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## The School Loan Question

### TUFTS AGREES AND DISAGREES

Editor, The Pilot:  
Mr. H. Lee Thomas' explanation of the school situation has been read with much interest. Personally I agree with most of Mr. Thomas' statements and deductions. For example, I agree that the extravagant school building at Carthage, for example, and the exclusion of all children from it except those living in the city was a mistake, but the school law was afterwards changed so that there had to be a certain number of children to a teacher which forced such cities as Carthage to take in the children from the surrounding country. Pinehurst and Southern Pines built adequate inexpensive frame buildings covered with plaster or brick and included the surrounding country so that those living within three or four miles or perhaps further could have all the advantages of the higher valuations of these towns.

Most heartily I hope that the next legislature will give us better education. What is needed to accomplish this I don't know, but I do know especially up to the 8th grade, that the education the children of the state are getting is a disgrace and a shame.

Nor do I disagree with Mr. Thomas that some new construction is needed and if this can't be done from taxes, a small bond issue may be necessary.

Many of the buildings, that it is proposed to abandon and replace with new ones, could be enlarged and altered so as to be approved by the State at a very small cost. The Commissioners had no way of getting estimates of the cost other than asking the architects of the State School board to furnish them plans. These architects deserve our most hearty commendation for they have designed a series of inexpensive, attractive buildings to suit all needs. They sent a man here who suggested which set of plans was needed for each locality. He could not take the time to prepare alteration plans for each existing building.

My suggestion is that some of the larger tax payers subscribe enough to have this work done and we at Pinehurst will be glad to subscribe and cooperate.

If the adjoining counties have school facilities to teach some of the Moore County children why shouldn't they? I can't see any reason if this is possible why we should put up buildings. Why not cooperate with them? The parents of the children in Manly as far as I know don't object to sending their children to Southern Pines. Why should the people of Moore object to sending children to Montgomery?

A member of the school board told me recently that only two new buildings were necessary. These might cost \$50,000. We had better add this to next year's taxes than to burden ourselves with the big debt proposed.

If the construction of these buildings would aid in employment that would be a horse of another color, but the contracts into which Uncle Sam puts money are properly open to the people of the United States

and the chances of even a North Carolina contractor, much less a Moore County man, getting it are very small. However the thing that seems wrong to me is that those cities that were so short sighted as to build needlessly expensive buildings and so selfish as to limit the school district to the city limits should be able to throw this burden on the rest of the County through a consolidation of debt and at the same time get more buildings in their cities.

Take for example the city of Carthage will save \$6,600 in taxes each year and get \$33,550 more buildings. Why should the rest of the county not only pay them \$6,600 a year for past follies but give them in addition \$33,550 that I am told by a member of the school board isn't necessary.

—LEONARD TUFTS.

July 21, 1934.

### DR. POATE'S ANALYSIS

Editor, The Pilot:

It is very hard to get exact figures as to the proposed county school bond issue. In last week's Moore County News, Mr. H. Lee Thomas speaks of "the \$166,000 bond issue." From other sources which I believe to be authoritative I learn that the total sum of money which the county would borrow under this plan is \$232,600—though not all of it comes from the PWA.

If we borrow this \$232,000, we should have to pay back nearly \$400,000, counting interest. And that's a lot of money.

Moreover, there are two sides to the plan. The total school-bond debt in Moore County is now \$610,000—mainly contracted by various special charter school districts, and not by the county as a unit. It is now proposed that the county assume this load, and increase it by borrowing \$232,000 more—which means that we should have to pay back, in all, about \$953,000. Nearly a million dollars!—And that's not all; the county has a large bonded debt for other purposes: this would be for schools only. With nearly a fourth of all county taxes now in arrears, how can we afford to assume this enormous additional debt?

Bear in mind that the proposed county wide school-tax, of 45c on each \$100, is not needed to repay the PWA loan. An additional 8c would be enough to retire this new bond issue. Or let's be generous, and call it 9.5c. As proposed, only one-fourth of the 7c on each \$100 be raised to 45c, as if our present county school tax of added tax will be used to pay off the new debt. The rest of the added 38c, or about 28.5c (it is really more) would go toward paying old debts contracted, not by the county, but by various single school-districts. Moreover, the districts which have the biggest debts now would be the ones to profit most by the new arrangement. Let us take Mr. Thomas' own figures:

These six school districts would have their tax-rate lowered by the following amounts:  
Aberdeen-Pinebluff, reduced 27c on each \$100; Cameron, reduced 37c; Carthage, reduced 42c, (and that's quite a reduction!); Hemp, reduced 12c; West End, reduced 29c, and Vass-Lakeview, reduced 22c.

The rest of the county, on the other hand, would have to make up these reductions.

In Pinehurst, the school-tax would be increased 9c on each \$100; Eagle Springs, 23c; Eureka-Harrison, 28c; Southern Pines, 16c; Sheffield-Ritters, 38c; Deep River, 38c; Bensalem, and parts of Carthage township, 38c; Greenwood, and parts of Sandhills township, 38c (and these are pretty big increases!) and Mineral Springs, 21c.

The folks at the north end of the county, and everyone who lives outside the former special charter school districts, are now paying 7c county school tax on each \$100. Under the new plan, they would pay 45c, an increase of 38c; and they would have to pay the total sum of \$181,000 to retire the proposed bond issue of \$232,000. They'd have more than 2-3 of it all to pay!

"But look at the benefits!" says Mr. Thomas.—As we have already seen, only 1-4 of the increased tax would go toward new buildings; the other 3-4 would pay old debts which these people never approved. Three-quarters of the "benefits" would go to Cameron, and Carthage, and West End and Hemp, and the rest of the six districts whose taxrate would be lowered. If the folks in Sheffield and Ritters and Deep River and Eagle Springs and elsewhere want new buildings, they could pay for them out of an additional tax of ten or fifteen cents, at most. Or, they could get all the benefits of the new PWA loan by paying a county-wide tax of about 9c per \$100.

As far as I can find out, nobody has even tried to explain why these

two projects were tied together.

The PWA doesn't care about our existing debt-structure. They would be perfectly satisfied with a county-wide tax big enough to retire the bonds they have offered to buy—which would mean about 9c more, or a total county-wide tax of, say, 16c per \$100.

These school districts—Carthage, Hemp, West End, Cameron, Vass-Lakeview and Aberdeen-Pinebluff—whose taxes it is now planned to reduce, voted to borrow money for school purposes. Nobody outside those districts had any say in the matter. They borrowed on their own credit. Why should the rest of us be asked, now, to help them pay off debts which they contracted deliberately, without consulting us?

Mr. Thomas speaks of "equalizing" the tax rate. But the Southern Pines town tax rate is now \$2.60, plus 47c special school tax (22c debt-service and the rest for operating expenses), or a total tax-rate of \$3.07, in addition to the county tax which everyone must pay.

In Aberdeen, the town tax rate is \$1.50, I am told—which includes the special school tax. In Carthage, the town tax-rate is \$1.00, and the special school tax about 87c, or a total of \$1.87 above the county tax.

Is it "equalization" to raise the Southern Pines tax rate by 16c, making it \$3.23—while the Carthage tax is reduced from \$1.87 to \$1.45, and the Aberdeen rate from \$1.50 to \$1.23? It would make our tax more than double that paid by either Aberdeen or Carthage; and that's just not fair.

As Mr. Thomas admitted (though it sounded like an accusation) Southern Pines has good schools. Our tax rate is by far the highest in the county; and we don't object to that. But we can't see the justice in raising our high taxes still higher, in order to lower taxes elsewhere, which are already very much lower than ours.

Whatever the merits of these two proposals, they ought not to be tied together thus. If the folks of Moore County want to borrow \$232,000, well and good. Let's do it, and raise the school tax 9c or so to pay the money back.

And if the rest of the county want to assume the back debts of Carthage school district, and of Vass, Cameron, and the others in the six districts listed, and to pay off debts they never approved, or had any good from, that's all right, too. But let

us vote on the two proposals separately: because these back debts of certain school districts haven't a thing in the world to do with the PWA.

One last objection, which seems mighty serious to me.—If we have more money to spend, it ought to go to our school teachers, who have worked so faithfully and loyally for less money than the PWA pays laborers. Plenty of teachers in Moore County are being paid \$50 a month; now how would they feel to watch a quarter-million dollars worth of new buildings going up? It is not marble buildings which make good schools: it's skilled teachers. If we have money to spare, let's take care of our teachers first—pay them decently, and build new school-houses afterward, if there's anything left.

But with a quarter of our county taxes still unpaid, and with the papers full, every week, of tax-foreclosure notices, it's a mighty poor time to be adding to the county debt, and trying to raise taxes. Our taxes are high enough now—plenty! And in the long run, even those whose tax-rate would be lowered for a while would suffer.

Because it won't be long before Southern Pines will need two entire new school plants. In ten years, West Southern Pines school has grown from 4 to 16 teachers. And with this county-wide scheme, the rest of the county would be taxed to build new school-houses for Southern Pines.

How would they like that? We shall

new \$300,000 here before many years. Do the folks in Carthage, and Deep River, and Ritters, and Sheffield, want to help us pay it back? I wonder!

Yours sincerely,  
—ERNEST M. POATE.

Southern Pines, July 23, 1934.

### REPLIES TO DR. DANIELS

Editor, The Pilot:

Dr. Daniels, in his article appearing in the Moore County News of July 19th, apparently overlooked the fact that the election on August 25th will decide whether we shall have the "county unit" plan of taxation to pay old and new school debts or continue on the district basis. It was my purpose to discuss some of the legal and administrative aspects of the "county unit" plan in my statement July 12th and later in the July 19th issue of the paper, to show how the plan, if adopted, would affect the tax rates in the various districts and areas of the county. This was essential in order to give a complete understanding of the proposition. There appeared to be plenty of time to do this before the election. If the good doctor will be patient, all the facts will be forthcoming in due time.

My discussion dealt with conditions as they existed over a period of years in the State as a whole prior to 1931, when tuition was abolished and children allowed to cross district lines freely. A few charter districts

(Please turn to page 7)



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