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Raleigh, N. C. - - - April 24, 1913.

Southern Educational Conference

THAT was a notable session of the Southern Educational Conference which convened at Richmond last week—notable because the discussions were confined principally to the betterment of farm life conditions through co-operation. Simultaneously four meetings were held in the same city—the Farmers' Conference, the Business Men's Conference, the Conference of Virginia Preachers, and the Interstate Superintendents' Meeting. When so many different classes, who are indirectly dependent upon the farm for their daily bread and also for their success in life, feel the necessity of doing something in a co-operative way to save the goose that lays the golden egg, don't you think it is a stupid farmer who will stay out of a farmers' organization and refuse to cooperate with his fellows to protect and promote his own direct interests? In the farmers' part of the Conferences at Richmond, there were very few in attendance that did not belong to some active farmers' organization. President Barrett is right when he says the world now looks upon an unorganized farmer as a huge joke.

In the discussions of constructive business co-operation the Minnesota men took the lead, just as they have taken the lead in establishing constructive co-operation upon the correct fundamental basis, and their stories of their struggles and how they succeeded under adverse conditions were the most interesting features of the Farmers' Conference. Mr. W. J. Shuford also gave interesting accounts of the development of the Catawba Creamery at Hickory. While this creamery has not yet settled down to the bedrock co-operative principle of deferred dividends upon patronage, instead of the old competitive idea of getting direct benefits through concessions in prices, it is said that the basic principle of constructive co-operation will be established at an early date.

Untried schemes and plans were not discussed in the Farmers' Conference, and it can be further said to the credit of these conferences that it wasted no time in discussing resolutions. No doubt there were plenty of men in attendance who had favorite resolutions in their pockets, already neatly and carefully written, but the main idea of short talks on practical co-operation by men coming directly from the field of action was rigidly adhered to, and it left no time for attempts to "reform" things with resolutions. It was practical information the crowd wanted, not resolutions.

The business men, the preachers, and the superintendents of schools had their separate meetings to discuss the farmers' problems, and in these conferences many different ideas were advanced. The viewpoints were different and there must necessarily follow differences of opinions when men discuss theoretically problems connected with a vocation in which they are not themselves engaged. It was all, however, faithful effort to find a way to save the farmer and bring about better rural life conditions in the South.

"Outworn and Inadequate"

THAT is the indictment drawn by H. L. Whitfield, president of Mississippi College for Women, in the Southern Educational Conference at Richmond last week, the following charges being made against the school of the present day:

"It does not teach health.

"It does not train for home life.

"It does not train for parenthood.

"It gives no real instruction in scientific feeding and clothing.

"It does not teach how to make sanitary and convenient homes.

"It does not teach how to make beautiful homes.

"It does not train for proper use of leisure in the home.

"It contains no training for political citizenship that is worth the name."

Not only criticism, but constructive suggestions were offered by Dr. Whitfield. We quote from his address:

"The systems of all ages down to the present have been simply the administration of a prescribed dose of so much grammar and arithmetic and other studies, with the vague idea that they would somehow help the student in life. Nobody in this day really believes that this is the proper method, he said, and, since the basis of confidence has been removed, it is time to sweep away forever the entire superstructure, which now rests solely upon a false vase of custom and tradition.

"All instruction in the school should relate of the home and to actual living problems. There should be taught health, citizen-making, rather than the ethics of citizenship, the right use of leisure and practical religion."

Dr. Whitfield did not get his part of the conference to accept all his ideas, but he got attention all right. It will be a long time before practical knowledge is taught in our schools as the Mississippi man would like to see it done.

"Fertilizers Measure Ignorance"

SOME of those who attended the Richmond Conference ventured out of the beaten paths, as the following news report suggests:

"J. W. Newman, Commissioner of Agriculture of Kentucky, injected spirit into the morning session with an unsparing arraignment of the evils which he said follow the reckless use of commercial fertilizers. To this failing he attributed a large measure of the burden which Southern farmers bear today.

"Any man that farms with commercial fertilizers alone will land in the poor-house sooner or later," said Mr. Newman. "If you will add up the sum paid annually by Southern farmers for this item you will have an accurate measure of their ignorance and the annual waste of their unskilled tillage."

"The Southern farmer, he said, depends upon fertilizers as the panacea for all his soil ills, much in the same manner as the man who goes to the corner drug store for the pill which is attributed with power to cure all human ailments.

"Mr. Newman saw no relief from present conditions until the farmers of the South learn, through the experiment stations and other agencies, that nature has provided in abundance the fertilizing constituents, that nine-tenths of all land needs, and that crop rotation and farm-produced fertilizers stand ready to help all those who have learned the lesson."

Commissioner Watson, of South Carolina, also took about the same position with reference to the use of commercial fertilizer, and gave it as his opinion that three-fourths of the commercial fertilizers, under prevailing methods of farming, represent a waste and a loss. As this occurred in the Business Men's Conference, it brought a fertilizer manufacturer to his feet to render protest. But there was really no need for the fertilizer man to get excited, for he will not live to see his sales affected materially. As long as more than half the lands of the South are cultivated by tenants there will be a strong demand for fertilizer "pills." Our land owners who want to build up their soils will do well to make a note from Commissioner Newman and Watson and use farm-produced fertilizers, that is, if we can get it out of our heads that we are able to buy the high-priced commercial products every year but are not able to buy clover seed, vetch, seed beans, peas, etc.

Tinkering With the Weak Link

THERE should have been no necessity for the President to deliver his message to Congress in person, but there was, and he acted wisely in adopting that course. His gracious explanation of his personal presence was but a diplomatic way of saying, "Gentlemen, I have a message of importance for you and there is no way for me to be sure you get it except to meet you face to face and deliver it myself." That the necessity for such a dramatic departure from the ordinary method did exist can not be questioned by intelligent men. The Baltimore Sun in a recent editorial said:

"Any well-posted, candid man in Washington will tell you that not one Congressman—or Senator either—in twenty, as far back as can be recalled, ever really reads or grasps a Presidential message. In the past these messages have been sent to Congress in printed form, thrown upon the desks of members and rattled off by the reading clerks. Usually they have been appallingly long and the beginning of the reading has been the signal for a general evodus to the cloak rooms. The truth is the members of both houses have dodged listening to the messages as they would the plague and, through either lack of time or inclination, or both, have failed to read them themselves. The result is that the great bulk of both branches of Congress gleaned their knowledge of what the messages contained wholly from the headlines in the newspapers. Newspaper correspondents in Washington who have from time to time sought Congressional and Senatorial interviews on important phases of Presidential messages know better than anyone else the extent of the ignorance of the average Congressman on this subject. It is usually complete."

Think of the lamentable failure of the system which makes possible such a condition! When the chief representative of over ninety millions of people cannot secure the attention of Congress unless he appears in person, is some fundamental change not necessary? The evidence is abundant and cumulative that the legislative branch, in both State and nation, is the weak link in our governmental trinity. Its failure to properly discharge its functions is becoming more evident every year. Sundry movements have been inaugurated in recent years, the primary though unconscious, purpose of which is to patch up and strengthen this link and enable it to bear the strain of modern civilization. The latest is this action on the part of the President, who breaks the precedent of a century simply to make the legislative branch open its ears and hear what ninety millions of people are saying through the Chief Executive.

This failure of the legislative branch of government is not due to any great extent to the character of men who compose it, but is due to the system which was made for a different age and is thoroughly unsuited to the conditions existing today. Congress is practically without restriction in the passage of local and special laws, and as a result in one session it is called upon to consider from 30,000 to 40,000 bills—a thing absolutely impossible of accomplishment in any sane and just manner. The result is inevitable. The private interests which can command the strongest lobby have first consideration. To overcome the blockade of such a vast amount of business log-rolling is resorted to, by all of which the great body of the people suffer and special interests fatten on favoritism. Some of the duties of Congress should be delegated to departments or other agencies of government.

Of course until we can do something really worth while towards changing the system, we will have to go on tinkering; but the time is certainly ripe for a fundamental remedy. Postoffices should be exclusively under the Postoffice Department, pensions under the Department of Pensions, river and harbor improvements under the War Department, and so on. Then there should be an amendment to the Constitution providing that Congress may pass general laws on these subjects, but shall not have power to pass any local or special act affecting any of the subjects named.—The State Journal.