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What Are We Doing About It?

THE records of the local draft board show that 33 of this county's registrants in the present draft cannot even sign their names. There is every reason to believe that those records are correct, but even if they were only 50 per cent correct, we still would have a situation for which there is no excuse.

And what are we doing about that situation?

Everybody knows the answer: We are doing substantially nothing.

The draft board figures, in fact, indicate that the situation is growing steadily worse; for, whereas 26 out of 27 in the entire group, aged 18-25, can at least write their names, only 20 out of 21 among the 18-year olds can.

Furthermore, the recent statement of the chairman of the board of county commissioners that there are children of school age in every township in the county who have "never seen the inside of a schoolhouse" remains unchallenged.

We have schools and we have a compulsory attendance law, but as far as these children are concerned, we might as well have neither.

The attendance law places responsibility for that law's enforcement upon the schools, first, and then upon the office of the county superintendent of public welfare.

In fairness to the school and welfare officials, it should be remembered that during the war they were handicapped by lack of sufficient help.

But in fairness to the Macon County boys and girls who are growing up without the ability to so much as sign their names, it should be emphasized that the war is over—and that these youngsters' years are flying.

Our Public Health Picture

Statistics easily may be misleading, and always they should be considered in the light of factors not covered by the figures themselves. That applies to the statistics published elsewhere in this issue on the health situation in Macon County.

Those figures—one of 100 sets compiled for the 100 counties in the state—show, for example, that Macon County had an extremely high rate of draft rejections in World War 2. The figures on draft rejections undoubtedly are correct, but they fail to take into account one important factor—the fact that the "cream of the crop" of young men in Macon County did not wait for the draft, but enlisted. The figures on draft rejections, therefore, present the picture only for a part of Macon County's youth, that part that waited for the draft.

Similarly, the large proportion of Macon County babies born outside of hospitals may not be as damaging an indictment of health conditions in this county as the statistics would indicate; because some members of the medical profession—still a very small minority—have come around to the view that the home, provided the care there is good, is a better place for a baby to be born than a hospital. The question, in other words, is not where the baby is born, but how good is the care the mother and baby receive.

And the same sort of reasoning can properly be applied to the general public health work. The point, in that case, is not how much do we spend for public health, but how good are our public health services.

These statistics, in short, like all statistics, should be studied, and perhaps discounted. But they can't be dismissed. For when all is said and done, you usually get about what you pay for, and the figures indicate that we in Macon County have a long way to go in providing the maximum in public health facilities for the people of the county.

Symptom of Revolt?

One of the strange things about the recent Presidential campaign was the bitterness with which the States Rights Democrats (Dixiecrats) were damned.

Ironically, some of the newspapers and radio commentators who were most vocal in condemning the egg-ing and tomato-ing of Henry Wallace themselves regularly threw verbal rotten eggs at Thurmond and his followers. And among many Democrats, especially Southern Democrats, Dewey, and even Wallace, were saintly by comparison with the sinning Thurmond.

The bitterness toward the Dixiecrats was illustrated by the somewhat fantastic statements that were made, and still are being made; statements by newspapers and commentators who ordinarily are reliable.

We were solemnly told all during the campaign, for example, that the Dixiecrats were seeking to establish a "splinter" party—that is, a party in addition to the two major ones; and that "splinter" parties were sure to ruin the country. Yet the actual fact is that there hasn't been an election since 1896 without from three to eight parties with Presidential candidates in the field.

And even now, more than a fortnight after the election, there are contemptuous references to the "miserable showing" the Dixiecrats made. Yet the truth is they made an excellent showing, as minor parties go. Despite the fact that Thurmond's name appeared on the ticket in only a few states, he received a larger electoral vote than any minor party candidate since the Civil War, with the sole exception of Theodore Roosevelt, whose Bull Moose party won 88 in 1912.

B. Gratz Brown, running as a combination Democrat and Liberal Republican in 1872, received 18 electoral votes. In 1892 James B. Weaver, the Populist candidate, won 22. And Robert M. LaFollette, running on the Progressive and Socialist tickets in 1924, received 13. All the horde of other minor party candidates, including Wallace in 1948, failed to carry a single state.

As a matter of fact, Thurmond's electoral vote was larger than that of a regular party candidate on two occasions, Taft in 1912 and Landon in 1936.

It was said of the Dixiecrats that they were largely financed by northern capital that was intent upon defeating Truman; and there probably was a basis of fact in the charge. It was said that they represented the Southern Bourbons—those Southern Democrats who, in everything but name, belong in the most reactionary wing of the Republican party; and there undoubtedly is some truth in that statement. It was said that they were motivated by race prejudice; and certainly the race question was the immediate, though perhaps not the basic, reason for Thurmond's candidacy.

But none of these reasons could have created such spleen. What did create it?

After you've discounted the Dixiecrat for the company he allegedly keeps, and for the race prejudice that is charged to him, you still have left a hard core of basic philosophy. That philosophy is the conviction that the preservation of such state's rights as remain is the last safeguard of certain rights; that those rights include the right of the individual to remain an individual and of a minority to remain different also; and that those rights, as well as the safeguard, are in grave danger today.

Nothing is so irritating to most of us as to have our customary way of thinking disturbed. Could it be, then, that the thing that really irritates us about the Dixiecrats is our subconscious suspicion that, in their basic philosophy, they are right?

When the history of this period is written, it is possible that the Dixiecrat explosion will be described not as a political phenomenon at all, but as one of the first symptoms of a revolt—a revolt that is general, but is most vocal in the South—against a movement which is tending to erase all boundaries and barriers, to destroy all individualism, and to standardize everything and everybody at a single, static, dead level of mediocrity.

Well Worth While

Mrs. C. N. Dowdle, the president of the Franklin Parent-Teacher association, and her committee chairmen and workers are due the community's congratulations on the success of last Friday evening's "family supper" benefit program. The affair was quite successful from a financial standpoint, but it would have been well worth while if not a penny's profit had been made. For it brought together parents, teachers, interested citizens, and children in an atmosphere of informal fun, thus tending to create a more united community; and one united, as it should be, around its school.

And what is true of the Franklin school event is, of course, also true of similar programs at schools elsewhere in the county.

POETRY CORNER

Conducted by

EDITH DEADERICK ERSKINE

Wezerville, N. C.

Sponsored by Asheville Branch, National League of American Pen Women

TOO NEAR TO EARTH

We live so far from permanence!
Were wings to start their play,
Could our weak-minded impotence
Defer . . . the Judgment Day?

LENA MEARLE SHULL

Asheville, N. C.

LETTERS

URGES MORE MONEY FOR HEALTH

Dear Editor:

The article in last week's Press entitled "Situation on Health Work Explained" seemed to explain the state's reasons for wishing Macon County to spend more money for health services, but did not explain the county commissioners' delay in providing the needed funds. In my judgment, no other money spent by the county brings to the people a service of greater value than that rendered by the Health Office.

Some phases of health care are inescapable public problems. Parents may guard health conditions in the home with painstaking care; but what may the end be if the children from that home drink milk from un-inspected dairies, eat meat from insanitary slaughter houses, or eat foods in un-graded restaurants? There are hundreds of other ways in which public health problems make themselves the personal problems of everyone of us.

Here are some figures I have seen giving just a part of the services rendered by our Health Department in the nine months ending September 30th.

Immunizations against disease:
Smallpox, 1,110; diphtheria, 127; typhoid, 3,088; lockjaw, 15.
War on tuberculosis:
X-rays by mobile unit, 3,961; tuberculosis suspects admitted to nursing service, 82; examinations in clinics, 171; fluoroscope on tuberculosis patients, 6.
Services to children:
Examined by physician and nurse, 1,627; defects corrected as a partial result of inspection—teeth of 23 children, eyes of 11, tonsils of 40.
Physical examinations of persons likely to spread infection if diseased:
Milk-handlers, 10; food-handlers, 125; teachers, 44; industrial workers, 68; midwives, 5.

Many other services are listed, including services to crippled children, war against venereal disease, inspection of water supplies and places of disposal of sewage, inspection of dairies and slaughter-houses.

As our population and industries grow, the demands on the Health Department grow. Twenty-three new dairy farms have been listed for our sanitarian to inspect. The physical examinations of teachers is far more more thorough than formerly.

Although the burden on our health workers keeps on increasing, their salaries remain comparatively low. Not all are up to the standard set by the State Merit Council a year ago.

If this county provides only \$4,000 for health work here, state and federal funds spent here will total \$2,000; but if the commissioners approve the additional \$1,500 needed, then the state and federal authorities, I am told, will put \$3,000 to work in this area.

It is good to feel that a strong and efficient health department stands to guard against some of the outstanding dangers to public health. A reputation for enforcing reasonable standards of cleanliness, sanitation and health should do more than costly advertising to bring tourists' dollars to this section, but it is chiefly for our own good that I ask that the board of county commissioners increase the local funds for the Health Department to the comparatively small sum of \$5,500.

Sincerely yours,
RAY N. MOSES

Franklin, Route 1,
November 8, 1948.

LET'S WIPE OUT ILLITERACY

Mr. Editor:

Your editorial ("A Shameful Situation") in your October issue truly concerns a shameful situation which I think we should have the attention of everyone in Macon County. I have often heard the remark that there were all kinds of people, and in my experience as a patron of our schools I have found this to be a fact.

I have known girls to marry the first chance they have in order to get away from home because their Dad was too hard on them, they had too much work to do, not enough privileges, etc. They were not sent to school until after the morning recess or 12 o'clock and then a great many times leave at the evening recess and they and their mother do the slavish work while Dad gossiped in town or something worse. Now this is one class that I would call on—the exploiter of his children. It happens in various forms and I am sorry to say that too often.

There is also another class. They just don't care. They want their boys to grow up in ignorance so that they can dodge military service. This class is first on relief and first on the old age pension list and they have no fear of hospital bills. If they get in court they can get off on the ignorant list. They are only a small per cent of our people, but let us remember that a termite is a very small animal that if given time can undermine a great building and cause a collapse that is very costly.

Then there are the unfortunate, who, by conditions beyond their control, cannot properly clothe and feed their children.

Now what is the remedy? We have a compulsory school law on the statute books and if that law is written in enough people's hearts in Macon County we can blot most of this out in the next ten years.

Mr. Editor, I had the pleasure last summer of taking four and a half months off. I saw a lot of good country and many progressive people, but I was glad to get back to good old sleepy Macon County for I think we have the best country in the world, but let's make it better. Let's set a standard that no child of school age now shall not be able to read or write ten years from now. Let's build a school system that we shall be proud of; build roads that have been neglected. A little more taxes well spent would be a blessing to us for we have a lot of new-found wealth that, if not invested in something worth while, will be a curse to us.

Let's make good old Macon County a lot better by getting up a little earlier in the morning and by the law of improvement.

The best for us today will not do for tomorrow.
Yours truly,
WEIMAR COCHRAN

Plata, N. C.
November 8, 1948.