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Primary Source: Chatham County Farmers Protest [1]

Below is a petition to the North Carolina General Assembly in 1889 from the Chatham County Alliance, a local organization of the Farmers' Alliance.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of North Carolina:
Your petitioners respectfully show:
That they were appointed by the County Alliance of Chatham County, held in Pittsboro, January 4th, 1889, to memorialize your honorable body and ask the following legislation:

I. That the state and county governments be administered on the most economical basis, and that all useless offices be abolished.
II. That our charitable and penal institutions, so far as practical, be made self-sustaining.
III. That a just and equitable equalization be established by law between the wages of the laborer and the compensations of office-holders and professional men.
IV. That sheep-husbandry [2], stock-raising, diversified farming and all the industries be fostered by appropriate legislation.

Your petitioners show that they are true and loyal to the best interests of North Carolina, and that they would ask nothing in conflict with the greatest good to the greatest number of their fellow-citizens.

The fact that there are seven or eight hundred lots or tracts of land now advertised to be sold for taxes in Wake County, is suggestive. This they believe to be but a fair index of the condition of things in a large part of the State; and that even this does not show the full extent of financial depression.

The failure of the crops in this county last year necessitates the buying of almost our entire supplies to make another crop, and there is very little money in the hands of the farmers. Almost every farmer is depressed; many are disheartened; labor is unremunerative [3]; the value of land isdepreciating [4], and there is a growing disposition [5] to abandon the farm and seek other employment. Unless something is done to bring relief, many will be compelled [6] to give up their farms. The boasted progress and increase of wealth in North Carolina is not shared by the farmers. They are gradually but steadily becoming poorer and poorer every year.

Relying upon your wisdom and justice, the farmers of Chatham County, for themselves and for their brother farmers throughout the State, have outlined, as above set forth, the legislation which they believe will bring contentment to the people and prosperity [7] to the State.

The first step towards relief is to put into effect in our state and county governments something of that rigid economy which the farmers are compelled to practice, and thereby lessen the burdens of taxation.

Make the salaries of state and county officers as low as will be consistent with efficient service. Reduce, if possible, the costs and delays of litigation [8], and devise some means of punishing crime and caring for criminals which will be less burdensome to the honest tax payers.

We trust that the justice of our cause and our own good intentions will be a sufficient apology for troubling your honorable body with our petition.

"Memorial of the Farmers' Alliances of Chatham County to the General Assembly of North Carolina."*Public Documents of North Carolina.* Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, State Printer and Binder, 1889. North Carolina Digital Collections, https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/public-documents-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-1889/4064488 [9]

User Tags:
Chatham County [10]
Farmers Alliance [11]
farming [12]
history [13]
legislation [14]
North Carolina [15]
North Carolina History [16]
Page [17]
Populism [18]
Students [19]
Teachers [20]
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[1] https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-chatham [2] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/husbandry [3] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/unremunerative [4] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/depreciate [5] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/disposition [6] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/compel [7] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/prosperity [8] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/litigation [9] https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/public-documents-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-1889/4064488 [10] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/chatham-county [11] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/farmers-alliance [12] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/farming [13] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history [14] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/legislation [15] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-5 [16] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-6 [17] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/page [18] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/populism [19] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students [20] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers [21] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/creative-commons [22] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/anchor-north [23] https://www.jstor.org/stable/23514355?seq=4