

STUDYING COUNTY GOVERNMENT

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The jungle of American Democracy is going to receive official attention. We refer to County Government, and to the commission that Governor McLean has recently appointed to make a thorough investigation of county government and to recommend measures looking to the improvement and modernizing of the present system in North Carolina. The Commission appointed by the Governor is as follows: E. C. Brooks, Raleigh, Chairman; A. C. McIntosh, Chapel Hill; Frank P. Spruill, Rocky Mount; E. M. Lyda, Asheville; F. H. Coffey, Lenoir; J. A. Orrell, Wilmington; S. T. White, Greenville; R. L. Stowe, Belmont; G. V. Cooper, Kinston; D. W. Newsom, Durham; G. G. Stancill, Morganton; and E. B. Bridges, Charlotte.

We Lead Off

Again North Carolina leads off. For some years local clubs and public-spirited individuals in various states have been studying county government, but so far as we know this is the first time that any governor has appointed a state commission to investigate county government and to make recommendations for improving the present system.

The lack of interest in county government in the past is very strange in view of the fact that everybody in the United States lives under some form of county government. So far as we know only one course on this subject has ever been offered in any American college or university, and that course attracted very few students. Mighty few books on the subject have ever been written. The 1917 Yearbook of the North Carolina Club at the University of North Carolina was the second volume to appear on the subject and it remains today one of the few standard books on county government. Under the direction of Dr. Branson, who for years has been studying county government and stressing the need for improvement, the library of the Department of Rural Social-Economics has assembled the most complete collection of books, pamphlets, and clippings on this subject to be found in the entire United States.

First-Hand Studies

For more than a year the Institute for Research in Social Science has had three field surveyors making first-hand studies of county government in a number of county court houses, at the invitation of the local county commissioners. To date six county surveys have been completed and are now on file. Invitations have been received from some twenty-seven other counties to make similar studies in those counties. The reports already completed are Pamlico, Edgecombe, Stanly, Surry, Alamance, and Macon. The counties scheduled for study during the present college year are Gates, Washington, Beaufort, Craven, Dare, Carteret, Greene, Onslow, Duplin, Sampson, Columbus, Warren, Halifax, Nash, Wilson, Robeson, Lee, Moore, Montgomery, Union, Cabarrus, Alleghany, Ashe, Caldwell, Burke, Rutherford, and Polk. When these counties have been surveyed there will have been collected a vast body of information about county government of a kind that no other state has ever attempted to assemble, information out of the court houses themselves, which information by the way is not for publication.

The Governor and members of the Commission have indicated their desire to make use of the assembled library on county government, and of the three research students and their reports, all of which have freely been placed at the disposal of the Commission.

It looks as if North Carolina is going to take the lead in another great cause. No more important commission has ever been appointed in this state than Governor McLean's County Government Commission.

ASHEVILLE'S PUBLICITY TAX

Many people are predicting that Western North Carolina is on the eve of a great boom such as Florida is experiencing. If these predictions come true the boom will be largely the result of the conscientious effort of this area in attempting to develop itself. Undoubtedly much of the prosperity of California and Florida is due to the large sums that have been spent on advertising the resources of those states. The natives of North Carolina

know that nature has been kind to the state, and we boast a great deal among ourselves, but we have made no great state-wide effort to let the outside world know about our many and wonderful attractions.

However, there is one area in the state that has under way a constructive development and publicity campaign, the area centering around Asheville. The September 24 issue of the Manufacturers Record has a splendid account of Asheville's publicity tax, and the fine results of her organized publicity campaign. It might be a profitable investment to make Asheville's idea a state-wide proposition. The following extract from the article appearing in the Manufacturers Record shows how Asheville taxes herself to raise a publicity fund:

Intelligent Planning

Constantly and consistently for 25 years Asheville has been advertising to the outside world the attractions and advantages of western North Carolina. And during the same period increasing numbers of progressive citizens have been mobilized in concerted efforts to promote the social and economic advancement of this region. Asheville and the whole section of which it is the center and metropolis have grown and prospered. The results of intelligent planning and concentration of purpose are manifest on every hand. The evidences of cooperative endeavor are apparent everywhere in this "Land of the Sky."

For many years the appropriations for advertising were small, but the campaigns, supported by united constructive effort at home, produced results far beyond the expectations of the pioneers in the field of community publicity. Activities were suspended during the World War period, but renewed with the return to normal conditions in the affairs of the nation.

All Property Benefits

Realizing that the benefits of advertising are distributed over the entire community, and that every property owner has an immediate return in the enhancement of values, the leaders in the movement proposed a municipal tax for publicity purposes. The idea was approved by the city authorities. An enabling act was drafted and passed by the state legislature. The proposal was submitted to the voters of Asheville and ratified by an overwhelming majority. The law provides that the City Commissioners may levy a special tax of not less than one-fortieth of 1 percent and not more than one-tenth of 1 percent on all taxable property. It is further provided that this fund shall be used exclusively for advertising, and that it shall be administered by the Asheville Chamber of Commerce under the joint direction of the City Commissioners and the executive board of the Chamber of Commerce.

A Five-Year Program

In 1924 the publicity tax levy was increased to the maximum as one of the major items in a five-year Program of Progress embracing 83 definite projects and activities. One hundred and forty-two citizens participated in the preparation of the program, which was organized and co-ordinated by a central committee of 25 community leaders drafted for the job by the Chamber of Commerce. A recent report reviewing the first year shows actual progress on every item in the program and a number of important projects accomplished or near completion. This program has attracted so much attention elsewhere that delegations from several other states have visited Asheville for the purpose of studying Chamber of Commerce methods.

The advertising budget for the five years is \$600,000. The revenue from the municipal tax the first year is approximately \$72,000. The remainder of the annual appropriation was subscribed by the hotels, banks, and realtors. The operating budget of the Chamber of Commerce, \$52,000, was subscribed by member firms and individuals in a five-day campaign which reached a successful conclusion at noon on the third day of the allotted time.

The national advertising campaign was inaugurated on January 1 of the current year. Reviewing the first eight months' operations, the officers of the Chamber of Commerce have disclosed a number of very interesting and inspiring facts.

KNOW NORTH CAROLINA

According to the federal Department of Commerce North Carolina had an estimated true wealth in 1922 of \$4,543,110,000, and was the third richest state in the South. Texas, with five times our area has twice our wealth, while Virginia ranks slightly ahead of us in estimated true wealth. However, in the annual production of wealth, which is perhaps far more important, North Carolina ranks second only to Texas in all the South. The output of our mines, forests, farms and industries for the year 1923 was around one billion six hundred million dollars, which was considerably more wealth than any other state in the South produced, Texas alone excepted. Both on the farm and in the factory North Carolina holds high rank among the states of the Union in the value of wealth created annually.

MAKING SKILLED ARTISANS

In this age of automatic machines and mass production, when the creative instinct is all but suppressed and there is scarcely any pride of workmanship, it is refreshing to discover at least one place where young people are learning real craftsmanship.

At Tryon, North Carolina, a beautiful little village on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge, is a novel industry, or more correctly a novel school. It has named itself the Tryon Toy-Makers and Wood Carvers. Here a dozen young men and women born and bred in the mountains, and denied all but the rudiments of an education, are proving themselves artists of a high quality. Their specialty is toys—not the cheap, fragile, gaudy kind displayed on the ten-cent counter, but sturdy and charming toys, made of mountain hardwoods, and fashioned with exquisite skill into the most original creations.

There are log cabins, covered wagons, horses, rabbits, chickens, automobiles and filling stations. There is Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Bears, The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, and other familiar Mother Goose characters. All are wrought with delicate precision and colored with gay enamels.

In addition to the toy-making, these young people are doing some excellent work as wood-carvers. In their quaint little show-room there are candle-sticks, trays, fruit bowls, chests, chairs and mantels—each piece a work of art.

Producing Artists

This interesting experiment in wood-working is not run as a commercial proposition, but as an agency through which the young people of the mountains may earn an honorable living and at the same time learn a skilled trade. The idea originated in the minds of Miss Eleanor Vance and Miss Charlotte Yale, who themselves became the designers and teachers. The project was launched twenty-five years ago as one of the Biltmore Industries and was moved to Tryon ten years ago. Its progress has been not rapid, but steady. It might have been more rapid had its objective been solely the production of toys. Instead the chief objective has been to train a limited number of boys and girls for lives of usefulness. More than a dozen have been trained up into finished artisans and sent forth to fill responsible positions.

No Mass Production

At present there are employed five girls, five boys, and two men—boys who have remained. I saw them at their work and I never saw more interested workers. They literally have to be driven away from their benches at night. The increasing demand for the toys and carvings could easily absorb the product of a larger force, and there are a dozen on the waiting list, but these fine ladies are unwilling to take on more than they can personally train. They consider that their real work is to produce men and women with deft fingers and sound characters; the toys are incidental.

On the other hand, there would be no scarcity of orders if they would produce in gross lots, but that gain would destroy the creative nature of the work. They want their boys to become skilled craftsmen, not machine operators.

Not all the applicants display an aptitude for this kind of work, but the many who do is evidence that the mountain boys and girls are rich in native ability and respond readily to intelligent and sympathetic direction.—Paul W. Wager.

COOPERATION PROGRESS

Organization of the farmers for the purpose of marketing their crops collectively is progressing. I believe that some day it will cover the entire field. Denmark has shown how, under the most adverse circumstances, it can transform the agriculture of a people. Wherever cooperative marketing is farthest advanced, either in the United States or abroad, there you find agriculture in its best estate; violent fluctuations in the markets eliminated; better prices to the producers without an increase in cost and sometimes with an actual decrease to the consumer; an approach to standardization of product; a more intelligent effort to adjust production to probable demand; a finer and more satisfying community life.

It will be many years, however, before the cooperatives of the staple farm products are sufficiently organized to take care of this ever-present problem of surplus. And this is a situation which, if left to itself, tends constantly to grow worse. For, as Professor Ely points out, when a manufacturer finds that he cannot market his product for cost of production, he can stop or reduce production and at the same time reduce expenses. The farmer cannot do this. His expenses largely go on whether his acreage planted is somewhat smaller or not. Having to meet these expenses anyway, the lower the price the larger must his acreage be to accomplish this.

If the producers of any farm product are only partly organized and attempt to take care of the surplus, the producers of that commodity who are not members of the cooperative receive the full benefit of the improved price without bearing any of the burdens incident to the surplus. . . . And thus, though the members of the cooperatives themselves received much larger returns than if they had not organized, the non-members have profited even more. It is difficult to maintain the morale of an organization when outsiders receive the benefits of the organization in a larger measure than do the members themselves.

Some day the farmers will be so thoroughly organized, I hope and believe, that they will be able successfully to cope with the surplus. But that day has not come yet. Meantime, are we to sit idle awaiting the further depletion of our soils and the ruin of our agriculture until we are incapable of meeting the needs of our increasing population? For when that time comes, as the economists point out, there will be another maladjustment. Then prices of farm products will be abnormally high.—Ex-Governor F. O. Lowden, in World's Work, October, 1925.

MUST FINANCE HIMSELF

In the countries of Europe where farming has reached its greatest success, the farmers have learned to finance themselves. No remedy will ultimately meet the farmer's situation until the latter places this keystone in the arch of cooperation. Our federal farm loan system has been of service to the farmer who has borrowed in sums of \$1,000 or more, but it has not, up to the present time, reached those who seek small loans as does the method in Europe under the Raiffeisen plan.

To Germany belongs perhaps the greatest credit for having devised the scheme by which farmers can do their own financing. It is grounded on the idea that each farmer in the organization shall be subject to unlimited liability for the debts of the whole. The result is that personal knowledge of each member becomes necessary to those in charge and great caution is exercised in making loans. It keeps down the number of members in an association and also eliminates farm holdings of large dimensions, since their owners do not care to assume unlimited liability. The effect of this plan is to put a premium on small farms which are intensively cultivated, rather than large acreage carelessly farmed. Moreover, it keeps the farmer's money in his own locality to a very great extent, and through the tying together of all the local organizations into one great central organization, gives powerful independent financial strength to the farmer, making him to a great degree free of unstabilized speculative financing of the cities.

Most of the farmer organizations of Europe have adopted a more or less modified form of the Raiffeisen system. It has done more to eliminate the usurer and financial control than any other thing in the farmer's world.—Huston Thompson.

THE BEST INVESTMENT

We hear of bond issues for permanent improvements—constructing roads, erecting buildings, installing water works and other things, but as a matter of fact there is but one permanent improvement or investment.

That is the money we spend for the education of our children.

We bond ourselves to build roads and the treading millions pound them into dust and the winds blow them away. We spend money for the erection of massive buildings of concrete and steel and in two hours fire reduces this magnificent structure to ashes. We invest our money in all of the appliances and devices necessary for life in a complex civilization and in a decade or two the things bought are obsolete or outgrown.

But the money we spend in purchasing an education for our children buys something which is as permanent as life itself. One generation of educated men and women in North Carolina would so increase the wealth of the state that the returns on this investment would be a thousand fold—a return of such magnitude in actual dollars and cents that the police would jail a man if he promised such returns on any other kind of an investment.

North Carolina made great progress during the past ten years because the boys and girls a generation ago got the rudiment of an education under the inspiration of Charles Brantley Aycock.

The kind of state North Carolina will be twenty-five years hence depends on the care with which we invest our money in the education of today's children—depends on whether or not we are niggardly and short-sighted in these expenditures, or whether we have a faith that believes that the money for education can be raised and the opportunity furnished every child to "burgeon out the best that is within him."—Kinston Free Press.

TENANT RATE INCREASES

The increase of tenantry in the United States is a fact that needs to be studied from many viewpoints. In 1880 46 percent of the people of the United States were tenants. In 1900 it had increased to 54 percent, and in 1920 it is estimated at 66 percent. The percentage is larger in the cities than in the rural districts, but it is increasing more rapidly in the rural districts than in the cities. In the cities in 1880 sixty-one percent were tenants, in 1900 it was 64 percent and in 1920 it is 66 percent. In the country in 1880 it was only 26 percent, in 1900 it had grown to 36 percent, and in 1920 it had reached 40 percent. This situation is important from an economic standpoint. As a rule the people who own their own homes constitute the most substantial citizenship from the material and industrial standpoint. They are far more likely to remain in the same community, and as a rule they will accumulate more wealth. But we believe that the question is more important still from a moral and religious standpoint. It is exceedingly difficult to do effective religious work among a constantly moving class of people. Such people are slower to connect themselves with the Church in any community; they hesitate to connect themselves with the Sunday school, or with any of the organizations of the Church, and they do not become interested in any of the local enterprises of the Church. The home is the foundation of our civilization; and when fifty-six percent of our people have no home of their own, it is a serious situation.—N. C. Christian Advocate.

THE LIVE COUNTRY PAPER

A country paper should not only be as readable as possible but as beneficial to the individual and the community as God will let you make it. Mark that down in your little book. Then this—a country paper must always be about three jumps ahead of its subscribers when it comes to seeing things and figuring on things that are good for Jim Jones or Tom Brown and for the place they live in. Just let the country paper keep this start over its subscribers all the time and they'll trail right along—and like as not get all swelled up thinking about how enterprising they are.

If the country paper doesn't take this lead—and here Ed Howe wags a monitory finger—something's bound to happen to it. Instead of running the town or the county, that paper'll mighty soon discover the town or the county is running it. Everybody'll come a-rarin' and a-snotin' round, telling the editor what to put in his paper and what will happen to him if he doesn't.

The country editor who allows this to happen to him is gone. Might just as well sell and hire himself out shucking corn. He's a failure.—Ed. Howe, editor The Atchison Globe, quoted by Robert Welles Ritchie in The Country Gentleman.