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White an 'amateur'

By DON JOHNSON
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Sterling Cockrill Jr., chief of staff for Gov. Frank White, said Wednesday the new administration has been "overwhelmed" by the duties of running state government and referred to White as a "complete amateur" in his role as governor.

Cockrill made the comments at a meeting of the Pulaski Visitors Council held at the Coachman's Inn in Little Rock. The council is primarily composed of hotel,

motel and restaurant managers and owners.

After the meeting, Cockrill said he did not intend to label the governor as an amateur but just wanted to note that White lacked experience for the job.

"None of us (in White's administration) have experience in the administrative branch of government prior to what we are doing now," he added.

Cockrill said many of his comments made during the speech were "off-the-cuff."

After being informed of Cockrill's comments, Barbara Pardue, White's press secretary, talked with the governor and later issued a response on White's behalf.

She said White noted that "people did not vote in November for people who are trained as government bureaucrats." Miss Pardue said White ran on the platform of bringing a businessman's experience to state government and that was what White has done.

She said some members of the governor's staff have many years

of legislative experience that have proven very beneficial. Responding to Cockrill calling White an "amateur," Miss Pardue said because some staff members have no prior experience in state government, people might consider them amateurs.

She said White did not consider it a disadvantage to have a lack of government experience, because his staff had experience in private business administration.

Miss Pardue said White was not angry about Cockrill's remarks.

She said White also had made "off-the-cuff" statements in the past.

During his speech, Cockrill said White ran for his first political office last year and "now he finds himself to be governor."

Cockrill said the White administration had been "overwhelmed" by several state issues in addition to putting together a legislative package. He mentioned the Cuban refugee situation, pay raises for teachers and

See COCKRILL, back page

White's plan to reduce vehicle fees gets axed

By ED PHILLIPS
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

The state House of Representatives Wednesday defeated the bill designed by Gov. Frank White to roll back vehicle license fees.

Senate Bill 18, sponsored for White in the General Assembly by Sen. Ben Allen of Little Rock, failed to receive enough votes for approval after House Speaker Lloyd McCuiston of West Memphis ruled that 75 votes - or three-fourths of the House membership - would be needed for the bill's passage. The measure received 62 favorable votes. Twenty-six representatives voted against it. Another 11 members did not vote, and one voted "present."

Meanwhile, White's companion legislation to SB 18 - SB 15, which would lower vehicle title transfer fees from \$11 to \$5 - passed the House 90-4. The Senate later adopted a House amendment to the bill, lowering the fee to \$5 rather than the original \$4 fee the Senate had earlier approved, and

sent the bill on to the governor.

McCuiston based his decision on SB 18 on a 1934 amendment to the state constitution requiring a three-fourths vote by the General Assembly to increase taxes or fees.

Rep. Ode Maddox requested an opinion of the chair on the number of votes needed for passage of SB 18 after he found a provision in the bill that would increase the cost of license fees of vehicles for hire. McCuiston recessed the House for 10 minutes to decide the question.

Maddox, who later voted for the bill, brought up the point at the end of a debate that took up almost the entire day.

Rep. John Miller of Melbourne, who spoke for the bill in the House, earlier had pulled from consideration a compromise amendment to the bill agreed to by White and Rep. Robert McGinnis of Marianna.

The compromise would have lowered the lost revenue brought

about by the two bills from \$12 million to about \$11.5 million this year, but would have actually increased revenues after 1983 by implementing a flat \$25 fee for most vehicles manufactured after that date.

Miller pulled the amendment after several legislators argued the compromise would, in effect, reduce the license fees for two years but would increase fees for most cars after 1983.

Rep. Jimmie Don McKissack of Star City called the amendment "one of the worst" he had ever seen and said it smacked of "political trickery."

Rep. Art Givens of Sherwood said he was suspicious of the amendment because "the increase becomes effective after the next election."

Miller then called for a vote on White's original bill, which led to lengthy debate and parliamentary haggling before the bill failed.

Rep. Cliff Hoofman of North
See BILL, back page



No strings attached

Sterling Cockrill, Gov. Frank White's chief of staff, once referred to by reporters as Pinochio because he said, in effect, he was nobody's puppet, certainly had "no strings attached" when he remarked Wednesday

that White was a "complete amateur" in state government. Through a spokeswoman, White said he wasn't angry about Cockrill's comments - but will he want to apply the reins in the future?

Mother still worrying about '53rd hostage'

By JAMES MERRIWEATHER
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

The 77-year-old mother of Mrs. Cynthia Brown Dwyer said Wednesday she was not optimistic about the latest news of her daughter's plight in Iran, but she expressed relief that "something finally is taking place."

Mildred Brown of Horatio (Sevier County) said she initially heard the latest developments over the radio Wednesday morning and that she had spoken with her son-in-law, Dr. John Dwyer of Amherst, N. Y., twice during the day.

The court session represented only a hearing.

"Even if they make a decision Monday," Mrs. Brown said, "I don't feel too good about it because the Iranians are so unpredictable. We'll just have to wait and see."

Mrs. Dwyer's husband said in an interview with the Associated Press his wife was always "concerned about the human element in things and what happens to people in crisis."

"I'll just wait until I hear a little more officially," Dwyer said Wednesday.



Iranians try Mrs. Dwyer, Swiss report

BERN, Switzerland (AP) - An Iranian Revolutionary Court tried freelance journalist and Little Rock native Cynthia B. Dwyer on espionage charges Wednesday, the Swiss Foreign Ministry said. The ministry said a verdict - and possibly sentencing - was expected as early as Monday.

The surprise move came only two weeks after 52 American hostages were released from 444 days of captivity and at a time when the Reagan administration was reviewing terms of the agreement with Iran that freed the hostages.

Trial

Continued from Page One

tion" and was able to "speak freely" during the trial.

In Washington, State Department spokesman William Dyess said information the department received reported Mrs. Dwyer had a hearing and not a trial and that "we are not aware of any specific charges."

But Swiss Foreign Ministry spokesman Othmar Uhl insisted it was a trial and that a verdict, which could mean conviction on the spy charges, was expected "around Monday." He said the Swiss had been invited to send an observer to the trial.

John Dwyer, who said his wife was arrested when she went to Iran to write articles about the Iranian revolution, said he had been told "there will be some kind of finding made Monday, and we just have to settle down and wait for it."

He added that Sobhani's release was not necessarily an encouraging sign. "I see no reason for optimism or pessimism," he said. "I'm very glad for him and his family, but I'm not sure what bearing it has on my wife's case."

Mrs. Dwyer, now of Amherst, a suburb of Buffalo, N.Y., and Sobhani, whose family lives in southern California, were not involved in negotiations to free the

52 Americans seized in the U.S. Embassy takeover Nov. 4, 1979.

The Swiss diplomat who attended the trial, Wilhelm Schmid, was reached by The Associated Press by telephone in Tehran and said Mrs. Dwyer "was very happy to see and to learn that finally there seems to be some sort of decision about her case."

Asked if he had any indication what the verdict might be, Schmid replied: "Oh, no. I'm afraid not. We will have to wait until the decision of the court is made known to us."

He said she was charged with "spying - acting against the best interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the event she is released, we will do everything in our power to help with the arrangements for leaving the country."

"In the event that she should be sentenced, which we hope will not be the case, we will naturally continue to insist on our right to visit her and to help her in any way possible."

There was no indication why Iran had decided to act on the cases of Mrs. Dwyer and Sobhani. Iran gave no information on whether it intended to free Mrs. Dwyer, convict her and deport her from the country or to sentence her to a prison term.

In Washington, Dyess said the Swiss had informed the United States there may be "a disposition" of the case next week.

Mother

Continued from Page One

"I think she wanted to see the situation for herself," he said. "I tried to be supportive of her decision, although I was concerned. We talked often about the dangers involved, about the possibility of the unexpected happening."

Mrs. Brown said she had received a letter from Mrs. Dwyer on Jan. 17.

"It was written in December and it was her Christmas present to me," Mrs. Brown said. "She said she was all right. The letter sounded real good."

Mrs. Brown said her daughter reported that she was allowed to go outside to the grounds of Evin Prison near Tehran, where she has been held since shortly after being arrested last May 5 at a Tehran hotel.

"I was glad to find out that they let her go outside. She said she

had a little garden and the roses still are blooming over there."

Mrs. Brown said Mrs. Dwyer also reported that "she can eat about anything she wants. She's feeling real well."

Mrs. Brown said she still holds out hope that Mrs. Dwyer will be released and returned home before Feb. 19, Mrs. Dwyer's 50th birthday.

A native of Little Rock, Mrs. Dwyer majored in English at Hendrix College at Conway. She did some post-graduate work in social studies and briefly attended Radcliffe College in a program for book editors.

She was married in 1965 and moved to the Buffalo area in 1967. The couple has three children: Ben, 15; Dan, 12, and Susannah, 9.

Mrs. Brown said she copes with the situation by keeping herself busy. "I've got my house and yard, my church work and a garden," she said. "I just try to stay busy. In fact, I've been very busy during the last two weeks."

Mrs. Brown said she was gratified by the support her daughter

had received from all parts of the country.

When the 52 U.S. hostages in Iran were freed last month, Mrs. Dwyer's continued captivity sparked petitions signed by more than 30,000 people urging President Reagan to press negotiations for her release. Mrs. Dwyer has been called the "53rd hostage."

The petitions were circulated by The Buffalo Evening News and WKBW-TV, Buffalo.

"I'm very grateful for everything," Mrs. Brown said. "I am getting calls from friends I haven't heard from in years. Everybody has just been wonderful."

Dwyer said his wife's sympathy for Iranian revolutionary causes was well known within the academic community in Buffalo.

Mrs. Dwyer had worked for prisoners' rights and social justice issues after the bloody Attica prison revolt of 1971. Before that, she had worked for organizations trying to win the release of people she considered political prisoners.

Bill

Continued from Page One

Little Rock, who voted against SB 16, gave notice of reconsideration after the vote. That allows him three days to call the bill back to the floor.

Miller said after the House adjourned he thought he might be able to work out an agreement with other House members - possibly as early as today - and persuade Hoofman to call the bill up again.

Some House members oppose White's bill because of the \$12 million decrease in revenues it will mean to the state Highway

Fund. Highway Department officials have said that loss will mean an additional loss of \$48 million in matching federal funds.

Among the many representatives speaking against the bill Wednesday, Rep. W.H. "Bill" Thompson of Marked Tree decried the loss of the funds, saying the department "cannot afford to lose one nickel."

Cockrill

Continued from Page One

the application for federal grants as some of those issues.

"Republican governors do not have time to be prepared between the November election and the January legislative session," Cockrill said.

Cockrill said if anyone should be called an "amateur" in dealing with the state's problems in the executive branch, it would be him. Cockrill said he, personally, had been overwhelmed by the "amount of business that comes into the executive's office."

"One day I am director for downtown Little Rock (the Metrocentre Improvement District) and the next I'm right-hand man to the governor. It's overwhelming to me," he said.

Cockrill also described the circumstances surrounding his hiring.

"I want you to do the same thing Rudy Moore, (former chief of staff) did for Bill Clinton," Cockrill said White told him.

"What was that," Cockrill said was his reply.

"Hell, I don't know. Just go out there and do a good job," he quoted White as saying.

Cockrill is a former speaker of the state House of Representatives. He was a Democrat then. He switched to the Republican Party in 1970 and ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor.

Cockrill took a leave of absence as executive director of Little Rock Unlimited Progress and the Metrocentre Improvement District to fill in for Preston Bynum, the governor's executive secretary who has been ill.

Cockrill said White makes up for a lack of experience in state government by "going a whole lot on instincts" when deciding issues. "He has good instincts," he said.

In a rambling speech covering several state issues, Cockrill said the governor had been criticized for reappointing Jo Luck Wilson as director of the state Parks and Tourism Department.

Cockrill said many Republicans and supporters of White had believed Ms. Wilson was part of "the group we voted out."

"They want to see elephant stickers on everybody out there (at the Capitol)," he said. "We want to get good people out there first and get Frank White and Republican people second."

Ironically, White was speaking to the Arkansas Broadcasters Association at the Coachman's Inn at the same time as Cockrill's speech. White had asked Cockrill to speak for him at the council's meeting because he had the prior engagement.

Cockrill said later if he had had more time to think about his speaking engagement, he would have prepared a more "substantial text."

Black LR businessmen file to obtain redress

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