

Editorial and Opinion

A Good Man Passes

This section of North Carolina and the state as a whole lost a good friend and wise counselor in the death of Rev. N. N. Fleming, pastor of the Hawfields Presbyterian Church in Alamance County and moderator of the Presbyterian Synod in North Carolina.

One of the best known rural ministers in the state, his loss will be felt keenly by citizens in all walks of life.

In his long period of service to rural people, he became well known and respected not only in his own community and county but in the state and the South. Just recently he was named chairman of the executive committee for the North Carolina Rural Overseas Relief program for North Carolina.

Only a month ago, he was elected moderator of the North Carolina Synod, one of the highest honors the Presbyterian Church can bestow.

We know of the tremendous good that Mr. Fleming has done and of the exemplary life he led. It is good to know that his teachings and his influence will endure for generations.

Truly he was a good man and a great Christian.

Government As Price Fixer

There is much to be said both for and against the government's direct support of agricultural prices, which makes it impossible for them to fall below some prescribed level. But, whether you are for or against the policy, you should understand the influence it has on keeping the cost of food, along with some other commodities, high.

According to Senator Williams of Maryland, the government recently spent \$32,000,000 to hold up egg prices—and disposed of the eggs it bought at a loss of over \$24,000,000. Early in the year it bought potatoes at \$2.75 per hundred pound bag and sold them back to farmers for almost nothing, with the stipulation that they could not be used for human consumption. It bought large quantities of raisins and honey to keep the price high. And it has spent hundreds of millions to prevent major farm crops, such as grains and cotton, from falling in price below a fixed level.

Price support will be continued as both parties have endorsed it. However, those who blindly blame processors, manufacturers and retailers for gouging the public should realize how potent an influence it is on the cost of living—particularly on the necessities of life. So, next time you go into a food store and feel like denouncing the operator as a burglar, keep that in mind. The government is the most powerful price fixer there is.

Value Of Organization

The North Carolina Farm Bureau is reporting considerable success in its drive for 80,000 members this year.

Since its establishment in North Carolina in 1936, the Bureau has made remarkable progress. As late as 1940, it numbered on its rolls not more than 1,726 members. However, beginning in 1941, its growth has been almost phenomenal.

Last year, at the end of the membership campaign, a total of 70,633 had joined to rank North Carolina fifth in the nation in Farm Bureau membership.

However, other Southern states have not been asleep in seeking members, and unless this state's goal of 80,000 is reached, North Carolina may lose its place as the leading Farm Bureau state in the South.

There can be no doubting the great amount of good the organization has accomplished for North Carolina farmers, particularly the tobacco farmers.

The Farm Bureau was started in this state principally to aid the growers of tobacco, and its battle for fair prices for our No. 1 crop has continued since.

Without the national organization's active interest in the welfare of Southern tobacco growers and its growing influence in Washington, the situation of the flue-cured leaf farmer might be considerably worse today.

Farmers will have to carry on an organized fight when the next Congress convenes if they want to retain their hard-won gains. This they cannot do unless their efforts are directed through strong farm organizations.

Labor, industry, and professional groups have long banded together in their respective fields for the general welfare of their individual members.

The farmer has no tightly-knit union. But he can have spokesmen in places of influence.

Thus the small amount of money required for membership in a farm organization has paid and will continue to pay handsome dividends to all farmers.

PRESS COMMENT

Fair Chance For Tobacco

The Patriot Farmer
Congressman Graham Barden, from down New Bern way, complained bitterly at a meeting in Washington the other day that "somebody is beating hell out of the tobacco industry."

His complaint was voiced during a meeting of Southern congressmen and tobacco growers with European Aid Administrator Paul G. Hoffman.

The group from below the Mason-Dixon line was in the nation's capital to protest "discrimination" against American tobacco, arguing that aid officials were encouraging countries receiving aid to make purchases of Greek and Turkish tobacco.

The group urged that these countries be allowed to take the tobacco they wanted, and then pointed out that the so-called pressure for foreign-grown leaf will eventually wreck the export market for American tobacco.

The delegation pointed out to Mr. Hoffman that Congress amended the European Recovery Act to include tobacco in the list of goods that may be shipped abroad to stimulate rehabilitation. The group argued that it was "the intent of Congress" that the ECA prevent the development of foreign trade patterns unfavorable to American producers.

To this argument, Mr. Hoffman answered with a big "no." Here are his words: "I would be opposed to distorting the historic trade patterns of Europe in favor of American industry. I'm sorry, gentlemen, if you don't like that, but that's where I stand."

He added: "I don't believe that American industry and agriculture are entitled to a subsidy under this program."

"Now, then, Mr. Hoffman, American growers aren't looking for subsidies in the foreign market, and they wouldn't be disturbing historic patterns by insisting that American leaf be given a fair chance in European countries."

American growers are looking into the future. They would like to hold their foreign markets, because the flue-cured tobacco on export trade. If European industry has been built largely on American tobacco now, by being "presurized" to take Turkish, Greek, and Rhodesian leaf, a sad day is sure to be in store for a sizable segment of our Southern farm population.

J. B. Hutson, president of Tobacco Associates, asks only for free competition among the tobacco-growing countries of the world. If American growers are assured of this fair play, he says, they ask nothing more.

"We don't want special advantages because of the European Recovery Program," he says. "On the other hand, we do not think that other people who may be competitors of ours should have special advantages because of the ERP. We want free competition."

Mr. Hoffman's attitude is not helping American tobacco growers and the future of the American tobacco industry. We hope that sufficient evidence can be produced to cause him to have a change of mind.

Property Tax Limitation Another Amendment To Be Voted On Nov. 2

Editor's Note: Following is the third of four informative articles on proposed constitutional amendments to be voted on by the people of North Carolina on November 2.

By ALBERT COATES,
Director, Institute of Government

On Tuesday, November 2, the people of North Carolina will vote for or against an amendment increasing the amount of total state and county tax which may be levied on property by changing the limitation on said tax from 15 cents on the \$100 valuation to 25 cents.

Article V, Section 6, of the North Carolina Constitution provides: "The total of the state and county tax on property shall not exceed 15 cents on the \$100 value of property, except when the county property tax is levied for a special purpose and with the special approval of the General Assembly, which may be done by special or general act: Provided, this limitation shall not apply to taxes levied for the maintenance of the public schools of the state for the term required by article nine, section three, of the Constitution: Provided, further, the state tax shall not exceed five cents on the \$100 value of property."

The proposed amendment would lift this constitutional limitation from 15 to 25 cents on the \$100 value of property. It would not lift the tax; it would simply authorize county authorities to lift it—if, and when county needs require it for general operating purposes.

The Constitution authorizes the county authorities to exceed the 15-cent property tax limitation for special purposes. And this explains the difference between the present 15-cent limitation on taxes levied for general county purposes and present county tax rates ranging from 55 cents in one of the richer counties to \$2.25 in one of the poorer counties, representing general and special purposes combined. This 15-cent limitation for general purposes appeared to give the counties plenty of operating leeway when it was imposed in 1920, coupled with the special purpose exceptions which had been in force since 1868.

If the 15-cent limitation on property taxes for general operating purposes was fixed and static, the special purpose loophole with equal constitutional recognition was flexible and dynamic, and could be expanded to cover expanding county needs. "It was inserted in the Constitution of 1868," said the Supreme Court of North Carolina, "for the purpose of providing for an emergency that could not be reasonably anticipated, and as a safeguard against increasing taxation hastily and without due consideration. When the sum raised by the ordinary rate is not enough to pay the current expenses, the only relief is to apply to the Legislature for authority to exceed the limit. . . . And this has been the course pursued this has been the course pursued ever since the Constitution of 1868 was adopted whenever the current receipts of a county have not been sufficient to pay its current expenses."

This inflexibility began to fade as the legislative practice of permitting special taxes for special purposes yielded to the court's authority to say what a special purpose is. "If the General Assembly can authorize the levy of a tax in excess of the Constitutional limitation for the ordinary expenses of a county," said the

Court, "Article V, Section 1, which was intended to protect the people against excessive taxation, would on a far broader scale than they were called upon to render back in those days. . . . 'I know it to be a 'dead letter' and of no effect.' Accordingly, the Court, on taxpayers' protests, has pronounced against the practice of absorbing 'floating indebtedness,' incurred in ordinary operating expenses of the county, as a special purpose for which taxes may be levied in excess of the 15-cent limitation; against the practice of budgeting the maintenance of jails and the care of prisoners, county commissioners' pay, expense and board, county courthouse and grounds, and county attorney's fees, etc., as special purposes instead of general operating expenses."

This fading flexibility has left the counties under growing pressures from expanding needs, in a strait jacket between the 15-cent limitation—fixed and static in the Constitution—and the ever tightening limitation of the special purpose doctrine, crystallizing in the Court's decisions. Local biddies hatched out in first Monday sittings of county commissioners are being driven from the sheltering wing of "special purpose" to seek standing room in the "general county fund," and find no room for sanctuary there. The counties are seeking to raise the general fund property tax limitation in the Constitution from 15 to 25 cents on the \$100 value of property as one way out of this dilemma.

In many counties commissioners with heads butting against revenue ceilings are forced to choose between cutting—to the quick, and sometimes to the core, of local services they feel are worthwhile and which the people want, and beating the devil around the stump by levying general fund taxes under a special guise, or by transferring funds from the special purpose ledger to the general fund, or by openly dispensing with the special purpose law in the effort to administer justice as they see it in their localities.

Reasons cited for and against the proposed amendment. Some officials seek to avoid the necessity of this increase: by insisting that "the state assume its full school obligations as it should and that counties be allowed the fines and forfeitures to be added to the general fund. . . . by cutting expenses down, and out, if necessary, in view of the fact that the more services rendered by a governing body to its people the more services are demanded." Others write: "If this ceiling were raised to 25 cents, within ten years there would be a clamor that it be raised still higher. . . . We have got to stop somewhere and let's stop where we are. . . . If you raise the constitutional limit most of the counties will go the limit and assess the whole rate."

Other officials favor lifting the rate: "The present cost of every expenditure is practically double what it was four or five years ago. . . . 'Since the present limitation was written into the Constitution, the counties have been forced to take on and furnish services to the people or the counties be a fact that the majority of the counties with lower property valuations can't possibly operate within the 15-cent limitation. Various and sundry means are resorted to to get around this limitation but I think it would be better to face the issue squarely and permit counties to levy a rate sufficient to take care of necessary expenses. . . . 'Only the richer counties can operate on the 15-

SOMEBODY SHOULD HAVE STOPPED THE PAPERS!



cent levy. . . . 'It is practically impossible to operate the departments and functions which come under the general fund on a 15-cent tax rate unless counties have A. B. C. store profits or other sources of revenue. . . .

Another writes: "Having experienced the difficulty of the county operating on the 15-cent Constitutional limitation, and knowing that it is impossible to run a county as desired on this rate, I naturally hate the subterfuges that are resorted to in order to give the people what they desire. It is a question of higher valuation which the taxpayers seem to despise and do not understand, or a raise in the county purpose rate which they can understand."

"The failure to adopt this amendment in my opinion would throw many counties practically into bankruptcy, unless the various subterfuges are upheld whereby additional taxes are placed in the general fund. I think that this amendment is essential to the proper legal functioning of county government. I think the voters should honestly realize that conditions require a larger expenditure for county purposes and that these are the foundations of our democratic system."

More pork and less beef in the prospect for 1949. Total meat supplies will be close to the 1948 pounds per civilian estimated for this year.

World demand for wool is expected to continue strong in 1948-49.

Prospects are that support prices for the 1949 Irish potato crop will be lower than for the 1948 crop. As a result, prices to farmers probably will be substantially lower than this year.

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140 lbs. at .91 . . . \$ 127.40	26 lbs. at .67 . . . \$ 17.42	154 lbs. at .68 . . . 104.72	300 lbs. at .68 . . . \$ 204.00	300 lbs. at .67 . . . \$ 201.00
182 lbs. at .90 . . . 163.80	104 lbs. at .70 . . . 72.80	196 lbs. at .92 . . . 180.32	300 lbs. at .69 . . . 207.00	300 lbs. at .67 . . . 197.50
32 lbs. at .56 . . . 21.12	164 lbs. at .70 . . . 149.24	152 lbs. at .92 . . . 139.84	300 lbs. at .67 . . . 201.00	250 lbs. at .67 . . . 167.50
156 lbs. at .68 . . . 106.08	146 lbs. at .91 . . . 132.86	128 lbs. at .67 . . . 86.76	300 lbs. at .68 . . . 204.00	150 lbs. at .67 . . . 101.25
100 lbs. at .55 . . . 55.00	138 lbs. at .80 . . . 110.40	194 lbs. at .65 . . . 126.10	300 lbs. at .68 . . . 204.00	230 lbs. at .44 . . . 101.25
138 lbs. at .91 . . . 125.58	88 lbs. at .65 . . . 57.20	108 lbs. at .65 . . . 70.20	260 lbs. at .68 . . . 176.80	
748 Total \$ 598.98	716 Total \$ 591.20	1556 Total \$1268.02	1760 Total \$1190.80	1230 Total \$ 771.20
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