

Great Strides Are Registered In Rural Work

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Financial, Social and Recreational Development Reported by County Agent

BY BEN SMITH

The Negro farmers of Durham county have made distinctive progress in the past 12 months in improving conditions on their farms and in their homes, not only financially and in a material way, but through social and recreational development, T. A. Hamme, Negro farm agent, states in his annual report to the county commissioners.

Great strides have been made in teaching rural people such points as the value of producing commodities where they have a ready market, and the importance of bettering sanitation conditions to bring about better health, but much remains to be done along this line.

The fact that so many farmers grow only one crop, tobacco, and are unable to see the advantages of diversified farming, is a major problem in the work of the farm agent, Hamme said. The large percentage of tenants in the county also creates a serious problem, he reported.

Out of some 515 Negro farm families in the county, only 143 own their own homes, according to the report. These homesteads have a value of \$117,738 on the county tax books.

There are 12 community organizations among adult Negro workers, all striving to encourage cooperation of all Negro farmers for the bettering of farm and home conditions. They meet monthly and members exchange experiences with each other and receive advice from the county and district farm agents. Businessmen and ministers have been especially helpful in meeting with these groups and advising them in every way possible.

The younger rural people are organized into 4-H clubs similar to those for white boys and girls, and there also is an organization for young men between the ages of 18 and 25, which was formed in Oak Grove township by a number of young men who felt the need for future self-improvement along the lines begun in the 4-H clubs.

This group, known as the 5-H club, met twice a month and held regular programs of community singing, debating, open forum discussions, and other activities. Taking as a project the installation of electric lights in the Zoar Baptist church, this club last year accomplished what the older people had been talking about doing for several years, Hamme reported.

One of the most popular projects for the 4-H clubs was the poultry raising demonstration. One youth, reported on his experiences with raising chickens, said that he already had a ready market because preachers "love" chicken so much, one preacher being accustomed to eat four pieces for breakfast, five pieces for dinner, and six pieces for supper, or two chickens a day.

After remarking upon the high prices which Durham county people pay for eggs and chickens, this youth concluded, as if in awe, "It's almost a miracle." The aforementioned preacher has caused his

congregation to refer to the chicken as the "gospel bird" because he seems to believe in the chicken as much as in the gospel, this same 4-H member states.

The better homes campaign found many Negro farmers cooperating, with considerable improvement in cleaning up yards and buildings, the farm agent said.

Demonstrations were carried out

by adult farmers in a number of crops, but the outstanding achievement was made by John Mack, of Lebanon township, who reached the goal of 100 bushels of corn per acre for which the farm agent has had farmers striving for five years. When John's demonstration was measured in October, with Congressman William B. Umstead and other notables in the huge crowd gather-

ed to learn the result, it was found that the corn measured 102.7 bushels to the acre.