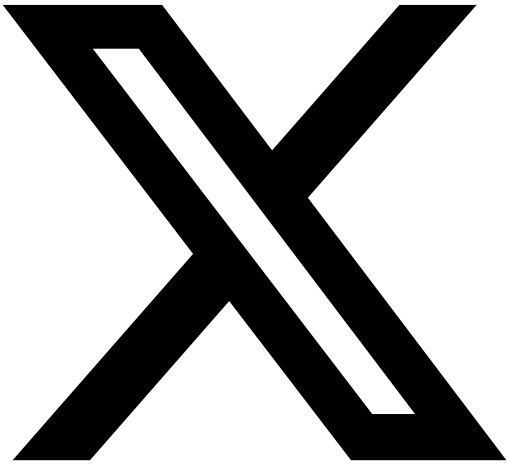
Ground Breaking Ceremony Held at new North Shelby School Project Location !!!– Perfect Example of a Publicity Stunt to Hide Waste and Maybe Some Fraud and Political Corruption Too!!??– Report, history and evaluation by Robert A. Williams

Editor's Note: Folks, this turned out to be a relatively long article because of all the pieces of the puzzle that had to be fit together. If you are interested in the truth, read on. If not, maybe you should just move on to another web site.



css shovels

This is a story that goes way back to the days of segregated schools. I remember those days, but many may not remember. So,

let’s just start at the beginning. And remember, nobody else is going to tell you the truth about this situation.

After the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education US Supreme Court case that outlawed segregation in public schools, Cleveland County and North Carolina drug their heels in implementing integration. NC Governor Terry Sanford at one time even had a plan to totally shut down public schools if the Feds tried to hurry up the integration process.

What we had in Cleveland County Schools in those days was two completely separate sets of schools. One set for black students and one set for white students. Some of the newest schools in the county at that time were actually black schools. (Later on the old North Shelby School was one of the previously black schools with a new name.) There were no special schools for handicapped students in those days. That type of school would have to wait for many more years and many more Court decisions. This new North Shelby School Project is not being built out of the kindness of the School Board’s heart. Although they would like you to believe so.

The fact is in the years between 1954 and 1967 the school systems in Cleveland County were kept segregated as long as possible. A complete K-12 class equivalent was caught up in this process before Cleveland County Schools were integrated. During this time new schools were being built. Whites had no intention of ever sending their white children to previously black schools. Or let their children swim along with blacks in school swimming pools. Nothing was done to help handicapped students because the integration “shock” took highest priority.

The school construction was completed in county schools in time for the 1967-68 class at Burns and Crest High Schools. Which did not have auditoriums and swimming pools that would have had an uncertainty as to how black and white students would react to such a mixed use environment. Most to all

county black schools were sold cheap to get them off the books so no white children would ever have to use the previously black school facilities.

Probably the most egregious misuse of school property was the cheap sale of the black Philadelphia School property to F.L. Beam. Beam turned the school into a so called “Rest Home” where he would house mentally ill sexual criminals who were released from prison with no place to go. It was a win-win situation for the State Government as Central Prison would release these mentally ill sex offenders and pay F.L. Beam well for taking them in.

It was not such a good deal for the Beam’s “inmates” or the community around Philadelphia, Lawndale and Fallston. Beam was mean and abusive to his inmates. Beam would farm out his inmates to dig graves or whatever and pocket most of the money for himself. The mentally handicapped and criminal sex offenders were allowed to walk the roads to Fallston and Lawndale and through Philadelphia. Many complaints were made from citizens, but they were all covered up since Philadelphia, a black community, Fallston and Lawndale were rural and considered backwoods by the political powers to be in Shelby who took over Cleveland County in 1966 when they abolished district elections. Nobody wanted such a facility in their back yards so Philadelphia, Fallston and Lawndale, having little to no political influence, were stuck with the problem.

After many years of being bulletproof from accountability, F.L. Beam’s mean and abusive behavior to his inmates finally caught up with him. As I recall, a mentally ill inmate Beam had digging a grave angered Beam, so Beam beat him to death with a shovel. F.L. Beam, despite all his political connections, had gone too far this time. Beam was charged, convicted and went to prison. By now an old man, Beam died in prison as I remember.

When I read in the Shelby Star a few months back about the new Shooting Range having bullets ricocheting out of the range endangering neighbors. The Range hired the mentally handicapped folks (many graduates of North Shelby School) from Cleveland Vocational Industries, Inc. to pick up rocks at the range. Shooting Range Director Sam Lockridge was quoted as saying it was a "win-win situation." That reminded me of the F.L. Beam situation. It also indicated to me that taking unfair advantage of the mentally challenged and handicapped students and handicapped people still exists in Cleveland County. Including the new North Shelby School Project where the Star headlined the ground breaking ceremony Sunday February 26, 2017. The Ground Breaking was just as phony as well as many other things associated with the new North Shelby School project. Read on. You will probably get mad.

Back to the time line:

F.L. Beam's "rest home" situation, while sad that a mentally ill man was beaten to death and Beam went to prison, didn't have much of an effect on the mentally and physically challenged in Cleveland County or North Carolina. What got the attention in Cleveland County was the son of a friend of mine who was deaf. There was no facility or program in Cleveland County, or Shelby School System for the deaf boy. The school system wasn't about to start one and told my friend so in no uncertain terms. My friend decided to take what actions were necessary and when the talking ran out, she took Shelby Schools to Court. And won BIG! The Courts ruled Shelby Schools would implement a program for the deaf and Shelby Schools were smart enough to implement one.

These and other legal actions, probably more than anything else taught the schools in Cleveland County a lesson. They had to start programs for deaf students. Other handicaps and other court orders from other cases made them take action there as well. Actions that they did not intend to do otherwise. I have come to the conclusion that you can't complain enough to the

leaders in Cleveland County to make them do what is right. Only legal actions and elections get their attention. More information about that in other articles.

So, all of this is the reason a North Shelby School was started. Tragic abuse of the mentally and physically handicapped resulted in jail time for some, successful lawsuits by others. Brotherly love mattered very little. And, in reality, it still matters little.

These court orders required schools in Cleveland County to initiate educational plans for the mentally and physically handicapped student. The school boards decided, as they usually do, to herd all “these people” into one place. So, did the school boards in Cleveland County build a “special school” for these special students because it was the right thing to do?? Oh no. County schools had gotten rid of all their old black school property but Shelby Schools had not. So, a poorly constructed and poorly maintained old black school was fixed up a little and cleaned up a little and renamed the North Shelby School.

The first North Shelby School, facility wise, was better than nothing. Staffing the first North Shelby School actually turned out well over time. The staff actually interacting with the special needs students and basically did the best with what they had. Most of the time. There still was some cover-up situations forced on the staff when things went amiss.

Like when the 15 year old mentally challenged white girl was caught having sex with a 22 year old black boy on the North Shelby School activity bus that took them to an event in Raleigh. The parents of the white girl found out and complained so the Cleveland County DSS was called in and took the girl from school put her in a foster home. Basically away from her parents as a punishment. As for North Shelby School staff (at that time), they claimed the girl was 16 and there was no statutory rape. The parents showed me the girl’s birth

certificate, which DSS and school officials also had, and the girl was 15. The parents were poor and got no justice. Same as usual for Cleveland County. Only when the girl “aged-out” of the system was she able to see her parents again.

OK. Now let’s fast forward a bit and examine what is going on with the North Shelby School and the various goings on with the now merged school system called Cleveland County Schools (CCS). Especially the CCS School Board.

The CCS School Board says their Strategic Plan shows that a NEW North Shelby School facility was their Number 1 priority in 2008 and again in 2013. Hokum, all Hokum!!! The CCS Board spent about $40 million to build the Shelby Middle School (for 800 students yet only 400 students attend) and the renovation of the Old Shelby High School to have a first class and fancy Central Services office complex for the CCS big wheels and administration. The priority for a new North Shelby School was last for the CCS Board, not first. Same as auditoriums for Burns and Crest High Schools. The CCS School Board, when examined closely, have all, except for Danny Blanton, been bald faced liars about many things. From the school credit card fraud cover-up, to the $millions in waste, to the sex crimes, to building the New North Shelby School, to building auditoriums at Burns and Crest and who knows what else.

And, besides all of this discussion about strategic plans, where is this strategic plan CCS talks about so much? If such a strategic plan actually exists, it is a public record and I have asked for it in writing. CCS, Put up or shut up about any such Strategic plan. But no dice from CCS. No strategic plan has been provided and no acknowledgment to my legal request-made in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act as well as North Carolina Public records laws. It certainly appears that the CCS Board is not only bald faced liars about what is in their strategic plan that effectively does not exist, they are crooks too for not following the law.

I should say liars, crooks and more. Let's just stick to the lies for a bit. Recent lies, but in no particular order.

In the past several years both James Love Elementary School and Graham Elementary have received multiple failing grades. Both are at the point of the State Board of Education taking over the operation of those schools. Misuse of North Shelby School students have figured in to CCS covering up the failures at James Love and Graham.

At Graham, whole classes of North Shelby School students had their IEPs changed so they could be transferred to Graham. IEP stands for "Individual Education Plan." "Individual" is the key word here. Changing a whole class full of individual plans to the same thing is like me winning the Powerball Lottery twelve times in a row. Possible, but statistically pretty close to impossible. The hope was by moving these North Shelby students to Graham, the Graham School could be reclassified in such a way that the failing grade category would not apply, thereby keeping the State Board of Education off CCS's back for awhile.

But what about James Love? Doing the same thing they did at Graham would have been too obvious. So they regrouped and came up with a new idea. Build a new North Shelby School at James Love and hook the whole thing together. Superintendent Fisher says that is why he pushed the CCS Board to approving the new North Shelby School project to be built at James Love. To add an exceptional "educational opportunity" for North Shelby School students. Fisher never explains how moving North Shelby School to a failing school provides anything "exceptional" about such an educational opportunity. When the school board looked at the building plans they were told the connecting corridor doors between the new North Shelby School and the James Love School would be locked. Common sense tell us all that Fisher is blowing a smokescreen to hide the many failures within CCS.

Back to Graham School. Fisher and the CCS Board are blowing another smokescreen there. This smokescreen is called “Year Round School.” With CCS Board Chairman Phillip “Bully” Glover leading the charge of smoke blowers, the school board approved the new “Year Round Schedule” for Graham School. Scroll on back for the articles I wrote about that. Basic curiosity caused me to look at both the old schedule and the new Year Round Schedule to find out why the new schedule was supposed to be so much better than the old schedule? My question was if this new schedule was so great, why didn’t CCS go for the new schedule at all schools???

I quickly found out why. I counted the instructional days on the old Graham (and everywhere else) schedule and counted 180 days. Then I counted the instructional days on the new Year Round Schedule and counted 180 days. What?, the number of instructional days are the same??? I recounted and again got the same 180 days for both schedules. The days in school were just moved around a little. The whole batch of hoopla put out by Bully Glover and his cronies was hokum. A whole passel of made up lies with the express intent of trying to hide failing grades within the school system to fool the State Board of Education (who are easily fooled in the first place) and especially to fool the general public and voters in Cleveland County.

Listen up folks, This is a school board election year. When you hear Bully Glover bragging about the new Year Round Schedule at Graham, remind yourself to vote for someone else.

Now that the great idea to build a new North Shelby School was sneakily and very poorly rolled out by Bully Glover and his cronies, the word was that “money was no object.”

The original budget for the new North Shelby School was $10 million for a student population of 175. So, Bully and his cronies selected Roger Holland (of Holland and Hamrick) as their architect. Holland and Hamrick have been getting

basically all the work for Cleveland County Government, Schools and Cleveland Community College projects for years now. They put out building construction documents that are full of mistakes and go over budget every time by at wide margin. They bill on a percentage so if they go over budget they get paid that much more. Nobody in CCS, the Commissioners and the community college ask any questions.

Architect Roger Holland and a couple others were even given the old Doran Mill property, valued at around $800,000, for nothing by the Cleveland County Commissioners for a so called data center project, which never happened. In the meantime the Doran mill house was stripped of lumber that was then milled into flooring to go into Roger Holland and former county manager David Dear's NewGrass Brewery in uptown Shelby. Then Holland and his cronies stripped the scrap metal out of the mill property that some say brought in a million bucks to Holland, et al. Then Holland and Co. gave the property back to the county, some believe owing a tax bill. Yet Holland gets all the county work, including the new auditoriums at Burns and Crest High Schools. Go figure. I figure there is some hanky panky going on somewhere in all of this.

In the meantime Bully, without even looking at any options other that building the new North Shelby School on the James Love property, upon the phony advice of Supt. Fisher, gets one of his cronies to make a motion to approve the project and to build the new North Shelby School at James Love. Another of Bully's cronies seconded the motion and the project was approved with basically no discussion from the school board except from Danny Blanton. Blanton asked the common sense question "Why are we voting on this when we have not looked at anything else?" No matter to Bully and his cronies. Common sense and proper financial management is beyond their skill set.

Bully, Fisher and all the cronies thought everything was a done deal. But problems that should have been looked at before

the approval for the new North Shelby School soon started rolling in.

The first problem was the lay of the land at James Love. Deep gullies on the backside would require large volumes of fill dirt that the new North Shelby School would be constructed upon. Many North Shelby School students are wheelchair bound. A wheelchair getting loose on the property would surely result in a wild ride for the student. Serious injury was likely. Just the kind of thing that should have been looked at to begin with.

But, no problem for Bully and his crowd. Money was no problem. Buy the property next door to get the fill dirt so the mountains of dirt necessary wouldn't have to be trucked so far.

Then a Registered Professional Civil Engineer suggested they do some soil tests to determine if the new property dirt was acceptable to build upon. CCS hired some soil testing engineers out of Hickory and they did some testing on the new property and a few tests on the James Love property where the new North Shelby School waste go.

The soil tests were conclusive. Not only was the soil on the James Love property unacceptable for construction, so was the first four to six feet of soil on the new property. None of the CCS board understood the test reports, except Danny Blanton. Since the dirt issue would cost millions of dollars to fix. Blanton suggested looking at other property where such soil expenses were not so severe. Totally a common sense approach, but Nooooo. Money didn't mean anything to Bully and his crew. We have plenty of money to spend they said, criticizing Danny Blanton for being so level-headed.

Then Roger Holland finalized the bid documents for the new North Shelby School and the documents were sent out for bid. I looked over the building specifications and found major

problems. I sent written notice to every school board member that the school air conditioning system chiller had been specified by Holland to use a banned refrigerant and such equipment was also illegal to build in the USA. Also the equipment specified was a low efficiency out dated model such that if you scrapped it brand new and bought an efficient model, power bill savings would pay it off in just a few years. Not a word back from Bully and his cronies. So, I just decided to let Bully do his thing, waste taxpayer money and then report it. as we go. This is an election year and Bully is up for re-election.

By the way, the low bid was $12.4 million. Hickory Construction got the job and no Cleveland County subcontractors will be getting a piece of the action-according to reports. So Cleveland County taxpayers, the cost of building the new North Shelby School just went up $2.4 million and none of the 25,000 county residents on Food Stamps will get any work out of the project. Just Catawba County workers. Ain't that nice. Something like the county commissioners would do. Stupidity in the name of economic development.

Then, more recently, the dirt issue raised it's ugly head. Holland and company decided that the unacceptable dirt issue for the project was so risky that a bunch of so called "geo-piers" seven to 24 feet deep would be required to further stabilize the unacceptable soil prior to construction. Who knows if this will be enough to pass building code requirements?? But no matter, more money will fix that too. Building the new North Shelby School at another location as Danny Blanton suggested look more and more like the thing to do.

Now the cost of construction for the new North Shelby School has skyrocketed to $13.5 million. That does not even count the $1.1 million CCS already spent, but tried to hide, on the project by charging certain work to the James Love School account when the work was actually required because of the new

North Shelby School. I believe the legal term for spending out of one government account for something else is FRAUD. Fraud is a crime. Somebody read this article to the District Attorney.

Anyway, if you add all this up, the new North Shelby School is presently estimated to cost $14.6 million for about 88 students. In comparison, the Pinnacle Classical Academy (a new Charter School in Cleveland County), is building a K-12 school for about the same amount using private money for over 800 students. CCS is spending ten times as much per student. Pinnacle Classical Academy, in temporary quarters, is already scoring better than CCS in so many ways. Folks, are you getting the message? The Pinnacle Classical Academy Board of Directors are doing things the smart way and the CCS Board, run by Bully Glover, are doing things the stupid way. Bad stupid. Read on.

The “official” groundbreaking for the new North Shelby School was scheduled for 2:30 PM Sunday February 26, 2017, One year and four days after the bad decision to locate this school at the James Love location and all the other bad decisions along the way. Bully and his buddies had proved themselves right. They were going to build this school no matter what it cost. no matter how many mistakes were made and no matter how much of the cost over-runs were just a pure waste of taxpayer money.

I arrived at 1:30 PM that day. I walked completely around the location where the new North Shelby School was going to be constructed. I looked at everything. I took pictures of everything. I stood on the high ground and judged the backfill dirt would have to be higher that the house I aligned up with on the other side of the creek. I noticed who was there and who was not there.

I also inspected the truck load of soft dirt that had been dumped and spread for the school board to dig around in. Even

the ground breaking was going to be phony. No ground was actually broken. It was more like the School Board was playing in a sandbox than breaking ground for construction. I even inspected one of the ten shovels used for the groundbreaking ceremony. The shovel was made in the USA. I was glad of that. I took a picture of the shovel label. Mostly because there were some that were watching everything I did.

Later I learned the shovels would be taken back to the CCS shops and locked up until the next groundbreaking ceremony. It seems CCS employees that sometimes use shovels on the job don't get to use such top of the line tools. It struck me as ironic that Bully and his cronies would pinch pennies on tools their employees use and then turn around and waste $$Millions, much going to Roger Holland and perhaps others. No wonder many employees with CCS credit cards abused the cards on personal stuff. Monkey see-Monkey do I reckon. The big wheels were taking what they could get by with, so why not the peons (pee-ons)?

Of course there were the speeches and patting each other on the back. And the lies. Bully Glover even said he was as excited about the new North Shelby School project as when he was a boy on Christmas Morning. Bully also made a huge faux pas when he said "these people" which is a variant of "you people." This is a historical negative way of speaking in generalities about another race or an assumed "class" of people. Bully might as well have used the "N" word.

I don't think Bully had a clue about his faux pas, but seeing where the North Shelby School came from historically as previously described in this article, Bully should not have been so insensitive to so many in the group he was addressing. I understand being insensitive to others is the main characteristic of being a Bully, so Bully was just being himself.

All in all, the speechifying was basically the whole group

just patting themselves on the back and talking about what a long way they had come and how much teamwork it took. Of course those like me that had observed the way the CCS Board had avoided doing anything smart, the cover-ups of mistakes, the wastefulness of the whole thing had a different opinion.

In my opinion wasting $4.6 million taxpayer dollars is not acceptable. Hopefully the waste is limited to that $4.6 million. Experience shows that the waste will not be so limited. So folks, pay attention. This is an election year for the school board and Bully and two of his cronies are up for re-election. Stay tuned, run for the school board, get elected and send Bully, Kathy Falls and Rev. Donnie Thurman, Jr. home for good.

Editor's Note: Nothing in this article is meant to take away anything from the North Shelby School, Principal Allison Hodges and her staff. They are dedicated to what they do and who they do for. They are top of the line and can't help who they have to work for. The fault there lies with the voters who put Bully and his crew in office to start with.

This is a story that keeps on giving. Now, for the rest of the story. Paying for the new North Shelby School project.

For those citizens and taxpayers who haven't paid much attention, the money that will pay for the new North Shelby School project has not been sitting around in a savings account somewhere drawing little to no interest. This will be borrowed money with many strings attached. And taxpayers will be paying high interest rates.

This is how it worked out.

The CCS school board, the same crowd who didn't care how much this project was going to cost and didn't have the money themselves, went to the Cleveland County Commissioners for money to build the new North Shelby School project. The Commissioners didn't have the money either because of their

many years of high give-away spending. Remember the Commissioners sales tax increase on this past election year ballots that the voters rejected by a wide margin. The commissioners were reminded that the voters are not much interested in wasteful spending.

But the commissioners are resourceful in a very negative and likely crooked way. And they have some secret projects that they want to spend lots of tax money on without drawing much public attention. Also, the commissioners brag about how good their bond ratings are, yet selling more bonds would bring on more attention to their finances than the commissioners wanted people to find out about. So the commissioners decide to borrow the money.

Therefore, the commissioners had their administration and financial people cast about for some suckers to borrow from. It turns out the suckers the commissioners were looking for were not to be found as easily as the sucker taxpayers in Cleveland County that keep on putting the crooked commissioners back into office like we do. The people with such money to lend want and demand security (collateral) for their loans as well as many fees and high interest rates on their money. Also, the commissioners were impressed on how well the school board had suppressed the crazy financial details on the new North Shelby School project that they decided to do the same crazy wheeling and dealing too.

So, the commissioners used the new North Shelby School project as a smokescreen to go for a loan application to the money people. Only thing was, for the $13.5 million to build the new North Shelby School, the commissioners added another $20.5 million for their own secret purposes. The commissioners are now borrowing $34 million in the name of building a new North Shelby School. And now comes the rub. The collateral required by the money people for that $34 million loan.

Since the Commissioners had only one property that was good

enough for collateral and paid for the new Health Department was put up for collateral. Remember the Hospitals and HealthCare facilities, the old Health Department, etc. the commissioners sold for $100 million? Remember that the sale of the hospital included $23 million in advance to build a new Health Department. Remember the new Health Department that was built behind the DSS and was paid for out of that $23 million. You can now forget that the new Health Department was paid for. That property was used as PART of the collateral for the $34 million loan.

And, what would be the other part of the collateral??? The new North Shelby School itself. The School Board, with little discussion so the public would not catch on, cut the James Love School property up into sections and split off the part that the new North Shelby School will be built upon. That will be the other part of the collateral for the $34 million loan for the new North Shelby School.

But even that is a farce. The new North Shelby School will be connected to the existing James Love School because of the phony exceptional educational opportunity that Supt. Fisher keeps talking about but never explains adequately. But, since the properties are connected on purpose at the time of the new North Shelby School construction as well as the loan application, guess what??? If there is a missed payment on the $34 million loan, these properties will go into foreclosure proceedings. Then it may be possible for the loan owner to foreclose on not only the new Health Department and the new North Shelby School, but also foreclose on the James Love School too. Of course us taxpayers will see a BIG tax increase before this happens. It is likely we will see a big tax increase anyway. The Commissioners have another “black hole” for money project that we will cover as soon as possible.

All this is truly a dumb deal. Even for the CCS school board and the Cleveland County commissioners. So, of course they didn’t want the public to know much about it.

That is why the Commissioners scheduled a public hearing on this for January 3, 2017. And what is so strange about that? you ask. Well, public hearings are supposed to have notice given at least 10 days before. Count ten days before. That would be December 24, 2016. Christmas Eve. Who reads the fine print in the legal section on the back of the Shelby Star on Christmas Eve. NOBODY!!! Get the message, this public hearing was clearly and cleverly scheduled by the commissioners so nobody would know about it and nobody would show up in opposition to this crazy loan. Now get this. The School Board (except Bully and his cronies) were only notified by email by Supt. Fisher on Saturday evening, December 31, 2016 (New Year's Eve) of this public hearing on a loan application for the funding of the new North Shelby School. And who reads their emails on New Year's Eve??? Got the message. Even the School Board was "officially" kept in the dark about this crazy financial arrangement for the funding for the new North Shelby School project.

I certainly did not read the Shelby Star fine print legal notices on Christmas Eve and CCS Supt. Fisher did not copy me on his emails to the CCS Board on New Year's Eve. But I did get a copy of the Commissioner's Agenda for the January 3, 2017 a few hours in advance of the public hearing and spread the word.

A number of people showed up at the public hearing on the $34 million loan to build the new North Shelby School project and spoke up loud and clear to the commissioners against such a crazy loan. Of course the commissioners had their minds made up in advance and didn't pay the citizens any attention. Nothing new to that.

As far as those short sighted and narrow minded folks that think the CCS did well in getting the new North Shelby School project to this point, I would add that this school could have been built with exactly the same features and over $4 million cheaper if a location had been selected wisely. Everyone could

be proud, except maybe Roger Holland. Spending $4 million more for correcting unacceptable dirt is more than unwise. It is flat out stupid.

Also, Scroll on back to previous article about this phony public hearing. This article is long enough for most people to get the idea. Not only Bully and his cronies should be voted off the school board this 2017 election, but the commissioners (all of them) should also be gotten rid of in upcoming elections.

I am only one of over 60,000 registered voters in Cleveland County. The rest of you are going to have to get informed and help with the work of getting rid of the wasteful and crooked elected officials in government: County, State and Federal. I am sure that I will do my part. I am not so sure about the rest of you registered voters. But rest assured, you as well as I. will be paying for a good government whether we get one or not.