

New Farm Agent Greeted At Meeting County Board

Sun — 2/5/34
**Commissioners Pay Smith's
Salary to February 1 and
Make Statement Giving Their
Side of Fight**

Voting to pay the salary of W. I. Smith, former county farm agent, until February 1, the county commissioners this morning formally greeted W. B. Pace, newly acquired agent, and promised their full support of his every endeavor.

"We must forget our recent position in the farm agent question," spoke Chairman C. W. Massey. "We have another man here, and a good one. We must support him and strive toward better conditions on our farms."

Pace attended this morning's session but merely listened to the comments of the board.

He comes here from Scotland county, where, according to reports, he made a commendable record. His salary is \$2,800 per year, plus an additional \$500 for traveling expenses.

He told the Durham Sun that he was very favorably impressed with Durham and that he immediately will plunge into his duties.

The following letter was read to the board:

Mr. D. D. Newsom,
County Manager,
Durham, N. C.
My dear Sir:

The board of county commissioners of Scotland county wishes to congratulate your county upon the acquisition of Mr. W. B. Pace as your county farm agent.

Mr. Pace came to us one year ago, and during the short period he has been here has rendered a service to our people that has been universally satisfactory, the cause of wide favorable comment, and there is general regret that we have to give him up.

You will soon discover that you have a man of the finest character and ability in your organization.

We are glad to give this unsolicited expression of our impressions of Mr. Pace.

Yours very truly,

C. E. Muse (signed)

Clerk to the board of commissioners

Stating that they were placing the Smith controversy in the annals of history, the commissioners adopted the following resolution:

"There has apparently been some misunderstanding on the part of the public as to the reason why the board of commissioners made a change in farm demonstrators.

"The board wishes to state to the people of the county that the reason they had for making such change was a desire on their part to improve farming interests of Durham county, and to this end to give to the citizens of the county the strongest man that the state department could recommend for this work.

"Accordingly, during the month of November the board went in a body to the office of Dean Schaub in Raleigh to get his advice and co-operation in securing such a man. The state department therefore knew, as early as November, that the board was seeking a man to take Mr. Smith's place, and Dean Schaub suggested several suitable men whom he recommended, and agreed to use his best efforts to secure any one of these men whom the board might select.

What caused the board to decide that a stronger man should be secured for the farm demonstration work was chiefly the fact that the district farm agent, in appearing before the board at the July meeting, made the statement that Durham county was lagging behind its neighboring counties in demonstration work, and that if the board should decide, by their December meeting, that a change would be desirable, he would be glad to co-operate with the board in securing a suitable man for the county. The district agent therefore knew, as early as July, that the board would very probably consider this matter at their December meeting. As a matter of fact, for the past two years, the board has considered, from time to time, the question of a change of farm agents or of abolishing the office. It is therefore hardly thinkable that the action of the board should have come as a surprise to Mr. Smith.

"Mr. Smith was appointed by the board as farm agent in January, 1926, on recommendation of the state department. There has been no further appointment during his eight years of service. At their December, 1933, meeting the board did not ask for Mr. Smith's resignation, nor did they ask for his application, this being the regular time, in keeping with Mr. Smith's original appointment, for consideration of a change, if such were

desired, said change to become effective as of January 1, 1934.

"The board has tried to make it clear to the public that they held nothing personal against Mr. Smith, but had only the best interests of Durham county at heart, and having in mind the statement made to them by the district agent at their July meeting, they felt that Durham county was entitled to the services of the strongest and best farm agent in the state, and they went to the state department to find such a man, and expected to pay a salary in keeping with the services of such a man.

"The board makes this public statement in order that the public, whose best interests they are trying to serve, may know the intent and purpose of their action."