

Annual Report of R. Flake Shaw

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*History*

I would like first to express my personal thanks to every man and woman for your loyalty and faithful cooperation in our membership work. You did a wonderful job this past year. Our total membership as of today is 70,633 in good standing. No organization is any stronger than the people that make it up. There is where numbers, courage and determination in Farm Bureau really pay off. We made great strides in 1947. We led the South the second time and now stand fifth place in the Nation--only four states with a larger membership.

We have added thirteen new counties this past year with an increase of 15,000 members as of December 31, 1947. On November 30, 1946, at the close of the membership year, we certified to the American Farm Bureau 55,785 members; on the same date in 1947, we certified 65,109. During December, we received another 5,000, making a total of 70,633 as of December 31, 1947. This is, of course, a family membership and reflected on an individual basis would mean 250 or 300 thousand people. This is a sizable group of folks in any state. We may not always be right in our thinking or not always in agreement on all questions, but we are trying hard to learn how to work together under democratic principles for one common purpose--a better way of life for North Carolina farmers, with due regard for the rest of our citizenship.

In the State Office, we have tried hard to give you our very best. Our duties and responsibilities have increased tremendously--the problems are now greater than ever. We have added four members to our staff and are now trying to work on a district basis. This brings your state organization staff a little nearer to the county programs, and I feel sure this will help in many

ways. We have also tried to improve our publicity, having employed Mr. Roy H. Park and his Agricultural Advertising and Research Agency for this job. This part of the service should improve as time goes on.

Our efforts in legislative and promotional work on a county and state level have been very successful. In every instance, where our people agree and get behind a program we get the job done. I shall not discuss this in detail. The record speaks for itself.

#### What are some of our State Problems?

We have been subjected to some criticism by certain vested interests and agencies from time to time because of the stand of the American Farm Bureau Federation and because of the honest differences of opinion in our thinking and that of other groups. This is perfectly natural and in all probability will recur as time goes on. This is no cause for alarm and should be nothing to fear. As long as we have the right of debate and people put their cards on the table face up, things usually come out about right in the end.

It is usually best to know who is calling the play before you start with the ball. I think a careful examination of the record of the American and the North Carolina Farm Bureaus will reveal that, for the most part, the things they have promoted throughout the entire years of their history have been reasonably sound, acceptable and beneficial not only to farmers but to the country as a whole. Many times they have stood alone on fundamental points but after having decided by majority rule to take a stand, I have never seen them divide or leave the ship because of differences of opinion with other organizations or agencies.

I would like at this time to mention a few more problems in the State along this line. As you know, the Farm Bureau Federation has no set rule of operation. We do our best to find out what the majority of our people want

and then try to get the job done. When we think of getting a job done, we naturally think of what we have to work with and that brings me to membership-- how we can build a bigger and better informed membership. The number one weakness in our whole farm structure, as I see it, is lack of information of the right kind. This presents a real challenge to our leadership.

Everyone will agree that it is necessary for any group to be organized and especially farmers. But our major task is to keep farmers fully informed. We are doing our best to accomplish this in Farm Bureau.

Now what are some of the things that make this such a difficult job?

No. 1 - Lack of interest on the part of educational agencies--they do not seem to think it is part of their work.

No. 2 - A. There are some types of so-called farm leaders who like to front certain vested interests with farm influence. However, a general farm organization that knows its job cannot be used for this purpose.

No. 2 - B. This being true, there usually develops an undercurrent of opposition supported by this group that you have to combat at all times.

No. 3 - There is another class and this is much larger than most people think--it can and in most cases does extend all the way across our economic front. This class will support a farm organization that will be for everything anyone wants to do and support every job that any man holds whether he earns his salary or not. This crowd will generally start to apply the brakes when the farmers start asking questions.

No. 4 - We have in our state the racial question. In some counties that can get to be a real problem unless properly evaluated and intelligently handled.

No. 5 - In some sections our leadership has not supported the membership work as much as they should. Here in these leaders we find our greatest source of strength for all purposes--once it becomes active. The work of the

state organization staff can be multiplied 400% by the full and complete utilization of this group of men and women.

I would like to spend a few minutes in looking at some of the national problems that should interest us. Our own state interests reach deep into the national and international channels of trade, therefore we must consider our interest from a state and national viewpoint. The public in general does not know too much about the farm program and how it operates, and in many cases the farmer is being made the goat. The cost of living, national debt of 256 billion dollars, the very high tax rate and many other factors will enter into the picture when we talk about the farmers' interest from now on.

Changes caused by the war in recent years will make the job of writing a farm program for the future much more difficult than it was throughout the thirties. Our money policies were liberal at that time. Production was ahead of consumption and the people in general were in sympathy with the farmers problem. Today our picture has changed; a large percent of the folks have forgotten that the farmers, with less labor and less equipment and what they did have in a bad state of repair, produced more food and fibre than the world had ever known. They have seen the demand for these goods increase in foreign countries and the movement overseas from time to time of very large quantities of essential food items. This, with better living standards and more money in circulation at home, has raised the prices of what people generally have to buy until the cost of living is at an all-time high.

Therefore, it will be much more difficult to obtain the support of the Senate and House Committees, who are not entirely familiar with Agricultural problems, in maintaining programs with proper safeguards to protect the farmers when these unusual demands created by the war have been filled and the surplus problem again gets to be the number one factor.

National and international laws that affect agricultural interests are most important to three of our major southern crops--tobacco, cotton and peanuts--that move into world trade and are largely dependent on the right kind of laws for support in determining the price the farmer is to receive. I feel sure we will all agree, if we look at the record for the last ten years, that this is true. I cannot discuss these laws in detail--there have been fourteen or more different basic laws passed since the early thirties--all of which have been useful in varying degrees. But, there are some that have meant more to the South than any other section of the country: Acreage adjustments or marketing quotas with a fair level of price supports, and Commodity Credit funds to support these laws on basic and surplus crops. The record will show that the American Farm Bureau Federation took the lead in support of these principles, including the Stagall Amendment. These were not Partisan issues--they were democratic principles supported by agricultural leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives--both Democrats and Republicans working together. Let us pray that this fine spirit of cooperation will continue in the executive branch of our government. If the farmers from the four corners of this nation will take the lead in further developing this principle they will, in my judgment, not only help their own cause but also make a notable contribution to the Nation as a whole.

Can this be done? The answer is yes. How? Through organization of the right kind. What is the right kind of organization? One that expresses the farmers' viewpoint and gives sufficient coverage to get the story over to the largest number of people. The American Farm Bureau Federation is the world's largest farm organization, with units in forty-five states and Puerto Rico, with its county and state directors, commodity committees totaling 60 and the national Board of Directors numbering 20 and meeting at least four times each year, bringing together the current facts that need attention.

With the Chicago office handling statistical and research work and the Washington Office working everyday throughout the year with the various Congressional Committees and Federal Department Heads--the Farm Bureau is one of the busiest and best informed groups in the Nation.

This brings me down to where I would like to ask the cooperation of all the county and community organizations in developing some type of educational program that would help to get this information out to the average farmer. This will require considerable help on the part of the local organizations, which can be supplemented by our district men. THIS STATEMENT IS FOR GENERAL CONSUMPTION, AND I CHALLENGE EVERY THINKING MAN TO CONSIDER IT VERY CAREFULLY. NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOUR BUSINESS OR PROFESSION IS, IF YOU LIVE IN NORTH CAROLINA THE PROGRAM OF THE FARM BUREAU WILL BENEFIT YOU.

In conclusion, let me say again that I am forever grateful for your continued support in building the North Carolina Farm Bureau to where it is today. With that same spirit and determination, we can go on to greater heights and development in service to all the people of our state and nation.