# Gardner-Webb Going Broke!!??? —Voluntary and Involuntary Resignations Required to Shore Up Finances —Report and evaluation by Robert a. Williams

When you read the Shelby Star article entitled “Gardner-Webb offering voluntary resignation packages” to 350 employees; you have to take off the rose colored glasses, hold your nose and just cut through the crap to understand anything. A voluntary resignation package is a way to fire an employee and give them some sort of benefit package so they keep their mouths shut and won’t file a lawsuit over a retirement pension they will not be getting. An involuntary resignation is when you are just fired. Either way you are out of a job and you will NOT be getting any retirement pay from Gardner-Webb. All in the name of improving the financial situation of the business.

That is what the Star reported, which was basically a press release from Gardner-Webb to put them in the best light possible to the public regarding whatever bad situation their financials are in. If past experience with other businesses is a guide, when Gardner-Webb gets all the suckers to take voluntary resignation packages, they will search out the most senior folks just shy of retirement, but not yet eligible for retirement (those with the most to lose and Gardner-Webb with the most to gain) and fire as many of those as possible.

It’s an old trick to steal money out of pension accounts and use it for other purposes. To pay bonus’s for favorites, to pay extra dividends to stockholders or sometimes to keep from

going bankrupt. Duke Power got rid of a lot of employees that way a few years ago. Then they took the money saved, along with other money, and bought out the old Carolina Power and Light company and others to become Duke Energy, the largest power company in the USA. I don't know about you, but I never noticed any reduction in my power bill. I suspect Duke would say my power bill would have been even higher if they had not done such things.

Bottom line in understanding the Star article and what is really going on at Gardner-Webb is to consider what they have done in the past. They colluded with the County Commissioners to sell some land that was bequeathed to Gardner-Webb to a middleman cheap and the land was then resold to Cleveland County by the middleman at double the price. The middleman actually owned the land for only one minute as the deed from Gardner-Webb to the middleman was stamped at the Register of Deeds office and then the deed from the middleman to Cleveland County was stamped one minute later. And, the Chairman of the County Commissioners just happened to be a Trustee at Gardner-Webb. Not a word of this was ever printed in the Shelby Star although all the documents are right there in the files at the Register of Deeds Office. I can name all the names if anybody cares. If the original records happen to turn up missing over the years, I have copies.

Then, there was the time Gardner-Webb changed a grade for a star basketball player so he wouldn't flunk out. The word got out and there was big controversy. Lots of lies and cover-ups. I think it took ten years for all that to blow over. Gardner Webb administration, at the highest level, was involved in that.

More recently, that I can write about, was when a Cleveland County School Superintendent was in hot water over the school credit card fraud controversy and the School Board was in full cover-up mode, the Superintendent decides to "retire" (although retirement was not in his extended multi-year

contract-only resignation was allowed with a 90 day notice), Gardner-Webb made a nice cushy job where the Superintendent could knock down his high dollar pay and keep his mouth shut. Which he did keep his mouth shut. Many believe the Superintendent “retired” to act as a “sacrificial lamb” so the school board could just say “Case Closed.”

Then, there was Gardner-Webb’s Godbold School of Business’ “study” that stated renovating the old historic Courthouse to become the Earl Scruggs Center would bring $220 million into Cleveland County over a ten year period. The Earl Scruggs Center has been open several years now and requires county and city tax money to pay the power bill.

Even the old Doran Mill property that the Commissioners actually gave away for nothing to the Dover Technology Group for an economical development project that never happened ended up with some Gardner-Webb involvement. A Partner in the group took timbers from the old mill and milled them into flooring for the NewGrass Brewery as well as allegedly selling scrap metal out of the mill for over a million dollars. When the original grand ideas for the mill property did not pan out, the Group put the property out for sale at very high prices. They advertised with an out of town real estate group to market the property at high prices as an industrial facility that would include a distillery AND a Gardner-Webb “Business Incubator. I think that particular For Sale sign is still up. Gardner-Webb went along with the scheme, Only thing was outside business folks were savvy enough not to fall for the scam. And why should they. The Commissioners just sold to Clearwater Paper property (for expansion) valued at $4.5 million for $1. That is right-ONE DOLLAR. In the end all the grand schemes failed and the Dover Group just gave the old Dover Mill property, with all the assets stripped out and sold, back to Cleveland County to keep from having to pay property taxes on the place.

So, who knows what Gardner-Webb is up to? You sure can’t tell

from the Shelby Star article that comes out in print today. And Gardner-Webb ain’t telling neither. The only thing for sure is many employees will be out of jobs and the Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership will never mention it. As well as the County Commissioners who will be running for re-election.