Branchhead Boys

by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

In his gubernatorial campaign of 1948, W. Kerr Scott strongly appealed to voters whose roots were in the soil. Scott called them "Branchhead Boys," referring to people who lived at the head of the branch of a creek—in other words, rural people isolated in the backwoods. They were the "farmers" and townpeople who know the bust of day, coffee that's sauced and blown, folks who made a good stagger at honest toil and plowed to the end of the row." Scott campaigned to "get the farmer out of the mud," he said, "so farmers could get to church and farm children to school.

These so-called Branchhead Boys became a political force, backing Scott in a surprising victory over Charles M. Johnson and supporting the new governor's populist and progressive legislation. Scott implemented a range of new programs under his "Go-Forward" plan, astonishing the state by proposing a $200 million bond issue (more than $1.5 billion in 2005) to pave rural roads in North Carolina. Additionally, his programs advanced rural electrification and improved state schools and health facilities.

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From:

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1 January 2006 | Williams, Wiley J.

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