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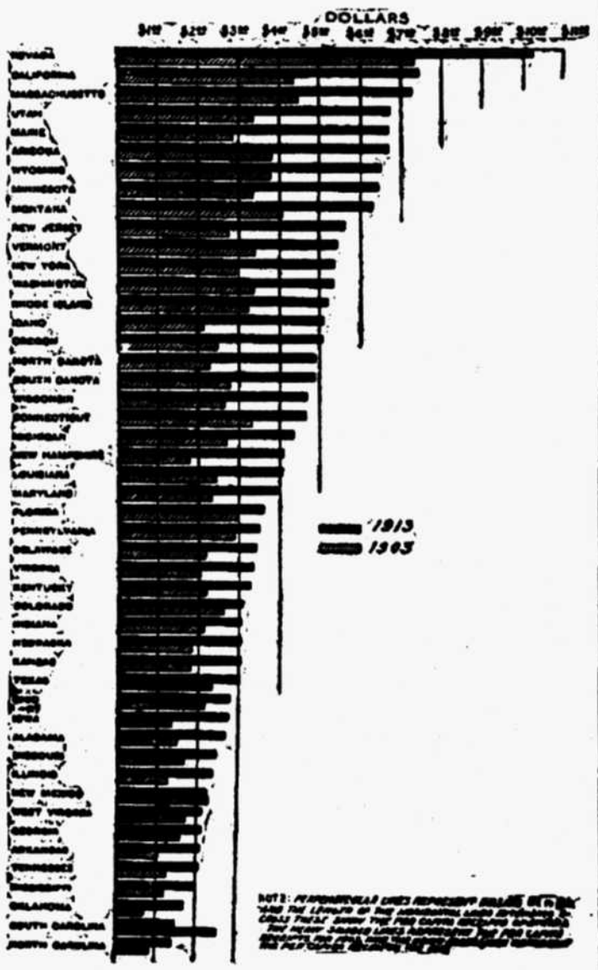
ANNUAL REPORT STATE TAX COMMISSION

Explains Necessity for State Equalization—Citizens of North Carolina Pay Less Taxes Per Capita for All Purposes Than Citizens of Any Other State—Total Increase in Assessed Values 1915 Only 10.5%



"After all the criticism that has or can be made of our taxing system, the net fact remains that under a State government administered with economy we have State institutions maintained in keeping with the progressive sentiment of the times; we have a six-months school term in modern school buildings, and are constructing improved roads as rapidly as any State of comparable wealth and development, upon a payment of taxes in dollars and cents, for all purposes, less per capita than that of any other State in the Union."—Annual Report N. C. State Tax Commission.

Raleigh, N. C., Jan. 1, 1916—The Annual Report of the State Tax Commission for the Year 1915, which has just been already [illegible] interest on account of its discussion of the equalization problem dealt with by the Commission last summer. In its formal letter of transmission to the Governor the Commission submits the following discussion of the subject:

There has been for a number of years a substantial demand in the State for the exercise of the powers of the State Tax Commission as a State Board of Equalization, based upon a widespread conception that there was great variance in the basis of valuation of real estate as between the several counties of the State, and to some extent in appreciation of the need for larger revenues to meet the increasing needs of a developing State. A careful analysis of returns from the assessment and listing of property for the year 1915 left no room for doubt that the time had come when the exercise of this power was a necessity, and, recognizing the importance of the action taken, we beg leave to outline the conditions leading to this conclusion.

The assessment of real estate was made this year to stand for and become the chief basis of revenue for the State, counties and municipalities for four years. The assessment was made as of the first day of May during the months of May and June, at a time when agricultural and business depression as a result of the European war had reached its maximum. Every form of industry had been challenged to the closest economy. Stocks of merchandise were held at lower volume, and on the farms there had been but little purchase of stock or farming equipment for the past year. As a result of this condition, there was an actual decrease in the value of personal property listed for taxation as compared with 1914. The returns from the counties of the assessment of real estate showed a slight increase as a whole, some counties showing a substantial increase, others no increase, others an actual decrease in the total value of their real estate as compared with the last quadrennial assessment, and in the latter classification was included some counties that had come to be generally known as under-assessed counties compared with assessed values in other counties. The total net result was an increase in the assessed value of real and personal property of 6.6 per cent. The General Assembly, considering with the greatest care and economy the necessities of the institutions of the State for the next two years, had made appropriations based upon an anticipated increase of 10 percent.

By the time the returns were received and analyzed, evidences were accumulating that agricultural and business depression was a temporary condition that should not be permitted to project itself into four years in the future of the State's finances. These evidences were unmistakable. [illegible] stand and force the State to borrow money to meet feebly its needs for four years of running expense.

2. To make a uniform raise in the value of real estate in all counties—adding still further to the burden of those counties that had already assessed their property on a fair basis and made a substantial increase—along with other counties that were known to have underassessed and in some instances decreased their assessments, and thus intensify and aggravate existing inequalities as between counties; or,

3. To secure the necessary increase by undertaking a general equalization between counties, and, as nearly as conditions could be ascertained, to require those counties that were underassessed to bear their equal part of the burden, and thus serve the double purpose of equalizing the burden while making provision for a moderate increase of public revenue.

We repeat that this situation left no room for choice as to the proper course to pursue.

The Commission gave to this question two months of laborious investigation and careful thought before formulating an order that in good conscience it believed would be equitable in its general results. That order is given in full in this report. Every request for a hearing on this order was granted, and, upon the more complete information elicited by such hearings, modifications of the original order was made in certain counties as shown by the supplemental order in this report.

The net increase in assessment of real estate as a result of the equalization order is $32,118,990. The total increase in assessed value of all property, real, personal and corporate, for the year 1915, is $85,227,974. The increase at the last quadrennial assessment period, 1911, was 20 per cent; in 1907, 20 per cent, and in 1903, 24.9 per cent. (See last statistical table in this report, page 390.) It will thus be seen that the net increase in assessed values is barely more than half the percentage of increase made in each quadrennial assessment since 1899, and we are confident the increase is more equitably distributed. It is extremely doubtful if the increase of 10.5 per cent will cover the actual aggregate increase by acquisition, improvement and construction for a period of four years.

In this connection we desire to call attention to the exhibits reprinted above from a bulletin of the United States Census Department, and commend their consideration to every citizen of the State. After all the criticism that has or can be be made of our taxing system, the net fact remains that under a State government administered with economy we have State institutions maintained in keeping with the progressive sentiment of the times; we have approached a six-months school term in modern school buildings, and are constructing improved roads as rapidly as any State of comparable wealth and development, upon a payment of taxes in dollars and cents, for all purposes, less per capita that that of any other State in the Union, as conclusively shown by the United States Census Department.

The report of the Commission will be mailed free of charge to any address upon request mailed to the Commission at Raleigh.

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MANY ALLIED VESSELS SUNK BY SUBMARINES

Toll Taken by Teutonic Allies in Mediterranean.

Vienna, Jan. 2.—Austro-Hungarian and German Submarines sank in the Mediterranean eight troop ships, 25 transports and 34 merchantmen, with a total tonnage of about 225,825 in the last two weeks of October and the month of November, according to claims made in authoritative quarters here. The loss of life is said to have been very heavy in the case of troop ships and the estimate is made that it amounts to at least 5,000 men.

The largest of the vessels which it is asserted has been sunk was the Cunard liner Transylvania of 14,000 tons, loaded with troops and war material. The list includes also the Japanese steamer the Yokkuni of more than 5,000 tons. Thirty-eight of the vessels sent to the bottom were of British registry, thirteen French, ten Italian, two Russian, two Greek, one Norwegian and one Japanese.

The tonnage of the troop ships and transports was about 200,000 and that of the merchant ships 25,[illegible] making a total of 57 ships of approximately 225,325 register tons of 169,000 net load tons.

COUNTRY HOME WEAK IN DEFENSES

Need Safe Water Supply and Safe Sewage Disposal.

"The great need of the South today is the improvement of the rural home," says Dr. A. W. Freeman of Washington, D. C. Dr. Freeman speaking especially from a health view point says further that the fundamental needs of the small town and the rural home are those of a safe water supply and safe sewage disposal. He says that the shallow well and the open closet are where the rural home is weakest in its defenses and where health suffers most. "They should be condemned, and in their places constructed a means of furnishing the family with water in [illegible] type of closet."

The first essential in securing a pure water supply is to have the top of the well covered, preferably with a cement top and provided with a pump. Dirt, filth and drainage get back into the open top well that could no occur in the case of a cement top. Next be sure no source of pollution such as privies, stables, etc., are located on nearby ground higher than the well. Last of all be sure that surface drainage from a well is away from the top in all directions and that waste water from the pump is carried away in troughs, tile or otherwise and not allowed to stand in puddles or soak back into the well.

Safe sewage disposal consists of keeping the sewage away from flies and animals and so it cannot reach the well supply. Usually a tight fly proof privy placed close down over a shallow pit or hole in the ground at least 300 feet from the well and on lower ground will meet all requirements.—State Board of Health.

Mr. Young, the Harnett candidate against Congressman Godwin, has been talking rather loudly to the Raleigh correspondent of The Greensboro News as to how certain Godwin is going to be defeated. Mr. Young believes he will beat Godwin two to one in Harnett, that there is bound to be a second primary, in which whatever of chance Godwin might have had will be evaporated. Of course Godwin's friends are scrap-booking Young's talk for post-election service.—Charlotte Observer.

Wilson's Name on Michigan Ballot.

Lansing, Mich., Jan. 3.—The White House has officially acknowledged Secretary of State Vaughn's notice that sufficient nominating petitions have been filed to place President Wilson's name on the Democratic ballot at the Michigan Presidential primary in April.

FORD SAYS IDEAS WAR HAVE CHANGED

People Being Slaughtered Responsible Because Rulers Do Thinking.

New York, Jan. 2.—Henry Ford, who led the peace expedition which left here December 4 on the steamer Oscar II for Copenhagen in the hope of bringing about a conference of neutral Nations that would end the war, arrived here today on the steamer Bergensfjord. He confirmed earlier reports that his return had been hastened by illness, but said it made a difference of only a few days, as he intended when he left to come back this month.

Mr. Ford declared his views regarding the cause of the war have undergone a marked change. When he left he said he was of the opinion that bankers, manufacturers of ammunitions and armament were responsible, but he returns with the belief that it is the people themselves, those now being slaughtered, who are responsible. The men doing the fighting have been too content to let those who rule them do their thinking, and they have not taken advantage of their divine right to say for themselves what they shall do and think, the pacifist asserted.

"Republics are no better than monarchies in this respect," he said, "even in the United States we allow those whom we have elected to office to be swerved from their duty. We do not assert ourselves. Personally, I have voted only six times and then because my wife made me."

"The movement is now organized and under way," he said. "People are talking about it and while some criticise when people talk they think and when they think, they think right."

Mr. Ford's future plans with respect to the peace expedition were uncertain, he said. While he had several ideas in mind, he deemed it too early to speak of them. He left the party in charge of Gaston Plantiff, he stated, in accordance with his original plans, and, despite all reports to the contrary, when the party left the Oscar II it was as harmonious as ever.

Main Idea of Mission.

"The main idea of the mission," continued Mr. Ford, "was to crystallize into concrete form, if possible, the various ideas and hopes for peace which prevail all over the world. The Nations doing the fighting would be glad to stop it if they could I believe but they are afraid to let go.

"Those who accompanied me on the Oscar II were as fine a body of people for that particular mission as I could ask, and the interested delegates that met us at Christiana were all good men. I am simply financing and carrying out as far as possible the work set under way last year at the meeting at The Hague of the Women's International Peace Congress. The work ultimately will bring Europe to its senses and stop the war.

"If what I have done will bring peace only one day nearer, I shall be more than repaid. Every day the war is shortened will save 30,000 lives and 30,000 lives will mean much toward restoring order and normal conditions.

"If necessary I will again go to Europe and if it will help matters I will charter another ship. I am not doing it for personal glory, gain or advertising. I have more money now than I can use and I feel I am simply custodian of what I have. It was entrusted to me by the people, some of whom are today fighting in the trenches."

Against Preparedness.

Commenting on the preparedness issue in President Wilson's message Mr. Ford said:

"I am against preparedness as preparedness means war. No man will arm himself unless he means to attack. Even when he takes a fork in his hand he is preparing to attack an oyster or a beef steak.

"It would be better for the Administration to find out first if the people themselves want armament. If they do, they will eventually get what Europe is getting now. As to other features of President Wilson's message, especially with reference to trade and a greater merchant marine, we are all with him on that."

State Law Requires All Cases of Tuberculosis to be Reported to Bureau of Tuberculosis.

Sanatorium, Dec., 31.—The law requiring the physicians of the State to report all cases of tuberculosis to the Bureau of Tuberculosis at Sanatorium, N. C., meets meets with favor and is rapidly being complied with. Dr. C. L. Pridgen of Wilmington and Dr. W. Henry Bruce of Winston-Salem are the first physicians to make reports. Dr. Pridgen reports three cases and Dr. Bruce five.

GRIP SPREADING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

Taking a Large Toll in Lives—Cleveland and Detroit Each Have 100,000 Cases.

Washington, Jan. 3.—Influenza is spreading over the United States from coast to coast in the most serious epidemic of its kind ever known taking a large toll in lives and causing economic loss by incapacitating workers in all walks of life.

Reports from public health service officers made public tonight by Surgeon General Blue show that already the disease has created a grave problem for many of the larger cities, and is spreading to the rural communities.

New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, Cleveland and Detroit reported the disease widely prevalent. Cleveland and Detroit each have probably 100,000 cases. Of the larger cities, Buffalo, Pittsburg, Baltimore, San Diego, Dallas and Mobile reported no signs of an epidemic.

There is practically nothing the Federal Government can do toward aiding in suppression of the epidemic. It must be dealt with by local authorities and they, in turn, it is said, are almost helpless without co-operation from the public. Surgeon General Blue said tonight he had called for reports from all parts of the country with the hope that publicity would tend to stimulate this co-operation.

Some of the reports were summarized by Surgeon General Blue as follows:

Norfolk, Va.—Influenza prevalent. Pneumonia not increased.

Wilmington, N. C.—About 80 cases, mild form.

New York—Disease widely spread. Marked increase in pneumonia mortality.

Chicago—Last week there were 57 deaths from influenza. 30 deaths week before. There were 1,400 cases of pneumonia in December with 666 deaths of which 201 occurred in the last four days.

San Francisco—Epidemic of influenza widespread and most severe [illegible] year.

Philadelphia—Influenza epidemic here. In five weeks ending December 31, 1915 deaths, of which 72 occurred the last week. During December 881 cases of pneumonia. Deaths from pneumonia the last week 234.

Memphis—Estimated 7,000 or 8,000 cases, but outbreak declining rapidly.

F. H. CREECH GETS WASHINGTON JOB

Washington, Jan. 3.—F. Hunter Creech of Johnston county, arrived here today to take up his duties as assistant clerk of the House committee on claims. Congressman Pou chairman of the committee, appointed Creech. He takes the place filled last season by George Pou, son of the congressman.

FIVE SAW FROM HARNETT JAIL TO LIBERTY

Four White Men and Negro Escape; Two Figured in Dunn Disturbances.

Sawing through the bars of a second story window and letting themselves to the ground by means of knotted bed clothing, four white men and a negro broke from the Harnett county jail here last night shortly after 8 o'clock. Two of the men were Burnice Smith and John L. Moore, prominent figures in local troubles at Dunn, which called out the detachment of the National Guard. The other white men were D. M. Darroch, charged with passing worthless checks, and an Asheboro man by the name of Boggs, charged with the larceny of checks. The negro was Louis Elliott, held for the larceny of a bale of cotton. All the men had been bound over to Superior court and were awaiting trial.

Sheriff J. M. Byrd has notified all the towns near Lillington to be on thewatch for the men. In the meantime posses are searching the surrounding country in the hope of locating them.

MADE REMARKABLE SUCCESS

The meeting of the Wesley Bible Classes of the North Carolina Conference scheduled for Fayetteville January 19-20, calls attention to the fact that this department of the Methodist Episcopal Church South has had a remarkable growth. It was at Asheville in this State that this movement was launched by the Methodists; the General Conference meeting in that city in May of 1910 unanimously decided that this organized Bible Class movement must be recognized and fostered by the Church. Dr. Chas Bulla, a member of the Baltimore Conference, was appointed to superintend the new department.

In five years time this new department of the Sunday School work in the Methodist Church has enrolled over six thousand classes of men and women and teen age girls and boys; the membership totalling upward of two hundred thousand. There has not been an equal growth in any department of the Church.

In the North Carolina Conference which covers the fifty-six eastern counties of this state, there are nearly four hundred such classes with a membership of ten thousand. Four years ago there were just six of these classes thus organized and enrolled. The work of these classes has something to do with the fact that during the recent session of the Conference at Wilmington, the largest net growth ever shown in the Sunday Schools of the Conference was reported, there being a net gain of more than 6,100.

The meeting in Hay Street Church Fayetteville, will be attended by more than three hundred prominent preachers and laymen from all over the North Carolina Conference.

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