

The Giddings News

July 8, 1932

ADDRESS BY R. A. RUST
AT LIONS CLUB PROGRAM
FRIDAY NIGHT, JULY 1

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I represent the Chamber of Commerce of Ledbetter, which, by the way, doesn't exist, and in that capacity I want to tell you about my home town, Ledbetter. Ledbetter is located in the northwest corner of Fayette County. It missed being in your county of Lee by less than a mile. And whether that's our hard luck or yours will depend on the viewpoint.

The population of Ledbetter, according to the 1930 census was 250. Of this number 175 are niggers, 25 are souphounds, and the rest are on the program this evening.

The most important industries of Ledbetter are meeting the two trains every day, going to the postoffice after the mail, sitting on the store galleries and whittling, drinking—drinking—ugh—a home brewed product called lemonade, playing skat, figuring out what caused

the depression, and, last but not least, chewing tobacco. Ledbetter feels justly proud of its tobacco and spitters. Some of our best spitters can hit the bulls-eye at eight feet nine times out of ten, and our champion can drown a spider at ten feet. For fear of seeming too boastful, I will tell you about our less important industries.

The bootlegging industry has never grown very large in Ledbetter because of the keen competition from our neighboring towns. Ledbetter, however, has an important gravel industry. An average of 100,000 yards of gravel have been hauled from the Ledbetter pits for the past fifty years. An interesting subsidiary use of the gravel is the making of gravel soup. Several of our most substantial and well-fed citizens were nourished on gravel soup. Good examples are C. W. Sanders, Willie Kruse, T. M. Vanderwerth and Frank McClellan.

Speaking of industries, one unique thing about Ledbetter is that it's not necessary to have one to live there. John Smith

wasn't talking about Ledbetter when he said, "He who does not work shall not eat." A large percentage of our population never works and they not only eat three times a day but also have clothes to wear and a place to sleep. So if you hate work, the Ledbetter Chamber of Commerce invites you very cordially to make your home there.

Ledbetter is unusual in that no one is ever born, gets married or dies there. Dr. Hertel gave this as his reason for leaving Ledbetter and moving to Giddings. It is for the same reason that the population of Ledbetter always remains the same, and not for the reasons sometimes given in bum jokes on that subject.

Ledbetter has a political Forum that meets on the store gallery of one of Ledbetter's most prominent merchants. It takes this bunch about five minutes to settle questions that the League of Nations has been working on for years. They can tell you at any time what caused this depression, who ought to be shot, if the war debts should be cancelled, who killed the Lindbergh baby, who'll be elected president in November, and what the heck is wrong with this country.

As for history, we're not so bad off. Wasn't one Alexander killed by the Indians in 1837 by a branch that bears his name and ain't he gotta monument? Didn't Jake Wolters get his political start at Ledbetter's free barbecues? Haven't we entertained former candidates for governor and governors—namely Hogg, Colquitt, and Campbell? And doesn't Gov. Sterling often pass through Ledbetter going pretty fast—a testimony to our excellent highways? Doesn't Ferguson always get two-thirds of the votes?

Before closing my speech, ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you a story with a moral. Away back in 1873 when Ledbetter was the important terminus of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad and Giddings was a wild and woolly western town, subscriptions were being taken up in Ledbetter to finance the buying of a cemetery plot. Two horse traders, stopping at Ledbetter, on their way through, were approached for a donation. "Horsefeathers," said the traders, "Nobody'll ever stay in this town long enough to die." That night they both died of ptomaine poisoning and were the first to be buried in the new cemetery. Moral: Don't make dirty cracks about Ledbetter.

I thank you.