

A Pool Table in Mayberry

November 1994

On a recent episode of *Andy Griffith*, the church in Mayberry had been bequeathed five hundred dollars by a deceased member. The finance committee then invited suggestions from the “parishioners” on how the money should be spent.

Aunt Bea, spokeswoman for the ladies’ choir, made an emotional appeal for new choir robes, even threatening to disband the choir if the committee didn’t accede to her demands. Howard Sprague, ever the practical sort, argued for repair on the building as a faulty drainage problem had caused the foundation to settle five degrees off level.

The third suggestion was timidly offered by another member, who noted that his request was not quite so “religious” as Aunt Bea’s choir robes. This fellow wanted the church to buy a pool table and place it in the basement. His reasoning? That it might attract more men to the socials sponsored by the church.

The debate then began between leveling the foundation and buying the choir robes – the suggestion of the pool table was met with disdain and dismissed. So how would this sticky situation be handled today?

First, the acquisition of a pool table would not be looked upon in disfavor by modern churches which spend millions of dollars to build sports and recreation annexes. The idea of using worldly “bait” to attract non-Christians has become a staple in post-Mayberry religious practice.

Secondly, Aunt Bea would have a hissy-fit at the thinly veiled pop-rock productions that have replaced her choir’s solemn hymns, but she probably wouldn’t realize that the same lack of Bible authority that permits choirs (and robes) also permits secular music ministries.

Finally, as chairman of the finance committee, Sheriff Taylor was to cast the tie-breaking vote between Aunt Bea and Howard – a lose/lose proposition. In one scene, as Aunt Bea is serving Andy all of his favorite dishes, Opie whispers, “Pa, is this what they call ‘lobbying’?”

Mayberry politics are still alive and well today. Even among brethren lobbying is sometimes put before love.

The lesson from Mayberry: some things never change, other things get worse.