

December 13, 1929

I want to say just a word or two to you this morning about an institution I visited last Monday. You know the state that we live in has made provision to take care of the unfortunate ones. Those unfortunate ones who lose their minds are provided for. Those in the state who are born blind or become blind, the state has provided for so as to enable them to overcome this handicap. I was teaching school in a county once some years ago--I will not say how many-- and we had a blind man to tune our piano. They train them to tune pianos in these institutions. A boy went over to the school building with the blind man one night and held the light while he worked. I asked him why he held the light for the man to work when the man was blind. It occurred to him what he was doing and he said that he was holding it so he could see what the man was doing.

I visited a school this week where the state has provided for those who are born deaf. This school is at Morganton. The school takes children at the age of seven if they are too deaf to attend the public school they are eligible to attend the North Carolina School for the Deaf at Morganton. If the parents can pay them they are supposed to pay but if not the state will take the children without cost. This is the first time I have studied what the state was doing for the deaf. I was dumfounded at what I saw. Mr. Goodwin, the superintendent of this school, has in connection with the institution a training school for the teachers of the deaf. It is probably one of the finest in the country.

They take these young children and they put them all in one building and in this building they have bedrooms and classrooms and they have playgrounds for them. They take those little folk that came there this fall for the first time and they had already taught them to talk. The teacher would ask them questions and they thru their eyes watching the lips and throat of the teacher heard. They heard thru the eye and then they answered back in spoken English. That has been



done already since the school opened last fall. Dont ask me how this is done because I do not know. The children put their fingers on the lips of the teachers and learn how to make words. You can see them thinking how to say what they wish. I talked with two or three of the teachers who are deaf and had no trouble in their understanding me. By seeing they heard and they answered me in spoken English. In other words, they could hear me by just looking at the movement of my lips.

I went into one of the rooms and I noticed a piano in it. I asked what this was for and Mr. Goodwin had a group to show me. Mr. Goodwin said just a few years ago he did not think it could be done but it could. I went into that room where all the children were there and they all had their hands on the piano and when the teacher struck a chord they began to sing. The teacher would strike up a song and they would recognize what the song was and they sang remarkably well. Of course, they could not hear so they do not know how to modulate their voices. I was told and I believe it now that they can get the music thru their feet and that they made very good dancers.

It is simply remarkable what people can do when they try. To teach the blind to see and the deaf to hear is indeed a remarkable thing. The blind do not see with their eyes and the deaf do not hear with their ears. It is just simply almost incredible what can be done. And then I was thinking that if those folks working with those children could get the wonderful results that they do get, how much more you and I ought to be able to do with the children with all their faculties.

The possibilities of education when we are working with folks with all their faculties is absolutely unlimited and we are beginning to find out how to do things successfully. Dr. Chase at the meeting of the North Carolina College Conference spoke about that. We are now beginning to measure the efficiency of what we are doing.

Robert H. Wright, President