

Chapel Talk

Made before the Summer School of East Carolina Teachers College

June 13, 1929

Friends, I cannot help it because I have this long face. Sometimes it hurts me and I think quite often it hurts other folks.

I want to talk to you this morning because it is always a pleasure to me to talk to people who have determination and faith. I am glad to see 500 students here. There are something over 500 I am sure because the registration is now 496 and there are some here who have not yet registered. I am glad to see that many folks in our profession who have faith in the school system of North Carolina and who have faith in the people of our state.

There are certain changes in educational conditions in North Carolina today that have never been here before. The college is twenty years old, that means that I will soon be free--I mean twenty-one. (You see I am married and have some children and I do not know whether I will ever be free again). But during those twenty years I have not seen the reaction that has set in in North Carolina during the last few months. We have never had a legislative enactment that so thoroly tore up the mental state of the teaching staff as the Hancock Bill did this year. Now I am going to surprise you by saying that I think the Hancock Bill in the final analysis is going to do more good in North Carolina than any legislation we have had in the last twenty years. I believe that that law has put the teaching force in North Carolina on its metal. That law has caused the people of North Carolina to become intensely interested in legislation with reference to public education and they have not been that way before. The people of North Carolina have been more or less indifferent. They have relied on the Legislature doing the best they can and they thought the last Legislature

would do that, they thought that at election time, they thought that in January and a few thought it the first part of February and then they began to see some things coming up in the Legislature that put people on their nerves and they finally passed this legislation. I do not know what it is and I do not believe anyone else does. About once a week the Attorney General makes another ruling. There is one in this morning's paper. And I want to say that I take my hat off to our Attorney General. He has put an interpretation on this law that is going to help the schools to go on. Every time he puts on an interpretation he makes it as liberal as he possibly can. But it is that law that causes the enrollment at East Carolina Teachers College to be 500 instead of 900. There is no question about it at all.

Now how are the people in North Carolina reacting to that legislation. Anywhere in this state you will hear people say, "I didn't know it meant that." "Are we going to lose one of our teachers?" And the superintendent will probably say to one school yes and to another no. "You mean we are not going to have as many teachers next year as this year." "Well, we are going to see about that." That law had not been passed two weeks when a mother of a girl who had had her application in for six or eight months to enter here next fall came over to see me. She wanted to know if there was any use for her to send her daughter to college to be trained to teach. The reaction towards that legislation is making the folks in North Carolina think and think seriously about public education.

And what is the reaction of teachers towards it? Well, all you have to do is to look around here and to read the papers and see what they say about the attendance at other summer schools in the state. I do not blame the teachers. Now dont get that in your head. I do not blame the teacher when she doesn't know what is going to happen and the superintendent cannot tell what will happen as the budget will have to be made and passed upon and then it must be submitted to the Equalization Board and then when passed by the Equalization Board the superintendent

may sign contracts. Well, he is in a fix. Of course, they are going to sign contracts before all of that red tape is gone thru with. I do not blame the teacher who says, "I believe I will just wait and see what happens." The Equalization Board is going to put pressure to bear upon counties to bring up their teaching staffs to high standard certificates. Now that is a thing that none of us thought would happen. The Equalization Board is going to encourage the employing of good teachers. Last year and year before, the best grade of teacher was not always employed and some low certificate teachers were employed. The teaching staff in North Carolina is reacting in a way that in the final analysis is making the folks of North Carolina wonder just what is going to happen to my school next year wherever that school may be.

You know I hold to a peculiar kind of philosophy. I believe that there is good in every bad thing when taken in the right way. Now I will admit that that kind of philosophy is queer. What I mean is that whenever there is adverse legislation we can turn that to a benefit instead of letting it become a handicap to progress by acquainting the folks in North Carolina with what ought to be done. Quinine does not taste very well but it is pretty good if you have malaria and I am not at all sure that the last Legislature did not have a yellow chill but we are going to give them quinine enough to shake the chill off. I think your biggest task is to carry the truth to the people. You know I blame ourselves for most of this that has happened.

We need to go back and instruct the voters of North Carolina and I want to tell you that is one of your biggest jobs. Read the article by Jule Warren in yesterday's paper giving the facts. He did not dodge the truth, he did not warp the truth but he gave the facts and then clearly demonstrates the truth that the best is the cheapest. It may cost more but in the long run it costs less. I want you to read that article and see that the people in North Carolina get the truths that are put down in that article. I want you to keep yourselves posted on what is going on in an educational way in North Carolina and then give

it just as it is to the people of this state because the people of North Carolina are determined to see to it that their children are educated.

Now you need to have faith. I think this is one of the times when the people of North Carolina need faith as much as the people ever needed faith. You need to have faith in your ability; you need to have faith in the children that you are going to teach; you need to have faith in the people of North Carolina that they will see to it that the right thing is done by the childhood of North Carolina. You can trust the citizenship of this state. There is no question in my mind about it. I think you can trust the youth of today more than you could trust the youth of any generation. I think the youth of today are seeking for the truth as young folks have never sought the truth before and I think their fathers and mothers are seeking for the truth and when there is a good thing in recent legislation say so. Say this thing is good, this thing ought to be changed. The better training the teacher has the more salary the teacher gets and she is going to continue to get it under this legislation and the better the teacher the more children will pass their grade for every child that fails to pass had to be retaught next year and that is not economy. It is economy for our people to employ the very best teachers they can get. The folks have got sense enough to see it too. There is no question about it--we have sensible people in North Carolina. You go ahead with your study and keep on going until you get the highest certificate the state of North Carolina gives and go ahead knowing that the people of North Carolina are going to demand that kind of a teacher for their children. I know a certain man who is worth over a million dollars and he is an old bachelor. He was a merchant and there came a terrible slump and it looked like we were going to have a complete crop failure and many of the merchants in his part of the state told their people that they could not furnish them any longer as the people could not pay and they could not afford to do it. This man kept every one of those he had promised to help and when many of the others came

to him and asked if he would supply them he said, "Yes". He bought and bought and strained his own credit to the limit that he might help those people of his that were his friends and acquaintances who lived around him. He went absolutely to his limit and then the seasons changed and almost every one of them paid him and practically all of them stayed with him as long as he stayed in that business. He made good because he had faith in his folks. He went right on to the limit and that is exactly what the teaching profession today needs in North Carolina and those men and women who are going to summer school and advance themselves are the ones who are going forward. You have set a goal for yourself, dont stop until you reach it. And I hope you have set that goal so high that you will keep on striving the rest of your life. I know now that I will never attain the things I want and each day I see something else I want to do. I have not turned my eyes backward and I hope I will go West before I do.

The future of this state is just as bright today as it has ever been. All we need is to have faith in our success, and you good people are headed in that direction. I congratulate you on your foresight. I congratulate all of those who have gone to other summer schools in North Carolina for they are the ones who have faith. You remember it would have taken only a few people with faith to save Sodom and Gomorrah. I do not believe that God is standing off with a stick in one hand and a piece of candy in the other ready to hit one and give sweets to the other. My concept of God is not one of bengeance but a spirit of justice and love. Human beings on this earth need to seek and find his way and organize their lives in accordance with his divine purpose and then the reward is sure to come and success cannot fail a people who do this. I think the people of North Carolina who are engaged in trying to make a better citizenship, who are engaged in trying to work with the young people of this state and nation to try to help them become right minded and familiar with the purpose of Jehovah, are working with God. If we are not working with God then.I do not know what is.

It is more blessed to give one's life in service to others than those lives may be God-like, that they may become good citizens, right minded in their spirit life than to receive and that is serving Jehovah in the biggest way. There is not anything on earth and I am not going to except the ministry tho it is a great work than the work you and I have laid out for ourselves to do with the little children and those who are not so little who are preparing for their life's work. There is no greater work than this because you are giving out your life to thirty or forty others and if you are prepared to give as it should be given with the spirit of love with faith and hope and with love there is no greater service that mankind can render to his fellow man and as I see it to render service to one's fellow man is man's only way to really worship God and serve Jehovah. I do not believe that one cannot reach down into his spirit life and worship Jehovah and not serve but I cannot. So if you have faith in God and faith in your fellow man then you are doing the right thing in getting educational training to enlarge your usefulness and you are doing it because you have faith in yourself, your fellow citizens and in your God and that kind of people cannot fail to be a success in life.

Robert H. Wright, President