

PAUL WAGER TALKS POSSIBILITIES OF POLK

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right sort. A school is more than a school building. A teacher is more than an hireling. An education is more than the possession of a diploma.

I read lately that North Carolina leads the states in the percentage of high school pupils studying Latin but is at the foot of the list in the teaching of bookkeeping, economics, and other business subjects. I have no quarrel with Latin, but I believe a county official who knows bookkeeping will save the county more money than one who knows how Caesar conquered the Gauls.

We need to include in our educational program that which makes better farmers, better home workers, better artisans, better business men, better mothers.

Neither do we have to limit education to the children. There is a great body of useful knowledge that can be taught to the old and young alike. Knowledge that will make for health and happiness. 32 counties have now fully developed county health departments, and the results are more marvelous in my estimation than any other phase of North Carolina progress. Typhoid and malaria and hookworm have been almost stamped out and tuberculosis will go too just as soon as the people can be educated to do their part. Knowledge of health rules must be universal before disease can be checked effectively.

The fifth factor in a model county is culture. And that means, first of all, appreciation of beauty. Polk County is blessed with a wealth of beautiful scenery and you have a right to capitalize it if you make the handiwork of man blend with the handiwork of God your county will draw to it Nature lovers in increasing numbers. Great artists are produced in regions like this. These mountain scenes are inspiring. I understand that Polk County is known for its interest in music and art. I congratulate you. Keep on promoting that interest, North Carolina as a whole is very much lacking in esthetic appreciation. Except among the Moravians there is very little musical talent in this state.

But culture means to me more than an appreciation of beautiful deeds. Culture includes all the Christian virtues. Hospitality, Gentility, Purity of life, Modesty in dress, Delicacy in speech, a spirit of tolerance and human sympathy. These are the earmarks of genuine culture. And I am afraid that the New South has lost some of the grace and chivalry of the Old South. I wish it might be restored. I wish we might know again the "Southern Gentleman" and the "Southern Girl" of the old school. I should think Polk County might be a fine place to make such an endeavor. How appealing it would be to your summer guests. If you can revive something of the gentile atmosphere of the Old South I promise you that your county will become a haven for the jazz weary people of the North. Culture in its richest sense, however cannot be capitalized. It is a spiritual possession.

The sixth factor in a model community is Opportunity. And I refer especially to economic opportunity. The county must furnish trade and business opportunities that will hold and attract the alert minded youth. Some of our counties are stagnating because they are losing their most aggressive young people. Are you holding yours? If not, why not? Is there room here for a young man to carve out a career as an engineer as an agriculturalist, as a manufacturer, as a surgeon, as a lawyer, as an educator, as an architect? I suppose there is room in each of these fields, but ambitious young men are often poor and unknown. They need financial and moral encouragement. It would be a fine thing for a Kiwanis Club to spot this budding talent and give it a lift.

These youngsters will be assets to the county later on. The way to supply opportunity to native labor and native talent is to develop your economic resources to the fullest extent. The increase in population and wealth will be slow if you depend on agriculture alone. It is wrong, but nevertheless a fact that only about 37% of the consumer's dollar reaches the pocket of the farmer. That means if you sell the product of farm and forest in the raw state that only 37 percent of the Consumer's money comes into the county. If you can put those products into finished form before they leave the county it will bring a much larger percentage of the consumer's dollar to you. Manufacturing is the keystone of our economic structure and without it your county cannot hope to be prosperous.

You have the raw materials, you have the labor, you have the power. Combine them and a fair share of the world's wealth will come to you.

Utilize all the resources which nature has given you, but don't exploit them—especially your forests. Don't rob your children of a splendid heritage for the sake of immediate reward. No county a reforestation policy can hope to become and remain a model.

The seventh factor of an ideal county is a Unified Government. Government is the activity of the people. If progress is to be made it must be in large measure through the agency of government. If Polk County is to obtain the splendid goal which it has set it must have a government which is honest, efficient and responsible and no government can be that unless it is a unified government. By "unified" I mean complete co-ordination of all its departments and a responsible executive head. Did you ever stop to consider that the county is the only unit of government in the world that does not have a head? There are half score of officers each chosen separately and each operating in his own way without any co-ordination of effort or uniformity of method. A dozen different spending agencies each buying supplies and dispensing patronage among its own group of friends.

County expenditures in the aggregate are not so much in a small rural county like this but just as much in proportion to your taxable wealth. Something like \$75,000 a year, I believe or about \$35 a family. Perhaps there is no waste in this county. I haven't investigated but I dare say there is, for unless there is unified government waste is inevitable. And this would be true even if every officer were entirely honest which I trust is the case in this county.

Can you imagine a corporation doing a \$75,000 a year business with no boss except three directors who meet once a month? Yet that is the way most counties do business. And I have no criticism to make of the commissioners. They have my sympathy for they are a much abused group of men. In most counties they are fine, public spirited men do the best way they can under a terrific handicap. It is not the men but the system that is at fault.

What is the remedy? Well, no one single thing will do more to correct the trouble than a competent, full-time officer who will act as bookkeeper, auditor, purchasing agent, and tax supervisor. I know of several counties which have such an officer and he is saving his salary many times over. I care not what title you give him but in reality he must be to the county what the city manager is to a city. He might well be called a "County Manager." I feel confident that such an officer in this county would help more in the realization of your ambition than any other single agency. Unified government calls for more than a county manager but that is its greatest need. But I hasten to add that such an officer must be strictly non-partisan. No city has ever realized efficient administration until it discarded party politics. And neither can a county.

My eighth ideal for Polk County is a non-partisan rule for that is the only kind that you can afford. I believe in political parties when they represent the issues on which men honestly differ. But the issues which for the platforms of our political parties are national issues and bear no relation whatsoever to local government. Pray, tell me what the protective tariff or the League of Nations has to do with building roads or operating schools, or recording deeds or holding court in Polk County?

People choose county officers on a partisan basis simply because it is a tradition to do so. There is no logic in it. People tell me they often vote for the man that they know is least efficient out of party loyalty. It is time we substituted for party loyalty—loyalty to our intelligence and loyalty to our pocket books. Three hundred of our best governed cities have given up party government for they have seen that party politics have no place in the administration of a political department, or a fire department, or paving, or street cleaning, or any other phase of city government. Counties are soon going to learn the lesson, too. Polk county citizens must be a unit in their advancement of their county. You can't afford to let your political differences over national issues divide you in local matters. County government must be unified and no partisan.

My ninth ideal for Polk County is "tax equity." In your telegram you suggested that I discuss this topic, but I have been a long time getting to it. Neither shall I dwell on it long. If you want to make a man mad mention taxes to him. Taxes are about as popular as small pox. Occasionally I meet a man who admits that he is getting "value received for his taxes, but he is a rare

bird. I suspect that if the taxpayers are getting less than they pay for the other half is getting more than they pay for, but they all complain alike—the man with five children in school who pays \$3 school tax and the man with no children who pays \$500 taxes. Mark Twain once said, "Everybody is complainin' about the weather, but nobody is doing anything about it." So it is with taxes. What are you doing about it? Have you analyzed the situation? Have you counted up the services rendered to you by our government and estimated their value to you? Maybe you will discover a balance in your favor. To be sure taxes are double what they used to be, but don't two cows cost twice as much as one? Isn't your county government rendering you twice the service that it did when taxes were half as much? Maybe so—maybe not. I don't know—find out.

But more important than tax returns is tax equity. And let me right here say that inequity is the greatest evil in the state. The burden of taxation should be equitably distributed and it is not. I can sympathize with the man who objects to listing his property at its true value if he knows that his neighbor has undervalued his. Or I can sympathize with him for wanting to withhold some of his property if he knows or thinks that his neighbor is not listing all of his. If everybody followed the same rule and listed half his property and that at half price it would not be so bad for there would be equity. But it doesn't work that way when some conscientious chap list all of his at its full value and some scoundrel does not list any. Or possibly some farmer hasn't anything but land and that can't be hid. But I must confess that even land has learned to play hide and seek. Even though everyone takes oath that he has told the truth it is doubtful if the tax books show more than half of the actual taxable wealth of the state. The result is not only a high rate but the grossest inequalities just as long as the practice persists of listing at less than actual value because one will list at 80 percent another at 50 percent and another at 30 percent.

If property were listed its full value more would be listed for the rate would be low enough to bring intangible property out of hiding. Some people won't perjure themselves to escape a 50c levy but will to escape a \$1.00 levy. There seems to be different degrees of conscientiousness. A high tax rate is a blight which destroys both the source of tax and the conscience of the taxpayer.

I don't know about tax conditions in Polk County but your county can not be a model unless there is equity and honesty in taxation. Put your levy down around 50c and the revenue will be greater, the honest man's taxes will be less, and your conscience will be easier. Further more you will attract new capital into the county.

A low tax rate seems like a magnet to attract investments. Tax reform is the most baffling problem before our countries and municipalities today. If Polk County can offer a solution you will win the plau-

gives the acme of satisfaction. But farming for profit calls for skill of high order. Agriculture is a science, a business, and a profession. No farmer can gain independence financially if he insists on being independent socially. There must be cooperation among farmers—certainly in buying and marketing and increasingly in production. I am glad to know that Polk County has sense enough to know that it can not afford to be without a farm demonstrator and a home demonstrator. They in truth are commonwealth builders. They are doing more than anybody else to make this a model county. They are bringing science to the aid of your farmers and prosperity with your gates. They are lifting burdens from the shoulders of tired housewives and putting color and comfort and cheer into once drab and joyless homes. They are making life more than living; homes more than houses; work more than drudgery; God bless their noble efforts.

With these mountains to inspire; this bracing air to exhilarate, these rich fields and orchards to nourish them, the farmer folk of this county ought to be a healthy and happy people, a virile and contented yeomanry out of which to build your common wealth. Now I have spelled out for you what, in my opinion, is the best way to do it.

But I must hasten to my tent and last ideal for your county. I have borrowed an English word and that is "yeomanry" which means a population of small land owners. No satisfactory civilization has ever yet been built on shifting population. Home and farm ownership makes for stability of population and stability of character as well. A man will work and sweat, fight and die for a home and a few acres which he can call his own. But nobody ever got sentimental over plowing another man's field or sweeping down another's back stairs. An independent farmer is a monarch among men and "a little farm well tilled and a little wife well willed"

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Poem by Uncle John

He never appears as a favorite in the fashionable show, but he's welcome to watch the blowout if he pays for a ticket to go— We stand him along with the yappers that stay outside of the ring, but—in spite of his comic whiskers—he's the salt of the earth, by jing!

He's never an artful trickster that feathers his nest with men—but knows how to feed the porkers that fatten inside his pen. We couldn't exactly call him a king in the social deck, but he knows how to grow potatoes that we can't do without, by heck!

While the law provides special favors for sons of the gifted class, there aint no statutes provided for the feller that mows the grass—but, so long as he finds contentment in whiskers an' crooked backs—and so long as he feeds the "people" he can tend to himself, by jacks!



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Old English Crushed Bond is a lovely two-toned effect heavy weight deckle edge paper in "crushed" finish; made for those who desire the best.
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For years I have boosted this saying—
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CHARLES J. LYNCH
"It Can Be Done"
PHONE 173

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But if you wrote such a letter on cheap, shoddy paper, or used a misfit envelope, wouldn't your friend think the same of you? Undoubtedly—and rightly.
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Buy a new Ford on the easy payment plan and get six months free service. Details on application.
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