

Community College Called A Vital Need

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Education Beyond High School
(Editor's Note: This is a substantial part of an address delivered before a Burke County audience last night by Mr. Carlyle, prominent Winston-Salem attorney and distinguished Tar Heel citizen. Because he was the head of a commission which recommended the establishment of a State system of comprehensive community colleges, he is a recognized authority on the subject. Burke County citizens who have the opportunity to vote for a community college Saturday will find his remarks of special interest).

Whether deserved or not, you have paid me a distinct compliment by inviting me to speak here a second time within two years on the same general subject — "A Community College for Burke County — A Vital Need." On the evening of August 24, 1962, under the sponsorship of the Morganton Kiwanis Club, I spoke in Morganton on "The Need for a Comprehensive Community College System in North Carolina," with particular reference to Burke County.

Since that time, much has happened and considerable water has gone over the dam, both here and throughout the State, to give to this talk a new meaning and a more specific purpose. We are now in a new context as regards community colleges. Burke County is now upon the threshold of decisive action for or against a Community College.

In the first place, on September 1, 1962, the Governor's Commission on Education Beyond the High School filed its report with Governor Sanford, the most education-minded governor we ever had, containing 61 separate and significant recommendations. I thought then and still do that the most important and far-reaching of those recommendations dealt with the establishment in the state of a system of comprehensive community colleges. The chief recommendations on this subject were as follows:

"We recommend that the State develop one system of public two-year post-high school institutions offering college parallel, technical-vocational - terminal and adult education instruction tailored to area needs; and that the comprehensive community colleges so created be subject to state-level supervision by one agency.

"We recommend that the board of trustees of each comprehensive community college consist of twelve members: four appointed by the Governor, four by the board of county commissioners of the county of location of the college, and four by the board of education of the county of location, all to serve six-year terms.

"We recommend that the trustees be chosen for their interest in and ability to assist in the development of the entire educational program of the college. That the administrative head of the institution be responsible only to the board of trustees of his institution and to the State Board of Education.

"We recommend:

"(1) That a minimum of fifteen comprehensive community colleges be established as soon as possible in top priority areas of the state and that legislative action be taken by the 1963 General Assembly to permit as many of these institutions as possible to open their doors to students by the fall of 1965."

The second important event occurred on May 10, 1963, when, by an overwhelming vote in both branches — almost a unanimous vote — the General Assembly passed the bill entitled "An Act to Promote and Encourage Education Beyond the High School in North Carolina." With considerable reason that Act has been described as the most

important piece of educational legislation in this State since the days of Charles Brantley Aycock. It enacted into law practically all of the recommendations made by the Governor's Commission, and this legislation gave the green light to the establishment of community colleges in accordance with approved standards. As a result, Wilkes County, Surry County, Rockingham County, Columbus County, Moore County, Davidson County, and above all, in the estimation of all of us gathered here, Burke County, are on their way toward the foundation of a community college. The opening of each college will be historic.

In the third place, the population explosion and the increase in the number of students of college age continue to grow at a rapid pace. The condition that precipitated the work of the Governor's Commission and has necessitated the expansion of the state's colleges is the tidal wave of students now about to engulf all the colleges and universities of America.

For instance, over four million degree - credit students are enrolled this year in American colleges and universities. It is estimated that this figure will double by 1975, which means that the enrollment will then be upwards of 8,500,000.

Moreover, the deluge of students is already upon us. By 1970 — just six years off — colleges and universities will have to make room for seven million students, almost 90 per cent more than they enroll now. Even more serious is the fact that half of the new applicants to college will pile up in the next two years. The wave of 1946-47 births will swamp the colleges next September.

North Carolina will not be spared this problem despite the college expansion program upon which we are now embarked. On February 24 of this year, President William Friday of the Consolidated University of North Carolina told his Board of Trustees that the number of applications for admission this fall at the University of North Carolina is up 25 per cent over last year; up 18 per cent at North Carolina State; and that the number of applications at the Chapel Hill unit already received is 10,249, and between five to six thousand more are expected, but there will be space for only four thousand.

According to Dr. Horace Hamilton of State College, by 1970 — only six years away — from 109,200 to 125,700 people will be seeking entry into the public and private colleges and universities of North Carolina, an increase of 46 to 67 per cent over the enrollments of 1961. In the face of these increases, if additional arrangements are not made, 35,000 to 50,000 young people will be denied an opportunity for a college education in this State. That kind of waste and failure must not be permitted.

It has been shown that the projections made by Dr. Hamilton are remarkably accurate. In 1960 the number of students enrolled in the public and private colleges stood at 67,600, and in 1961 he predicted the enrollment of 75,000 would grow to at least 100,000 students by 1966. In the process, he predicted that the maximum enrollment in 1962 would be 80,479, whereas the actual enrollment turned out to be 80,804.

Beyond any doubt, the young men and women of our State, now increasing by leaps and bounds, are its most valuable asset provided — and this is a great and solemn provision — they are properly educated. Not so many decades ago all that a man or woman needed for success was native intelligence and a willingness to work. A formal education was not considered absolutely necessary.

But in the space age in which we now live, that attitude has completely changed and it is now considered that real success and a full life and even national survival are impossible without as much mental training as can be had by the average citizen. Today, and it will become increasingly so in the future, the capacity of a person and what he can earn will be governed by how much education he has had. Ignorance and illiteracy are the greatest curse that can befall an individual, community or nation. There is no neglect so serious as failing to get an education. In the future, the unskilled, unlearned, and ill-trained will be doomed to a poor existence. Neither they nor the state can afford this.

These facts are well known by the public and the educational program, public and private, is being stepped up to meet the problem. North Carolina is not alone in this effort. The fifty state legislatures of the United States appropriated more than two million dollars of tax money for the operation of public colleges and universities in 1963-64. This figure is some \$425,000,000 more than was appropriated in 1961-62, a 26 per cent increase over the two-year period. In North Carolina the appropriation was \$46,000,000, and increase over the preceding biennium of 31 per cent, not the largest, but well toward the top.

After all is said and done, the surest gauge of the interest of the people in education is their willingness to be taxed for its support. The taxes they pay for education speak louder than anything else. I am sure that the dynamic and progressive county of Burke, with all of its traditions and capabilities, will meet that test. Certainly there is no lack of educational vision in this great county.

The fourth memorable event in the community college program in this State was the presentation on November 1, 1963, of the preliminary survey of a community college for Burke County. I have read the report, and I found it to be thorough, impressive and convincing. The potential is here, the need for the college is clearly established, and the leadership of the area is behind the project. This survey shows, I think, that the citizens of Burke County can accept its recommendations with confidence and act on them with firm reliance. A community college in Burke County is not a half-baked idea or a pipe dream because its feasibility has been fully explored and carefully documented by the leaders of this community, who deserve the thanks and backing of the citizens. In short, a community college for Burke County is a practical necessity. For the people of Burke County to stop or to turn back or to defeat the establishment of a community college in Burke County at this point would be a tragic mistake. I am sure that this will not happen.

The fifth important development in the community college program is the bond election to be held in Burke County on March 21.

Without local financial support, a community college cannot exist. That is the way it is and the way it should be. The commitment and loyalty of the people to the college will be strengthened by their financial stake in its operations. The value of public education increases with the growth of the dollars invested in its ongoing. The more money reasonably invested in education, the better the product, because "where a man's treasure is there will his heart be."

The survey to which I have referred shows that Burke County has the prospective students and the financial resources for a college, therefore, it is clear that the county can afford a college. In fact, it cannot afford not to have one. The larger the vote for the bonds the stronger the momentum for the establishment and the operation of the college will be. The students, faculty, administration and alumni of a college always do their best work in a positive atmosphere. A negative approach to education is self-defeating. Morale is always built by a show of confidence.

Therefore, to win the election on March 21 is a life and death matter for the Burke County community college, and the larger the vote for the bonds the more insurance will be gained for a bright future for the college. Also, the rest of the State will take note that Burke County is on its way up the ladder of progress to a better life for all its people.

And finally, a community college in Burke County is in keeping with the State's best traditions and will help the State to shape its destiny upward.

In a complimentary way it has been said that North Carolina is unique and is different from the other states, even from those in this region. If our State is distinctive and different from its sister states, and I think it is, to its credit, then this nonconformity is due primarily to four factors:

- (1) The respect of its people for public office;
- (2) The respect of its people for law and order;
- (3) The respect of its people for progress;
- (4) The respect of its people for education.

Certainly the people of North Carolina believe passionately in education, and this devotion has existed through many decades of the State's history. Our public and private colleges and universities, our public school system, our public libraries and enlightened newspapers have the loyal support of the people. These institutions are their pride and joy.

These four factors have given to North Carolina a quality all of its own. Every public office, from Constable to Governor, is so highly regarded that habitually and with rare exceptions, only men and women of character and ability are appointed or elected to fill them. Demagoguery is not practiced or tolerated in our State. The people are so influenced by their public servants that they select them with care. Groups organized to take the law into their own hands or to resist the enforcement of law are not favored here. They are personae non grata. And our fine system of highways and our industrial and agricultural progress are the envy of our neighbors.

But most of all, and in the truest sense, our State owes its high position among the sisterhood of states to the light of education. May the Burke County community college soon take its place in this bright array and help light the way to a better future for North Carolina.