

HOW 'YA GONNA KEEP 'EM DOWN ON THE FARM?

Washington's Country Life Commission and Redirected Rural Education

By Robert A. Harvie

COLUMBIA The Magazine of Northwest History, Summer 2005: Vol. 19, No. 2

At the end of World War I the lyrics to a popular vaudeville song asked, "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm After They've Seen Patee?" Country life reformers during the first two decades of the 20th century believed they had the answer to the lyrics in their faith that all rural problems "resolve themselves in the end into a question of education." Young men and women began drifting away from the farm into the city long before doughboys saw "Patee." Increased land prices, expanded farm mechanization, miserable health and sanitation, bad roads, isolated and lonely farm life, the drudgery of farm work and, above all, inferior education drove country boys and girls into the city as a place to make a living and have a more genteel life.

National country life reformers, who were for the most part businessmen, academics, and journalists, saw the reduction of rural population as both a moral and economic problem. Farmers, rural reformers believed, were individualistic, law-abiding, intelligent, devoted to family and to private property, and morally superior to urban dwellers. The loss of the yeoman farmer meant the loss of traditional American ideals and perhaps the loss of democracy itself. Moreover, if the movement from the land continued, the nation and eventually the world would have difficulty providing food for an increasing population. Keeping as many rural youth on the farm as possible was America's best hope of maintaining food production and, more importantly, perpetuating traditional agrarian values.

Concerned about the growing exodus from the farm, President Theodore Roosevelt formed the Country Life Commission in 1908 and appointed Liberty Hyde Bailey, dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell University, as its chair. The commission's purpose was "not to help the farmer raise better crops, but to call attention to the opportunities for better business and better living on the farm." Bailey quickly organized the commission, divided the seven commissioners into groups and, in whirlwind tours, conducted hearings in 30 cities in 44 days, including a visit to Spokane and Opportunity, Washington. The commission, with assistance from the Census Bureau, sent a 12-question circular to over 500,000 farmers, rural women's clubs, farmers' societies and organizations, rural ministers, physicians, lawyers, and others. Nearly 115,000 completed circulars were returned. To aid in the commission's work, President Roosevelt urged farmers to meet in district schoolhouses no later than December 5, 1908, to discuss how to improve rural life. Minutes from approximately 200 schoolhouse meetings were sent to the commission.

No issue evoked more response at the hearings, on the circulars, or at the schoolhouse meetings than education. The rundown one-room rural schoolhouse with its ineffective teacher and classical curriculum was blamed for ineffective farming, lack of new ideas, and the continual drift of young rural folks toward the cities. Even though the school building might be adequate

and the teacher experienced, country life reformers feared that rural schoolchildren were being taught a curriculum fitting them for professional life in the city rather than life on the farm. To keep boys and girls on the farm, reformers demanded consolidated schools staffed with teachers trained in agriculture and country life subjects who would remain in the rural community, and curricula that emphasized the practical over the theoretical, the study of nature and the pleasures of country life. The rural school, reformers believed, was the community's natural social center, a place where farmers and their families could obtain the latest information about crop production, good roads, health, sanitation, and domestic science, and where social, recreational, and fraternal gatherings might decrease the isolation and loneliness of farm life. In short, country life advocates saw the role of "the country school as a center for redirected education and community building."

Like their national counterparts, Washington's country life reformers expressed grave concern about the migration of young people from the farm to the city and blamed rural education. Unlike many areas of rural America, Washington's rural population doubled from 307,000 in 1900 to 614,000 in 1920. Fueled by homestead acts and newly reclaimed land, the number of farms doubled during the period. Washington's country life reformers welcomed the increase in rural and farm populations but were troubled by the state's urban population explosion that increased from 211,000 in 1900 to 743,000 in 1920.

This unbalanced population growth and its implications drew the attention of Governor Marion E. Hay, an enthusiastic country life advocate, who advised the 1911 state legislature that "growth in the agricultural districts, the very basis upon which the prosperity of the country rests, has not kept pace with city increases." Echoing the national country life reformers' sentiments, Hay informed the solons that the reasons for the farm exodus were chiefly the "lack of religious facilities, schools, society, transportation, and good roads, and the scarcity and high cost of help."

Leaders of Washington's country life movement were middle-class, well-educated men and women who -believed in President Roosevelt's country life philosophy and policies. Spokane businessmen and chamber of commerce members Edwin T. Coman, Fred Niederhauser, David Brown, Frederick A. Goodall and H. J. Neely recognized that the city's prosperity depended on agriculture. Edwin A. Smith, editor of Spokane's *Twice-A-Week Spokesman Review*, a newspaper devoted to farming, mining, and forestry, used his forum and his influence on the Spokane Chamber of Commerce to promote better rural education. Other businessmen, like former state senator and Garfield grain merchant R. C. McCroskey, and Waterville engineer and land agent A. L. Rogers saw the country life movement as a chance to improve their businesses and their communities through better rural education. The professional education elites—Enoch A. Bryan, president of the State College; N. D. Showalter, principal of Cheney Normal School; Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry B. Dewey; and Josephine Corless Preston, Walla Walla County school superintendent and later state superintendent of public instruction—were determined to improve rural education and rural life. Regardless of their individual agendas, Washington country life reformers eagerly awaited the arrival of Roosevelt's commission in Spokane.

Hosted by the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, the Country Life Commission, represented by Chairman Bailey and Commissioner William S. Beard, arrived in the city on December 4, 1908. After a train ride from Colfax to Spokane and lunch in the Hunters Room at the Spokane Hotel, the commissioners held a two-hour hearing in Opportunity that was attended by nearly 250

people. Chairman Bailey sharply questioned community leaders about why boys and girls left the farm. Most leaders agreed that the fault lay with the rural education system.

Opportunity's school principal, Jacob Vercier, told the commission that rural schools were not doing what they could to keep children on the farm and that the state had failed to provide a farm-related education. In response to Bailey's inquiry, Vercier pointed out that rural teaching provided teachers with five or six months' work and that their salaries were lower than those paid to itinerant farm workers.

Bailey then turned to the school curriculum and asked Vercier, "Is there anything taught in the schools that would induce boys to stay on the farm?" "No, there is not even a garden on the campus," the principal responded, apparently referring to local Opportunity schools. "Occasionally, I have known of fruit trees being planted, but they are usually let die." The solution, Vercier confidently told Bailey, was to, "instill in the minds of children that the farm is a beautiful, healthful, wholesome place to live, and that agriculture is a high calling. This must be started in the home and the schools should cooperate [in] inculcating those ideas."

The next day the commission held two hearings in Spokane, one in the morning at the chamber of commerce building and one in the afternoon at the state armory. The audiences consisted of mostly businessmen, academics, country life advocates, representatives of various farm organizations, and a few farmers. The hearings drew people from the Big Bend country, the Palouse region, Idaho, and Oregon. When Bailey addressed the issue of why boys and girls leave the farm, Mrs. Paul Clagstone from Bonner County, Idaho, commented that young girls leave the farm because of their mother's discontent. "Wives in Idaho," she informed the commissioners, "do nothing but work and care for their babies." The solution she said was to teach domestic arts and agriculture in rural schools.

Professor H. T. French, director of the experiment station at the University of Idaho, charged that rural schools did nothing to encourage rural students toward agriculture. Defending farm boys against allegations that they wanted to avoid hard work, Professor French advised the commission, "Boys do not leave the farm because they are afraid of work, but because they are made to feel that the higher attainments of life are reached only through the professions."

By prior arrangement, farmers in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana met on December 5, 1908, in local schoolhouses to discuss the farm problem. Before the meetings, the editor of the Spokane *Twice-A-Week Spokesman Review* published a list of 25 topics that farmers might discuss, including the farm home, rural schools, rights and privileges of farm women and children, prices of farm products, good roads, keeping boys and girls on the farm, smaller farms, and postal and telephone service. In February 1909 the newspaper reported the results of the schoolhouse meetings along with a newspaper-sponsored contest on how farm life could be improved. By a heavy margin farm homes and rural schools ranked first and second, respectively, followed by good roads, prices of farm products, and postal and telephone services.

On December 6, 1908, the national Country Life Commission left Spokane for the rest of its grueling tour and on January 23, 1909, submitted its report to President Roosevelt. Two weeks later Roosevelt transmitted the report to Congress with a request for \$25,000 to enable the commission to complete its study and publish its report. President Roosevelt was outraged when the House of Representatives killed the appropriation, but he was leaving office and there was little he could do to save the commission's work. Country life reformers urged incoming

President William Howard Taft to continue the commission, but he took little interest in the project.

Rural reformers in Washington closely followed the national Country Life Commission's fate and were bitterly disappointed when Congress failed to fund it. During the political struggle over the commission's future, the editor of the *Twice-A-Week Spokesman Review* urged his readers to write letters to the newspaper voicing their opinion, whether the Country Life Commission's work should continue. Buoyed by the overwhelmingly favorable response, Washington country life reformers and the Spokane Chamber of Commerce hosted the state's first Country Life Day at the annual Apple Show. The organizers invited rural reformers from Oregon, Idaho, and Montana to create a Northwest Country Life Commission that would continue the national commission's work in the region.

On November 18, 1909, Chairman Edwin T. Coman called the Country Life Convention to order. The chairman's opening address was delivered to a mixture of business and professional men, academics, students, and farmers. He told the excited audience that the Roosevelt administration had accomplished four great achievements; (1) settling the Pennsylvania coal strike, (2) negotiating an end to the Russo-Japanese war, (3) calling the governors together in Washington, D.C., to discuss conservation of natural resources, and (4) establishing the Country Life Commission. Focusing his remarks on the commission, Chairman Coman concluded by saying, "If this current from the country to the city can be reversed this country life agitation will have accomplished more for the benefit of the American people than any one movement inaugurated in the last generation." Other speakers took the podium and addressed a wide range of country life topics focused on keeping boys and girls on the farm, including the importance of the farm kitchen, domestic science, farmstead beautification, and rural education.

The audience was surprised and delighted when Frederick A. Goodall, president of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, announced to the assembly that the chamber would print and distribute copies of the national Country Life Commission's report at its own expense. Retired Major General Thomas H. Tannatt introduced a lengthy resolution that thanked the chamber for its community spirit and urged the chamber to obtain permission from President Taft to print the report. The resolution was quickly adopted and after the convention adjourned a telegram was sent to President Taft asking permission to print the Country Life Commission's report for free distribution. The president had no objection. In December the report was received by the chamber, published, and distributed free of charge.

The primary purpose for the convention was to establish a permanent Northwest Country Life Commission. Washington State College President E. A. Bryan introduced a resolution to form a committee in order to create a "permanent organization of the country life movement, and to secure from the governors of the Pacific Northwest, a joint commission on country life, without expense to the respective states, said commission to work in conjunction with and at the expense of the Chamber of Commerce of Spokane."

The resolution was quickly adopted. Chairman Coman appointed to the committee R. C. McCroskey; General Tannatt; Paul Clagstone, a Harvard-educated speaker of the Idaho House of Representatives, M. L. Dean, a Montana state fruit inspector; John L. Dumas, former president of Washington's Horticultural Society; and C. E. Whistler, a horticulturist from Medford, Oregon. The hastily formed committee met and proposed the following resolution:

Resolved that C. E. Whistler of Medford, Ore., Paul Clagstone of Clagstone, Idaho, M. L. Dean of Missoula, Mont., and R. C. McCroskey of Garfield, Washington, be and are hereby appointed each as a committee of one to lay before the governor of this state, the plan for creating a Northwest Country Life Commission and secure from him, if possible, the appointment of a state commission of five members, all of said state commissions to constitute a joint Northwest Country Life Commission, the duty of said joint commission shall be to provide for at least one day's discussion during each Spokane National Apple Show, or at such time and place as shall be designated by the chairman of the Washington State Country Life Commission, of problems pertaining to country life and perform such other duties as in their judgment will promote the objects and aims of said commission.

The resolution's intent went beyond Bryan's original motion and requested that the governors of each Northwest state appoint a country life commission whose members would work for rural reform within their own state and meet as the Northwest Country Life Commission at the yearly Apple Show in Spokane. The conference adopted the resolution unanimously.

After the convention adjourned, the committee members wrote letters to their respective governors urging the chief executives to create country life commissions. R. C. McCroskey's letter to Governor Hay included a copy of the resolution and requested that the governor appoint a five-member commission. Initially, Hay moved quickly to appoint members to the commission. Responding immediately to McCroskey's letter, Hay speculated that he might appoint the former senator as well as Bryan, David Brown, Edwin Smith, and State Senator W. H. Paulhamus, and thought that there ought to be a woman on the commission. President Bryan recommended Mrs. W. H. Lawrence of Puyallup or Mary Carpenter, Whatcom County school superintendent, as excellent nominees for the commission. Governor Hay grew cautious about his appointments when he learned from David Brown and Edwin Smith that the commission's role might be more extensive and comprehensive than the governor had first thought.

On January 17, 1910, Brown and Smith invited Hay, Bryan, McCroskey, and Paulhamus to a meeting in Spokane to discuss the new commission's membership and function. No minutes of the meeting can be found, but it is likely the participants concluded that this small group was not sufficiently diverse to develop a country life plan for the entire state.

In any event, two weeks later Governor Hay asked C. M. Fassett, president of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, to appoint a committee to form a Washington plan for the country life movement. Fassett appointed David Brown chairman of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce Country Life Committee. What role this committee played in the appointment process is unknown, but it was not until an April 19 meeting in Spokane that Governor Hay made his commission appointments. Ten days later the governor publicly announced the formation of Washington's -Country Life Commission.

The new commission was a mixture of successful businessmen, powerful politicians, educators, and prosperous farmers. Governor Hay appointed David Brown as chairman, and he became the linchpin between the state's Country Life Commission and Spokane's Chamber of Commerce Country Life Committee. Other commission members included John L. Dumas, A. L. Rogers, Senator Paulhamus, and Mary Carpenter.

In early May, Brown called the commission together for an organizational meeting. At the meeting, the commission discussed a variety of country life problems but ultimately decided to establish an aggressive agenda exclusively centered on redirecting rural education. There were a number of reasons for the commission's focus on rural education. First, three of the

commissioners—Carpenter, Dumas, and Rogers—were either directly or indirectly involved in education and had a personal interest in rural education. Second, Washington's rural reformers agreed with Brown's observation that "the country schools are held by some to be largely responsible for ineffective farming and the general lack of ideals, and the rapid drifting from the country to the cities and towns." Third, redirecting rural education was a relatively safe political agenda.

Powerful farm organizations like the Grange and the Farmer's Union found many country life ideas insulting to farmers but agreed with Brown's observations about rural education. Likewise, the state's widely diverse agricultural resources and population density made it difficult politically for Washington's Country Life Commission to develop a strategy for rural improvement other than education that would be accepted statewide. Finally, legal authority to implement most rural education reforms already existed. State law permitted consolidated schools, established the length of the school year, compelled children to attend school and granted authority to Washington's board of education to develop grammar and high school curriculums. The commission would not have to spend time and resources lobbying an uncertain legislature, and as long as the state's superintendent of public instruction supported the commission's rural educational agenda, it stood a good chance of being implemented.

During the spring and early summer of 1910, Washington's Country Life Commission, in cooperation with the Spokane Chamber of Commerce Country Life Committee, developed a plan to redirect country schools. The ambitious plan's first step envisioned consolidated school districts designed to serve a 36-square-mile area. During the second stage, districts were to acquire 10 acres and build modern schools, teacher cottages, community halls, athletic fields, playgrounds, and propagating grounds. The plan called for fruit trees and flower and vegetable gardens spaced between immaculate lawns. Good road-building models surrounded and intersected the school grounds.

This idealized school complex, commissioners believed, could be adapted to the financial and geographical circumstances facing most rural school districts. Some districts, for example, might want to include modern barns, poultry pens and up-to-date farm equipment. The final and perhaps most important step demanded a change in rural school curriculum from the theoretical to the practical, focusing on agriculture, horticulture, domestic science, and country life subjects.

"We do not want a dry goods box with four holes on each side and two in the front for a school," Dumas told a receptive country life audience, but rather a "modern, up-to-date building, fully equipped and sanitary. Consolidation is the first step to secure this." State law defined consolidation as the joining together of two or more contiguous school districts located within the same county. Consolidated schools, rural reformers believed, offered educational advantages over the one-room schoolhouse. Consolidation provided a broad tax base that permitted the district to build a modern school building, teacher's cottage, and community hall. Increased financial resources allowed consolidated school districts to hire a cadre of well-trained teachers who would teach a variety of country life subjects rather than relying on one, often--inexperienced instructor. Consolidated schools offered farm children more playmates, thus reducing the isolation and solitary nature of farm life. Finally, country life reformers were confident that consolidated schools increased community interest in quality education and built viable communities.

Consolidated school districts proved politically difficult to create. Consolidation procedure first required a petition signed by five heads of families requesting consolidation of two or more districts. The county school superintendent, after conducting hearings, called for a special election in each district concerned. A majority of voters in each district had to approve consolidation. This deceptively simple procedure was slow and often accompanied by strife and bitterness between families and school districts. Many farmers felt a nostalgic attachment to the one-room school district and did not want to relinquish control of their school to educators in towns or other districts. Moreover, the state Grange urged farmers to oppose consolidating with town or city school districts where rural students were exposed to immoral influences. The editor of the *Agricultural Grange News* told his readers that every rural school district could afford to "purchase not less than ten acres of ground, construct adequate school buildings, community centre hall with a cottage for teacher."

Country Life Commissioner Rogers pointed out that consolidation was more likely to be successful in locales with dense population and small farms than in the state's vast wheat-growing areas. Wheat farmers did not have time to transport their children to school over long distances during the busy spring planting season. During the winter months wheat farmers were often snowed in or traveled over hazardous roads to deliver their children to the consolidated school, while other wheat growers moved to nearby cities where their children received a city-based education. Rogers recommended that rural consolidated schools build or rent dormitories for students who must travel long or hazardous journeys to school. Principal Showalter agreed with Rodgers that consolidation would not succeed in some rural localities but disagreed about the solution. Showalter suggested that students in a modern one-room schoolhouse properly equipped and staffed with an experienced teacher received as good a practical education as that offered by a consolidated school.

Notwithstanding Showalter's belief in the potential utility of the "little red school house" and the political problems associated with efforts to consolidate schools, Washington's Country Life Commission agreed with Superintendent of Public Instruction Josephine Corless Preston's observation that "the consolidated rural school brings to the country -community that thing, the absence of which has driven so many boys off the farm, namely a well-classified, well-equipped, well-taught school."

The next stage in the commission's plan called for consolidated districts to purchase 10 acres and to construct modern school buildings, community halls, and teacher cottages. A modern school with good lighting, indoor plumbing, running water, and other conveniences provided an excellent learning environment. Rooms devoted to domestic science, laboratories, and manual arts were mandatory. A library well-stocked with country life literature was essential to a good rural education.

Although a modern school building was deemed necessary to keep boys and girls on the farm, the community hall was the central feature of the redirected rural educational complex. The building plans for the community hall called for a modern kitchen, a large room for dining and recreation, a dressing room, library, and business office. Local farmers could find the latest agricultural bulletins from the Department of Agriculture and state experiment stations. The hall's library would host a series of farm-related books and pamphlets. More importantly for country life reformers, the hall was a social center that would "quicken country life and vitalize our schools." Community members might use the hall to discuss community needs and school problems. The hall was a place to hold district-wide contests for young people in spelling,

sewing, reading, cooking, manual training, crop growing, and athletics. In addition, dinners, community sings, parent-teacher clubs, little mother clubs, glee clubs, agricultural and industrial clubs, dances, and carnivals held there cemented a sense of community. The close contact and personal touch between teachers, students, and parents developed at these events built a sense of community and, at the same time, drew many boys and girls from the farm into rural or union high schools where they might receive more country life education.

Country life reformers expected rural teachers to instruct students, supervise community halls, tend the school's animals, farm equipment, agricultural plots, fruit trees, lawn, and vegetable garden. This impressive, if not overwhelming, list of responsibilities was beyond the capability of young, inexperienced, ill-trained teachers often hired by rural school districts. Regardless of their teaching experience, rural schoolteachers boarded with a local family or with a series of families during the school year. Boarding gave teachers little privacy and often was inconvenient for the host family. After a year or two of living with different families, teachers left the rural community to find better positions in towns and cities. Teacher cottages equipped with modern home conveniences built at taxpayer expense, reformers believed, attracted and retained well-educated, experienced teachers who would become respected leaders in their rural communities. Moreover, an up-to-date cottage surrounded by well-groomed lawns, fruit trees, and vegetable gardens provided a positive model for farm homes.

Washington law initially proved an obstacle for those districts that wanted to build community halls or teacher cottages. In 1901 State Attorney General W. B. Stratton opined that school districts lacked legal authority to build or purchase teacher cottages and community halls. In 1913, urged by the Country Life Commission, Governor Hay and other country life reformers, the legislature enacted the "Wider Use of School Grounds Act." The new law granted second and third class school districts authority to build community halls and teacher cottages.

The final stage in the commission's redirected school plan required a change in grammar and high school curriculums. At the turn into the 20th century, Washington's common school curriculums offered a classic education. The state required grammar schools to teach courses in science and nature, history and civics, arithmetic, reading, spelling, language, writing, and art. High schools taught courses in science, literature, music, American and European history, mathematics, English, rhetoric, political economy, Latin, Greek, civil government, and psychology. High schools could offer courses in stenography, bookkeeping, and business forms and customs, but domestic science, manual arts, or agriculture were not part of the high school curriculum. Country life advocates railed against the grammar school curriculum that prepared students for high school that most rural students would never attend, and against the high school curriculum that prepared rural children for city-based professions rather than for country life.

In 1905 the state board of education gave grammar and high schools the option to offer courses in manual training and household arts. In addition, grammar schools could elect to provide students with courses in nature studies and agriculture. Country life reformers were not mollified and demanded that vocational training, nature study, local geography, domestic science, agriculture, and horticulture be required courses in grammar schools and high schools. In 1910 the reformers received some of what they demanded.

Under the new approach, the state board of education required first and second grade students to explore nature studies. Third grade children learned about their local geography, and students in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grades studied elementary and advanced

geography. Eighth grade students spent three days a week studying forestry, agriculture, or horticulture, and one hour a week learning manual arts.

Commissioner Mary Carpenter, in a speech to the county school superintendents, described how the new curriculum might be implemented in rural grammar schools:

We shall build our course of study on the four main sources of supply—namely, the earth, the air, the plants and the animals. From these sources we can arrange for the first six years of the child's life. Much of this work has and will be done in the form of nature study.... In the seventh and eighth grades nature study will be turned into the study of agriculture, in which the work is to be carried on by means of practice in doing things with the soils, plants, and animals. Here our school gardens will stand for experimental stations.

Commissioner Dumas stressed that the school gardens were not experiment stations like those that existed at the state colleges but rather were places "to teach plant propagation, to teach the germination of seeds and a place for seed testing."

Of course, eighth grade students must remain in school to experience the educational benefits of the agriculture course. The 1909 legislature enacted a compulsory school law that required children between the ages of 8 and 15 years to attend school and those between 15 and 16 to attend unless engaged in a lawful occupation. The law's intent required all children in Washington to finish the eighth grade. Nevertheless, Dumas feared that many rural students left school before studying agriculture, and his fear was confirmed when Commissioner Rogers discovered that only 25 percent of rural boys went beyond the sixth grade. In order to induce students to remain in school and complete the agriculture course, Dumas proposed awarding medals to eighth grade students in each county who scored highest on a series of examinations given to graduates in elementary agriculture. The test questions would be prepared by the Country Life Commission, administered by the local school districts, and graded by the state's Department of Education. Although Dumas contributed \$1,500 toward financing the plan, there is no evidence that it was implemented.

Although the state board of education required grammar schools to teach agriculture to eighth grade students, the board gave high schools the option to offer agriculture and horticulture courses. Country life advocates argued that it made no sense to require rural eighth grade students to study agriculture but not require rural high schools to teach agriculture or horticulture. A high school agricultural course, they believed, created self-reliance, stimulated the mind with ideas of growth and change, developed curiosity, taught cultural values, and trained children about the beauties of nature. In defense of agriculture as an option rather than a required course, Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry Dewey argued that trained agriculture teachers were in short supply and the decision as to whether agriculture could be taught effectively in high school must be left to the local district. Nevertheless, rural education reformers were pleased that the new four-year high school curriculum required young women to enroll in a domestic science course each year, and that young boys were required to take courses in manual arts, including mechanical drawing, cabinetmaking, advanced woodworking or ironworking, and machine shop.

While country life reformers agreed about the utility of domestic science, agriculture, and manual art courses, they disagreed as to how best to teach rural children traditional classroom subjects. Mabel Carney, director of the Rural Department at Cheney Normal School, argued that country life pedagogy must be used in rural schools to study mathematics, literature, history, art, and other traditional courses. She told rural teachers that solving mathematical problems

from the farm rather than from Wall Street gave farm students skills to help their parents and taught them that farming was not just dull, physical labor. Teaching country life literature, history, and music idealized country life and awakened in rural children a love for the land. Decorating school walls with paintings and photographs that glorified country living implanted in young rural children an appreciation for farm life.

Commissioner Rogers disagreed with this pedagogy, proffering that a blend of practical and theoretical education was the best approach to teaching rural children, and cautioned that rural schools must not neglect the classic education for those students who desire to attend high school and beyond. In addition, the state's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction expressed concern that in some rural school districts the pendulum had swung too far toward vocational training.

After the rural school plan was unveiled in June 1910 the commission's role focused on convincing skeptics, school directors, and the public that redirected schools were necessary to build rural communities and to keep boys and girls on the farm. The commission's first opportunity to promote the plan publicly occurred in November 1910 when the Washington commission met as part of the Northwest commission during Country Life Day at the Apple Show in Spokane. Chairman Brown limited discussion during the day to community halls and teacher cottages.

The second and last meeting of the Northwest commission was held a year later as part of the first Country Life Congress. Country life advocates from throughout the United States streamed to Spokane to establish a National Country Life Congress. Saturday, November 25, 1911, was Education Day at the congress. A model schoolhouse was erected and given a degree of realism when nearby rural school children enacted a typical class day.

Although the Spokane Chamber of Commerce paid the Washington Country Life Commission's expenses during the conferences, without its own budget the commission lacked the financial resources to prepare reports, distribute pamphlets, publicize its work, travel, or otherwise promote the redirected education plan. Moreover, the failure to appoint a secretary deprived the commission of an official to whom interested persons could write or telephone for information.

In 1912, two years after Governor Hay had announced the formation of the Washington Country Life Commission, Commissioner Rogers informed the governor that without a budget the commission's usefulness was questionable as an advocate for redirected rural education. The governor responded that he would ask the 1913 legislature for at least \$5,000 to publicize the commission's work and appoint a secretary for the commission. During the 1912 gubernatorial campaign Governor Hay demonstrated his intention to continue the commission by appointing two new commissioners—Frances Carew Shanly of Bellingham and Arnold S. Allen, secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association. However, Ernest Lister's narrow election victory over Hay ended the Washington Country Life Commission's short life.

Even so, the promotion of redirected rural education did not die with the commission. The "Wider Use of the School Plant Act," in addition to authorizing second and third class school districts to build teacher cottages and community halls, required Washington's Department of Education to establish an Agricultural and Rural Life Commission composed of three permanent members: the superintendent of public instruction and the extension directors from the state college and the state university. The commission's powers—to approve plans for community

halls and teacher cottages and promote the growth of the community center idea—absorbed the Washington Country Life Commission's role. The new commission was busy and by the end of World War I had approved 311 community halls and 289 teacher cottages. Moreover, 76 percent of school districts reported having vegetable gardens. Consolidation moved slowly, and by 1919 the state reported 240 consolidated rural school districts but claimed nearly 1,700 one-room schoolhouses.

"How 'ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm?" Washington's Country Life Commission and its allies believed they had the answer in the redirected rural school, which showcased a model farm for young boys and girls and provided a place around which farm families could socialize and build a sense of community. Country life reformers were convinced that this idyllic complex—coupled with well-trained educators, teaching a new, redirected school curriculum focused on the practical rather than the theoretical, on nature studies, agriculture, and the beauties of country life—instilled in rural children a belief in the joy of farm work, fair play, honesty, nature's beauty, and country living.

Whether the Washington Country Life Commission's redirected education plan resulted in keeping boys and girls on the farm is difficult to assess. Reformers admitted that there was no room on farms for many rural boys and girls and that these children would move to cities. Moreover, it is impossible to know whether redirected education kept some boys and girls on the farm who might otherwise have relocated to town. Nevertheless, the commission and its supporters believed that those children who stayed on the farm and were armed with practical knowledge and traditional rural values learned in a redirected country school would become the future leaders in their rural communities.

Robert A. Harvie is a professor of criminal justice and department chair at St. Martin's College, Lacey, Washington. He has published one book and a number of articles on the history of jurisprudence in the West.