

Second Citizens Conference On Library Needs of State

State - Feb. 17, 1936

The proceedings of the Second Citizens' conference on the Library Needs of South Carolina called by the State Library board and held at the University of South Carolina last month have been compiled, and they show effectively the interest being taken in this important field.

Program.

11:00 A. M.: Opening session, museum room of the University library. Presiding, Marion A. Wright, chairman, State Library board. Speakers: Dr. E. W. Sikes, president, Clemson college; the aftermath of the Clemson conference; Mrs. Margaret Davies, state director of Women's work, WPA. "State WPA Library Project." W. Agnew, secretary, state grange, "The Need for Library Service in a Rural Community"; Mrs. J. L. Williams, state president, Farm Women's council, "Books and the Rural Woman"; E. A. Webster, trustee, public library, Greenville, "The Library in a Textile Community"; Miss Wil Lou Gray, South Carolina supervisor of Adult education, "Libraries and Adult Education."

1:30 P. M.: Luncheon meeting in woman's building. Speaker, Dr. H. N. Snyder, president, Wofford college.

Proceedings.

The conference was called to order in the museum room of the library of the University of South Carolina at 11 a. m., Wednesday, January 8, by Marion A. Wright, chairman of the State Library board.

Mr. Wright: The reading habit is necessary for the continuance of democracy and libraries are necessary to make this habit possible. Two years ago there was held at Clemson college a Citizens' conference on the Library Needs of South Carolina, called by President Sikes, which was one of the most interesting and stimulating meetings I ever attended. We have in the state in the State Library board an agency, charged with the development of libraries in the state but that board is without a war chest or the sinews of war. The purpose of this second Citizens' conference is to gather together the citizens of the state who are not professional librarians but are interested in the library movement to discuss present conditions and consider next steps in the development of the library program.

Ten minutes will be allowed each speaker to present his subject after which there will be ten minutes for discussion. Dr. E. W. Sikes, president of Clemson college, will speak on the subject, "The Aftermath of the Clemson Conference."

Dr. Sikes: Neither the bad weather of the day of the last meeting nor that of the present day proved sufficient to prevent a great show of interest as registered in the attendance. Plans for concrete action were laid in the last meeting. Interested citizens of Oconee, Pickens and Anderson counties held a follow-up meeting a little later at which there was an attendance of around 400 people. A small tax for a rural library truck system was urged and Oconee county put on a program of an election to achieve this end. A library truck from Greenville Public library was used for display purposes and the radio in Greenville was used for additional publicity. The election was lost through the op-

position of the community that needed library service most. A man who was not a college graduate championed the cause and urged his workers to do likewise. South Carolina needs more emphasis on the neglected field of the education of adults. Rural and town libraries can and should put on programs of this type of education. Adult education is not a new idea as the Greeks taught adults and they were instructed during the Middle Ages.

I went to New York and held an interview with the Carnegie corporation and asked that a demonstration of rural library service be put on in South Carolina. The corporation showed interest and later sent a representative to study the situation in South Carolina. Their representative was interested, not as much in county libraries, as in the regional system, the organization of which had been attempted in Oconee, Pickens and Anderson counties.

Mr. Wright: The recent months have witnessed great activity on the part of the federal government, part of which activity has affected libraries. Mrs. Margaret Davies, state director of Women's work for the works progress administration, will speak on, "The State WPA Library Project."

Mrs. Davies: The seed for the project was planted under the old ERA by Miss Mary E. Frayser of Rock Hill. Miss Fannie Taber, librarian of Greenville public library, wrote and tried to get a project started. I called Miss Taber when the WPA started and requested a plan, which was given, and the project was started. Funds are for work done in libraries and not for the purchase of books. Miss Ida Belle Entekin has been selected to head the work. The idea back of the project is to show the people of the county how much libraries are needed so that they can influence their delegations to obtain permanent support. The work is divided by counties and co-operation between counties is not very popular. Each county has submitted a project and the whole state is divided into four main districts. An attempt is made to link up individual county projects within the district. The labor is largely unskilled and ten per cent. of the total number employed do not necessarily have to be on relief rolls.

Federal Projects.

Miss Ida Belle Entekin: I think the co-operation the workers on the projects are receiving from library minded groups throughout the state is to be highly commended.

Mr. Wright: Are there any questions on Mrs. Davies' and Miss Entekin's remarks?

Mrs. St. Pierre Hoge: I would like to ask Mrs. Davies how to start a traveling library.

Mrs. Davies: In Pickens county a shelf has been put on the school buses and WPA workers are stationed at various places to handle the books thus distributed.

Mr. Wright: The interest of the state grange at the Clemson meeting was great, and W. Agnew, secretary of the state grange, will speak on, "The Need for Library Service in the Rural Community."

Mr. Agnew: I am greatly interested in rural libraries. Just as undernourished children show the effect of good food and treatment when they receive it, so the undernourish-

ed mental life of people without library facilities show the effect of reading matter when they receive it. The work of the grange in starting a circulating library in Abbeville county is outstanding. This county has five different granges at five different points. The president of Erskine college went to the WPA and tried to get a library project started but was not successful. The grange appointed a committee to start a circulating library. Erskine college furnished some books, the Seaboard library was used, and donations were solicited. No funds are available but the county agents have agreed to transport the books for a year. Donations of suitable material will be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Wright: I will now call on David R. Coker of Hartsville, as he is very familiar with the rural problems of our state.

Mr. Coker: Education is of primary importance and reading is an excellent method of education. The agricultural population of South Carolina has few facilities for keeping abreast of the times. Everyone should keep up with advancing thought and the person who does not read drifts behind in his profession. The advance of civilization depends on keeping the minds of the citizens informed. Darlington county is trying to aid adult education. Pictures, reading matter, and the intelligent use of the radio are means of educating adults.

Mr. Wright: I would like to have additional discussion.

Miss Tommie Dora Barker, regional field agent for the South for the American Library association: I would like to hear Mrs. Hagood Bostick, librarian of the Richland county public library and secretary of the State Library board, tell about Robert Lewis.

About Young Lewis.

Mrs. Bostick: The picture of Robert Lewis of Columbia, appeared in the rotogravure sections of the leading papers of the nation and he received wide publicity as the first person in America to discover the new star, Nova Herculis. Lewis, an 18-year-old high school student, built a telescope from information obtained from a book in the Richland County Public library. Other astronomy books in the library aided him in his study. One afternoon while delivering papers, Lewis noticed a new star in the sky and telegraphed to Harvard. His discovery was relayed to the University of Virginia. The star had already been noticed by an astronomer in England but Lewis was the first person who saw it in the United States. Lewis gave credit to the Richland County Public library for aiding him with books on astronomy. As a result of his discovery, he was awarded two year scholarship to the University of South Carolina and then is to receive a fellowship at the University of Virginia.

Mr. Wright: This example epitomizes all library service. The library acts as a telescope to gather all knowledge to us. I would like to appoint the committee on resolutions and ask them to report at the luncheon meeting. Dr. S. M. Derrick of the University of South Carolina, chairman; Mrs. S. O. Plowden of

Dalzell; E. A. Webster of Greenville. Mrs. J. L. Williams, state president, Farm Women's council, will speak on the subject, "Books and the Rural Woman."

Mrs. Williams: I feel that no argument is needed to convince this audience that books are essential for more abundant rural living, but for the sake of the more than 15,000 rural women whom I have the honor to represent I do seek to convince you that rural women have a right to and are desirous of obtaining the broadening influence of books.

Theodore Roosevelt once said something like this: "Measured in terms of its influence on the national life there is no more important family than the farmer's family, no more important home than the farm home." And Franklin D. Roosevelt has shown his interest in the farm family by the manner in which he has handled the farm situation. During the last few years there has been a general awakening to the importance of the farm family in any scheme for restoring national prosperity. President Roosevelt spoke the sober truth when he said that farm relief was essential not merely for farm prosperity, but for national well being.

You may be asking yourselves just what relation does this bear to my subject, "Books and the Rural Woman." I am merely trying to show you that the farm homes of America have made significant contributions to the nation, among them being courage, idealism, a faith in education. Farm homes are responsible for about one-half our retail trade; they contribute to national leadership; their children help to build our cities; when, then, rural people ask for some returns in terms of help for rural schools, libraries, and other public utilities, they are not asking a favor; they are only asking for what is best for the nation as a whole.

On the wall of the Library of Congress in Washington are these words, "The foundation of every state is its youth." The rural woman is interested in the education of her children. She feels that if agriculture and rural life are to hold their own in the future, then the young people of today must be more efficiently trained than any generation that came before them. And this training must not end with the class room. The public library offers a means of continuing an education that was begun in the public schools. It is still a prevalent notion that to have an education one must have a classroom and an instructor, but libraries are introducing the idea that education may be gained through reading, inspiration and mental growth that may be attained by reading. The rural woman realizes that the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and that the fight for satisfactory returns from agriculture will be won or lost now, as our boys and girls are fitted for that leadership.

It is not only in the training of her children that the rural woman is seeking the help of books. She finds in reading a means of continuing her own education. Many rural women have not had the training that comes from classrooms and trained instructors, and they are deeply interested in books which broaden their mental horizons, and which help them to lay the foundation for the physical, mental and spiritual well being of their families. Many rural women, too, have hobbies which reading helps them to develop. These hobbies often prove a source of economic benefit to the family. Books of rug making, flower culture, bee keeping, gardening, poultry, homemaking, and marketing provide keys which unlock for farm homemakers doors to

economic independence. The great pity is that these books are relatively hard for farm women to obtain.

Rural Women Interested.

That rural women are interested in continuing their training is amply proved by the number enrolling in Home Demonstration clubs; a number that is steadily growing as fast as instructors can be provided for additional groups. At present we have over 15,000 farm women who are continuing their education through Home Demonstration clubs. Realizing the hunger for reading material in these groups, several years ago the education chairman of the state council recommended the establishment of magazine and book exchanges among the members. The idea met with instant approval, and at the present time all over our state there is seldom a Home Demonstration club meeting without also an exchange of books or magazines. Yes, rural women are reading. With modern equipment in their homes, and because they are more efficient homemakers, they have more leisure time in which to improve themselves, and they are spending much of this time with reading material. But this reading needs to be directed by the wise librarian, and the right kind of reading material furnished that will make for better citizenship by enabling

readers to arrive at intelligent conclusions.

Do rural women want library facilities? The State council has for two years as a part of its legislative program advocated the establishment of library facilities for rural people, and judging by the reports that were sent to the president last year, and also by the requests coming in for talks on this subject, rural women are deeply concerned over obtaining this service. Just to mention a few counties selected at random: Fairfield had a speech at council meeting on the library movement; Hampton reports, "We are working for county library"; York reports library movement is making wonderful progress; Lancaster reports library movement is sponsored; Orangeburg, Greenwood and Saluda are working for library facilities; Dillon council women donated a handsome collection of books to their library; Aiken has secured an appropriation of \$300 for a library demonstration; Darlington farm women raised \$25 in each club in the county to start a rural library truck (and I might add by way of parenthesis, that when those Darlington farm women make up their minds to go places and do things they usually accomplish what they set out to do. I have been told that they gave the county delegation a turkey dinner, and then discussed the library truck and its needs!) I give you Anderson's report in full because of its bearing on the situation: "During this year we have worked for a circulating library for our county. Our president was a member of the county circulating library committee. Every club circulated petitions calling for a ballot on the subject, and in each community where there is a Home Demonstration club more than the necessary number of signers was secured, but the towns were not in favor of it, so the ballot was not won. We feel that we succeeded even though we failed. Now we are urging our county delegation to help us out. It won't be long before we will have it, because we are determined to keep working for it."

Working Together.

The state council through its president is co-operating in every way possible with the Citizens' committee. We have invited Mrs. Bostick to a number of our meetings for a discussion of the library needs of our

state. At our district meeting in Columbia with an attendance of 1,400 women we had a library truck on display, and at our Piedmont district meeting in Spartanburg with an attendance of 900 women we also had a library truck on the grounds. We feel that sentiment is crystallizing to the point where rural women are not only willing to assume responsibility for the small increase in the tax burden that library facilities will entail, but they are demanding that this service be brought to their doors. And when women make up their minds to do worthwhile things, there are not many that are impossible.

Mr. Wright: I would like to hear discussion on this splendid address.

Mrs. S. O. Plowden: I would like to speak on the work on the home demonstration agents in creating a desire for libraries. They get month old magazines and carry them and books around. The work in Darlington county is worthy of note. Here a truck has been made possible through influential citizens. A turkey dinner was held for the delegation and the need of library service was presented to them. To place books and music in homes is part of the extension program.

Miss Tommie Dora Barker: An interesting exhibit was held in the Greenville library. Articles made by patrons of the library from information gained from library books were displayed. Furniture, hooked rugs, sculpture, paintings, canoes, and various other items were on display. Greenville has a county tax levy of one mill for library service and hence good service is given through the main library and branches and truck service.

Mr. Wright: E. A. Webster, trustee of the Greenville Public library, and a man of long standing interest in library work will speak on, "The Library in a Textile Community."

Mr. Webster: I have associated with the Greenville Public library from the beginning of the movement to get for it a county tax. My background is that of a farmer and not of a textile worker. I would like to have criticism and comment on my remarks. The library, which contains the record of civilization, has been a continuation school for me. The textile community is of rural origin and grouping in industrial communities has made these people a good place for the class demagogue to work and a breeding place for class antagonism. The library and the schools, through the children, get into the homes and influence them. A change is coming over the industry.

The vote in Oconee county for tax supported library service was a step in the right direction. A mill owner told his people to vote in favor of the measure and was influenced so to do through his personal contacts with the Greenville Public library. The library changes the standards of those who come in contact with it. Changes in taste in music, in vocational attitude of workers and in views of housekeepers are apparent. I could give many instances of persons who have used the library and through knowledge gained there have achieved advancement in their work. The innovation of the shorter working day, introduced by NRA, opened up the question of the use of the resultant greater leisure. Here is an opportunity for the library. The developing of hobbies, some of which result in financial benefit, through library books should be stressed.

Mr. Wright: The work in adult education in South Carolina of Miss Wil Lou Gray, supervisor of adult education, is held in high esteem. She will speak on "Libraries and Adult Education."

Miss Gray: The work of the Greenville Public library in this field deserves great praise. Two types of adults are reached by the library: Educated people whose opinions crystallize and make them hard to work with—to these people the library affords opportunity for study after the completion of formal educa-

tion; and those who can barely read and write—the library is their only opportunity.

During September and October a survey was made by the FERA, 117,000 homes were visited and 40 per cent. of the state's population reached. The poorer homes were visited and the years of schooling of the parents noted.

The library is the agency for supplementing the work of the formal school. As you know, few books are available for rural adults and a list of books which could be purchased for \$5 was prepared. All of these books were carefully selected as being ones suitable for rural adults of limited educational advantages. Even a few books are better than none and I give you this list now in the hopes that some of you may find it useful, as I have found it greatly so.

Suggested List of Books for \$5 Libraries.

"Peter Pan Story Book," "Child's Garden of Verse," "The Mammoth Fairy Tale Book," "Picture Book of Houses Around the World," "Picture

Book of Children Around the World," "The Book of Dogs," "Talking Leaves," "A Tiny Book of Nursery Rhymes," "One Hundred Best Known Stories for Children," "Lion and Tigers, Clyde Beatty,"

"New Testament," "Treasure Island," "Tom Sawyer," "Book of Poems," "Little Women," "Black Beauty," "Minute Biography," "Robinson Crusoe," "Dictionary" edited by Doctor Thorndike, Illinois; "Silas Marner," "Les Miserables," "Stories of Great Americans for Little Americans," "Fifty Famous Stories," "Enoch Arden," "Story of My Life," "Autobiography of Edward Bok,"

"How We Travel," "The Circus," "Houses," "Keeping Our City Safe and Clean," "Your Shoes and Your Feet," "The Post Office," "Clothes," "Pueblo Indians," "The Story of Flying," "The Story of Glass and Brick," "The Story of Heat," "The Story of Coal," "The Greeks," "The Beginning of Trade," "The Story of Lime," "The Egyptians."

Good literature would be loved if adults of limited education had an opportunity to read it in simple language.

Here are some suggestions for all to work on. (1) Ask all types of county organizations and committees to create sentiment for state wide rural library service. (2) Have a dinner for the interested people in the community. (3) Collect books that people are through with but sort carefully all gifts. (4) Have books reviewed each week in the newspapers. (5) Publish reading lists. (6) Plan for discussion and supervised study rooms in new library buildings.

Library Extension.

Miss Mary E. Frayser of Rock Hill: I would like to give a brief resume of the high lights in the movement for extension of public libraries in South Carolina from its inception 15 years ago to the organization of the State Library board in 1929 and the \$5,000 received from the Rosenwald fund which made possible the survey by Miss Cheves. The Richland county public library and the Charleston library were used as county library demonstrations by the Rosenwald foundation. Democracy requires the dissemination of education. The following steps could be taken to further library development in South Carolina. (1) Interested parties must be willing to work for it. (2) Publicity. (3) All county organizations must be kindled into action. (4) County delegations should be interviewed. (5) High school seniors should be interested. (6) Appropriations are needed.

Mr. Wright: The work for library development in other states should have an influence and bearing on the work here and I would like Miss Barker to tell us of the work being done elsewhere.

Mr. Wright: After all present have registered we will adjourn for the luncheon meeting.

Luncheon Meeting.

Mr. Wright: Dr. H. N. president of Wofford college, leader in public spirited enterprise in the state, will speak to us.

Dr. Snyder: The size of the attendance at this meeting is an encouraging sign. It would be possible for me, as for the majority in the audience, to be very personal in talking about books. We want others to have books because they have meant so much to us. To keep a record of life and to interpret its meaning are as instinctive as breathing. Although books are fundamentally an instinctive thing, the demand for them is not. The origin of printing is more important than the invention of gunpowder and the compass. "Our Starving Libraries," a book by R. L. Duffus, points out that during the depression years, when library support had been cut, there was a great increase in the use of library and 5,000,000 new borrowers registered. This turning to the library in a time of stress was an attempt at mental release from problems since a physical one was impossible. People read to escape from themselves. Reading of serious books increased in this period. People were trying to find reasons for the collapse of civilization. If reading meant so much to people during the depression why can't books be made effective now for the same purposes? An annual appropriation for library support is an unsatisfactory method. Permanent tax support is necessary. Work through women's clubs of all kinds, farmers' organizations, and civil clubs for men. Since the library is the first thing cut in time of depression this is a measure of the value of the library in the eyes of those in public control. Their opinion must be changed, and this will require loud and frequent opposition to cuts in library appropriations. A process of education is necessary combined with patience and faith in people.

Mr. Wright: I will now call for the report of the resolutions committee.

Doctor Derrick: Whereas, An informed and reading citizenship is desirable and necessary for South Carolina to maintain the free institutions of a Democratic government;

Whereas, Public libraries provide the major source of information and reading materials in a democracy;

Whereas, The public library facilities of South Carolina are extremely limited, only a small percentage of the population being reached by them;

Whereas, The State Library board authorized by the general assembly is the only agency in the state for the purpose of definitely developing public libraries; and

Whereas, It has been unable to function because of the lack of funds;

Now therefore,
Be it resolved, that this library conference of representative men and women of South Carolina meeting at the university on this 8th day of January, 1936 does earnestly urge that the general assembly appropriate to the library board funds sufficient for it to carry out its purpose of

stimulating public library service for all of the people of the state.

Mr. Derrick moved the adoption of these resolutions. This was duly seconded and the resolutions were unanimously adopted.