

CHAPEL January 27, 1931

-- President Wright,

Scripture lesson: 103rd Psalm

I hope you young people are reading the papers. Right now something very interesting is going on in the General Assembly relative to a six months' school term in North Carolina. Last week there was passed, almost unanimously, a resolution for the state to take over the six months' school and pay the expenses of it. That means that if it is enacted and becomes a law--only a resolution as it stands--if there is a law passed to that effect the state of North Carolina will run the school six months. If you read this morning's paper you will know that there is considerable discussion on this proposed law, and it was discussed in the House of Representatives last evening. Some members favored and some were opposed to it. This measure is being put to the General Assembly primarily, according to those who advocate it, as a tax reduction measure; it is being proposed as a measure to reduce taxes on real estate--real property--which would mean making the farmers' taxes lighter. I am sure this legislature is going to do something to reduce that tax. If the state sets up and operates a six months' school term the question is this: shall it set it up on the basis of Ashe county that pays a very small per capita tax for the education of children; or shall it be set up on the basis, we will say, of New Hanover county that is a complete unit within itself and pays a large tax per capita, and by that I mean spends considerable money on the education of each child. In other words, will they set up a thoroughly efficient state system of schools or will they set up an inefficient system of state schools? If they set up, as a state system, the lower type will they allow the progressive counties of the state to add sufficient to the amount the state spends to carry on the same grade of schools they

now have. That is the real problem they are now facing. New Hamover county representatives object to the resolution if it means that they will be forced to run schools inferior to those now operated. There is no objection to the system if it provides sufficient funds to let the progressive counties of the state carry on as they have been doing, and that is a real problem. It may defeat the measure. If it does something else to reduce taxes will be brought up. As the thing is now written I am sure it is not going to pass and I don't think it should. As it is now set up it would mean that the Equalization Board caould not appropriate money to any county that goes above the regular state schedule, minus ten per cent. The bonuses now being paid are from ten to fifteen per cent above the salary schedule. This measure would mean that all those teachers in Greenville, or anywhere, who are getting more than the salary schedule would be brought down to the salary schedule, with ten per cent taken off, making some persons who are now getting twenty-four hundred dollars a year get twelve hundred. If the system were set up on the lower basis it would ruin half the counties in the state. If set up on the higher basis it would cost about twenty-eight million dollars, and they are figuring on eight^{to} twenty million. Now what is going to be the way out? There are a number of things that may be done. It may be set up on the lower basis and the counties be allowed to pay bonuses as they have been doing, if they wish to. They are not much disposed to do that, at present, however. Or they may abolish the equalization Board and may appropriate so much money and distribute it to the counties per capita for students of school age. This hadn't been suggested but is the system of a great many states in the Union.

The Equalization Board up to now has been a stimulating board, has encouraged counties to get the best teachers and to have the best schools possible. If the present appropriation bill is put into operation the Equalization Board cannot be a stimulating board but will become a retarding board to all the progressive counties, but I am quite sure they will make some changes in that bill.

I just wanted to give you this much this morning so that you can read the papers and read them intelligently.

Those opposing the present measure before the House of Representatives are almost unanimously in favor of some method of tax reduction, but are determined that schools of North Carolina shall be given a chance to do the most possible good for the boys and girls of our state. I think they are genuinely patriotic and honestly striving to do the best they can. Two years ago we had a very reactionary legislature. Today I think we have a legislature composed of people with a broader and much more earnest desire to do the right thing by the children of our state, but they do have a big task and a most difficult one. I hope they will solve it wisely.

With this much, young people, I trust you will read the papers and hold your judgment in suspense. Don't condemn and don't take sides but seek for the truth and then make up your mind accordingly.