

WILL LAURENS COUNTY DWINDLE?

In the November 14th issue of The Laurens Advertiser the first article on the front page, headed "Commission Now Shaping Report," gave the story of the progress of the secession movement, which proposes to put to an election the question of whether the northwestern corner of Youngs township will secede from Laurens county and enter Greenville county.

Should the election be held and prove successful, Laurens county will lose upwards of a quarter of a million dollars of assessed value of property, about 400 voters, a population of upwards of 2,000, several school districts and several churches.

Some years ago Newberry officials opposed to building the Calhoun highway through Whitmire—the northwestern corner of Newberry—were met with a proposition by the Whitmire section to secede from Newberry county, and the road was promptly built. Whitmire is still in Newberry county.

A little later the people resident on the ridge between Bush river and Little river, lying south of Kinards and Goldville, becoming discouraged in their continual application for a better highway down the ridge, threatened to secede from Laurens county unless they were given a good road. The supervisor built a ridge road down that ridge to connect from state route 56 to a Newberry county highway running down by Bush river church and Helena to Newberry. This Bedenbaugh ridge is still in Laurens county.

However, the Northwestern portion of Youngs township, though they begged for roads enabling them to go to market at Fountain Inn and to send their children in by bus lines to Fountain Inn, were only heard. Nothing was done. Now they are to determine whether they shall be citizens of Greenville county or citizens of Laurens county. They have the right to determine the matter for themselves.

The writer would dislike extremely seeing any part of Laurens county cut off from the county, but the people have a right to go into any county they can get into, where the conditions of living will be better than where they are.

Youngs township has only one mile of state highway in it, and only seven miles of county highway, from Gray Court to Woodruff bridge. Their case is paralleled by Jacks township, which, while it has state highway route 7 diagonalizing the township, and one mile of state route 56, it has not a single mile of county highway in it. The northeastern part of Jacks township has talked of seceding and joining Newberry county. They may, if the Youngs township secession succeeds, develop a second secession. Newberry county has developed a number of highways, state and county, just across the line from these Jacks township people. The temptation will be strong.

Similarly, the southeastern section of Cross Hill township will be tempted, for lack of good roads, to join Greenwood county. The remainder of Youngs township, if they continue to be neglected, may join Spartanburg county. Princeton, if it doesn't get a paved road on the Dixie highway, may secede and join Greenville or Anderson county. The entire ridge between the Regdy and the Saluda rivers, southeast of Ware Shoals, sadly needs a ridge road, and has asked for it time and again. If they don't get it, they may secede into Greenwood county.

So Laurens county may continue to dwindle, and what is the complaint? Lack of good roads. And why the lack

of good roads? The answer is the reactionary spirit, the defect in the \$500,000 good roads bond issue bill, which presented that bill for referendum to the Democratic primary where it was successful, instead of to a general election, where it would probably have been successful. Result: Reactionaries attacked the act after successful referendum, and secured the Supreme court ruling that the act was unconstitutional, because presented to the wrong kind of an election.

That is the reason why these and other sections of Laurens county are without good roads today. That \$500,000 bond issue would have prevented this secession threat of the northwestern corner of the county, and would have satisfied many other sections which are not now satisfied. There are dissatisfied sections in every township in Laurens county, even including Laurens township and Hunter township, which townships are best supplied with roads.

There was a very much dissatisfied ridge between the two Rabuns, until at the last election their demands were met with a promise by the county delegation that a ridge road should be built up from the Laurens-Princeton highway, between the Pabuns, to

the Greenville line. That road has been built, or almost finished.

Why not solve all of this discontent at one time, by passing a county-wide good roads bond issue of \$500,000 as originally proposed and approved by the people? If such a bill were passed, and if another bill were passed reforming the county chain gang control, and road and bridge maintenance, by putting the entire business under a commission control, with a county engineer in charge, as is done in many progressive counties, then we would have a reduced taxation for county road maintenance in a very short time, but we would have very much better roads; and there would not be a farm house anywhere in Laurens county more than two miles from a highway.

These two bills have been presented to the members of the delegation. They have not, however, had the support of the county commissioners and supervisor; nor have they had the unified support of all members of the delegation. They have not been passed. As a result, we spend a great deal of money each year (upwards of \$100,000 a year in recent years) for county road and bridge maintenance, while many of the roads are deserted and are washed into gullies; bridges un-built where they ought to be built, a little new highway building done, but precious little; and the people, at least a large percentage of them, extremely dissatisfied. Even Laurens, Clinton,

Cross Hill and the other towns of the county are dissatisfied because they have not complete touch with all country sections.

Will the delegation leave it this way, and run the risk or losing not only the northwestern corner of the county, but ultimately other sections of the county? Will they let Laurens county dwindle, or will they give us a progressive and necessary policy of ample funds for a county highway system, and scientific and business-like control of the expenditure of all funds devoted to road and bridge maintenance and construction in Laurens county? That is a question for the delegation to answer, and a question for the county commissioners and the supervisor to answer. Thus far the answer has been in favor of almost nothing.

Next year there will be an election. Should the upper part of Youngs township secede before that time, the county highway system and county road and bridge maintenance question, and the economical and efficient expenditure of county taxes for road and bridge maintenance, and the making of the best use of the chaingang forces, will become red-hot questions the county over. Candidates will probably be called upon to announce their attitude towards these red-hot questions.

If the people wake up to the point where they will express themselves before the necessity of secession comes

on, they may get results, not on one ridge or another, but the county over. Every precinct which fails to get satisfactory bills passed at the next legislature, should at the following Democratic primary put the question to all candidates, "How do you stand on a county-wide good roads bond issue?" and also the question, "How do you stand on reforming our road and bridge maintenance expenditure to a scientific and non-political basis?"

Ultimately Laurens county will wake up and enforce its views on progressivism in road building, or it will disintegrate, growing poorer and weaker year by year. Roads cannot be built or maintained by a political organization. They can only be properly built and maintained under a competent engineer's direction, gov-

erned by a non-political commission, as in Newberry county, and other nearby counties.

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