

Dorothy Knox

Our Forgotten Children On The Square

WHEN I have talked about the feeble-minded children of North Carolina and the necessity for their immediate care, men have said, "We can't take on any more expense now. Nothing can be done until after the war." Well—nothing could be more penny wise and pound foolish than that attitude.

Now the feeble-minded—overlooking Caswell—are in our county homes, schools of correction, public schools and penitentiaries. The cost of care is widely spread and so concealed from shallow-thinkers. The men who make the laws at Raleigh must face the fact that we are paying and will pay for our neglect of the mentally unfit. At the time of our survey, 100 per cent of the inmates of seven county homes were feeble-minded. A study of Eastern Carolina Training School showed that 50 per cent were feeble-minded in 1934-35, the staggering number of 240,288 children had to repeat their grades. Hundreds of these are feeble-minded. In one year they cost the State seven million dollars—and the work had to be repeated.

Back in 1934, Dr. Crane speaking at a meeting of the State Welfare Conference on "A State-wide Program for the Mentally Deficient" made this statement: "The teacher will find feeble-minded children who are unable to make progress in school. In some cases it will be due to faulty habits too firmly established to be changed. In other cases it will be because home and other influences during the eighteen hours the child is out of school, are too great to be offset by the few hours in school. Such children for their own good and for the good of the State should be taken out of the public school system. For the protection of society they must not be allowed to run wild. The type of feeble-minded child must have the best of influences. He should be trained for the entire 24 hours a day. These children are not a local or community problem or responsibility, but a State responsibility.

Since Caswell was opened back in 1914 and immediately filled to overflowing, the men who make the laws of North Carolina have shirked their responsibility towards our mentally unfit children. They think they have saved the State money by refusing to appropriate more funds for the care of these children. But what has really happened? Because of lack of medical care and expert training, these feeble-minded children are costing the State and the whole of American millions of dollars—and the loss of manpower which we are suffering in desperate need of it. For time has marched on. Faced with a Second World War, the American Government established the Selective Service System.

And what did the physical examination of these Selectees bring to light? I quote in part from the Resolution unanimously adopted by the Wilmington Post of the American Legion on Nov. 15th, 1942. The Resolution cites a lack of facilities for caring for the feeble-minded children of North Carolina, stating: "First the physical examinations of the Selectees have shown a large number of physically or mentally unfit, and, second, and more tragic, it was shown that if PROPER

AND REMEDIAL MEASURES HAD BEEN APPLIED AT THE PROPER TIME, A GREAT MANY OF THESE DEFECTIVES COULD HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE ROLL OR EARLY IMPROVED. Inasmuch as these Selectees were children during or born shortly after World War I, they properly fall into that group known as war-time children, and the fact that remedial measures were not applied can be designated as WAR-TIME NEGLIGENCE." (Just what our present Legislature will be guilty of if they fail to appropriate additional funds for the feeble-minded children.)

The resolution of the Wilmington Post of the American Legion continues: "North Carolina has made wonderful strides in the phases of child welfare work, and if there are any who are behind we should justly be ashamed. Not outstanding in our neglect is the case of children designated as feeble-minded and for whom, with the exception of the Caswell Training School, no provision has been made almost no provision. The Caswell School is filled to capacity and has waiting list

of nearly 1,000—and because of the slow turn-over of the children of this waiting list will never be reduced, and what is or should be their just and inalienable rights in a state as great as North Carolina. Caswell only admits white children, so there is no provision for care for Negro children. With the exception of one ward at the State Hospital at Goldsboro, few cases properly diagnosed as feeble-minded can be cured, but some can be, and a great many can receive such training as will enable them to become self-supporting and eventually discharged from the institution.

"Aside from the lack of custodial care for the feeble-minded itself, there is also another far more serious problem involved. This is that problem that is caused frequently when feeble-minded are kept in the same homes with normal children. Any psychiatrist will testify that serious behavior problems frequently develop in feeble-minded children if they are raised in a home with an abnormal child."

"As one proof of the deplorable lack of institutional care available in North Carolina at this time is the fact that Wilmington Post No. 10 recently failed in its efforts to get the feeble-minded Training School—the feeble-minded child of a disabled veteran, and the mother of this child is neglecting her other children and appear tomorrow."

I heartily endorse this resolution, but is there any way I can persuade the Wilmington Legislature to change the wording of that last paragraph I have quoted? You boys are headed for a political dystopia. Because of present building restrictions, the lawmakers are already saying that nothing can be done in the next session to authorize the immediate construction of two additional schools for training feeble-minded children, one for white and one for Negro children, and to make available such funds as may be necessary for construction and proper maintenance."

What is the fourth in a series of columns about North Carolina's Forgotten Children. The fifth will appear tomorrow.

MISS KNOX, feeble-minded in 1934-35, the staggering number of 240,288 children had to repeat their grades. Hundreds of these are feeble-minded. In one year they cost the State seven million dollars—and the work had to be repeated.

slowly killing herself in an attempt to care for this child, who is a logical but neglected ward of the State—"North Carolina." (For this proof quoted from Wilmington, I have quoted many cases from Charlotte in previous columns, and can quote many more similarly urgent ones.)

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The Everyday Counselor

By REV. HERBERT SPAUGH

A happy and blessed New Year to all of you, my readers. There is something about beginnings whether the beginning of a week, a month, or a year, which makes us feel that we have a fresh hold on time. We feel that we can turn our back on the normal children of the old year, and face the New Year with anticipation. Yes, we can do that. I have had a rather messy one. Man's plans, his self-sufficiency have brought him to a sorry pass. But, HE CAN HAVE A NEW PAGE. He can turn in his old one, and receive a new one. This is the message of these lovely lines by an unknown author, found in my scrap book.

"I came to my desk with quivering lips, the Jason was done. Have you a new leaf for me, dear teacher, I have spoiled and I took this leaf all soiled and blotched, and gave him a new one so that just that, The old And into his tired face I smiled,

The News Radio Log

Table with columns: WSOX (1240), WBT (1110), WAYS (610). Rows list various radio programs and stations like Orange Bowl Game, Cigarette Parade, News Reporter, etc.

Know Thyself

DO YOU FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF? You feel sorry for yourself, you say, because you are old. Well, that may be true. But it's even more true that sympathy won't help you. What will help is action—action that will help you to get on your feet. You've got to get out and do it for yourself.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYBODY

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It's the time to pause and think with kindness and good will of those who have our friendship. To you, our customers and neighbors, we wish to express our sincere hope that the year of 1943 is bright and happy—brimming over with health and success.

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WANDERING WILDOES. The Walter Spiermann, who left Chapel Hill to write textbooks for the Army at Petersburg, Va., will become three next month. Judge Johnson will make his first appearance here next week, presiding over Superior Court Civil Court. Hundreds of names of local men in the armed services are not on that board in front of County Courthouse. If you know of omissions call the City Water Department and ask to speak to Mr. Rich. A reader reports that Indian Bill is up and about—and is taking care of a lawn on McCall Street. Tina Jim, and the eleven-year-old are distressed because their pup, Buck, has been missing since Monday afternoon. He is a mixture of fox terrier and spitz and is white with brown spots, about six months old. A check of the Animal Shelter failed to find him. An unusual comment: A local man has asked the News to let me write his obituary when the proper time comes. I have been assigned the job, but hope the performance of it is far away.

THINGS I REMEMBER about growing up: The farmers who came to town in Winter with their feet wrapped in burlap bags. The day both of the Ponder boys got off the train from college carrying mandolins.

ODDS & ENDS: Wonder how a fellow goes about making up his mind? I wear a purple necktie—about the same way I suppose, he goes about deciding to wear a chiffon hankie in his breast pocket. I had an uncomfortable ride in one of the buses the other day. I sat on one of the longhairs seats just behind the driver. Across from me sat a girl and before we had traveled far I made the discovery that she had a wart on her knee, plainly visible through her stocking. The darned thing fascinated me and I kept trying to look the other way, but found my eyes always being drawn back to that wart. It was such a little one, too. A reader replies word that rationing news falls so thick and fast that it's hard to keep up with it. What if it doesn't do is strike back.

DO YOU FEEL CONCERNED FOR YOURSELF? You feel sorry for yourself, you say, because you are old. Well, that may be true. But it's even more true that sympathy won't help you. What will help is action—action that will help you to get on your feet. You've got to get out and do it for yourself.

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