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MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES

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The table which appears in this issue reveals the ratio of marriages to divorces in the counties of the state. The first column gives the ratios for the single year 1926. Because the number of divorces in a county varies so from year to year, it seemed desirable to supplement the 1926 ratios with the ratios obtained by taking a four-year period 1923 to 1926, inclusive. It is according to these latter ratios that the counties are ranked.

In 1923 there were in the state 24,028 marriages and 1,504 divorces; in 1924 there were 23,190 marriages and 1,468 divorces; in 1925 there were 23,337 marriages and 1,576 divorces; and in 1926 there were 22,641 marriages and 1,551 divorces. The ratios of marriages to divorces have thus been, successively, 16.0, 15.8, 14.8, 14.3. This trend is characteristic of the entire country.

When the counties are compared it is found that thirty-three counties have relatively more divorces than the state average and sixty-seven have fewer. They rank from Yadkin, with 151.2 marriages for each divorce, to Gaston, with only 3.6 marriages for each divorce. If we take the single year 1926, we find three counties—Jones, Pender, and Transylvania—with no divorces at all and Richmond with a divorce for every 3.2 marriages.

Where Many Divorces

In the four-year period ten counties—Gaston, Richmond, Avery, Robeson, Buncombe, Polk, Cherokee, New Hanover, Durham and Rutherford—had fewer than ten marriages for each divorce. It will be noticed that three of these ten counties are urban counties and five are counties bordering South Carolina. Divorces are always more common in the cities than in the country, for the reasons that more married women are at work and financially independent, city women have more contacts with other men, private relationships are more concealed, birth rates are lower, and family ties in general are weakened by the very nature of city life. In the country, or at least on the farms, the family constitutes an economic unit as well as a more closely knit social unit. Hence it is not surprising to find Buncombe, New Hanover, and Durham with high divorce ratios. Mecklenburg, Guilford, Forsyth, Wilson and Wayne are other urban or semi-urban counties with divorce ratios higher than the state average.

There may be no significance in the fact that five of the ten low-ranking counties are counties bordering on South Carolina, though it is a striking fact. It is known that many young people in the border counties go to South Carolina to be married because of more lenient marriage laws. This necessarily reduces the number of marriages in these border counties. The fact that South Carolina grants no divorces may lead certain South Carolina couples contemplating divorce to establish a residence in North Carolina. If both of these forces operate, a reason for high divorce ratios in these border counties is suggested. The writer can offer no explanation for the appearance of Avery among the lower ten. It may be that in the case of Cherokee its young people divide their matrimonial fees with the officers of all three states, Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, but necessarily have all their divorce trials at home.

Ratios Vary Widely

The wide variations in the ratios revealed by the table leave many questions unanswered. Why should the three high-ranking counties, that is counties in which the integrity of the home has been best preserved, be so scattered—Yadkin, Jones, Currituck? Why should Currituck and Camden in one corner of the state rank so high and Cherokee in the other corner so low? Why so much discrepancy between Johnston and its neighbor Wayne, between Clay and Cherokee, between Yadkin and Wilkes, between Franklin and Vance? It may be that if figures were taken for a ten-year period the discrepancies would not be so great, yet the four-year ratios reveal nearly as great differences as the one-year ratios.

Despite the large and increasing num-

ber of divorces granted in the state there may be comfort in the fact that only two states had fewer divorces (in 1925) per 1,000 of total population than North Carolina. These two states were South Carolina, which grants no divorces, and New York which grants absolute divorce only for adultery. In that year North Carolina divorces numbered 0.56 per 1,000 people. The average for the United States was 1.52. Stated differently, North Carolina granted one divorce for every 14.8 marriages. The average for the United States was one divorce for every 6.7 marriages. The wide variation among the states offers an argument for more uniformity in marriage and divorce laws.—Paul W. Wager.

NORTH CAROLINA CLUB

The North Carolina Club at the University has begun its fourteenth year with a program which promises to make the current year one of the best in its existence. The club has, through the years, been studying the economic, social and civic problems of the state, or in the words of Dr. E. C. Branson, its founder, "interesting itself in the facts and folks of a real world."

This year the club, in collaboration with the School of Commerce, is undertaking a comprehensive study of taxation. The work of the local club will, in turn, be a part of the larger program of research that is being undertaken by the newly created State Tax Commission. Hon. A. J. Maxwell and Dr. Fred W. Morrison, chairman and secretary respectively of the State Tax Commission, have met with the steering committee of the North Carolina Club and helped formulate the year's program.

At the first meeting Monday night, October 17, Robert B. House, Executive Secretary of the University, addressed the club on The Historical Background of the Tax Question in North Carolina. He pointed out the historical and psychological factors which influence and cloud our thinking in the field of taxation. His interesting and thoughtful address will help the members of the club to approach their tax studies objectively.

Tax Bias Inherited

Mr. House said that we need right now in North Carolina a scientific, impartial, intellectual consideration of taxation. Instead, most tax thinking, so-called, is a complex of emotions. These emotional reactions to taxation are an inheritance and a tradition. The very words—tax and impost—have a threatening and offensive connotation. Originally taxes were levied by despotic monarchs upon unwilling subjects. A tax was an exaction with little or nothing given in return. It was an instrument of oppression, something to be resisted. So intense was the feeling against taxes that the tax-gatherer was the most despised of all persons. A prominent historian has said that Julius Caesar was great because he was a skillful tax collector. When absolutism in government began to give way to constitutional monarchy it will be recalled that it was in respect to taxation that the kings were obliged to yield. The struggle between king and Parliament in England was a contest as to who should hold the purse strings. Finally, the separation of the American colonies from England was the result of a tax quarrel.

Resistance to taxation is thus a tradition, a part of our social inheritance. Liberty, we conceive of, as an escape from taxation. Since taxation was considered such an intolerable evil, it was quite natural that tax evasion was considered quite proper and moral. Indeed it now appears that some of our Revolutionary patriots were very successful smugglers. Tax evasion carried no stigma—and that attitude is also a part of our inheritance.

Tax Dodgers in N. C.

These attitudes, characterizing the early settlers of America, were peculiarly true of the first North Carolina settlers. North Carolina was settled not direct from the old country but by emigrants from other colonies, chiefly at first from Virginia. They were men dissatisfied with the economic conditions in these older colonies, among them the

HUMANITY FIRST

We cannot suppose that we are to be benefited by great production unless the men and women who furnish it are themselves benefited by it. We cannot neglect the human element in our affairs. All the cattle and grain, all the cotton and wool, all the cloth and steel, all the shoes and automobiles, will be of small advantage to us unless they contribute a more abundant life to those who produce them. Prosperity cannot be divorced from humanity.—President Coolidge.

taxes. North Carolina represented a new frontier where economic conditions would be more liberal and taxation more nearly suited to their means and ideas. They wanted "elbow room" and at least lower taxes. Instead they were cramped by the measures of the Lords Proprietors and the king. Their land rents were high, their tobacco duties were high, the Anglican Church charged them for marriage and baptismal rites—all as high or even higher than in Virginia.

At the same time the frontiersman could see little return for his taxes—in protection, stability of government, schools, roads, or any institutions of public welfare. It was as though his money and goods were distrained for the benefit of a foreign power. The people reached the conclusion that the cheapest government was the best, and stolidly refused to countenance any form of taxation for the public welfare beyond keeping the peace. Numerous rebellions and riots occurred, particularly the War of the Regulation of 1761. In the light of governmental policy, while the people did have grievances that ought to have been redressed, they did not have cause for rebellion. Yet many people thought at the time and some people think today that the War of the Regulation was the opening struggle of the American Revolution.

Still Suspicious

As North Carolina began to control its resources as an independent state, foresighted men began to plan institutions of education and welfare based on public support. From the beginning of our history there had been men of this type and they were to increase and prevail in the policies of the State. But parallel with this progressive and enlightened citizenship there remained the individualistic pioneer type—citizens who based their thinking on these age-old wrongs and emotions, and doubted that taxation could ever be anything but injustice, and who continued to confront taxes imposed by their government with suspicion and evasion. Even so late as 1917 Governor Bickett could refer to our tax books as "a tissue of lies." And while he aroused the public conscience for a time, his work was short-lived.

Against this sentiment of resentment of taxation progress in our government has been slow. It has been difficult to get the citizen to tax himself, or even to realize that in a democratic government he does really tax himself. He has felt all along that someone else was taxing him and not for his good. Taxation rouses class consciousness. The farmer, the laboring man, the manufacturer, the professional man, each thinks that his class is the victim of discrimination. He may be right even about contemporary taxes, but his emotions at any rate refer back to some wrong in the experience of his class with taxation.

And, therefore, while we need to overcome our personal biases and our age-old prejudices in order to consider the tax question impartially and scientifically, while we must ascertain our objectives as self-governing people and measure our resources for investment in these objectives, we must prepare our minds for accurate estimates of these problems. But in order to go at the question scientifically, in order to arrive at expert knowledge, we must meet squarely and considerately these age-old obstacles to straight thinking about taxation.

Fall Program

The tentative program of the North Carolina club for the remaining meetings of the fall term is as follows:

October 31, An Outline of the Present Tax System. Dr. Paul W. Wager, acting Editor of the University News Letter.

November 14, The Need and Plans for Readjustment in Our Tax System. Hon. A. J. Maxwell, Chairman of the Corporation Commission and Chairman of the State Tax Commission.

November 28, The Functions of Government and Their Present Distribution Among the Political Units. Dr. Clarence Heer, Research Professor of Taxation.

December 12, The Debt Situation in the State and in Its Political Subdivisions. Dr. Fred W. Morrison, Secretary of the State Tax Commission.

SLOWLY DISAPPEARING

Ten or 15 years ago, many of the counties in this state joined in a movement to remove from themselves the reproach of maintaining "poor houses," as institutions of the kind had been known. The poor house was eliminated by substitution of the name, "County Home." And now the County Home is on the disappearing list, because maintenance of an institution of the kind has become unprofitable in some of the counties. There are so

few charges to care for that it is cheaper to board them out than to keep them in a home. Two years ago the mountain county of Ashe put its county home and lands on the market, because there was nobody in that county to inhabit the home. Other counties have found the maintenance of a diminished number of charges burdensome, and McDowell, one of the more prosperous counties in the mountain districts, has solved the problem by negotiating with the commissioners of Rutherford county for the bed and board of the few "paupers" left in McDowell. The "poor house" is an institution of the past in flourishing North Carolina. The County Home is an institution that is going along with its vanished name-sake.—Charlotte Observer.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The county government advisory commission has been informed by its executive secretary, C. M. Johnson, that seventy-two counties of the state are substantially complying with the new county government acts, and that there is no open opposition manifested in the other counties. This is highly encouraging. Mr. Johnson and his assistants plan to spend as much time in the field as possible and utilize as many county accountants as can be supplied to aid the counties that are not making progress and need assistance in putting the new laws into effect.

MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES

Ratio of Marriages to Divorces, 1923-1926

In the following table the counties are ranked according to the number of marriages for each divorce in the four-year period 1923 to 1926. The county with the most marriages for each divorce is ranked highest. The ratios for the single year 1926 are also given. The table is based on a recent report of the United States Department of Commerce.

In the four-year period there were, in the entire state, 93,246 marriages and 6,139 divorces, or a ratio of marriages to divorces of 15.2. Sixty-seven counties had relatively fewer divorces than the state ratio and thirty-three exceeded the state average. The ratio for the state in 1926 was 14.3.

Among the counties, Yadkin ranked highest for the four-year period with 151 marriages for each divorce. This ratio was also sustained in 1926, but exceeded that year by Camden, Jones, Transylvania, and Pender, the last three having no divorces. Ten counties had, for the four-year period, fewer than ten marriages for each divorce, Gaston ranking last with a ratio of 4.6. In 1926 there were thirteen counties with a ratio below 10, Richmond being lowest with a ratio of 3.2 and Gaston second with 3.6.

Paul W. Wager

Department of Rural Social-Economics, University of North Carolina

Rank County		Marriages for each divorce 1926	Marriages for each divorce 1923-26	Rank County		Marriages for each divorce 1926	Marriages for each divorce 1923-26
1	Yadkin	151.0	151.2	51	Pasquotank	17.2	18.9
2	Jones	125.0	125.5	52	Anson	11.9	18.6
3	Currituck	88.2	88.2	53	Greene	16.0	18.4
4	Camden	62.3	62.3	54	Caldwell	17.5	18.0
5	Johnston	54.2	54.2	55	Alexander	12.7	17.8
6	Franklin	52.7	52.7	56	Watauga	16.0	17.5
7	Stokes	48.5	48.5	57	Stanly	12.8	17.4
8	Graham	46.0	46.0	58	Tyrrell	19.0	17.2
9	Randolph	42.3	42.3	59	Henderson	26.0	17.1
10	Clay	40.7	40.7	59	Wake	13.1	17.1
11	Chatham	39.8	39.8	61	Rockingham	16.8	16.9
12	Sampson	39.1	39.1	62	Washington	8.1	16.7
13	Granville	38.2	38.2	62	Union	22.7	16.7
14	Pamlico	36.2	36.2	64	Yancey	15.8	16.2
15	Perquimans	36.0	36.0	65	Chowan	27.7	16.0
16	Bladen	35.9	35.9	66	Columbus	13.2	15.9
17	Caswell	34.4	34.4	67	Cabarrus	13.5	15.6
18	Davie	34.1	34.1	68	Edgecombe	11.7	14.8
19	Mitchell	32.0	32.0	69	Rowan	11.3	14.4
19	Alleghany	32.0	32.0	70	Orange	9.4	14.3
21	Alamance	31.7	31.7	71	Nash	15.6	14.2
22	Onslow	31.6	31.6	72	Halifax	18.3	14.1
23	Gates	31.1	31.1	73	Macon	31.5	14.1
24	Person	29.0	29.0	73	Wayne	11.0	13.6
25	Hyde	28.4	28.4	75	Catawba	16.4	13.4
26	Lincoln	28.3	28.3	75	Transylvania	—	13.4
27	Surry	28.0	28.0	77	Wilson	19.0	13.3
28	Lee	27.5	27.5	78	Haywood	11.3	12.9
29	Montgomery	26.7	26.7	79	Guilford	16.2	12.8
30	Hoke	26.5	26.5	80	Scotland	6.0	12.7
31	Craven	26.1	26.1	81	Hertford	8.6	12.5
32	Iredell	25.0	25.0	82	Lenoir	12.8	12.2
33	Cumberland	24.7	24.7	83	Forsyth	10.7	11.7
34	Harnett	24.6	24.6	84	Swain	18.3	11.2
35	Duplin	24.5	24.5	85	Bertie	13.2	11.0
36	Wilkes	24.2	24.2	86	Mecklenburg	9.1	10.9
37	Pender	24.0	24.0	87	Madison	11.7	10.6
38	Ashe	23.2	23.2	88	Cleveland	5.6	10.4
39	Moore	22.9	22.9	88	Pitt	11.4	10.4
39	Burke	22.9	22.9	90	Northampton	28.0	10.2
41	McDowell	21.8	21.8	91	Rutherford	7.9	8.6
42	Carteret	21.0	21.0	92	Durham	10.2	8.5
43	Jackson	20.7	20.7	92	New Hanover	7.6	8.5
44	Warren	20.6	20.6	94	Cherokee	15.8	8.3
45	Davidson	20.5	20.5	95	Polk	30.0	8.2
46	Dare	20.4	20.4	96	Buncombe	8.1	7.9
47	Vance	20.1	20.1	97	Robeson	5.4	7.0
48	Martin	19.8	19.8	98	Avery	8.7	5.9
49	Beaufort	19.3	19.3	99	Richmond	3.2	5.6
50	Brunswick	19.1	19.1	100	Gaston	3.6	4.6

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