

The news in this publication is released for the press on receipt.

AUGUST 18, 1926

CHAPEL HILL, N. C.
 THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS

VOL. XII, NO. 40

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Entered as second-class matter November 14, 1914, at the Postoffice at Chapel Hill, N. C., under the act of August 24, 1918

PRISONERS ON COUNTY ROADS

STUDYING THE CHAIN-GANG

This study is one phase of a state-wide investigation of crime now in progress under the direction of the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University. It deals with 1,500 county road gang prisoners in the state. Other phases of this study based on Superior court indictments have already been presented through the News Letter. This study of our chain-gang population is centered around the question of the education of the prisoners in this group. It narrowed itself, so far as this point is concerned, to a test of the ability of the prisoners to read. For this purpose the Detroit Word Recognition Test and the Thorndike Test of Word Knowledge were used. The tests were given to the men in groups, usually gathered about the mess-hall table. At the same time certain other information was obtained. This includes age, occupation, marital status, residence, church membership, offense, and length of sentence. The last two items could usually be obtained from official records. The others, in most cases, it was necessary to obtain from the prisoner. In two counties were found records of age, and address, and in one of marital relation.

The following county prison camps were visited and studied: Alamance, Anson, Buncombe, Chatham, Davidson, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Guilford, Johnston, Lenoir, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Orange, Pitt, Robeson, Vance, Wake, Wilson, and the Rocky Mount Road District. Included in these camps also were some prisoners sentenced from the courts of Alleghany, Ashe, Catawba, Cherokee, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Pender, Person, Surry, Swain, and Wilkes counties.

Age of Prisoners

The prisoners range in age from 14 to 70 years. Two hundred eighty-six or nineteen percent of the total number are under 21 years old. This group includes 20 percent of the white prisoners and 18 percent of the negroes. Six of these boys—five negroes and one white—are under sixteen. A second group comprising 15 percent of the whites and 16 percent of the negroes are 21 to 22 years old. And a third group including 25 percent of each race are between the ages of 23 and 27 years. Thus 60 percent of the white prisoners and 59 percent of the negro prisoners are 27 years of age or younger.

Occupation

Of the 469 white men, 143 or 31 percent classified themselves as belonging to some skilled trade; 123 or 26 percent are farmers; 57 or 12 percent textile workers; 20 or about 4 percent workers in other factories, largely furniture; 69 or 15 percent unskilled laborers; and the remaining 57 scattered among a large number of occupations. Of the 1,052 negroes, 496 or 47 percent are unskilled laborers; 230 or 22 percent farmers; 85 or 8 percent factory workers, mostly in tobacco factories; 117 or 11 percent skilled or semi-skilled trades—mechanics, plasterers, etc.; 75 or about 7 percent domestic service; and the remaining 49 in various occupations. It is probable that the number in skilled trades of both races is too large. The prisoner in classifying himself doubtless gave himself the best rating possible. Having in many cases worked at many jobs, he probably chose to have recorded as his vocation the one that in his opinion gave him the highest social standing. In this respect, however, these figures do not differ from those recorded in the United States census.

Marital Status

Forty-seven percent of the total chain-gang population are single. By races this number includes 44 percent of the whites and 49 percent of the negroes. Eleven percent of the whites and 10 percent of the negroes are separated or divorced. Three percent of the total are widowed. The unmarried group seems to be excessively large.

Residence

Under this head the study attempted to ascertain two things: whether the prisoner lives in a city (meaning in this study a city or town of 2,500 inhabitants or more), in a small town, or in the country; and whether he is a

floaters, having recently come into the state, or moving about frequently within the state. Sixty-three percent of the total—55 percent of the white and 65 percent of the negro prisoners—live in cities; 9 percent of each race live in small towns; and 28 percent of the whole number—35 percent of the whites and 26 percent of the negroes—live in the country. Seventy-four white prisoners, 16 percent, and 169 negro prisoners, 15 percent, are non-residents, or floaters. Seventy-one percent of our population are rural, but only 28 percent of the chain-gang population live in the country.

Church Membership

This item, as most of the others, was obtained from the prisoner. An attempt was made to make the information as reliable as possible under these conditions. When the prisoner said that he was a member of the church, he was asked to name not only the denomination, but the individual church to which he belonged. He must give a definite and prompt answer. Thirty-eight percent of the whole number are members of the church. This includes 27 percent of the white prisoners and 43 percent of the negro prisoners. Forty-five percent of the whole population of the state ten years of age and above are church members. The percentage for males alone is somewhat lower.

Offenses

The offenses for which men are sentenced to the roads in North Carolina range from failure to pay auto hire to murder. Larceny is the most common offense for which negroes are sent to the roads. Of the 1,052 negroes included in this study, 828 or 31 percent were sentenced for this offense. Then follows violation of prohibition laws—manufacturing, selling, transporting, and possessing liquor—248 cases or 24 percent of the total; affrays and assaults, 142 cases or 14 percent of the whole, etc. Among the white prisoners violation of the prohibition laws leads. Of the 469 white prisoners 160 or 43 percent are serving time for the violation of the prohibition laws; 118 or 25 percent were convicted of larceny; and 49 or 10 percent of affray and assault.

Sentences

Sentences range from 15 days for being drunk and disorderly to 10 years. The ten-year sentences, whose number is small, occur only in cases of prisoners charged with two or more offenses or technical offenses. The largest single group—38 percent—are serving from one to two years. Nine percent are serving sentences shorter than three months. This group by races includes 7 percent of the whites and 10 percent of the negroes. Six percent of the whites and 11 percent of the negroes are in for three years or more. One to two years are the more frequent sentences for both races for all the more common offenses.

Educational Status

Twenty-nine percent of the whole number—16 percent of the white prisoners and 34 percent of the negro prisoners—are totally illiterate. Seventy-four percent of the whole number are unable to read a newspaper. This includes 52 percent of the whites and 83 percent of the negroes. Twelve prisoners out of the fifteen hundred have acquired a knowledge of the English language equal to that of a high school student or above, and five equal to that of a college graduate. Three of this educated group are negroes, one of whom has reached the first year of the high school and two the second year.

Of the group of illiterates and near-illiterates who cannot read a newspaper, 268 are boys of 14 to 20 years of age, boys still within the public-school age. Forty-five of these are white boys and 223 negro boys. This is practically one out of every ten white prisoners and one of every five negro prisoners. The outstanding facts seem to be (1) that the bulk of the chain-gang prisoners are relatively young; (2) that a large percent are unmarried; and (3) that the general level of education is very low.—Roy M. Brown.

AGRICULTURE IMPORTANT

The rapid industrial, commercial and financial development of the United States during the past quarter century

LANDLESSNESS AND CRIME

The ownership of land tethers a man to law and order better than all the laws of the statute books. It breeds in him a sense of personal worth and family pride. It identifies him with the community he lives in and gives him a proprietary interest in the church, the school, and other organizations and enterprises of his home town or home community. It enables him to hold his family together, makes him a better father, a better neighbor, and a better citizen, mainly because it makes him a stable, responsible member of society. Landless men, white or black, in town or country areas, tend to be restless, roving and irresponsible; and the restless, roving, irresponsible multitudes of America are a fundamental menace to society.—E. C. Branson.

has tended to obscure the changes in the position of American agriculture, to divert public attention from its problems, and to make their importance less clearly and generally understood. It is, however, vital to the economic prosperity, social advancement, political unity and national security of the country that all groups give full consideration to the position and problems of our agriculture in order to ascertain whether, in what respects and why our agriculture may have failed to keep pace with the rest of our economic development, and in order to establish a sound basis for co-operation and mutual adjustment in restoring that industry to its proper role in our national economic life.

Agriculture is a determining factor in our economic welfare. It normally exerts a purchasing power for nearly ten billion dollars' worth of goods and services of other groups annually. It purchases annually about a tenth of the value of the products of our manufacturing industries. It supplies materials upon which depend industries giving employment to nearly half of our industrial workers. It pays indirectly about two and a half billions in wages of urban workers. It supplies about an eighth of the total tonnage of freight carried by our railroads.

Its products constitute nearly half of the value of our exports. It pays in taxes one-fifth of the total cost of government. The capital invested in it in 1919 more than equalled that invested in our manufacturing industries, mines and railroads combined.

It represents about a fifth of our national wealth, and normally contributes about a sixth of the national income. Since it supplies not only the food for our industrial workers, but about a third of the materials of our industries and a market for a large part of their products, it forms the basis of our industrial prosperity. Since, also, the farm population forms about thirty percent of our total population and constitutes a reservoir from which must be drawn a large part of our future citizens, the standards of living and the social welfare of this group cannot but have an important effect upon the racial quality of our people.

Moreover, the political attitudes of this group must have in the future, as they have had in the past, a determining influence upon the character and development of our political institutions. These attitudes are inevitably affected by the economic and social condition of the agricultural community.

When, finally, it is realized that the strength of our agriculture may have a vital bearing on our national security in the future, it becomes clear that the position of agriculture involves a far-reaching question of national policy, rather than a problem of immediate, temporary or special adjustment. It requires the creation of a sound, consistent, far-sighted program of economic development, embracing and justly balancing all interests in the light of considerations of national security, economic prosperity, social welfare and political unity.—National Industrial Conference Board.

TOWN GROWTH

Some towns, like Topsy, just grow up. They concern themselves with neither direction nor destination. They accept

that which comes to them unbidden and unsought. They build without thought of present or future. If their streets are straight and broad it is only because they just happen to be so. If their commercial, industrial and residential sections do not encroach upon one another it does not indicate that it is because forces have been working to prevent such encroachment. If towns of this type grow and prosper it is because they enjoy some peculiar natural advantage which forbids community stagnancy.

And then there is another type of town. They have both direction and destination. They seek out and bid to come that which they otherwise would not be given the privilege of accepting. They build like the engineer, giving thought to the unity of the whole and the relationship of the component parts. Their streets are purposely straight and broad. They preserve well defined boundaries between the residential, commercial and industrial districts. Even without the advantage of natural opportunities towns of this type grow and prosper.

Thus it behooves every town to make the best of what it has and then to discover more that it may make the best of that also. Established communities are deprived of the privilege of determining their own beginnings but they are the masters of their own destinies.—From the Madison Wisconsin Journal, in Charlotte Observer.

CONSERVING HEALTH

One newspaper is quoted as stating that the most important happening in this country last year was the birth of 2,000,000 children. How many of them lived? This is not known accurately, because there

remain eighteen states whose registration of births is so incomplete as to exclude them from the birth registration area. Of the thirty states in this country within the registration area, one child in every thirteen born dies during its first year. If the same ratio applies to the states whose birth registration is incomplete we have a total loss of 190,000 American children a year.

That is startling, but it is a long way from the day when parents were considered fortunate if they were able to bring up two out of every three of their children.

Still, it leaves us behind five other nations, including New Zealand, the best off of all countries which keep books on their greatest asset. New Zealand loses only one in twenty of its children during the first year.

But there are things almost as bad as death. There are children unfitted or not half-fitted for life. And there are hordes of them just enough handicapped physically or mentally to be drawn into the ranks of those who may labor long but receive little happiness or substance.

Studies made in many communities indicate that millions of American school children suffer from malnutrition or physical defects, most of which can be prevented and many of which can be corrected.

They range from 75 percent with dental defects, to one-half of one percent with organic heart trouble. In between come those with tuberculosis, defects of vision, etc.

Then as to mothers: According to the United States Census Bureau, 17,800 women in the United States of America died from conditions caused by childbirth in 1919. In 1920 the rate rose to eight per 1,000. In Italy, crowded as she is, only five mothers die per 1,000.

Sixteen nations have a lower death rate for mothers in childbirth than we have.—California Health Bulletin.

**EXPENDITURE FOR TEACHING AND SUPERVISION
 Per Child Enrolled in Rural Schools, 1924-25**

In the following table, based on information released by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the counties are ranked according to the amount spent on teaching and supervision per child enrolled in rural schools in 1924-25.

New Hanover leads, the average amount spent on teaching and supervision per child enrolled in rural schools being \$35.85. Scotland ranks last with only \$12.10 or about one-third as much per child.

The average expenditure on teaching and supervision per child enrolled in city schools was \$33.07. The average per rural child was \$17.98.

The rank of the counties in current expenditures on teaching and supervision per child enrolled is largely the result of (1) length of school term, (2) quality, and thus cost, of teachers, and (3) the white-negro school population ratio. The length of the school term and superior quality of teachers mainly explain why the average city child has nearly twice as much spent on him for instruction as the rural child.

Department of Rural Social-Economics, University of North Carolina

Rank	County	Expenditure per child enrolled	Rank	County	Expenditure per child enrolled
1	New Hanover	\$35.85	51	Martin	\$17.37
2	Durham	31.53	52	Rutherford	17.32
3	Currituck	28.68	53	Tyrrell	17.30
4	Buncombe	28.08	54	Iredell	17.15
5	Transylvania	26.48	55	Chowan	16.97
6	Dare	25.76	56	Camden	16.87
7	Gaston	25.46	56	Haywood	16.87
8	Craven	25.28	58	Harnett	16.81
9	Pamlico	25.07	59	Nash	16.69
10	Guilford	24.66	60	Burke	16.64
11	Polk	23.86	61	Cabarrus	16.30
12	Jackson	22.71	62	Brunswick	16.21
13	Henderson	22.78	63	Stanly	16.07
14	Garteret	21.68	64	Mitchell	15.97
15	Montgomery	21.46	65	Gates	15.91
16	Catawba	21.16	66	Wilkes	15.88
17	Alamance	20.90	67	Stokes	15.86
18	Vance	20.87	68	Randolph	15.80
19	Mecklenburg	20.86	69	Yadkin	15.78
20	Rockingham	20.85	70	Person	15.70
21	Moore	20.80	71	Yancey	15.60
22	Alexander	20.47	72	Sampson	15.56
23	Swain	20.35	73	Ashe	15.43
24	McDowell	20.31	73	Johnston	15.43
25	Hyde	20.24	75	Lee	15.40
26	Rowan	20.17	76	Jones	15.38
27	Pender	20.09	77	Pitt	15.25
28	Forsyth	19.91	78	Union	15.24
29	Avery	19.60	79	Bertie	15.16
30	Caldwell	19.41	79	Cleveland	15.15
31	Wilson	19.29	81	Hertford	15.03
32	Graham	19.07	82	Watauga	14.97
33	Northampton	18.90	83	Alleghany	14.96
34	Washington	18.89	84	Madison	14.92
35	Davie	18.80	85	Warren	14.85
36	Wake	18.77	86	Greene	14.76
37	Granville	18.39	87	Franklin	14.39
38	Clay	18.37	88	Richmond	14.37
39	Davidson	18.30	89	Cherokee	14.33
40	Cumberland	18.21	90	Edgecombe	14.30
41	Bladen	18.14	91	Surry	14.26
42	Orange	18.10	92	Anson	14.21
43	Columbus	18.03	93	Robeson	14.13
44	Lincoln	17.74	94	Hoke	14.12
44	Pasquotank	17.74	95	Lenoir	14.00
46	Chatham	17.61	96	Perquimans	13.95
47	Wayne	17.53	97	Duplin	13.68
48	Macon	17.55	98	Halifax	12.55
49	Beaufort	17.51	99	Caswell	12.78
50	Onslow	17.44	100	Scotland	12.10