

Address on

CITIZENS' FACT FINDING MOVEMENT
of GEORGIA



Delivered before

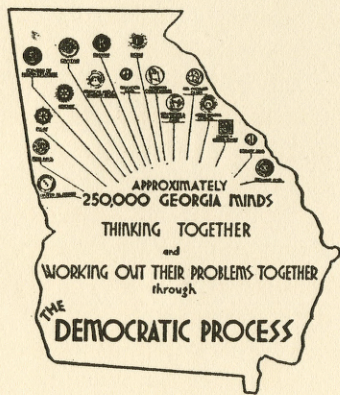
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FACTS VERSUS FOLKLORE—AN ADVENTURE IN DEMOCRACY

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I come from the South. I was born in the South. Most of my life has been spent in the South, where several generations make me part and parcel of the Region. Irrespective of any of its alleged idiosyncrasies—I love the South. That fact I wish to make clear, and firmly establish at the outset.

Physically and geographically the South is part of the Nation. Yet social and economic lines bound it as definitely as might a foreign boundary. It is bound by mountains of sensitive pride, which too long have stood as the natural result of the search—the very human search—for some compensation on the part of a proud people humiliated through defeat—a people who have found that compensation in thought on glories of the past. Naturally this habit of looking backwards has established a pattern of thought which revolts against the new—which rebel against change. The South is bound by valleys of economic depression, with all of the social ills which poverty so freely breeds—by hillsides of economic and social erosion due largely to the slow draining away of its resources through an economic unbalance brought about by such national factors as the American tariff and freight-rate differentials.

Any social program planned to serve the South must necessarily take its traditional attitudes into consideration. These attitudes find expression in the folklore of its people. In my own state, for instance, they take form in such widely-heralded slogans as "It's great to be a Georgian" and "The Empire State of the South."

An experience of my own is an illustration. As a child I was taught at the feet of a greatly revered southern lady. Even now I can hear her: "Which was the first state (to do this)?"—"Which was the first state (to do that)?" And after each question, in a deep, throaty voice—fairly caressing the word—she would answer, "G-E-O-R-G-I-A." One of my greatest disillusionments came when further knowledge caused this childhood halo to vanish from my state.

However, a little story that I heard a few days ago is pertinent. Some men stopped on a corner where a group of small boys were playing baseball. One of the men asked a little fellow, "What's the

score, son?" "Twenty-seven to nothing, against us," the boy replied. "That's too bad," the man said. And the little fellow came back with this, "No, it ain't so bad—we ain't been to bat yet!"

The South "ain't been to bat yet."

I shall not belabor you with an analysis of national practices which have contributed so largely to the fact that my region has remained in a colonial status for these many years, though the temptation to do so is great. Suffice it to say, what no doubt is common knowledge to most of you, that some way must be worked out whereby part of the wealth, long drained from the South, can be replaced. It must be done for the good of the Nation as a whole—for the good of other regions, as well as the South. For the South is the new market—the new frontier.

A Southern State Looks at Itself

Your President, Paul Kellogg, has manifested encouraging interest in the effort being made by one southern state to look realistically at itself, and has asked that I tell you of it. I refer to the Citizens' Fact Finding Movement of Georgia.

Many of you saw Jonathan Daniel's story of the venture carried in the March issue of "Survey Graphic." Those of you who saw it probably recall the cut carried on the front cover. It was an outline map of Georgia with a group of little silhouettes, representing the organizations engaged in the Fact Finding program, shown as lifting up the top layer of the State and peering down inside to see what was going on. Mr. Daniels served our pride well when he began his article: "In Georgia the most important thing may be happening since Sherman's march through."

In my state the public utility which furnishes most of the power and light is the Georgia Power Company. This program which I shall discuss has interestingly been called "the *real* Georgia Power Company." It has been said that "it is generating the power which is lighting the minds of the people of Georgia."

The foregoing comment can be well used to illustrate the work. The "power and light" are reports on various aspects of the State. These reports, the "power and light," are generated by well known Georgians who are experts in their chosen fields, and are distributed monthly in the form of booklets. They are prepared at the request of the official heads of seventeen statewide organizations—such as men's luncheon clubs, women's clubs, farm associations. The state

heads of these groups serve as "distributing centers." They send the reports to their five thousand affiliated groups in communities throughout the State. The heads of these local groups are the "substations." Through programs based on the reports, they electrify their local membership, which represents a combined total of two hundred fifty thousand persons. In addition, from a central distributing plant maintained jointly by the organizations, the reports are sent directly to seven thousand other individuals who have requested them—you might call this "direct electrification." Thus, twelve thousand reports—twelve thousand units of this "power and light"—are flashed out monthly over far-reaching lines. Although consumption in kilowatt hours cannot be definitely known—and short circuits of course exist—there is abundant evidence of wide use.

We Willed a Way

The program came about in this manner. In the spring of '37, two years ago, a number of individuals began discussing among themselves the paradox of the State—its natural wealth and its human poverty. Participating in these discussions were the official heads of a number of statewide organizations. In the offices of the men, on the porches and in the living rooms of the women, we talked about the State and the Region. The discussions centered around the fact that the Southeast has the three natural requirements of a high order of civilization. It has natural wealth, admittedly unsurpassed by any region of the Nation. It has fine climate. It has people. Yet it is the poorest section of the Nation. That this does not make sense is evident.

We talked of the drain of wealth from the Region—drain through unfavorable trade balances, through migration of skilled workers, through migration of youth educated at public expense. We recognized that the section was going yearly into the red. Any business house going into the red would immediately take an inventory, would check up on its assets and liabilities, would review its policies. We discussed taking an inventory of Georgia. And gradually a proposed coordinated program took form.

In August we came together. We met to consider the program collectively. At that meeting around a dinner table in a little hotel room in Atlanta, the Citizens' Fact Finding Movement was launched.

In the meantime we had found our first fact. We found that it was the exception when the head of one of our organizations knew personally the head of another. Yet the aim of each group, in

broad principle, is to raise the social level of the State. In working toward this common aim, we recognized that more basic information about the State would increase the effectiveness of each separate group.

I cite the program of one group by way of illustration. It is a well known men's civic club. It has a program for the blind. In assisting those so handicapped, it is doing a fine job. It buys canes for the blind and glasses for the blind, has operations performed, and provides instruction and libraries in braille. But in Georgia half of the babies have no medical attention at birth. Midwives attend many. Too often there are no drops in the infants' eyes. Georgia is continually breeding a new crop of blind children for this civic club to buy canes for. The club will not soon run out of a program.

As for my own group, the League of Women Voters, we have found through this Fact Finding venture that we had been missing the mark in our approach to many of the things we advocate.

Program Plans Projected

Georgia organizations represented at the aforementioned meeting and those which have since developed the Fact Finding program are: the men's civic clubs—Civitan, Exchange, Kiwanis, Lions, and Rotary; a feminine counterpart of these, the Pilot Club; the Association of University Women, the Business and Professional Women, the Congress of Parents and Teachers, the Federated Church Women, the Federated Women's Clubs; the Education Association, the Library Association, the Press Association; the Home Demonstration Council (composed of eleven hundred small groups of rural women), the United Georgia Farmers, which recently was organized in the State; and my own group, the League of Women Voters. These are all statewide organizations and each has affiliated local units which meet regularly throughout the State (with the exception of the Press and the Library Associations and, to some extent, the Education Association.) As I have said before, they are composed of five thousand local groups and have a combined membership of two hundred fifty thousand persons.

Let me briefly describe the program as we planned it when we met together. We based it on the principle of a state inventory. Twelve subjects were selected on which concise factual reports on Georgia would be obtained. "Georgia—Past and Present" was chosen as the first in order to orient the program through a brief historical sketch of the State. Other subjects selected were: "Nat-

ural Resources," "Agriculture," "Industry and Commerce," "Health," "Education," "Public Welfare," "Penal System," "Political System," "Tax System," "Federal Activity," and "Religious, Civic and Social Forces." In connection with the last subject we sought to obtain an index of the organized forces of the State, together with some discussion of their relation to the information we expected to gather.

We agreed that the reports should be limited to facts, with no opinion included. The type of information we had in mind would not necessarily require new research. We wanted known facts about the State brought together in tabloid form so that they could be easily used by average people like ourselves—key information which usually one can gather only by searching through many volumes in libraries.

We also agreed that the reports should be made by outstanding Georgians—our own people—Georgians recognized as being well versed in knowledge of the State. We realized that the reports would require great time and labor and that we could not logically expect such work to be done for any one of our organizations singly. However, the scope of our collective plans led us to believe we would receive the cooperation which we planned to ask. We would use our best judgment in selecting these persons—selecting those whom we considered sufficiently free of economic and social ties to permit them to give us unbiased information.

We would issue monthly reports over the period of a year. These we would reproduce in sufficient quantity to allow us to send one copy to each of our affiliated groups in communities throughout the State, to assist in program making—as research material for speakers, round table discussions, study groups.

Thus we planned to open up channels—existing channels—to reach people with information about themselves and their state. On this information we would endeavor to focus public thought and discussion simultaneously.

The program thus planned was put into effect. Approximately two years have intervened. In the meantime, the undertaking has grown to far greater proportions than we dared hope when it was begun.

If any one thing is responsible for such success as has come to this Fact Finding venture, that one thing undoubtedly is the looseness of the framework set up for carrying it forward. There is no super-organization. The program is developed by each group inde-

pendently, none losing its identity. The work is coordinated through a committee composed of the state heads of the groups, together with two alternates for each. One alternate is permanent; the other rotates so that key members of the respective organizations can have direct contact with the committee work. This provides three members from each group and still keeps the committee small enough to be workable. We share leadership responsibility. The Coordinating Committee has no permanent chairman. The chairmanship rotates monthly. The committee holds monthly dinner meetings, alternating them between two of the largest cities of the State, Atlanta and Macon. The sessions are divided between business and an informal discussion of the report for the given month. The authority who has prepared the report meets with us. We have in addition a working sub-committee, the membership of which also rotates. A jointly maintained central office carries out the wishes of the committee.

Sidelights

While the Fact Finding reports were originally designed to serve only the organizations which undertook the program, public demand has broadened the distribution of the reports. Over seven thousand additional copies go monthly to persons who have asked for them. These requests have come from deep down among the people as well as from the higher economic and educated strata. They have come on engraved stationery, and they have come on tablet paper.

Two thousand copies a month are being used by the Extension Division of the University System of Georgia—used by fifty circuit teachers who in turn instruct teachers. Others are being used in some classes by practically every institution of higher learning in the State. They are being used by the common schools in connection with debates and commencement addresses. They are being used by church societies and business groups.

We recently received a request from Babson Institute, asking for twenty-five copies of our second series for use in a course on the South. It is the scope of the requests that encourages us most. Little stories center around so many of them. For instance, a communication came from a woman—evidently, judging by the shaky handwriting, an elderly woman. It was written in pencil on lined pad paper. It said, "You know these facts these organizations are getting up about Georgia. Well, if you'll get me a copy of these facts, I'll send you a bottle of pickles." The contract was carried out. The pickles were served at the next meeting of the Coordinating Committee!

One of the finest aspects of the work is the generous manner in which leading Georgians have given so freely of their time and knowledge in preparing the reports. We have had the cooperation of such men as the Dean of the College of Agriculture, the former Chancellor of the University System, and men of this caliber in fields other than education.

Then there is the spirit of camaraderie which has developed among the organization leaders who compose the Coordinating Committee. Meetings of this committee have been taking place regularly for nearly two years on the first Friday of each month, and its members come from all over the State.

Let me tell you of an incident in connection with one of these gatherings. One day last July, you will recall, the afternoon papers of the Nation carried front page streamers on President Roosevelt's dramatic statement terming the South the "Nation's Number One Economic Problem." It happens that while those papers were being read throughout the country, there were assembled around a table in Macon, Georgia, the official heads and representatives of seventeen of the State's organizations. They had come together to discuss the very subject dealt with in those newspaper stories. Federal Activity was the subject of the report for the month. I have thought back many times to the table display that night. (We have, by the way, thus pictured the subject of the report at each meeting.) That night it followed so closely the information contained in the report on the South later made to the President that, in retrospect, it is of added interest.

The display took the form of an elongated triangle. The three points were dramatized as: Georgia, Industrial Areas, and the National Government. (We used for the last a white plaster paris replica of the national capitol—a beautiful object, about four feet high.) Train tracks connected the three points of the triangle. A train was shown as moving away from each point to the other. The one from Georgia going to "Industrial Areas" was labeled "Migration of wealth through unfavorable trade balances," "Migration of skilled workers" and "Migration of youth educated at public expense." An arrow pointing in the same direction informed that the train had been running on "Frequent schedule over many years." The train going from "Industrial Areas" to Washington carried a carload of stage money labeled "Taxes." The arrow bore the statement "More frequent schedule recently." The train going from Washington down to Georgia, thus completing the triangle, also

carried money. It was marked "Federal grants and services." The arrow this time stated "More frequent schedule needed." Whether the return of that wealth comes about in this manner or some other, that is our story. Buying power is the need of my region.

I cannot resist describing one more of these displays, the one on the Political System of Georgia. Incidentally, it made a box on the front page of one of the State's major newspapers.

Georgia has an excessively long ballot. In fact, we elect everything literally "down to the dog-catcher." We unwound a roll of heavy white paper and had it run from the entrance of the hotel dining room, across the floor, up on to the banquet table, over the top of the cocktails, and on up to the speakers' table. It carried broken black lines indicating printing, with these words at the top, "Official Ballot, State of Georgia." Certain instructions were given: "Note—Make yourself comfortable while marking ballot. Get ticket at the right for lounging robe and slippers, reading chair and lamp. Lunch will be served in interim." Georgia ballots also carry a unique little number. With this number it is possible for those who have access to the voting lists to ascertain how a given elector votes. We put a number on our ballot. Under it we added: "Note—To promote efficiency and to expedite matters sign name under this number."

This ballot was removed from the table and other decorations were revealed. A puppet, about three feet high, stood on a platform supported by posts marked "Campaign Contributions from Corporate Interests" and "Campaign Contributions from Private Interests." Some of the planks in the platform on which this candidate was running, were missing. They were lying loose on the table and were labeled "Public Issues." The planks he stood on were marked "Villification of Opposing Candidates." Strings from the puppet, controlling his mouth, his hands and his feet, were held at some distance by two large hands labeled "Campaign Contributors." Of course, there was also the whiskey bottle and the cigar.

This candidate had thrown out a lasso towards a barrel marked "Pork." In front of it four little men marched, one by one, down the center of the table, supporting a large card marked "Candidates' Campaign." They were labeled: "Workers in State-at-Large," "Workers in 159 Counties," "Workers in 694 Incorporated Cities," "Workers in 1822 Militia Districts." Each carried a "Ticket to the Public Trough." The "Public Trough" just ahead was piled high with stage money.

Circles at each committee member's place held a brightly colored little hat, flaunting a cocky feather. The member's "hat was in the ring"—and the ring held the words "To raise the social and economic level of Georgia."

Georgia's Response

In discussing this Georgia program, I would not mislead you into thinking the response to the reports—reports which have thrown spotlight as sharply on our liabilities as on our assets—has been favorable without exception. A number of misgivings were evidenced shortly after the start. You may recall the editorial referred to by Jonathan Daniels. It was entitled "What in the World Has Happened to Georgia?" In no uncertain terms this particular editor made clear that he had been reared to think the State was different from the picture of it given in the Fact Finding reports. He said one would think these reports were coming from persons outside the State but instead they were coming from its own people. "What in the world has happened to Georgia?" he asked. Then he added this postscript, "By the way, is this Georgia in the United States or Georgia somewhere near the Caucasus Mountains?"

With few exceptions the State has evidenced fine spirit in response to the work. It has recognized the sincerity of those engaged in the undertaking. The constructive value of such frank self-appraisal has been generally commended. The accuracy of the information has not been challenged. And recognitions from a distance have justly developed a certain amount of state pride in the work.

Money Matters

The Fact Finding reports are sent out without charge. This procedure was adopted early in the program when requests for the reports began coming in. We argued that a charge might result in their reaching only those already actively interested in the State. You naturally question how we have financed the venture. I could answer you, "On a shoestring." But amplifying, it has been financed through contributions. A few have been relatively large, most have been small. The sum acquired last year reached the handsome total of \$5,000! But we have free office space, and the workers are largely volunteers. In fact, we have had a personnel expenditure of only \$50 a month. Two young college women give their time regularly at the office. Also, we have the assistance of NYA students in assembling the material for distribution.

You might be interested to know that we originally prepared these reports on a mimeograph machine—the first month, on one operated by hand! Many a boy friend of the attractive little office secretary served his term cranking that machine. This method was used until the monthly distribution reached ten thousand; it was then no more expensive to print the reports.

Of course, our meager finances have kept us from taking advantage of many opportunities to make the program more effective. They have also placed on some of us work too excessive for the human machine to stand up under for a very long period. Frankly, there have been times when we have questioned whether after all we had not created a "Frankenstein"! But this year we have adopted a more appropriate budget. The work is now sufficiently established to merit it. Our budget is this: One cent for each person in the State of Georgia, toward a program which has as its objective the raising of the people's income 100%, in order to bring it up to the national average. There are three million people in my state. One cent for each of them would total \$30,000. We have broken down our budget in this manner: \$10,000 to be obtained in grants from foundations, for the lower one-third underprivileged group; \$10,000 in goods and services from Georgians, for the middle-income group with little margin between income and outgo; and \$10,000 in financial contributions from Georgians, for the upper one-third privileged group.

As for our progress in raising this budget, all of the goods and services have been pledged by Georgians, and we have made some headway on both of the budget divisions which relate to actual funds—though there is yet quite a distance to go. Funds are difficult to raise down my way.

However, there is one source from which we should be able to take ample care of the financial side of work such as this. It is estimated that a minimum of \$3,000 is required to rear and educate a child. Our capital investments of this type, it so happens, frequently move elsewhere to be put into operation as soon as they are completed. And it seems that those in whom we invest most are usually the very ones who go elsewhere to produce. To illustrate, in the last United States census my state shows a net loss in the migration of native-born people equal to one-fifth of the population given for the State. Capitalize this loss and you have a staggering sum. Well, we would like to start a "Georgia Three-per-cent-Club." We would like three per cent on our investments. We might even

strike a bargain and base the yield on the minimum. Even that would handsomely finance work such as ours. You might mention it to your migrated southern friends, by the way.

Current and Future Program

Some months ago we completed the inventory on which the first year's program was based and with the last report we sent a query to Georgians. Did they wish the program continued? If so, what did they want? Fully three-fourths of the responses asking that the work be continued proposed that it take the form of suggested solutions to problems presented in the factual reports. Only one reply asked that the program be stopped. "Just such abortions," this response said, "have misled the President into thinking the South is the Nation's Economic Problem Number 1"!

Thus we have based our current work on this public response. The twenty authorities have agreed to give their services to the State again. They will serve as a committee to reconsider the subjects on which the factual studies were made and to chart possible solutions to the problems revealed. The reports consisting of possible solutions as seen by this committee will be issued without indicating the minority or majority opinion of the committee members. In this way it will be left to Georgians to decide what they consider wise future action.

Distribution of this series of reports will start in the fall. Meanwhile we are issuing, monthly, sections of the now well-known "Report on Economic Conditions of the South," which we have annotated from our Georgia factual reports. In this manner we are obtaining a picture of the State in comparison with the South as a whole.

Toward What End?

This program is directed toward what end, you may ask. It is truly an adventure in democracy. Confidence in the theory of the democratic process leads us to believe that such widespread thought will ultimately find expression in action. If the Nation can continue to maintain itself as a democracy, then this thought on the part of Georgia citizens should eventually find some expression. If we as a nation lose our democratic form of government, then the information and thought stimulated through this program should still be of assistance to Georgians, irrespective of what their situation may be.

A few days ago I was thinking of how closely the present challenge to democracy parallels with marriage. Those of you who have entered into such union, most probably, exerted yourselves no little before it was consummated. This is generally true of the woman as well as of the man. After marriage, more often than not, the union develops into a more or less accepted state. It is taken as a matter of course. Then frequently there comes a period of—a few side glances here and there. The union requires a little more wooing or it is apt to go on the rocks. We have come to call it—"the dangerous age."

As for this democratic union—this union of Uncle Sam and the Goddess of Liberty, we most certainly exerted ourselves before we brought *it* about. We even went so far as to have physical combat with our English parents because consent was withheld. However, for a long while now we have given it little personal attention. We have let it rock along—have thought of it in terms of permanency.

But we have come to a time when there is a little flirting with other alliances. There are definitely side glances on the part of some of us. There are even rumors of trysting places. This democratic union has arrived at—"the dangerous age." We, Uncle Sam, cannot neglect Liberty as we have done and at the same time expect to hold her. Though we have lived with her little, she is still our ideal. In my opinion, unless we evidence greater understanding and appreciation of her, we deserve to lose her.

In this present challenge to democracy, do not take too lightly my region. There you will find the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Shirts, and the Knights of the White Camellia. Take my state for instance. It is an agricultural state, yet two-thirds of its farmers are landless. Half of these landless are a dispossessed, hopeless people, moving yearly from farm to farm. In cities, around industrial plants, others are equally as hopeless. Is it not natural that they should listen when new hope is offered? They have followed demagogues. Until their lot is bettered, they will follow demagogues again.

Do not take too lightly my region. Its mountains of pride might easily respond to the cultivation of a "super-man" philosophy. Its valleys of depression yearn longingly for richer harvests and might readily reach out to whatever promises abundance. Its socially eroded hillsides are fertile for seed which seem bright. Some seeds take root easily in wasted land. Do not take too lightly my region.

Coming from the "Bible Belt," I need not feel it inappropriate to close with a quotation from that book which is so widely read and so little understood. The quotation is one which has great meaning when it is vitalized—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Many are seeking the Truth in Georgia. May it make and keep us—Free.

If by chance this little book should fall into the hands of a migrated Georgian who should have "a certain urge," our Treasurer is Dr. J. C. Wardlaw, and our address is 411-13 Forsyth Building, Atlanta, Georgia.



Jun 21 '41

