

## "THE FORGOTTEN CHILD"

*Shall the diversion of tax monies from the general fund to the segregated road fund be permitted to go on indefinitely? Can Virginia—with schools ranking 43d and roads above 23d—be content?*

NO one who has followed with any degree of intelligent attention the series of events that has resulted in the present condition of schools both in America at large and in our own state can help coming to the conclusion that there must be an immediate and radical change in the policy with regard to education or the country will suffer an irreparable loss in the quality of citizenship of the future generation.

In this paper the writer will first, summarize the more striking conditions education is facing, presumably due to the depression, in America at large and in Virginia; second, discuss the causes of these conditions in Virginia; and third, suggest some plans for remedying the situation.

### *In the Nation at Large*

Last spring from 750,000 to 1,000,000 children were out of school long before the scheduled closing of schools. In over 100 cities and in a much larger number of counties schools were closed one or more months before the regular date for closing. In one state 178 out of 2,000 schools were unable to open at all this fall and 500 in the same state were to open for only four months.

In Alabama by April 1 last year 85% of the schools were closed, many of them before January 1. In that state the schools suffered a revenue cut of 50%.

Teacher's salaries have been cut in various states from 10% to 50% and in some states teachers have not been paid for from four months to three years.

In hundreds of cities kindergartens, manual training departments, art, music, and

home economics have been taken out of the schools.

One fourth of the teachers in the United States are working for less than the NRA wage scale for day laborers.

### *In Virginia*

Our state never has ranked high in the education it provides its children, but in the last three years it has sunk from 39th to 43d in rank. It is now attempting to operate on 30% less revenue than in normal times.

It was predicted this fall that the school term in about half the counties would have to be cut to less than eight months unless more revenue could be obtained.

Many special courses such as music, art, manual training, physical education, and home economics have been cut out of the offerings of a large number of Virginia schools.

Teachers' salaries, in spite of the fact that Virginia ranks among the highest in the country in the training it demands of its teachers, are less than two-thirds the average for the United States. Even among the Southern states Virginia's rank is seventh in teachers' salaries. A large proportion of the teachers are getting salaries less than the NRA wage scale for unskilled labor.

This is not a pretty picture in a land whose boast has for so long been "a free public school education for all the children of all the people."

### *Why Has This Happened in Virginia?*

1. Under the general results that can be attributed to the depression come lack of work, low prices for farm products, and decreased sales by merchants, with the consequent inability of many to pay their taxes. This, in turn, results in a drop in revenue to the state from property taxes. The above cause can undoubtedly be attributed to the depression. The remaining causes

suggested cannot, I believe, be attributed to the depression.

2. Tax receipts to the general fund from corporation profits have been greatly reduced. Such receipts were at one time one of the principal sources of income to the general fund, the largest single source probably being that of the railroads. Since the rapid development of passenger and freight traffic by automobile and truck, respectively, the income of the railroads has been cut correspondingly. But in Virginia the policy of segregation works to prevent the automatic balancing of increased income from automobile taxes against decreased income from railroad taxes. For in this state the taxes from automobile licenses and from the sale of gas do not go into the general funds (from which school support comes), but into a segregated fund exclusively for the building and maintenance of roads.

3. The state has refused to borrow money to aid the schools during the depression. It is an accepted industrial policy that if through some unusual and temporary condition a business concern finds certain phases of its organization needing temporary help, and its credit is good, it borrows the needed cash to carry over that phase of its organization that there may be no loss in the efficiency of the concern. Now the credit of the state of Virginia is probably as high as that of any state in the Union, and its public debt is among the lowest.

4. Virginia's refusal to take seriously her responsibility to educate the children of the state. Figures for 1930, for instance, show that only two states in the Union, and only one Southern state, are spending a smaller proportion of their total tax collections (federal, state, and local) on public schools.

#### *Virginia's Capacity for Meeting the Crisis*

If Virginia is bankrupt, if its credit is gone, if its public debt is getting insupportable, then we should consider the children

of the state fortunate that they are being looked after as well as they are. What is Virginia's financial status?

a. In the market of the world Virginia bonds sell higher than those of any other state in the Union save one, and bring a better price than those of the United States.

b. Virginia is one of the three states in the Union to substantially reduce their public debt since 1926.

c. Virginia is one of the few states whose budgets will be but slightly out of balance at the end of the present biennium.

d. Virginia has the greatest per capita wealth of any Southern state.

e. Only two other Southern states have a greater per capita income.

f. Only three states in the South have a smaller per capita debt.

g. Virginia's tax rate on land is the lowest of any state in the Union in proportion to its value.

#### *Suggestions for Remedying these Conditions*

Now what can Virginia do about this crisis in its educational system?

1. Eliminate all segregation of taxes and turn all tax revenues into the general fund. It is bad enough for education to have to compete locally with highways, water systems, and municipal electric plants, but to have the largest single source of tax revenue lifted out of the general fund and placed at the disposal of the state highway system seems unjustifiable. And particularly when Virginia highways now rank above the average of those of the United States while her schools rank forty-third. Think that statement over a minute and then try to justify the fact. The state comptroller's report for September, '33, shows that after deductions were made on account of funds returned from the state institutions, 49% of her expenditures went for roads and 21% for schools.

The state should worry less about an unbalanced budget and think more seriously

about balancing the distribution of its income in terms of essential and non-essential functions of government.

2. Levy a reasonable (say 1 cent) sales tax on all but the most essential commodities, such tax to go, not to a segregated fund for schools, but to the general fund from which it may be apportioned as deemed wise and fair to schools and to other necessary functions of government. Such a tax is working successfully in a number of states at the present time.

3. Let the state borrow for the present emergency on its future prosperity. The children of the state can't wait on the future prosperity of the state. Any curtailment of schooling at the present time will affect permanently the future citizenry of the state.

4. Urge Federal Aid. Up to the present time the Federal government has given very little financial support to education in individual states. In 1932 Virginia paid to the United States government in internal revenue \$99,971,505. This was exceeded by only four other states and represented a sum more than double the entire state budget.

In a time when the Federal government is spending billions for relief in other departments, it does not seem unreasonable that it be asked to spend two hundred million for education. Such a sum, apportioned according to need, would go a long way toward relieving the worst aspects of the present situation.

5. Inaugurate a campaign of publicity for schools. Knowledge of conditions such as have been presented in this paper percolate very slowly into the consciousness of the rank and file of the people. Frequently when conditions do finally force themselves on public attention the harm has been done. A definite campaign should be developed in Virginia, directed, not by teachers, but by parents and other taxpayers interested in the continuance of the public schools. The legis-

lature should be provided with accurate information not only as to the facts of the crisis in education but as to the attitude of the people who have the welfare of the children of the state at heart.

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## HOW THE PRINCIPLES OF GEOGRAPHY MAY HELP THE ADULT

*Geography is a suitable university study, needed in the interpretation of history, politics and government, economics and business. It also provides new and interesting scenes for the adult's fireside travels.*

WE ARE so accustomed to think of geography as a grade-school subject that we forgot that it has applications, and very practical ones, to our everyday life after we leave school. The general notion of geography in the United States is that of something you finish in the seventh grade and then proceed to forget. In Europe geography is not only a grammar-school subject, but also a university subject in very good standing. The reason many students do not elect geography in the university is that they have been "fed up" with it in the grades, just as many of the world's bad boys were once bored by Sunday school. (Please do not jump to the inference that Sunday schools produce bad boys!) The old style textbooks, some of which are still in use even in our own state, are so written as to kill any budding interest in the subject because the emphasis is laid upon mere information and not upon the reasons for things. How many realize the difference between a geographic fact and a geographic principle? Portland is a geographic fact. That Portland and like cities come into existence because of breaks in transportation is a statement of a geographic principle. If one will compare the average school geography with a book like