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IMPROVED COUNTY GOVERNMENT

COUNTY ROAD LEGISLATION

Until the good roads movement began about twelve or fifteen years ago there were no county highway commissions in the state. The board of county commissioners exercised a general supervision and control over roads while actual administration was left to a township organization. The free labor system prevailed and if there was a tax levy at all it was insignificant. When it became necessary or desirable to build roads on an extensive scale and to expend huge sums of money there was a tendency to create separate road boards. While this practice had something to commend it and proved successful in some instances it produced a divided authority which is not ordinarily desirable. At any rate, highway commissions have been created and abolished with surprising frequency, and local road laws have been enacted, revised and repealed in amazing numbers.

Local Acts Superfluous

Although the 1917 road act (c. s. 3631-95) and the 1919 road act (c. s. 3725-49) are still on the statute books and provide alternative plans for establishing county road commissions, nearly every one of the forty-seven county road commissions now in existence was created by a local act, that is, an act applying to one county only. Some counties created their first highway commissions under the provisions of one of the general statutes and later abolished them and set up specialized forms. In fact, some counties have had a new road law, or an existing one amended, at practically every session of the legislature for the last ten years. Every new representative seems to want to be the author of a road law for his county, and in some cases the same representative has drafted three or four such laws. Since 1917, and including that session, the general assembly has enacted, amended or repealed 546 public-local road acts. The acts have affected every single county.

At every session of the legislature there have been several acts passed depriving the county commissioners of road powers and setting up separate road commissions and several other acts abolishing similar commissions and restoring road powers to the county commissioners. An analysis of the public-local acts in force at the present time indicates that there are fifty-three counties in which the county commissioners exercise road powers and forty-seven which have separate road commissions. There are counties in both groups which have additional road commissions for special districts.

Variations Slight

The forty-seven county road commissions vary little in powers and functions; the main differences are in composition and in the manner of selecting the members. Of these forty-seven boards four were appointed by the governor, fourteen by the legislature, five elected by popular vote, sixteen chosen by the county commissioners, four chosen by a road electorate, and as to the other four boards the writer is uncertain. Twenty-two of the boards have three members each; two have four members; fifteen have five members; two have six members; three have seven members; one has eight members; and one has nine members. In some instances the members of the highway commission represent districts into which the county is divided, though in more cases they are chosen at large. In most cases the terms of the members are overlapping. In at least ten instances the board must be bi-partisan. These minor variations in structure have little significance and are no justification for the great mass of local legislation.

The fifty-three counties which at the moment have no separate county highway commissions have suffered no less from public-local legislation. Most, if not all, of them have had separate commissions at one time or another. Nearly every county in the state has seen its road law amended or completely re-drafted at every session of the legislature. Men appointed or elected to membership on road boards are usually legislated out of office before their terms expire. Road powers are transferred from board to board at the whim of the legislator. Large sums of

money are distributed for expenditure into the hands of such persons as the local representative may select. Bond issues, totaling millions of dollars, have been made the plaything of individual legislators.

Politics

An examination of the five hundred and forty-six public-local road acts enacted in the last ten years will show very clearly that politics has been the dominant motive in much of this legislation. A new road is not designed every two years for the sole purpose of improving the organization. Quite often the new organization is simply a vehicle by which to elevate one group to power and depose another. It will be noticed that in many of these road boards the membership was named by the legislature. Ordinarily, such a provision is included for one of two reasons: It is to insure that the board members shall belong to the dominant political party of the state or it is to give the author of the bill an opportunity to select the members of the commission. Neither of these reasons is defensible, though it must be admitted that individual selection may at times be the means of securing a very competent board. There is not the slightest justification for a partisan road board. In fact, there is every reason why it should be a bi-partisan board.

Unfortunately, politics have been manifested not only in the selection of the road commissions but in the locating of roads, the awarding of contracts, the appointment of highway officials and even in the employment of workmen. This has not been true in any universal way; highway work in some counties and at some periods has been singularly free from political influence. But in far too many cases highway administration has been honey-combed with politics. It is not surprising that this should have been the case. The income from bond issues and additional road levies suddenly swelled the volume of county expenditures to unprecedented proportions and the temptation to the politicians to dispense a few plums was irresistible.—Paul W. Wager.

THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM

This year the North Carolina Club at the State University is examining some of the immediate problems of democracy in the state. If North Carolina is to become the commonwealth which has been envisioned for it much must be attained through political action. Furthermore, legislation of opportunity must give place to legislation that is daring, forward-looking, constructive.

There is at least one group in the state which has a definite, constructive program to present to the approaching legislature. That is, the Legislative Council of North Carolina Women. This program was presented and analyzed before the North Carolina Club at its last meeting by Mrs. Mary O. Cowper, of Durham. The women's program includes five measures which the next legislature will be asked to pass. All of these measures are sound and reasonable and ought not to provoke the opposition of any legislator who is sincerely devoted to the public welfare.

1. A state-wide Australian Ballot Law: It seems inconceivable that a so-called progressive state will refuse any longer to give the citizens a chance to express themselves at the polls in secret and without coercion. Every other state in the Union has a secret ballot. Hundreds of people who have moved to North Carolina from other states refuse to vote here until they are permitted to vote in the dignified manner to which they have been accustomed. Our open ballot is a disgrace which it is hoped will be removed forever by the next General Assembly.

2. A law limiting the working day of children under sixteen to eight hours a day in industrial and mercantile pursuits: Our present law allows a child to work 60 hours a week or 11 hours a day.

The respectable employer who is not guilty of such exploitation of childhood ought not to have to compete with an employer who is lacking in moral sensibilities.

3. The establishment of a farm prison for women offenders older than

CREATION

If I had an acre of land—
O an acre of land!
Within cry of the hills, the high hills,
And the sea and the sand,
And a brook with its silvery voice—
I would dance and rejoice!
I would build a small house on my land—
So I would, a small home!
Within call of the woods, the high woods,
Within flight of the foam!
And O, I would dig, I would delve.
Make a world by myself!
O I would keep pigs, and some hens,
And grow apples and peas:
All things that would multiply,
flowers
For my hive of striped bees—
If I had an acre of land
Life should spring from my hand!
—Hamish Maclaren.

those received at Samarcand. There is no place now to receive immoral women except the county jail. Quite often they are merely ordered to leave the county. Neither method protects society nor makes any effort at reformation.

4. Two weeks' notice before marriage. Good marriage laws are more important than divorce laws. Many a hasty, unwise marriage would be prevented if such a law were in force. Too often a local magistrate is more interested in the marriage fee than in the future happiness of the young lives which he unites in marriage.

5. Taking over by the state of the Reformatory for colored girls. The women of the colored race have established and maintained such an institution at their own expense, but it is unfair that they should be required to carry the burden longer. The state owes it to society, and to these young offenders, to assume this responsibility.

SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHERS

In the table which appears elsewhere the counties are ranked according to the scholarship of their rural white teachers for the year 1925-26. By rural schools is meant all schools under the administration of a county superintendent. "The study," to quote from State School Facts, "is made by use of the index number. This particular index is called the scholarship index for the reason that it indicates the scholastic training of the average teacher employed in any given unit for the year under consideration. The whole scheme is based upon the kinds of certificates the teachers hold, and certificates in turn are based upon the amount of academic and professional credit which the teacher presents for certification. For example, a teacher who presents credit for two years' college work, including the required professional work, is issued a C certificate—primary, grammar grade, or high school. In this study all teachers holding C certificates are given a score of 600 in arriving at the scholarship index, because the training upon which such certificates are based is equivalent to four years of high school plus two years of college credit. In other words, a score of 100 is credited for each year's work done by the teacher after completing the elementary school. Four years in high school and four years in college gives a perfect score of 800 to the college graduate receiving the A certificate. The average score or scholarship index is obtained, therefore, by adding these scores and dividing by the total number of teachers." These are the figures by which the counties are ranked in the accompanying table.

The average scholastic training of all white teachers in the state, city and rural, in 1925-26 was nearly two years in college, the index being 579.1. The index in 1922-23 was 513.3. Thus during the last three years two-thirds of a college year has been added to the scholarship of the average white teacher in the state. If the state be divided into two parts, rural and city, it is found that the rate of progress has been greater in the rural systems than it has been in the city systems. "The average index for the rural schools has advanced from 464.5 to 536.8, whereas the city index has changed from 671.8 to 708.8. In other words, the gain in the rural index was .723 of a year and the city index gain was .370 of a year. How-

ever, sight must not be lost of the fact that the average index for city schools started with 671.8, nearly three years of college training, whereas the rural index for the same year was 464.5, slightly more than a half year of college training—a difference at the beginning of the period of over two years' training and of less than one and three-fourths years at the end of the period." The most that can be said is that the existing wide gap between the scholarship of rural and urban teachers is slowly closing, with no immediate prospects of any approach to equality. The urban teachers will always be better trained than the rural teachers.

Durham First

Durham county has the best trained rural white teachers of any county in the state. Her rural white teachers grade higher than the average for many of the city systems. Durham county has ranked first in rural white teacher scholarship for the last four years.

Currituck, a purely rural tidewater county, ranks next to Durham, and has held second place for the last three years. Currituck is really to be congratulated for the excellent quality of her white teachers, all of whom are rural.

Gaston now ranks third, having displaced Wilson last year. Gaston has moved up from ninth to third place in three years.

Cherokee seems to be contented with the cellar position which she has held without much competition for the last four years. Cherokee is really a very poor county, and is only one of a large number of counties in the state that simply cannot stand the pace being set

by the wealthier counties. A large number of counties that rank low in the accompanying table are actually spending a larger part of their wealth and income on education than are many of the wealthier counties that rank high in school matters. As a rule the poor counties are doing their best by their children, but they cannot do enough. They need more help from the outside. A large number of the rural white teachers of Cherokee and many other poor counties have never finished high school. It may be that children in these poor counties are not entitled to educational opportunities equal to those of the more fortunate counties, but it cannot be denied that they are entitled to a better chance than they now have. The discrepancy is too great to exist in a just state.

Slightly more than half, 55.3 percent, of the white teachers of the state hold certificates based on two years or more of college training, which is considered a sufficient minimum preparation for a teacher at present. An outstanding fact is that only 43.6 percent of the rural white teachers of the state have had as much as two years of college training, while 91.0 percent of the city white teachers have had two or more years of college training. This is a large difference. It simply means that in the rural schools the supply of well-trained teachers is inadequate. It is well that the existing gulf between urban and rural schools, as indicated by the scholarship of teachers, is gradually closing. We hope that the closing of the gap may be accelerated.—S. H. H., Jr.

SCHOLARSHIP OF RURAL WHITE TEACHERS, 1925-26

In the following table, based on State School Facts issued by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the counties are ranked according to the scholarship rating of rural white teachers. A score of 100 is credited for each year's work done by the teacher after completing the elementary school. Thus four years in high school and four years in college give a perfect score of 800, entitling the teacher to an A grade certificate. A score of 600 means a high school education plus two years in college.

The index for the rural white teachers of Durham county is 695.8, almost the equivalent to three years' college work. The index for such teachers in Cherokee county is 408.2, or barely out of high school. The counties rank between these two extremes.

State average index for all white teachers 579.1. The index for city white teachers is 708.8; for rural white teachers it is 536.8.

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Rank	County	Index	Rank	County	Index
1	Durham	695.8	50	Richmond	532.7
2	Currituck	679.5	52	Davie	531.3
3	Gaston	662.6	53	Harnett	531.0
4	Wilson	660.4	54	Person	530.3
5	Guilford	637.5	55	Duplin	527.2
6	Mecklenburg	636.9	56	Bladen	526.1
7	Scotland	625.9	57	Perquimans	526.9
8	New Hanover	621.9	58	McDowell	525.8
9	Pamlico	619.2	59	Iredell	524.4
10	Halifax	617.1	60	Franklin	522.6
11	Warren	605.1	61	Columbus	521.0
12	Cumberland	594.9	62	Greene	510.6
13	Granville	593.8	63	Haywood	509.8
14	Edgecombe	592.6	64	Tyrrell	505.9
15	Martin	591.7	65	Rowan	505.5
16	Northampton	589.9	66	Avery	504.5
17	Pitt	582.6	67	Beaufort	501.2
18	Jones	578.8	68	Union	500.0
19	Buncombe	577.9	68	Washington	500.0
20	Hertford	576.7	70	Carteret	497.5
21	Hoke	575.0	71	Caswell	497.3
22	Chowan	571.9	72	Moore	496.8
23	Rockingham	571.5	73	Stokes	495.6
24	Vance	570.0	74	Chatham	495.3
25	Pasquotank	568.3	75	Swain	495.1
26	Wake	568.2	76	Sampson	494.2
27	Polk	568.1	77	Cabarrus	494.1
28	Lenoir	567.4	78	Alexander	491.7
29	Orange	566.3	79	Cleveland	491.5
30	Bertie	564.3	80	Onslow	484.0
31	Forsyth	563.7	81	Henderson	483.3
31	Jackson	563.7	82	Craven	482.1
33	Gates	563.4	83	Mitchell	477.7
34	Nash	563.1	84	Graham	476.7
35	Robeson	561.5	85	Dare	471.4
36	Camden	557.6	86	Madison	470.4
37	Pender	556.4	87	Macon	468.7
38	Transylvania	554.8	88	Alleghany	464.6
39	Catawba	550.4	89	Caldwell	462.7
40	Montgomery	549.2	90	Burke	461.9
41	Anson	547.0	91	Ashe	458.8
42	Lee	543.5	92	Yadkin	456.5
43	Johnston	543.0	93	Watauga	456.0
44	Wayne	542.9	94	Clay	452.8
45	Lincoln	542.7	95	Brunswick	447.4
46	Stanly	541.9	96	Yancey	446.0
47	Hyde	540.4	97	Wilkes	445.0
48	Alamance	539.2	98	Randolph	441.6
49	Rutherford	533.6	99	Surry	440.0
50	Davidson	532.7	100	Cherokee	403.2