


1946

UA3/2/4 Constitutional Amendment

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Constitutional Amendment

Radio Talk

Few people realize how poor a chance children have for an education in the poorer counties of Kentucky as contrasted with those whose more fortunate lot it is to live in the more prosperous areas of the state. No matter how great the willingness of a people to provide educational opportunities for their children what they can do is limited by what they have. To illustrate the wide range of financial ability to support education I call your attention to the fact that in one of the wealthier county districts of the state the assessed property value back of each school child amounts to ten thousand dollars while in the case of a poorer county the assessed property value amounts to only three hundred seventy-nine dollars. In independent school districts the assessed property wealth varies from six thousand five hundred dollars in Louisville and five thousand nine hundred seventy-five dollars in Lexington to less than two hundred dollars in one of the smaller units. Consider the actual situation in some of the poorer counties in the state. The assessed values per child are as follows:

Jackson	\$379
Leslie	538
Butler	636
Casey	432
Edmonson	735
Russell	421

It would be necessary in Jackson County to levy a school tax of four dollars twenty-three cents per hundred added to the present state per capita to maintain a school program as good even as the average in the state. A levy at the present state maximum of seventy-five cents provides only two dollars forty cents with which to educate each child. The same levy in a wealthier county will produce seventy dollars for the same purpose. When you add the present state per capita of twelve dollars seventy cents you have fifteen dollars ten cents in the poor county as contrasted with eighty-two dollars seventy cents in the wealthy county. As a result of this inability to provide adequate financial support for education in the poorer counties of the state we have two thousand three hundred ninety-eight teachers receiving less than five hundred dollars per year; a short school term; poor and unsanitary school buildings; a complete lack of library books and proper teaching facilities; and a poor and inadequate school program.

The inability to provide a proper educational opportunity for the children of the county is not just the loss of the children nor even the loss of that county, it is Kentucky's loss through a part of its citizenship poorly trained in mind and body. After all Kentucky's future depends upon what use she makes of her resources. The children of the state constitute her most valuable resource. It is unsound financial policy on the part of the state to fail to provide an educational program of minimum efficiency for all its children. The theory back of a democracy demands a decent opportunity for all its citizens. The proper functioning of a democratic government demands proper education of its future citizens. For increased income with its attendant increased ability to support government through taxation, for intelligent citizenship, for healthier and happier living a certain minimum program of education is indispensable.

Then too our population does not stay in the same place. As the poorly educated product of the counties unable to provide a decent educational opportunity moves into the wealthier counties the latter pay the price of the lack of training in the place of their childhood. Under the constitution at present no matter what the financial ability of a county, whether great or small, there is paid into the educational funds of that county for each child to be educated the same amount of twelve dollars seventy cents regardless of need. Under the constitution at present any additional sum of money added to the state school fund must be distributed in the same manner. Constitutional Amendment No. 1 which will be submitted for your approval on November 4 permits the legislature to distribute not to exceed ten percent of the state school fund for the help of those school districts which are not able at present to provide a minimum educational opportunity for their children. It is fully realized that the distribution of this ten percent can not possibly enable the poorer districts to provide an educational opportunity equal to or even comparable to that which is provided for its children by the wealthier districts. It will however, as I have suggested, enable the poorer county to provide a minimum program. Governor Johnson has stated that the present amount received for each child need not be reduced and has promised that he will recommend sufficient increased appropriation at the next legislature to provide this help without a reduction in the present state per capita.

Woodford County has the greatest amount of wealth back of each census child of any county in the state due to the presence there of the offices of the Southern Pacific Railway Company. The editor of the county newspaper recently stated that he noted with pleasure that the Governor proposed to recommend that an additional amount of money over and above present funds was to be provided so that the present per capita might not be reduced but, said he, "Even if this were not true I still would support the amendment because it is right." With this statement I heartily agree. In the name of justice for Kentucky's children in its poor areas

and for the protection of the state through adequate training everywhere of its future citizens, I urge that you vote, "Yes" for Constitutional Amendment No. 1.