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Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota: VII> Local Government

W. F. Kumlien

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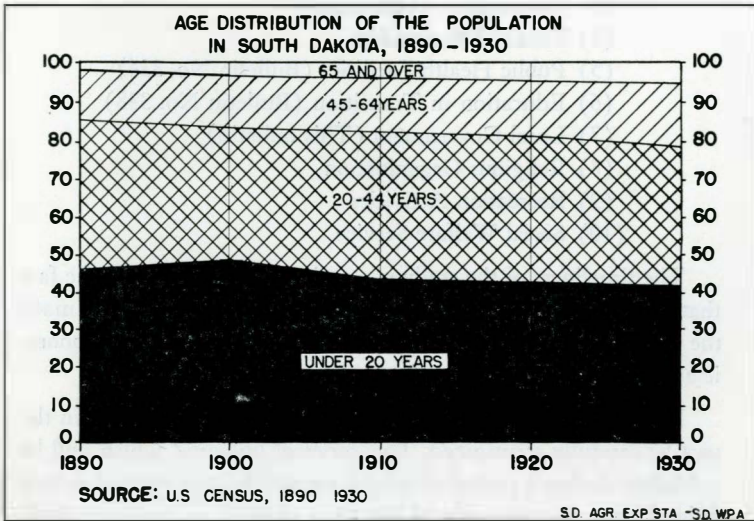
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Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota

VII. Local Government

W. F. Kumlien



The changes in age composition have probably affected many changes in our government. The increase in the aged, 65 and over, and the declining number of young persons under 20 has in recent years greatly accentuated such problems as social welfare, education and health.

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Explanatory Note

This is the fourth bulletin to be published in a projected series of 10 carrying the general title of "Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota." Appropriate subtitles for each field covered will appear as follows:

- (1) Population Tendencies (Bulletin No. 327)
- (2) Rural Life Adjustments
- (3) Community Organization
- (4) Family Relationships
- (5) Public Health Facilities (Bulletin No. 334)
- (6) Education in Transition (Bulletin No. 338)
- (7) Local Government (This bulletin)
- (8) Religious Organization
- (9) Recreation Activities
- (10) Social Welfare Service

The timeliness of the study is occasioned particularly by the fact that the recent extended period of drought and depression has made the people of the state increasingly conscious of the need for economic and social planning in the future.

In such planning it is imperative that what has happened in the past be carefully scrutinized. This series of bulletins, which will be published during a period of several years, is being prepared so that federal, state, county and local planning agencies, as well as individuals, operating in the state may obtain a clearer view of the direction and implications of the more definite trends of social change in each of the fields listed above.

Whenever possible, data were obtained for the years 1890-1940, although in some cases data were not available before 1915 and 1920, and in some cases were not available for a later year than 1930, 1938 or 1939.

This bulletin does not attempt to study the technical aspects of government but rather to treat its social institutional phases.

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Digest

1. Before 1930 the proportion of the potential voters who voted was declining, but since 1930 this proportion has increased greatly. (Page 6.)
2. In practically all phases of government there are evidences of its growing centralization. The state and county governments have taken over most of the functions of the township, the state has increased control over the county in certain fields and the federal government has strengthened its control. (Page 15.)
3. The costs of state and local governments increased greatly up to 1930 declined abruptly during the depression, then began to rise again. They still are less than the peak amount, however. (Pages 15 and 16.)
4. The changes in the composition of South Dakota population have resulted in changing services of the units of government in the state. (Page 18.)
5. Many of the functions of government have changed during the history of the state and the government has taken over many functions which formerly it did not perform. (Page 20.)
6. The changing social order is the most important factor in making the smooth operation of democracy in South Dakota more difficult and complex. (Page 24.)
7. The laws of the state set only very general qualifications for elective officials, most of them draw rather low pay, and in many cases the tenure of office is limited. As a result the best-qualified people are not always attracted to these jobs. (Page 24.)
8. There may possibly be some improvement in the qualifications of public officials. A few positions have been put under a merit system. (Page 25.)

Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota

VII. Local Government

W. F. Kumlien¹

I. Introduction

The Problem. South Dakota people have many problems of adjustment to both the physical and social environments. As a result the trends in some of the major social institutions require more detailed study for better understanding and adjustment of the problems. One such institution is government, both state and local. Certain trends have developed in the field of government which have greatly increased the interest in it. They are:

- (1) The cost of government is increasing greatly.
- (2) The importance of local units of government is declining and there is a tendency toward centralization of government.
- (3) People are demanding more services without increasing taxes. This is bringing the problem of efficiency in government into prominence.
- (4) The changes in the composition of the population are bringing about a change in the type of services demanded. With these changes have arisen new problems in government administration.
- (5) There is a growing realization that local governmental units do not follow natural community boundaries and, therefore, their inhabitants do not have the same interests.

Purpose. It is the purpose of this study to portray as simply as possible the basic trends of government in South Dakota.

Scope and method. This study attempts to cover the main phases of government, emphasizing particularly changes in costs and functions. Data have been secured for the state and, in some instances, for counties. The sources of the data used in this study included reports of the South Dakota Division of Taxation, the South Dakota Manual, the constitution of South Dakota, and in some instances, federal and state census data.

1. **Acknowledgements.** This study was made possible by the generous cooperation of the State and Federal Work Projects Administration (formerly Works Progress Administration) with the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The official name of the project has been "Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota." The original project was designated as WPA Project No. 665-75-3-143. The WPA financed the larger part of the study by furnishing clerical helpers working under the technical guidance of an analyst, while the experiment station provided the general project supervision and bore the cost of publishing the manuscript. The author gratefully acknowledges the faithful assistance rendered by all those working on the study. Particular mention is made of the valuable contribution given by Vera Petheram Woolbert, project supervisor and analyst.

II. Origin of Governmental Units

Early settlers in South Dakota came largely from the northern and eastern states.² This accounts in general for the type of state and local government established in South Dakota. The men who formed the constitutional convention were acquainted with the government of neighboring states, and naturally carried over many ideas of government from them.

A mixed type of local government with the township as an important subdivision of the county was established. This type is prevalent from New York to North Dakota, although the exact organization of the county government varies from state to state. Each state provides a county board, which may be composed of representatives from local governmental units or may be chosen on a county-wide basis. The first type of county board is usually large although it is required to have only three members. The second type usually consists of from three to seven members.

In South Dakota the county is the main unit of local government, while the township, even where organized, has only limited duties and powers. The county board of commissioners is composed of from three to five members.

During early days there was, perhaps, a legitimate reason for the township for it constituted the basis for the open country election precinct, was the local taxing unit for the maintenance of country roads, and in many parts of the state was identical with the school district. As the state developed these functions declined in importance.

III. Changes in Government Organization

Some of the more marked trends in government are the changes in participation of individuals, increasing costs, and changing relationships between units of government. This section deals specifically with these changes.

1. More Active Participation in Government During Periods of Economic Stress and Social Crisis. Between 1890 and 1918 the percentage of potential voters who actually voted decreased almost 60 percent. Beginning with the presidential election of 1920, however, this trend has been reversed. In the general election of 1940, 81 percent of the potential voters in the state voted. This was a higher percentage than at any time except in 1900, and was a 25 percent increase over 1920 and a 27 percent increase over 1930. More interest is displayed in the presidential elections than in purely state elections, as evidenced by the fluctuations in the proportion voting each year. (See Fig. 1.)

The proportion of the total population who voted also has increased since 1920, although there was a slight decrease between 1890 and 1920. One reason for the increase which began in 1920 is the fact that women voted for the first time in that year. This greatly increased the number of potential voters, and also the total number of persons who voted. A second reason is the increase in the number of persons of voting age (those 21 years of age and over). This proportion increased considerably between 1890 and 1940.³

2. See Kumlien, W. F., "Basic Trends of Social Change; I. Population Tendencies," *South Dakota Agr. Exp. Station Bulletin 327*, April, 1939, page 36.

3. See Table 5, page 18, for the changes in age composition between 1890 and 1930. Although figures on

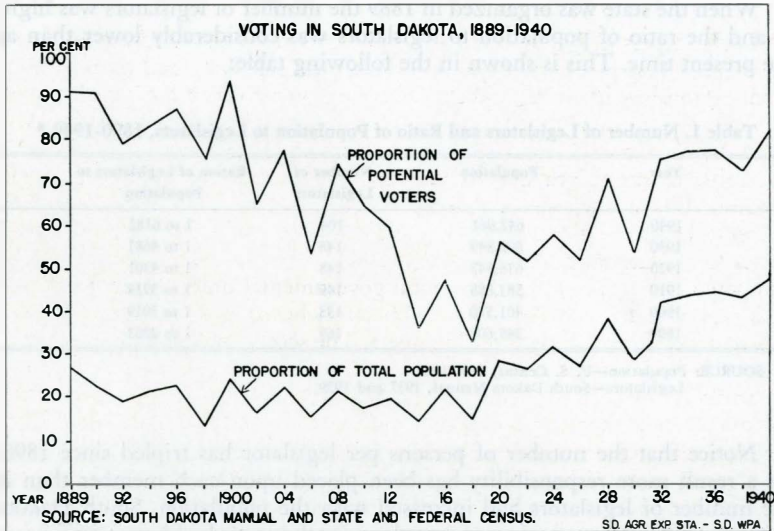


Fig. 1. Proportion of potential voters in South Dakota who voted and proportion of the total population in South Dakota who voted, 1889-1940.

Apparently the people of the state lost much of their interest in the working of their government until the agricultural depression following the World War. This loss of interest occurred despite an increase in education. However, with the coming of low prices for agricultural products and the decline in land values, interest in government revived. After 1930 the severe drought and equally severe economic depression, with its consequent changes in government policies and the increasing seriousness of world affairs, have greatly intensified interest in government. In addition the widespread use of the radio to broadcast news of world events and also political campaign speeches has made people more alert to the issues involved in national and state elections. This would seem to be an encouraging trend, if we expect to secure more efficiency in government.

Another indication that the citizens of the state are taking an increased interest in their government is the development of various citizens' organizations such as taxpayer's leagues. These organizations work for improvements, particularly in local government, and no doubt do much to foster greater interest.

2. Increasing Centralization of Government. Government is becoming increasingly centralized, and local government units are losing more and more of their responsibilities and functions. Numerous instances of this trend can be found in South Dakota.

age distribution are not available for 1940 there is no doubt, in view of the declining birth rate of the last ten years, that the proportion of those over 21 years of age has increased.

When the state was organized in 1889 the number of legislators was higher and the ratio of population to legislators was considerably lower than at the present time. This is shown in the following table:

Table 1. Number of Legislators and Ratio of Population to Legislators, 1890-1940.*

Year	Population	Number of Legislators	Ratio of Legislators to Population
1940	642,961	104	1 to 6182
1930	692,849	148	1 to 4681
1920	636,547	148	1 to 4301
1910	583,888	149	1 to 3919
1900	401,570	133	1 to 3019
1890	348,600	169	1 to 2063

* SOURCE: Population—U. S. Census, 1890-1940.
Legislators—South Dakota Manual, 1937 and 1939.

Notice that the number of persons per legislator has tripled since 1890. As a result more responsibility has been placed upon each member than if the number of legislators had increased with the population. South Dakota further reduced the number of members in the state legislature two years ago.

Table 2 shows how the elective and appointive state officials, departments, commissions, boards, and bureaus, which are supported by state appropriations have increased since the state was established in 1889. As these boards, commissions, and bureaus have been established, more and more people are employed by the government and the complexity of government has increased. At the same time, of course, the functions of government have been expanded, and people have come to look to the state government rather than the township and county for desired services.

There seems to be a rather definite trend towards placing more responsibility upon the state government for the collection of taxes, of which more and more are being turned back to the counties to meet their expenses.⁴

A few years ago the state tax department was of minor importance; today it is relatively important, employing 52 workers.

Within a year the state has allotted \$7,725,000 to local divisions of government. This allotment included aid to schools, county relief, mothers' pensions, and aid for highways.

As the county and state governments increased in importance, the township government declined. Evidence of this decline is not difficult to secure. Approximately 170 townships in the state abandoned their township organization between 1925 and 1940⁵; township tax levies have declined (see Fig.

4. Article in *Argus-Leader*, January 23, 1941, by Ralph O. Hillgren, *Argus-Leader* State News Editor.

5. Data for 1940 secured from the files of the Division of Taxation, State of South Dakota and prepared by the Division of Land Economics, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

5); and the number of township officers other than clerk, treasurer and town board, who actually qualify for office,⁶ has decreased. South Dakota state law provides that each township shall elect two justices of the peace and two constables. In a questionnaire sent to the township clerks of Brookings County, these officers were asked how many justices of the peace and constables their township had. If they had no justice of the peace or constable they were asked to indicate whether no one was elected or if the persons elected failed to qualify.

Table 3. Number of Justices of the Peace and Constables in Brookings County Townships in 1940, and Reason for Not Having These Officers.*

Number of officers	Percent in each class	Reason for having no justice of the peace or constable	
		None elected	Failed to qualify
		Percent	Percent
Justice of the Peace			
None	56.25	40.00	60.00
One	37.50		
Two	6.25		
Constable			
None	75.00	33.30	66.70
One	25.00		
Two			

* Based on a 70 percent return of the questionnaires.

Reasons for the Decline of Township Functions. 1. The number of incorporated towns has increased rapidly in the last 50 years as shown in the table below.

Table 4. Number of Incorporated Towns in South Dakota, 1890-1940.*

Year	Number of incorporated towns
1940	302
1930	299
1920	275
1910	232
1900	136
1890	91

* SOURCE: U. S. Census, 1890-1940.

When a town incorporates it ceases to be a part of the township for governmental purposes. The number of towns with more than 1,000 population is increasing and they are becoming the important community centers. These towns offer more services to people in and outside of the town than do the smaller towns and thereby diminish the functions of the township.

2. Most of the townships were originally laid out in arbitrary six mile squares without regard for physical barriers or community or neighborhood

6. To qualify for office township officials must take the oath of office administered by the township clerk within a specified time after the election. If they fail to qualify they do not have any of the privileges of office, despite their election.

Table 2. Establishment of South Dakota State Departments, Officers, Boards, Institutions, Commissions, etc., Which Have Received State Appropriations for Their Support*, 1889-1939**

Year	Officers	Departments	Boards	Institutions	Commissions	All Others
1885				University State College State School of Mines Eastern Normal Spearfish Normal Insane Hospital State Penitentiary School for Deaf		
1887				Training School		
1889	Governor Lt. Governor Sec. of State State Auditor State Treas. Supt. of Public Instruction Judges of Supreme Court		Agriculture Railroad Commission- ers	Home for Soldiers		Sup. Court
1890	Com. of School and Public Lands Attorney Gen.	Public Examiner (Discontinued, 1919) Public Instruction Legal State Insp. of Mines (Discontinued, 1926)				Militia Circuit Court
1891			Charities & Correc- tions Regents			
1893			Health	School for Blind		
1899				School for Feeble-Minded		
1901		History Food & Drug		Southern Normal Northern Normal		
1906		State Engineering				
1908					Capitol (Discontinued, 1926)	

Table 2. (continued)

Year	Officers	Departments	Boards	Institutions	Commissions	All Others
1909			Livestock Sanitary (Consolidated into Dept. of Agr.)	Tuberculosis Sanitari- um		
1911						Bureau of Immigration (Cons. into Dept. of Agr. 1924)
1913			Soldier's Home		Printing (Consolidated into Dept. of Fi- nance, 1924) Free Library Tax (Cons. into Dept. of Finance, 1924)	Executive Accountant (Cons. into Dept. of Finance, 1924)
1917	State Sheriff (Dis- continued, 1932)	Grain Insp. & Mar- kets (Discontinued, 1922) Rural Credit (Discon- tinued, 1919)		Watertown State Hosp. (Discont. 1921)	State Highway (Dis- continued, 1921)	Industrial Commis- sioner
1919			Budget (Cons. into Dept. of Finance)		Coal Mining (Disc., 1921) Cement (Disc., 1936)	
1920		Banking & Finance				
1921	Parole Officer	Agriculture	Nurse's (discontinued, 1925)			Efficiency Survey
1923					Securities (Discont., 1933)	
1924		Finance			Child Welfare	State Chemical Lab- oratory
1937			State Livestock Sanitary Board		Social Security	Geological Survey State Highway Motor Patrol State Health Labora- tory
1939		Highway Motor Fuel Tax Refund Dept.				Commissioner of In- surance

** Source: South Dakota Manual for 1939.

* There are doubtless other important boards or commissions which have been omitted from this table, that receive their support from sources other than state appropriations.

groupings. It frequently happens that personal contacts with the majority of the people of a township are largely for voting purposes, and little for educational, religious or social purposes. Through a series of interviews with both farmers and merchants throughout the county and through the use of records, the boundaries of service areas or communities were mapped for Brookings county, South Dakota. Fig. 2 shows these areas⁷ in relation to the township

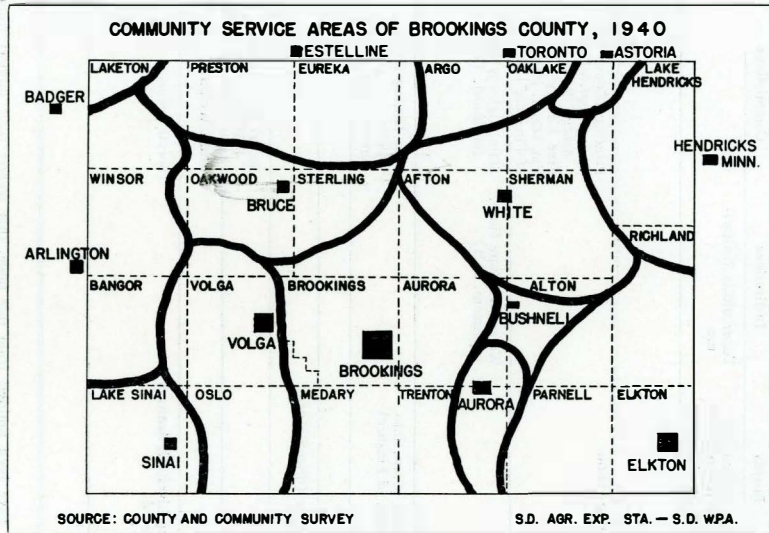


Fig. 2. The community service and trade areas in Brookings county, 1940.

boundaries. In no case do the community boundaries coincide with the township or county lines. Not only do community boundaries disregard township lines but also county and state lines,⁸ especially where towns are located near the border of the county. However, people still maintain considerable contact with the county seat, because of the business which must be transacted there.

Much attention is now being paid to the organization of services upon a community basis. In some places the working units of institutions are organized somewhat on a community basis, even though the main administrative unit may be the county. Libraries and health units, for example, are sometimes organized this way.

The suggestion has been made that the whole local governmental unit might be based advantageously upon the community. The town would be the community center and most of the social institutions would be located in

7. The following items were considered in arriving at trade area boundaries: grocery, machinery and fuel purchases; and egg, grain, cream and livestock sales. In addition to these, church and high school attendance areas were included in locating community boundaries.

8. This is shown by the communities on the eastern edge of Brookings county, which borders on Minnesota.

this town, but the rural area around the town would help support and would use the services offered. The set-up would be flexible enough to suit different local situations.⁹

3. Improved roads and means of communication have made many of the counties smaller than necessary since they were laid out with the idea that all persons residing in the county should be able to drive a team of horses to and from the county seat in one day. It now has become possible for more and more business to be transacted in the county seat, thus decreasing further the importance of many of the township officers, such as justices of the peace.

4. The multiplicity of functions recently assumed by governmental agencies makes it imperative that the unit of government be larger. Even the county, in many cases, has far too limited resources for the maintenance of many of the desired services. As a result many more state grants-in-aid are being made to the counties, but not to the townships.

5. There is a growing belief that the great number of local governmental units, including school districts, incorporated villages, towns, and cities, the county and townships are a strong factor in the mounting tax burden. For instance, in a single eastern South Dakota county, Brookings, there are 152 separate taxing units as follows:

Townships	23
Rural School Districts	112
Ind. School Districts	8
Incorporated Towns	8
County	1

The people in the incorporated towns find themselves in three taxing units, as do those who live in the open country.¹⁰ The tax burden of the incorporated towns is especially heavy, however, since many of them have a very small population and the tax base is so limited that a very high levy must be made in order to secure enough money to carry on the functions of the town. This is especially true where small towns have bonded themselves for the purpose of making improvements.

6. Another factor in the decreasing importance of the township is the decline in land value. This is especially true in the ranching area west of the Missouri River where land cannot be owned advantageously if township tax levies must be paid. As a consequence many of the township organizations in this area have been abandoned.

It is a comparatively simple matter to abandon the township organization. In civil townships which do not have any outstanding bonded indebtedness

9. For a complete discussion of rural municipalities see Manny, Theodore B., *Rural Municipalities*, the Century Co., New York City, 1930.

10. In 1939 the state legislature repealed the state tax levy of two mills. Previous to this time all people owning property paid a state tax, when levied. This tax, levied up through the year 1932, was superseded by the gross income tax from 1933 to 1936 and was again levied in 1937-1939.

or do not own any real property, a majority of the legal voters, as determined by the votes cast at the last annual township election, may petition the clerk and the clerk may then call a special election at which the question of abolishing the civil township organization shall be submitted to the voters.

If a majority of the voters favor abolishing the township, the township clerk submits to the county auditor a statement of such action and a report of the balloting. Within 30 days the township officers deliver all township books, money, papers and personal property to the county auditor. All records, except those of the justice of the peace, become a part of the county records. The money is turned over to the county treasurer. The county commissioners dispose of the real property which, with any other moneys handed over, is used to pay off any outstanding indebtedness. If the money is insufficient the county levies a tax on the property of the people of the township to cover the remaining debt.

If the township has more money than is required to pay its debts the funds are used by the county for road work within the former township territory.¹¹

7. The development in recent years of many types of federal grants-in-aid has helped to further weaken the townships and even the counties. Previous to the depression one of the largest items for which these grants were made was the road item. Since this was formerly the main expenditure of the township governments, and since now the township is limited to the building of side roads leading to highways, there seems to be less and less reason for

11. South Dakota Civil Code, revised, 1939.

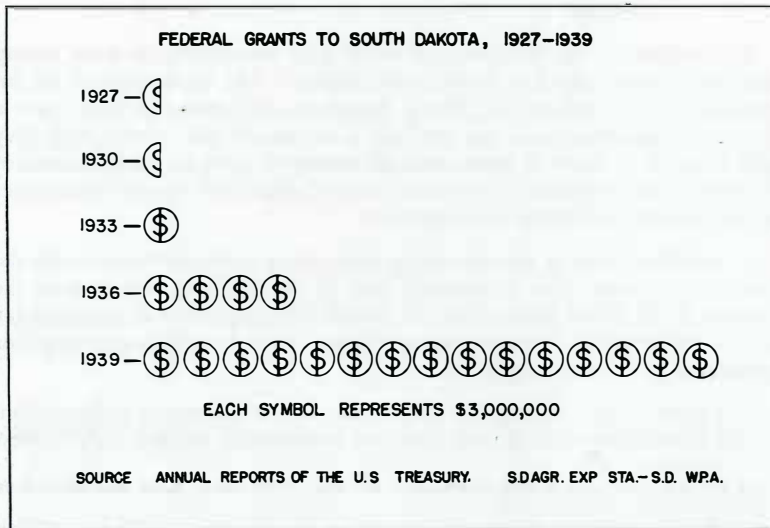


Fig. 3. Grants-in-aid to South Dakota by the Federal government, 1927-1939.

their existence.¹² These federal grants to the state have increased the authority of the state over the counties and townships, just as they have increased the authority of the federal government over the state. This has been one of the major factors in the centralization of government during the past decade.

Note the large increase in these grants in 1939 (Fig. 3). This is due largely to the great increase in money granted to the state for various large-scale programs such as those carried on under the Social Security Act, the Work Projects Administration, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the Farm Security Administration.

3. Increasing Costs of Government. The cost is one of the most important phases of government and is the one which is most forcibly brought to people's attention. Government costs, state and county, increased rapidly up to 1920; fluctuated between 1920 and 1930 with the peak coming in 1930; slumped greatly during the worst of the drought and depression; and then began to climb again. By 1939 all general taxes levied in the state were about two-thirds as high as they had been in 1930.

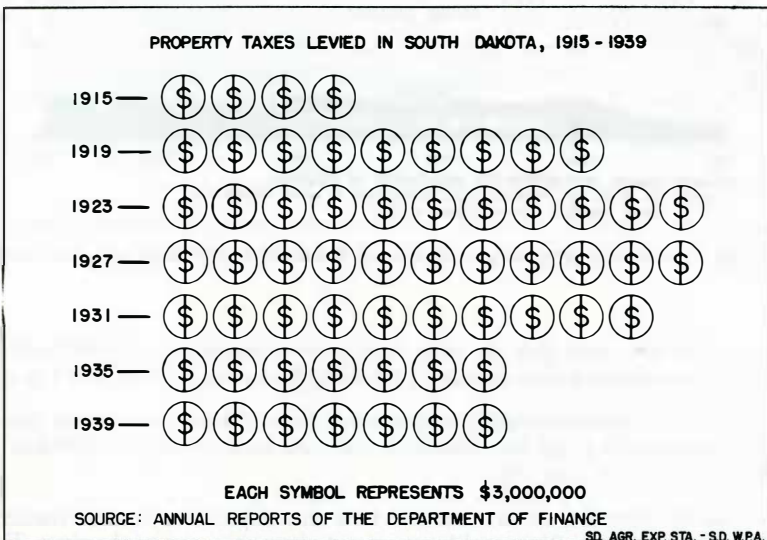


Fig. 4. The total amount of property taxes levied by all taxing units in South Dakota, 1915-1939.

The taxes levied by the several types of taxing units in South Dakota have followed practically the same trend between 1915 and 1939. (See Fig 5.) There was a sharp increase between 1915 and 1920, an almost constant level

12. Westbrook, R. B., "An Analysis of General Property Tax Trends in South Dakota" South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 292, April, 1936.

between 1920 and 1930, an abrupt decline during the early 1930's and then a gradual increase. The cities and incorporated towns did not show such a great decline after 1930, and their taxes have increased to almost their 1930 level. Township taxes declined abruptly between 1930 and 1933 and have increased only slightly since then.

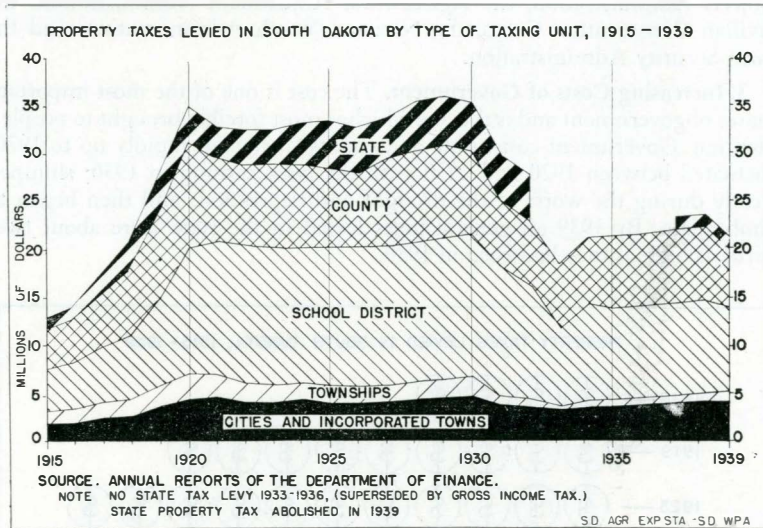


Fig. 5. General property taxes levied in South Dakota by type of taxing unit, 1915-1939.

At the same time that the taxes have been increased the expenditures of the state government have increased, reaching their peak in 1938. (See Fig. 6.)

County expenditures have pretty much followed the trend in county taxes. The expenditures of all the counties in the state were over \$3,000,000 less in 1939 than in 1929. (See Fig. 7.)

County expenditures have come to be a serious problem in some counties west of the Missouri River and in some central counties east of the river. The drought struck these counties particularly hard, which made it difficult to pay taxes. Even now the mill levy is high, in many cases reaching the legal limit. The bonded indebtedness is heavy, and the large amount of land which the county has been forced to take over on tax deed has decreased the tax base. In addition to the county-owned land there is in some of these counties a large amount of Indian land, which is not subject to taxation. There is also in some counties considerable land which has been purchased by the federal government and is no longer taxed. Not only is the tax base small, but it is

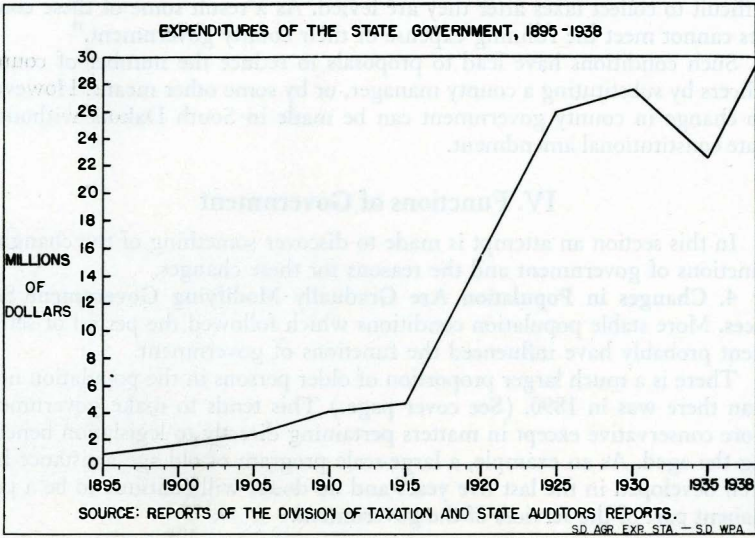


Fig. 6. Total expenditures of the South Dakota state government, 1895-1938.

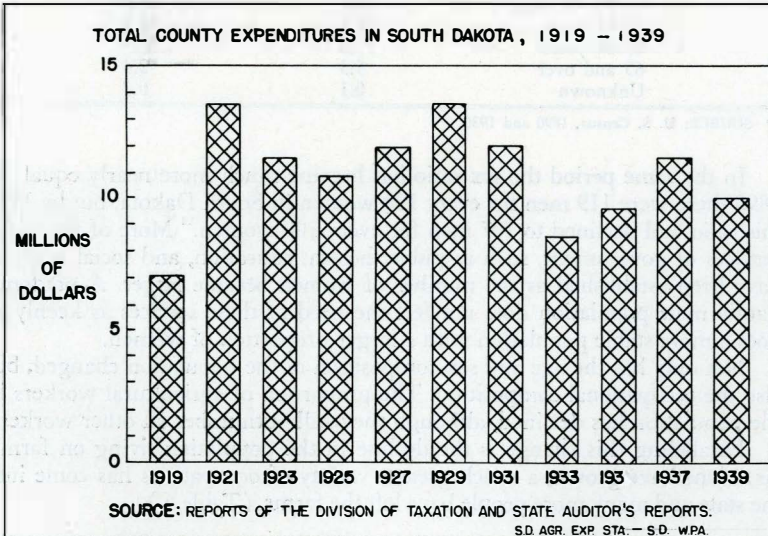


Fig. 7. Total expenditures of all counties in South Dakota, 1919-1939.

difficult to collect taxes after they are levied. As a result some of these counties cannot meet the running expense of their county government.¹³

Such conditions have lead to proposals to reduce the number of county officers by substituting a county manager, or by some other means. However, no change in county government can be made in South Dakota without a state constitutional amendment.

IV. Functions of Government

In this section an attempt is made to discover something of the changing functions of government and the reasons for these changes.

4. Changes in Population Are Gradually Modifying Government Services. More stable population conditions which followed the period of settlement probably have influenced the functions of government.

There is a much larger proportion of older persons in the population now than there was in 1890. (See cover page.) This tends to make government more conservative except in matters pertaining directly to legislation benefiting the aged. As an example, a large-scale program of old age assistance has been developed in the last five years and no doubt will continue to be a permanent part of the services of the government.

Table 5. Percentage of the Population of South Dakota in Each Age Group, 1890 and 1930.*

Age Groups	1930 Percent	1890 Percent
Total	100.0	100.0
Under 20 years	42.5	47.8
20-44 years	36.2	38.4
45-64 years	15.9	11.2
65 and over	5.3	2.4
Unknown	0.1	0.2

* SOURCE: U. S. Census, 1890 and 1930.

In the same period the sex ratio has become much more nearly equal. In 1890 there were 119 men for every 100 women in South Dakota, but by 1940 this ratio had declined to 107 men for every 100 women.¹⁴ More of the social services of government, such as public health, education, and social welfare, have been established as the number of women became larger. A predominantly male population does not feel the need of these services as keenly as does a more stable population with a larger proportion of women.

Not only has the age and sex composition of the population changed, but also the occupational composition. The proportion of agricultural workers in the population has declined, although they still outnumber all other workers.

Paralleling this change is the decline in the population living on farms. As towns have grown, a much greater variety of occupations has come into the state and many more people have left the farms. (Table 6.)

13. For a more complete discussion of this problem see Westbrook, R. B., "Tax Delinquency and County Ownership of Land in South Dakota," South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 322, May, 1938.

14. The 1940 ratio is a preliminary, estimated figure released by the Bureau of the Census.

Table 6. Occupations of the Population of South Dakota, 1890-1930.*

Occupations	1930		1920		1910		1900		1890	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All occupations	247,678	100.0	216,571	100.0	219,077	100.0	137,156	100.0	114,093	100.0
Agriculture	130,786	52.8	117,277	54.2	124,951	57.0	82,714	60.3	68,139	59.8
Manufacturing & Mechanical	22,229	9.0	26,282	12.1	25,250	11.5	11,885	8.7	10,498	9.2
Trade and Transportation	46,838	18.9	34,813	16.1	31,507	14.4	15,274	11.1	12,850	11.2
Professional Service	20,257	8.2	13,782	6.4	10,835	5.0	7,877	5.7	5,995	5.3
Domestic & Personal Service	15,700	6.3	13,253	6.1	16,029	7.3	16,821	12.3	13,911	12.2
Miscellaneous and not specified (including Public Service for years 1910-20-30.)	11,868	4.8	11,164	5.1	10,532	4.8	2,585	1.9	2,700	2.3

* SOURCE: U. S. Census, 1890-1930.

government between the years 1890 and 1940.¹⁶ These changes in appropriations are taken as indicative of the trend in expenditures in the various fields, although money is raised for some of these functions from sources other than state government appropriations. Schools and roads, however, account for the great bulk of local expenditures.

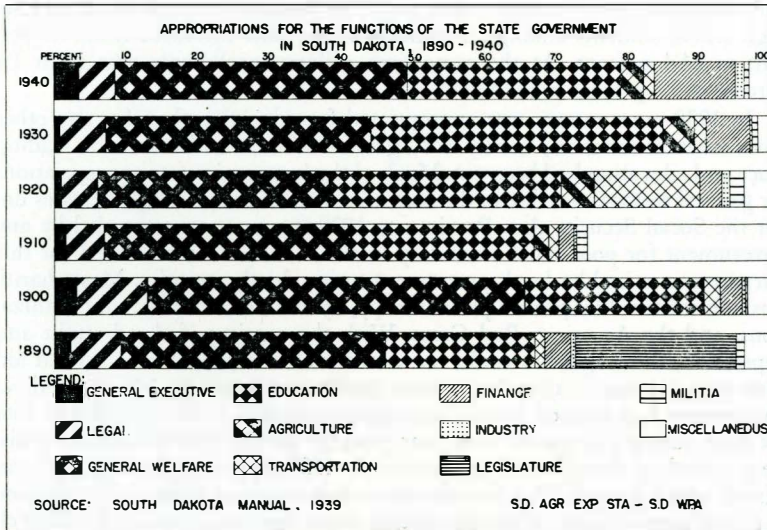


Fig. 9. Amount of the appropriations for the various functions of the state government, 1890-1940.

There was an increasing amount of money appropriated for almost all purposes up to 1930, but since that time there has been a decided decline in many fields. On the other hand some governmental services have been greatly expanded. This is especially true of general welfare, which includes expenditures for the various institutions for the care and education of special groups, as well as for the Child Welfare Commission, Social Security Commission, State Health Laboratory, the State Chemical Laboratory, the penitentiary and the state training school. Although many of these services, the Child Welfare Commission and the Social Security Commission excepted, have been in existence practically since the state was established, they have been greatly expanded in recent years and many more now are being cared for in institutions.

Education has also been greatly expanded. Although the peak in appropriations was reached in 1930, the appropriation for 1940 was higher than for any federal census year except 1930. Such appropriations were largely for college education in the state. If expenditures of the counties for the common

16. For a list of the items included under each heading see appendix.

school and the expenditures of the school districts were added to this figure, education would easily occupy first place in state expenditures. No doubt, the expansion of education has been greater than that of almost any other function of government. Although common schools had been made available for most people by the time South Dakota was established as a state, there has been an ever increasing demand for more education, especially in the secondary education field. Between 1890 and 1938 the proportion of South Dakota high school students among all students of the state increased from 1.3 percent to 24.4 percent. At the same time college enrollments rose from 1.0 percent to 5.3 percent of the total.¹⁷

In 1930 more money was appropriated for education than for any other governmental function, but by 1940 general welfare had taken the leading place and education had been cut. Much of the increase in state appropriations for general welfare was due to the increased assistance for indigent classes under the Social Security Act. Previous to 1930 the amounts expended by any government for poor relief were very small. What money was used for this purpose was raised by local government units, chiefly counties. Most charity was administered by private philanthropy, by church and fraternal organizations, and the American Red Cross. With the coming of the drought and depression, these agencies could not care for all the people who needed aid even though county expenditures were greatly increased. By 1932 the federal government had stepped into the emergency and sent millions of dollars into the state during the next three or four years for the purpose of alleviating distress caused by drought and depression. In 1935 the Social Security Act was passed, which provided funds to the states on a matching basis for the purpose of aiding special classes in the population. State appropriations for public welfare were increased and county aid for the poor was limited largely to emergency cases and for mothers' pensions.

In several other fields there has been a gradual expansion of appropriations. Certain fields such as agriculture and transportation have been receiving increasing aid from the government. A State Department of Agriculture was established in 1921 and various boards were maintained to assist the agricultural industry of the state and to regulate the products sold. The increased appropriations for transportation are due largely to increased state aid to the counties for highway construction. These functions formerly were left almost entirely to the individual or to local governmental units, but increasing demands and more centralization of government made it more expedient for the state government to perform them.

In all important fields of state expenditures the appropriations increased until 1930, but were cut, some of them drastically, between 1930 and 1940.

It would seem that most of the functions which were transferred to government from other social institutions were originally transferred because of a lack of facilities and money to meet the increasing demands for certain services. Government, being the only institution which could easily raise the necessary money and have the authority required to enforce regulations, was

17. Kumlien, W. F.—“Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota, VI Education in Transition,” *South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin* 338, June, 1940, page 9.

naturally the one to which people turned. Gradually there has developed a feeling that many functions which were originally considered the legitimate functions of other institutions really should be a responsibility of government. This accounts for a more rapid transfer of functions in recent years.

The county expenditures in various fields have followed nearly the same trends as have similar expenditures by the state government. (Fig. 10.)¹⁸

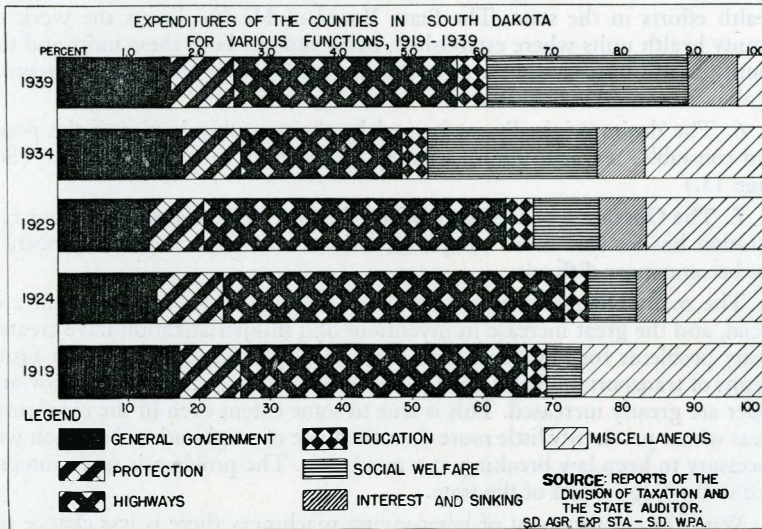


Fig. 10. Amounts expended by the counties for various functions of their government, 1919-1939.

6. Shift of Functions From One Unit of Government to Another. There has been a decided trend in South Dakota toward the shifting of various functions from one unit of government to another. Most of the functions of the township have been taken over by the county; certain functions exclusively the duty of the county have been turned over to the state; and, to some extent the federal government is helping out with some of the functions of the state. Most of these shifts have been discussed previously in this bulletin, but in the present section they are brought together so as to make a summary picture of the trend. Reference is made after each point to the page on which a more complete discussion may be found.

1. Road building has been almost entirely shifted from the township to the county and state. (See page 14.)
2. There is a growing tendency for the state government to collect taxes and then turn money back to the counties. (See page 8.)

18. For a list of the items included under each heading see appendix. These divisions and the data for the years 1919-1933 were secured from an unpublished thesis, "An Analysis of the Expenditures of South Dakota Counties from 1919 to 1933" by George H. Phillips.

3. Public Welfare Aid to various needy classes is being taken over by the state and federal governments rather than being left to the county governments. (See page 22.)

4. More and more state aid is being made available to the common schools of the state. The high schools receive federal aid for certain vocational courses. (See page 8.)

5. The State is taking more responsibility for the coordination of public health efforts in the state. The State Board of Health directs the work of county health units where established, helps support both these units and the county health nurses, and requires that the local health officers make reports of all communicable diseases.

6. The duties originally performed by the township justice of the peace and constables are now almost entirely turned over to county officials. (See page 13.)

7. The Operation of Democracy Has Become More Complex. As our civilization has become more complicated the smooth operation of democracy has become more difficult.

The many changes which have taken place in ideas, both political and social, and the great increase in inventions and industrialization have created many problems for our democratic form of government. With much faster means of transportation and good roads the problems of maintaining law and order are greatly increased. This is true to some extent even in the most rural areas where previously little more than the force of neighborhood opinion was necessary to keep law breaking at a minimum. The problem is more intensified in the large towns of the state.

With the development of labor-saving machinery there is less chance for the surplus youth of the state to secure employment, which not only increases the problem of government aid to the needy, but also tends to form a discontented group within the population.

Even our local government is showing the effect of certain urbanizing influences. This is especially noticeable in the increasing complexity of political party organization. The major political parties have greatly expanded their organization so that political patronage, vote gathering, and selection of candidates for office are largely under the control of a local county chairman. This organization has become very effective and, if not working for the best interests of the people, can be very disastrous.

V. Changes in Qualifications of Government Leaders

8. Public Office Does Not Always Attract the Best-Qualified Officials. The qualifications for either state, county, or township officials as set by law are general, requiring little more than that the person has resided in the state for a short time and is a qualified voter. The governor and lieutenant governor must be at least 30 years of age. The attorney general of the state, all judges, state, circuit and county, and the states attorney of the county are required to be learned in the law.

According to the constitution of South Dakota, voters must meet certain requirements:

"Article VII"

Elections and Right of Suffrage

Section 1. Every person resident of this state, who shall be of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, not otherwise disqualified, belonging to either of the following classes, who shall have resided in the United States five years, in this state one year, in the county ninety days, and in the election precinct where such person offers his vote thirty days next preceding any election, shall be a qualified elector at such election:

First. Citizens of the United States.

Second. Persons of foreign birth who have become naturalized citizens conformably to the laws of the United States, upon the subject of naturalization.

Section 2. No person under guardianship, non compos mentis or insane, shall be qualified to vote at any election, nor shall any person convicted of treason or felony be qualified to vote at any election unless restored to civil rights.

These very general qualifications for office allow some poor officials to be elected. Other reasons are probably equally important as causes of such incompetence.

Salaries are not high and the tenure of office is limited (in most cases they serve not more than two terms of two years) so that often the more successful people are not attracted by public office.

Another reason for inefficiency and waste in county government is the lack of a centralized authority to which the county officials are responsible. At present they are responsible only to the electorate, although the county commissioners do exercise some control over the other officials.

9. Improvement in the Qualifications of Public Officials. Although it is hard to say definitely that public officials today are any better than they were in the early days of statehood, there are some reasons to believe that persons holding public office as well as electors are becoming better qualified than previously.

First, illiteracy has now almost disappeared, illiterate persons being only 1.2 percent of the population in 1930.¹⁹ The proportion of illiteracy in the state has never been high, however.

Second, the extent of education has increased considerably. (See Fig. 9, page 21.)

Third, a system of merit examination has been established for employees of two divisions of the state government, the Unemployment Compensation Commission and the Social Security Commission. These two commissions employ only a small proportion of the public employees in South Dakota, but it is an encouraging trend toward securing better qualified personnel.

VI. Summary, Implications, and Conclusions

Below are listed the more significant trends in government. Following the trends are the factors believed to be responsible for the trends and the probable results.

19. U. S. Census of Population, 1930.

1. More active participation in government in times of economic stress and social crisis.

- a. Factors responsible for an increasing participation in government.
 - (1.) Interest in government was aroused by changes in government policy during the depression and drought period. This trend has not only continued, but has shown a further increase since the advent of war in Europe.
 - (2.) The granting of woman's suffrage increased the proportion of the population eligible to vote.
 - (3.) Increased use of the radio has also fostered interest in government.
- b. Probable results of this tendency.
 - (1.) Interest in government seems to be much more prominent during periods of stress. Whether or not this active participation continues depends largely on future events in the nation and the world.
 - (2.) It is probable that in the future the interest of the voters will increase during times of stress and will decline when stress is lessened, particularly in periods of prosperity.

2. Increasing centralization of government.

- a. Factors responsible for the increasing centralization of government.
 - (1.) Greater facilities for transportation and communication have decreased the necessity of the small unit of government.
 - (2.) The township is too small a unit of support for the increased services demanded of government. Even the county finds itself unable to finance certain functions.
 - (3.) The county has taken over most of the functions formerly performed by the townships. At the same time the county has turned over certain of its functions to the state. There has been a recent trend toward turning over tax collections to the state, after which a portion of the money is allocated back to the counties.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (4.) The federal government is securing more control over the state government by setting up definite requirements which are prerequisite to securing money grants.
- a. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) The township may eventually become a very minor part of our governmental system.
 - (2.) A tendency towards more efficiency in government should result.
 - (3.) The reduction in the number of government units may make local government less expensive.
 - (4.) Uniformity of action will be affected among the various units of government.
 - (5.) All indications point to a continuation of this trend in the future.

3. Increasing costs of government.

- a. Factors responsible for increasing the costs of government.
 - (1.) The largest factor is the growing demand for governmental services.
 - (2.) The complexity of modern civilization has increased expenditures, for certain purposes such as law enforcement and protection.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) In some cases the costs of government have been increased so much that it will be impossible to pay them by taxes levied in the particular unit of government.
 - (2.) If the cost of government continues to increase, further sources of revenue must be found. Since in some cases this is practically impossible it is almost inevitable that certain services will have to be curtailed.
 - (3.) In order to try to reduce the cost, more attention will be paid to the problem of efficiency in government.

4. Changing population composition gradually modifying government functions.

- a. Factors responsible for changes in the composition of the population.
 - (1.) The birth rate is falling rapidly.
 - (2.) Foreign immigration has practically ceased, and interstate migration is becoming less.
 - (3.) The proportion of persons who were born in South Dakota is increasing rapidly.
 - (4.) South Dakota is outgrowing the pioneer stage of its existence.
 - (5.) The proportion of farm population is declining, while the proportion of urban population is growing.
- b. Probable results of these changes.
 - (1.) This trend will likely continue in the future since the composition of population is continually changing.
 - (2.) The decline in the proportion of young persons and the increase in

- the proportion of the aged is probably the most significant change in our population. Its results can be seen in many fields of government.
- (a) A huge problem of public assistance to the aged has developed.
 - (b) The large proportion of older persons will probably result in more conservatism in government.
 - (c) The falling birth rate is lowering elementary and high school enrollments and may eventually affect college enrollments as well.
 - (d) More attention will be paid to the welfare and education of the fewer number of children.

5. Transfer of functions of other social institutions to the government.

- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
 - (1.) The government can secure more money to carry on these functions, than can private individuals or organizations.
 - (2.) The government can regulate these activities more efficiently than if they are left to private discretion.
 - (3.) As the people have become more anxious to secure services, social institutions have found it necessary to turn to the government for assistance.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) It has resulted in a more costly government.
 - (2.) It has greatly increased the complexity of government, and has added to the number of people

- who are in the government employ.
- (3.) The transfer of most of these functions likely will be permanent at least during the life span of our present type of social organizations.
 - (4.) Most of these functions are now managed much more efficiently than previously.
 - (5.) The work of the government in the field of public health has resulted in a great decline in the death rate and many other improvements along similar lines.
 - (6.) The great advances in education could not have been secured if this field had been left to private individuals.

6. Shift of functions from one unit of government to another.

- a. Factors responsible for this shift.
 - (1.) The greatest factor has been the lack of money available in the smaller units of government to carry on the increasing number of functions demanded of them.

- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) This shift in functions is resulting in a rapid increase in centralization of government.

7. The operation of democracy has become more difficult and complex.

- a. Factors responsible for these difficulties and complexities.
 - (1.) The political and social ideas of the present period of civilization have changed.
 - (2.) Urbanization has taken place.
 - (3.) The number of inventions and industrialization has increased.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) Foreign immigration has ceased
 - (2.) The problems created by the rapidly changing civilization are increasingly complex and, in the future, are less likely to be solved by simple methods.

8. Public office does not always attract the best-qualified officials.

- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
 - (1.) Very general qualifications have been established by law for government officials.
 - (2.) Low salaries prevail.
 - (3.) Tenure of office is limited.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) It may be that if more definite standards of experience were required for public officials, there might be an increase in the number of well-qualified men in our government offices.
 - (2.) The limited tenure of office in the case of public officials probably does more harm than good.

9. Improvement in the qualifications of public officials.

- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
 - (1.) There is an increase in the extent of education.
 - (2.) Illiteracy is disappearing.
 - (3.) A merit system has been set up for a few positions within the state.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
 - (1.) If the present interest in government continues there will probably be an increased demand for better qualified men in public office.
 - (2.) If a merit system could be established pertaining to appointive state officials there would doubtless be a great improvement in qualification of officials, realized to its full extent only when politics are divorced from the management of the merit system.
 - (3.) If government personnel were better qualified it might eliminate many of the wasteful, inefficient practices now prevalent.

Conclusions

1. In practically every instance the basic trends of state and local government outlined in this bulletin have been found to be similar to those of nearby states, particularly those northern Great Plains states with comparable populations, types of local government, and physical environmental conditions.
2. One of the most beneficial results of governmental change has been the reduction in the number of small taxing units.
3. One of the most important trends is toward centralization of government. This trend has, no doubt, been accelerated by the low population density of South Dakota. The population is so sparse in many areas of the state that it is difficult for small units of government to secure sufficient tax money to carry on adequately without placing an undue burden upon local taxpayers.
4. The structural pattern of local government in South Dakota has been based upon forms found in a number of states directly east of it. There

has been a tendency, however, for many townships to remain unorganized in the western and central areas of the state. Because population is more sparse in those areas and communication and transportation facilities have been greatly improved, the need for small units of local government has been much reduced.

5. The functional changes in the state and local governments probably have taken place at a relatively faster rate than in some of the older states.
6. Another factor which has facilitated the smooth operation of South Dakota's units of government is the preponderance of population of North European origin who are descendants of peoples experienced in self-government.
7. There are still a number of problems, especially in local government, which we may reasonably expect to see gradually worked out in the near future. Some of these problems are:
 - a. The high cost of county government.
 - b. Making the local taxing units of government coincide more closely with the boundaries of community trade and service areas.
 - c. Abandoning township organizations, especially in areas of low population density.

VII. Appendix

Items included in Fig. 9, page 21.

<p style="text-align: center;">General Executive</p> <p>Salaries and expenses of Governor and Secretary of State</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Legal</p> <p>Legal Department Supreme Court Circuit Court Sheriff—state</p> <p style="text-align: center;">General Welfare</p> <p>State Board of Charities and Corrections State Board of Health School for Deaf Mutes State Training School Soldier's Home State Penitentiary State Hospital for the Insane School and Home for Feeble Minded School for the Blind State Tuberculosis Sanitarium Soldier's Home Board Child Welfare Commission Social Security Commission State Health Laboratory State Chemical Laboratory</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Agriculture</p> <p>Department of Agriculture Livestock Sanitary Board Food and Drug Commission State Board of Agriculture Bureau of Immigration</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Transportation</p> <p>Railroad Commissioner State Highway Commission Motor Patrol State Engineer</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Finance</p> <p>State Treasurer State Auditor Public Examiner Tax Commission Printing Commission Executive Accountant Department of Finance Tax Refund Commission</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Industrial</p> <p>Industrial Commission Grain Inspection, etc. Inspector of Mines Insurance Commissioner</p>
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Education	Miscellaneous
Department of Public Instruction	State House
Board of Regents	Commissioner of School and Public Lands
University	Investigation
College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts	Capitol Commission
School of Mines	Printing
Northern Normal and Industrial School	Custer State Park
State Normal School, Madison	Geological Survey
State Normal School, Spearfish	
State Normal School, Springfield	
Department of History	
Free Library Commission	

Items included in Figure 10, page 23.

<p style="text-align: center;">General Government</p> <p>Commissioner, salaries and mileage</p> <p>Auditor, salaries</p> <p>Treasurer, salaries</p> <p>Assessors, salaries</p> <p>Election expense</p> <p>Buildings</p> <p>Office expense</p> <p>Advertising and printing</p> <p>Delinquent tax sale expense</p> <p>Vital Statistics expense</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Protection</p> <p>Register of Deeds, salaries</p> <p>Coroner's expenses</p> <p>Clerk of Courts and all court expenses</p> <p>Sheriff, salaries, mileage, and board of prisoners</p> <p>State's attorney, salaries</p> <p>Bounties</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Highways and Bridges</p> <p>Highway Superintendent, salaries and mileage</p> <p>Roads and bridges including the "County Motor Vehicle" fund</p> <p>Surveyors, salaries and mileage</p> <p>New construction, maintenance, new machinery and equipment, and work-</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Education</p> <p>men's compensation on highways and bridges</p> <p>Superintendent of Schools, salaries and mileage</p> <p>School libraries</p> <p>County Normal Institute</p> <p>Agriculture Extension</p> <p>Textbooks</p> <p>County libraries</p> <p>County fair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Social Welfare</p> <p>Care of poor, poor farm and physician</p> <p>Mothers' Pensions</p> <p>Board of Insanity</p> <p>Support of patients in the Custer Sanatorium</p> <p>County Hospital</p> <p>Care of insane</p> <p>Board of Health</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Interest and Sinking</p> <p>Interest Fund</p> <p>Sinking Fund</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Miscellaneous</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Stock inspection and dipping</p> <p>Drainage ditches</p>
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South Dakota Among the States²⁰

1. Population

41st in density of population (1940).

4th in percentage of farm population (1935).

2. Revenues

26th in total per capita revenues.

36th in total taxes collected per capita.

46th in property taxes collected per capita.

23rd in income taxes collected per capita.

15th in sales taxes collected per capita.

7th in non-tax revenues per capita.

6th in per capita federal grants from the United States government.

3. Costs

32nd in per capita cost of operation, maintenance and interest.

34th in per capita cost for operation and maintenance.

1st in per capita cost for interest.

20. Ranked from the highest. Data are for 1937 unless otherwise specified. Financial data secured from Financial Statistics of States, 1937, published by the Bureau of the Census, U. S. Dept. of Commerce.