

Department of Public Schools

PROF. J. T. SMITH, EDITOR.

LOCAL TAXATION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Letter From J. Y. Joyner, Superintendent Public Instruction, Which Should Be Of Interest to Stokes County People.

Under section 4115 of the Public School Law of North Carolina, upon a petition of one fourth of the freeholders residing therein, a special tax district may be laid off within any definitely fixed boundaries, and upon approval of the said petition by the County Board of Education, an election upon a special tax for the support of schools within that district, not to exceed thirty cents on the hundred dollars valuation of property and ninety cents on the poll, must be ordered by the Board of County Commissioners. If a majority of the qualified voters vote for the special tax, said tax must be annually levied and the funds arising from it must be placed to the credit of said special tax district, and be subject to the order of the school committee of said special tax district, for the benefit of the public schools of the district. An election, therefore, upon local taxation for the improvement of its public schools is thus placed within easy reach of any school district in North Carolina. The funds raised from this source are of course in addition to all funds apportioned to the district from the general State and county fund.

Blanks for petitions and election returns will be furnished upon application to the State or county Superintendent of Public Instruction.

THE NEED OF IT.

This business of public education is like any other great business. For successfully conducting it enough capital must be invested in it to supply the necessary equipment and to employ the necessary number of competent, trained men and women to carry on the business according to modern, progressive business and professional principles. Comparative statistics show that North Carolina is still behind most of her sister States in teachers' salaries, in length of school terms, in value of school houses and equipment, and in general expenditures for school purposes. The average school term in the rural schools of North Carolina is 86 days. The average monthly salary of rural white teachers is \$30.24; the average annual salary is \$130.07.

For better houses and equipment, better teachers and more of them, better supervision and longer school term, more money is the fundamental need. The constitutional limit of general State and county taxation has already been reached in all the counties of the State but one. A special annual State appropriation of \$200,000 has already been made by the General Assembly to provide a four months' school term. It is evident, therefore, to any reasonable man, that the only practical means of further increasing the school fund of any local school is special local taxation. Practically all other States and all the communities of this State that have provided educational facilities adequate in buildings and equipment, length of term, number of teachers, salary and qualification of teachers and course of instruction to meet the demands of the

age for the education of all the children, have been compelled to resort to special local taxation to supplement the funds received from general taxation. More than 69 per cent. of all the funds raised for public schools in the United States is raised by local taxation. In some States, like Massachusetts, having the best-equipped public schools, more than 95 per cent. of the funds is raised by local taxation. In North Carolina, the only cities, towns and rural communities that have succeeded in providing a system of schools, open eight or ten months in the year, adequately equipped with houses and teachers, have been compelled to supplement their State and county school funds by local taxation. The experience of other States and of these communities in our own State compels, therefore, the conclusion that the only hope of largely increasing the present available funds for rural schools, and thereby making these schools equal to the demands of the age for the education of 82 per cent. of our population dwelling in the country is to be found in the adoption of local taxation.

POPULARITY AND SUCCESS OF IT IN NORTH CAROLINA.

In 1900 there were in North Carolina only 30 local tax districts and in 1907 there are 450 local tax districts. Three hundred and sixty-seven of these are rural districts or incorporated villages of not more than five or six hundred inhabitants. About one hundred of these have been established within the past twelve months. All the cities, larger towns and most of the larger villages of this State have adopted local taxation. These local tax districts are scattered from the seashore to the mountains and are to be found in all counties of the State except 12.

No town or district, after having given local taxation a fair trial, has, so far as I know, ever abandoned it permanently. A few that abandoned it temporarily readopted it after a few years. The communities that have adopted it will be found, as a rule, the most progressive and prosperous. These progressive communities, some of which have been bearing this additional burden of taxation for more than 20 years, would not continue voluntarily to bear it if they had not found that it paid financially, intellectually, and morally. Local taxation would not have spread so rapidly among a conservative people like ours if the success of it had not been demonstrated in the object-lessons of the communities that have adopted it.

SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF IT.

1. It provides more money for better houses and equipment, longer terms, more teachers, better salaries, better teachers and better schools.
2. More and better teachers and longer terms make possible better

graduation and classification, more rapid advancement, and more thorough and extensive instruction.

3. Preparation for college, or better preparation for life, through high school training, may thus be obtained for all children at home under the most favorable environment at much less expense than such preparation could be obtained for only a few children of the community at preparatory boarding-schools out of the community.

4. Good schools provided by local taxation are the best inducement to the best citizens to remain in a community where they can get the best advantages for the education of their children at home, and the best advertisement for the best class of immigrants from other communities and other States to become residents of such a community. The tide of immigration and of prosperity flows from ignorant communities with poor schools to intelligent communities with good schools.

5. Every cent of money, therefore, invested by local taxation in a better school, by inviting a better class of immigrants and preventing the disastrous drain upon the best blood of the community by other communities with better facilities, enhances the value of every cent of property in the community by increasing the demand for renting and purchasing it by the best people.

6. Every cent of money raised by local taxation for schools by any community remains in the community for the improvement of the community schools, and is invested, through better schools, in the minds, souls and characters of the rising generation, thereby, increasing the general intelligence and efficiency of the entire community, and elevating its character intellectually and morally.

7. It stimulates local pride and self-help; it cultivates self-reliance independence, public spirit and cooperative effort; it makes the community feel that the school is distinctly the community's school as well as the school of the State and county.

8. It ties closer to the school in pride and interest every man that pays an additional cent of school tax, makes him feel more keenly his individual responsibility and his individual right to have his child in school, and quickens his natural instinct to get the worth of his money by sending his child to school.

9. By providing longer terms, better equipment, and better schools, it increases attendance and inspires public confidence.

10. It is the cheapest and best way to educate any child, because it provides for his education at home, under the restraining influence of home environment and in association and sympathy with the children of his home community. It is the only way to provide for the adequate education of all of the children. For less than it would cost the biggest tax-payer in almost any special local tax

(Continued on page 15.)

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