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Elizabeth City, N. C.

CLAXTON'S REPORT GIVES NEEDS OF CITY SCHOOLS

Continued from Page 1.

are 13 rooms in the Primary school they cannot be included in building plans since they are really not fit for school purposes. The inadequate lighting alone should prohibit their use. In fact, the parents of the children realized that permitting their children to study in the badly lighted, over-crowded rooms of the Primary school was a menace to the eyesight and health of the children, there is no question but that they would insist that the school be abandoned and adequate appropriations made for school accommodation.

Thus Relieve Congestion
To sum up the situation in the white schools—there are 36 classes of children and only 16 available classrooms. (When the Primary school is eliminated, —i. e., there are 20 classes without adequate seating accommodations. Moreover, an increase of between 7 and 8 classes, about 250 children, over the next 5 years must be provided for. Furthermore, the 216 children of school age

not now in school should be provided for. In other words, taking the children now enrolled, 1,425, those of school age out of school, 216, and the anticipated increase during the next 5 years, 280, it will be necessary for Elizabeth City to plan its building program that 48 classes of children—1921 children—may be provided for in the coming bond issue. If this is done, not only will present congestion be relieved but adequate provision made for a period of 5 years.

Our Negro Schools
According to the statistical report of the Superintendent of Schools, for 1914-15, there were 585 children enrolled in the negro schools in the first 5 grades. In 1919-20 there were 727 children enrolled in seven grades, and of this number 595 were in the 3 public school, while the remainder were in the negro normal school which takes children in the practice school department from grade one through to eight. The increase in the public and normal schools of children in grades 1-8 was 192 in 5 years, or at the rate of about 1 class a year.

There is not only bad congestion in

the negro schools but the building themselves are unfit for school purposes. In 1919-20, 595 negro children in grades 1 to 5 inclusive were attending school in 3 wooden frame structures. In Sawyer Town school 173 children go to school in 2 rooms. One room has 27 double benches and the other has 28. Then benches are old and scarred. In one room 54 children attend in the morning, and another 54 in the afternoon. The building is nothing but a frame structure in such bad repair that pasteboard is tacked over a portion of a window where the pane has been broken. In Sale St. school there are 224 children in four rooms. In one room there are 31 double benches; in another, 30; in another 29; and in the fourth, 22. In Shannon Street School there are 198 children. One room has 17 double seats; another, 20; another, 24; another, 23; and there is also a chapel which is one long room with a platform. All these buildings should be abandoned for they are not fit for school use.

Lack Modern Facilities
But there is not only great congestion in both the white and negro schools, but also there are almost none of the

modern school facilities, such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, shops, laboratories, drawing and music rooms,—facilities which are now recognized as essential in any modern school system, and which it is necessary to include in an adequate building program. There are in the white school 1 auditorium, no gymnasium, no shops, no cooking room and 1 laboratory with very little equipment, no drawing room, no music room, and no library.

It is often difficult for men and women who were brought up in the country a generation ago to realize the necessity of providing these facilities for children living in cities. In the olden days it made little difference that the school buildings consisted only of classrooms for studying the three R's. In those days, the children had plenty of opportunity for the wholesome work and play which, educationally, were just as important for them as study. There is such a common tendency to identify "schools" and "education" that it is important to emphasize the fact that education has always consisted of work and study and play, and that children must not be deprived of any of these three elements in their education if they are to grow in health and strength, and develop initiative, intelligence, and the ability to think for themselves.

Our Changing Needs
Fifty years ago the environment of the average boy and girl furnished an education in wholesome activities that developed intelligence, initiative and industrious habits. But during the past half century has come the growth of the modern city, until now half the population of the country is concentrated in cities, and the city with its overcrowding, its mills and factories and office buildings which gradually go up on the vacant lots, is depriving children of the opportunity for the healthy, wholesome work and play which are essential elements in their education. The city home, whether in a large or small city, is very unlike the farm with its many necessities for "learning by doing." It offers few educational opportunities in the way of healthful work which develops the ability to think by attacking problems to be solved. There is no planting or harvesting to be done; few if any animals to be taken care of; and it is a rare city home that has a work shop or laboratory. Yet children until recently have received much of their education through the opportunity to handle tools, to take care of animals and to experiment in making and using things. But the city not only fails to educate children in the right direction; it educates them in the wrong direction, for the street with its dangers to the physical and moral life of the children too often becomes their only playground. And street play means education not in health and strength and wholesome living but precocious education in all the vicious sides of a city's life.

Vocational Courses Advocated
For these reasons, it has come to be recognized that the city school must not only supply the opportunity for study in good classrooms under wholesome conditions, but it must also return to the children the opportunity for the helpful work and play which the home can no longer supply. It must provide playgrounds and shops and laboratories and drawing and music rooms, as well as classrooms, where they may be kept wholesomely busy all day. For Elizabeth City to plan a building program on the basis of providing merely classrooms for her school population, and ignore her obligation to furnish such modern facilities as shops, laboratories and nature study rooms would be to fail in her duty to the rising generation, and to the best interests of the city. It is said that America is the land of equal opportunity in education. This, however, does not mean opportunity for uniform education, but opportunity for the development of the varied gifts of many individuals. Democratic education means a variety of opportunity in accordance with the needs of the individual. If Elizabeth City does not give this variety of opportunity in work and study and play to the children of all its people, then it is failing to tap the reservoirs of power for its coming citizenship. Moreover, it is laying up trouble for itself in the future, for nothing more serious for any community than to have the rising generation feel balked in their power of self expression and attainment.

It is obvious from the foregoing that Elizabeth City needs a building program which will relieve present congestion, provide for an increase in enrollment for at least five years, and at the same time provide the modern educational facilities, such as auditoriums, playgrounds, shops and laboratories. To do this will involve considerable expenditure and careful planning. There are two chief methods of meeting the situation.

The first method would attempt to solve the situation by the usual procedure of adding classrooms without changing the traditional school organization. All children would be expected to be in school seats at the same time, and if provision were made for special activities, such as shops or cooking rooms, the classrooms would remain vacant when such facilities were in use. If such special facilities were provided, therefore, they would have to be in addition to a classroom for every class.

Cost of The Plan
Let us consider the cost of meeting school congestion and growth—in the white schools, for example,—on the basis of the traditional type of school organization.

As has been pointed out, it will be necessary, in order to take care of present enrollment and provide for growth in the white schools, to make provision for 48 classes. The Primary only the High School with 16 regular classrooms; therefore, it would be necessary to erect a building with 32 classrooms in order to provide for the 48 classes. The cost of a classroom unit at the present time is \$16,000. This includes the cost of auditorium and gymnasium. A 32-classroom building would therefore cost \$512,000. This amount, however, would not furnish any of the modern school facilities such as shops and laboratories. Therefore, to provide these facilities would mean an additional expense.

Elizabeth City is not peculiar in respect to her school congestion situation. Cities all over the country, even before the war, were having the greatest difficulty in meeting the increase in school enrollment. The rapid growth of population makes the congestion and financial problems extremely difficult of solution on the traditional plan of a reserved seat for every child. To keep pace with growth, therefore, merely on the basis of adding classrooms where they are needed at a given time, presents both administrative and financial difficulties. But when to this problem is added the obligation to provide the other necessary facilities such as shops and laboratories, the problem assumes formidable proportions.

Indeed, were this plan the only alternative the situation which the Board of School Trustees is now facing would be a discouraging one. Fortunately, however, there is another way out of the difficulty.

Still Another Way
A second possible method of solving the building problem of Elizabeth City is what is commonly known as the work-study-plan plan now in operation in some 30 or 40 cities in the country. This plan developed in an attempt to solve the peculiar problem created by a modern city. It grew out of recognition of the fact that the growth of cities makes the educational problem far more difficult than formerly; in fact, has created a new school problem. The plan represents an attempt to meet these new conditions and to make it practicable both administratively and financially for school administration to provide not only classroom accommodations, but also modern educational facilities, such as gymnasiums, shops and laboratories that children may be kept wholesomely occupied in study and work and play.

Briefly, the plan is this: A school is divided into two parts, each having the same number of classes, and each containing all the eight or nine grades. The first part, which we will call the "A School," comes to school in the morning, say, at 8:30, and goes to class rooms for academic work. While this school is in the classrooms, it obviously can not use any of the special facilities, therefore the other school—B School—goes to the special activities, one third to the auditorium, one third to the playground, and one-third is divided among such activities as the shops, laboratories, drawing and music studios. At the end of one or two periods, that is, when the first group of children has remained, according to the judgment of the school authorities, in the school seats as long as is good for them at one time, the A School goes to the playground, auditorium, and other special facilities, while the B School goes to the classrooms.

Advantages of Latter Plan
The important point about this reorganization is that all the children would have not only the same amount of time for reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and history as formerly—210 minutes—but also 50 minutes of play every day, 50 minutes a day of auditorium and 50 minutes a day of shopwork every day in the week for a third of the year; science every day for a third of the year and drawing or music every day for a third of the year. At present the children get a 10-minute recess period for play, a few minutes for opening exercises in the auditorium, and little or no time for these special activities. Of course, each community would

decide what special activities it wanted the children to have.

There would, after all, seem to be no good reason why the principle of other public service institutions, i. e., multiple use of facilities all the time, should not apply to the school, nor any reason why all children should be in classrooms at the same time, nor why the special facilities should be used only a fraction of the day, provided, of course, that the children receive during the day the required amount of academic work. In fact, it is difficult to see how the problem of providing enough classrooms, or playgrounds, or auditoriums for the mass of children is ever to be met if all children have to be in classrooms at the same time, and if all children have to play at once. Moreover, there seems to be no good reason from an educational standpoint why children should all have to do the same thing at the same time.

Keeps Child From Streets

As has been pointed out, one of the most undesirable elements in the life of city children is the street life in which they have hitherto spent so large a part of their time. The average city school is in session about 180 days in the year. This means that even though all the children attended the entire time, they would still be out of school 185 days in the year. Obviously, because of the conditions of modern city life it is necessary that the school take over some of the time now spent by the child on the streets, especially the school year. At present if 10 hours of the 24 are allowed for sleep, and 6 for meals and home duties, there still remains 8 hours to be accounted for. Even if the children were in school 5 hours every day there would still be 3 hours left, and as is well known these hours are spent on the city streets and not always to the child's advantage. At least one or two of these should be taken over by the school, and wholesome activity in work and play provided.

The work-study-plan plan does this by lengthening the school day an hour or more as each community may desire, and by offering to the children the wholesome activity in shops and laboratories and on the playgrounds, which is so essential for them. It should be borne in mind, however, that this lengthening of the school day does not necessarily lengthen the number of teaching hours of any teacher. It is necessary that she be around the building six hours, but she need not teach more than five hours.

How the Plan Works
Let us consider now how this plan can be applied to conditions in Elizabeth City.

There are now 1,425 children, 86 classes, in the 2 white schools. This makes just enough children for one fair sized school. All these children should be housed in one school plant, to be located on the present High School site. The building could be erected in the form of an "H", the present High building forming one section, and another building erected to the rear of the present High School forming the other section with an auditorium between the two.

As has been pointed out, the building would have to be planned to take care of a 48-class school in order to provide for a growth over a period of five years. There are, however, at the present time in the High School building 16 regular class rooms, 4 rooms in the basement, an auditorium on the second floor, and 4 attic rooms.

Under the work-study-plan-plan, a school of 48 classes would require only 24 class rooms, or 8 more than are now available in the High School building. Another building should therefore be erected to the rear of the High School building. To do this the lot on which the present building stands should be squared, the houses to the rear of the High School building removed and a new building of 12 units, erected, with an auditorium between this building and the existing High School. Twenty-four of the best rooms in the 2 buildings should be used as class rooms. That would leave 4 units, 2 of which can be used as laboratories, 1 as a drawing room, and 1 as a music room. The 4 rooms in the basement of the old building should be used as shops. In the basement of the new building a gymnasium could be provided for boys, 2 units could be used for cooking rooms, and 1 unit for another shop. The auditorium of the old building could be used as a gymnasium for girls.

In other words, with the addition of a 12 room building, the following accommodations could be secured for a 48-class school—24 class rooms, 2 gymnasiums, 2 laboratories, a drawing room, a music room, 5 shops, a cooking room. And an auditorium could be erected between the old and the new building, with entrances on the side and also with an entrance on the street, so that it could be used easily for community purposes, congestion could be relieved and provisions made for growth for 5 years.

Since a class room unit costs approximately \$16,000, which includes the cost of an auditorium and gymnasium, a building of 12 units would cost \$192,000.

As has already been suggested land should be purchased to square the present lot. Also additional playground space is needed, and for this purpose either the whole lot to the north of the present building or the lot directly across the street should be purchased. Of course, the lot to the north of the present building is preferable as it would not necessitate the children crossing the street for play. Estimating the cost of land at approximately \$20,000 the appropriation for the white schools would be \$222,000.

Needs of Negro Schools

As has been pointed out, the present negro school buildings are so inadequate that it will be necessary to abandon them and erect new buildings. At the present time (1919-20) there are 355 children in the 3 public schools—15 classes. The increase has been approximately at the rate of 1 class a year. Therefore, provision should be made for at least 750 children, or 18 classes, in order to provide for growth for at least 4 years.

On the work-study-plan plan, this would necessitate a building of 9 class rooms and 4 special activity rooms—a shop for boys, a cooking room for girls, a nature study room, and a library. An auditorium and gymnasium would be included. This makes a building of 13 units. At a cost of \$16,000 per class room unit, a building of 13 units would cost \$208,000. Estimating the cost of land at \$10,000, the building and land would come to \$218,000. The total cost, then, a building program as outlined would be \$440,000.

If it is desired, however, to limit the contemplated bond issue to \$300,000, making temporary arrangements for the negro schools, and thereby postponing the erection of a permanent building, the following Plan II is suggested. Erect 2 portable buildings of the modern type for negro children in the northern and southern ends of the town. Each building should accommodate 10 classes. This would necessitate 4 class rooms, \$4,000, and auditorium, \$2,500, gymnasium, \$2,500, a shop, \$2,000, a cooking room, \$2,000, a drawing room, \$1,000, a nature study room, \$1,000. All these units can be combined into a single building with corridor, principal's office, store, showers, and heating plant; making a total approximate cost of \$20,000 for each building. This would make the total budget for the negro schools \$60,000, with the cost of sites approximately \$70,000, thus bringing the total budget to approximately \$300,000.

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