing it the wrong way. He was digging a hole beside the stump and placing the dynamite beside the stump. I knew this was wrong because in 1955 when I was thirteen years old, we cleared trees from new ground to plant cotton.

Dad, "Big John" would go to the train depot in Alexandria, Louisiana to get a case of dynamite he had ordered. He would put the case of dynamite in the back of the truck and the blasting caps in the glove compartment of the truck. Next, he would put the roll of fuse wire behind the seat of the truck. We always kept these three things in different places.

On the way home Dad stopped to pick up a hitchhiker, which was a common practice back in the 1950's. As the hitchhiker was getting into the back of our truck, he spotted the case of dynamite and jumped out of the truck and went back down the road a way.

The fact of the matter is that dynamite is not really dangerous without a blasting cap in the dynamite. However, that little blasting cap is

very dangerous. It could blow your hand off. And if it were on a fuse and in the dynamite, it could explode the dynamite and blow everything on you off including your head.

Now back to setting the dynamite. We would take a handheld auger about one- and one-half inches in diameter and about four feet long and drill beside the stump deep enough to get the dynamite as far down as possible and under the stump. We would then put a couple sticks of dynamite in the hole and push them to the bottom of the hole. Next, we would very carefully cut enough fuse to stick out of the hole and long enough for us to get the heck of a long way off, at least seventy-five yards from that stump. We would push that stick of dynamite with a blasting cap on the fuse down to and on top of the other sticks of dynamite and very carefully pack that dirt.

We were also taught to be sure that the path to cover was clear and there was something like a big log to get behind. Also, you did not get between the one lighting the fuse and the cover.

One fine fall day two brothers came home from school with us. They wanted to see a stump blown into the air. Big John happened to be gone. George, who was two- and one-half years older than me, knew where the blasting caps which were kept in a different place from the fuse wire, was and the dynamite was kept.

We decided to surprise Dad and blow a stump out of the ground. We also thought it would be cool to show George's two friends how it was done. That decision almost proved to be fatal.

We did everything step by step as we had been taught. George gave the rest of us a head start and lit the fuse. When we were all four behind a big log the older of the brothers realized he had left his cap on the stump. He jumped from behind the log and went to get his cap with all three of the rest of us hollering, no and screaming at him to come back! He did not! He got his cap and just as he got back to our big

By John Ed Bartmess, Jr.

log all heck broke loose. Dirt, tree roots and the boy came flying our way. He was not hurt but he was not out of danger yet. I thought George and the boy's brother were going to kill him. His only words were, "Well it's my Brooklyn Dodgers cap!" We never knew where the blasting caps were kept again.

Now back to the Costner TV series not long after the rancher's son had dynamited the stump, they shot a horse that had been injured in a truck wreck. That really shook Shirley up. Also, their language was no fit to listen to.

As Shirley was getting up to change channels a woman who was bathing in a water trough, also called a stock tank, got out and walked back naked away from the camera. Well, we won't be watching that show again.

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