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LOCAL SCHOOL-TAX DISTRICTS

XXVI—THE DANISH FARM-LIFE SCHOOL

Denmark has every kind of school and school system that any other country has, but the Folk High School is the school that is uppermost in the minds of the people who visit Denmark to study her institutions. Other Danish schools are more or less commonplace, but the Folk High School is unique. Her public elementary schools are not better than ours in America. The same observation may fairly be made of her schools of technical agriculture and teacher training. As for her public high schools, they are not so many nor so good as the public high schools of North Carolina. But they are effective and their effectiveness lies in the use the Danes make of them. The Danes believe in education and they use their schools to the limit, their schools of every grade and type—the farm population in particular.

Available Scholarships

The folk high school is a farm-life school so original in conception, so unique in character, and so significant in the part it plays in Danish country life that most people in other countries know very little about any other kind of Danish education. It is so effective in creating and sustaining a satisfying country civilization that I have been moved to send an earnest letter to a gifted young teacher in North Carolina urging him to apply at once for one of the thousand dollar scholarships awarded annually by the Scandinavian-American Foundation, and to spend next year studying the folk high schools of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland—not the schools alone but also the social-economic conditions out of which they sprang, the part they have played in Denmark, and the part that effective farm-life schools might play in North Carolina and other American states.

A thousand dollars isn't much in any of these prosperous countries of northern Europe, but it goes a long way because the state authorities in Scandinavia conspire to reduce to a minimum the expenses of student travel and research. Some of these countries arrange free transportation for scholarship students on the state railways. Or so it was in Finland for Mrs. John C. Campbell and her party. Also in Sweden, as I remember it.

Why We Need Them

I have made this suggestion to my richly endowed young friend because fit schools are a fundamental country-life defense, because country civilization in America is suffering for lack of such schools, and because the farm-life school is still an unsolved problem in the Western World. Every state in the Union has one or more sometimes a score or more schools called farm-life schools. Every state has country-life schools, county agricultural high schools, district agricultural high schools and the like. We even have what are called Danish folk high schools in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and California. The distinction of such schools in America lies mainly in the names they bear, and not as a rule in the particular service they render to farm civilization. In almost every state there is a rural school department in the University school of education. The Education Bureau in Washington has a rural school section staffed with specialists. All the states are collaborating with the federal government and spending millions of copartnership money every year upon vocational agriculture. Nevertheless the rural school is a mired wheel in American education and vocational agriculture limps along lamely in our country regions. Our farm-life schools are a diplomatic gesture more or less meaningless. In some states the agricultural high school is a football for the politicians, and in no state is the country school the soul of country life as the folk high school has been the soul of country life in Denmark. In almost every other country of the world, education fit for farm people has been a failure. A member of President Wilson's cabinet pronounced the country schools of the United States to be a nation-wide failure and a national

disgrace. And nobody challenged the verdict. Nearly everybody is sure of it, many people are anxious about it and struggling with it bravely. And nowhere more capably than in North Carolina. No other state of the Union has had such educational leaders in recent years as Joyner, Brooks, Allen, Brown, Knight, and Newbold, and nobody knows better than they that the country school is an unsolved problem in North Carolina and the Nation.

Our Hard Problem

There are many reasons for the sad estate of rural education in America, but among all the reasons the farmer himself looms up as the largest. How to reach and arouse the country people about the fundamental things in country civilization, and the essential things in country education for country life is the hard problem in North Carolina and every other state and country in America.

The Realization of a Dream

It was Bishop Grundtvig's dream in Denmark in the dark days that followed Waterloo. He was fifty-three years of age when he dreamed his dream of the folk high school—a folks school, of the folk, by the folk, for the folk, their very own school in origin, ownership, and support, and therefore a vigorous instrument of country consciousness, country pride, and country expression. He gave his dream to Denmark in a brief pamphlet in 1836. Eight years later the first folk high school was established at Rodding, where the Schleswig Danes were struggling with the Germans for survival. There were thirty-nine such schools in existence when Grundtvig died in 1872, and there are eighty-odd today.

Denmark is the lengthened shadow of Grundtvig. He reached and stirred the souls of the Danish peasants and he did it with a country-school dream—a vision so vivid and so vital that the men to realize it sprang up by scores, men like Christian Flor, Ludvig Schroeder, Christian Kold, Ernst Trier, Jens Norregaard, and Paul la Cour in the earlier years, to be followed later by Bredsdorff, Begtrup, Appel, Poulsen, Hostrup, Lange and a host of other kindred spirits, a rare group of school builders and commonwealth builders who would be called great in any land or country.

The Prophet of the North

It is a truly great man who can inspire greatness in other men in anything like the way of Grundtvig. The Danes call him The Prophet of the North and pay honor to him in memorials from one end of Denmark to the other. I find a bronze statue of him in the court of the Marble Church facing the square of royal residences in Copenhagen. In the Studiestraede, the street the great University fronts, I find the Grundtvig House erected to his memory and fitly devoted to what we call Christian Association uses in America. Over the front door of the Fredericksborg Folk High School at Hillerod is a bust of him chiseled in stone. In the public buildings and private homes of Denmark are numberless pictures of him. No other man in the long history of Scandinavia has ever been so honored. All because or mainly because he dreamed a dream of a country-life school fit for country people.

A Story to Be Written

But I am far more interested in the Tar Heel folk high school than I am in the Danish folk high school. The one is an old story, the other is a story yet to be written. And the genius who writes it will have more monuments erected to his memory in North Carolina than Grundtvig has in Denmark. It cannot be a Danish folk high school but it must be identical with it in one essential particular—it must spring directly out of country consciousness and satisfy the cravings of country youth in North Carolina. It cannot be a Christmas-tree gift from the capital, it must be created by the local country communities under homebred leadership that they trust implicitly and support without stint.

SUPERIOR SCHOOLS

When a community builds a consolidated school house it not only houses a larger and a better school, but it sets up a community center that can and will be made a center for social, educational, benevolent and religious activities. Amusements can be staged there, the community library housed there, lectures enjoyed and the community brought together in the most advantageous manner for higher development in community life. The modern college today is more than a school for a few hundred boys or girls, housed as students on its campus. It is an educational center for the state, or a large proportion of the state; so with the large community school, it is for the whole people and can be made to pay for its cost by its service to the people above school age. —Salisbury Evening Post.

Our own folk high schools may be crude efforts in the beginning as Christian Kold's school was in Denmark, but like the Danish folk high schools they must give impetus to country community life and lead country communities into cooperative enterprises that are properly related to the commonwealth. The genius who creates a school of this type anywhere in North Carolina must have "sunshine in his eye and a world in his heart." Lacking such leadership and such schools our Community Cooperation law of 1917 is a dead letter.

A Task for Carolina

The folk high schools of Denmark are worth studying. They would be suggestive and stimulating to a Carolina school man of the creative type—tonic and quickening to the last degree, in my opinion.

So far no other country of the world has been able to transplant the folk high school as it exists in Denmark, not even Norway and Sweden her next-door neighbors and racial kinsmen, but these and a half-dozen other countries have been inspired by them to evolve folk high schools of their own. And nowhere with perfect success or not yet. Which means that no other country has yet given birth to an original genius like Grundtvig, or an Old Testament prophet like Christian Kold. Men of this sort might be born of the spirit of North Carolina. She has given many men of rare talent to other states, and it is time she were developing a genius of her own to save her country civilization. It is threatened by extinction and who saves our country life saves the commonwealth. The agency of country salvation will be a fit country-life school that develops the spirit and the virtues of living and working together for the common good. The Danes call these Christianity and less than these is not Christianity no matter what notions of religion prevail, say the Danes. The cooperative farm enterprises of Denmark have grown out of the cooperative spirit and the cooperative virtues. Danish cooperation and Danish folk schools are complementary aspects of one and the same movement. Together they produced the cooperative democracy of Denmark.

Who Will Lead?

The country civilization of America, like the country civilization of Denmark, must develop effective farm-life schools. The call in every state is for a great country-life leader inspired by a distinct purpose that he is willing to give his life to. Who will answer the call in North Carolina?—E. C. Branson, Paris, Nov. 20, 1923.

LOCAL TAX DISTRICTS

In this issue of the News Letter we present a table showing the percent of all school districts, white and negro, in each county in which the people have voted special taxes on themselves in order that their particular district may have a better school than would be possible with the funds derived from the flat county rate. Two counties have done away with local districts and have adopted the county-wide school system.

In the other 98 counties the length of the school term, the quality of teachers, the physical equipment, and so on, varies according to the local willingness to supplement the county fund. In the same county it is possible to find the best and the poorest schools in the state.

The school districts which have voted special taxes are to be congratulated for their willingness to levy additional taxes in order to have better schools. It is the only choice in a county where the rate is insufficient to provide decent schools. It is the one best evidence of local pride and interest in school matters. But we have come to the point in our educational development where the small local tax districts and the small school districts must be discarded and a county-wide school system adopted as has been provided for by law. Some of the local tax districts are rich, having all the corporate wealth of the county. Many of these are detached from the county system. These have excellent schools while adjoining districts struggle along with poor schools because of meagre taxable wealth. Is it fair for an imaginary line to determine the types of schools two neighboring children shall attend?

The County-Unit Plan

Ideally a state-wide school system should be adopted, but several factors stand in the way of such a big step. The minimum essential under present conditions is a county-wide school system in every county in the state. This system is operating in two progressive counties, New Hanover and Wilson, and a large number of counties are arranging to vote on the plan. Davidson has just voted favorably. Under the county-unit plan every dollar of taxable wealth goes to support every school in the county, rich and poor, alike. The

offices of county and city superintendents are combined into a county superintendent with a professional assistant. The county-unit plan means more uniformly trained teachers, a more uniform curriculum, and more uniform physical equipment. Dr. E. C. Brooks says:

"The county unit of administration has a distinct advantage over the district system. It makes it possible for the county board of education to locate buildings advantageously and economically. High schools may be established according to the needs of the whole county, and the per capita cost of instructing high school pupils may be materially reduced by proper organization. Large school units will bind small districts together and encourage cooperation, thereby breaking up the clannishness of the people that has had a tendency to perpetuate the tribal age. Large community schools create a more wholesome social life among the young people and have a tendency to raise the culture level of all the people. In these stronger schools vocational subjects may be introduced and the teachers of these subjects may extend their instruction to all the adults of the county. If the schools are rightly located and organized, better instruction in health and hygiene may be carried to the people."

These are the main advantages of the county-unit plan. The local-district school system has served its day. It must be discarded in favor of the county-unit plan which is the minimum essential under present conditions. The next step up is a state-wide system of public education, with the county as the local unit, and in which is preserved a wise amount of local initiative.—S. H. H., Jr.

LOCAL TAX DISTRICTS

In North Carolina in 1922

Based on information from the office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, showing the percent of all school districts, white and negro, in each county which have local taxes.

Two counties, New Hanover and Wilson, have the county-unit school tax system. This system should be adopted by every county in the state.

State average, 28 percent of all school districts have local taxes to supplement the county rate.

F. O. Yates, Union County
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Rank	County	Percent Local Tax Districts	Rank	County	Percent Local Tax Districts
1	New Hanover.....	County Unit	49	Richmond.....	28
2	Wilson.....	County Unit	52	Franklin.....	26
3	Dare.....	93	53	Stanly.....	25
4	Graham.....	74	53	Lincoln.....	25
5	Transylvania.....	69	53	Warren.....	25
6	Chowan.....	63	56	Iredell.....	24
7	Pamlico.....	59	56	Polk.....	24
8	Union.....	52	56	Wayne.....	24
9	Greene.....	50	59	Duplin.....	23
10	McDowell.....	49	59	Gaston.....	23
11	Catawba.....	46	59	Rockingham.....	23
11	Johnston.....	46	62	Anson.....	22
11	Swain.....	46	62	Cleveland.....	22
14	Granville.....	45	62	Halifax.....	22
14	Jackson.....	45	65	Cherokee.....	21
14	Nash.....	45	65	Jones.....	21
17	Columbus.....	43	65	Mitchell.....	21
17	Durham.....	43	68	Hertford.....	20
17	Washington.....	43	69	Bladen.....	19
20	Currituck.....	42	69	Burke.....	19
20	Hyde.....	42	71	Randolph.....	18
22	Haywood.....	41	72	Bertie.....	17
22	Mecklenburg.....	41	72	Chatham.....	17
24	Buncombe.....	40	72	Davidson.....	17
24	Guilford.....	40	75	Beaufort.....	16
26	Avery.....	37	75	Brunswick.....	16
26	Vance.....	37	75	Gates.....	16
28	Craven.....	36	75	Montgomery.....	16
28	Edgecombe.....	36	76	Scotland.....	16
28	Henderson.....	36	75	Yancey.....	16
28	Macon.....	36	81	Cabarrus.....	15
28	Onslow.....	36	82	Yadkin.....	14
28	Robeson.....	36	83	Forsyth.....	13
34	Harnett.....	35	83	Martin.....	13
34	Rutherford.....	35	85	Ashe.....	12
36	Camden.....	34	85	Stokes.....	12
36	Carteret.....	34	87	Davie.....	11
38	Pender.....	33	88	Caldwell.....	10
38	Sampson.....	33	88	Orange.....	10
40	Lenoir.....	32	88	Pasquotank.....	10
40	Madison.....	32	91	Perquimans.....	9
42	Clay.....	31	91	Rowan.....	9
42	Wake.....	31	91	Tyrrell.....	9
44	Hoke.....	30	91	Wilkes.....	9
44	Moore.....	30	95	Surry.....	8
44	Northampton.....	30	96	Caswell.....	7
47	Cumberland.....	29	97	Person.....	6
47	Pitt.....	29	98	Alexander.....	5
49	Alamance.....	28	99	Alleghany.....	4
49	Lee.....	28	99	Watauga.....	4