

Jan. 19, 1904

Dr Wallace Buttrick

New York City

Dear sir:

I have written you concerning my observations among the normal schools of the State of North Carolina. I now report my visits and ~~expressions~~ impressions of the public primary schools as far as I have been able to see them.

In my report of the Elizabeth City Normal School I mentioned the public school of that city. The school there is graded and has four teachers in one building and one in another in a different section of the town. The main building is poorly arranged for school purposes, but nevertheless comfortable. The furniture is rough and the equipment poor and insufficient. But on the whole the facilities for education are fair. The teachers reported having seats for all the pupils who wish to attend. At least one hundred pupils of the town attend the state and church schools situated there.

The attitude of the public there is commendable to say the least. Schools will run as usual about eight months there this year. The teachers are not above mediocre and fail to make all that is possible out of their opportunities. The principal is a young man, however, who will probably improve. His school needs better grading, more positive discipline, and better handling all round.

At Franklinton the town has given over its schools to the three institutions there and leaves them largely to their direction. This is a small town and the schools are practically rural schools. Their connection with the larger institution in no sense changes their rural qualities for the better.

The town saves the expense of maintaining a building, but pays no more than it would otherwise for teachers--less than \$300 per annum, divided among three teachers.

The city of Raleigh does very well indeed for its colored people in the way of

schools. Five schools are maintained. One does the equivalent, I was told, of the first two years of high-school work, including the Latin and mathematics. This is a good building and receives the more advanced children from all the other schools. The largest of these I visited was a large, comfortable, frame building with a long wing one story high. Eleven school rooms were thus provided. All the pupils were comfortably seated. There were two teachers in but one room. All the work I saw was creditable, and in some cases very good.

The colored people expressed no little satisfaction over their educational facilities.

Fayetteville has a graded colored school, but the schedule of my trains made it impossible for me to see it. There are only three teachers, however.

In the county, Cumberland, no colored teachers is paid more than eighteen and a half dollars (\$18.50) per month. Four months constitute a term. As a result many of the abler teachers are forced into other callings and normal school undergraduates and other poorly prepared persons fill the schools.

At High Point the public school is conducted by the High Point Normal and Industrial School. The situation here is unique. The town pays the Normal the pro rata appropriation for maintaining its school. Out of this sum, amounting to about one thousand dollars (\$1000) annually, the town pays one third of the salary of the superintendent of schools and then turns over the rest, about \$700, to the Normal. They save the expense of erecting and maintaining a building and get a well graded school taught by such teachers as the town otherwise would not employ. The Normal must have good teachers for its regular work. As long as this condition exists the town and especially the colored people will enjoy a special advantage from their fortunate bargain. Yet some credit is due the town for I doubt very much if the town would spend \$700 a year on a school conducted by itself ^{though} ~~through~~ the pro rata remained the same. Nevertheless the Normal wants to be rid of its burden, in order to give more time to its own work, despite the loss of the town appropriation.

The Normal's teachers now have to give their time in part to public work, and to that extent neglect the normal students. Especially is this true of the teachers of the industries who for a half of each day must become academic teachers.

Charlotte has one large colored school of 16 rooms and over a 1000 pupils. The building is a poor one, though large. But altogether this is one of the most remarkable schools I have ever seen. All sixteen of the teachers are women, yet the order of the pupils at the school and on the streets is as nearly ideal as one could wish. I never saw it surpassed anywhere. The class room recitations were also of this same high order. These results are due to the wonderful personality of the principal, Mrs. Isabella B. Wyche, wife of the pastor of one of the colored churches of the city.

The school is of course ~~highly~~ badly overcrowded, there being an average of over sixty pupils to a teacher. In the lower grades enrolments run high as eighty to a teacher. What this principal would do with ordinary accommodations is almost too much to imagine. Some of these teachers receive only twenty-five dollars per month while the principal receives only sixty-five dollars.

This county, Mecklenburg, was pointed out to me by Sup't Joyner as having the best schools perhaps of the State. I made it a point to see a country school in Charlotte township, the most progressive and richest in the county. The building has two rooms, and is a rough frame structure, ceiled. The smaller room had crude homemade desks for all the pupils. The larger room had desks for a part of the pupils. Many had no desks. This little room, about 20x30 feet, has an enrolment of 80 pupils. No maps nor globes were in evidence. The teachers, however, were fairly good ones, being wives of teachers at Biddle University, near by. Both together receive \$45 a month for six months. Indeed, only one or two teachers of colored schools in the county receive over \$20 per month according to the published school appropriation made public last week. No white teacher receives under \$35 with possibly one or two exceptions. Most of them get over \$40. Yet school money is

appropriated to a school district on a per capita basis, counting negro pupils of course. But after such money is appropriated the boards dispose of it as they see fit

The great advance North Carolina is making then is in reality almost entirely among the white people. The school house I just mentioned though a poor one is in one of the richest districts. It is by no means as poor as most of the colored school-houses in the State. The movement for better houses and longer terms, etc., is being carried on among white people. This is generally conceded by every one, including Sup't Joyner, who, though he blames the colored people for not being more alive to their own interests, admitted that the initiative lies mainly with the county superintendents of schools. They are doing doubtless a great work of education among the whites, but nothing of any consequence among the blacks. The latter are open to blame for not caring for their own interests, but of course there is no good reason why they should be more alive than the whites who have to be aroused. However, unless they or their leaders take up the matter, little will be done for a long time, if at all; though the means set apart by the State are intended, apparently at least, to help the colored as well as the white schools. My own opinion, strengthened by that of many of the more thoughtful, capable negroes, is that the negroes of the State ought and must look out for their own interests regardless of where the initiative is theoretically placed.

There is in fact but little interest in negro education among the whites, I am led to believe, save in the cases of the very best elements, who are sadly in the minority. Such men are well enough trained to see the ultimate value of such training for negroes, and for all men, indeed. But the mass of the whites actually believe that by educating the negro they are putting him in a position which he will be of less material advantage to them. There is little concern on their part for the advantage that might accrue to the negroes. If, however, it could be shown sufficiently clearly that any gain for him, as in the case of any other men, meant a general advantage, the feeling would perhaps be different. But it really seems hard

to be rid of the notion that the negro is to be "used" without regard to his success and advantage.

I am merely trying to state a condition. I have no bitterness of feeling in the case, for I do not think bad feeling altogether actuates the whites in the matter. It is somewhat of an inheritance perhaps which has not yet been sloughed off and may not be for a long time.

In the face of all these things I find many of the thoughtful negroes sanguine, patient, and brave, and without bitterness. And these men are a great restraining influence upon the less thoughtful and irresponsible elements. Theirs is not the passiveness of despair, but a positive confidence in the negro's ability ultimately to prove his worth beyond dispute. And though these men feel many of their humiliations keenly and regret any neglect, they are accepting whatever aid is given for education and development, and are supplementing it in some cases. In others, they are building and supporting private and church schools. In all cases these men are determined to prepare their sons and daughters for the new and brighter day.

The white school district and the colored school district of a given community are not necessarily the same thing. Advance made by the whites in the way of special taxes, etc., do not indicate similar movements for the blacks. The latter are not consulted nor taxed in cases of special levies for the whites and vice versa. So in the splendid showings in many places the negro has no part.

(Signed) W. T. H. Williams.