

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS, 1922 to 1957

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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Norman, Oklahoma

1958

THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS, 1922 to 1957

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is indebted to the chairman of his committee, Dr. D. Ross Pugmire, for his wise counsel in developing the design of the study and for his encouragement and expert guidance in directing the writing of this dissertation. He is indebted to Dr. Thurman White who as a member of his committee and historian of the Oklahoma Congress provided valuable liaison with that organization.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mrs. George E. Calvert, a former president and historian of the Oklahoma Congress, who compiled the files of the state presidents and collected other materials which were invaluable sources of data for the study. The writer wishes to thank Mrs. W. Fred Scott, president; Mrs. C. E. Scott, executive secretary; Mrs. C. H. Stapp, associate secretary; and Mrs. John A. Wadlin, director of field service of the Oklahoma Congress for their assistance in the collection of data for the study.

The writer also thanks the other members of his doctoral committee, Dr. W. B. Ragan, Dr. Glenn R. Snider, Dr. Lloyd P. Jorgenson, and Dr. Gail Shannon, for their encouragement and assistance in the planning and preparation of the study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	
The Data	
The Method	
Related Studies	
II. THE PARENT-TEACHER MOVEMENT COMES TO OKLAHOMA	10
A National Organization Is Formed	
The Parent-Teacher Idea Grows in a New State	
Oklahoma Is Organized as a State Branch of the National Congress	
III. BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION (1922-1929)	23
The Background of Social and Political Unrest	
The Background of Educational Needs	
Organizational Problems and Needs	
The First Three Presidents	
Organizational Growth	
IV. THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1935)	75
Oklahoma in the Great Depression	
Depression and Education	
The Plight of Teachers	
The Fourth State President	
The Fifth State President	
Other Leaders	
Instruction in Parent-Teacher Work	
Maintaining the Organization in Depression	
Promoting New Units and Increasing the Membership	
V. SIGNS OF PROGRESS (1935-1940)	102
Progress in Dealing with Depression	

Chapter	Page
Educational Progress after Three Years of Chaos	
The Sixth State President	
Strengthening the Organizational Framework	
Establishing a State Headquarters	
Launching a State Wide Project	
Progress in Publications	
Achieving the Second Objective	
Growth Toward Maturity	
VI. MEETING THE CHALLENGE (1940-1946)	134
Oklahoma in the War Years	
Education in the War Years	
Parent-Teacher Leaders in the War Years	
Organizational Problems of the War Period	
Growth of Parent-Teacher Cooperation	
Publications and Publicity	
Improving the Local Organization	
The State Office	
Leadership Training	
Parent-Teacher Instruction in Colleges	
Growth in Strength and Numbers	
VII. RAPID GROWTH IN THE POST WAR YEARS (1946-1957)	167
Oklahoma in the Post War Years	
Education in the Post War Years	
Leaders of the Oklahoma Congress in the Post	
War Years	
The PTA and the Profession	
Oklahoma-National Congress Relations	
Parent-Teacher Publications	
Growing Importance of the State Headquarters	
Development of Field Service	
Improving the Organizational Patterns	
Patterns of Growth	
VIII. PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS	219
Changing Patterns in Local Meetings	
District Meetings and Conventions	
Early State Conventions	
Conventions of the Depression	
Changing Patterns of Annual Conventions	
Post War Conventions	
IX. PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH	267
Fund Raising Projects	
Welfare Projects for Underprivileged Children	
Health and Safety Projects	

Chapter	Page
Projects for Juvenile Protection	
Projects for Peace and International Understanding	
Protecting Children in War Time	
Improving the Learning Situation	
X. RAISING THE STANDARDS OF HOME LIFE	313
Literacy Education	
The Mothersingers	
Parent Education Classes	
Schools for Parents	
Conferences on Child Welfare and Parental Life	
The Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education	
The Oklahoma Family Life Institute	
XI. SECURING ADEQUATE LAWS FOR THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH	336
Early Efforts to Secure Legislation	
Parent-Teacher Legislative Programs in the Depression	
Legislative Programs in the War Period	
Post War Progress in Securing Adequate Laws	
XII. THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF COLORED PARENTS AND TEACHERS . .	378
Early Negro PTA Units	
Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers Organized	
Committee on Intercultural Relations	
Last Convention of the Oklahoma Colored Congress	
The First Year of Integration in Parent-Teacher Organization	
XIII. THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE	395
Prerequisites for Achievement	
Improving the Welfare of Children	
Raising the Standards of Home Life	
Securing Adequate Laws	
Bringing Into Closer Relationship the Home and the School	
The PTA and the Profession	
Miles to Go	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	406

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Membership in Oklahoma Congress by Regions	165
2. Financial Support from Membership Dues	165
3. Membership in Oklahoma Congress by Regions, 1946-47 to 1956-57	218
4. Total Membership and Membership Dues in Oklahoma Congress, 1946-47 to 1956-57	218

THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS, 1922-1957

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

In 1957 the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers observed its thirty-fifth anniversary with a membership of 172,014.¹ A voluntary organization which attracts a membership of this size commands the attention of students, and professional members, in the field of public school administration.

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers lists as its objects:

To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community.

To raise the standards of home life.

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

To bring into closer relation the home and the school that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.

To develop between educators and the general public such united effort as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.²

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIX (April, 1957), p. 7.

²"Objects," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIX (January, 1957), p. 3.

The pursuit of these objectives has involved building an organization, publishing a state bulletin, conducting meetings and conventions, sponsoring study groups, and planning and activating programs and projects at state and local levels.

Of necessity, the first years of the Oklahoma Congress were concerned largely with the building of an organization. Projects were few, and goals were stated often in terms of members to be gained rather than programs to be achieved. During these years, however, the organization placed considerable emphasis on parent education and also sponsored many "schools of instruction" in which members and potential leaders learned parent-teacher procedure, policy, and organizational techniques.¹

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers was only seven years of age when the great depression came with all its damaging effects on education. Steady growth had been made, but organizational stability had not yet been achieved. "Widening the Circle" was a PTA slogan during this period, but membership declined during 1929 and 1930. Although membership increased slightly in 1931, it wavered again in 1932 and 1933.

From 1935 to 1940 membership in the Oklahoma Congress increased substantially. More important, however, than the growth in membership was the development of a sound organizational structure. Under the leadership of Mrs. George E. Calvert of Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma Congress succeeded in: (1) establishing a permanent state headquarters with employed personnel, (2) establishing a state bulletin as a regular publication, (3) amending the by-laws to produce a more functional organizational

¹"Twentieth Anniversary," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIV (April, 1942), p. 4.

structure throughout the state, and (4) founding the Oklahoma Family Life Institute as a state-wide project in cooperation with the University of Oklahoma.¹

When the attack on Pearl Harbor precipitated the United States into World War II, the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers was in a position to cope with a period of crisis. Without neglecting the affairs of organization, the state congress made substantial contributions to the welfare of children in homes, schools, and communities beset with the problems of wartime. The post war period, with its educational crisis and educational growth, produced an amazing increase in the membership of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. As PTA membership grew, the organization achieved the financial ability to support an expanded state office and employ a full time director of field service to work in the organization and leadership training of local units. Projects, publications, and services of the state organization became increasingly available to local units.

This background of growth and achievement suggests an interesting and significant problem for historical study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the history of this organization which has had, and will undoubtedly continue to have, considerable influence on the home, school, and community experiences of children and youth in Oklahoma.

Need for the Study

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers has completed more than one-third of a century without having been the subject of comprehen-

¹Mrs. Ray L. Six, "A Heritage unto You," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Vol. XVII (March, 1945), p. 6.

sive historical study. These years include periods of major crises and of major developments in public education in Oklahoma. Many individuals living today have furnished leadership in the Oklahoma Congress. They constitute valuable primary sources of data. The board of managers of the Oklahoma Congress recognized the need for the study, and adopted a proposal for the initiation and completion of the project. Most importantly, a history of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers should provide worthwhile information for school administrators, teachers, and leaders within the organization itself who are seeking to improve and extend the contribution of the PTA to home, school, and community life.

Limitations of the Problem

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers is the state branch of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. Membership in a local unit includes membership in the state and national organizations. The name of a local unit is usually the name of the local school plus the words, "Parent-Teacher Association." For convenience of administration, the Oklahoma Congress is divided into four Regions; Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest. Each of these regions is under the administration of a regional vice-president. A county or city may have organized within its local area a group of local parent-teacher associations. This constitutes a PTA Council. There are standing committees at the state level with responsibilities for moving the parent-teacher program forward in a wide number of subject-matter and interest areas.

While the individual and the local unit form an integral part of the Oklahoma Congress, the focus of this study is primarily on the parent-teacher movement in Oklahoma at the state level. Local unit activities

are not ignored in the history. Indeed, most of the examples of projects completed must necessarily come from the individual units which make up the state organization. It was not possible, however, and no attempt was made, to write individual histories of the many local PTA units throughout the state.

During much of the period covered by this study there was, in addition to the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, a separate organization known as the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers. A brief chapter of the study is devoted to the interesting relationship between the two groups; but no attempt is made to write a history of the Negro organization.

The Data

Most of the information used in this study came from the files and official records of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers and from the publications of the organization. Additional information was gathered from state newspapers, publications of the National Congress, and from unpublished materials reviewed in this chapter. Primary sources included files for each of the state presidents. These files consist of separate collections containing the letters, committee reports, and mimeographed instructions and information pertaining to each president's administration. They are cited in footnotes throughout the study by item and by the use of the last name of each president from whose files the particular item was taken.

Other primary sources included official minutes of state conventions, of the state board of managers, and of the executive committee, annual audits and budgets, annual summaries of local unit information,

and reports of standing and special committees. Proceedings of National Congress conventions were valuable sources. Since their place of publication varies with the site of the convention, they are cited in footnotes throughout the study as follows: National Congress, Proceedings (followed by place of convention and year held).

Newspapers and periodicals afforded both primary and secondary data. Unpublished theses dealing with the problem indirectly were an additional source of secondary data. With a combination of primary and secondary data available, the data were both adequate and reliable for the purposes of this study.

The Method

Criticism of the data was relatively simple. Since many of the data were taken directly from the official records of the organization, there was no question of external criticism involved in their use. The trustworthiness of the information contained in the official files was checked against one or more additional sources when these were available. It also was possible to discuss the few instances of conflicting records with individual leaders in the Oklahoma Congress whose experience with the organization covered its entire history.

The historical method was used throughout the study. In Chapters Two through Seven the focus is on organizational history and a chronological sequence was maintained although a topical arrangement frequently was used within the chapters. In Chapters Eight through Twelve the focus is on the program, projects, and accomplishments of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. Here a topical arrangement of chapters was preferred with data treated chronologically within each of the several topics

and sub-topics presented.

Related Studies

In 1928, Stevens completed a study, "The Parent-Teacher Association," in which he attempted to discover what the parent-teacher associations were doing, and to suggest some of the "subjects proper for the consideration of such organizations."¹ The scope of the study was nationwide, but many of the specific illustrations were drawn from schools and PTAs in Kansas. His conclusions are of interest only as they suggest what may have been the practice in similar organizations in Oklahoma.

In 1929, Whitley studied "Parent-Teacher Associations." Her approach was primarily historical. She studied both the state and the national organizations and attempted to compare the Oklahoma Branch of the National Congress with other state branches.² She also made an analysis of selected programs in PTA units in Oklahoma and gathered letters from PTA members and from school superintendents in Oklahoma on their attitudes toward parent-teacher associations.

In 1932, Kennon completed a study of "The Objectives and Achievements of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers." The primary purpose of Kennon's investigation was "to determine as nearly as possible if the objectives of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers coincide with the permanent platform of the National Congress of Parents and

¹George R. Stevens, "The Parent-Teacher Association" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1928), p. 2.

²Ada Vaughn Whitley, "Parent-Teacher Associations" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1929).

Teachers"¹ Kennon mailed a questionnaire to each of the 284 local unit presidents in Oklahoma and received usable replies from ninety of them. She developed an interesting picture of the activities of these ninety units of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers for the single year in which her study was made.

In 1943, Duncan investigated "The Promotion of Constructive Parent-Teacher Relations." Her purpose was "to suggest some practical, feasible means for unified work and understanding for teachers and patrons."² Parent-Teacher work was only one of several agencies and techniques included in Duncan's study

In 1949, Davison completed a "History of Education in Oklahoma, 1907-1947." Chapter Eight of this history is titled, "The Parent-Teacher Organization."³ Davison could not, and did not, attempt to present in a single chapter a comprehensive history of a movement as extensive as that included in the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. But he did compile an interesting and worthwhile overview of the organizational growth of the Oklahoma Congress and a brief summary of events in the administrations of each of the state presidents of the Oklahoma Congress.

Historians of the Oklahoma Congress, and other state officers,

¹Neva Kennon, "The Objectives and Achievements of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers" (unpublished Master's thesis, Oklahoma A. and M. College, 1932), pp. 8-9.

²Edna Moran Duncan, "Promotion of Constructive Parent-Teacher Relations" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1943), p. 12.

³O. W. Davison, "History of Education in Oklahoma, 1907-1947" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1949), Chapter VIII, pp. 186-218.

have attempted from time to time to compile histories of a phase or a period of parent-teacher work in Oklahoma. None of these however, is as extensive as the material included in Davison's chapter and for this reason none is summarized individually at this point. These valuable accounts have been credited in appropriate footnotes as the information they contain was used in this study. They also are listed individually in the bibliography.

CHAPTER II

THE PARENT-TEACHER MOVEMENT COMES TO OKLAHOMA

That parents and teachers should cooperate in the education of children is an idea much older than formal organizations of parents and teachers. Richard Mulcaster, who served as First Head of the Merchant Taylors' School in London from 1561 to 1586, believed that parents and teachers should work together continuously in mutual trust, friendliness, and understanding. Although he regarded the dispensing of knowledge as the role of teachers "without participation of anie parent," he considered "a wise and learned parent . . . the verie best part of the verie best teacher."¹

A National Organization Is Formed

On February 17, 1897, a meeting was called to order in Washington, D. C. This meeting was the culmination of more than two years of effort on the part of a "wise and learned" parent, Mrs. Theodore Birney. Mrs. Birney's dream was to form an organization which would gather all the mothers of the nation together in a gigantic effort to promote the welfare of the child. That she succeeded in this organizational effort was due in no small part to the backing she received from Mrs. Phoebe Apperson

¹Richard Mulcaster, Mulcaster's Elementarie, ed. E. T. Campagnac (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 5.

Hearst of California, then a resident of Washington, D. C. To the group assembled, Mrs. Birney explained her dream in these words:

The mental attitude of the world today is one of receptivity. Never before were people so willing to accept new thought from all sources. It has been truly said, "to cure was the voice of the past; to prevent, the divine whisper of today." May the whisper grow into a mighty shout throughout the land until all mankind takes it up for the battle cry for the closing years of the century. Let mothers, fathers, nurses, educators, ministers, legislators, and mightiest of all in its swift, far reaching influence, the press, make the child the watchword and ward of the day and hour; let all else be secondary, and those of us who live to see the year 1925 will behold a new world and a new people.¹

This organizational meeting brought together representatives from various sections of the nation. The speakers included leaders and scholars in a number of fields, but all of them shared a common interest in child welfare. Dr. G. Stanley Hall, Dr. Josiah Strong, Anthony Comstock, Miss Mary Lowe Dickinson, Mrs. Ellen Henrotin, Mrs. Maud Ballington Booth and others spoke to one or more of the sessions. A reception for the delegates was given in the White House by Mrs. Grover Cleveland.²

The dream of Alice McCellan Birney had begun to take form. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that the small group assembled in Washington had planted an acorn from which a mighty oak would one day grow. In time the oak tree was adopted as the emblem of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The trunk represents the national organization, the main branches the state congresses, the small branches the districts and councils, the twigs the local units, and the leaves the

¹New York Tribune, February 18, 1897, p. 5.

²Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (December, 1927), p. 20.

individual members.¹

The Parent-Teacher Idea Grows in a New State

When Oklahoma Territory was opened to settlement, an organized system of public education had long existed among the Five Civilized Tribes who occupied the eastern half of the future state. The pioneer settlers made early efforts toward the building of schools. A Ladies Aid Society which was organized in Edmond in 1889 had as its first project the building of a school. "That aid society was inter-denominational, and worked smoothly and harmoniously . . . for the good of the community."²

Some Early Rural Organizations

Three announcements appearing in the Lexington Leader illustrate some of the organized efforts of parents and teachers to discuss rural school problems during Oklahoma's first two years as a state. One of these announcements states:

The Township Central High School Association met at the Rose Hill school house, Thursday night, April 15th., 1909. Quite a crowd attended and some very interesting talks were made in regard to the plans of the subject. The next meeting will be held April 22. It is the duty of every citizen to attend and take part in the

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVII (October, 1944), p. 8.

²"They Built The First School," Daily Oklahoman, December 2, 1923, p. A-15. (This feature article was based on the personal recollections of Mrs. L. G. Wahl who was a member of that first society. One of the most lively events in Edmond after the opening of the territory was the thanksgiving dinner which the Aid Society served for the benefit of the school fund. The game prepared for the feast included quail, opossum, rabbit, prairie chickens, two wild turkeys and one deer. Two hundred were present and the proceeds were sufficient to care for the major portion of one teacher's salary for the ensuing year. Many similar events were undoubtedly held in the newly settled territory for the benefit of a school fund.)

discussion.¹

This announcement was signed by L. R. Ramsey, president, and Joseph Higbee, secretary.

Six months later the Lexington Leader printed the complete programs planned for "a teachers' and patrons' meeting" to be held at Spring Hill school, and a "combined teachers' and patrons' meeting" to be held at the Valley Grove school house. Both programs were scheduled for the evening of November 17, 1909 and the topics discussed were similar. "The Rural School's Greatest Need," "Duties of the Parent," "How Can We Better Our Schools," "Cooperation of Teachers, School Boards, and Patrons,"² were topics appearing on both programs.

Organized Parent-Teacher Groups and the School Lands

Controversies over the disposition and handling of the state school lands resulted in the formation of several parent-teacher groups during the first two years of statehood. An organization of teachers and citizens was formed at Ardmore in 1908 with the county superintendent of Carter County as president, and "speeches were made by lawyers and teachers against the proposed measure to sell the state school lands."³ On the other side of this question was a group which called itself "The Citizens' League and the School Land Lessees of Oklahoma." In a Guthrie meeting, at which William H. Murray spoke, this group passed a resolution to be presented to the legislature favoring the sale of the state school

¹Lexington Leader, April 23, 1909, p. 1.

²Ibid., November 12, 1909, pp. 1 and 8.

³Ibid., October 9, 1908, p. 6.

lands.¹ Another group known as "The Oklahoma School Fund Protective League" urged in a resolution that the state "proceed to collect the present rentals" on the school lands. The League maintained that this would save the state schools some \$700,000.00.²

Parent-Teacher Groups in City Schools

In the city schools parent-teacher groups functioned long before the Oklahoma Congress was organized. Davison reports a meeting of parents and teachers of El Reno on April 23, 1902 for a symposium on "Training the Child." The following year teachers of Central School in El Reno met to discuss "The School from a Patron's Point of View." The first formal organization of a Patron's Club in El Reno was held November 24, 1914. Officers elected were Mrs. O. A. Cromer, president; Miss Etta Dale, vice-president; Mrs. R. F. Jones, secretary; and Mrs. S. E. Brady, treasurer.³

In 1908, a group of women in Eufaula organized the "Twentieth Century Club." The purpose of this organization was to advocate the election of women as members of the city school board.⁴

According to Mrs. A. R. Wallace, for many years a teacher in the Willard School in Ada, a PTA was organized in that school in 1910.⁵

¹Ibid., January 7, 1909, p. 5.

²Ibid., June 18, 1909, p. 3.

³Davison, "History . . .," p. 187.

⁴Lexington Leader, April 17, 1908, p. 7.

⁵"Willard, Ada, Is Pioneer PTA," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (November, 1952), p. 19.

Parent-teacher work was organized in McAlester as early as 1912.¹ In Tulsa, Mr. William Hackendorg is credited with having organized the first PTA in October, 1913.² Riverview was the first school in Tulsa to organize a PTA, but other units soon followed. Mrs. Carl Davenport joined a PTA at Irving School in Tulsa in 1915. Irving was one of the few scattered units in the state affiliated with the National Congress.

A Mothers' Club was organized at Durant on October 7, 1913 with nine charter members. A joint meeting of the club with the superintendent and principals of the several ward schools discussed "ways and means for a more hearty cooperation upon the part of the parents and the entire student body of the city."³ This first PTA unit in Durant was organized at the East Ward, or George Washington, School. It had gained a membership of fifty-four by 1917. In 1917, E. S. Monroe, superintendent of Muskogee schools, organized groups which were known as Patrons' Associations, or sometimes as Teacher-Patron Associations. In Pawhuska, a parent-teacher unit was organized in 1920. Okmulgee's Lee School PTA was officially organized in the spring of 1922.⁴ Mrs. Irene Mattox recalls that "The federated patrons clubs were organized and active when we moved to Oklahoma City in 1919."⁵ The Mattox family had five children distri-

¹A. D. Hefley, "Progress in McAlester Organization," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XII (January, 1931), p. 20.

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIX (March, 1938), p. 29.

³Davison, "History . . .," p. 188.

⁴Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁵Irene Young Mattox, "I Remember," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIV (April, 1952), p. 7.

buted among three of the Oklahoma City schools. Mrs. Mattox was active in the Linwood and Classen groups and served as president of the federation prior to the organization of a state branch.

In 1921, Classen Junior High School was completed and during its first year a patrons' club was organized with Mrs. J. P. Slaughter as president. A prominent member of this group was Mr. Anton Classen for whom the school had been named. One of the first projects carried out by the Classen Club was the purchase of fifteen pictures of the "Holy Grail" at a cost of \$1,000.00, a substantial part of which was contributed by Mr. Classen.¹ At the time of its organization, the Classen group did not affiliate with the National Congress. During the 1921-22 school year, however, the National Congress sent its Field Secretary, Mrs. Winifred Carberry, on an extended tour of the state. Her purpose undoubtedly was to strengthen the ties of the National Congress with the few affiliated units in the state and to promote affiliation by other organized groups.

Mrs. Slaughter invited Mrs. Carberry to speak at the last meeting of the Classen Patrons' Club for the 1921-22 school year. Following Mrs. Carberry's talk the Club voted to become a standard PTA unit and to affiliate itself with the National Congress. The Classen unit dropped the name "Patrons' Club" and became the Classen Parent-Teacher Association. The other Oklahoma City units, however, retained their designations as Patrons' Clubs and did not affiliate with the National Congress at the time of Mrs. Carberry's visit.²

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, May, 1924, p. 3.

²Ibid.

For a state branch to affiliate with the national organization it was necessary that membership in the nationally affiliated local units in the state total at least five hundred. The National Congress no longer has within its records data on membership within the Oklahoma units prior to the organization of the state branch in 1922.¹ In 1937, when Mrs. John A. Wadlin was membership chairman of the Oklahoma Congress, she prepared a table from National Congress files showing a membership within the nationally affiliated locals in Oklahoma of 356 for the year 1918, of only nine for the year 1920, and of 580 at the time the state branch was organized in 1922.² Whitley placed the number of affiliated units at the time of the organization of the state branch at twenty or more.³

Oklahoma Is Organized as a State Branch of
the National Congress

With the required number of members in local, affiliated units, all that was needed to form a state branch of the National Congress was an invitation to the National Congress to participate in a state organizational meeting. Mr. Anton Classen is given credit for providing the immediate stimulus for a state organization. B. L. French, principal of Classen Junior High School, Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, president of the Classen PTA, and Mr. Classen called on Mr. R. H. Wilson, state superintendent of public instruction, to discuss the organization of a state

¹Letter from Alice Davidson, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, to J. E. Burkett November 1, 1956.

²Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, "Fifteenth Annual Convention, Official Program and Year Book," (1937), p. 18.

³Whitley, "Parent-Teacher Associations," p. 34.

branch of the National Congress. Their proposal was very favorably received. On behalf of the Classen unit, Wilson agreed to issue, from the office of the state superintendent, a call for the organizational meeting.¹

As this happy Classen delegation left the superintendent's office, a future president of the future organization happened to enter. Miss Maude Richman, who later became Mrs. George E. Calvert, was at that time state supervisor of Home Economics in the state department of education. Wilson asked Mrs. Calvert to attend the forthcoming organizational meeting and told her, "You will be interested in this organization of parents and teachers and they will, in turn, be interested in your mothercraft classes."²

On November 17, 1922, "with a representation of more than 150 mothers and teachers from fifty towns in the state and from Oklahoma City Schools and patrons' clubs, the conference . . . opened auspiciously . . . in the State Capitol."³ Inclement weather may have discouraged a few delegations, but attendance was reported for Tulsa, McAlester, Durant, Ardmore, El Reno, Bartlesville, Stratford, Marlow, Poteau, Hillsdale, Ada, Red Rock, Edmond, Healdton, Calumet, Wayne, Alva, Cardin, Sayre, and Witcher. Other towns, not mentioned in the newspaper report of the meet-

¹Mrs. J. P. Salughter, "Organization of Oklahoma State Parent-Teacher Work," unpagged ms. (files of Mrs. J. P. Slaughter's Administration, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers); cited hereafter as Slaughter Files. Files of the administrations of other state PTA presidents will be cited in the same manner.

²Mrs. George E. Calvert, "Through the Years with Oklahoma," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (October, 1940), pp. 4-5.

³Oklahoma City Times, November 17, 1922, p. 1.

ing may have been represented. Some of the towns sent three or four representatives. These representatives included "county superintendents, principals of schools, teachers, and mothers."¹ Since there were only 75 official delegates to the meeting, it is apparent that many visitors came to lend interest and support to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:00 a.m. with Mrs. J. P. Slaughter presiding. The invocation was given by Forney Hutchinson, a prominent Oklahoma City minister. Following a vocal solo by Mrs. H. B. Turner, greetings were extended to the assembly by E. D. Overholzer, president of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce; by A. C. Parsons, superintendent of the Oklahoma City Schools; and by Mrs. Slaughter.² The principal business of the morning session was an address by Mrs. Milton P. Higgins, president of the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teachers Associations. Mrs. Higgins foresaw "great possibilities" for state organization in Oklahoma, and gave these objectives of the National Congress:

Not to receive but to give is the object of the National Congress . . . to give of our thought, time, money and constant effort to make children better citizens for the future, and to produce, train and educate boys and girls who shall be physically clean, mentally alert, morally above reproach, and spiritually able to render Christian service to the world.³

Mrs. Higgins emphasized that parent-teacher organizations were designed to cooperate, but not to interfere with the school authorities. "Life must not stop short at the school house door," she added, "The home

¹Ibid.

²"Tentative Program for Organizational Meeting" (Slaughter Files).

³Oklahoma City Times, November 17, 1922, p. 1.

must reach into the school and the school reach back into the home.

Nothing that is isolated is going to function."

On the question of the need for state organizations to affiliate with the National Congress, Mrs. Higgins said,

The small group needs the inspiration that comes from association with the larger group. With singleness of purpose, together with united strength and concentrated effort, educational and social welfare measures may be effectively promoted on a national scale.¹

Entertainment for the morning session was provided by the Irving High School orchestra composed of twenty-six boys and four girls. "Much favorable comment was heard on the ability of these young musicians, from representatives to the conference and from capitol employees, who were drawn to the doorways by strains of music."²

The afternoon session opened at 2:00 p.m. with Mrs. Winifred Carberry, national field secretary, presiding. Constitution and nominating committees were appointed. These committees reported and officers were elected. This was followed by a round table discussion in which representatives from the several local organizations reported on their activities as National Congress units.

In an address to the afternoon session Mrs. Carberry told the assembly:

The parent-teacher movement has enjoyed a healthy growth in Oklahoma. It is new work in the state, but the people have readily taken it up. The clubs have doubled their memberships in the last year. The work is absolutely non-partisan, non-sectarian, and non-political, but it is for all the people, regardless of affiliations. Partisanship of any nature is taboo.

I have enjoyed the work with parents and teachers of Oklahoma. In all sections of the state I have found the people enthusiastically taking up the work. I can't adequately express my apprecia-

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 2.

tion of the cooperation I have received from Oklahoma citizens. I would enjoy going over¹ the state again and meeting with the friends that I have made here.

Mrs. Higgins extended the greetings of the National Congress to the newly elected officers, and a response was given by Superintendent Wilson. Mr. M. A. Nash, secretary of the Oklahoma Education Association, and State Superintendent-Elect, spoke on "The Values of Parent-Teacher Associations to the Public School."

The First State Officers

In addition to the usual officers found in organizations of this kind, the constitution of the newly organized Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers provided for "a vice-president for each district of the Oklahoma Education Association."² It was announced that district meetings of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers would coincide with those of the OEA. There were, at this time, seven OEA districts,³ but newspaper reports giving the names of officers elected at the organization of the Oklahoma Congress do not include each of the seven districts.

The following officers were elected: Mrs. J. P. Slaughter of Oklahoma City, president; Mrs. W. P. German of Tulsa, vice-president at large; Mrs. Thomas M. Aderhold, El Reno, vice-president of Central District; Mrs. A. H. Burgardt, Cordell, vice-president of the Southwestern District; Mrs. H. A. Bost of Alva, vice-president of the Northwestern District; Mrs. Mitchener, Okmulgee, vice-president of the East Central

¹Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), November 18, 1922, p. 1.

²"Constitution," November 17, 1922 (Slaughter Files).

³Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IV (November, 1922), pp. 18-20.

District; Mrs. Lottie Braley, Ada, recording secretary; Mrs. F. E. Nelson, Oklahoma City, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. J. C. Barnett, Willow, auditor.¹

Mrs. J. A. McDougal of Sapulpa was elected treasurer. She was not present at the organizational meeting and when notified of her election, she could not accept the office. At the request of the executive committee, Mrs. Earl Foster accepted the appointment as the first state treasurer.²

With its organization as a state branch, Oklahoma, the forty-sixth state in the Union, became the forty-third state to organize as a state Congress in the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations.³

¹Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), November 18, 1922, p. 1.

²Mrs. Earl Foster, "Reminiscences Concerning the Early Days in the Oklahoma Congress," undated, pp. 1-2 (Slaughter Files).

³In 1922, the official name of the national organization was The National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations. In the first constitution, the state organization is called The Oklahoma Branch of the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations.

In 1924, the name of the national organization was simplified to The National Congress of Parents and Teachers. For approximately one year following this change, the state organization adopted the name Oklahoma Branch of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. By 1926, however, the state organization had adopted the simplified name, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, the name it bears today (1957).

CHAPTER III

BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION (1922-1929)

The Background of Social and Political Unrest

Since organizations exist within a social setting and since they affect and are affected by the setting in which they function, it may be well to consider briefly the social and political climate of the state during the formative years of the Oklahoma Congress. The state organizational meeting occurred just a few days after the 1922 election, the first state election in which women could vote. John C. Walton, the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League candidate who had defeated the regular Democrats in the primary, won the general election, defeating the Republican candidate, John Fields, by 49,737 votes. The Walton administration soon became the center of controversies which grew increasingly bitter until he was impeached by the House of Representatives, tried by the Senate and removed from office. Lieutenant Governor Martin E. Trapp was able to restore political stability to the office of governor for a short time; but under the state constitution, Trapp could not succeed himself. Henry S. Johnston, who succeeded Trapp, early became embroiled in a contest with the legislature which again impeached and removed the governor from office. The presidential election of 1928 produced another political upheaval in Oklahoma. This normally Democratic state not only joined in

the national "Hoover landslide" but also elected an unusual total of 46 republicans to the Oklahoma House of Representatives.¹

The political unrest from 1922-1929 was accompanied by much social unrest within the state. In coal mining communities labor disputes and labor disturbances were frequent, and on more than one occasion martial law was invoked for the purpose of maintaining or restoring order. Another major problem of the period was that of the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma. Klan activities prompted Governor Walton to declare martial law in Okmulgee County in July, 1923 and to suspend the writ of Habeas Corpus; he also declared martial law in Tulsa County the following month. There followed on September 15 a proclamation by the governor of state-wide martial law with troops stationed in Oklahoma County. The governor was widely criticized for the state-wide declaration of martial law since it also prevented the convening of a grand jury in Oklahoma City.²

Since Oklahoma was predominately an agricultural state during these years, the condition of agriculture vitally affected the condition of the entire state. Agricultural conditions were not very favorable. First of all, most Oklahoma farmers had not learned the value of diversified farming. When their one cash crop failed, their year of effort was largely wasted. Many farmers, in the price spiral which accompanied World War I, had greatly extended their credit, and were faced in the post war years with the prospect of payment with greatly reduced farm

¹Victor E. Harlow, Oklahoma (rev. ed.; Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Corporation, 1955), passim, pp. 371-383.

²Ibid.

prices. Farm income further declined with the accelerated inroads of soil erosion and cotton boll weevils at the local level, and overproduction of farm crops on a national scale. Increasing automobile traffic demanded the creation of a state highway system, and the need for improving many other governmental services in a young state demanded additional public support.

The Background of Educational Needs

The plight of the common schools had prompted the state to secure the services of the U. S. Office of Education for a survey of Public Education in Oklahoma which was published in 1922. The needs identified and the recommendations proposed were largely ignored, however, in the period of political unrest which followed the report. With or without the survey, many educational needs of the period were apparent. High school enrollments were increasing far more rapidly than facilities, elementary schools were crowded, reorganization of school districts into larger administrative units was badly needed. The school term in Oklahoma for the 1921-22 school year averaged only seven and three-tenths months. Terms of five and six months were not uncommon in the rural schools.¹

Biennial reports of the state superintendent during this period revealed conditions similar to these deplored by Mrs. H. A. Adams in her presidential address to the Annual Convention of the Oklahoma Congress in 1929:

We read from statistics that our school enumeration is 725,000 with but 650,000 enrolled in school, with an average daily attendance of but 400,000. We are spending twenty-four million dollars annually for the maintenance of schools and with one-third of all the children

¹ Davison, "History . . .," p. 181.

out of school all the time we are wasting annually eight million dollars.¹

These educational needs were not diminished by the presence within the state of 30,000 native born, white illiterates, 22,000 children of school age gainfully employed, and the economic condition of many families in Oklahoma in which parents knew "little but daily toil and grind, eking out a mere existence."²

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers may, or may not have grown out of these conditions, needs, and motivations existing within the state at the time of its formation as a state branch of the National Congress. Certainly in the midst of these conditions there was needed an organization for the improvement of the home, school, and community environment. Before the Oklahoma Congress could come to grips with the more important problem of meeting the needs of children however, it was necessary for the organization to face the more immediate problem of building a state organization.

Organizational Problems and Needs

The Oklahoma Congress needed a substantial membership to perform valuable services; but it was difficult to attract members to a new organization which could not confer status upon its members, nor perform services for them in the same degree as an older, larger, well-organized group. The first officers of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers found themselves in this situation:

¹ Mrs. H. A. Adams, "We Are Builders," President's Address to the Annual State Convention, 1929 (Adams Files).

² Ibid.

With practically no funds, poorly organized publicity and inadequate material for distribution, the growth of the organization was of necessity slow and often disheartening. The National organization was just getting into its stride and was unable to provide much assistance. The task of getting information into the hands of the interested workers, organizing local units, securing regional officers and committee members, involved much longhand correspondence Funds for travel by state officers were extremely limited. Of necessity, much of the early organization work was done through individual rather than group activity.¹

The emphasis placed on the organization of new units and the enrollment of new members produced numerical growth which did not always result in a corresponding advancement of parent-teacher goals. Some six years after the founding of the state branch, Mrs. H. A. Adams, the third president concluded: "We needed information rather than increased membership; organization, not extension, but most of all, cooperation and consecration."²

Leaders and Leadership Training

Perhaps the greatest single factor in the growth of a voluntary organization is the quality of its leaders. Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, the first state president, described the search for leaders in these words:

After completion of the state organization, our first consideration was the selection of directors of departments, and the chairmen of standing committees. It was a difficult task, as many who were appointed directors of departments or chairmen of standing committees could not serve the full term, making it necessary for the state board of managers to choose the departments most essential in carry-

¹Dell Slaughter Day, "A Message from the Daughter of Oklahoma's First State President," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (April, 1947), p. 10.

²Mrs. H. A. Adams, "President's Annual Report," March 28, 1928, p. 1 (Adams Files).

ing on as far as possible the work outlined by the National organization.¹

Resignations of important state officers not only occurred during that first year, but continued to be a problem throughout this early period. In December, 1926, Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, the first president, was forced to resign because of ill health. But prior to her own resignation she had accepted resignations of Mrs. Earl Foster, state treasurer; Mrs. H. N. Grannis, chairman of literature; Mr. J. R. Chandler, chairman of home service; Mrs. Walter McCain, parliamentarian; Mrs. J. Y. Allen, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. Fred Donoho, publicity chairman. In addition to those who resigned, "The Board declared the office of publicity chairman vacant and granted power to the president to remove any officer who fails to do his work."² Reasons for the 1926 resignations were not given, but in 1928, Mrs. Everett Carpenter of Bartlesville resigned as state chairman of literature because of illness; Mrs. George Pruett of Ponca City resigned as recording secretary with the statement that her school duties made it impossible for her to continue; Mrs. G. B. Reneau of Tulsa, who had been nominally the editor of the state bulletin, resigned to accomodate the arrival of a new baby; and Mrs. Marx Levy, having "taken up her pen in another way," resigned as corresponding secretary.³

Officers of the Oklahoma Congress recognized the need for leadership training at both the state and local levels. Among the most fre-

¹Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "State President's Report," p. 1 (Slaughter Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, December 11, 1926.

³Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (April, 1928), unpagued.

quently mentioned projects in reports of these early years were the "schools of instruction" in which members, and potential officers, were taught the objectives and ideals of the parent-teacher movement, and were instructed in techniques and procedures of organization. It was in these schools that the National Congress provided its greatest service to the new organization. Mrs. Charles E. Roe, Field Secretary of the National Congress, was a frequent visitor in the state speaking with hundreds of PTA workers who gathered in key cities of the state to meet with her and with state officers. The Oklahoma Congress also encouraged leaders to take a course offered by Columbia University on "The Educational Aspects of the Parent-Teacher Movement." Mrs. Eval Miller of Stillwater, Raymond H. Hicks, Superintendent of Jenks School; Rex D. Cleveland, Enid; Richard Burt, Superintendent of Glenpool took the course at Columbia in the summer session of 1927.¹

Financing the State Organization

"Setting up a budget was a difficult operation . . . with only five cents per member . . . we almost 'made the eagle squeal' to pay the necessary expenses."² This description by the first treasurer of the financial plight of the new organization was not overdrawn. In her annual report for 1924-25, the state president described a situation in which the organization had a balance of only sixty-five cents in the treasury

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (September, 1927), pp. 18-19.

²Foster, "Reminiscences . . .," pp. 1-2.

and asked, "How has the work been carried on?"¹ In 1925, Mrs. Fred

Donoho made this appeal for contributions from local units:

Do you realize that because of lack of funds the state work is lacking in efficiency? Will you observe November 17, 1925 or some early date as the state birthday and give some kind of benefit, and give all proceeds above expenses to the state treasurer?²

Ten local PTA units made donations to the state budget in the amount of \$82.82. Another \$16.45 was contributed as "Child Welfare anniversary gifts to the National Congress," but the only substantial source of state income for the 1925-26 year (the first year for which a budget report could be found) was the sum of \$1,202.00 in membership dues. Half of this total, however, included per capita dues collected by the state and forwarded to the national office. Expenditures for State Congress work totaled only \$526.84 for the 1925-56 year.³

Another illustration of the financial problems of the newly organized Oklahoma Congress was the fact that it was not possible for the state organization to pay the expenses of its delegates to the National convention in 1926. State leaders hoped that local units, who were honored by having one of their leaders selected as a delegate, would raise the necessary expenses for the delegate at the local level. Of this procedure, J. O. Hall, president of the Pawhuska Council, complained:

The situation that now confronts us is to the effect that the presidents of all of the local associations are unanimous and

¹Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "State President's Report, 1924-25," p. 2 (Slaughter Files).

²Form letter from Mrs. Fred Donoho, state publicity chairman, to co-workers, November 12, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

³Mrs. Earl Foster, "Financial Report of the State Treasurer," March 9, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

emphatic in the stand that they will not go to their local associations and ask for more money for any purpose at this time. They all feel that there would be very great danger of breaking up their associations should they do so.¹

Hall's reaction may, or may not, have been typical since, in Pawhuska, "there was considerable criticism as to the manner in which the delegates were selected."² But the incident does illustrate the problem of financial inadequacy at the state level and the impact of this condition on local organization.

Clark's reply to a letter of inquiry concerning the use of five dollars for payment toward a life membership by a unit which had previously pledged the amount to the state organization is another indication of the critical need for additional funds at the state level during this period:

The pledge to the state budget should be paid as such if it is possible. The state office depends upon the five cents dues and what contributions are made to it for its finances. We have a very difficult time making both ends meet. In fact several members of the state board of managers travelled to Tulsa last week at their own expense to attend a board meeting because the state treasurer has no money with which to pay such expenses. Since only the interest obtained from investment of life memberships can be used for operating expenses, it is very desirable at this time that you pay the pledge as such.³

No complete record exists of the donations made to the state organization in the form of special pledges by local units. A one-page, typewritten report of "Pledges to State Budget for 1926-27," shows contributions of

¹Letter from J. O. Hall, superintendent of Pawhuska Schools and president of the Pawhuska Council, to Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, March 27, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

²Ibid.

³Letter from R. W. Clark, State President, to Mrs. J. F. Freeman, December 17, 1926 (Clark Files).

\$189.50 from 30 local PTA units. These units were located in the following school systems: Oklahoma City, Mountain View, Okmulgee, Guthrie, Cushing, Bartlesville, Britton, Pawhuska, Pitcher, Ada, Webb City, Ponca City, Crescent, and Alva.¹ This may not have been the complete record of such contributions for the 1926-27 fiscal year, but it is sufficiently detailed to indicate that donations from local units did not constitute a very practical approach to the problem of adequate finance for the state organization.

The treasurer's report for May, 1928 showed a bank balance of \$941.11 with liabilities of \$942.17 to say nothing of expenses "due Mrs. Adams, April expense, and convention expenses to Cleveland."²

Establishing State Headquarters

An organization which attempts to coordinate a state-wide program needs a state headquarters. The first meeting of the executive board of the Oklahoma Congress concerned itself with that need and approved a motion by Mrs. Lottie M. Braley that "a typewriter be purchased for the state corresponding secretary."³ This was undoubtedly the first piece of office equipment purchased by the state organization and was the very humble beginning of a state headquarters. In March, 1925, the board of managers adopted a motion by J. R. Barton that the board "establish state headquarters in Oklahoma City in the office of Mrs. Hale, County Superin-

¹"Pledges to State Budget for 1926-27" (Slaughter Files).

²Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (May, 1928), unpagued.

³Minutes of the Executive Committee, April 20, 1923.

tendent of Schools."¹ Although a letterhead was struck showing this location for the state office, the plan was not carried out and a December board meeting authorized the president to appoint a committee to "look into the matter of a location for state headquarters and report back to the board."² This first state office committee consisted of Mrs. H. A. Adams, R. W. Clark, and A. H. Parmelee.

On February 9, 1926 letters were mailed from the state president to several business firms in Oklahoma City listing items of furniture needed for the state office and inviting the companies to designate any items they would be willing to contribute. Apparently the response was good since the state convention authorized that letters of thanks be written to the following: Harbour Longmire, Doc and Bill, Western Bank and Supply, Kerr Dry Goods, McCoy and Spivey Furniture, Leech Book Company, OK Auction Furniture Company, Spivey and McGill Furniture, Pettee Hardware, Rorabaugh-Brown Company, and Mrs. Anton Classen.³

The committee, meanwhile, had succeeded in renting Room 405 of the Franklin Building in Oklahoma City and the state board employed Mrs. J. Y. Allen as part-time secretary at a salary of \$60.00 per month. On April 20, 1926, Mrs. Slaughter announced that "the beautiful dream of a state office"⁴ had become a reality.

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, March 24, 1925.

²Minutes of Special Meeting of the State Board of Managers, December 12, 1925.

³Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, March 10-12, 1926, p. 5.

⁴Mrs. J. P. Slaughter and Mrs. J. Y. Allen, "Notes from the State Office," April 20, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

The financial burden of maintaining a state office proved too great for the young organization, however. On April 16, 1927, Mrs. John R. Burns, the state treasurer, reported a deficit of \$122.76. The board approved an amendment to the Charter striking the name, Oklahoma City, as the location of the state office. The board decided to move the state office to the home of the state president, Mrs. H. A. Adams of Goltry, and to remove and re-establish the state office in the home town of each succeeding state president.¹ The board authorized Mrs. Adams to take to her home any of the office furnishings which she could use in the official business of the Oklahoma Congress, and appointed a committee to decide on the disposition of other furnishings and equipment owned by the organization. By the time the transfer of the state office was accomplished, in May, 1927, the Oklahoma Congress was in debt \$150.00 and behind more than two months in the salary of the executive secretary. Mrs. Adams' "regime of economy" included "giving up both the office and the executive secretary."²

When Mrs. Adams completed her administration in March, 1929, she furnished the state board a report of the property owned by the organization and offered to send the property immediately to the new president Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, wife of a Tulsa physician. To permit Mrs. Johnson to handle the affairs of the organization without interference with her husband's practice, the board agreed to pay the expense of approximately five dollars per month for an additional telephone in the

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 16, 1927.

²Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (October-November, 1927), unpagged.

Johnson home. Mrs. Adams recommended that her successor also be allowed an expense account of twenty-five to thirty-five dollars per month. This proposal was discussed at length after which the board referred the proposal to the state budget committee.¹

The dream of a state headquarters had not long maintained its reality, but the office had functioned long enough to demonstrate its value. Certainly the dream was not forgotten as the leaders continued the work of building an organization.

Publications and Publicity

The publication of an official state bulletin was a need and an interest frequently expressed by leaders in the Oklahoma Congress. The "very first" issue of an Oklahoma Parent-Teacher appeared November 1, 1923, less than one year after the organizational meeting. It was edited by Mrs. Fred Donoho of Guthrie, state chairman of press and publicity. Below a very simple masthead was the slogan, "The Child of Today is Our Citizen of Tomorrow." This first state bulletin was financed by the Guthrie PTA, with this note by Mrs. Donoho to other units.

Guthrie felt that she wanted to awaken interest in the PTA by publishing free of cost to any of you the first. Now then in so doing she challenges Tulsa to follow in her steps and bring us one in December equally free of cost to the state.²

Unhappily, one thousand copies of the first issue were "given the wrong parties" through an error in distribution at Oklahoma City. The same error occurred in Bartlesville although the number misplaced was not

¹Minutes of the Post-Convention and Adjourned of the State Board of Managers Meeting, March 30, 1929.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, November, 1923, unpagued.

given for that area. Mrs. Donoho lamented, "Those of you who did not receive a copy of 'our first' may never know just what you missed."¹

The second issue did not appear until January, 1924. It also was financed by the Guthrie PTA Council and paid advertising. The editor again urged other city PTA councils to take turns in publishing the bulletin. "Where are you Ada, Muskogee, Oklahoma City or Tulsa?" she asked. "Surely Guthrie isn't the only wide awake PTA in the state."² The third issue, financed by the Ada PTA units, contained advertising for the Ada Chamber of Commerce, the Peabody School Furniture Company, and the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company.

The fourth issue in March, 1924 was financed by the Mother's Council of Central High School Muskogee. It contained five pages of news and one page of advertising. The editor again urged local units to underwrite the financing, pointing out that much of the cost could be written off through the sale of advertising. She reported several units willing to assume the expense of an issue if their own local printer could be used; but she assured the local units that the firm which had printed it in the past offered the most reasonable rate and was a reliable firm.³

The fifth issue in May, 1924 was sponsored by the PTA Council of Oklahoma City. With some sixteen pages of news, it was larger than any of the previous bulletins, and it contained only one advertisement. Like all the previous issues it was printed on pulp paper with pages that were six inches wide and nine inches long.⁴

¹Ibid., January, 1924, unpagued.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., March, 1924.

⁴Ibid., May, 1924.

Only two numbers were issued in 1925. The January number contained eight pages and the April issue contained sixteen pages including advertising. At the bottom of each page of the January issue was the announcement, "This issue of the bulletin is financed by a group of public-spirited citizens of Okmulgee."¹ Some hint as to the possible identity of the public spirited citizens could be inferred from page eight which was devoted in its entirety to the theme, "Okmulgee, The City Beautiful."

It is surprising that bulletins issued under these circumstances contained as much news as they did and were as free of typographical errors. It is true that Perry was once designated as a "wike awake" city, and the proof reader once missed the fact that "sandwiches" were served at a local meeting; but on the whole, these first bulletins discussed important state and national PTA topics and shared news of interesting activities among the local units. Nevertheless, the uncertainty of financing made it difficult for the editorial staff to do advance planning on the bulletin and left considerable doubt as to when the bulletin might, or might not, be expected by local leaders.

The state board of managers first considered the problem of the state bulletin at a meeting on December 11, 1926; but decided that a lack of funds precluded any improvement in the situation at that time. On February 12, 1927 the board again discussed the bulletin and gave the state president authority to sign a contract with a national advertising company as a means of financing it.² The board also authorized Mrs. Fred

¹ Ibid., January, 1925, p. 1.

² Minutes of the State Board of Managers, February 12, 1927.

Byers of Guthrie to study the possibility of printing the bulletin in that city. The next meeting of the board, on April 16, 1927, heard a report by Mrs. G. A. Waring of Tulsa that the bulletin was being financed by "Tulsa People."¹ The board also adopted a motion by Mrs. Waring that the editor of the bulletin be made a member of the state board, and a second motion that funds for the publication of the bulletin be kept in a separate account.²

It was some two years after the April, 1925 bulletin that the next issue appeared. This first issue by the "Tulsa People" was dated May, 1927 and was published under a new name, Oklahoma Bulletin. Beneath this simple masthead was the statement, "Introductory number, official publication of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Association, Branch of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers."³ This was the first state PTA publication to be designated by volume and number. The lead article in the first issue of the Oklahoma Bulletin was an inspirational message by Mrs. H. A. Adams followed by a note of congratulation by P. P. Claxton, Tulsa Superintendent of Schools and former U. S. Commissioner of Education. Mrs. G. B. Reneau was listed as editor, Mrs. G. B. Young, business manager; and Mrs. Ben Hill, advertising manager. Mrs. Gerald A. Waring soon became editor when Mrs. Reneau resigned to accomodate the arrival of a baby. The subscription price was twenty-five cents per year. Unlike the earlier publications, the Oklahoma Bulletin was printed on "slick" paper and contained no advertising. Nine numbers of the Oklahoma Bulletin

¹ Ibid., April 17, 1927.

² Ibid.

³ Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (May, 1927), unpagued.

were issued beginning with the May, 1927 issue and concluding with the May, 1928 issue.

The state convention, held in Ponca City, March 27-30, 1928, amended the constitution of the Oklahoma Congress, increasing the annual dues from ten to twenty-five cents which increased the state per capita dues from five to twenty cents. Five cents of this increase was for the purpose of "making the bulletin larger and better."¹ It was also planned that the bulletin would be mailed to each member whose name was on the official membership list of the Oklahoma Congress.² This plan, however, did not work out as anticipated. On September 29, 1928, Mrs. Waring told the state board that it was not possible to produce the bulletin, apparently for lack of funds. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Byers reported that an arrangement could be made with Cooperative Publishing Company of Guthrie to finance the bulletin through advertising. In fact, Mrs. Byers reported that some advertising already had been solicited including political advertising. This prompted a discussion of advertising policy in which the consensus developed that no advertising should appear in Oklahoma Congress publications which might embarrass the organization. Although the board extended Mrs. Byers a vote of thanks for her efforts on behalf of the bulletin, it also adopted a motion that the board reject the political advertising which Mrs. Byers had previously solicited and that no further political advertising be accepted.³ The board then heard a proposal by a

¹Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (April, 1928), unpagued.

²Ibid.

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, September 29, 1928.

Mr. Price of the Cooperative Publishing Company for publication of a state bulletin through the sale of advertising. Price estimated that 10,000 copies could be issued by his firm for approximately \$250.00 per issue. He proposed that the Oklahoma Congress authorize three issues on a trial basis, and proposed that his company be awarded a two-year contract in the event the trial period proved satisfactory to the organization. Price planned a format which would have included fifty per cent news and fifty per cent advertising. No action was reported on this proposal,¹ but the board appointed a committee to supervise plans for the bulletin. The members of this first bulletin committee were Mrs. Gerald Waring, Mrs. Fred Donoho, and Mrs. Cleora Helming.

On March 27, 1929, Mrs. Donoho reported to the board. After much discussion, the board voted to appropriate \$300.00 in funds from state membership dues to "establish a bulletin."² The language of the motion clearly indicated, however, that this fund was to be used only in the event and to the extent that the sale of advertising failed to produce sufficient revenue for an early issue of the bulletin in the fall of 1929.

While efforts to launch a state bulletin occupied much of the attention and effort in the field of publications, other sources of information and publicity were not overlooked during this early period. An announcement in the May, 1924 Oklahoma Parent-Teacher told of a full page of school news in each of the Sunday issues of the Okmulgee Daily Democrat and noted that the parent-teacher associations profited by this.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., March 27, 1929.

PTA news soon began appearing in other newspapers, particularly in the Tulsa Daily Tribune, and somewhat later in the Blackwell Morning Tribune. In February, 1927 the state board instructed Mrs. J. O. Early of Oklahoma City to report board meetings to the local papers,¹ and beginning with the issue for September, 1926 the Oklahoma Teacher, official organ for the Oklahoma Education Association, included a page edited by and for the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers.

In December of 1927 the Oklahoma Bulletin announced: "So many inquiries have come in as to how to organize new units that the officers have been almost swamped."² For information local leaders were referred to the "Handbook." Outgoing officers were urged to treat the "Handbook" as unit property, not personal property, and to pass it along to their successors. The term "Handbook" could have referred to a National Congress publication, but it more likely referred to the leaflet, "How to Organize Local Parent-Teacher Units," by Mrs. H. A. Adams, state organizer. It was published by the Oklahoma Congress in 1926 in cooperation with the Oklahoma Education Association and the State Department of Education. Its purpose was "to answer questions, eliminate correspondence and help speed up the work of the organization of local Parent-Teacher Associations in Oklahoma."³ Two other leaflets were available for distribution as early as December, 1927, one on Founders' Day and another on "Safety

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, February 12, 1927.

²Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (December, 1927), unpagged.

³Mrs. H. A. Adams, "How to Organize Local Parent-Teacher Associations," p. 1 (Adams Files).

Surveys."¹

A measure of the number of requests for information and of the volume of publications furnished was indicated in the report of Mrs. Neva Carpenter, state literature chairman, to the annual convention in 1928. For the organizational year ending with the March, 1928 convention she received 345 letters, wrote 525 personal letters, and mailed 650 form letters. She supplied 135 county superintendents and other school superintendents with the leaflet, "Parent-Teacher Movement," and distributed 500 reprints of an editorial by Joy Elmer Morgan on the parent-teacher movement. She distributed 1,500 descriptive folders on the Child Welfare Magazine, official publication of the National Congress, and supplied 584 organization packets including a complete set of publications for each old and new unit in the state.²

Relations with the National Congress

Working out a satisfactory relationship with the National Congress presented fewer difficulties than were involved in other organizational problems and needs. State officers came into contact with the National Congress mainly through correspondence, attendance at National Congress conventions, and visits by National officers to Oklahoma. The first National Congress president to visit Oklahoma after Mrs. Higgins' visit to organize the state in 1922 was Mrs. A. H. Reeve. While in Oklahoma City, June 2-5, 1924, she was "extended every courtesy by state superin-

¹Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (December, 1927), unpagued.

²Ibid., Vol. I (April, 1928), unpagued.

tendent Nash;"¹ the Oklahoma City Council honored her with a luncheon; the state board of managers, with a dinner; and she delivered a public address to an audience at Central High School. Mrs. Reeve also visited the campuses at Central State College and the University of Oklahoma. She was received by the president of the University, and both faculty members and students gave her "a hearty welcome at both Norman and Edmond."² Mrs. Slaughter estimated that the National Congress president spoke to an audience of 2,500 at each of the institutions.

A more frequent visitor was the National Field Secretary, Mrs. Charles E. Roe who joined the staff of the National Congress in 1924.³ In 1927 the National Congress sent Mrs. Roe to Oklahoma to spend the entire month of February. The purpose of her visit was to promote membership.⁴ She also hoped to hold training classes over the state and to appear at the OEA Convention scheduled in Oklahoma City for February 9-11.

Arranging Mrs. Roe's itinerary grew into more of a problem than either she or state leaders had anticipated. The problem was basically that of communication. Mrs. J. Y. Allen, the executive secretary, had not known in advance the exact date of Mrs. Roe's arrival; she wrote that the state organizer, Mrs. Adams, would meet Mrs. Roe in Enid and spend a

¹Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "State President's Report, 1924-25," p. 4 (Slaughter Files).

²Ibid.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (January, 1937), p. 1.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. VIII (January, 1927), p. 15.

week with her before Mrs. Roe moved on "to another part of the state."¹

Mrs. G. A. Waring apparently had been given the responsibility for arranging Mrs. Roe's itinerary in the Northwest District of the state, but she could not find where the local units were located to say nothing of which ones wanted Mrs. Roe to visit them.² Mrs. Fred Donoho, who was working on the schedule in another part of the state, found that Mr. Clark wanted Mrs. Roe in Okmulgee on the date she had her scheduled elsewhere.³ And Mrs. C. J. Davenport inquired on the eve of Mrs. Roe's arrival of the possible dates when she could come to Sapulpa where the PTA Council wished "to make plans to have a large group hear her."⁴ On January 31, from her hotel in Tonkawa, Mrs. Roe wrote to Mrs. Allen as follows:

I will do my best to carry out the plans for my work this week. I am of course greatly disappointed to find there are as yet no training classes planned. Mrs. Brown writes I am not to be used in Oklahoma City because of the greater need elsewhere, but I feel the object of the field service has not been understood. We are to so strengthen the state organization that it will be better able to care for the locals, not to primarily strengthen each local. Therefore we work in the so-called strong centers and through institutes and training classes can reach large numbers Of course you must realize that an outsider cannot very well give local help and information . . . for your own state leaders understand the local problems so much better.

I have been told to go to Tulsa, but not what for, nor to what hotel, nor to whom to report

I do not understand the arrangements as detailed by Mrs. Brown as she failed to give dates. Is it the third or fourth week she is

¹Letter from Mrs. J. Y. Allen to Mrs. Charles E. Roe, January 3, 1927 (Clark Files).

²Letter from Mrs. G. A. Waring to Mrs. J. Y. Allen, January 17, 1927 (Clark Files).

³Letter from Mrs. Fred Donoho to Mr. R. W. Clark, January 22, 1927 (Clark Files).

⁴Letter from Mrs. C. J. Davenport to Mr. R. W. Clark, January 31, 1927 (Clark Files).

writing about?

Having served as a state executive secretary for four years, I can assure you that I fully understand your problems and hesitate to add to them, but hope the rest of my work in the state can be so modified that I will not feel so absolutely incapable of any real help.¹

Apparently some modification of Mrs. Roe's schedule was made since she appeared prominently in the first state "school for parents" held in Oklahoma City February 21-26, 1927. If the difficulties of scheduling appeared great on this first trip to Oklahoma by Mrs. Roe, it should also be pointed out that apparently no ill feelings were engendered, and this was the beginning of a very long and cordial association between Mrs. Roe and the Oklahoma Congress. Apparently a rather pleasant relationship was the rule for situations in which state and national organizations came in contact. A motion by the state board of managers instructing the corresponding secretary "to write to Mrs. Watkins at Washington, D. C. that the state president be consulted about all matters pertaining to the state work"² is the only instance which any degree of friction is implied, but this same meeting, December 12, 1925, adopted another motion endorsing the activities of the state president in promoting the policies of the national and pledged her full support.

Attendance by Oklahoma delegates to the annual conventions of the National Congress offered opportunity for a few days of pleasant association with other state and national officers including study, business,

¹Letter from Mrs. Charles E. Roe, Field Secretary for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers to Mrs. J. Y. Allen, January 31, 1927 (Clark Files).

²Minutes of Special Meeting of the State Board of Managers, December 12, 1925.

and recreation. Each state president gave an annual report to the National Convention which became a part of the printed proceedings of the convention. These reports provided an interesting summary of each year's activity. Oklahoma delegations to the annual conventions were often smaller than their authorized number because the state could not pay expenses of all its delegates. In 1924 only five Oklahoma delegates attended the National Congress convention at St. Paul, Minnesota.¹ In 1928, however, fifteen delegates attended the annual convention in Oakland, California. At one of the sessions of the Oakland Convention each state president was asked to wear a costume representative of her own state. This provided an interesting opportunity for Mrs. H. A. Adams, the Oklahoma Congress President.

Your state president . . . was the most unique. She tried to pose as an Indian Princess. Her costume was furnished by Ponca City and was the property of Mrs. Charley Lessert. It was valued at \$2,000.00.²

That these annual conventions included fun as well as work may be seen in this report by Mrs. Adams on her activities at the 1929 convention:

Play night is one long to be remembered. There were more than 500 on the floor and Mr. Faust of the National Playground and Recreation Association of America had them doing his bidding in unison. We danced the Virginia Reel, the Minuet, and played many folk games. Your president played so hard that she had to go to a chiropodist the next morning, but aching feet were worth the price.³

Relations with the Profession and the Public

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, May, 1924, unpagged.

²Mrs. H. A. Adams, "The National Convention, May 21-28, 1928" (Adams Files).

³Mrs. H. A. Adams, "Report of the National Convention, April 28-May 5, 1929" (Adams Files).

The newly organized Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers needed the support of the public generally and of the teaching profession in particular if it was to achieve its objectives. To a very large extent, this support was not "given;" it had to be earned. This required time for the public and the profession to become acquainted with state and national PTA methods and goals.

Walton probably was too occupied with his unsuccessful efforts to retain the governor's chair to have taken note of the new organization, but in January, 1924 Governor Martin E. Trapp extended his support to the Oklahoma Congress with this statement:

I am glad to lend my endorsement to the work and program of the Parent-Teacher Associations of the state. Closer cooperation between parents and teachers will make for the efficiency of our schools.

I hope that more of the citizens and patrons of the public schools will take an interest in our schools. The beneficial results of this are obvious.¹

By 1925 at least a few of the civic clubs were becoming aware of PTA work in their communities. The May meeting of the state board of managers voted a card of thanks to the Rotary Club at Holdenville for a beautiful banner presented to PTA,² and officers attending the first state board meeting in 1928 were luncheon guests of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce.³

The Oklahoma Congress received both support and leadership from the state department of education. In the first issue of the Oklahoma

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, January, 1924, unpagued.

²Minutes of Special Meeting of the State Board of Managers, May 29, 1925.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Cleveland, Ohio, 1928, p. 324.

Parent-Teacher, State Superintendent M. A. Nash said:

Important among the developments of school activities during the past few years is the growth of the Parent-Teacher Associations which, with increasing effectiveness, are becoming a force in the educational program. In the Parent-Teacher Association the purpose is to give the fathers and mothers a general understanding of school problems and school activities. The parents become an arm for service and a check against inefficiency.¹

Another important source of support was the Oklahoma Education Association. This support probably should be credited more to vision of Clyde M. Howell, the Executive Secretary, than to OEA leaders many of whom were school administrators who were often less than enthusiastic in their regard for PTA work in their local schools. In September, 1926 the Oklahoma Congress expressed appreciation to Howell for furnishing space for a PTA page in the Oklahoma Teacher, and for a "splendid leaflet" which had been printed by OEA for the Oklahoma Congress.² The OEA had created Parent-Teacher Departments by 1925 in three of the eight OEA districts in the state. "With the prospects of the other five carrying out the same plan in the fall," Mrs. Slaughter felt the work of the Oklahoma Congress would be stimulated.³

A resolution of the State PTA convention in 1925 stated: "Several school boards throughout the state arranged to have their teachers attend this convention. We commend them for this far-seeing policy and trust that future years will see an enlargement of it."⁴ But

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, November, 1923, unpagged.

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. VIII (September, 1926), p. 18.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Austin, Texas, 1925, p. 261.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, April, 1925, p. 3.

a state board meeting held a few weeks later recommended "that the president reply to an article in the School Board Journal . . . and correct such mistakes as she deems wise and that a copy be sent to the school board at Guthrie."¹ This may have referred to the national publication.

On March 10, 1927, Clark found it necessary to reply to an inquiry from Oklahoma City on the subject of PTA activity in school board elections. Clark stated the policy of the Oklahoma Congress in these words:

Parent-Teacher Associations are entitled to interest themselves in the personnel of school boards to the end that the best interests of the school will be served. The participation of Parent-Teacher Associations in the election of any other elective officer . . . should not be countenanced. Where a contest between candidates for the school board exists and there is a division of a Parent-Teacher Association, then no part of that association should attempt to work for the election or endorse either candidate. To make my meaning of this last sentence clear, a majority of a Parent-Teacher Association should not attempt to force such an endorsement.²

At the beginning of the 1923-24 school year, Mrs. Slaughter wrote a letter to each of the 77 county superintendents seeking their cooperation in the formation of new PTA units. "This met with practically no response."³ A year later J. O. Payne, county superintendent of Okmulgee County wrote Mrs. Slaughter, "I assure you that my heart is with you in the organization of Parent-Teacher Associations throughout Okmulgee County."⁴ But as late as March 14, 1928, Wirt Lucas who was in charge of

¹Minutes of Special Meeting of the State Board of Managers, May 25, 1925.

²Letter from R. W. Clark, President of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, to Mrs. J. O. Parr, March 10, 1927 (Clark Files).

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, March, 1924, unpagued.

⁴Letter from J. O. Payne, County Superintendent of Okmulgee County, to Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, November 24, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

organization for the southwestern part of the state complained:

The greatest hindrance in organizing the work is the lack of cooperation on the part of the county superintendents. In the Southwest we have two enthusiastic PTA boosters; three that are teachable and somewhat impressed with the good to be accomplished in the work; and the others strangely indifferent if not opposed to the work.¹

One of those two enthusiastic boosters was E. H. Shelton, County Superintendent of Tillman County. In a bulletin to his teachers Shelton said:

One of the major projects in the county school program for the past three years has been the Parent-Teacher Association. In some schools this organization has succeeded and in others it has not. The success of the PTA may depend on the tact and diplomacy of the teacher, but in most cases where the organization has failed the cause was traceable to factions in the community over which the teacher had no control.²

The bulletin closed by saying, "The county superintendent is anxious to see just as many locals as can possibly be made to function during the ensuing year."

In addition to factional strife within some communities, the Oklahoma Congress was hampered in its early organizational efforts by "confusion . . . in the minds of educators because of experiences with organizations calling themselves parent-teacher associations . . . but working independently and not in accordance with the principles and regulations of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers."³

One of the school superintendents who soon recognized the value

¹Letter from Wirt Lucas to Mrs. H. A. Adams, March 14, 1928 (Adams Files).

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. X (November, 1928), p. 25.

³Neva Carpenter, "Why Affiliate with the State Congress?" Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. X (October, 1928), p. 24.

of the parent-teacher movement was H. L. Allen of Guthrie. As early as November, 1923 he found it "the best means of putting the work of the schools properly before the people."¹ But Allen saw a great difference between units of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers and what he called "the old patrons club idea that invariably ran into politics or a gossip club and then broke up."² Allen reported splendid results from the organization of the PTA in Guthrie, and at no time had anything undesirable or unpleasant developed.

Another school administrator who supported PTA work from the beginning of the Oklahoma Congress was Dr. P. P. Claxton of Tulsa, a former U. S. Commissioner of Education. Claxton paid this glowing tribute to the parent-teacher movement in 1923:

I have watched with great pleasure the rapid spread of the parent-teacher associations throughout the country. I know of no other organization that can serve so well to bring together parents and teachers to discuss the welfare of the children in the education of whom they are both interested³

The January-February issue of the Oklahoma Bulletin in 1928 paid tribute to J. R. Barton, Superintendent of Oklahoma City; to high schools at Bartlesville and Cushing; and to "other high schools and superintendents" in the state for their contributions to PTA work.

While some superintendents approved and encouraged the parent-teacher movement, many teachers and superintendents were initially indifferent,⁴ and hostility to the organization was not uncommon. In Enid, the refusal of the superintendent to approve an organizational meeting

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, November, 1923, unpagued.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams to J. E. Burkett, March 19, 1957.

resulted in a less than cordial conference between Superintendent E. D. Price, and the state organizer, Mrs. H. A. Adams. Price maintained that Mrs. Slaughter, the state president, had not written him concerning the organization of a PTA in Enid, a position with which Mrs. Adams could not agree. He further stated that it would not be wise at that time to organize a PTA in Enid, advising Mrs. Adams that he did not have a single principal or teacher who wanted one. But Mrs. Adams contended, "One of his principals told me they all wanted it but would lose their jobs if they opposed Price."¹ She asked what she should tell Enid patrons who asked her reason for not organizing the city as apparently had been requested. She reported that Price told her, "Tell them the state didn't come to organize until after some of the Enid people started a fight and then it was too late."

In 1929, Whitley wrote letters to twenty-five superintendents of city schools where it had been reported that no PTA's had been organized. Of the thirteen who supplied their reasons, four reported either having one or more PTA units or of having plans to organize the following year. Another reported a unit which was "well organized" but not affiliated with the state organization. "The members . . . felt that they preferred to act independently and plan their work apart from the state organization."²

But another replied, "The only attempt made to organize here was an avowed attempt made to antagonize the authorities of the schools. The

¹ Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams, state organizer, to Mrs. J. Y. Allen, Executive Secretary, January 7, 1927 (Clark Files).

² Whitley, "Parent-Teacher Associations," p. 92.

state officer of the PTA refused to organize under those conditions."¹

One superintendent had followed the advice of his predecessors who had not had a PTA unit in the schools and "got along fine without them." He approved the PTA in principle but agreed with a colleague who told him, "You can try them, but they are more apt to try you." He conceded that "three or four" patrons had criticized him for not organizing a PTA but felt that "in two particular instances the reason they wanted the PTA was in order to get a teacher fired and the teacher was one of the best we had."²

A superintendent who approved PTA "if it is well managed and properly controlled" had tried PTA at one time "but a number of the ladies could not keep out of politics. They thought their duty was to check up the finances of the schools, and also get rid of . . . incompetent teachers."³ This superintendent felt that many principals and teachers in larger towns were "out of sympathy with this work" but were afraid to express themselves for fear of losing their jobs.

A recently elected superintendent approved of the parent-teacher movement but added:

This is the only school position I have ever held without the help of a PTA. I thought when I first came here I would organize several clubs but when I began to talk it there were several leading citizens and also several teachers who advised against it.⁴

And finally the lack of adequate lay leadership was the objection of the superintendent who complained:

The PTA has potential qualities of great value, but these quali-

¹Ibid., p. 90.

²Ibid., p. 92.

³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴Ibid., pp. 90-91.

ties are practically one hundred per cent latent. Since no parent has within my observation known how to conduct meetings . . . I suggest that the leaders be trained before they are allowed to attempt to lead, until then they will not be welcome.¹

Whitley also submitted questionnaires to 250 teachers of her personal acquaintance who were teaching in schools having PTA units. She received 167 replies which showed that 92 per cent were members; 91 per cent attended meetings; and 81 per cent enjoyed PTA work.²

One measure of the interest of teachers, administrators, and school board members was their attendance at state conventions of the Oklahoma Congress. In March, 1926 twenty-one principals, two county superintendents, Oklahoma and Noble; five city superintendents, Oklahoma City, Cleveland, Nelogony, Guthrie and Pawhuska; and two board members from Pawhuska and one each from New Hope and Guthrie attended.³

During this formative period, the interest of the profession increased, and "finally the county superintendents were asking for the work."⁴ Mrs. Adams was able to say in her 1929 report, "The educators of our state . . . have cooperated in a splendid way."⁵ But this energetic leader must have looked forward to the establishment of an even firmer cooperative relationship than she and her two predecessors had enjoyed.

Developing an Organizational Framework

Developing organizational framework presented fewer problems for

¹ Ibid., p. 93.

² Ibid., p. 87.

³ Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention, March 10-12, 1926.

⁴ Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams to J. E. Burkett, March 19, 1957.

⁵ National Congress, Proceedings, Washington, D. C., 1929, p. 358.

the new organization than some of the other organizational needs. The original constitution and by-laws of the Oklahoma Congress were brief and simply written. The first three articles dealt with routine matters of name, objects, and membership. Article four provided officers consisting of a president, a vice-president-at-large who served as aide to the president, a vice-president for each district of the OEA, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary, a treasurer and an auditor.¹ There was a board of managers "consisting of officers . . . directors of state departments and chairmen of standing committees," and an executive committee consisting of the officers of the state organization. The board's function was to structure the general policies of the state organization while the executive committee was empowered to conduct business between board meetings and to act in emergencies within the adopted policies of the organization. An annual convention was provided which could amend the constitution, on proper notification, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present.

The by-laws described in some detail the powers and duties of officers and board members, set annual dues at ten cents per member, authorized local units to send one delegate to the state convention for each of its twenty-five paid memberships, and set procedures for nominations and elections of state officers.

The question of revising this original framework soon arose for Mrs. Slaughter told the National Convention in 1925:

The first work of the state branch this coming year is to re-organize the state on a definite and systematic plan. The general

¹"Firsts" (Oklahoma Congress Files).

plan will follow the national organization in its five departments but with minor changes in the organization of standing committees of respective departments. These changes have been made because of the infancy of the work in the state and the impracticability of immediately expanding it as the national has outlined.¹

Revision of the constitution was discussed by the board of managers in March, 1926; and in February, 1927 a by-laws committee report was adopted after the group had conferred with Mrs. Charles E. Roe to eliminate any provisions in conflict with the by-laws of the national organization.²

The first revision combined the constitution and by-laws into a single document under the dual heading. It spelled out in more detail some of the provisions of the original document. No additions were made to the group of elective officers, but the president was given authority to appoint a historian, parliamentarian, and sergeant-at-arms. This first revision increased the representation at state conventions, making it possible for local units to send one delegate for each ten paid memberships.³

In March, 1928 the annual convention in Ponca City made two significant changes in the constitution and by-laws. It reduced the ratio of voting delegates to paid memberships to the original ratio of one to twenty-five. The larger representation had not worked out as had been anticipated. Many cities were unable to send their full share of delegates because of lack of travel funds and other problems of time and convenience, and since the hostess cities always could provide a full

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Austin, Texas, 1925, p. 261.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, February 12, 1927.

³"Firsts" (Oklahoma Congress Files).

slate of delegates, the one-to-ten ratio gave them disproportionate voting strength at annual conventions.¹

The convention of 1928 also increased annual dues from ten cents to twenty-five cents in an effort to remedy the severe financial difficulties discussed earlier. Mrs. Adams, the state president, anticipated a decrease in membership, but felt the step was necessary to get the organization out of debt and on a financially sound basis.²

None of these changes represented a basic reorganization of the Oklahoma Congress. They did result, however, in a clarification of the organizational structure, a realistic approach to the problem of finance, and in making decisions of the annual convention as representative of the membership as was possible under limitations imposed by conditions which made it difficult for local units to send full slates of delegates.

The First Three Presidents

Some of the qualities of leadership represented by the first three presidents have emerged in the discussion of needs and problems which faced the new organization. Each made a significant contribution, but Mr. R. W. Clark, the second president, served only an interim appointment, from November, 1926 to March, 1927. Half of the formative period occurred in the administration of Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, the first president who served from November, 1922 to November, 1926. Mrs. H. A. Adams served the last two years of this period from March, 1927 to March, 1929.

¹Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (March, 1928), unpagued.

²Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams to J. E. Burkett, March 19, 1957.

The First President

Mrs. Dora Bounifield Slaughter, the first state president, was a native of Nevada and the daughter of a prominent lawyer who later became a judge of the Nevada Supreme Court. Her early ambition was to study law; instead she attended an Episcopal school for girls in Nevada and later a Methodist school in San Jose, California.¹ Her marriage to Mr. John P. Slaughter occurred in 1890, and the Slaughters lived for a time in Pueblo, Colorado, where Mrs. Slaughter engaged in PTA work as early as 1900, only three years after the founding of the National Congress.

The Slaughters came to Oklahoma City about the time of statehood when Mr. Slaughter was named chief of the U. S. Weather Bureau station in Oklahoma City. With their two children, John McBride and Dell, they lived at 1915 Classen Boulevard. Mrs. Slaughter was active in the Eastern Star, having served as Worthy Matron of the Nova Chapter in Oklahoma City. She was an active member of the congregation of St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City and keenly interested in civic and educational affairs. It was said of Mrs. Slaughter that she was "never too busy to relieve the sick and distressed,"² and she apparently continued these ministrations in spite of the pressing affairs of her office, as indicated by this notice in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher:

Mrs. Slaughter, state president, has recently spent one month at the bedside of a very dear friend, finally helping to lay her away. This accounts for Mrs. Slaughter's seeming neglect in unanswered letters, requests, etc.³

¹Mrs. Fred Donoho, "Here's To Mrs. Slaughter," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, January, 1924, unpagged.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

That she was equally generous with the time she devoted to the affairs of organization is seen in this statement by Mrs. Earl Foster, first treasurer: "Often Mrs. Slaughter came to my home and stayed for a week or ten days and we compared notes, answered letters and often held executive meetings."¹ Her own record of activities for October and November, 1924 also illustrates the great amount of time and energy she devoted to her work as state president:

On October 2, I met in conference with Mr. Conolly, Commissioner of Labor, and a group of ladies from the following clubs in Oklahoma City; Sorosis, Motherhood Culture Club, WCTU, and The Council of Jewish Women.

Upon an invitation from the president of the Cosmopolitan Club . . . I was a guest at a luncheon, and gave my support to Mrs. Harrison in her plea for a home for dependent girls, and the next day was invited to attend a meeting of the Excise Board to meet with the members individually At this time I spent a week with Mrs. Harrison in checking up the news boys and doing work for Judge Christison.

On the morning of October 10th, I attended a conference of the Welfare Workers and gave an address in the afternoon to members of Gatewood school.

On October 12th, I attended a meeting of the Oklahoma Education Association at Ada, Oklahoma, arriving home on the 14th on an early train and leaving for Altus, Oklahoma, to attend a district meeting of OEA.

In November, I spent Educational Week at Okmulgee, meeting with the officers of several schools, beginning at 9:00 a.m., visiting schools at the invitation of Mr. Barton, Superintendent, and meeting and addressing members of the Parent-Teacher Associations from noon until late at night. In some instances I addressed four groups a day, besides being a guest of the Rotary Club and Lions Club at a luncheon and telling them what PTA stands for. In the evening, I visited rural schools.²

To the National Convention in 1924 Mrs. Slaughter reported:

It is useless to tell you members of this convention the number of places visited and organized over the state. The experiences

¹Foster, "Reminiscences . . .," pp. 3-4.

²Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "State President's Report, 1924-25," p. 5 (Slaughter Files).

have been thrilling, especially when you are out on a country road, with the county superintendent of schools, stuck in the mud, in the pouring rain, at twelve o'clock at night. (I forgot to mention the county superintendent was a lady).¹

Late in November, 1926 ill health forced Mrs. Slaughter's resignation, but her interest in parent-teacher work continued. In 1927, the Fifth Annual Convention of the Oklahoma Congress conferred on her the title of Honorary Vice-President in appreciation of her work, and the Sapulpa Council presented her with a life membership.² In 1928, John McBride Slaughter was fatally injured by a runaway team in Elko, Nevada, and died before his parents could reach him. On June 2, in less than twelve hours following her son's funeral, Mrs. Slaughter also succumbed.³ She was buried on June 5, 1928 in Rose Hill Cemetery in Oklahoma City.⁴ A state committee prepared a resolution on behalf of the Oklahoma Congress which said in part:

Be it resolved that due to her untiring efforts the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers was made possible and strengthened by her untiring hands, that the entire state sustains a great loss in the passing of Mrs. Slaughter.⁵

The Second President

R. W. Clark of Okmulgee succeeded Mrs. Slaughter as president. He was a consulting geologist and became interested in parent-teacher

¹Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "Oklahoma Is Still on the Map," 1924, unpagged (Slaughter Files).

²Minutes of the Fifth Annual Convention, March 16-18, 1927.

³Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), June 2, 1928, p. 20.

⁴Ibid., June 5, 1928, p. 5.

⁵Resolution Adopted at Guthrie, Oklahoma, June 2, 1928 (Adams Files).

work through his three children, Grace, June, and Bobby. He was not one of the original state officers, but his interest in the Oklahoma Congress dated back at least to the First Annual Convention in Tulsa in 1923. The exact date upon which he was elected president of the Okmulgee PTA Council is not available, but it must have been about 1925 for it was in that year that the council sent Clark as a delegate to the National Congress convention in Austin, Texas. In 1925, at the Third Annual Convention of the Oklahoma Congress, Clark was appointed to the first state budget committee,¹ and when the board of managers was presented the resignation of Mrs. Ben Hilburn as vice-president of the Oklahoma Congress on April 28, 1925, Clark was the unanimous choice to succeed her.²

When Mrs. Slaughter's resignation became effective on December 11, 1926, Clark again was the unanimous choice of the state board to complete her unexpired term.³ He apparently had no intention of seeking the full term in the 1927 convention as his name was not placed in nomination for the office of president. He was nominated for vice-president from the floor of the convention, but the delegates elected the choice of the nominating committee, Superintendent John Whipple of Cushing. Mrs. Adams recalls Clark as "a good parent-teacher worker" and states that to her knowledge Clark never missed a meeting of the state board of managers during the time he served on the board.⁴ Clark was not the

¹Mrs. H. A. Adams, History of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers (Crescent, Oklahoma: Crescent Publishing Company, 1935), p. 17.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 28, 1925.

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, December 11, 1926.

⁴Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams to J. E. Burkett, March 19, 1957.

first man to hold the office of president for a state parent-teacher congress; but it was an unusual distinction for a man to have become a state PTA president at the time Clerk served.¹

The Third President

Emily Burks Adams, the third president, was a native of Farmington, Missouri. She came to Oklahoma in 1890 with her parents who homesteaded a farm near Edmond and later moved to Edmond to be near the normal school which her father had helped to locate in that city. She graduated from normal school and taught at Harrah and in Edmond. Mr. Hugh Adams, whom she married in 1906, was cashier of a bank in Crescent. Mrs. Adams organized her first PTA in Crescent as early as 1910, and she later organized a PTA at Douglas during the short period when the family lived there. There were four Adams children; Arno, who died in infancy, and Jack, Hugh J., and Charles who grew up in Oklahoma.²

For a few years following World War I the Adams lived in San Diego, California. There Mrs. Adams gained additional training for her future PTA leadership through an adult education class in Community Service. When the Oklahoma Congress was organized in 1922, the Adams had

¹ Many Oklahoma Congress members believed Clark to have been the first man in the United States to hold the office of state president. That this is not the case can be seen from a letter from Mrs. Charles E. Roe, National Field Secretary, to Mrs. J. Y. Allen, Corresponding Secretary for the Oklahoma Congress, dated December 31, 1926. Mrs. Roe said: "I consider Mr. Clark a mighty brave man to become state president, although I hope more and more that we will be able to have men assume this position. Mr. Clark, however, is not the first one, as Mr. Yoder of North Dakota served as president there for several terms."

² Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams to J. E. Burkett, March 19, 1957, with enclosure "Some Facts Relative to Mrs. Adams and Her Administration."

recently moved to Goltry where Mr. Adams had bought the First National Bank. Adams planned to build up the bank and then sell it, and accomplished his purpose as he had planned within five years. The family then moved to Crescent where Mr. Adams became president of the bank in that city.¹

In addition to her parent-teacher activities, Mrs. Adams was an active member of the Christian Church, a Past Matron and honorary life member in the Eastern Star, a life member of the Central College Alumni Association, a Red Cross worker, and a charter member of the Cynthia Walker Chapter of United Daughters of the Confederacy.²

Mrs. Adams' PTA work in Goltry not only attracted the attention of Mrs. Slaughter, but also of the National office, and soon she was chosen state organizer. For the succeeding thirteen years, until ill health forced her to limit her activities, Mrs. Adams held a state office in the Oklahoma Congress. She served as historian, state organizer, and as chairman for promotion of Child Welfare Magazine. So interested was she in building the new organization that she traveled untiringly over the state often at her own expense to promote the work.³ In November, 1926 she wrote a fellow officer in the Oklahoma Congress:

My mail has so piled up that I hardly know where to begin. I think from the inquiries . . . the work is going fine. I wish I could keep closer tabs on the work but with county superintendents getting interested as they are this can be brought about in the right way, and I'd rather go more slowly and build a strong foundation. I am simply in love with this work and wish I were a millionaire and could devote my entire time to it.⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Letter from Mrs. H. A. Adams to Mrs. C. C. Liebler, November 23, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

Mrs. Adams became president of the Oklahoma Congress at a critical period. Financial difficulties forced the closing of the state PTA office and this retrenchment added to her work load, as her activities for 1927-28 indicate. In May, 1927 she was one of fourteen delegates to attend the National Congress convention in Oakland, California. She also found time to address the Linwood PTA in Oklahoma City, attend a banquet at the Senior High School unit, attend a state board meeting, speak to the Capitol Hill unit, and organize a new PTA unit at Ringwood, Oklahoma. June found her speaking to the student body at Phillips University, Enid, after which she conducted a school of instruction. She made many speeches and visited numerous units in Alfalfa County during June. July and August were devoted to planning the work of the year ahead. September was a busy month as schools reopened; and her October schedule included a state board meeting in Oklahoma City, an address on "Efficient Leadership" at the Central District meeting, conducting a school of instruction at a District meeting in Tonkawa. In November she addressed the Wewoka unit, attended a tea with Wewoka officers and a banquet and PTA reception given by the Wewoka Ministerial Alliance. On November 27 she met with the Ada PTA Council and high school faculty and spoke on "High School Units;" the following day she addressed the East Central District OEA convention and conducted a school of instruction in the afternoon helping to organize that District. In November she also spoke to the Central and Capitol units in Guthrie, and delivered a public address at Crescent.¹

¹Mrs. H. A. Adams, "President's Annual Report," Delivered at the Annual Convention at Ponca City, Oklahoma, March 28-30, 1928 (Adams Files).

This pace continued through January 6, 1928 at which time Mrs. Adams became seriously ill. The following notice appeared in the January-February issue of the Oklahoma Bulletin:

We regret deeply to be obliged to announce that our beloved president is obliged to take an enforced vacation. She has given herself so completely to the work that she is quite exhausted, and must have a complete rest and change; so her husband is driving her to Florida.¹

The following month, however, Mrs. Adams was able to report: "Your president returned from Florida much improved, due of course to the wonderful assistance and consideration of all co-workers."² She resumed the duties of the president's office, serving until the end of her second term in March, 1929.

Mrs. Adams was an energetic organizer, an untiring worker, an eager participant, and a zealous believer in the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. She succeeded in furthering the organizational work of the state and the good relationship with the Oklahoma Education Association. She faced realistically the need for adequate dues to support a state organization, and with the retrenchments she carried out, was able to restore financial solvency to the organization.

Organizational Growth

The need for expanding the membership was a primary consideration in the early years of the Oklahoma Congress. Mrs. Foster recalls, "We were all organizational secretaries. We so believed in the work we never

¹Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (January-February, 1928), unpagged.

²Ibid., Vol I (March, 1928), unpagged.

missed a call to speak in its behalf."¹ Mrs. Adams believed that, "every individual should be made to realize that he or she belongs to the community and that a parent-teacher association is a unit of service in the interest and welfare of all,"² and Mrs. Slaughter wrote:

As an organization of parents and teachers, we believe that education . . . is no longer the privilege of a favored few but a necessity for all. Let us seek, therefore, to reach each city, town, and rural community so that there may be an active parent-teacher association in every public school in Oklahoma.³

A few years later, this emphasis on increasing memberships would bring this appropriate comment from the state program chairman, "In the confusion of organization let us not forget, 'the child is in our midst.'"⁴

Gradually the emphasis shifted from one of maximum expansion to that of developing organizational procedures and techniques which would promote growth with maximum stability and minimum friction with local school authorities. In 1925, for example, the state board of managers decided to ask each county superintendent to act as chairman of organization for his respective county, and the board further stated that "Henceforth, we shall direct this organization only upon approval of the county superintendents."⁵ A plan eventually emerged which included a department of extension at the state level with six organizational committees work-

¹Foster, "Reminiscences . . .," p. 4.

²Mrs. H. A. Adams, "Parent-Teacher Facts," Guthrie, 1928, unpagged (Adams Files).

³Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "Greetings from the State President," Perry Convention Bulletin (March, 1924), unpagged (Slaughter Files).

⁴Mrs. Earl Foster, "Report of State Chairman of Program," 1932 (Johnson Files).

⁵Letter from Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, President, to Mrs. H. A. Adams, State Chairman of Organization, November 11, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

ing to extend the parent-teacher movement in the following areas: PTA in Colleges, PTA in High Schools, PTA in Grade Schools, PTA in Churches, Pre-School Circles, and PTA Study Circles.¹ These state committees were duplicated, in so far as leadership could be found, at the district and county level.

Following the state organization on November 17, 1922, the first PTA units to pay dues and become officially affiliated with the Oklahoma Congress were: Marietta, Antlers, Oklahoma City, Welsh, Marlow, Poteau, Custer City, Pryor, two at Cordell, Waukomis, Luther, Woodlawn at Sapulpa, Texola, Willard at Ada, Hayes at Ada, Sayre, El Reno, Wayne, First Ward at Ardmore, Hillsdale at Ardmore, Healdton, an unnamed unit at Ardmore, and Capitol Hill of Oklahoma City. These original twenty-five units enrolled 1,433 members.² Perhaps the most unique parent-teacher group in the state was that organized as early as January, 1923 at the Quapaw Indian School at Miami. The superintendent called it the only Indian PTA in the world.³

Meetings at which new units were organized often featured outstanding speakers and attracted large audiences. The organization of the Norman Junior-Senior High School unit on March 1, 1927 was attended by 700 persons, and Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University was the speaker.⁴

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (January, 1928), pp. 20-21.

²Foster, "Reminiscences . . .," p. 3.

³Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), January 4, 1923, p. 9.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. VIII (April, 1927), pp. 26-27.

In addition to organizing new units, Oklahoma Congress leaders attempted to persuade independently organized groups to affiliate. In 1924, A. Floyd, County Superintendent of Pontotoc County, reported a PTA in each of the 53 school districts in his county, but added that many of the units were not affiliated with the state and national organizations. Floyd credited the interest of parent-teacher groups in Ada with promoting the work among the rural schools.¹ In 1925 Liebler spoke to about 300 parents and teachers in Sallisaw. He found a local association which was not affiliated and was very careful in his talk "to emphasize the need of affiliation with the state branch," pointing out frequently "that the only way this could be done was through the payment of dues."² In 1928, Carpenter urged affiliation with state and national organizations, pointing out the need for state and national guidance and the strength that comes with unity. She found "a growing consciousness that every local unit is a part of the tremendous parent-teacher movement, not just a local unit."³

Pressure for the organization of new units produced many local PTA units with very little permanent basis for organization. In 1928, Lucas reported:

I will say that we have many, very many, local organizations throughout the southwest that think they are fully organized, but they are not. I have been three years getting our home local properly organized.⁴

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, February, 1924, unpagued.

²Letter from C. C. Liebler to Mrs. H. A. Adams, December 19, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

³Neva Carpenter, "Why Affiliate with the State Congress?" Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. X (October, 1928), p. 24.

⁴Letter from Wirt Lucas to Mrs. H. A. Adams, April 14, 1928 (Adams Files).

Clark reported the organization of a PTA at Schulter in 1925 with the note, "This is a strike troubled community and they think the PTA will be a panacea for their ills."¹ The incentives used to gain members did not always have a direct connection with the aims and objectives of the parent-teacher movement. At Jefferson School in Tulsa

A chart was hung in each school room with the names of all parents and stars were placed upon the chart as the parents joined: a red star for mother, a blue star for father,² and a gold star at the top of the chart when the teacher joined.²

Such incentives proved so effective that they became an important part of the membership promotion at the state level in later years and grew both in numbers and varieties.

Membership cards for the Oklahoma Congress were furnished by the national organization and during the 1925-26 school year a committee was appointed "to develop a credential card to be issued to organizers over the state."³ In 1929 the organization made available PTA buttons for men. L. N. Morrisett, principal of Roosevelt Junior High School in Oklahoma City had the distinction of having bought and worn the first of these.⁴

County and City Councils

A plan to organize PTA Councils in every county in the state was announced in 1925. Alfalfa County was the first to organize a PTA

¹Letter from R. W. Clark to Mrs. H. A. Adams, November 13, 1925 (Adams Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. II (March, 1929), p. 3.

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, December 12, 1925.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. II (March, 1929), p. 4.

council, but in September, 1926 Alfalfa, Noble, and Tillman were the only counties with county PTA councils.¹ County councils were never organized in a majority of the counties of the state. The Oklahoma Congress was more successful, however, in organizing PTA councils in cities. According to Mrs. Foster, the first city PTA council was organized at Sapulpa with Mrs. C. J. Davenport as its first president and "councils in other cities followed in quick succession."²

A city-wide council of patrons clubs existed in Oklahoma City before the organization of the Oklahoma Congress, and continued to function as a council of patrons clubs after the state branch was organized. This created an organizational situation in which local PTAs belonged to a city-wide council of "patron's clubs," but it was skillfully resolved. In February, 1924, Mrs. H. H. Gambrel, president of the Capitol Hill Junior High School PTA, arranged for a meeting of all officers of PTA units in Oklahoma City. The group was entertained in the school cafeteria with Mrs. Irene Mattox, president of the Federated Patrons Clubs of Oklahoma City, presiding. The group voted to resolve itself into a PTA council, terminating the inter-school organization of Patrons Clubs.³ This was a very important milestone in the progress of the parent-teacher movement in Oklahoma City.

¹Form letter from Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, President, to County Superintendents, 1926 (Slaughter Files). Also "Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. VIII (September, 1926), p. 18.

²Foster, "Reminiscences . . .," p. 7.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, February, 1924, unpagged.

Organization of Districts

The Oklahoma Congress had difficulty, not only in organizing its eight districts, but also in keeping them organized. The original PTA districts were based on the OEA districts which, in turn, were based on the somewhat gerrymandered eight congressional districts of the state. As geographic areas they had no relation to organizational efficiency or need. Central District, including Canadian, Creek, Cleveland, Grady, Jefferson, Kingfisher, Lincoln, Logan, Noble, Oklahoma, Pawnee, Payne, and Stephens counties, was the first to organize at a meeting held February 8, 1924 in the St. Paul's Episcopal Parish House in Oklahoma City.¹ East Central District was organized at a PTA meeting held in connection with the District OEA convention, October 30, 1927.² The Panhandle District could boast but six organized locals as late as 1928,³ while the North District reported only 24 units.⁴ The more populous Northeast District was organized at the first District Convention, held in Claremore in November, 1927.⁵ By March, 1928 six of the eight districts were, to a certain degree, organized and functioning.

College PTA Units

The first PTA on a college campus was organized at Stanford

¹Ibid., January, 1924.

²Ada Evening News, October 30, 1927, p. 6.

³Mrs. A. F. Burch, "Report of the Panhandle District," March, 1928 (Adams Files).

⁴Mrs. J. L. Jones, "Report of North District PTA," March 28, 1928 (Adams Files).

⁵Mrs. Paul L. Heilman, "The Prize Report, Northeast District," Oklahoma Bulletin, May, 1928, unpagged.

University about 1925.¹ In the early years of the Oklahoma Congress Mrs. A. Richards of Norman headed a state committee to organize PTA units on college and university campuses,² but PTA organization enjoyed little success at the college level. On March 1, 1928 the first, and perhaps only, senior college PTA unit in Oklahoma was organized on the campus of the University of Oklahoma. Dr. A. B. Walker, a Norman Dentist, was named president; Dr. Gayfree Ellison, vice-president; and Mrs. J. D. McGuire, secretary. Meetings were scheduled for the first Thursday in each month. Miss Edna McDaniel, University Dean of Women, said she expected the organization to help the University in promoting student welfare. It was suggested that membership be open to parents of students, former students, faculty members and their wives, and University hostesses.³ Fifty persons attended the organizational meeting, but apparently the organization was short-lived. It seems likely that the geographic problem was too great to form a representative organization composed of parents and teachers of college students.

Life Members

Mrs. H. A. Adams was the first life member of the Oklahoma Congress, having selected the life membership as a Christmas gift from her family in December, 1926.⁴ Life membership fees were dedicated at that

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (January, 1928), pp. 20-21.

²Ibid.

³The Norman Transcript, March 2, 1928, p. 1.

⁴Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (October, 1954), p. 15.

time to an endowment fund which was described as a "permanent fund which provides a regular income for the promotion of parent-teacher work in the state."¹ The income from this source must have been meager, however; only ten life memberships were issued prior to 1930.

Growth in Membership

The membership report for April 1, 1926 showed 12,441 members from 236 units, a substantial growth for the first four years. There were only 98 school districts represented, however, from the 4,933 which existed in the state at that time. Obviously the PTA movement grew more readily in the larger city school districts than in the small rural districts. In fact, 69 of the 236 units in 1926 were located in the following five cities: Bartlesville, Holdenville, Oklahoma City, Okmulgee, and Sapulpa.¹ There were twenty counties in the state without a single affiliated PTA unit.² The largest unit in the state in 1926 was Roosevelt Junior High School PTA in Oklahoma City with 646 members.³

Total membership increased each year through 1925-26; but for the 1926-27 school year, gains in new units were more than offset by losses of units previously organized, and membership declined by about 600 for the year. In 1928, state leaders adopted the goal of doubling the membership. This goal was far too optimistic but the organization gained more than four thousand members to reach its largest membership to that time,

¹"Oklahoma PTA Membership from April 1, 1925 to April 1, 1926" (Oklahoma Congress Files).

²Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention, March 10-12, 1926.

³Ibid.

16,752. A year later, however, depression began to show its effect as membership declined by more than 3,000, and the Oklahoma Congress was forced to turn its major attention from that of building an organization to that of facing the crisis of "the great depression."

CHAPTER IV

THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1935)

Oklahoma in the Great Depression

The impact of the New York Stock Market crash in 1929 was not immediately felt in Oklahoma. Still basically an agricultural state, Oklahoma had not experienced much of the prosperity of the "Twenties" and many Oklahoma farmers regarded their situation in 1929 as one which probably could not get much worse. As depression deepened, however, Oklahoma farmers faced not only the prospect of financial annihilation with "five cent cotton and forty cent wheat," but extended drought on the Great Plains set "Deserts on the March"¹ and in desperation thousands of Oklahomans joined the semi-nomadic ranks of migrant labor, heading westward.

In the midst of this economic chaos, a bankrupt colonizer returned from an unsuccessful venture in Bolivia to seek the governorship of Oklahoma. In a "cheese and crackers" campaign, William H. Murray defeated oilman Frank Buttram and launched a fight against the depression. Murray was "a powerful, spectacular, and unpredictable executive,"² a controver-

¹This was the title chosen by Dr. Paul B. Sears for one of the important books of the period.

²E. E. Dale and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), pp. 355-56.

sial figure who had little use for the philosophy of the New Deal and refused to take advantage of many of the federal programs advanced to deal with the depression. In a period of extreme crisis, Murray used extreme measures. He called out the National Guard nineteen times, slashed ad valorem tax assessments drastically, and when the legislature rejected parts of his program, he went to the people with initiative petitions and, following his "Firebells Campaign," a special election. E. W. Marland, who succeeded Murray, was close to the national administration and had more success in dealing with depression problems in Oklahoma.

Depression and Education

With or without depression, schools in Oklahoma faced severe problems in 1929; but depression, which forced abandonment of the ad valorem tax base for local school support without immediate enactment of other support, resulted in three years of chaos. State Superintendent John Vaughan gave this estimate of the educational situation in 1933:

It is doubtful if we realize how close to disaster our present civilization has been A year ago if the legislature had been in session and someone had proposed a law to close all educational work in the state, I verily believe it would have been enacted into law; not only that, but it would have been approved by a majority of the people of the state. That is not true today. Only in a few places did the people fail to make necessary levies for their schools. Sanity is returning among our people.¹

Vaughan paid tribute to the parent-teacher association as "one of the most potent agencies in maintaining the rights of our children."

The Plight of Teachers

Depression brought financial disaster to Oklahoma teachers and

¹John Vaughan, "The Clouds Are Breaking," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VI (September, 1933), p. 4.

the situation was aggravated by a surplus of persons certified to teach. As the depression deepened, Oklahoma teachers were forced to work for progressively smaller salaries, with progressively larger class loads, with fewer instructional materials, in buildings which received progressively less maintenance, and with children whose parents found it increasingly difficult to provide needed clothing, textbooks, and other school supplies. In a period characterized by retrenchment, school costs in Oklahoma were reduced more than costs for any other major function of government and teachers suffered more economic loss than any other group of public servants.¹

This background of economic depression and educational retrenchment posed two major problems for the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers; how to maintain, and if possible extend, the organization, and how to deal with crises which threatened both home and school.

The Fourth State President

During these trying times a number of interesting persons were active in the organization. Mrs. Charles D. Johnson who became president in 1929 was the wife of a Tulsa physician and mother of two daughters, Phillis and Maxine. She attended Tonkawa Junior College and Western State Teachers College at McComb, Illinois, and received special instruction in the University of Chicago. She taught four years in Cherokee and Oklahoma City Schools.² Prior to her election, Mrs. Johnson served two terms as

¹ John M. Ashton, "Functional Costs of Government in Oklahoma Compared with the Cost of Education" (unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1933), documents this thesis.

² Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, "A Few Personal Notes," unpagged (Johnson Files).

president of Central High School PTA in Tulsa and another two terms as president of the Horace Mann unit. She served as council representative from both schools and was president of the Tulsa Council at the time of her election.

Mrs. Johnson's election was unusual in that she had never been a member of the state board and was not the choice of the nominating committee. The Tulsa Tribune reported:

A fight over the presidency was carried to the floor after the nominating committee had presented its report with a full slate of officers prepared. Mrs. Virgil Browne of Oklahoma City, third vice-president during the past year, was nominated by the committee. Immediately after the report was presented and other nominations were called for . . . the name of Mrs. Charles D. Johnson . . . was offered by Mrs. Emma Carpenter of Bartlesville.¹

As a result of this action, Mrs. Johnson received a majority of the votes.

During her two terms as president, Mrs. Johnson served as a member of the Governor's education committee, and was appointed by President Hoover as a delegate to White House Conferences on Children and on Housing. Mrs. Johnson's report for 1931 lists attendance at the National Parent-Teacher Convention, five meetings of the Governor's Commission and speeches at Bartlesville, Blackwell, Checotah, Chickasha, Cushing, Henryetta, Norman, McAlester, Oklahoma City, Okmulgee, Picher, Redfork, Sapulpa, Sayre, Stillwater, Turley, and Weatherford. She gave fourteen talks in Tulsa and edited a weekly column of "Parent-Teacher Notes" in the Tulsa Tribune throughout the year.²

¹Tulsa Tribune, March 29, 1929, p. 1.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1931, p. 326.

The Fifth State President

Mrs. John R. Burns, the fifth state president, was elected by the Eleventh Annual Convention in Sapulpa in April, 1933. The nominating committee submitted two candidates for the office of president, Mrs. George E. Calvert of Oklahoma City and Mrs. John R. Burns of Okmulgee. Although there is no indication in the official minutes, the Sapulpa Herald reported a "turbulent election" in which Mrs. Calvert was defeated "when the Tulsa delegation formed a coalition in favor of the Okmulgee delegation."¹

Mrs. Burns had been active in the state organization for several years prior to her election as state president, having served as treasurer in the Johnson administration. She had served also as local unit president and as president of the Okmulgee Council. Mrs. Burns was the mother of seven children. As treasurer she often took her youngest, Ruth Ann, to state meetings. At one of these meetings, Ruth Ann was elected official mascot of the Oklahoma Congress. Another baby arrived in the Burns' home a few months after her election as president. Mrs. Burns administration was marked by personal tragedy in that serious illnesses existed in her family from time to time resulting in the death of one of her children and two other members of her immediate family.² With a large family of young children, she was unable to leave her home duties to engage in the vigorous organizational schedule which had been followed by the first three presidents and, to a lesser extent, by Mrs. Johnson.

¹Sapulpa Herald, April 6, 1933, p. 1.

²Adams, History . . ., pp. 38-39.

Other Leaders

In addition to the presidents many other leaders were important in the state organization. During the ten years Floyd L. Coates served as county superintendent of Kay County, he was one of the most active school men in the state in promoting PTA, and one of the most active members of the state board of the Oklahoma Congress. In a single year he attended fifty different unit meetings at which he was invited to speak¹ and, at one time during his tenure, every school in Kay County had an organized PTA.²

The state also was fortunate in having the leadership of Mrs. Virgil Browne who directed the extension work of the organization as third vice-president and became first vice-president in 1929. Mrs. Browne had moved to Oklahoma from Louisiana where she had served as state president, and was a life member of the National Congress.

The McAlester area had an energetic leader in the person of Mrs. Ray DeLa Mater. Having served as McAlester's delegate to the first state convention and having held many offices in the local and state work, she was credited with a "keen intellect and an unlimited capacity for hard work" and with keeping alive and growing "the fires of enthusiasm for a better and more inclusive knowledge of childhood."³

A prominent leader in Oklahoma City was Mrs. Irene Young Mattox.

¹Letter from Floyd L. Coates to Mrs. John R. Burns, April 29, 1935 (Calvert Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (May, 1946), p. 9.

³A. D. Hefley, "Progress in McAlester Organization," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XII (January, 1931), p. 20.

Mrs. Mattox became a teacher in Greenville, Texas, when the National Congress was only seven years old. She borrowed the family savings and went to Chicago University for a summer session under Miss Elizabeth Harrison, principal of Chicago Kindergarten College. She became greatly interested in parent-teacher work and was active in organizing patrons clubs in Oklahoma City several years prior to the organization of the Oklahoma Congress.¹

Instruction in Parent-Teacher Work

In July, 1929 Mrs. Johnson announced that the National Congress would offer a correspondence course covering the history, growth, and organization of parent-teacher associations. Enrollment in Oklahoma was limited by the National Congress to twenty-five persons, and the fee was five dollars per person.² Only eight Oklahomans enrolled, but several study groups were organized for a wider sharing of the material.³

Schools of Instruction

More significant than the correspondence courses were the schools of instruction conducted by Mrs. Charles E. Roe, the national field secretary. From March 11 to March 28, 1930 she held eight district schools for parents, two county schools, and one county teachers' institute. She held one or two-day meetings in each of thirteen towns reaching an esti-

¹Mrs. Irene Young Mattox, "I Remember," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIV (April, 1952), p. 20.

²Form letter from Mrs. Charles D. Johnson to Association Presidents, July, 1929 (Johnson Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1930, p. 286.

mated 2,000 individuals representing some 200 schools.¹ In 1931, Mrs. Roe returned to Oklahoma to conduct training courses in nine of the state colleges,² and from September 6 to September 22, 1934 she again traveled over the state conducting three-day study periods arranged by city council presidents. This took her into a total of twenty-one different localities where she talked to an estimated 5,485 members from 168 local units, not counting her audiences for broadcasts on Radio Stations KVOO in Tulsa and WKY in Oklahoma City.³

Parent-Teacher Courses in Teacher Education

In October, 1930 the state board of managers discussed a report that practically no institution in Oklahoma offered credit courses in parent-teacher work to candidates in teacher education. Mrs. George E. Calvert moved that the PTA request the president of each institution to include such courses in the curriculum and that such courses be taught by individuals who had completed work in the subject at Columbia University.

There followed a letter from Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins of the National Congress to the institutions offering teacher education in Oklahoma.⁴ She enclosed information on the qualifications required by the

¹Mrs. Charles E. Roe, "Field Service Report, State of Oklahoma," March 11 to March 28, 1930, unpagged (Johnson Files).

²National Congress, Proceedings, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1931, p. 326.

³Mrs. Charles E. Roe, "Field Service Report," September 6 to September 22, 1934 (Johnson Files).

⁴Form letter from Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins, Education Secretary, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, to Presidents of State Colleges, 1930 (Johnson Files).

National Congress of its certified instructors and a statement of the financial arrangement which the National Congress offered to colleges which were approved for such instruction.

President Bizzell responded for the University of Oklahoma stating that he would be pleased to cooperate with Mrs. Johnson and that he had referred Mrs. Watkins' letter to Dr. Helen B. Burton, head of the department of home economics.¹ Dr. Burton did not have funds in her budget to employ an additional teacher for the summer, but suggested that since Miss Greta E. Smith, Director of Parent Education in the Oklahoma City Schools, would be teaching for the summer, the National Congress might add its contribution to her salary and place her on full time status.²

Mrs. Watkins replied that "a parent teacher course is quite different from a parent education course," and asked, "How well is she prepared in the parent-teacher field?" Mrs. Watkins wondered if an arrangement could not be made with either L. N. Morrisett of Oklahoma City or Mrs. Charles D. Johnson "to hold a parent-teacher conference at the University of Oklahoma for a week in lieu of a more extended course."³ This plan apparently was adopted, not only at the University but also at eight other higher institutions in Oklahoma including Oklahoma A. and M. College, Oklahoma City University, Tulsa University, and state teachers

¹Letter from Dr. W. B. Bizzell, President of the University of Oklahoma, to Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins, December 12, 1930 (Johnson Files).

²Letter from Helen B. Burton to Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins, December 19, 1930 (Johnson Files).

³Letter from Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins to Helen B. Burton, January 13, 1931 (Johnson Files).

colleges at Ada, Durant, Tahlequah, and Weatherford.¹ The college at Alva cooperated but with a slightly different plan.

Morrisett, a high school principal in Oklahoma City, and Mrs. Charles E. Roe conducted the courses. Excellent results were reported with some 4,000 persons represented in the classes. By 1934 all teachers colleges of the state were offering some type of formal instruction in parent-teacher work, but not all for credit.²

In her report for the 1932-33 school year, Mrs. Johnson reported parent-teacher short courses and institutes in the colleges at Ada, Alva, and Tahlequah, and at Oklahoma A. and M. College, Oklahoma City University, and Tulsa University. Mrs. Roe returned to the state to teach five of the courses. Morrisett and Eli Foster, a Tulsa high school principal, taught one each. More than 4,000 attended one or more of the lectures, representing seventy local units.³ Some of the topics presented in these short courses were "The Parent-Teacher Movement;" "Leaders and Members;" "Committee Work;" "Program Making;" and "The Parent-Teacher Meeting."⁴

This program of training for organization was probably the outstanding achievement of the Johnson administration. Its effect undoubtedly was cumulative, resulting in an expanding knowledge of state and national PTA goals and of good organizational techniques for the achieve-

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1931, p. 325.

²Max Chambers, "Report of the Department of Extension," 1933-34, p. 1. (Johnson Files).

³Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, "President's Annual Report," 1932-33, p. 1 (Johnson Files).

⁴National Congress of Parents and Teachers, "Report on Courses and Institutes," June 13-17, 1932 (Johnson Files).

ment of goals. It served as a forerunner of the Oklahoma Congress Field Service which became important in later years.

Maintaining the Organization in Depression

The depression probably encouraged a closer relationship between the Oklahoma Congress and professional educators as school administrators and teachers looked to the PTA for help in a period of great need. The education secretary of the National Congress, Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins was delighted with invitations in 1931 to address the PTA Section, City Superintendents, High School Principals, and Parent Education Sections of the annual OEA convention.¹ George D. Hann, president of OEA, extended the Oklahoma Congress "a pledge of sincere cooperation."² An instance of cooperation by a county superintendent was the provision of a parent-teacher desk in the office of Ray O. Sutherland, County Superintendent in Stephens County, for use of the Central District president.³

A more significant development, however, was the formation during the 1932-33 school year of "a joint committee of the Oklahoma Education Association and the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers . . . in order to keep closer in touch with problems . . . during this emergency."⁴ Meetings were held in several different parts of the state "for the purpose of informing parent-teacher people, board of education members, legislators, and civic leaders of the proposed program of educational

¹Letter from Mrs. Arthur C. Watkins to Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, January 13, 1931 (Johnson Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VI (November, 1933), p. 1.

³Ibid., Vol. V (October, 1931), p. 7.

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, 1933, p. 317.

legislation."¹ The state superintendent and the OEA president "gave facts and figures and presented a plan to meet the needs."²

The depression also encouraged closer cooperation with and increased dependence upon the Oklahoma Congress by such agencies as the State Department of Health, State Library Commission, Oklahoma League of Hard of Hearing, and the State Tuberculosis Association.³

Publications and Publicity

When the 1928 convention increased membership dues from ten to twenty-five cents per person per year, it was intended to devote a part of that increase to the regular publication of a monthly bulletin which would be distributed to each member. A year later the president reported this had not been possible primarily because of "delinquent dues and the difficulty of getting a correct mailing list."⁴

During the 1930-31 school year, six numbers of Volume IV of the bulletin were issued and sent to each member.⁵ Volume V was issued monthly from September, 1931 through March, 1932 with the February-March numbers combined into a single issue. The January, February, and March 1933 issues also were designated as Volume V, so that the single volume covers a period of two years. Six issues of Volume VI appeared, covering the months of September, 1933 through February, 1934. Volume VII is the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ National Congress, Proceedings, Des Moines, Iowa, 1934, p. 256.

⁴ Mrs. H. A. Adams, "President's Report," March 27-30, 1929 (Adams Files).

⁵ National Congress, Proceedings, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1931, p. 326.

first in which the numbers appeared regularly for the entire school year. It contains nine numbers for the months of September, 1934 through May, 1935.

At the 1929 convention Mrs. Fred Donoho reported that 10,000 copies of the first issue of the bulletin for the 1938-29 school year had cost \$300.00 of which \$70.00 came from the sale of advertising. The second and remaining issue for the year cost \$290.00 for 9,000 copies, but the "Guthrie Ladies" handled the mailing to save \$40.00.¹

In July, 1929 Mrs. Johnson announced that Mrs. G. A. Waring, the bulletin editor, would get out the first number about August fifteenth, and that it would go out in bundles to the local unit presidents for distribution to members;² but when August arrived, Mrs. Johnson explained that a Mrs. Grace Leighton of Tulsa had offered to "get out our state bulletin monthly at the same cost that one every two months would have cost us."³ This was to be accomplished through the sale of advertising for which the Oklahoma Congress had agreed to pay Mrs. Leighton \$65.00 per month. Mrs. Waring, who continued as editor, reported this plan to the state board on October 29, 1929, the first month in which the bulletin was issued for the 1929-30 school year.⁴ This October issue of 14,111 copies was not sufficient to meet the demand, and Mrs. Waring also

¹Minutes of the Seventh Annual Convention, March 28-29, 1929.

²Form letter from Mrs. Charles D. Johnson to Local Unit Presidents and others, July, 1929 (Johnson Files).

³Form letter from Mrs. Charles D. Johnson to Association Presidents and State Board Members, August 26, 1929, p. 1 (Johnson Files).

⁴Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 29, 1929.

had difficulty in mailing the bulletin in that some local unit presidents had failed to provide sufficient addresses.¹ The November-December numbers were combined into a single issue after which the bulletin appeared regularly through June, 1930. The advertising copy covered a wide range of products including political candidates of both major parties. By April, 1930 the circulation had reached 17,500 and the state treasurer reported increasing difficulty in keeping mailing lists up to date.²

The April meeting of the state board again discussed the advisability of carrying political advertising, and voted to "authorize the bulletin manager to accept political advertising taking care to remain distinctly non-partisan in policy by writing all candidates when they file of the chance to advertise in the paper."³

Five persons served as editor within this five-year period. In December, 1930 Mrs. Waring retired as editor and Mrs. Johnson appointed Mrs. E. A. Cook of Tulsa, "a young college woman of unusual ability, a mother and an active parent-teacher worker."⁴ But Mrs. Cook resigned the following year to enter teaching, and Mrs. Ray F. DeLa Mater of McAlester was appointed.⁵ Because of the illness of her husband, it was not possible for Mrs. DeLa Mater to function for a time and Mrs. Johnson served

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (November-December, 1929), p. 6.

²Ibid., Vol. III (April, 1930), p. 3.

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 9, 1930.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IV (December, 1930), p. 1.

⁵Letter from Mrs. Charles D. Johnson to Mrs. George E. Calvert, August 1, 1931 (Johnson Files).

as editor in the interim. In September, 1933 Mrs. DeLa Mater was able to resume the task of editing the bulletin and the place of publication was changed to McAlester for 1933-34. In September, 1934 Mrs. John R. Burns became editor and the place of the publication was changed to Okmulgee.

As the depression continued it became increasingly difficult to sell advertising and none appeared in the bulletin from September, 1933 through February, 1937. Publication of the bulletin from budgeted funds severely restricted the size of the bulletin and forced the state board to limit its distribution to the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, program chairman, and school principal in each local PTA.¹

Other Sources of Publicity

During the Johnson and Burns administrations the PTA page was continued in the Oklahoma Teacher and PTA features appeared with greater regularity in state newspapers. A weekly broadcast beginning January 1, 1933 was carried on Radio Station KOMA in Oklahoma City. The programs were planned by Mrs. George E. Clark, state publicity chairman and included music with a parent-teacher talk by a leading educator or a member of the state board. In addition, the Oklahoma City Council sponsored a weekly broadcast on WKY called "The Parents' Hour,"² and other radio stations scheduled PTA programs occasionally.

The growing importance of parent-teacher publications resulted in the appointment of Mrs. James S. Goepfinger as state publications chair-

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VII (September, 1934), unpagged.

²Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, "Report of Central District," 1933-34, p. 2 (Johnson Files).

man in 1928. During the five years she served in that capacity, Tulsa Superintendent, Dr. P. P. Claxton, and his successor, Dr. Merle Prunty, furnished office space in the Tulsa Board of Education Building. Mrs. Goepfinger credited this courtesy as being "no small factor in raising the work in units throughout the state."¹

The publications chairman not only distributed "free material" and "pay material" to local units, but also arranged many interesting exhibits of parent-teacher publications at PTA conventions, OEA conventions, PTA schools of instruction, county and district meetings, and even at county fairs. The Blackwell Morning Tribune reported such an exhibit at the Kay County Free Fair consisting of "a number of books furnished by various organizations in the county" and "free literature describing the aims of PTA and the work done in Kay County."² At the rear of the booth a number of scrap books representing member units of the council were on display.

National Publications in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Congress placed great emphasis on securing subscriptions to the national publication, Child Welfare Magazine. In 1933, Mrs. Johnson reported that Oklahoma had 1,258 members receiving the magazine and that these members constituted the highest percentage of subscribers of any state in the organization.³ This statement was modified somewhat

¹Mrs. James S. Goepfinger, "Report of State Chairman of Publications," 1932-33, p. 1 (Johnson Files).

²Blackwell Morning Tribune, September 16, 1932. p. 3.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, 1933, p. 317.

in Mrs. Burns' report in 1934 which ranked Oklahoma first for the second consecutive year in distribution of Child Welfare Magazine for its class. Ratings were based on quotas assigned to each state by the Congress.¹ Oklahoma earned thirty-four gold stars from the National Congress, the maximum which any state could receive under the gold star award program.² Oklahoma won national honors again in the 1935 competition, and the Okmulgee High School PTA received a National Parent-Teacher Magazine Cup for its promotion of the national publication.³

Need for State Office

The need for a state office continued, but there was little progress toward its establishment during the depression. Mrs. Johnson observed that "only one with an iron constitution could go on at the pace demanded"⁴ without the assistance of a state office. In 1934 Mrs. Burns reported budget items totaling \$913.03 for the purpose of establishing a state office. It should be pointed out, however, that \$435.00 of this amount was for travel to national conventions and for the purchase of national publications. A small amount of office furniture was purchased in the spring of 1935, and the president was also authorized by the board to provide "some safe way to protect all materials and files kept in the

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Des Moines, Iowa, 1934, p. 256.

²Letter from Mrs. Pearl M. Remington to Co-Workers, April 10, 1934 (Burns Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Miami, Florida, 1935, p. 231.

⁴Letter from Mrs. Charles D. Johnson to Mrs. George E. Calvert, August 8, 1931 (Johnson Files).

state office"¹ which continued to be located in the home of the president.

Mrs. Langworthy, the national president who attended the state convention in 1935, discussed the need for a state office with the board. At this meeting, October 11, 1935, Mrs. Burns reported that the furniture and equipment of the state office consisted of "rug, typewriter, cabinet, letter-graph, and two files."² The board delegated to Mrs. Burns and Mrs. George E. Calvert the task of setting up a state office. In November, 1935 the state board approved the purchase of a desk for \$25.00 to be used by Mrs. Ralph Boyte, executive secretary, who was to receive a salary of \$50.00 per month.³

Financing the Organization

In March, 1929 Mrs. John R. Burns, the treasurer, reported a small balance would be left after the receipts and disbursements of the year, and that this was the first time in the history of the Oklahoma Congress that such a balance had obtained.⁴ Following Mrs. Johnson's election, a budget committee was appointed to plan a budget for the following year. She reported that this was the first attempt to utilize a budget committee and that it proved to be of great value. Every department was furnished with "stationery, stamps, and funds for other necessities."⁵ The year ending March 23, 1930 is the first for which an

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 5, 1935.

²Ibid., October 11, 1935.

³Ibid., November 9, 1935.

⁴Minutes of the Seventh Annual Convention, March 28-29, 1929.

⁵National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1930, p. 288.

auditor's report was found in Oklahoma Congress files. The report shows expenditures of \$2,822.16, and a bank balance of \$1,303.38, with an additional \$248.72 in a savings account.¹

By 1932, however, the state board discussed a situation in which the Oklahoma Congress, as a result of a decrease in membership, had failed by \$4,000.00 to reach its budget goal. The board appointed a committee to prepare a downward revision of the budget which would become effective on approval of two-thirds of the board members.²

In February of 1933 the National Congress President, Mrs. Hugh Bradford, reported that many local treasurers were not paying state and national dues. She blamed this neglect on the pressures of the emergency but asked local units not to cripple the efficiency of the state and national organizations.³

The state treasurer reported a balance of \$1,341.56 of which \$275.96 was in the endowment fund⁴ for the 1934-35 school year. But that balance had shrunk to \$68.89 by September 30, 1935 and on November 9, a new treasurer reported insufficient funds to pay delinquent dues to the National Congress. The board authorized her to send \$7.75 to the National to protect the schools involved in the event the matter could not be "straightened up by the former treasurer."⁵

¹Benson, Cooper, and Parks, "Audit Report," March 19, 1929 to March 23, 1930 (Johnson Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 6, 1932.

³Letter from Mrs. Hugh Bradford to PTA Presidents, reprinted in Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (February, 1933), p. 6.

⁴Mrs. W. I. Bond, "Treasurer's Report," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

⁵Minutes of the State Board of Managers, November 9, 1935.

Promoting New Units and Increasing the Membership

In 1930 the Oklahoma Congress listed twelve requirements for a "standard association." These requirements served as a guide to local units in their organizational efforts. Most of these requirements were quantitative such as membership of fifty per cent of the homes and teachers, attendance by an average of sixty per cent of the members, and at least six regular meetings each year.¹ Achieving these goals and standards earned awards and recognition which sometimes assumed unusual importance. For example, the state chairman for promotion of Child Welfare subscriptions could state:

In spite of the many problems every parent-teacher unit has been called upon to handle through the trying year just past, the most regrettable one perhaps has been the illness which forced our state chairman of the Child Welfare to resign

And yet, regardless of those handicaps, Oklahoma has forged bravely ahead and will be in line for the Gold Star Honor Medal which the 1932 convention of the National Congress . . . will present to the branches having earned ten or more Gold Stars in the 1931-32 Child Welfare campaign.²

This great concern for earning gold stars in a period when the very existence of public education was threatened, and when home life was subjected to the severest tests of economic pressures must have seemed overdrawn by many Oklahoma Congress leaders.

By 1935 there existed considerable difference of opinion as to the value of offering awards for the achievement of organizational goals, and Mrs. H. B. Caldwell moved that the pre-convention board meeting discontinue standard and superior ratings. The question was discussed at

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XI (December, 1930), p. 19.

²Mrs. T. J. Sharp, "Report of Chairman for Child Welfare Magazine," 1932 (Johnson Files).

another board meeting on November 9, 1935 at which Mrs. Ira Burk, the North District president, reported units in her district were "clamoring for goals to be set up," and a letter was read from the president of the Kay County council favoring a continuation of the goals and awards program. In the general discussion which followed, a consensus developed for continuing the achievement awards for standard and superior units and, on the motion of Floyd Coates, the board authorized Mrs. Calvert to appoint a committee to set up standards.¹ What apparently was needed was the observance by local units of Mrs. Caldwell's sound advice:

Let me urge that you use the requirements for standard and superior ratings as a measuring stick for your unit . . . but also let me urge that you do not make these requirements of undue importance and let them become the goal rather than the gauge of the organization.²

Improving the District Organization

Northwest District, last of the eight PTA districts to organize, held a meeting for that purpose on June 17, 1931 in Alva. Speakers for the occasion included Dr. W. W. Parker, president of Northwestern State Teachers' College, Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, state PTA president, and Mrs. Charles E. Roe, national field secretary.³ Mrs. C. O. Green of Alva was named president of the district which included seven counties, Alfalfa, Blaine, Ellis, Harper, Major, Woods, and Woodward.⁴ Mrs. Green's report

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, November 9, 1935.

²Letter from Mrs. H. B. Caldwell to Local Unit Presidents, September, 1935 (Calvert Files).

³Alva Review-Courier, June 17, 1931, p. 3.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (September, 1931), p. 7.

for 1932-33 indicated little growth for the district. She told of organizing new units at Northwestern State College, Riverview, Union Center, Fairview, and Cherokee, and reported "some other organizations . . . which did not see fit to affiliate."¹

In Spetember, 1931 Central District President, Mrs. E. E. Brown, reported 5,810 members in 116 units, a gain of 28 units and 463 members for the year.² A year and a half later a new district president, Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, reported individual membership had decreased, but felt this loss was overbalanced by "the spirit of friendliness, goodwill and sympathetic service" in the interest of underprivileged children. Grady County had reported not a single unit and in the other counties the effort had been "to retain our present membership rather than stress new organizations."³ The following year, 1933-34, Mrs. Kennedy reported, "Those associations well organized came through with flying colors while those with weak leadership have either fallen completely by the wayside or are on the brink."⁴ She reported attendance by 140 delegates at the Eighth Annual District Conference in Crescent, November 2, 1933, to discuss the theme, "The Challenge of a Changed World."⁵

"Definite progress along all lines of parent-teacher work" was reported from East Central District for the 1933-34 school year, with eighteen new units and plans for a special effort to organize rural com-

¹Mrs. C. O. Green, "Report of Northwest District," 1932-33 (Johnson Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (September, 1931), p. 7.

³Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, "Report of Central District," 1932-33 (Johnson Files).

⁴Ibid., 1933-34, p. 1.

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

munities the following year.¹ Reports from the North District indicate progress without specifying the growth in units or memberships,² but the Panhandle District experienced little growth during the entire period.³

Mrs. Guy Sigler reported twelve counties organized in the Southeastern District for the 1933-34 school year. Pittsburg County had the largest number of units, but the largest single unit was Sunset PTA of Healdton in Carter County. Six counties, Marshall, Johnston, Le Flore, Love, McIntosh, and Pushmataha, had but one unit each. In all there were 46 PTA units in the Southeastern District with a total membership of 1,238.⁴

The seventeen counties of the Northeastern District made the most rapid growth in 1932-33 with a membership of 5,080 in 64 units, a gain of 1,000 members. Northeastern District contained the two largest units in the state in 1932-33, Barnard and Kendall PTA both in Tulsa.⁵ This growth continued through the 1933-34 school year in which efforts were again "concentrated on extension work,"⁶ and membership increased to 5,846 in 84 local PTA units.

¹Mrs. C. L. Kirkpatrick, "Report of East Central District," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

²Mrs. W. A. Jones, "Report of the Work of the North District," 1932-33 (Johnson Files).

³Mrs. A. F. Burch, "Report of Panhandle District, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," 1932-33 (Johnson Files).

⁴Mrs. Guy H. Sigler, "Southeastern District, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," 1933-34, pp. 1-2 (Burns Files).

⁵Mrs. Paul Heilman, "Annual Report of Northeastern District," 1932-33 (Johnson Files).

⁶Mrs. Bruce T. Luckett, "Annual Report of Northeastern District," 1933-34 (Johnson Files).

Distribution of Parent-Teacher Units

In 1929, eight of the twelve cities in Oklahoma with more than 10,000 population and ten of the fifteen cities of 5,000 to 10,000 had PTA units; but in towns of 1,000 to 2,000 population there were PTA units in only fifteen of eighty-seven,¹ definite evidence that PTA was spreading more rapidly in the urban areas. Many newly organized units were short-lived. With the March 20 deadline approaching in 1930, Mrs. A. W. Shattuck, the state treasurer reported that dues had been received in the state office from only 181 of the 400 units organized the previous year.² In November, 1931, Mrs. Howard Keagy reported a need for "the conservation of the old members, acquiring of new members and . . . informed membership."³

A factor in the growth of new units was the existence in many localities of the state of strong, thriving units. Such was the leadership of McAlester in organizing new units in the Southeastern District. In a period of three months, Mrs. Ray DeLa Mater, Mrs. W. E. Griffin, Mrs. R. D. McAffee, and Mrs. Denman T. Clark organized eight new units in Pittsburg County, four in Latimer, fourteen in Carter, four in Atoka, two in Johnston, and one in Le Flore County.⁴ In Kay County, Mrs. Ira Burk, president of Carlisle PTA frequently assisted in organizing new

¹Whitley, "Parent-Teacher Associations," p. 47.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (February, 1930), p. 5.

³Letter from Mrs. Howard S. Keagy to Local Unit Presidents, November 10, 1931 (Johnson Files).

⁴A. D. Hefley, "Progress in McAlester Organization," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XII (December, 1930), p. 20.

units in that area.¹

Efforts continued to organize county councils. Pottawatomie County, organized March 1, 1932 with only five units and a total membership of 80 members, and added ten new units within a year. The county also contained city councils at Shawnee and Tecumseh, and by 1933 there was a PTA organization in each of the nine Shawnee schools.² Carter County organized a council November 22, 1930 with nine schools, six of which were in Ardmore.³

Meanwhile, rural organization was being promoted under the able leadership of Dr. J. C. Muerman of Oklahoma A. and M. College. But Muerman found it difficult to establish rural units which could survive over a period of years, and he felt that lack of continuity in leadership was the limiting factor. Rural leaders frequently moved to other communities and a new leader could not be developed "on the spur of the moment."⁴ Muerman felt that rural organizations should cooperate in forming a strong county council with a definite program for the several units.

The problem of non-affiliated parent-teacher groups was discussed by Coates in 1934. He cited an instance in which "a moderate sized city . . . organized eight units. Six decided not to become congress units

¹Blackwell Morning Tribune, February 25, 1932, p. 3.

²Letter from Mrs. J. H. Parks to Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, March 16, 1933 (Johnson Files).

³Daily Ardmoreite, November 24, 1930, p. 2.

⁴Max Chambers, "Report of the Department of Extension," 1933-34, p. 2 (Johnson Files).

while two cast their lot with the state and national."¹ Coates reported the six non-affiliated units had passed from existence while the other two were still thriving.

Because of the economic conditions which made it difficult for some parents to pay even the nominal dues of parent-teacher membership, Mrs. Johnson advised unit presidents in 1929 to allow both parents to join the local PTA "with only one name in each family being sent to the state."² This also permitted each family to be represented with the state and national. Leaders in Oklahoma City decided in 1931-32 that paid membership would be emphasized, notwithstanding the depression; but the group also agreed that no parent should be embarrassed if he could not pay the annual dues of twenty-five cents, but should be made to feel that he was one of the group.³

In spite of the severe economic crisis, the Oklahoma Congress experienced a substantial, if somewhat uneven, growth during the depression. The membership declined for the first two years, recovered slightly in the third year, only to decline again in 1932. But the upward trend in membership which began with the 1932-33 year was never reversed, and membership climbed to 19,011 by the close of the Burns administration.

There remained, however, some basic problems and organizational needs. These included the continuing need for a state headquarters with

¹Floyd Coates, "The Need for Unity," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XV (January, 1934), p. 13.

²Form letter from Mrs. Charles D. Johnson to Local Unit Presidents and State Board Members, August 26, 1929 (Johnson Files).

³Mrs. A. N. Lago, "Membership," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (January, 1932), p. 9.

employed personnel, establishment of the state bulletin as a regular publication, and a reorganization of the eight districts into more functional geographic areas.

CHAPTER V

SIGNS OF PROGRESS (1935-1940)

Progress in Dealing with Depression

Oklahoma had not recovered from depression when Governor E. W. Marland was inaugurated in January, 1935 nor would recovery be complete when his term expired in 1939; but Marland's administration was "a period of constructive achievement."¹ He proposed extensive tax reforms to finance needed services of government, took full advantage of federal relief programs, and secured enactment of legislation to deal with the lingering problems of depression. In this he was not unopposed and much of the progress of his administration came to a halt in January, 1939 with the inauguration of Governor Leon C. Phillips, one of Marland's strongest legislative critics and a former speaker of the house. In the meantime, however, there were "signs of progress."

Educational Progress after Three Years of Chaos

From 1931 to 1933 the total cost of education in Oklahoma had been reduced from approximately \$32,000,000 to \$22,000,000 per year. Of this amount, \$7,000,000 was the result of reducing the salaries of teachers.²

¹Edwin C. McReynolds, Oklahoma, A History of the Sooner State, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 374.

²Harlow's Weekly, Vol. XLII (January 6, 1934), p. 3.

Depression was a principal factor in the sustained crisis, but the destruction of the ad valorem tax base upon which school finance rested, without provision of an adequate substitute, had aggravated the situation in the worst possible way. The Fifteenth Legislature which convened in January, 1935 opened a new era in state support of schools by enacting into law House Bill 212 providing \$8,200,000¹ in state support for schools. More important than the size of the appropriation was the enactment, for the first time in Oklahoma, of a state guaranteed minimum program of public education. The Sixteenth Legislature extended the concept of the guaranteed minimum program by appropriating \$12,000,000 in state funds.² While some of this progress was reversed by the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Legislatures under Governor Phillips, and many educational needs and deficiencies remained, a measure of stability had been restored to public education.

The Sixth State President

Having weathered the worst effects of depression, the Oklahoma Congress in 1935 was in a position to make substantial organizational progress. Much of the leadership for that progress came from the sixth president of the Oklahoma Congress, Mrs. George E. Calvert of Oklahoma City.

Maude Richman Calvert was born August 19, 1892 in Effingham, Kansas, but came to Oklahoma as a child, attended a rural elementary school near Watonga and high school at Geary. She graduated from Oklahoma

¹House Bill 212, Session Laws, Fifteenth State Legislature, 1935.

²House Bill 6, Session Laws of Oklahoma, Sixteenth State Legislature, 1937.

A. and M. College in 1916 and received a master's degree from Oklahoma University in 1920. She studied at Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1920-21; and attended summer session at the University of Chicago in 1924. Her teaching experience included service in a one-room rural school, high school, junior agricultural college, and the University of Oklahoma. She served as state supervisor of home economics from 1921 to 1925, organizing the first Mothercraft classes in Oklahoma, a movement which later spread to other states. She authored four textbooks: First Course in Home Making, 1924; Everyday Living For Boys and Girls, 1925; Home Making Students Notebook, 1927; and New First Course in Home Making, 1932.¹

Mrs. Calvert had known, personally, each of the state presidents who preceded her, and was acquainted with the work of the Oklahoma Congress from its beginning, having attended the organizational meeting on November 17, 1922 at the request of State Superintendent Wilson. Her first PTA position was chairman of home economics for the Oklahoma City Council in 1926. She served as the first state chairman of home economics from 1927 to 1929, and the first state chairman of parent education, 1929-33. It was in this position that she organized, and directed the Oklahoma Council of Child Development and Parent Education. She served on the State Emergency Education Committee from 1933 to 1935, and was a member of the state board of the Oklahoma Congress from 1926 to 1933. She was active in local PTA work and in the Oklahoma City Council of which she was president when she was elected state president November 9,

¹Who's Who in America, Vol. XX, 1938-1939 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company), p. 488. See also Logan County News, January 9, 1936, p. 1.

1935.

This remarkable woman maintained many other interests and furnished leadership in several other organizations. She helped organize, and served as president of the Big Sisters organization in Oklahoma City; was organizing president of the Oklahoma City Branch of the National League of American Pen Women; helped organize the Oklahoma Society for Crippled Children and served on its executive committee; was chairman of home economics training for the General Federation of Women's Clubs; was chairman of the Oklahoma County Consumer's Council, and of the Women's Division for the Civic Center Project in Oklahoma City; was vice-chairman of the Oklahoma Illiteracy Committee, and of the Children's Code Commission; was a delegate to the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection in 1930, and director of the Oklahoma Conference which grew out of it; was a delegate to President Hoover's Conference on Home Planning and Home Building in 1931; was an active member of the Christian Church, the Eastern Star, and several civic and professional groups. She was elected to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1934, and in 1935 was named Oklahoma City's most useful citizen, the second woman to receive that honor in the twelve-year history of the award.¹

Notwithstanding all of these civic activities and honors, Mrs. Calvert was also a successful wife and mother. She married George E. Calvert, an Oklahoma City man who handled municipal bond issues, on October 31, 1923. At the time she was elected president of the Oklahoma Congress, the Calverts lived at 1101 N. E. Eleventh Street in Oklahoma

¹"Mrs. Calvert Honored," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XVII (February, 1936), p. 18.

City. Their three children, all girls, were Mary Ann, aged 10; Betty Lou, 8; and Maude Richman, 3. In a newspaper interview, Mr. Calvert said of his wife, "Her family has always come first, and since she's a good enough manager to get the other things too, I'm for it."¹

While serving as president of the Oklahoma Congress, Mrs. Calvert was elected vice-president of a newly organized Oklahoma Safety Council. At the close of her administration she continued to serve the organization and to receive state and national recognition. She was a member of President Roosevelt's White House Conference on Children in a Democracy in 1940, and served as national chairman on education for home and family life for the National Congress.² She addressed the first general session of the Florida Congress Convention in Miami, Florida, in 1941;³ but with all of these honors and recognition, when her youngest daughter entered Central High School in 1949, Mrs. Calvert again became a local PTA president. This then, was the leader who would direct the affairs of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers for the next five years, a longer administration than that of any other president in the history of the organization.

Strengthening the Organizational Framework

In 1936 the National Congress initiated a plan for reorganization but no state was required to follow the national pattern unless it proved

¹Oklahoma City Times, December 28, 1935, p. 1.

²"Parents and Teachers Oklahoma Congress," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXII (September, 1940), p. 35.

³Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (January, 1941), p. 14.

suitable to state needs,¹ and the stimulus for reorganization of the Oklahoma Congress came primarily from state leadership.

The state convention in 1936 set annual dues at a minimum of twenty-five cents, of which twenty cents was forwarded to the state office and the remainder retained by the local unit. The state office forwarded five cents to the National Congress and made a refund of five cents per capita to units in all counties organized under a director.²

In her annual report for 1937-38, Mrs. Calvert noted a change in by-laws governing election and service of state officers. State officers were divided into groups to be elected in different years, and three-year terms were provided with no reelection. County extension chairmen were given added importance. They were to be elected by the executive committee, receive special training for their work, and serve the county in the same capacity that the district directors served the districts.³ The general term "room representatives" was adopted for persons variously known as class patrons, room mothers, room committees, and home room fathers. The function of room representatives was to attempt to "bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child."⁴

¹Letter from Mrs. B. F. Langworthy, President of the National Congress, to Mrs. George E. Calvert, July 21, 1936 (Calvert Files).

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XVIII (November, 1936), p. 31.

³Mrs. George E. Calvert, "Annual Report of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1937-38," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (September, 1938), p. 30.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIX (April, 1938), p. 42.

The most important reorganization was the change in the PTA districts. When Mrs. Calvert became president, the state was composed of eight geographical districts, and the district president and officers served as assistants to the state president. These districts varied widely in their ability to support strong district organizational programs. Little success had been achieved in the organization of county councils; only five existed in 1936 two of which had been organized within the year. Councils were organized in twenty-nine of the thirty-seven cities having populations of five thousand or more, but few successful councils existed in smaller cities, and Mrs. Calvert advised groups in towns of fewer than five thousand population to affiliate with county councils.¹

Mrs. Calvert presented a detailed report to the Seventeenth Annual Convention proposing a complete reorganization of the districts. A change was forthcoming in any case since Oklahoma Congress districts followed those of OEA which were revised by that association. From many suggestions received from the membership, a committee appointed by Mrs. Calvert recommended four regions to replace the districts. Each region was to be in charge of a vice-president of the state organization. The proposed regions were designated as Southwest, Southeast, Northwest, and Northeast Regions. On behalf of the by-laws committee, W. Max Chambers presented the proposal and the convention adopted it.²

Under the reorganization the rapidly growing Northeast District received no new area; it simply was designated Northeast Region; but the

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1936, p. 264.

²Minutes of the Seventeenth Annual Convention, October 10, 1939.

struggling Panhandle, North, and Northwest Districts were combined into a Northwest Region giving the area a much firmer organizational base. The Southwest District joined the Central District to make up a new Southwest Region, and the Southeast and East Central Districts were combined to form the Southeast Region.¹

While the geographical reorganization was being effected, much study also was being given to a reorganization of Oklahoma Congress committees. In April, 1940 a committee consisting of Mrs. R. V. Rorabaugh, Mrs. George E. Clark, and N. L. George completed a plan which the board of managers approved in October. Under the plan parent-teacher committees were divided into two basic groups, those which had to do with organization and procedure, and those which had to do with activities and projects. The organization and procedure committees were eight in number with appropriate sub-committees in some instances. These eight committees were program service, membership, room representatives, hospitality, publications, publicity and radio, rural service, historian and procedure notebook, and goals and achievement. The activity and project committees included character and spiritual education, legislation and citizenship, health, education for home and family life, safety, visual education and motion pictures, education, library service and reading, recreation and cultural arts, and juvenile protection and child guidance.²

The resulting organizational structure consisted of local units which might form city or county councils within one of the four regions which made up the Oklahoma Congress. The governing bodies in order of

¹The Guthrie Daily Leader, October 11, 1939, p. 3.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 8, 1940.

their importance were the state convention, state board of managers, state executive committee, and the structural standing committees.¹

Establishing a State Headquarters

In November, 1935 Mrs. Calvert announced the establishment of a state headquarters in the Wells-Roberts Hotel in Oklahoma City with Mrs. Ralph H. Boyte as executive secretary; but in January it was announced that the state office had been moved to the OEA headquarters located at that time in 400 Key Building. In reality the PTA occupied a storeroom or mailing room of the OEA offices which afforded very little space. Mrs. Boyte was employed on a part-time basis, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from ten to twelve; and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from three to five p.m.² Mrs. Boyte worked through May, 1936 at which time she resigned because of ill health. Mrs. Calvert accepted her resignation with "sincere regret" thanking her for the help she had given in establishing the state office.³

On June 26, 1936 Mrs. Calvert notified the executive committee that she had employed Willie Lee Broome as office secretary. Her office schedule was 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and she also assisted Mrs. Calvert with PTA matters at her home.⁴ This was the

¹"Objects for Every Child," unpagged (Wadlin Files).

²Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Local Unit Presidents, January 6, 1936 (Calvert Files).

³Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Mrs. Ralph Boyte, June 26, 1936 (Calvert Files).

⁴Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Executive Committee, June 26, 1936 (Calvert Files).

beginning of several years of service by Miss Broome (later Mrs. Carl H. Stapp). Miss Broome was a second cousin of Mr. Calvert and, at the time of her appointment, was living with the Calverts and attending school. In August, 1936 Mrs. Calvert recommended that the executive committee "establish office hours from 8:30 to 12:30 each day, and that Miss Broome give an hour or two of her time at home to receive instructions, take dictation, etc."¹ This plan was adopted and the committee increased Miss Broome's salary from \$25.00 to \$50.00 per month which Mrs. Boyte had received.

For the 1936-37 school year the state office prepared a mailing list of 3,000 names each month, prepared and mailed six hundred unit packages, and a total of 3,600 copies of form letters, issued many original letters, and wrote 1,200 receipts for dues. The office also prepared material for the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin and for the parent-teacher page in the Oklahoma Teacher, handled a total of 2,400 telephone calls, and received an average of ten visitors each week.²

In 1939, the state office was described as follows:

A visitor enters the state office finding the office space 10' x 16' in which there are two desks . . . three filing cabinets, two small cabinets for supplies, one built-in containing shelves for publications, one card table with four chairs (used every day in preparing material for mailing), one stenographer's chair, two typewriters, one line-a-time, and a floor lamp.³

A surprising amount of work was accomplished in this small space and with

¹ Ibid., August 18, 1936.

² "Official Program and Yearbook, Fifteenth Annual Convention," 1937 (Calvert Files).

³ "State Office Report," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XII (September, 1939), pp. 24-25.

only one full time employee. In July and August, 1938 a girl was employed to help the office secretary prepare mailing lists. No additional part time help was available until April 21, 1939 when the National Youth Administration placed a girl in the PTA office seven days per month. Through a WPA project, the state office also received the help of two ladies, each of whom worked 104 hours during the months of May, June, July, and August, 1939.¹

Improvement and expansion of the services of the state office were noted in Mrs. Calvert's report to the National Congress convention in 1940.

We are happy to report that we now have an office space of two rooms and a storage closet We now have two desks, one typewriter desk, three filing cabinets, three sets of shelves for publications, three typewriters and other office equipment necessary to carry on the work. The office secretary keeps all records answers correspondence . . . makes up a mailing list of 6,000 each month for the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, sends out all material to local units, including letters prepared by state chairmen.²

Launching a State-wide Project

The mothercraft classes which Mrs. Calvert initiated as state supervisor of home economics in 1921 probably represent the beginning of organized family life education in Oklahoma. Later, as state chairman of parent education, Mrs. Calvert organized and directed the Oklahoma Council of Child Development and Parent Education. One of the outstanding leaders in family life education in the United States was Dr. Alice Sowers, a field worker for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Omaha, Nebraska, 1940, p. 298.

Dr. Sowers visited the state on National Congress assignments and in January, 1938 was employed by the University of Oklahoma as professor of family life education. Under her direction the scope of the family life program expanded rapidly and Dr. Sowers became well known in parent-teacher circles throughout the state.

In June, 1939 budget cuts at the University threatened an early termination of her services in family life education. Through prompt action of the state board of managers an agreement was worked out in which the University agreed to furnish Dr. Sowers with office space, a full time secretary, office supplies and equipment, and a portion of travel expense and salary, while the Oklahoma Congress agreed to secure funds to supplement the contribution of the University.¹ As a result of this cooperative agreement, the Oklahoma Family Life Institute was incorporated under a state charter on July 14, 1939. The charter was signed by Mrs. Calvert, Mrs. C. E. Scott, and Mrs. H. B. Caldwell. Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University, became president of the Institute, and Herbert H. Scott, director of extension at the University was its vice-president.² How the Institute functioned as the first state wide project of the Oklahoma Congress is discussed in a later chapter.

Progress in Publications

From 1935 to 1940 the state bulletin appeared regularly, having finally achieved the status of a permanent publication. Mrs. John Burns

¹Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "An All-American Plan for a Program in Family Life Education," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXII (April, 1941), p. 36.

²Alice Sowers, "Founding of the Institute," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (May, 1946), p. 6.

continued as editor through December, 1935 and the first five numbers of volume eight were printed in Okmulgee. There was no February, 1936 issue and the following month the place of publication was changed to Oklahoma City. Mrs. H. S. Keagy edited the January, 1936 issue but the March, April, and May issues were edited by Mrs. Leroy Ritter. Nine numbers of the bulletin were issued for the 1936-37 school year with the November issue missing. Mrs. Ritter continued as editor with Willie Lee Broome as assistant editor beginning with the January, 1937 issue. The March, 1937 bulletin began a new format; the magazine became a "slick" publication with photographs, an attractive format and front cover, and was expanded from four pages to sixteen. In September, 1937 Mrs. Calvert became editor of the bulletin and Miss Broome continued as assistant editor. In September, 1938 Mrs. Calvert became both editor and business manager, and continued in that capacity throughout the remainder of her administration. In fact her name appeared on the masthead as editor and business manager as late as 1957.

Financing the Bulletin through Advertising

The improvements in the format beginning with the March 1937 bulletin were made possible by the sale of advertising which had been discontinued during the depression when the sale of advertising became increasingly difficult. The sale of advertising was not an unmixed blessing to an organization based on parent-teacher principles. Mrs. Calvert devoted much effort, ability, and patience to the solution of the many problems which arose.

The executive committee discussed the publications of the bulletin at some length in its December, 1936 meeting, finally adopting a

motion by Floyd Coates, that "Mrs. Calvert and her committee try putting out a bulletin with advertising for two issues and more using their own judgment without embarrassing the state congress."¹

Late in December, 1936 W. B. Warren, publisher of the Oklahoma State Journal made the following offer on the publication of the PTA bulletin:

Our proposal would be to take over full business management and assume financial responsibility for publication of the PTA monthly magazine. We would expect the PTA to assume the mailing expense. It would be understood that PTA would reserve and control the news and editorial policy. We would, however, lend our cooperation in furnishing and editing news items, proof-reading, etc.²

The following month, Mrs. Calvert issued the following authorization for the solicitation of advertising for the Oklahoma Congress:

This is to certify that Mr. C. M. Barde of the Times Journal Publishing Company is authorized to solicit advertising for the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. Any consideration shown him will be appreciated by the state officers and members of our organization.³

Barde began work immediately, but found it "quite a task to start a publication in the face of so many other publications and the opposition to many of them,"⁴ and advised Mrs. Calvert that "considerable effort in a clean way" would be necessary for the first two or three months.

As the sale of advertising continued, problems developed from

¹ Minutes of the State Executive Committee, December 5, 1936.

² Letter from W. B. Warren to Mrs. George E. Calvert, December 31, 1936 (Calvert Files).

³ Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to "Whom It May Concern," January 25, 1937 (Calvert Files).

⁴ Letter from C. M. Barde to Mrs. George E. Calvert, February 3, 1937 (Calvert Files).

several quarters. On July 21, 1937, Mrs. Calvert received a telephone call from Mrs. Lloyd J. Lewis, president of the Tulsa Council, after which Mrs. Calvert wrote Barde that "officials in Tulsa had refused to indorse some of his employees and that he had better make other arrangements."¹ The following day, Mrs. Calvert received a letter from the Better Business Bureau of Tulsa asking for "any and all information you can give us regarding this solicitation."² She advised the Bureau that C. M. Barde had been authorized to solicit advertising, and that since the magazine was not published during the summer, funds from the July sale of advertising were for the purpose of publishing a PTA Yearbook to be distributed at the state convention. Apparently the solicitation had not worked out as anticipated for she said,

We gave Mr. Barde authority to solicit advertising . . . and it seems that he has used my letter in this way - - he has had the letter copied and inserted other people's names instead of his own. These other names are the ones employed by him. I asked him to withdraw these letters and in turn gave him permission to copy my letter indorsing him and told him that it would be necessary for him to give each individual a letter who is employed by him.³

By October, 1937 Mrs. Calvert was considering the possibility of taking charge of the advertising and asked that Mrs. Lewis suggest someone in Tulsa to help with the sale of advertising. In December, Mrs. Lewis wrote a letter commending Mrs. Calvert for the very fine content of the bulletin but adding this criticism of the advertising.

¹Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, July 22, 1937 (Calvert Files).

²Letter from Mr. Edward T. Wigg, Better Business Bureau of Tulsa, to Mrs. George E. Calvert, July 22, 1937 (Calvert Files).

³Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Edward T. Wigg, July 24, 1937 (Calvert Files).

A number of us are quite concerned over the type of advertising which came from Tulsa. We wonder who the new solicitor is. Surely someone who does not understand parent-teacher policies. Of the twenty-three Tulsa ads, six are from business firms . . . while the rest is a roster of our politicians in city hall and court house. You doubtless are not aware of that since there is nothing in the advertising to so indicate. Already calls have begun coming in.¹

Mrs. Calvert replied that it had been very difficult to know where to draw the line on advertising, and added,

Our committee decided that the names of persons sending greetings when no office was mentioned could not be ruled out, but maybe we had better rule out all names and take advertising only from firms. However, we have had some complaints on firms such as finance companies Another objected to the motion picture ad because we could not indorse all of their pictures, and so on. So you see how it is.²

But Mrs. Calvert called B. M. Wilson who was handling the Tulsa advertising and told him to have the Tulsa solicitor submit all advertising from that area to a Mrs. Allman of the Tulsa Council before it was accepted for use in the bulletin. She also appointed a committee consisting of Mrs. C. E. Scott of Shawnee, Mrs. Irene Mattox of Oklahoma City and Mrs. Lewis to study the problem of advertising policy. The committee was not able to meet as a group, but Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Mattox agreed on the following statement.

. . . it would be entirely correct to accept personal ads from individuals for the Yearbook and program, provided no mention of political views or aspirations are mentioned Of course, it is understood that we would not accept ads from tobacco manufacturers, beer "joints" or such places.³

¹Letter from Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis to Mrs. George E. Calvert, December 21, 1937 (Calvert Files).

²Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, January 7, 1938 (Calvert Files).

³Letter from Mrs. C. E. Scott to Willie Lee Broome, March 31, 1938 (Calvert Files).

Another problem grew out of competition with other organizational magazines financed through advertising. While the criticism was not directed at the Oklahoma Congress, a representative of the Oklahoma Club-woman fired this crisp note to Wilson.

You have been in the advertising business long enough to know what the spirit of fair play means. Last Friday, someone working for your magazine called on two politicians and told these men in selling them that it represented the club women of the state.

This is not so. We circulate to 12,000 women each month. Everyone of them is a club woman. Some of them might at the same time belong to the PTA which they do. But your magazine represents the PTA women and not the club women of the state.¹

Another incident developed on June 21, 1938 when a Mrs. Critchlow arrived in Okmulgee and called on Superintendent Max Chambers. She was so vague about her connections with PTA that Chambers "refused to endorse her solicitation of advertisements and advised her to get on the train and go back to Oklahoma City."²

From October 27, 1937 to September, 1939 a number of persons were authorized to sell advertising for the Oklahoma Congress. Names which appear in Oklahoma Congress files include Mrs. A. C. Siekman of Bartlesville, B. M. Wilson, Pat Critchlow, Mrs. Ed Taylor, Mrs. R. L. Buckler, Mary Lee Whitsitt, Mrs. Grace McCarthy, and Mrs. Helen Anderson, all of Oklahoma City, and Mrs. Floyd Summers of Ponca City.³

The problems which grew out of the sale of advertising finally

¹Letter from Bruce L. Greer to B. M. Wilson, May 8, 1938 (Calvert Files).

²Letter from W. Max Chambers to Mrs. George E. Calvert, June 22, 1938 (Calvert Files).

³Form letters from Mrs. George E. Calvert to "Whom It May Concern," July 14, October 27, 1937; January 11, June 27, August 23, September 23, 1938; August 16 and September 9, 1939 (Calvert Files).

resulted in the following decision.

Beginning with the October issue the state president is taking over complete management of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin. We will employ people to solicit advertising, giving them 25% commission It is not possible for us to have a magazine without advertising, but we want to hold the amount of advertising down as much as possible, hence, our attempt to manage the bulletin directly from the state office with our president as editor and business manager.¹

Advertising rates varied slightly from year to year, but the rate card issued June 27, 1938 is fairly typical. The rates were \$70.00 per page, \$40.00 per half page, \$20.00 per quarter page, \$10.00 per one-eighth page, and card size space was available at \$5.00 and \$3.00.² No records are available of the cost of printing each issue, but again a rate quoted to Mrs. Calvert by the Times Journal Publishing Company in August, 1938 is indicative. The estimate was \$168.00 to \$207.00 per issue of 5,000 copies depending on weight and quality of paper.³

The bulletin was distributed to officers and committee chairmen of local units and councils, board members of the Oklahoma Congress, county extension chairmen, superintendents of schools, county superintendents, colleges, public libraries, and to members of the national board of managers.⁴ In addition, subscriptions were taken from members

¹Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Local Unit and Council Presidents, August, 1938 (Calvert Files). See also "The President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (September, 1938), p. 9.

²Letter from B. M. Wilson to Mrs. George E. Calvert, June 27, 1938 (Calvert Files).

³Letter from C. M. Barde to Mrs. George E. Calvert, August 11, 1938 (Calvert Files).

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1938, p. 284.

and non members at twenty-five cents per year until September, 1939 when the rate was advanced to fifty cents per year.¹ Before the rate increase the number of subscriptions sold was not significant, but local presidents were urged to promote the sale of subscriptions following the increase.

From time to time regular features became a part of the bulletin. One of the first of these to appear was the Oklahoma Family Life Institute page. Beginning in September, 1939 and written by Dr. Alice Sowers, it appeared regularly as late as 1957. "At first, when Mrs. Calvert suggested a page each month in the bulletin, I was appalled," Dr. Sowers said, "I knew the inevitableness with which the deadline approaches each month."² In the end, however, Dr. Sowers decided it was "an opportunity too good to miss." The Oklahoma Family Life Institute page was launched and it soon gravitated to the front of the bulletin where it occupied the choice spot in succeeding years.

Progress in Publications

This period saw a gradual expansion in the publications of the Oklahoma Congress and in the distribution of those publications. Among the most popular were "Four Lessons on the Manual," "Our Homes, Our Public Schools," "A New Force in Education," and "Rural PTA." A special effort was made to interest educators of the state in the National Parent-Teacher Magazine and other National Congress publications. Mimeographed lists were prepared by the Oklahoma Congress and distributed to more than

¹Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Local Unit Presidents, May 26, 1939 (Calvert Files).

²Alice Sowers, "A Page Is Born," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XII (September, 1939), p. 9.

1,000 school administrators.¹ "Goals for Home, School and Community," and "Widening The Circle," were sent free of charge to all units and to county and city superintendents, and in 1939 a publication on "The High School Association and Young Lives in a Modern World," was mailed to each high school PTA in the state.²

Some of the PTA councils had active publicity chairmen who prepared copy for local newspapers. In 1936, a special column of parent teacher notes appeared weekly in the Tulsa Tribune, the North District president prepared weekly news items for local papers, and a PTA column edited by Mrs. Ray Six appeared three times weekly in the Stillwater News during the 1937-38 school year. There were undoubtedly several other such instances. The Oklahoma City council published its own monthly bulletin.

The unique report of a PTA council publicity chairman was that made by Mrs. C. E. Scott of the Shawnee Council for the 1936-37 school year.

During season made 2,000 phone calls; received 4,000. Was "bawled out" 225 times; made 150 enemies and two friends Had my shoulder wept on sixteen times incurred wrath of nine unit presidents, nine principals, and 35 committee chairmen Almost lost husband and sent three children to school all winter with dirty ears incurred animosity . . . of all connected with two newspapers . . . in zeal to publicize every activity of PTA.³

Parent-Teacher Radio Programs

Radio played an increasingly important part in the publicity of

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1938, p. 284.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1939, p. 313.

³Mrs. Ruby R. Scott, "Final Report of a PTA Council Publicity Chairman," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (April, 1937), p. 11.

the Oklahoma Congress and in the adult education activities of the organization. In 1936 local programs were given by the Oklahoma City and Tulsa Councils. Mrs. Roy M. Huff, Chairman of radio for the Tulsa Council, reported a monthly series on Station KTUL by Mrs. John A. Rice, parent education chairman, and a five minute program each Monday by various departments of the council.¹ The radio schedule for the Oklahoma City Council for February, 1937 lists PTA programs on Fridays over KOMA, on Saturdays and Mondays over WKY, and in addition there was a Saturday NBC series on WKY on "Training Your Parents."² The Tulsa Council continued its KTUL series in 1937 and also presented a weekly series on KVOO. In 1938, Station KGFF in Shawnee provided two quarter hours per week for talks by local PTA leaders.³

In 1939, the Oklahoma Congress launched two radio series which received national recognition. Station KOCY and the Oklahoma City Council presented a thirty-minute dramatic series, "The P. T. Anderson Family," which won honors on the "National Script of the Month" competition sponsored by the Edwards Advertising Agency in New York. Marvin Krause of the KOCY staff played the title role, and Mrs. J. D. Armour wrote, cast, and narrated the production.⁴

Also in 1939, Dr. Alice Sowers launched the most extensive program of parent education by radio which has ever been conducted in Okla-

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XVIII (December, 1936), p. 35.

²Ibid., Vol. XVIII (February, 1937), p. 18.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (March, 1938), p. 16.

⁴Ibid., Vol. XI (February, 1939), p. 15.

homa. The "Family Life Radio Forum," a series of lectures, informal discussions and dramatizations pertaining to child guidance and family relationships, brought faculty members of the University of Oklahoma and other guests into the discussions. The program originated on WNAD and was carried over an Oklahoma Network consisting of Radio Stations KADA, Ada; KBIX, Muskogee; KCRS, Enid; KGFF, Shawnee; KOME, Tulsa; KTOK, Oklahoma City; and KVSQ, Ardmore.¹

Promoting the National Magazine

Leaders in the Oklahoma Congress continued to promote the use of the National Parent-Teacher (formerly Child Welfare Magazine). In 1938 the National Congress set the subscription rate at one dollar per year and discontinued all special offers and club rates. This was done to simplify the work of the local chairmen for promotion of the magazine and "to place the promotion work on a level in keeping with the educational standards and objectives of the National Congress."² Oklahoma's 2,190 subscriptions for the 1937-38 school year earned the state an "Oak Leaf Honor Scroll."³

Achieving the Second Objective

In her report for the 1936-37 school year, Mrs. Calvert stressed three major objectives for the year the second of which was "to give educators and the general public a better understanding of this great

¹Ibid.

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XX (September, 1938), p. 23.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1938, p. 284.

folk movement, the parent-teacher association," and she added, "We are beginning to see that our greatest need is to cooperate with our schools through shared participation."¹ Mrs. Calvert displayed a high regard for teachers when she wrote:

No one can adequately put into words the influence of the teachers upon the childhood of this state. Healthy, happy, well-adjusted and well paid teachers are invaluable assets to our communities Let us express our appreciation in every way possible to our teachers and school officials for their untiring efforts in behalf of our children.²

She worked to bring about a better relationship between parents in local PTA groups by addressing advice on the subject to both groups.

To parents she said:

When teachers join our association and pay dues they are in full membership with all the rights and privileges of any member . . . but let's make a special effort to keep our organization from being a burden to teachers.

Your principal should always be a member of your executive committee, hence, your executive committee meetings should be held at a time when it is convenient for him or his representative to be present. If you have a council, your superintendent or his representative should be a member of the executive committee of the council.³

She advised local leaders to "give the teacher an opportunity to do more than pay dues and attend meetings,"⁴ but she believed the local unit should make it possible for teachers to "bring inspiration and new vision to the group" without giving them a disproportionate share of the responsibility for local meetings and local work.

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Richmond, Virginia, 1937, pp. 298-300.

²Mrs. George E. Calvert, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (February, 1938), p. 6.

³Ibid., Vol. IX (May, 1937), p. 5.

⁴Ibid., Vol. XII (December, 1939), p. 4.

To members of the teaching profession, Mrs. Calvert wrote:

Some of you are in membership in our parent-teacher associations, sometimes because you want to, and sometimes because you have to. I am always sorry to hear that anyone is a member who prefers not to be, and when you are in membership you should not permit the patrons to impose upon you in any way. Do your part as a member, but do not carry the load. Perhaps your best contribution will be in program planning and in talking impersonally with us about our children and young people.¹

The work of the Oklahoma Congress on behalf of House Bill 212 and other legislation to deal with the depression did not go unnoticed by leaders of the teaching profession. A resolution was passed by the business assembly of the Oklahoma Education Association on February 5, 1937 commending the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers "for its courageous fight for schools during the depression and for its unfaltering interest in the children of Oklahoma."²

Individual expressions of appreciation also came from many professional leaders. Henry G. Bennett, president of Oklahoma A. and M. College, called the PTA "an important link between the people and their schools,"³ adding that colleges were "feebly groping for such an agency" through which the home and college might promote better mutual understandings. Kate Frank, president of OEA, expressed "deep appreciation to Mrs. Calvert and to many other members of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers" for their "keen interest, efficient help, and fine spirit of cooperation in solving problems in connection with the educational

¹Mrs. George E. Calvert, "An Open Letter to Oklahoma Educators," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XX (March, 1939), p. 21.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 24-25, 1936.

³Henry G. Bennett, "Partners in Progress," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (May, 1937), p. 6.

well-being of children and the welfare of members of the teaching profession."¹

A. L. Crable, state superintendent, addressed notes of appreciation to the Oklahoma Congress on at least two occasions. In October, 1937 he thanked the organization "wholeheartedly for the constructive aid" it had given and was giving to the program of public education in Oklahoma,² and in October, 1939 he added the following:

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers is the most vital organization in the state in supporting a program of public education. This organization is to be commended for the intelligent manner in which it seeks to keep informed concerning the problems and needs of the schools in Oklahoma.³

In Blackwell, where six new PTA units were organized in 1938, Superintendent A. J. Lovett said, "I look for the result of the Parent-Teacher work to broaden the sympathies of the home and the schools and this is bound to benefit school organizations." Lovett favored PTA because it aimed toward "cooperation in every way between teacher and parent."⁴

In a speech in 1939, R. L. McLean, superintendent at Anadarko, called the "unity of purpose between . . . parent and teacher" the most stimulating trend of the day adding,

To the scholarship of the schools, we must join the scholarship and experience of the parents to the end that all forces of educa-

¹Kate Frank, "A Message from the OEA President," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (September, 1937), p. 6.

²A. L. Crable, "Greetings from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction," ibid., Vol. X (October, 1937), p. 6.

³A. L. Crable, "Our Public Schools," ibid., Vol. XII (October, 1939), p. 6.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIX (February, 1938), p. 40.

tion can plan and act as a unit to strengthen the republic, and defend and advance the American way of life.¹

Cooperation with Other Groups

In addition to helping the organized teachers secure better educational legislation, the Oklahoma Congress in 1936 cooperated with the governor's statewide safety campaign, the WCTU in temperance education, and the state health department in establishing county health units and community sanitation projects. It helped the Tuberculosis Association in its fund drives, the Oklahoma Society for Crippled Children in efforts to hospitalize all children in the state with remedial orthopedic defects, the League of the Hard of Hearing in its efforts to secure early diagnosis of hearing difficulties in children, the Oklahoma Library Commission, the Oklahoma Home Economics Association, the Oklahoma Federation of Women's Clubs, and many other groups.² In 1940 the Oklahoma Congress was represented by a member of its state board at national, state, or local conferences sponsored by sixteen other civic and social welfare groups.³

Growth toward Maturity

While the Oklahoma Congress was making progress in state services, it also was making substantial and consistent growth in numbers. Mrs. Calvert said there was only one requirement for PTA membership, "an

¹R. L. McLean, "Looking Forward," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (April, 1939), p. 6.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1936, p. 264.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Omaha, Nebraska, 1940, p. 298.

interest in the welfare of children, and not necessarily one's own children," adding, "no matter the race or creed, the education or lack of it, the rank or class, we are bound together by the ideals set before us in the parent-teacher associations of the country."¹ She urged members of the state board to assist with organization efforts and with city and county schools of instruction, reminding them that the state organization would reimburse their expenses for official trips at the rate of three cents per mile for travel and would pay other necessary expenses.²

At the close of the 1936-37 school year, Mrs. J. P. Mattox, director of extension, reported 87 new units for the state; two new city councils, Guthrie and Mangum; and two new county councils, Payne and Pottawatomie.³ In 1938 a "friendly note from Superintendent Dewitt Waller" notified the Oklahoma Congress that Enid would join the state and national organizations.⁴ In March, 1936 Kate Frank told Mrs. Calvert that some school patrons and teachers felt the need for a PTA in Muskogee. The first unit in Muskogee was not organized, however, until October 10, 1939 when the West High School announced its organization following a meeting attended by 300 persons. The addition of Muskogee to PTA circles was of sufficient importance that the Seventeenth Annual Convention extended a message of congratulations.⁵

¹Mrs. George E. Calvert, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (January, 1937), p. 1.

²Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to State Board of Managers, March 24, 1937 (Calvert Files).

³"Fifteenth Annual Convention, Official Program and Yearbook," 1937, p. 18 (Oklahoma Congress Files).

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (April, 1938), p. 20.

⁵Minutes of the Seventeenth Annual Convention, October 11, 1939.

In 1937, the Oklahoma Congress exceeded its membership goal of 25,000 and set its goal for the following year at 50,000. At the close of the 1938-39 year, 29,795 members had been enrolled and the 50,000 goal was retained for 1939-40 when a membership of 32,344 was achieved. The net gain in membership for the five years which Mrs. Calvert served was 3,333.

In September, 1940 the annual membership drive was launched by a proclamation of Governor Leon C. Phillips urging "all people, in whatever walk of life, to join with the organization of parents and teachers in the work of improving and enlarging the opportunities of our children for wholesome and useful training, both at home and at school."¹

PTA Growth in Tulsa and Oklahoma City

Two of the strongest centers of PTA growth, as might be anticipated, were Tulsa and Oklahoma City. As early as 1938, Tulsa had 36 local units, and sent 110 delegates to the annual convention at Stillwater. Under the leadership of Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, the Tulsa Council met on the first Tuesday of each month in sessions which opened at 9:30 in the morning and continued through luncheon until 2:30 p.m. These luncheons usually were attended by six or eight principals and by several teachers.² By 1939, there were 5,658 members in 38 Tulsa PTA units forming a reservoir of strength and leadership within the state organization.

In May, 1938 the Oklahoma City Council held its first city wide

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (September, 1940), p. 4.

²Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, "Tulsa Council Report," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (October, 1938), p. 5.

installation of officers, an event which served to point out the organizational strength of the state's largest city. Three hundred fifty-eight officers, representing 57 local PTA units and 6,350 members, were installed with appropriate ceremonies on Friday afternoon, May 7, 1938 in the Northeast High School Auditorium. Mrs. J. P. Mattox, third vice-president of the state organization, officiated at the installation which was attended by 500 persons.¹

In 1937, Mrs. E. E. Brown, second vice-president, reported twenty-five junior high school associations in the state, the largest of which was Webster PTA in Oklahoma City with 320 members. There were twenty-two senior high school units, the largest being Central in Tulsa with 284 members. There were six joint junior-senior high school units, the largest of which was Britton with sixty members.² During her visit to the state in 1937, Mrs. Charles E. Roe, national field secretary, noted more improvement in high school organizations for the preceding two years than for any other type. Mrs. Brown credited this improvement to a realization "that high school associations are different in their make-up and needs and so must be treated differently in activities and especially in the kinds of programs attempted."³

In 1939, Okmulgee Junior College organized the first junior college PTA in the Oklahoma Congress with Dean W. H. Rutlege as president. A charter was issued with twenty-nine members, but the reaction among

¹Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), May 7, 1938, p. 7.

²"Fifteenth Annual Convention, Official Program and Yearbook," 1937, p. 17 (Oklahoma Congress Files).

³Mrs. E. E. Brown, "High School Associations," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. IX (April, 1937), p. 8.

other junior colleges, though favorable, showed "a tendency to await the outcome of this experiment before attempting one of their own."¹

Progress in Leadership Training

Informed membership continued to be an important goal of the Oklahoma Congress. In addition to the extended use of radio, mentioned earlier, W. Max Chambers took the lead in forming a committee for the preparation of units of study on PTA for use in college courses. The committee included John Moseley, president of Central State College; Harvey M. Black, superintendent of schools at Hugo; Dean Howard Taylor, Oklahoma College for Women; Roy Bradshaw, principal of Wilson Junior High School in Tulsa; and Vera Jones, Oklahoma A. and M. College.² In 1938, eleven state colleges reported use of parent-teacher courses. Of these eleven, nine colleges designated certain courses using parent-teacher materials; nine gave credit for courses including parent-teacher materials; and six required teacher preparation candidates to take some course including parent-teacher materials. During the 1937-38 school year, 967 college students took courses including parent-teacher information. In addition, a parent-teacher short course was held at the University of Oklahoma in June.³

In 1940, the University of Oklahoma Extension Division announced two correspondence courses by Dr. Alice Sowers on "The Organization and

¹"First Junior College PTA," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (May, 1939), p. 12.

²Letter from W. Max Chambers to Mrs. George E. Calvert, October 23, 1936 (Calvert Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1938, pp. 283-284.

Work of Parent-Teacher Associations." These were designated as school administration 108 and 409. The undergraduate course was offered to teachers of junior standing with educational psychology as a prerequisite. The graduate course required twelve hours of education and graduate standing. Kate Frank of Central High School, Muskogee was state chairman of a committee to promote these correspondence courses.¹

City and county councils were urged during this period to continue schools of instruction for leadership training. Mrs. Calvert agreed to send help from the state office for leadership training when a school of instruction was held for city wide or county wide participation.²

The period in which Mrs. Calvert served was one of significant achievement. The Oklahoma Congress reorganized its districts, established a permanent state office and a continuous state bulletin, resumed its growth in membership and service, improved its status with educators and the general public, and launched its first state wide project, the Oklahoma Family Life Institute. Looking back on her five years as state president, Mrs. Calvert gave this modest summary of accomplishments in her final report to the National Congress.

As we look back we would like to start all over again. Maybe we could do better the things we tried to do, accomplish more, find fewer uncultivated garden spots; but we have made some progress, and in spite of all unfulfilled hopes and aspirations we believe that the Oklahoma Branch of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers faces the future with renewed confidence and high courage.³

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXII (March, 1941), p. 16.

²Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to City and County Council Presidents, March 24, 1937 (Calvert Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Omaha, Nebraska, 1940, p. 297.

High courage was needed in the years that followed, for the next two presidents served the Oklahoma Congress in the war years.

CHAPTER VI

MEETING THE CHALLENGE (1940-1946)

Oklahoma in the War Years

The German invasion of Poland in 1939 heralded a period of challenge and change. In Oklahoma in 1939 depression lingered. There was not full employment; there was not general prosperity; there was not adequate support for needed services of state government. There was continued out-migration and rural-urban migration; there were relief projects; there were crop restrictions to control mounting farm surpluses; and there was a state debt of \$25,731,000.00.¹

War would bring transition from deflation, depression, unemployment to full employment, prosperity, and inflation. Thousands of Oklahomans would find new occupations in war industries, and other thousands would face transition from civilian to military life, all of which would tend to uproot individuals and families.

Education in the War Years

By 1939 schools had made progress from the levels imposed by depression, but there remained a backlog of accumulated neglect which would be aggravated by war time restrictions. An exodus of teachers from

¹Dale and Wardell, History of Oklahoma, p. 364.

Oklahoma classrooms during the war years would result from the combined effect of war time manpower requirements and the failure of teachers' salaries to maintain a reasonable adjustment to the upward inflationary spiral. The shortage of teachers would be met by lowering standards of certification to permit the employment of emergency "teachers."

In the midst of these transitions, Oklahoma children would face crowded classrooms and the insecurity born of war time disruptions in family life. There was needed an organization sufficiently interested and sufficiently strong to meet on the one hand the challenge of helping to win the war, and on the other of ameliorating the effect of war time conditions on children.

Parent-Teacher Leaders in the War Years

The Seventh State President

Mrs. John A. Wadlin, the seventh state president, was described as "a serious minded mother, interested in the welfare of all children and youth."¹ At the time of her election in 1940 her oldest son, Jack, was a student of dentistry in Loyola University, New Orleans; her daughter, Virginia, was attending the University of Arkansas; and Bob, youngest of the three children, was attending the University of Oklahoma.

Mrs. Wadlin was born in Iowa but moved with her parents to Greeley, Colorado, at twelve years of age. There she attended high school and college, graduating from Colorado State College of Education. After serving for a short time as music supervisor in the Brush, Colorado

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Madam President," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (December, 1940), pp. 7-8.

schools, she married Dr. John A. Wadlin at St. Joseph, Missouri, December 20, 1916. For several years the Wadlins lived in Greeley where Dr. Wadlin practiced dentistry. They moved to Tulsa about 1925 where Dr. Wadlin again established his practice of dentistry.¹

In addition to her interest in parent-teacher work, Mrs. Wadlin was active in the First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa, served as president of the Tulsa League of Women Voters, and as a member of the Community Fund Board of Tulsa. She worked in the Tulsa Council of Social Agencies, and headed the women's division of the Tulsa War Bond drives. She was a member of PEO, a professional education society, and an honorary member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an educational sorority.

From the standpoint of PTA experience, Mrs. Wadlin was unusually well prepared for her position of leadership. Ten years earlier she had been elected president of the Kendall PTA in Tulsa, and even prior to that time had served as president of a "Mothers' Club" at Kendall. While serving as president of the Kendall unit, where her two younger children were in school, Mrs. Wadlin served as membership chairman of the Woodrow Wilson Junior High School unit where her older son was a student. Later she was elected vice-president of the Tulsa PTA Council, and served as president of the council from 1933 to 1935.

Mrs. Wadlin became widely known in state PTA circles through her work as state membership chairman. The seven years she served in this capacity were years of substantial and consistent growth in membership. Mrs. Wadlin would have preferred to remain in that post, but other state leaders felt that she was needed in the office of president. In her

¹Interview with Mrs. John A. Wadlin, May 1, 1957.

first message to the Oklahoma Congress, Mrs. Wadlin identified two basic tasks facing the organization.

We must work to strengthen the home and family life of our state that our children may have the security which they deserve. We must work for the support of free public education. We are pledged to the principle that universal education is fundamental in a democracy. We believe that the people will pay for what₁ they want and bring pressure to bear to see that they obtain it.¹

Mrs. Wadlin served through the first two years of America's participation in the war. The nearness of that conflict to each home represented in the Oklahoma Congress was apparent in this letter from Mrs. Carl H. Stapp to members of the state board of managers.

It is with deep regret that it is necessary to send this word to you. Mrs. Wadlin received word last night that her youngest son, Bob, was killed in action. Bob was a₂ bombardier giving services to our country somewhere in the Pacific.

Mrs. Wadlin was the first president to serve under a new provision in the constitution setting the term of office of state president at three years without eligibility for reelection. Her leadership did not end, however, with the close of her work as state president. She served as state budget chairman for six years, and after Dr. Wadlin's death in 1950, she became director of field service for the Oklahoma Congress in 1951, a post she held at the time of this writing in 1957.

The Eighth State President

Mrs. George (Mable J.) Flesner, the eighth state president, was born in Delta, Iowa and moved to Stillwater, Oklahoma with her parents

¹Mrs. John A. Wadlin, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (November, 1940), p. 4.

²Letter from Mrs. Carl H. Stapp to Members of the State Board of Managers, April 22, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

in 1902. She attended the Stillwater public schools and graduated from the Oklahoma A. and M. College school of commerce. On December 17, 1913 she married Mr. George Flesner, a cattleman, an auctioneer, and for ten years a county commissioner in Payne County. Mrs. Flesner was an active member of the Methodist Church, a past president of the Rotary Ann Club of Stillwater and was active for many years as a member of the recreational committee for the city of Stillwater. She was active in the Rebekah Assembly of Oklahoma having served as state president.¹

The Flesners had eight children, five boys and three girls. All of the Flesner sons played with the "Pioneers," the Stillwater High School football team. Principal Glenn Tonkinson said in 1946 that there had been a Flesner on the football team for nineteen consecutive years, beginning with Lester in 1928 and extending to Melbourne in 1946.² Between were brothers, Eugene Edward, Gordon, and Wayne. The three daughters were Luella, Juanita, and Eileen, later Mrs. Price Vincent of Tulsa, Mrs. Jack Harris of Tulsa, and Mrs. Dallas Cox of Atoka.

Mrs. Flesner brought a rich background of experience in PTA work to the office of state president. She had served as president of Lincoln PTA in Stillwater, president of the Stillwater High School PTA, and president of the Stillwater PTA Council. She had served as state extension chairman, regional director of the Northwest Region, and as vice-president.³

Mrs. Flesner's letters to local units and her articles for the

¹Letter from Mrs. George Flesner to J. E. Burkett, April 25, 1957.

²Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVII (November, 1944), p. 14.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XV (May, 1943), p. 14.

state bulletin are interesting for their composition as well as their content. They abound in figurative language with a literary style which is easily recognized as that of Mrs. Flesner. In the midst of war time rationing, for example, her Christmas message reminded PTA members that these things were not rationed; "Democracy, Courtesy, Tolerance and Courage, and the Christmas Spirit."¹

Mrs. Flesner stated her parent-teacher philosophy in these words:

The parent-teacher association does not live in itself, by itself, or for itself. It is established in the community; it is maintained by cooperative effort; it exists for the children and youth of the land. It is playing a major part in resolving the difficulties in an age of transition.²

Later she added these thoughts:

Even while we preserve all the idealism of parent-teacher work, let us resolve to make our program more realistic. Let us plan it as an intelligent forum for the advancement of our members. While the immediate object of our activities still may be to satisfy some particular need in the field of child welfare, we must plan in such a manner that our ultimate goal will be to fit the oncoming generation for a life in which they must inevitably participate.³

Other Leaders

Mrs. Calvert continued to serve as editor and business manager of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin and as state treasurer during Mrs. Wadlin's administration. Dr. Alice Sowers, whose work as director of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute is discussed later, became one of the most prominent state PTA leaders during this period and was elected national

¹Mable J. Flesner, "Non-Rationing at a Glance," ibid., Vol. XVI (December, 1943), p. 3.

²Mable J. Flesner, "President's Message," ibid., Vol. XVI (September, 1943), p. 2.

³Mable J. Flesner, "President's Message," ibid., Vol. XVI (April, 1944), p. 4.

vice-president for Region Six at the annual convention of the National Congress in San Antonio, Texas, May 3-7, 1942.¹

An active member of the state board and executive committee for several years and later first vice-president was Judge Donald B. Darrah of Clinton. A graduate of the University of Oklahoma Law School, Judge Darrah served for eleven years as County Judge of Custer County and during the war was in charge of civil defense activities in Southwestern Oklahoma. Perhaps his outstanding contribution to the Oklahoma Congress was his service as chairman of the important joint committee of Oklahoma Congress, the Oklahoma Education Association, and the Oklahoma State School Boards Association.²

By September, 1943 three members of the state board of managers were serving in the armed forces. These were Thurman White, Boyd Gunning, and Andrew Holley all of whom were important educational and parent-teacher leaders in the post war period.³ In May, 1952 the state board of managers created an advisory committee consisting of White, Gunning, and W. Max Chambers. The board invited White and Gunning as special guests to a state board dinner at which each was given a life membership.⁴ Chambers had been a life member since 1940.

Organizational Problems of the War Period

Restrictions imposed on war time travel caused Mrs. Wadlin to

¹"State Board Information," May 5, 1942, unpagged (Wadlin Files).

²Mrs. Carl Davenport, "Introducing Judge Donald B. Darrah," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (October, 1946), p. 14.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVI (September, 1943), p. 18.

⁴Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 8, 1952.

ask permission of the state board in September, 1942 to "conduct several important matters" by correspondence which ordinarily would have been discussed in a board meeting. She also announced it would not be advisable to hold a state convention. Instead, several "war conferences" were scheduled in thirteen different cities during October and the early part of November.¹

Cancellation of the state convention in 1943 made it necessary for the first time in the history of the Oklahoma Congress to elect a state president by mail. Proposed changes in state by-laws also were included on the ballot. A committee consisting of Mrs. George Flesner, Mrs. C. E. Scott, and Mrs. W. S. Jerkins formulated five procedures for conducting the election.² Each local unit was asked to elect its usual quota of voting delegates at its March meeting. These delegates were then called together by the local unit president and cast their ballots for state officers. The completed ballots were collected, sealed, and mailed in an envelope furnished by the state office. The results of the election were canvassed by the election committee and its appointed tellers at a called meeting of the state executive committee.³

In addition to the problem of travel restrictions, there was need for better coordination of new projects and activities which grew out of the needs and problems of war time. One month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Mrs. Wadlin called a meeting of the state execu-

¹Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin to the State Board of Managers, September 16, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

²Mrs. George Flesner, "Report of Election Committee," February, 16, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

³"Instructions for Voting by Mail," March, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

tive committee in Oklahoma City. The committee agreed that four points should be emphasized by the Oklahoma Congress during the emergency. These were nutrition, home safety, family morale or mental and spiritual fitness, and the maintenance of educational standards in spite of war.¹ In March, 1942 Mrs. Wadlin announced the creation of a "State War Committee" which would "try to prevent overlapping and confusion in the work of our associations and try to suggest to them some of the activities they may undertake in their own communities."² A conference was held on the first and second days of April "for the purpose of working out and developing together a war time plan of action."³

The War Committee which evolved from these discussions was headed by Dr. Alice Sowers. It published a colorful "PTA War Bulletin" in which suggestions were offered on "Health in Wartime," "Wise Buying," "Conservation Vital to Victory," "Keeping Safe at Home," "Nutrition," "Rationing," "School Defense," and many other topics. Much of the work of this committee was devoted to activities directly affecting the war effort, but the theme of education as a main line of defense was not overlooked. The Committee expressed the belief that there had never been a time when the education and training of children had been so important.⁴ That the War Committee was an effective agency for coordinating these activities

¹Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin to Local Unit Presidents, January 15, 1942, p. 1. (Wadlin Files).

²Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin to Members of the State Board of Managers, March 19, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

³"Program for the Workshop of the Oklahoma Congress," April 1-2, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

⁴"Oklahoma PTA War Bulletin," Vol. I (August 2, 1942), unpagued.

is indicated by the fact that it was continued after the end of the war with the emphasis shifted to problems of post war planning.¹

Growth of Parent-Teacher Cooperation

The Nineteenth Annual Convention held in Ada in October, 1941 was marked by the attendance of an "unusually large number of school people" including teachers, principals, and superintendents.² This was regarded by leaders in the Oklahoma Congress as a very favorable development and caused the National Congress vice-president to remark that Oklahoma was truly parent-teacher.

In November, 1942 Arnett Cross, superintendent of schools at Clinton, reported, "Our PTA did an exceptionally fine piece of work last year. I am pleased with the organization and we are going to do even a better work this year." J. C. Fitzgerald, Payne County Superintendent added, "The Parent-Teacher Association is invaluable to the schools in this time of crisis."³ Fitzgerald saw the PTA as a great rallying force to secure the support needed by schools to prevent neglect in the period of preoccupation with war. Another superintendent felt that educators had come to value parent-teacher associations as they had developed better understanding of education.

Whenever we think of education as simply being so much time used in the school room to learn so many facts . . . we do not think of the parent-teacher association as being very valuable, but when we think of education as providing the environment . . . for healthy

¹W. Max Chambers, "PTA Post War Planning Needed," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (November, 1945), p. 13.

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXIII (November, 1941), p. 21.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIV (November, 1942), p. 2.

growth of body . . . mind, for the strengthening . . . of the human spirit, and making better the human character, then we realize that there must be cooperation between all those forces that help make the environment or ennoble the spirit.¹

An article by a teacher written in 1944 encouraged members of the profession to suggest possible courses of action to "invigorate" the PTA and to assume full share in the work "as an active partner in promoting local activities."²

In 1946, O. W. Davison, who had served as a superintendent of schools for many years and was a past president of the Oklahoma Education Association, made this comment on school-PTA relations:

I have been observing the PTA at work now for nearly twenty years. A few of the early units, with inexperienced guidance and a lack of definite policy, have added little to the improvement of education in their communities. Others, moving cautiously at first, have grown steadily with the years, and have built up a splendid spirit of cooperation between the home and the school.

Today the officers of the PTA are working more closely with the school administrators and teachers than ever before. Only in this way will they succeed. Both are striving for the same goals. If a PTA officer fails to work with her local principal or superintendent, she soon loses his confidence . . . if an administrator merely "puts up with" a PTA or wants one simply for use for school financial drives, he will destroy the effectiveness of the PTA in his community.³

Notwithstanding these and other favorable statements of school administrators who supported PTA, many other school administrators continued to discourage PTA work in their communities. In 1946, Dean Arnold E. Joyal of the University of Oklahoma College of Education reported that "all too frequently and in significant numbers" school administrators

¹Willis A. Sutton, "The Value of the Parent-Teacher Association to the School," *ibid.*, p. 8.

²Elsie N. Allison, "The Place of the Teacher in the PTA," *ibid.*, Vol. XVI (February, 1944), p. 8.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (November, 1946), p. 12.

told him that while the national and state congresses were "swell" the local PTA's in their schools were "a pain in the neck." Joyal said not very many, but some, "intelligent, competent, fine school men" had told him, "they wish to heaven that they had never heard of the PTA, that they would like to get rid of their PTA, or . . . that they are going to see to it that the PTA is not started in their schools."¹ Joyal cited three types of PTAs which he felt should be improved; those which interfered with school administration, those which made a fetish of fund raising projects, and those which existed as a closed corporation controlled by a small group.²

In 1945, Mrs. Flesner mailed a form letter to principals of the state, copies of which were furnished to all superintendents and school board members. The letter was an appeal to school principals to exercise leadership in their communities in the extension of PTA membership. It also was an invitation to school principals to comment on PTA work and PTA programs and a business reply card was furnished for their convenience. Each principal received a copy of "Parent-Teacher Facts" which the Oklahoma Congress issued in June, 1945.³

The Oklahoma Congress continued its joint planning with the OEA and the State School Boards Association. In 1943, the state board of managers voted to discontinue the term "advisory committee" in favor of

¹A. E. Joyal, "Forward Together through Service to the School," *ibid.*, Vol. XVIII (Yearbook Issue, 1946), p. 10.

²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

³Form letter from Mrs. George Flesner to Oklahoma School Principals, September 19, 1945 (Flesner Files).

a new group to be known as "cooperating agencies."¹ In 1945, however, the new cooperative group was referred to as a joint committee with the purpose of better coordinating the efforts of the Oklahoma Education Association, Parent-Teacher Association, and the Oklahoma State School Boards Association. This committee was headed by Judge Donald B. Darrah. Other representatives of the Oklahoma Congress were Dr. Alice Sowers of Norman; Mrs. John Wadlin, Tulsa; and Mrs. George Flesner, Stillwater. The OEA was represented by Ira Armstrong of Hugo, Elmer Cecil of Weatherford, Frank Hess of Drumright, and O. W. Davison of Durant. Joe Hurt of Edmond represented the School Boards Association. This committee recommended the creation of an educational council, a study of the possibility of a joint educational journal, the study of the possibility of a radio program, and a study of existing school laws with respect to their adequacy and limitations.²

In addition to this joint committee, the OEA invited a PTA representative to be a member of its legislative committee, and its committee on lay participation in curriculum planning. The Oklahoma Congress also worked in an advisory capacity with a committee of the state home economics association, and cooperated with the Future Home Makers of Oklahoma in the preparation of a pamphlet to show how each organization might be of assistance to the other.³ In 1946, Mrs. Flesner could report,

The state congress has won a high degree of recognition in educational and governmental circles. Cooperation between the

¹Minutes of the State Executive Committee, April 14, 1943.

²"PTA, School Boards and OEA Unite Their Efforts," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXVII (September, 1945), p. 11.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1945, p. 174.

Oklahoma Congress and state agencies working for the welfare of children has progressed swiftly in the past three years.¹

Publications and Publicity

Nine numbers of the state bulletin were issued for each year of the period with the addition of a special yearbook edition in the summers of 1945 and 1946. The place of publication was changed in May, 1945 from 325 Perrine Building, Oklahoma City to 312 Key Building; and again in 1947 from the Key Building to the new location of the state office on the North Campus of the University of Oklahoma in Norman. In September, 1942 the name of the publication was changed to Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, dropping the word "bulletin" from the title. In PTA parlance the national publication is called the magazine and state periodicals are referred to as bulletins. Thus the change in title merely remedied a minor redundancy and gave the state bulletin a name which corresponded with the name of the national publication, National Parent-Teacher.

Mrs. George E. Calvert continued as editor and business manager of the bulletin throughout the period. Mrs. Carl H. Stapp was assistant editor and business manager through May, 1944. Miss Thelma Levering served in that capacity through November, 1944 and Mrs. Dorothy Whittlesey for the remainder of the period. In November, 1940 the bulletin listed as "contributing editors" Mrs. John A. Wadlin and Mrs. Joel Burkitt of Tulsa, Mrs. C. E. Scott of Shawnee, and Dr. Alice Sowers of Norman. These were changed in September, 1943 to include Dr. Sowers, Mrs. George Flesner, Mrs. C. E. Scott, Mrs. Ray L. Six of Stillwater, and Rev. George H. Quarterman of Ardmore.

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1946, p. 227.

Regular Features of the Bulletin

The "President's Message" and the Family Life Institute page were discussed earlier as regular features of the bulletin. In September, 1940 Mrs. C. E. Scott of Shawnee began a new monthly feature called, "Among Ourselves." This feature had continued to the time of this writing with the exception of a brief period when Mrs. Carl Davenport edited a similar column called "This 'N That." The idea for the column grew out of a discussion in an automobile when a group of PTA leaders were returning from a national convention. According to Mrs. Scott, Maude Calvert and Dr. Alice Sowers "thought it up" and asked her to write it.¹ Mrs. Scott described the feature as a "chatty, friendly department . . . where we can meet each month and have an exchange of ideas."²

In September, 1941 the Reverend George H. Quarterman, Rector of St. Phillip's Episcopal Church, Ardmore began a column of "Devotional Thoughts" which continued as a regular feature through the February, 1946 issue. In September, 1942 Mrs. Rebecca Nelson, coordinator of family life education for the Tulsa schools began a column which answered questions submitted by parents. The feature was called "Mrs. Nelson's Question Box," and appeared continuously through the May, 1943 issue. In September, 1945 Mrs. Minnie Lee Stone began her column of "Council Confab" which ran monthly for the next seven years. Its purpose was to furnish advice to council officers and to share ideas. In addition to these regular features, many articles were written by the several chairmen of

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (February, 1955), p. 12.

²Ibid., Vol. XIII (September, 1940), p. 12.

departments and standing committees. The War Activities Committee published several "War Bulletin Supplements" in a page provided for that purpose.

Promoting Circulation

In 1941, Mrs. Wadlin estimated the circulation of the bulletin had reached 8,000. It was mailed to officers and committee chairmen of each local unit, state board members, county superintendents, city superintendents, public libraries, colleges, and national board members.¹

In 1943, the Oklahoma Congress mailed 5,000 free copies of the bulletin each month to local parent-teacher officers and superintendents. The number of subscriptions to the bulletin also increased substantially. By 1944 the subscription list had reached 1,056, and by 1946 it had grown to 1,547. Mrs. Calvert announced that the money received from subscriptions was used to help finance the bulletin with the purpose of eliminating eventually the advertising matter in the bulletin.²

Financing the Bulletin

In the meantime, however, the bulletin was financed primarily by advertising. Four sales representatives worked through the state office, and the office kept files on prospective advertisers, made collections and disbursements, prepared copy for the printer, and read proof.³ A report of March 28, 1941 showed receipts of \$2,398.75 from the sale of

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Boston, Massachusetts, 1941, p. 312.

²Mrs. George E. Calvert, "Report on the Bulletin," March 19, 1946 (Matofsky Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Boston, Massachusetts, 1941, p. 312.

advertising for the preceding year which lacked only \$60.04 of financing the bulletin for that year.¹ Beginning with the year ending August 22, 1942, the advertising fund was held in an account separate from the general budget of the Oklahoma Congress. An audit of that fund showed \$2,151.37 collected from the sale of advertising with commission and general expenses of \$604.77 and \$20.88 deducted from the total. The actual cost of printing the bulletin was \$1,593.88 leaving a balance of \$6.84.² For the year ending March 19, 1946, the audit indicated collections of \$2,418.97 with total disbursements of \$2,846.97. The Oklahoma Congress advanced \$372.56 from budgeted funds to furnish additional financial support needed for the bulletin.³

Bulletin Committee

In June, 1943 the state board of managers appointed a committee to study general policies of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher and to make recommendations for the following year.⁴ The board also adopted a suggestion by Mrs. Calvert that a mid-summer issue be published to serve as an annual yearbook. The bulletin committee met in special session Wednesday, August 11, 1943 and after deliberation issued the following statement:

We recommend a promotional plan for getting subscriptions to the state bulletin.

¹"Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin Report," March 28, 1941 (Wadlin Files).

²William G. Bales, Auditor, "Audit of PTA Advertising Fund," for Year Ending August 22, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

³Ibid., for Period April 10, 1945 to March 19, 1946.

⁴Minutes of the State Board of Managers, June 3, 1943.

1. A special promotional chairman to be appointed in each local unit, whose sole duty will be the promotion of the state bulletin.
2. That the subscription price be kept at 50¢ for the year's nine issues, and that, as a special inducement, each local unit be allowed to retain 25¢ of the subscription price in its own treasury.

We recommend that the Congress take on the financial responsibility for four extra pages of non-organizational material in the bulletin. The committee has examined the expense and decided that \$500.00 over and above that already in the budget will be adequate. The practical side of it is that the larger magazine will make a greater appeal to potential subscribers as well as to advertisers.¹

In its meeting of September 29, 1943 the bulletin committee commended Mrs. Calvert and Mrs. Stapp for the high quality achieved in the state bulletin. The bulletin had received a special award for appearance from the Southwestern Association of Industrial Editors, and at least two other state congresses were interested enough to write Mrs. Calvert for material concerning the bulletin and to commend the Oklahoma Congress for "its fine publication."² The committee modified its recommendation on the size of the bulletin to read as follows:

We recommend that the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher be standardized to a minimum sixteen page publication in order that content may be planned further in advance and that the bulletin may³ make a greater appeal both to possible subscribers and advertisers.

Content of the bulletin was left to the "discretion of the editors."

A price list of materials mailed from the state office to local publications chairmen in November, 1940 indicated the growing importance of publications in state parent-teacher work. Twenty-three of the items

¹Letter from the Bulletin Committee to the State Executive Committee, August 12, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, September 30, 1943.

³"Bulletin Committee Report," September 29, 1943 (Flesner Files).

were listed under the heading of "Pay Material." They ranged in price from two cents to fifty cents each, and were concerned primarily with organizational information and home and family life education. Eleven publications were listed under the heading of "Free Mimeographed Material" and were designed to assist local units in promoting membership and in planning programs and projects.¹ In 1941, Mrs. Wadlin reported that among the new state publications for the year were "Secretary's Notebook," "Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Handbook," and two publications from the Oklahoma Family Life Institute. "Parent-Teacher Facts" was issued in June, 1945 to explain the Oklahoma Congress from the standpoint of organization and program.

Radio Programs

In her report to the National Congress in 1941 Mrs. Wadlin commended two programs conducted by Dr. Alice Sowers, Director of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute. "Youth Talks It Over," was called the outstanding program of the year and "Family Life Radio Forum" also was praised.² In May, 1942 PTA members were reminded to listen to Radio Station WNAD each Monday morning at 10:15 for the parent-teacher newscast. The program was presented by Thurman White who was credited with "doing a grand job in broadcasting information and news activities of associations over the state."³ In February, 1943 the executive committee

¹Form letter with enclosure from Mrs. O. A. Snodgrass, State Publications Chairman, to Local Publications Chairmen, November, 1940 (Wadlin Files).

²National Congress, Proceedings, Boston, Massachusetts, 1941, p. 311.

³Mrs. John A. Wadlin, "State Board Information," May 29, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

authorized letters of appreciation to White and to WNAD, expressing the opinion that the broadcasts had helped to increase membership throughout the state.¹

The PTA newscast continued on WNAD although the program time and the reporter varied from year to year. In September, 1943 H. E. Wrinkle, a former superintendent of schools in Oklahoma City, and at that time service director for the University of Oklahoma, accepted the state chairmanship for radio and responsibility for the PTA newscast.² In 1946, Mrs. Flesner observed that radio in Oklahoma was "assuming an important role in parent-teacher programs of education and publicity."³

In 1943, Dr. Alice Sowers, a national vice-president, was named national chairman for a parent-teacher radio script service. The objective of the script service was "to take the parent-teacher program into every home in the nation, and to furnish aid in meeting the need for scripts for parent-teacher broadcasts."⁴ Mrs. Warren Stone of Bartlesville was radio script chairman for Oklahoma and the first script adapted for national use was one prepared by Mrs. Stone and broadcast on the Bartlesville station.

Improving the Local Organization

One of the duties of the first vice-president of the Oklahoma Congress was to check the by-laws of local units. When Mrs. C. E. Scott

¹Minutes of the State Executive Committee, February 16, 1943.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVI (September, 1943), p. 13.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1946, p. 13.

⁴"Radio Script Service," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XV (March, 1943), p. 3.

of Shawnee was serving in that capacity in 1946, she gave this description of the many types of by-laws she received from local PTAs.

There they were on the table before me, a huge stack; some typewritten, some in pencil, some pen and ink copies, some on notebook paper, others in fancy booklets. Most of them in splendid order, I'm thankful to say, others dug out of desks and long forgotten and those were the ones with outmoded ideas, names and rules, and these have already been corrected by unit officers and many have been checked the second time and approved.¹

"Why is it we all want to shy away from by-laws?" Mrs. Scott asked. She reminded local leaders that by-laws were the rules for managing the internal affairs of the local unit and that they served as a compass, "pointing the way ahead and warning against dangers."² Mrs. Scott undoubtedly succeeded, to some extent, in making local members and officers more conscious of by-laws and the function they served.

The Oklahoma Congress also continued to work for better local organizations through the PTA councils. In 1941, Mrs. Scott, who also served as council advisor, announced a "council conference" at a state meeting to discuss problems of council organization. She wrote a series of form letters to council presidents which she called "Council Chats," and later "Council Communiques," and circulated a questionnaire to council presidents in an effort to study their programs and progress more closely.³

The Oklahoma Congress continued its program of goals and achievements as a means of strengthening the local units. The score card used

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (February, 1946), p. 7.

²Mrs. C. E. Scott, "By-Laws Can Be Exciting: Use Spizzerinctum," ibid., p. 9.

³Form letter from Mrs. C. E. Scott to Council Presidents, January, 1941 (Wadlin Files).

in 1942 set up a point system in ten different areas with a possible total of 170 points which a local unit might earn. A local unit which earned as many as 90 points was "standard," 100 points was "superior," and 135 points was "extra-superior." In order to achieve any of the three ratings an association had to meet the following basic requirements:

1. By-laws approved by the state congress.
2. Officers elected according to by-laws.
3. Names and addresses of officers mailed to state office as soon as elected or by May 1.
4. Elected officers and chairmen of standing committees shall attend a school of instruction or study group on the manual before November 1.
5. First membership report and dues in the state office on or before November 1.
6. Copy of year's program or yearbook in state office before November 1.
7. Two paid subscriptions to the National Parent-Teacher and four paid subscriptions to the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher.
8. Each unit shall have a minimum of six meetings.¹

While these efforts to improve local organizations were in progress, the need for continuous improvement in local PTA programs was not neglected. In 1943, Mrs. S. S. Matofsky, as state program chairman, defined the program as ". . . the foundation upon which the work of your organization is built. It encompasses all the activities engaged in by a parent-teacher association to further the objects for which it was founded." She described a good program committee as one composed of "men and women who are vitally interested in the home, school, and community, and who are alert to the needs of children and youth." She advised local program committees to set up programs "only after you have surveyed the previous year's programs and evaluated them in terms of

¹"Parent-Teacher Score Card," 1942 (Wadlin Files).

successes or failures, and after you have studied the needs and interests of your community now."¹

In 1945, Mrs. Flesner took advantage of the war time emphasis on "victory gardens" to advise local presidents on program planning. She suggested that all PTA members plant "in the fertile soil of your community these five peas: (1) participating membership, (2) progressive meetings, (3) pertinent programs, (4) practical helps, and (5) publish the facts."²

In 1946, Mrs. Alvin Kindle, Guthrie Council president, raised the problem of extensive committee organization and the wide diffusion of PTA effort among many program areas.

Not one unit in a hundred has an active committee for the twenty-five or thirty listed committees that every organization really needs when the regional, state or national (maybe all three) chairmen get behind you. Undoubtedly those matters do need consideration in every unit, but if they could be correlated under ten main committees with the necessary sub-committees it would be much less confusing to whip a unit into a working organization.³

Mrs. Kindle announced that she would attempt such a working plan for the following year unless "obliterated by the atomic bomb of officialdom."

Mrs. Kindle soon received the following assurance from the state office that such a bomb would not be forthcoming.

It has long been suggested that units combine chairmanships wherever practical A local unit should arrange its chairmanships in the way which is most helpful to that particular unit Make your committees work for you and arrange them in any

¹Form letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to Local Unit Program Chairmen, June 30, 1943 (Flesner Files).

²Form letter from Mrs. George Flesner to Local Unit Presidents, July, 1945 (Flesner Files).

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (February, 1946), p. 14.

way you like, combining them where it is feasible.¹

The State Office

In 1941, a full time assistant to the office secretary was employed. The assistant handled correspondence, telephone messages, orders for free and pay material from state and national offices, receipts to local units for dues, mailing lists for the bulletin, mailing of local unit packages, and other routine clerical duties.² In October, 1942 the salary of the office secretary was increased to \$145.00 per month,³ and in September, 1944 the salary of the assistant office secretary was raised from \$85.00 to \$100.00 per month.⁴

In September, 1944 after serving as office secretary of the Oklahoma Congress for eight and one-half years, Mrs. Carl H. Stapp (the former Willie Lee Broome) resigned to devote full time to her home. During her service as assistant editor and business manager of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, she saw the bulletin grow both in size and in circulation. Her personal goal had been to have the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher in every home, and much of the success of the publication was credited to Mrs. Stapp's devoted work. During her tenure as office secretary, Mrs. Stapp helped promote the growth of the Oklahoma Congress from "a struggling little group without funds to a membership of 50,000 and with money to pay its way."⁵

¹ Ibid.

² National Congress, Proceedings, Boston, Massachusetts, 1941, p. 312.

³ Minutes of the State Executive Committee, October 7, 1942.

⁴ Minutes of the State Board of Managers, September 29, 1944.

⁵ Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVII (September, 1944), p. 16.

Mrs. Stapp was succeeded by Thelma Levering, a former editor of the Oklahoma Federationist. Miss Levering served for only three months, apparently not to the satisfaction of the president and the state office committee which dispatched the following letter:

The office committee has met and decided that the verbal agreement made with you as office secretary has not worked out satisfactorily.

Your duties with the Parent-Teacher Association shall be terminated at 5 p.m., November 3, 1944. You have not been in this office long enough to have earned a vacation, but we are allowing you salary to November 15, 1944 in lieu of notice.¹

The letter was signed by the president and the three members of the Office Committee. In December the committee employed Mrs. Dorothy Whittlesey as office secretary and as assistant editor and business manager of the bulletin.

In December, 1942 the federal government took over the space occupied by the PTA in the Key Building, and the state office was moved to 325 Perrine Building in Oklahoma City. The executive committee, in October, 1945 adopted a motion to incorporate the Oklahoma Congress. The committee also voted to depart from a long-standing policy of refusing to give any other organization the mailing list of local PTA presidents. It was decided that names might, in the future, be furnished to organizations or agencies which the state PTA president felt would be helpful to local unit presidents.²

Leadership Training

The Oklahoma Congress continued its programs of leadership train-

¹Letter from the State President and Office Committee to Thelma Levering, November 3, 1944 (Flesner Files).

Minutes of the State Executive Committee, October 6, 1945.

ing, PTA institutes, and cooperation with colleges. Mrs. Flesner believed that parent-teacher education was needed in direct proportion to the acquisition of new members, and urged that the organization put into action its slogan, "every member an informed member."¹ The Oklahoma Congress also began to improve its deliberative meetings through use of modern discussion techniques. An example of this was the state board meeting held in Norman, April 1-2, 1942. The meeting was conducted in the manner of a workshop with all council and unit presidents invited to attend. Informal group discussions gave each participant an opportunity to be heard and the findings of the small groups were used by the state board of managers in its deliberations.²

Mrs. Charles E. Roe returned to the state for five weeks in November and December of 1944. She held twenty-one regional institutes "designed to present current procedures and objectives for parent-teacher leaders, and to serve as a means toward providing for every member to be an informed member."³ Tulsa and Oklahoma City served as temporary headquarters for this five-week effort, and a "state caravan" which included Mrs. Flesner, Dr. Alice Sowers, and H. E. Wrinkle assisted Mrs. Roe. Caravan leaders were prepared to discuss topics in seven different areas. Mrs. Roe reported "unusual interest . . . by school authorities in providing opportunity at many places for attendance by prin-

¹Mable J. Flesner, "Lifters or Leaners?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVII (September, 1944), p. 5.

²Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Council Chat," March 19, 1942, unpagged (Wadlin Files).

³Mrs. Charles E. Roe, "Field Service Report," November 6-December 8, 1944, p. 1 (Flesner Files).

cipals and teachers."¹

Parent-Teacher Instruction in Colleges

In 1945, Mrs. Flesner reviewed the history of parent-teacher courses in colleges stating the decision of the committee on such courses to be

. . . that nothing could be done until the National had a book and outline for use in colleges and until someone in the college could be found to teach the course. All agreed that more harm than good would be done unless the teacher understood the parent-teacher program and was in sympathy with it.²

Apparently the earlier interest, and the parent-teacher instruction offered in colleges, had not continued through the first years of the war period for Mrs. Flesner announced that the Oklahoma Congress expected to "re-establish" its contact with colleges through a University Institute planned for July, 1945.

Programs for these institutes, which were held on six of the college campuses, were planned for "teachers, prospective teachers, and parent-teacher officers and chairmen."³ Students of the college classes in teacher education attended the sessions, and schools in the vicinity of each college arranged to have at least one teacher participate. In general, the same program was followed at each of the six institutions. The president of the institution extended greetings, indicated his faith in the PTA, and offered further cooperation for similar conferences. A

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²Letter from Mrs. George Flesner to Mrs. William A. Hastings, President of the National Congress, January 25, 1945 (Flesner Files).

³"College PTA Institutes," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (October, 1945), p. 10.

total of 717 persons attended the six institutes, including 208 students in teacher preparation, 67 college faculty members, and 442 parent-teacher officers and members from 53 towns.¹ In April, 1946 the state board of managers changed the status of the committee on cooperation with colleges from that of a "special committee" to a "standing committee."²

Growth in Strength and Numbers

The growth of the Oklahoma Congress in the war years undoubtedly surpassed even the hopes of the leaders since membership goals were exceeded on at least two occasions. Mrs. Wadlin became president of an organization of 32,344 members; three years later, Mrs. George Flesner received the presidency of an organization of 41,505 members, and at the close of her administration in 1946, the Oklahoma Congress membership had climbed to 67,336, more than double the membership six years earlier. Many factors contributed to this growth. The formative years had produced a sound organizational structure; the war called attention to the needs of children; leadership training which state and national officers had promoted was becoming increasingly widespread; years of experience had evolved effective techniques for promoting maximum membership growth; and finally the organization enjoyed the leadership of two capable and devoted state presidents during the war period.

In 1941, Mrs. Carl Davenport, state membership chairman, told local membership chairmen to "first account for every member on last year's roll; second enroll additional members, third develop all into

¹Alice Sowers, "College-PTA Institutes are Successful," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (January, 1946), p. 10.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 9, 1946.

LIVE members."¹ Each local chairman was furnished "Publicity Suggestions for Membership Week," "Why a State and National Congress of Parent-Teacher Associations," "What the Parent-Teacher Association Does," and "Plan for Membership Enrollment Campaign." Mrs. Davenport recommended that the state office:

1. Write county extension chairmen.
2. Send a card to each delinquent unit.
3. Write associations showing a decrease in membership.
4. Write to superintendent of schools of units that are delinquent and whose membership had decreased.²

Membership campaigns also worked through the organized PTA councils of the state. In March, 1943, Mrs. C. E. Scott told council presidents:

I regret to learn . . . that we have this year lost some units in cities where we have councils I realize you have all had obstacles to overcome this year but our objective is such a worthy one and PTA forces are needed now more than ever before and I wonder if we as council leaders need not refresh our minds on our purpose.³

In her report for 1941-42, Mrs. Wadlin attributed growth in membership to "increased contacts with local associations, to particular emphasis on worthwhile programs, and to better informed leadership."⁴ In her report for 1942-43, she added that emphasis had been placed on early payment of dues and that more frequent and extensive communication had been maintained with local units through radio, frequent letters,

¹Form letter from Mrs. Carl Davenport, State Membership Chairman, to Local Membership Chairmen, June, 1941 (Wadlin Files).

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, February 16, 1943.

³Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Council Communique," March 31, 1943, unpagged (Wadlin Files).

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, San Antonio, Texas, 1942, p. 295.

material sent to units, and especially through the state bulletin.¹

In 1943, Governor Kerr proclaimed October 4-11 as Parent-Teacher week and Mrs. Kerr opened the membership campaign with a broadcast on Station KOMA. A follow-up broadcast on three goals for emphasis was presented later in the week. A new parent-teacher score card was used with a thermometer showing "warm, hot, and boiling" units.² In 1944-45, the state membership campaign slogan was "Sixty thousand members--worth fighting for."³ The organization attained a membership of 60,045, exceeding its pre-campaign goal for the second consecutive year.

In addition to the growth in total membership the war years also brought a rapid increase in the number of life members of the Oklahoma Congress. Twenty-four new life members were added in 1940, a number equal to all which had been added in the previous history of the organization. From 1941 through 1946, eighty-eight additional life members were added. In 1946, some of the most prominent citizens of the state became life members. Included were Dr. D. W. Griffin, superintendent of Central State Hospital; Dr. A. Linscheid, president of East Central State College; Dr. McLain Rogers, mayor of Clinton and chief of staff of Western Oklahoma State Hospital; John S. Vaughan, former state superintendent of public instruction, and president of Northeastern State College; Dr. George L. Cross, president of the University of Oklahoma;⁴ Frank Phillips, oilman, banker, philanthropist; Dr. Henry G. Bennett, president of Okla-

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Chicago, Illinois, 1943, p. 180.

²National Congress, Proceedings, New York, New York, 1944, p. 413.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1945, p. 174.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (February, 1946), pp. 8-9.

homa A. and M. College;¹ Roy J. Turner, prominent rancher and later governor; and many others.²

Awards for Membership Growth

In 1941, those associations which reached or surpassed their membership of the preceding year, and reported that achievement to the state office before November 1, were eligible for the "Gold Leaf Honor Roll."³ In February, 1942, Mrs. Carl Davenport also mentioned another group recognized as "Gold Star Associations." These units had increased their membership ten per cent or more before March 15. In fact, it was possible for a local association to earn as many as six gold stars depending on the per cent of increase in membership over that for the preceding year.⁴ In 1944, there were "Gold Leaf" certificates, and "Gold Seal" awards, and a "Gold Star Honor Roll" which was published in the state bulletin. Members of Gold Star Associations were privileged to wear a gold star and a blue ribbon at state conventions.⁵

In January, 1946 the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher featured a column headed "Can You Top This?" It listed associations which had enrolled "every parent in every home and every teacher in school," and those whose membership equaled or surpassed their school enrollment. The first group became the "100 Per Cent Club," and the latter, "The Topper Club." The

¹Ibid., Vol. XVIII (March, 1946), pp. 14-15.

²Ibid., Vol. XVIII (April, 1946), pp. 18-19.

³Ibid., Vol. XIV (September, 1941), p. 6.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXIII (March, 1942), p. 20.

⁵Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVI (February, 1944), p. 8.

Garfield PTA in Bartlesville was first to attain the "100 Per Cent Club" and issued the challenge to other units. The idea for such an award, however, originated in the Illinois Congress in 1944.¹

Table 1 shows the growth of the Oklahoma Congress by region for the years 1941-42 to 1945-46. The effect of the two largest cities in the state is apparent in the membership totals for the Northeast and Southwest Regions.

TABLE 1
MEMBERSHIP IN OKLAHOMA CONGRESS BY REGIONS²
1941-42 to 1945-46

Year	Northeast Region	Southeast Region	Northwest Region	Southwest Region	All Regions
1941-42	15,633	5,863	5,491	13,723	40,710
1942-43	17,522	5,332	4,909	13,742	41,505
1943-44	19,725	6,532	5,948	17,986	50,191
1944-45	24,070	8,011	6,000	21,964	60,045
1945-46	26,409	8,898	7,415	26,614	67,336

Increased membership during the period brought a corresponding increase in funds raised through state membership dues. The major source of financial support for the state organization was its fifteen cents per capita dues. This growth is shown in Table 2. The Budget of the Oklahoma Congress increased from expenditures of \$5,461.58 for the year ending March 21, 1942³ to a total of \$7,533.80 for the year ending March 19,

¹Ibid., Vol. XVIII (January, 1946), p. 18.

²See May issue of Oklahoma Parent-Teacher for years indicated.

³Mrs. George E. Calvert, Treasurer, "Statement of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," October 11, 1940 to March 21, 1941 (Wadlin Files).

1946, not including expenditures carried as non-budget items.¹ The financial condition of the Oklahoma Congress reached such a favorable state in June, 1945 that the state board of managers authorized the creation of a reserve fund of \$4,000.00 which was subsequently invested in war bonds.²

TABLE 2
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM MEMBERSHIP DUES

Year	Total Membership	State Membership Dues
1940-41	34,597	\$ 4,926.30
1941-42	40,710	5,917.95
1942-43	41,505	6,154.35
1943-44	50,191	7,528.65
1944-45	60,045	9,829.75
1945-46	67,336	10,100.40

The Oklahoma Congress met the challenge of the war years, increasing its membership, improving its programs and services, growing in favor with professional educators and the general public, making its contribution to the war effort, and improving its own leadership through continuous instruction in parent-teacher work. When war ended, the conditions were favorable, indeed, for rapid growth of the Oklahoma Congress in the post war period.

¹William G. Bales, Auditor, "Annual Audit, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," April 10, 1945 to March 19, 1946 (Flesner Files).

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, and Minutes of the State Board of Managers, June 26, 1945.

CHAPTER VII

RAPID GROWTH IN THE POST WAR YEARS (1946-1957)

Oklahoma in the Post War Years

Change continued to be a characteristic of Oklahoma in the post war years. While the rural population continued its trend downward, substantial growth occurred in the twenty-three largest cities of the state and this produced a considerable expansion of home building and real estate. The net loss of population to other states through out-migration ended, and the total population resumed its upward trend reversing the pattern of loss revealed in the federal census reports of 1940 and 1950.

Oklahoma joined other states of the South and Southwest in the quest for new industries. This had several aspects, but the one which most affected education was the persistent policy of no increase in state taxes which was advanced by every successful candidate for governor from 1946 to 1954. In fact, Governor Raymond Gary could say in his message to the Twenty-sixth Oklahoma Legislature in 1957 that Oklahoma was the only state in the Union which had made no major tax increase in the post war period. Meanwhile the per capita income of Oklahoma increased at a pace relatively faster than that for the nation as a whole. This did not mean that Oklahomans were more prosperous than the average for the nation; there had been ample room for improvement. Two serious economic problems

developed in the state after 1952. The general decline in farm income adversely affected rural areas, and drought which had brought disaster in the 1930s returned in 1954, 1955 and 1956, only to be followed by floods in 1957.

Education in the Post War Years

The post war crisis in education with its attendant criticism of the public schools caused Mrs. Matofsky to observe:

Our public schools in Oklahoma have not escaped the crisis. They have not escaped the rending of loyalties, of friendships, of educational opportunity for the children in those schools by the impact of issues and controversies which we hope will never happen again. We must all work together for the benefit, not of the parents nor of the teachers . . . but for the benefit of the children for whom those schools are meant, and for whom they must be maintained.¹

Oklahoma faced several other important educational problems in the post war years. School finance lagged behind the inflationary spiral which accompanied the war years and persisted in the post war period. "Emergency teachers" continued to work with sub-standard credentials, and the slow progress toward district reorganization became even slower. A growing building shortage could not be met because of constitutional limitations on the ability of districts to incur bonded indebtedness. In fact, Oklahoma school laws, which had never been developed into a comprehensive school code, contained many provisions which were hopelessly outmoded in the post war world.

By 1957 substantial progress had been made in dealing with some of these problems. An adequate certification program had eliminated the

¹Frances Matofsky, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (May, 1947), p. 4.

emergency certificate, and Oklahoma enjoyed a relatively high rating among the states in the quality of its teacher preparation. In 1946, and again in 1955, voters in Oklahoma approved "better schools amendments" in special elections. More important than the legislation contained in the state questions submitted in 1946 was the object lesson demonstrated in the campaign for their adoption; namely that organized parents and teachers constituted a powerful influence at the polls. The omnibus constitutional amendment submitted by the Twenty-fifth Oklahoma Legislature in 1955 doubled the limitation on bonded indebtedness and provided permissive legislation for additional local school support for current expenditures.

In 1948, Pugmire developed additional data on educational needs through a study of education in Oklahoma.¹ Financed largely by teacher contributions to the OEA, the study became the basis for the first complete codification of Oklahoma's school laws.² Many educational problems remained, particularly those of inequalities of local tax assessments, and the persistence of earmarking of some of the most productive sources of state revenues; but on the whole, the post war period was one of substantial progress in public education in Oklahoma.

Leaders of the Oklahoma Congress
in the Post War Years

The Ninth State President

Mrs. S. S. (Frances) Matofsky, the ninth state president, was

¹D. Ross Pugmire, Oklahoma Children and Their Schools (Oklahoma City: The Oklahoma Education Association, 1950).

²House Bill 120, Twenty-second Oklahoma Legislature, 1949.

born in Allen County, Kansas and moved with her parents to Rogers County, Oklahoma in 1910. She entered school in Kansas but completed grade school and high school in Rogers County, Oklahoma and attended the University of Oklahoma and Tulsa University. She married Sam S. Matofsky in Kansas City, Missouri in 1920. The Matofskys established a home in Tulsa where Mr. Matofsky operated an insurance business. Their two children, Joe and Rosanne, first attended Kendall elementary school in Tulsa. Mrs. Matofsky began her PTA career as home room mother at Kendall, serving later as president of Kendall PTA, of Wilson Junior High School PTA, and of the Tulsa PTA Council.¹ In addition to her interest in PTA work, Mrs. Matofsky was active in the Methodist Church, the League of Women Voters, the Council of Social Agencies of Tulsa, Community Fund activities in Tulsa, and Delta Gamma Mothers.

After serving as president of the Tulsa PTA Council from 1941-42 to 1942-43, Mrs. Matofsky advanced rapidly in the state PTA organization. She served as chairman of the state program committee in 1942-43; she served on the state bulletin and state war committees from 1943-44 to 1945-46. She was elected fifth vice-president of the Oklahoma Congress in 1945, and was advanced to the office of president in April, 1946.

Mrs. Matofsky worked "to establish effective functioning of local organizations through state congress assistance."² She also worked with the Oklahoma Education Association in the successful election on the "better schools amendments" of November, 1946. Mrs. Matofsky felt that

¹Letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to J. E. Burkett, May 22, 1957.

²Ibid.

the improvement of public schools was the business of every one.

No person can plead that the schools do not concern him, for there is no one whose life is not conditioned in some way by the work carried on in the public schools. Literally, the schools are our schools. If we fail to know them we fail to know about our business.¹

The Tenth State President

Willis Maxon (W. Max) Chambers was born in Toronto, Kansas in 1893. As a child he moved with his parents to Purcell, Oklahoma where he attended high school. He received a life certificate in education from Central State College, Edmond in 1914 and a bachelor's degree from Berea College (Kentucky) in 1915. He received a second bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1921 and a master's degree in 1928. He attended Harvard Law School in 1922, continued the study of law at the University of Oklahoma in 1923, and was admitted to the State Bar by examination. He attended summer sessions at Columbia University from 1930 to 1934 and in 1936, and in 1948 received the degree of doctor of education from Colorado State College.² The Chambers were married in 1917 and had one daughter, Maxine (later Mrs. Lloyd S. Engert).

Chambers began his professional career as a teacher-coach and later principal of Cushing High School. He was superintendent of schools in Newkirk from 1919 to 1923, in Perry from 1923 to 1928, in Sapulpa from 1929 to 1931, and in Okmulgee from 1931 to 1949. He was named president of Central State College, Edmond, in 1949 and held that posi-

¹Frances A. Matofsky, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (October, 1948), p. 4.

²Who's Who in America, Vol. XXIX (Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Company, 1956-57), p. 448.

tion at the time he served as state PTA president. Chambers was a member of the Methodist Church, a Rotarian, and a Thirty-second degree Mason. He served on the board of directors of the National Education Association, and was a member of the "Ninety-Six Club," a select NEA group composed of two men from each state. He served as a member of the Oklahoma Textbook Commission, as regional visitor of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and as a member of the Commission for Selection and Improvement of Teachers for the state of Oklahoma.¹

Chambers' contribution to the parent-teacher movement in Oklahoma covered many years and included numerous positions of leadership. He supported parent-teacher organizations at an early date when many superintendents were far less than enthusiastic about the movement, and worked consistently in the organization for the major part of its history. His services as a member of the state board of managers and of several important committees have been noted previously. It was said of Chambers that he had not missed a state PTA convention for more than ten years prior to his election, but he was a victim of a severe attack of influenza and confined to his home when the state PTA convention elected him president in 1949.²

The Eleventh State President

Mrs. Joel L. (Norma) Burkitt, the eleventh president of the Oklahoma Congress, spent her childhood in Nebraska. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado and a master's degree from the

¹Ruby R. Scott, "Mr. President, A Tribute," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (November, 1949), p. 4.

²Margaret Whitehair, "They Picked Papa as Prexy," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (November, 1949), p. 6.

University of Nebraska. Her early experience included teaching and assisting her father who was editor of a newspaper. Aside from her PTA activities, Mr. Burkitt was an active civic leader in Tulsa, having served as president of the Tulsa League of Women Voters. She was active in the Tulsa County Red Cross, the Oklahoma Committee for Mental Hygiene, and served for three years as PTA delegate to the Tulsa Council of Social Agencies. During World War II, when Mr. Burkitt and her oldest son, Bill, were serving overseas, Mrs. Burkitt worked for two and one-half years in the personnel and procedures division of Spartan Aircraft Company,¹ also serving as factory editor of the Spartan News.

The Burkitts had three sons, Bill and Frank, graduates of the University of Tulsa; and George, a graduate of Oklahoma A. and M. College. Mr. Burkitt was a chemist for one of the major oil companies. Mrs. Burkitt's PTA work began when her oldest son entered kindergarten. She advanced from one assignment to another until she became a leader in the state organization. For three years immediately preceding her election as state president, Mrs. Burkitt served as first vice-president. During that time she attended three out-of-state meetings as the Oklahoma representative to the National Congress. As chairman of the office committee, she became thoroughly acquainted with state office procedure and needs. She also served as chairman of the important program committee on legislation, and of the equally important standing committee chairmen. As chairman of a PTA committee on Civil Defense, she helped prepare a statement of the Oklahoma Congress position and program in that important

¹"Madam President," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIV (July, 1952), p. 6.

area.¹

The Twelfth State President

Mrs. W. Fred (Lois) Scott, twelfth president of the Oklahoma Congress, was born in Athens, Texas and came to Oklahoma with her parents in 1904. She graduated from high school at Sayre, Oklahoma and later attended the University of Oklahoma. For three years, she taught in the Indian Service, two years at the Kiowa Agency in Oklahoma, and one year at the Shoshone Agency in Wyoming. The Scotts were married in Wichita Falls, Texas in 1921 and in 1936 moved to Oklahoma City where Mr. Scott operated an independent trucking concern.² The Scotts had four children, a son, Robert, and three daughters, Lois Margaret (later Mrs. Frank Lorince), Freda, and Katherine. At the time Mrs. Scott became president of the Oklahoma Congress, Robert, a graduate of the University of Oklahoma in aeronautical engineering, lived with his wife and two small sons at Norman. Lois Margaret, who held a master's degree from Eastman School of Music, lived in West Virginia. Freda was an outstanding music student at the University of Oklahoma, and Katherine an outstanding senior in Central High School in Oklahoma City.³

In addition to her interest in PTA work, Mrs. Scott was active in the Oklahoma County chapter of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. During the severe polio epidemic in 1947, she organized the

¹Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "First Vice-President, Three Year Report," 1949-52 (Chambers Files).

²Interview with Mrs. W. Fred Scott, June 19, 1957.

³"Madam President," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (July, 1955), p. 8.

first group of women volunteers who contributed some twelve hundred hours of service to Crippled Children's Hospital during the emergency. She served on the Oklahoma Citizens Commission for Public Education and was a member of the Governor's Committee for the Oklahoma conference which preceded the White House Conference on Education in 1955. She served on the Oklahoma City Mayor's Board of Review, a group which made considerable progress in dealing with objectionable reading matter in comic books and other cheap publications available to children. She was active in church groups and was a member of St. Luke's Methodist Church in Oklahoma City.

Mrs. Scott's PTA work began in 1937-38 as a member of the Westwood elementary PTA and the Jackson Junior High School PTA in Oklahoma City. She served three terms as a local unit president, two as president of Central High School PTA.¹ For her work in the Oklahoma City PTA Council she received the council's award for meritorious service in 1948. She held many committee chairmanships at the state level which undoubtedly served as valuable background for her work as president. Like Mrs. Burkitt, who preceded her, Mrs. Scott served as first vice-president for three years prior to her advancement to the presidency. In this position she was chairman of the important program committee on legislation, a field in which she was greatly interested. She was the first state chairman of civil defense and assisted in the development of a state-wide program in that field. In addition to her work on standing committees, she served on such special committees as the joint committee of OEA-PTA, the school education committee, the group relations committee, and a

¹Oklahoma City Times, May 4, 1955, p. 15.

committee on adult education techniques.

Other Leaders

Many other leaders made important contributions to the Oklahoma Congress. One of these was Mrs. Carl (Myrl) Davenport of Tulsa. Mrs. Davenport, a native of Kentucky, moved to Oklahoma with her parents, attended Central State College, and later Tulsa University. She taught twelve years in the Tulsa public schools. The frequent appearance of her name throughout this history indicates the many state PTA activities in which she engaged. After the death of her husband in 1954, Mrs. Davenport succeeded him as vice-president of a wholesale coffee company and the demanding duties of that office forced her to curtail her parent-teacher work. In announcing her resignation as state treasurer in 1954, the state PTA office credited Mrs. Davenport with "many years of service to the parent-teacher movement in her own city as well as throughout the state."¹

Another leader who was known for "organizing new PTAs was Mrs. J. M. McCombs of Oklahoma City. During a period of three years in which she served as organizing officer of the Oklahoma City Council, Mrs. McCombs organized twenty-three new units and "revitalized" two others.² As publicity chairman of the Oklahoma City Council, Mrs. McCombs did much to convince newspaper editors that PTA news belonged on the news pages, not in the society columns. She succeeded in getting a PTA page published in the Monday morning paper in Oklahoma City and wrote many

¹"A Story about Treasurers," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (December, 1954), pp. 8-9.

²Ibid.

articles on publicity in her column in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher.

The PTA and the Profession

When the four "better schools amendments" were adopted in the general election of 1946 following vigorous support by the Oklahoma Congress, there probably had never been a higher regard on the part of school administrators for the parent-teacher movement. Mrs. S. S. Matofsky received numerous letters of appreciation from school men, and several of these comments were published in the bulletin. C. M. Howell, executive secretary of the OEA said all were agreed that a large part of the success was due to the work of the Oklahoma Congress. G. T. Stubbs, a former OEA president, wrote, "I have the feeling that we could never have achieved the victory . . . had it not been that your splendid organization through its unselfish and untiring service . . ." ¹ informed the people. Other words of appreciation came from O. W. Davison, superintendent at Durant; O. V. Porterfield, state president of the Classroom Teachers Association; Charles C. Mason, Tulsa superintendent; W. Max Chambers, Okmulgee superintendent; and George D. Hann, superintendent at Ardmore.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that no resistance to parent-teacher organizations remained. "Indifference and actual discouragement on the part of school authorities" was one of three reasons given by Mrs. Davenport for PTA units lost in the 1946-47 school year. ² In the summer of 1948, the Oklahoma Congress submitted questionnaires to 115

¹"Oklahoma Educators Praise Congress Efforts on School Amendments," ibid., Vol. XIX (January, 1947), pp. 18-19.

²Myrl Davenport, "Annual Report, Northeast Region," April 3, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

school administrators attending summer sessions. All agreed that home-school relations were important in school administration and all but six agreed that PTA was a help in achieving good school-community relations; but fewer than half of the administrators had PTA units in the schools in which they served.¹

A real effort was made on the part of Oklahoma Congress leaders to pattern local PTA efforts on state and national principles. These efforts were largely successful, but not entirely so and "many a promising organization . . . ended in shipwreck because its members and leaders mistook it for something that no real parent-teacher association can ever be."² Allen pointed out that the PTA was not a mother's club, a board of education, a fund-raising agency, a grievance society, a "white-wash crew," a boosters' club, or a partisan organization. He believed that a PTA could be neither a parent association only or a teacher association only, but should follow basic policies of the state and national organizations.³

Dr. Charles C. Mason, superintendent of schools in Tulsa, also felt that the local unit was the focal point in developing good home-school relations.

The real lifeblood of the parent-teacher association is the local unit When the local unit works, the whole organization works. When the local unit lies down on the job, the damaging

¹Mrs. Ray L. Six and Maxine Grissom, "Summary of Questionnaire Submitted in Classes of School Administrators at Two State Schools," Summer Session, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

²"Mistaken Identity," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (October, 1946), p. 16.

³Paul Allen, "Why Promote the PTA?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (October, 1952), p. 7.

effect is felt far and wide.¹

Mason felt the PTA to be "just as much a part of the educational institution as the teachers and students." He believed parents should assist teachers in discovering community needs and community opinions while teachers should interpret to parents "the technical aspects of public education."

As late as 1947 at least one school system in Oklahoma had PTAs which were not affiliated with state and national associations. In May, 1947 Mrs. I. G. Beall of Enid requested mailing cartons from the national PTA office with which to send a relief package over seas. The matter was referred by the national office to Mrs. Matofsky since the project materials were for the use of state and national units and the Enid unit was not affiliated. Mrs. Matofsky approved issuance of the project packet to the Enid group on the basis that the Oklahoma Congress had no desire to prevent people over seas from receiving assistance. But she directed the office secretary, Mrs. Whittlesey, to advise the national "that this group, along with several others in Enid, are not Congress groups because certain school administrators in that city have repeatedly refused to permit Congress units to be organized."² At the time of this incident, the superintendent of schools in Enid was Dewitt Waller.

Meanwhile new efforts were being made for closer cooperation

¹Charles C. Mason, "How Can We Make Our Parent Teacher Relationship a Reality?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (September, 1947), p. 20.

²Letter from Alice Davidson to Mrs. S. S. Matofsky, May 14, 1947; Letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to Dorothy Whittlesey, May 19, 1947; and Letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to Mrs. I. G. Beall, May 22, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

between the Oklahoma Congress and school people. In 1947, the Oklahoma Congress took the initiative in forming a "Council on Education" composed of twenty-two representatives of agencies within the state which had a "compelling interest in the educational welfare of Oklahoma's children." Its purpose was to ". . . study school problems, attempt to discover ways in which those problems may be solved, and serve as a center through which information on needed activities in the field of education may be given to member organizations."¹ The Oklahoma Congress also participated in forming the State Council on Teacher Education and the Commission on Teacher Certification in an effort to "eliminate emergency certification of teachers as quickly as possible."

In 1953 the Oklahoma Congress joined with the state department of education, the OEA and the Oklahoma State School Boards Association in organizing the Oklahoma Commission for Public Education. Membership in the commission was held by lay people on an individual basis and the Commission proposed to "take advantage of the work of existing commissions and of the considerable volume of research available to educate its members first on the problems of education."²

On October 20, 1954 the Oklahoma Congress joined other groups in supporting an "Education Day" sponsored by the Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council. The Congress also joined other groups in sponsoring the Rural Health Conference and a conference on the Health of the School Age Child. Mrs. Burkitt and Mrs. W. Fred Scott were appointed by Governor

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Chicago, Illinois, 1947, p. 224.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "State President's Annual Report," 1953-54, p. 2. (Burkitt Files).

Raymond Gary in 1955 to the planning committee for the state conference on education which preceded the White House Conference in November of that year.¹ In October, 1948 the state board of managers discussed the advisability of encouraging local units to send a PTA representative to meetings of local boards of education, but a Mr. Spraberry suggested that specific instruction and education be given local unit presidents about establishing harmonious relationships between the PTA and the school board before any direct action was taken on the proposal.²

Statements by leading educators in the post war period revealed a growing awareness of the importance of parent-teacher organizations. In 1948, D. D. Kirkland said as president of the OEA, "To this date no organization outside . . . the school profession has done as much for the schools as the parent-teacher association."³ O. W. Davison, a past-president of OEA, praised the PTA as "working in closest harmony with school officials" and added,

As an agency for bringing the homes, schools and communities together in behalf of children and youth the PTA is unexcelled. So varied has its program become that there is hardly any phase of public school education⁴ that has not been materially aided by this unselfish organization.

Whitt Abbot called the PTA "the principal's best friend." He regarded PTA leaders in his school as persons to whom he could take his

¹Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "Report of State President," 1952-55, p. 3 (Burkitt Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 13, 1948.

³D. D. Kirkland, "The Oklahoma Schools and PTA," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (March, 1948), p. 16.

⁴O. W. Davison, "History . . .," p. 186.

problems and "expect sound, confidential discussion and advice."¹ Paul Allen, superintendent of schools in Pauls Valley, observed,

The local PTA has . . . only one grave responsibility and that is living up to and practicing your fine objectives. If you will study those objectives and try to put life into them, your local will be a godsend to your community.²

F. E. Willingham, as president of the OEA in 1954, extended greetings to the Oklahoma Congress and solicited a continuation of "the fine and generous support" which the parent-teacher organization had given the organized teachers.³

Praise for the Oklahoma Congress also came from Joe D. Hurt, president of the Oklahoma State School Boards Association. Hurt said a friend had told him, "There's no use in trying to get PTA's and school boards to work together because they get along like two cats tied by the tails and hung over a clothesline." But Hurt said,

My experience in recent years with . . . the Oklahoma Council on Education proved quite the contrary. There I saw leaders representing these two organizations sit down and reason together in perfect understanding. It was a splendid privilege of mine and one not soon to be forgotten.⁴

In addition to these and other favorable expressions from educators, the Oklahoma Congress received recognition from civic and municipal government leaders in the two largest cities of the state. In 1949 the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce planned a special day in recognition of parent-

¹Whitt R. Abbot, "PTA Through the Eyes of a Principal," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (December, 1950), p. 6.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (October, 1948), p. 17.

³Ibid., Vol. XXVII (November, 1954), cover.

⁴Joe D. Hurt, "Parent-Teacher-School Board Relationships," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (December, 1948), p. 13.

teacher units in that city. Dr. Eugene S. Briggs, president of Phillips University, Enid, was principal speaker at a meeting attended by 250 guests. J. Howard Engel, "Inquiring Reporter" for Radio Station KOME, interviewed many of the leaders on his program. Engel was himself a former PTA president.¹

In the fall of 1954, Mayor Allen Street of Oklahoma City named two outstanding PTA leaders to a "Board of Review for Juvenile Readers." They were Mrs. W. Fred Scott, then first vice-president of the Oklahoma Congress, and Mrs. Herman Merson, president of the Oklahoma City PTA Council. As a result of the work of this committee, agencies distributing comic books in the area agreed voluntarily to withdraw some 80,000 copies per month of the most vicious type of reading material.²

Oklahoma-National Congress Relations

From May 18 to May 20, 1953, the Oklahoma Congress was host to the Fifty-Seventh Annual Convention of the National Congress. Invitations had been extended by Oklahoma to the National Congress on a number of occasions including a special effort in 1935 to secure the National Congress convention for 1939,³ fiftieth anniversary of the first Oklahoma land opening. The convention scheduled for Oklahoma City in 1953 culminated many years of effort and of waiting.

As early as August, 1951 a "convention management committee" was

¹"PTA Day at the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (December, 1947), p. 7.

²"PTA Leaders Appointed to Board of Review," Ibid., Vol. XXVII (November, 1954), p. 9.

³Letter from Glen W. Faris, Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, to Mrs. John R. Burns, September 18, 1935 (Calvert Files).

authorized by the executive committee. Dr. W. Max Chambers appointed Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, Mrs. W. Fred Scott, and Mrs. Harry Neuffer to the committee. It was instructed to "prepare materials to be distributed . . . as a forerunner of the Oklahoma Convention."¹

More than 3,000 delegates, representing PTAs from every state in the nation and from some foreign countries, attended the convention. The annual banquet, held in the Persian Room of the Skirvin Tower Hotel, was attended by 1,000 guests. To give the convention a western flavor pages were dressed in cowgirl costumes which included bolero and skirt while ushers were dressed in white tailored short sleeve shirt waist blouses, squaw skirts, and string ties matching their skirts. The pages and ushers received detailed instructions on behavior and procedure in their efforts to help convention guests. They were instructed "to be courteous to all attending regardless of race or color and . . . to seat each delegate where he wishes to be seated."²

Apparently the efforts to entertain the National Congress were successful. Mrs. C. E. Scott, the executive secretary, wrote that Mrs. Burkitt had been "literally swamped" with enthusiastic notes of appreciation telling her what a wonderful convention it was. She described the letters as

. . . sincere, friendly letters, where the writers bubbled over with joy and enthusiasm as they praised the Oklahoma Congress people, and Oklahomans in general for the hospitality manifested and the smooth handling of a huge convention.³

¹Minutes of the Executive Committee, August 19, 1951.

²"Mimeographed Instructions to Pages and Ushers" (Burkitt Files).

³Mrs. Ruby Scott, "National PTA Convention," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXXV (September, 1953), p. 29.

In 1950 the National Congress launched a fund raising campaign to finance a new headquarters building in Chicago. In January, 1950 an Oklahoma Congress committee was appointed to conduct the "quarters for headquarters" campaign. Mrs. George E. Calvert was chairman of the committee with Mrs. W. Fred Scott as co-chairman. The members were Mrs. Warren Stone, Mrs. J. L. Burkitt, Mrs. A. F. Saddoris, Mrs. M. J. McCombs, and Mrs. Carl Davenport.¹

Mrs. Calvert called on each local unit to strive to reach its goal before the regional conferences in April, at which time suitable awards were promised to presidents whose units had been placed on the honor roll.² A total of \$3,171.75 had been collected by the end of May, 1950³ and the campaign continued for the next five years. On June 15, 1955 a final report of the committee showed that Oklahoma had raised \$11,236.68 toward its quota of \$15,000.00 for the building of the national headquarters. The total contributed by all the states was \$763,507.38.⁴

Attacks on National Magazine

As the National Congress became increasingly important as a champion of public education, the organization came under attack by those post war critics who bitterly opposed modern education and used the post

¹Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Council Presidents, January, 1950 (Chambers Files).

²Press Release, Oklahoma Congress, February 16, 1950 (Chambers Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Long Beach, California, 1950, p. 230.

⁴Contributions to the National Headquarters Fund, State Totals as of June 15, 1955 (Burkitt Files).

war hysteria attending the widespread loyalty investigations of the period as a means of attracting public concern. In November, 1951 Mrs. Burkitt discussed the problem in a letter to the National Congress.

We are under increasing attack on the National Parent-Teacher Magazine here in Tulsa Citations of Sidonie Gruenberg and Algernon Black as members of numerous subversive groups . . . are being circulated in Tulsa. What are we to say to such attacks? On what basis does the board of directors of the National Parent-Teacher justify the use of articles by Dr. Black? What are we to tell our critics? Certainly, even they are not criticizing the content of the articles . . . but they are able to negate any good the writing may accomplish by pointing to these unsavory connections. As a council, the Parent-Teacher organization in Tulsa is trying to keep an even balance in the face of a definite tendency in some groups to witch-hunting¹

In a second letter Mrs. Burkitt described the attacks as taking the form of telephone calls to local magazine chairmen informing them that contributors to the magazine had recently been associated with frontist groups. As a result, one magazine chairman in Tulsa had halted efforts to secure subscriptions to the National Parent-Teacher pending a reply to Mrs. Burkitt's inquiry.² On January 9, 1952 Mrs. Eva Grant, editor of the magazine, replied at considerable length and with considerable feeling. She reviewed in detail the policies and principles on which the National Congress was founded, pointing out the utter abhorrence of those principles to subversive groups and to communism in particular. She then proceeded to answer the attacks one by one observing that "practically everything removed from its context can carry an odd connotation," but maintaining, "We find that most of the underlined words and

¹Letter from Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt to Eva Grant, Editor of the National Parent-Teacher, November 12, 1951 (Chambers Files).

²Letter from Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt to Mrs. John Hayes, National Congress President, November 16, 1951 (Chambers Files).

phrases speak just as righteously out of context as within." She said Black not only had not been before the committee investigating Un-American activities, but was often consulted by the FBI in checking on former students, staff members, and friends. Of Sidonie Gruenberg she said, "Never to my knowledge has her loyalty to this country and to its way of life ever been questioned." She discussed the long service of Mrs. Gruenberg including a statement from Mrs. Gruenberg that she had never been a communist. Mrs. Grant concluded her defense of Mrs. Gruenberg by saying,

Many liberal-minded people at one time or another supported certain proposals endorsed by communist-front organizations when the identity of these organizations was not known. Now that their nature has been disclosed many of these former supporters believe that the testimony of a lifetime's work should be sufficient evidence of their faith in democracy. Their whole life has been an affirmation of their faith.¹

Mrs. Grant was particularly shocked that the Tulsa critics had singled out Dr. George Stoddard for their most violent disapproval. She reminded Mrs. Burkitt that General Douglas MacArthur had called on Stoddard to revamp the Japanese school system along democratic lines and had complimented him for his work.

On January 23, 1952 Mrs. F. C. Swindell of Tulsa, who was state chairman of the National Parent-Teacher promotion, reported to the executive committee the letter from the editor. She moved authorization of fifty mimeographed copies of Mrs. Grant's report; this was seconded and approved. Mrs. Burkitt then moved that a letter of appreciation be written to the editor for her efforts in clearing up the matter. This

¹Letter from Mrs. Eva Grant to Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, January 9, 1952, p. 10 (Chambers Files).

also was approved,¹ and apparently closed the incident since no further reference to such criticism could be found in the Oklahoma Congress files. Subscriptions to the magazine, however, did not increase in the post war period in proportion to the increase in state membership in Oklahoma. In 1955, Mrs. Burkitt observed that 3,696 subscriptions to the national magazine from a membership of nearly 155,000 was evidence that the membership as a whole was "obviously failing to live up to its responsibility for support."² She urged council presidents to work to secure more subscriptions to the national magazine.³

Parent-Teacher Publications

In the post war period the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher continued to be the most important publication of the Oklahoma Congress. Volume XIX (1946-47) contained two changes from the preceding volume. There was no summer yearbook issue, and the practice of listing contributing editors was discontinued. In March, 1947 the place of publication was changed from Oklahoma City to Norman. With Volume XX the number of issues was increased to ten numbers per year, one of which served as a yearbook edition. On January 23, 1952 the state board of managers named Mrs. Ruby Scott as managing editor of the bulletin.⁴ She had previously been listed as assistant editor and business manager.

¹Minutes of the State Executive Committee, January 23, 1952.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "Report of the State President," 1952-55, p. 1 (Burkitt Files).

³Letter from Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt to Council Presidents, February 21, 1955 (Burkitt Files).

⁴Minutes of the State Board of Managers, and Minutes of the State Executive Committee, January 23, 1952.

Changes in office personnel may have accounted for mis-numbering of the September, October, and November, 1951 issues of the bulletin. The September 1951 issue was designated as Volume XXIII, Number 11. This error was continued through November. The December issue was correctly designated Number 4, but incorrectly designated as Volume XXIII, the result being that the December, 1950 and the December, 1951 numbers of the bulletin were given identical volume and issue numbers. In the fall of 1952, the September and October issues were incorrectly designated as Volume XXIV, Numbers 11 and 12; but with the November 1952 issue, Volume XXV, Number 3, appeared and no further inconsistencies in the designation of volume and issue occurred.

Meanwhile circulation of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher increased by 1,200 subscriptions for 1949-50 reaching a total circulation of more than 7,000 copies per month.¹ During this period the bulletin usually contained twenty pages per issue with additional pages added when needed. In 1952, William R. Fulton reported a circulation of 8,500 copies. He announced a new subscription price effective May 1, 1952 of seventy-five cents, and said the bulletin committee had agreed to reduce the number of free subscriptions.² A year later, the managing editor reported subscriptions had decreased by 350 and observed that there apparently were "hundreds of local unit chairmen in the state who do not subscribe to the bulletin."³ This same view was voiced by Mrs. Burkitt in May, 1955.

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Long Beach, California, 1950, pp. 228-229.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 6, 1952.

³Mrs. Ruby Scott, Report of the Managing Editor, Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, 1953-54 (Burkitt Files).

She reported an average of 6,100 bulletins printed each month and pointed out, "If each officer and chairman of units and councils subscribed as would be ideal, between 7,500 and 10,000 copies would be needed each month."¹

A basic change in policy occurred in May, 1954 with the following announcement:

The Oklahoma Parent-Teacher has reached a milestone in its career. With this, the May, 1954 issue, we close our long and pleasant association with our advertisers. The next issue, July, will come forth with a "new look"--no advertising!

We have joined the ranks of other state congress bulletins. For a number of years a majority of state bulletins carried advertising. Slowly this practice was discontinued.²

Oklahoma was one of the last two remaining states to discontinue the sale of advertising. The editors expressed appreciation to the two advertising agents, Mrs. J. F. McCarthy of Oklahoma City and Mrs. J. O. Misch of Tulsa. Mrs. McCarthy had handled advertising for the Oklahoma Congress for fourteen years. Mrs. Scott the managing editor observed that a bulletin without advertising would simplify the make up of the publication; but that it would make it more difficult to present eye appeal.

Prior to 1948-49 subscriptions had not paid a substantial part of the cost of publishing the bulletin. In 1946-47 production costs were \$3,544.87. Of this amount only \$791.50 was raised through the 1,583 subscriptions sold during the year, while \$2,261.12 came from the sale of advertising, and \$257.75 from a surplus in the bulletin fund for the

¹Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "Report of State President," 1952-1955, p. 1 (Burkitt Files).

²"We Will Have a New Look!" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (May, 1954), p. 3.

preceding year.¹ Subscriptions showed no appreciable gain for 1947-48 although the production costs of the bulletin increased approximately one thousand dollars. In 1948-49, the revenue from the sale of subscriptions reached \$1,480.50, almost double that of the preceding year, but revenue from advertising declined and the Oklahoma Congress allocated \$2,000.00 in budgeted funds to the production of the bulletin. With the elimination of advertising subscriptions to the bulletin took on added importance, but the Oklahoma Congress had grown so rapidly in membership that regular publication of a bulletin no longer depended either on subscriptions or advertising.

In April, 1949 Mrs. Carl J. Davenport reported the activities of a committee to gain wider circulation of the bulletin. Said Mrs.

Davenport:

To this end we inaugurated the "Clover Leaf Club." This is a very exclusive group in which membership may only be had by meeting the following local unit requirements;

- Five chairmen as subscribers,
- Five room representatives as subscribers,
- Five per cent of general membership as subscribers,
- Five "outside" subscriptions (Doctors' offices, libraries, etc.)²

While the award undoubtedly served as an incentive to subscribe to the bulletin, Mrs. Davenport gave much of the credit for an expanded circulation to Mrs. Calvert, the editor, and Mrs. Dorothy Whittlesey, the assistant editor. "We could not sell the units on the necessity for wider circulation among their membership," she said, "if we could not show them

¹D. L. Barnes, Auditor, "Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, Bulletin Summary," Year Ending March 15, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

²Mrs. Carl J. Davenport, "Annual Report on Promotion of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher," April 12, 1949 (Matofsky Files).

the excellence and helpfulness of the content of the magazine."¹

The 1949-50 report of the promotion committee revealed a total of 91 Clover Leaf units. The committee also awarded some 300 badges and plaques to units having a high percentage of members subscribing to the bulletin. Muskogee became the first council to achieve 100 per cent subscription by its membership.² Somewhat later, the "Emerald Star Club" award was added for subscriptions to the bulletin. A local PTA was eligible for the Emerald Star Club if (1) the school principal subscribed to the bulletin, (2) every officer and every unit chairman subscribed, (3) fifty per cent of the room representatives subscribed, and (4) twenty-five per cent of the entire membership subscribed, including those in the first three categories.³ Names of PTAs achieving the Emerald Star Award were listed each month in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher.

Special Features in the Bulletin

In October, 1946 a new column appeared in the bulletin under the heading "The Book Shelf." Its purpose was to list from time to time brief reviews of books for parents. This column written by Dr. Alice Sowers became the "Parent's Bookshelf" in November, 1946 and continued under that name at the time of this writing. In 1948, county extension chairmen were given a page in the bulletin, and in 1950 the editor instructed the office staff to give Group "B" chairmen in the state organization one page in each issue. The chairmen worked out a schedule

¹
Ibid.

²Mrs. A. F. Saddoris, "Annual Report of Promotion of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher," 1949-50 (Chambers Files).

³"Emerald Star Club Report," undated (Burkitt Files).

for use of the page.¹ In November, 1950 Mrs. Allen B. (Mildred) Johnson of Oklahoma City began a column of "Devotional Thoughts" which continued as a regular feature of the bulletin at the time of this writing. The editor rated "Mildred's Devotional" as one of the most popular features in the bulletin. Mrs. Johnson was an outstanding worker in St. Luke's Methodist Church, Oklahoma City, and much in demand as a speaker for Methodist Church Circle meetings throughout the state.²

With the November, 1952 issue Mrs. John A. (Olive) Wadlin, director of field service, began a column on "Hi-ways and By-ways in the Field." The purpose was to report field activities such as conferences on leadership training and schools of instruction. In September, 1953 Opal Lute, state chairman of rural service, began a column, "From the Grass Roots." The editor noted that Mrs. Lute's column would appear "at intervals in the future." It had continued to do so at the time of this study.

Other Publications

"Activating the Platform," "Project Prime," and a revision of the PTA "Handbook" were three of the more important state publications of the period. "Activating the Platform" grew out of the blueprint for action adopted by the convention of 1946. It contained twenty-eight pages designed to serve both as a guide to local units and councils in their projects and project planning and to assist those units in a self-

¹ Alice Sowers, "Report of Meeting of Group 'B' Chairmen," September 8, 1949 (Chambers Files).

² "Presenting Mildred," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (September, 1952), p. 7.

evaluation of their success in implementing the three-year platform.

"Project Prime" was prepared primarily by Mrs. Warren (Minnie Lee) Stone to assist councils in project planning and to stimulate enthusiasm for achievement of project goals. The fifty-two page booklet was issued in 1950 and "attracted widespread interest."¹ In 1953, after studying the publications of other state congresses, and the former "Handbook" of the Oklahoma Congress, the Handbook Committee suggested a list of contents to be revised as study and discussion might indicate. Publication of a new handbook was deferred until the state convention of 1955 to permit necessary changes which might result from action in the convention.² Another committee prepared a check list to replace the PTA score card with its system of points for achievement.

With the large number of state committees, the volume of form letters issued by state chairmen received attention. Group "B" chairmen were advised by the state president that form letters would be mailed as the need arose but that mailings would be limited because of the expense of mimeographing and postage. Group "B" chairmen were asked to send their form letters to the coordinator, Dr. Alice Sowers, for approval. All other form letters would be sent to the state president for approval.³

A clever idea for promotion of PTA publications attracted so much attention that permission was asked and granted that it be presented

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Miami Beach, Florida, 1951, p. 212.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "State President's Annual Report," 1953-54, p. 2 (Burkitt Files).

³Alice Sowers, "Report of Meeting of Group 'B' Chairmen," September 8, 1949, p. 3 (Matofsky Files).

at the National Congress convention. Known as "Ruby's Hat Show," the idea was a PTA fashion revue consisting of hats fashioned from PTA publications. The idea "originated in the mind of Mrs. C. E. Scott and was carried out through the technical skill of Mrs. W. Fred Scott, state publications chairman."¹ Mrs. Fred Scott made the hats to fit the unusual descriptions in the skit written by Mrs. C. E. (Ruby) Scott.

Importance of Radio to PTA

In 1947, radio may have reached its peak as an instrument of PTA publicity and education. Five Tulsa radio stations carried PTA programs. KVOO carried the NBC series, "The Baxters," and the WNAD series "Family Life Radio Forum," with Dr. Alice Sowers. KTUL presented a fifteen minute program, "You'll Want to Know," sponsored by the Tulsa PTA Council. KOME had begun a new series, "Youth Looks at Life," also sponsored by the Tulsa Council and planned by a committee of parents and teachers headed by Byron L. Shepherd, assistant superintendent in charge of secondary education. KOME also carried an interview once each month with Lucille Burns on the work of the Tulsa Council in community projects. KFMJ a new station devoted exclusively to music and news carried a PTA news program each week, and KAKC carried a fifteen minute program each week called "Youth Presents." In addition to its local programs, KOME originated a program each week for the Oklahoma Congress which was carried by the nine stations of the Oklahoma Network; KADA, Ada; KVSQ, Ardmore; KCRC, Enid; KWSO, Lawton; KITMC, McAlester; KBIX, Muskogee; KGFF, Shawnee; and KTOK, Oklahoma City. This program series was prepared by the radio

¹Mrs. George E. Calvert, "It Went to Their Heads," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (October, 1950), p. 10.

workshop of Tulsa University under the direction of Ben G. Henneke and took its subject matter from the state pamphlet, "Activating the Platform."¹ The Oklahoma Network also had presented Oklahoma Congress programs in support of the "better schools amendments" of 1946. A special script on those amendments was written and mailed to all council presidents and school superintendents in the state and may have appeared on other stations.

The Oklahoma Congress dropped one of its state wide broadcasts in 1947 with this note from Mrs. Joel Burkitt, radio chairman:

It is a matter of regret that the newscast over WNAD which had been on the air for five years could not be continued. The radio chairman living at a distance from Norman, and finding it a slow and difficult matter to set up a news channel, the station abandoned the attempt after several broadcasts.²

Changes in state officers had left no one on the campus to present the PTA news which had been given in the past by Thurman White and H. E. Wrinkle. WNAD Director, John Dunn, suggested that staff announcers would prepare and read the news copy if sufficient material were furnished by the state office each week, but apparently sufficient material was not available.³ WNAD continued to originate the "Family Life Radio Forum" with Dr. Sowers.

In 1953, Mrs. Karl Janssen of Tulsa prepared four sets of spot announcements and advised local councils to offer them to local radio

¹Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "What Is Being Done in PTA Radio?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (January, 1947), p. 8.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "Annual Report, Radio Chairman," April, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

³Letter from John Dunn, Director of Radio Station WNAD, to Dorothy Whittlesey, July 14, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

stations for use as public service announcements. Series D was promotion for the National Parent-Teacher. An example follows:

The job of being the wise parent of a growing, energetic boy or girl requires knowledge and skill. For helpful counsel, based on experience and good sense, subscribe to the National Parent-Teacher Magazine through your PTA.

Series E was designed to counteract unfair criticism of public school textbooks:

Textbooks are the contribution of free enterprise to our public school system. No fair-minded person will be impressed by the rating of a book that depends on a few quotations taken out of context. Books are tools of learning. Learn more about textbooks and how they are used.¹

Series F was concerned with the critical shortage of school buildings, and series G dealt with the need to reduce the number of school districts in Oklahoma.

Growing Importance of the State Headquarters

In 1945, Mrs. Flesner appointed an office committee "to clarify the procedures and operation of the state office to assist the president in the general supervision of office services and procedures, and to make recommendations to the presidents regarding questions which arise."² On November 25, 1946 a committee of the Oklahoma Congress met with Dr. George L. Cross, president of the University of Oklahoma, to consider the possibility of locating the state office on the campus of the University. Out of this and other discussions an agreement was reached in which the University offered to provide office space for the

¹Form letter, with Spot Announcements enclosed, from Mrs. Karl Janssen, to Council Radio Chairmen, December 3, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

²"Report of the Office Committee," 1945-46 (Flesner Files).

Oklahoma Congress in a building occupied by the University of Oklahoma Extension Division and to share equally with the Congress the cost of a field representative to be selected by the Congress and approved by the University. A called meeting of the state board of managers discussed the proposal at "considerable length" after which the members present voted unanimously "to accept the generous offer of the University."¹ On February 14, 1947 the state office was moved to Building 1001 of the North Campus of the University of Oklahoma in Norman. These "newer and larger quarters" resulted in the purchase of new furniture and equipment. The office committee also recommended an increase in salary for Mrs. Dorothy Whittlesey, office secretary, and for her assistant, Mrs. Marguerite Douglas.²

In April, 1947 Judge Donald Darrah reported to the state board the advantages of incorporating the Oklahoma Congress. The board adopted a plan of incorporation and named the executive committee the board of trustees for the corporation.³ In October, 1948 the state board discussed and approved a new position of executive secretary. A special office committee was appointed to set up a division of duties and responsibilities for the expanded office staff.⁴

On December 1, 1948 Mrs. C. E. (Ruby) Scott became executive secretary of the Oklahoma Congress. Mrs. Scott was known throughout the

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (January, 1947), p. 7.

²Thurman White, "Annual Report of the Office Committee," April 14, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 15, 1947.

⁴Minutes of the State Executive Committee, October 13, 1948.

organization for her state and local leadership of some sixteen years. She had held many local and state committee chairmanships, had served twelve years on the state board of managers, had been a regular contributor to the state bulletin, and had served as first vice-president of the Oklahoma Congress from 1941 to 1946. For twenty-four years, the Scotts had lived in Shawnee where their three children had grown to adulthood. Mrs. Scott was in charge of the primary department of the Church of Christ Bible school in Shawnee for sixteen years and often conducted special classes for young mothers. From 1942 until the time of her appointment, Mrs. Scott had served as assistant county superintendent of Pottawatomie County. Of her appointment to the newly created post of executive secretary she said, "It is the fulfillment of a dream of years to be able to give full time to parent-teacher work."¹

Several changes in, and additions to, the personnel of the state office occurred from 1948 to 1957. In the summer of 1949, Mrs. C. L. (Dorothy) Whittlesey resigned as office secretary and assistant editor to devote full time to her home.² She was replaced by Mrs. Claude B. (Edna Gene) McCaleb who served from July 1, 1949 to May, 1951. Mrs. McCaleb's background included both teaching and office work. She resigned when her husband completed an advanced degree at the University.³

In 1950 the office staff included four full time employees. Mrs. Scott, the executive secretary, supervised the entire office and served as personal representative of the Oklahoma Congress President; Miss

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (December, 1948), p. 7.

²Ibid., Vol. XXII (September, 1949), p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 19.

Maxine Grissom was director of field service; Mrs. McCaleb prepared final copy for the bulletin, handled the advertising copy with agents, and kept records of membership; and Mrs. T. L. (Helen O'Dell) Wilson served as office clerk. A student was employed each month to help prepare the mailing of the bulletin which required three days and filled twenty mail sacks.¹ The state office had added a moveable table for use in mailing and several other pieces of office equipment. The state board adjusted salaries of state office employees from time to time as the wage-price increase continued in the post war years.²

In September, 1952 Mrs. Russell (Lena May) Myers became office manager for the Oklahoma Congress and chief assistant to the executive secretary. Mrs. Myers was a graduate of Central State College and had attended the University of Oklahoma. She had taught music, served as high school librarian, and as secretary to a board of education.³ In 1957 Mrs. Carl H. (Willie Lee) Stapp again became a part of the staff of the state office. Having served as office secretary during the formative years of the Oklahoma Congress, Mrs. Stapp had resigned in 1944 to devote full time to her home. Looking forward to the time when Mrs. Scott would reach the age of retirement, the state board named Mrs. Stapp associate executive secretary. In July, 1954 Mrs. Myers' title had been changed from Office Manager to Administrative Assistant. She continued to serve in the latter capacity.

¹Ibid., Vol. XXIII (September, 1950), p. 6.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 4, 1949; and October 9, 1951.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (November, 1952), p. 9.

In the post war period the state office had grown in space, facilities, personnel, and volume of service to the Oklahoma Congress. Or to use the more expressive language of Mrs. C. E. Scott, it had "grown like Mr. Finney's turnip."¹ This expansion would not have been possible without the post war growth in membership which greatly expanded the financial resources of the Oklahoma Congress. The financial audit in 1947 revealed a large cash surplus at the close of the year and the auditor recommended that at least \$6,000.00 be invested in U. S. Bonds.² In September, 1947 the executive committee recommended that the state board authorize the treasurer and president to purchase \$4,000.00 in series G bonds.³ In 1949, Mrs. Matofsky reported unencumbered assets of \$24,171.35, an increase of \$3,483.06 for the preceding year and of \$10,171.35 for her entire administration of three years.⁴ The financial situation of the Oklahoma Congress continued to improve throughout the period covered in this study.

Development of Field Service

In the post war period, the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers led all the state branches in the extent and quality of its field service. It was the only state with a full time director of field service as late as 1957, and the only state which maintained a regularly

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (February, 1955), p. 12.

²Letter from D. L. Barnes, Auditor, to Mrs. S. S. Matofsky, April 10, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

³Minutes of the State Executive Committee, September 23, 1947.

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, St. Louis, Missouri, 1949, p. 225.

scheduled program of parent-teacher education with higher institutions offering work in teacher preparation.

Field Service undoubtedly had its origin in the work of unpaid, volunteer parent-teacher leaders who, with the help of such national field workers as Mrs. Charles E. Roe, conducted leadership training and other types of instruction in parent-teacher work. In September, 1943 the executive committee authorized the president to secure the services of a part time field worker with the extent of the work to be determined by the funds available.¹ If anyone was employed, however, no record of her work could be found. Another attempt to launch a field service was made in September, 1944 when the executive committee adopted a motion that Mrs. S. S. Matofsky be appointed to do field work. No salary was involved in the plan, but the treasurer was authorized to pay her expenses.² There is nothing to indicate that this proposal was carried out. In 1946 the executive committee authorized the president to set up a committee to study extension and to employ field workers at the discretion of the committee. The executive committee also authorized the use of \$1,000.00 of the surplus funds for extension purposes.³

In December, 1946 Mrs. Matofsky notified local unit presidents of an offer by the University of Oklahoma to furnish free of charge office space and utilities and to share in the expense of a field worker for the Oklahoma Congress. She called a meeting of the board of managers

¹Minutes of the State Executive Committee, September 30, 1943.

²Ibid., September 29, 1944.

³Ibid., September 28, 1946.

"to consider this very fine offer by the University."¹ At this meeting, held on December 11, 1946, Mrs. Whittlesey read a letter from President Cross making the offer on the part of the University, and after general discussion the board adopted a motion by Mrs. John A. Wadlin that the offer be accepted.²

In April, 1947 Mrs. Margaret Welden was employed as field representative of the Oklahoma Congress. She was a native Oklahoman, having spent her childhood in Chandler, later moving to El Reno where she attended high school. She had attended Oklahoma College for Women, and Central State College, and had taught school for eight years in Canadian County. Her husband, Wetzel Welden, had died in an automobile accident in 1945 and her one son, Allen, was at that time ten years of age. Of her appointment Mrs. Welden said, "Realizing the importance of an organization that unites the home, school and community, it is with the utmost sincerity that I enter this new field work."³

The field service committee instructed Mrs. Welden to spend a rather large share of her time in strengthening and instructing units already in existence. The committee felt that the best way to encourage the organization of new units was the example of efficient work and worthwhile projects being carried on by existing units in the state. The first year of activities included schools of instruction for elected officers and chairmen of local units in enough localities of the state

¹Form letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to Local Unit Presidents, December 2, 1946 (Matofsky Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, December 11, 1946.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (April, 1947), p. 18.

that every local unit was within easy driving distance of at least one of the schools.¹

Mrs. Welden resigned at the close of the 1947-48 school year and Maxine Grissom was employed as director of field service in September of 1948. Miss Grissom had attended elementary and high school at Hollis, Oklahoma. She held a bachelor's degree from Oklahoma College for Women and a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma. She had taught in the junior high schools of Guthrie and Shawnee and had served as assistant director of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute.² During her first year as director of field service, Miss Grissom helped plan fall schools of instruction, organized a number of new PTA units, helped arrange conferences with personnel of state colleges, and represented the Oklahoma Congress at many educational meetings. She developed plans for "a school of instruction of the air" to be broadcast on a number of radio stations of the state, but apparently this interesting and novel idea was never carried out.³

In April, 1950 Miss Grissom gave a brief account of her work for the previous month in the field. It illustrates the type of services performed by the state PTA field service. During the month she attended a meeting and luncheon of the Tulsa Council and while in Tulsa spoke to the education classes of Dr. Ross Beall in Tulsa University. She next visited Oklahoma A. and M. College to discuss plans for a summer work-

¹Myrl Davenport, "The PTA--Yesterday and Today," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (February, 1948), p. 6.

²Ibid., Vol. XXI (September, 1948), p. 7.

³Mrs. O. W. Jones, "Annual Report of Field Service Committee," April 18, 1949 (Matofsky Files).

shop. She then traveled to Southeastern State College, Durant, to visit classes there, and while she was in that part of the state she held a school of instruction at Valliant. She then traveled to Oklahoma City and from there to Ponca City to meet the convention committee. There she joined Mrs. Warren Stone, state council advisor, and traveled with her to Woodward where they met the Woodward PTA council. From Woodward she went to a meeting in Yukon and then back to Norman to meet student teachers at the University of Oklahoma. Finally she completed the month's activities with a trip to Healdton at the invitation of Superintendent Noel Vaughan. There she addressed a city wide meeting of faculty members and parents.¹

After three years with the Oklahoma Congress, and following her marriage, Mrs. Maxine Grissom Littrell resigned as director of field service effective September 1, 1951.²

In January, 1951 and prior to Mrs. Littrell's resignation, the Oklahoma Congress had employed Mrs. John A. Wadlin on a part time, temporary basis as consultant of leadership training. Together Mrs. Wadlin and Miss Grissom had held seventy-eight schools of instruction and had worked with individuals from 600 parent-teacher units in 174 communities.³ As consultant in leadership training, Mrs. Wadlin had been instructed

. . . to give basic instruction to state, regional and county leaders so that they will have a better conception of the integration and coordination of their work; to help officers and chairmen in all divisions to learn more thoroughly their respective duties and obligations; to work with individuals and small groups including

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (April, 1950), p. 20.

²Ibid., [Vol. XXIV] (October, 1951), p. 12.

³Mrs. Warren Stone, "Field Service, Three-Year Report," 1949-52 (Chambers Files).

state officers and chairmen, regional vice-presidents and county extension chairmen, educational and lay leadership and council officers.¹

Following Mrs. Littrell's resignation, the executive committee combined the positions of field service and leadership training and employed Mrs. Wadlin as full time director of field service.² Under the new plan, more than a dozen volunteer leaders were to assist Mrs. Wadlin in field service activities; but Mrs. Wadlin was to coordinate the entire program of activities.

In May, 1952 Mrs. Wadlin reported to the executive committee that more help should be given local units on projects and activities, on the problem of raising and spending money, and in forming study groups. She also recommended that the number of county chairmen be increased and that conferences be arranged earlier in the year in the several regions of the state.³ Leadership training and a program of cooperation with state teacher education institutions had developed as the two major areas of field service. Leadership conferences and schools of instruction were held each spring and each fall; and the director of field service visited ten state colleges and universities on a regularly scheduled basis meeting as many classes on each campus as might benefit from her services.⁴

¹"New Service for Parent-Teacher Leaders," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (February, 1951), p. 9.

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, August 19, 1951.

³Ibid., May 5, 1952.

⁴Olive Wadlin, "What Is Field Service," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (April, 1954), p. 6.

Cooperation with Colleges

In September, 1947 the board of managers approved \$125.00 to finance the college section of a two-day conference to be held in Norman.¹ Purpose of the meeting was to discuss cooperation of the Oklahoma Congress with state colleges. On October 21, 1947 a meeting was held at the Extension Study Center of the University with fifteen representatives from seven state colleges, and on October 22 a conference was held with representatives of the OEA departments. Boyd Gunning, chairman of the committee on cooperation with colleges, reported the following results of these meetings: (1) the inclusion of a study of parent-teacher relationships in regular credit courses by several colleges, and (2) the writing of the course outline on parent-teacher organization by several members of the committee with Mrs. Norma Burkitt as editor.²

In 1950, W. Max Chambers reported a successful program of cooperation with state colleges with Thurman White as chairman of the committee. The committee arranged for the field director to meet with pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators in thirteen state teacher education institutions, and to meet with classes in each of the institutions three times each year.³ In November, 1952 a representative of each of the six state colleges and of the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma A. and M. College met with the state board of managers to discuss the best time and the best way to present information on parent-teacher work

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, September 23, 1947.

²R. Boyd Gunning, "Annual Report, Committee on Cooperation with Colleges," April, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Long Beach, California, 1950, p. 229.

to teachers in pre-service programs. The group also discussed the possibility of a scholarship plan for teacher recruitment.¹

In 1954 twelve institutions sent representatives to the committee on cooperation with colleges. Seven members of the group reported conferences to be held on their own college campuses. One of the important conferences in March, 1954 was a nine-day workshop on adult education techniques conducted by Dr. John Keltner, associate professor of speech at the University of Oklahoma. Extension chairmen, state officers, and chairmen of standing committees were urged to attend and more than fifty persons registered for the short course held at the University of Oklahoma Extension Study Center.²

While the success of the field service depended to a large extent on the able leadership of the directors, other factors also were significant. Assistance from the National Congress field service had been curtailed during the war, but this service was resumed in the post war period. Mrs. Charles E. Roe, the national field secretary who had contributed so much to early parent-teacher field work in the state, had retired; but trips were made to Oklahoma by Mrs. Mildred Wharton of the national field service, and later by Ellen Dell Bieler. Mrs. Bieler assisted Mrs. Wadlin in holding seven one-day leadership conferences in October, 1954 and again in 1957. The conferences in 1954 were attended by 559 persons representing eleven councils and 119 units³ and the atten-

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1953, p. 215.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1954, p. 217.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Chicago, Illinois, 1955, pp. 210-211.

dance was even larger in 1957.

Annual reports of state presidents in the post war period give much credit to the University of Oklahoma for assistance to the field service. The University continued to furnish office space and utilities and to pay half the salary and travel allowance of the field director who was a member of the professional staff of the University of Oklahoma Extension Division as well as the Oklahoma Congress.

The success of the field service also was increased by the work of the committee on cooperation with colleges and by the accumulation of leadership training among volunteer workers of the state. The latter brought modern techniques of discussion into parent-teacher instruction and it outgrew the "spoon feeding" techniques of an earlier period.

Improving the Organizational Patterns

It is one thing to set up an organizational structure and to define organizational objectives, but quite another to see that objectives are carried out. This is particularly true in an organization which works on a wide variety of problems. The unusual growth in membership of the Oklahoma Congress in the post war period permitted a shifting of emphasis from physical growth to that of improvement of patterns of action, and of greater efforts toward successful completion of progress and projects.

Awards and Achievements, A New Look

One of the organizational techniques which received attention was the method of rating local unit activities through the awards and achievements program of the Oklahoma Congress. In 1947-48, 248 local unit

score cards were returned to the state office and were rated as follows: extra superior, 75 units; superior, 86 units; and standard, 12 units. Seventy-five units received no rating because they had failed to fulfill one of the "basic requirements," a copy of the year's program or year-book in the state office on or before November first.¹ The chairman of the awards and achievements committee noted that Mrs. Matofsky felt that a new score card was needed and had appointed a committee, headed by Mrs. Hart D. Meech, to design it. The study of the goals and achievement program continued into Mrs. Burkitt's administration. In December, 1953 Mrs. Burkitt sought the advice of other state presidents.

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers is considering a complete change in method of evaluating the work of local units. We think the time may be here when we can drop the incentive of "points" on the Goals and Achievement Score Card. Preliminary to this study we would like to be better informed on the means used by your state parent-teacher organization to learn if the local association is doing effective work. Would you please send us copies of the forms used and explanations of how your procedure works?²

Mrs. Burkitt also addressed a letter to each council president in Oklahoma noting that "a number of PTAs have shown great interest in abandoning the 'point' system of rating our goals and achievements" and asking that they indicate their reaction to the idea.³

The check list which evolved from this study and which eventually replaced the point system was last revised, prior to this study, in 1955-56. The resulting "Parent-Teacher Goals of Achievement Check List" was

¹Mrs. Hart D. Meech, "Report, Goals and Achievements," 1946-49 (Matofsky Files).

²Letter from Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, President of the Oklahoma Congress, to State Presidents, December 3, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

³Letter from Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt to Council Presidents, December 7, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

printed on the two sides of a single sheet. One side was used to record basic data about the local unit, the other was divided into six sections headed by two "general requirements" and nine "basic requirements."

Four awards were offered to local units returning the check list prior to May 1 of each year. The lowest award was "unit recognition" for those PTAs completing only the two general requirements. The highest award was the "gold scroll" given to those units completing all general and basic requirements and several additional achievements. The two intermediate awards were the "certificate of merit" and the "silver scroll."

Emphasis on Sound Local By-Laws

During the 1945-46 school year Mrs. C. E. Scott, who served as chairman of procedure and by-laws as a part of her work as first vice-president, reported that most of the 200 sets of by-laws checked by her had been approved but that many had not. "A few were regular museum pieces" with outdated provisions or provisions not in conformity with state and national by-laws. She also found some units "whose by-laws were in order 'on paper' . . . violating rules and regulations in actual procedure . . . mostly in regard to membership and dues."¹ She furnished a list of "oddities" to the four regional directors and to some of the other state officers so that they might assist local units and councils during personal visits and in schools of instruction. She also wrote two articles on by-laws for the state bulletin.

In 1947, Mrs. Scott called to the attention of the state board of managers the problem of local by-laws in "sectarian schools," asking

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Report of the First Vice-President," 1945-46 (Matofsky Files).

for a decision if possible as to what might be done with units whose by-laws violated national non-sectarian policies.¹ Continued attention to local by-laws by succeeding chairmen undoubtedly resulted in bringing the by-laws, and perhaps the philosophy, of local PTA units into closer harmony with state and national principles.

Changes in State Procedures and By-Laws

In 1949, the state board of managers divided the audio-visual education and radio committee into two separate standing committees.² In 1951, Mrs. Davenport suggested a plan for increasing the effectiveness of local room representative committees. She urged that units not use the same room representatives year after year as this office provided leadership training. She recommended that room representatives sponsor room meetings when the parents of a particular room could meet with the teacher and discuss problems.³

In May, 1952 the executive committee voted to bond three state board members including the executive secretary, the treasurer, and the budget chairman.⁴ The state organization paid the cost of their bonds for a period of three years under a blanket fee of \$56.25. Requisitions for travel claims were required within thirty days and board members were asked not to hold checks more than a reasonable length of time

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Annual Report, State Chairman Procedure and By-Laws, State Historian," March, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 3, 1949.

³Form letter from Mrs. Carl Davenport, State Room Representative Chairman, to Local Room Representative Chairmen, October 26, 1951 (Burkitt Files).

⁴Minutes of the State Executive Committee, May 5, 1952.

before depositing or cashing them.¹

In 1954, Mrs. Burkitt called on "Sam School and Paul Parent" to join "Lillian Local" in a study of PTA policies with regard to political activity. Said Mrs. Burkitt, "Candidates still appear on PTA programs while campaigning for office; still have access to parent-teacher membership lists."²

The most important organizational change in the post war period was the change from extension chairmen to district directors.³ The districts constituted an intermediate area within the region and served as a working unit larger than city or county. Usually a district was composed of two or three counties and the district directors served their areas in the same relation that regional vice-presidents served the region.

Activating the Platform

To focus state attention and program on major needs the state convention of 1946 adopted a three-year platform. Soon a state committee headed by Dr. Alice Sowers was charged with responsibility for "activating the platform." Dr. Sowers explained the need for the platform and for the committee as follows:

One criticism of the PTA throughout the years has been the wide variety of its program; that it tries to do too much to be effective; that the program and activities of local units too frequently fail to correspond with the claims made by the state and national organization; that the large number of committees spreads the

¹"Important Notice, Procedure for Sending in Expense Accounts," September 24, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (July, 1954), p. 4.

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 2, 1955.

program too thin to be effective in any one area; that the PTA is something like the rider who "jumped on his horse and rode off in all directions."

In an effort to avoid domination of the local unit's program and to give help in the mechanics of conducting a good PTA while permitting sufficient flexibility to enable each unit to base its program of study and activities on its own needs, the National Congress and state branches have given the impression of having no program. The Oklahoma Platform was an endeavor to provide a blueprint to help units unite in working toward common goals, at the same time keeping their individuality.¹

Dr. Sowers reminded members, however, that a house is not built by simply completing a blueprint. She urged local leaders to begin to activate the platform but warned that no PTA could or should undertake to activate all the platform at once. The platform itself suggested four steps:

1. Become better informed about desirable standards and practices.
2. Determine the extent to which present situations measure up to these.
3. Develop public opinion for support of those changes and additions necessary to achieve desirable standards.
4. Stimulate and encourage the adoption of desirable standards.²

The publication, "Activating the Platform," mentioned earlier, was re-issued when the platform was retained by the convention of 1950. The platform with its state committee on activating the platform was important in that it helped to concentrate effort on major needs rather than launch random attacks along a seemingly endless front.

Rural Organizations

The rapid growth of the parent-teacher movement in the post war

¹Form letter from Alice Sowers to the State Board of Managers, April 1, 1950 (Burkitt Files).

²Alice Sowers, "Check Lists Are Coming to Activate the Platform," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (September, 1946), p. 7.

years was consistent throughout the state with the exception of rural areas. In 1948 Mrs. Vera Jones reported "A general lack of understanding of the purposes of the organization and appreciation for its value as a means of promoting and understanding the whole school program"¹ among county superintendents, rural teachers, and rural parents. She recommended a demonstration county for each of the four regions. Such an example of good rural organization existed in Pottawatomie County, having been accomplished through the cooperation of Ira Bugg, county superintendent, and Ben L. Morrison of East Central State College under the leadership of Mrs. C. E. Scott.

The state board of managers, in an effort to promote rural organization, appointed a committee to develop special assistance and publications for rural units. These included a rural packet, rural score sheet, and rural schools of instruction.² The executive committee adopted a resolution calling on all board chairmen to give increased attention to the organizational and instructional needs of rural and reorganized units.³

Morrison advised county extension chairmen to "help rural people find their problems, lead them to information about their problems, and to bring the information into use in the solution of the problems."⁴ He saw a new role emerging for the rural PTA member which he stated as

¹Vera Jones, "Annual Report of Rural Service Chairman," April, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 13, 1948.

³Minutes of the State Executive Committee, October 12, 1948.

⁴Form letter from Ben L. Morrison, Chairman of Rural Service, to County Extension Chairmen, June 21, 1949 (Chambers Files).

follows:

Yesterday the work of the rural PTA member was in the local unit formed around the one or two room school. Today the work of the PTA member in a rural district is very likely to be a responsibility of cooperation with the men and women of the neighboring village to which the educational responsibility has been assigned.¹

Morrison accurately predicted that rural mothers and fathers would "see reluctantly the responsibility to the big school just out of the neighborhood." The problem, as he saw it, was to create among rural patrons "a new conception of the bounds of the community."

Patterns of Growth

In the eleven year period, 1946-47 to 1956-57, the membership of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers grew from 77,929 to 172,014. Techniques for the promotion of membership varied from time to time and from region to region throughout the state but they had one common goal, maximum enrollment of potential members. Each state membership drive was preceded by a proclamation of parent-teacher week by the Governor of Oklahoma. In 1948, a report from the Southwest Region told of "block by block canvass" by some units, but noted that "awards for prizes for classrooms in securing membership . . . were discouraged."² In 1952, the state membership chairman reported the use of radio, newspaper publicity, bill boards, show window displays, posters, inserts in newspapers, advertisements proclaiming October enrollment, and articles in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher as some of the techniques employed in getting new members.³

¹Ben L. Morrison, "A Challenge to Our Rural Units," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (November, 1949), p. 20.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (January, 1948), p. 6.

³Mrs. Luther A. Roach, "Membership, Three Year Report," 1949-1952 (Chambers Files).

But apparently more was involved in this unusual growth than the use of good promotional techniques. Mrs. Matofsky in her report for 1948 spoke of a spirit of unity and cooperation throughout the entire organization and suggested that the rapid increase in the membership, units, and councils was concrete evidence of the growing stature of the state organization.¹

During the 1949-50 school year the Oklahoma Congress passed the membership mark of 100,000 for the first time, and by 1952 it had grown to 118,931. Chambers commented as follows on this rapid growth.

This gradual but substantial increase in membership is a tribute to the enthusiasm of our regional directors, board members, state membership chairmen, and the various state and local association chairmen as they have assumed their various responsibilities in the development of worthwhile programs of activities.²

Mrs. Burkitt credited a gain of 15,456 members for the 1952-53 school year to emphasis by chairmen on the participation of members. This, she felt, placed membership in its proper perspective in relation to the purposes of the organization.³

The rapid growth in regular membership was reflected to a lesser degree in the increase of life members. Only six life memberships were added in 1947, but in 1953, twenty life memberships were added and the number did not fall far below that mark for any of the other post war years.

Table 3 below shows the annual growth in membership by region,

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Cleveland, Ohio, 1948, p. 224.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1952, p. 230.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1953, p. 214.

and Table 4 indicates total membership, and membership dues for each of the post war years, 1946-47 through 1956-57.

TABLE 3
MEMBERSHIP IN OKLAHOMA CONGRESS BY REGIONS
1946-47 to 1956-57¹

Year	Northeast Region	Southeast Region	Northwest Region	Southwest Region	All Regions
1946-47	31,562	11,171	8,824	26,372	77,929
1947-48	34,219	12,801	9,570	31,230	87,820
1948-49	39,073	13,632	11,613	35,283	99,600
1949-50	39,858	14,957	12,705	40,382	107,902
1950-51	42,287	15,635	12,842	42,235	112,999
1951-52	46,019	16,724	13,070	43,118	118,931
1952-53	51,650	17,081	13,224	52,432	136,111
1953-54	58,231	17,751	14,314	58,936	149,232
1954-55	58,781	17,391	16,370	61,483	154,025
1955-56	65,597	17,766	15,943	64,726	161,032
1956-57	66,935	17,902	16,279	70,898	172,014

TABLE 4
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP DUES² IN
OKLAHOMA CONGRESS, 1946-47 to 1956-57

Year	Total Membership	State Membership Dues
1946-47	77,929	\$15,585.80
1947-48	87,820	17,564.00
1948-49	99,600	19,920.20
1949-50	107,902	21,580.40
1950-51	112,999	22,599.80
1951-52	118,931	23,786.20
1952-53	136,111	26,877.40
1953-54	149,232	29,846.40
1954-55	154,025	30,805.00
1955-56	161,032	32,306.40
1956-57	172,014	34,402.80

¹Membership data were taken from the May issue of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher for each of the years listed above.

²Financial data were taken from the annual reports of the auditor of Oklahoma Congress funds. These reports are in the files of the executive secretary.

CHAPTER VIII

PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

Changing Patterns in Local Meetings

In 1930, Mrs. Lillian Bishop of Ardmore, the recording secretary of the Oklahoma Congress, contrasted the "old" and "new" type PTA meetings.

In the old type, much of the hour was consumed with a demonstration program by school children. Then followed an address by an outsider on a subject of his own choice. No round table discussion followed, but always refreshments were served.

The new type of meeting is the development . . . of a definite program planned to cover an entire year. No children are present and speakers are chosen because of ability to help solve the problem for the day. A brisk, wide awake round table discussion follows. In the business session action is taken and committees appointed to carry out the suggestions evolved during the hour of concentrated study of the problem of the hour.¹

While the "new type" PTA meeting may not have been too prevalent in 1930, the contrast was a valid one. Refreshments, entertainment by school children, and speech making were important characteristics of early PTA meetings. Only gradually were improvements made toward the use of discussion, careful planning of meetings centering on an annual theme, and subordination of entertainment and food to the more important objectives of PTA meetings. Among the activities reported from local PTA

¹Lillian Bishop, "Parent-Teacher Meeting No Place for Children," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (February, 1930), p. 2.

meetings in 1927, for example, were an old fiddlers contest and minstrel show, music by a 60-piece boys' band, boys' and girls' quartets, and a community play.¹ The program for an all-day Tillman County PTA meeting at Hollister on September 16, 1927 included community singing, special piano selections, and two speeches, followed by lunch in the Hollister high school. There was more music in the afternoon and an address by E. H. Shelton, Tillman County Superintendent.²

In January, 1930 patrons, teachers, and citizens met at the Milburn high school for an "all-day jollification." The morning was consumed in speech-making. After a "big dinner," there were readings, musical numbers, and other entertainment in the afternoon. In the evening an amateur orchestra gave a "very delightful program." When the meeting closed at 10:00 p.m. the group felt it had enjoyed a "friend-making day together."³ In 1931, a newly organized PTA at Dewar decided not to mix business with pleasure. The group agreed to hold two meetings per month, one for the purpose of study and business, the other solely for entertainment.⁴

On November 10, 1938 all the civic organizations of Blackwell joined with the PTA in sponsoring an all-community covered-dish dinner. The event was held in honor of Mrs. Roy Cox, president of the Blackwell PTA Council, and Mrs. M. L. Opperud, state chairman of parent education.

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. VIII (January, 1927), p. 15.

²Ibid., Vol. IX (October, 1927), p. 18.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (January, 1930), p. 4.

⁴Ibid., Vol. IV (January, 1931), p. 3.

Dr. Alice Sowers, the principal speaker, described the occasion as "probably the largest community get together ever staged in Blackwell."¹

A surprising number of prominent speakers attended some of the county PTA meetings and a surprising number of speeches were worked into the time available. A Logan County PTA meeting in 1935, for example, heard speeches by J. Andrew Holley, state department of education; A. L. Crable, DeWitt Hunt, and Dr. J. C. Muerman, Oklahoma A. and M. College; Ada B. Sims, director of parent-education for Central District; Mrs. George E. Calvert, state president; and Cliff Otto, science department, Central State College. The group also found time for community singing and music by the Guthrie high school orchestra.²

Apparently a large attendance of fathers at early PTA meetings was infrequent enough to make good news copy. In 1924, Classen Junior High School reported one of its most successful meetings of the year when 200 persons attended a "fathers' party." Students and fathers furnished entertainment and I. H. Thurman gave an address.³ In 1927 Mrs. Gerald A. Waring, second vice-president of the Oklahoma Congress, recommended night programs "which partake of a community meet" as a means of encouraging attendance by fathers.⁴ In 1929, Crescent PTA scheduled a "dads' night" as its first meeting of the year. Many fathers attended

¹Ibid., Vol. IV (December, 1938), p. 6.

²The Guthrie Daily Leader, October 20, 1935, p. 1.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, February, 1924, unpagued.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (November, 1927), p. 16.

and the meeting "made a fine beginning for the year's work."¹ In May, 1937 the state publicity chairman reported that PTA night meetings for fathers were the "coming thing." At some of these meetings fathers conducted the entire session; at other unit meetings fathers were honored as special guests.²

In October 1938, Franklin PTA at Ardmore went a step further. Invitations were extended with the label, "men only." The meeting was preceded by a dinner at Hotel Ardmore attended by over sixty per cent of the men having children enrolled in Franklin School. The Franklin PTA had recently elected John Hendricks as president, the first man to head an Ardmore PTA unit. Superintendent George Hann opened the meeting with selected remarks on the "unlimited possibilities" of such a group and the good it might bring to the Ardmore schools. The principal address of the evening was delivered by Dr. Morris L. Wardell, vice-president of the University of Oklahoma³ and one of the outstanding after dinner speakers in the Southwest.

Efforts to Improve Meetings

In 1926, Mrs. Adams advised local units to arrange programs which were "not too long but both entertaining and instructive."⁴ She recommended that PTA meetings always provide opportunity for the superin-

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. II (March, 1929), p. 3.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (May, 1937), p. 7.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XX (December, 1938), p. 22.

⁴Mrs. H. A. Adams, "Suggestions for Parent-Teacher Associations," 1926 (Adams Files).

tendent of schools to discuss any phase of the school work. In 1927, Mrs. Burns suggested a program plan which included 25 to 35 minutes for business, 30 minutes or less for program, 10 to 20 minutes for "enriching the program," and 20 minutes for hospitality.¹ Enriching the program included such things as community singing or a devotional.

The state board of managers offered the following list of suggested topics for local PTA meetings for the 1929-30 school year.

Theme - Worthy Home Membership

September	What It Means to Be a Parent-Teacher Member.
October	What the Home Can Do for the School and What the School Can Do for the Home.
November	Why We Need a National Department of Education.
December	Habits (Thrift, Safety, Health, Mental Hygiene).
January	(Omitted).
February	Responsibilities of Citizenship.
March	Basis of Character Is Laid in the Home.
April	Home Guidance in the Use of Leisure.
May	The Home and the Nation's Wealth.
June	Local Aspects of Home Responsibility. ²

Central PTA in Guthrie issued a printed brochure for the 1931-32 school year listing all topics for the year opposite the meeting dates for each month in the school year. This was certainly an improvement in program planning, and the topics included were important subjects centering around the objectives of education, health and safety, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, etc.³ The program topics did not, however, reflect the probable need for discussion of specific problems growing out of the depression.

¹Mrs. John R. Burns, "Suggestions for Program Planning," 1927 (Adams Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (November-December, 1929), p. 7.

³"Central School PTA Program," Guthrie, 1931-32 (Johnson Files).

McKinley PTA in Bartlesville discovered in 1932 that its meetings were more or less uninteresting to parents. "The members came, sat through the same routine each time and confessed that the only reason they came at all was their children's interest in winning the attendance prize."¹ All this was changed by adopting a "sectional or room group" plan which brought together the parents of a room in discussions of specific problems within their own child's room.

"A much better understanding of pupil's problems"² also resulted from a program planned by the Duncan Junior-Senior High School PTA in 1937. In preparation for this meeting on the subject, "Rearing Our Parents," some of the upper class boys and girls were asked to list three items under the heading, "Things I wish my parents would not do." These unsigned papers were turned to the school principal and the items appearing were made the basis for a round table discussion. Both parents and teachers were included in the membership of the panel. The panel discussion apparently was relatively new to PTA meetings in Oklahoma. A news item in the May, 1938 bulletin credited the Springdale PTA in Tulsa as the first elementary group in that city to use the panel discussion as its method of program presentation.³

One instance was reported in which considerable controversy developed in a PTA discussion. The question of ballroom dancing in junior high schools set off the lively debate at the Webster PTA in Okla-

¹"Bartlesville Activities, McKinley School," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VI (November, 1933), p. 2.

²Mrs. E. E. Brown, "High School Associations," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (April, 1937), p. 8.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (May, 1938), p. 24.

homa City in 1938. J. L. Collins, educational director of the Kelham Avenue Baptist Church, precipitated the argument with a denunciation of dancing in the schools after Dr. Edward C. Mason, professor of physiology in the University of Oklahoma Medical School led a panel discussion on "Adolescent Leisure." As tension began to mount within the crowd of approximately one hundred parents, Mrs. J. L. Powers, the program chairman, "averted more argument by diverting the discussion."¹

The Webster PTA meeting was at least interesting; many others apparently were not. In 1939 a teacher complained to Mrs. Calvert, "I have sat through a hundred poor parent-teacher meetings, I deserve a reward."

"What did you do to help?" Mrs. Calvert asked.

"I suffered through. I paid my dues and attended the meetings."² Mrs. Calvert used the story to illustrate the need for assistance to local units in the matter of improving PTA programs and PTA meetings. The amount of help that could be given by the Oklahoma Congress, however, was limited by the strength of the state branch.

Payment of dues and attendance at meetings, important signs of strength, in some instances became ends within themselves. Awards to the classroom with the largest attendance at meetings was only one of several effective techniques for encouraging parents to attend. Wheeler PTA in Oklahoma City had success with the organization of a "grandparents' auxiliary." Perhaps the unique plan for extrinsic motivation of parental

¹Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), February 25, 1938, p. 5.

²Mrs. George E. Calvert, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XII (December, 1939), p. 5.

attendance at PTA meetings was employed by the Ada Junior High School PTA in 1929. All children whose parents attended were dismissed at 2:30 p.m. and allowed to go home. All others had to remain at their studies until the usual dismissal hour, 3:30 p.m. This produced the largest attendance of the school year.¹

In 1941, Mrs. C. E. Scott commended the Spiro PTA for the type of program planning described in a letter from Mrs. O. W. Jones:

The program committee for the past two years has called meetings of representatives from every organization in the community in order to determine the needs of the town. The program is then built about those needs.²

Mrs. Scott predicted that a program based on such an approach would result in a PTA which would not lack membership or attendance.

In 1945, Mrs. Flesner agreed that a stimulating meeting was "far easier to analyze than achieve." "Effective publicity, hospitality, program building and good engineering by the presiding officer" were elements she regarded as particularly important.³ Mrs. Matofsky advised program planners to "first choose the theme which fits the needs of your community as discovered by your committee. Then study the varying methods of presentation"⁴

"The lecture is by far the most commonly used type of presenta-

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (November-December, 1929), p. 3.

²Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (January, 1941), p. 14.

³Mable J. Flesner, "President's Report," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (September, 1945), p. 4.

⁴Letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to Program Planners, July, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

tion," wrote Frances Rider in 1945. "It has not, however, been found an effective means of getting group discussion."¹ She advised that the lecture not be used to the exclusion of all other methods and described the symposium and demonstration as alternate means of presenting PTA programs. The use of children on PTA programs was discussed in 1948 in schools of instruction conducted in the Southwest Region. It was the consensus that children should not be used on PTA programs except to present a method of teaching, and that they should be used in groups or classes not as individuals.²

In 1953, Mrs. C. E. Scott warned, "A good way to kill a PTA is by postponing meetings."³ A note on program planning during Mrs. Burkitt's administration added, "No program, from the beginning of the opening exercises to the social hour, should last longer than one hour."⁴ In these and many other ways, the Oklahoma Congress worked to improve local PTA programs. These efforts did not bring the "new type" PTA meeting to every local community, but they did much to "point the way."

District Meetings and Conventions

Not only were local PTA meetings important, there also were meetings, conferences, and conventions of PTA groups in areas larger than cities or counties but smaller than the state, usually the district or

¹Frances Rider, "Symposium, Lectures, and Demonstrations Vary PTA Programs," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (December, 1945), p. 13.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (January, 1948), p. 6.

³Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (October, 1943), p. 9.

⁴"Planning the Program," undated (Burkitt Files).

region. One of the earliest, and probably the first, of these district conventions was held by Central District in Guthrie in 1926. G. W. Perdue, principal of Central High School in Guthrie was convention chairman. The program continued through October 22 and 23 and was "filled with matters of interest for the school patrons."¹

As the eight districts of the state achieved organization annual district conventions throughout the state were established. At times these were held in connection with the district conventions of the Oklahoma Education Association, but the majority were held at other times. On October 25, 1927 a district PTA convention was held at Ada in connection with the East Central District OEA Convention. In the afternoon, a school of instruction dealing with all phases of PTA work was conducted by Mrs. Virgil Browne and Mrs. Eileen Harrison.² Both members and non-members were invited to the third annual convention of the Northeast District held in Bartlesville November 2, 1929. Approximately 100 guests attended from out of town and fifty came from Bartlesville to hear three outstanding speakers on parent education.³

Parent education also was the principal objective of a district PTA convention in Ada, March 13, 1930. The meetings were open to all citizens in Ada regardless of membership or lack of membership in PTA.⁴ A "fair crowd" attended the meeting to hear Mrs. Eileen Harrison, well

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. VIII (November, 1926), p. 18.

²Ada Evening News, October 27, 1929, p. 1.

³The Morning Examiner (Bartlesville), November 2, 1929, p. 1.

⁴Ada Evening News, March 13, 1930, p. 1.

known specialist in parent education, discuss "Old World Parents and New World Children." Other speakers included John Vaughan, state superintendent; J. R. Holmes, superintendent of the Okmulgee schools; Mrs. Charles E. Roe, national PTA field secretary; Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, state PTA president; Frank Martin, superintendent of the Pauls Valley Training School for boys; and Dr. A. Linscheid, president of East Central State College;¹ Harry Simmons, superintendent of schools in Wewoka; and Alice Francisco of East Central State College. Kate North, state supervisor of home economics, conducted a round table discussion in which every parent was invited to participate.²

More than one hundred visitors from PTAs in cities of the Southwest District attended a convention and school of instruction held March 20, 1930 in the First Baptist Church, Altus. Mrs. J. Gilmer Capps of Washington, D. C. discussed "The Responsibilities and Opportunities of the PTA," and Mrs. Harrison spoke on "The Child in the Home." After luncheon and community singing led by Mrs. J. E. Parish, Margaret Sue Wells of the Wilson School in Altus spoke on "What the PTA Does for My School." This was followed by more singing and speeches.³

Public education rather than parent education was the principal subject discussed in the Central District Convention at Norman. On November 6, 1930 Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma, told the group:

I want you to realize the vital objectives of education depend

¹Ibid., March 14, 1930, p. 5.

²Ibid., March 16, 1930, p. 1.

³Altus Times-Democrat, March 20, 1930, p. 1.

upon a spirit of partnership between the parents and teachers. The public school system is now about 100 years old, and the time has come to check up on how we are getting along.¹

Dr. Bizzell then discussed at some length his subject, "The Changing Objectives of Education." Among the other speakers at the convention were Mrs. Henry D. Rinsland of Norman and L. N. Morrissett, principal of Classen High School of Oklahoma City.

In the depth of the great depression, more than 130 persons faced "a brisk north wind and a heavy rain" to attend the Central District convention in Crescent. The date was November 2, 1933 and the convention theme, "The Challenge of a Changed World." Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, president of Central District, stated the theme in these words:

Change is apparent on every hand. We are living in a new world, a new age. The challenge to the parent-teacher association is to determine its program and opportunity, then its duty. Our first necessity is to seek an intelligent understanding of conditions, to make decisions as to what we may do to assist, and be courageous enough to make our decisions known.²

"Building New Lives with Our Children" was the theme of the East Central District convention in 1936. Juvenile problems, health and safety, and mental health were important topics of discussion, but problems of organization were not ignored. Mrs. George E. Calvert "held the close attention of her audience as she spoke on the work of the parent-teacher association and what it hopes and expects to accomplish."³

Public relations was an important topic for the Northeast District meeting at Bartlesville, April 8, 1936. "The Modern Parent Knows the

¹The Norman Transcript, November 6, 1930, p. 1.

²"Report of Central District Convention," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VI (December, 1933), p. 4.

³Ada Evening News, March 26, 1936, p. 1.

School" was the conference theme, but Superintendent H. E. Wrinkle chose to title his address, "The Modern School Knows the Parent." If schools were to work effectively with parents in the job of reconstruction they must know the home. The schools could not, however, assume responsibilities for the proper training of young people which could only be carried out successfully by parents.¹

On March 3, 1937 Mrs. Charles E. Roe told the Northwest District Convention in Alva that the aim of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers was to promote better feelings between parents and teachers and to eliminate much of the friction which had held over from the times when parents and teachers could not understand one another and work together.² "Finding the Way Together" was the convention theme. A school of instruction was held in which parents and teachers wrote questions and Mrs. Roe supplied answers.

A series of twenty-four "spring conferences" held in different sections of the state in 1938 included schools of instruction in the mornings and talks by Dr. Alice Sowers in the afternoons. Total attendance at these conferences was estimated at 10,000 adults. Dr. Sowers made extensive use of the panel discussion and was enthusiastically received. Discussions centered on the topic, "The Contribution of Home Life to a Successful Community."³

In 1938 Mrs. Calvert suggested a new plan for district conven-

¹Bartlesville Enterprise, March 26, 1936, p. 1.

²Alva Review-Courier, March 3, 1937, p. 1.

³Mrs. George E. Calvert, "Annual Report of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1937-38," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (September, 1938), p. 30.

tions.

What would you think of having only one meeting in each district this year, beginning the afternoon of one day and continuing through the evening and until noon the next day? This would necessitate many of you staying over night, but I have studied the district conferences over a period of years and I feel that coming in one day and going back the same day makes it practically impossible to have a satisfactory conference.¹

Three hundred persons attending the Southwest District convention in Anadarko on March 8, 1939 heard Superintendent R. L. McLean present the convention theme, "Looking Forward." Mrs. John A. Wadlin spoke on the guiding principles of PTA work.² Dr. Alice Sowers was the featured speaker at a district meeting in Altus on March 12, 1939.³ She also appeared at the Northeast District convention at Claremore where Mrs. Calvert's suggestion apparently was followed. The Claremore convention opened on Thursday afternoon and extended through Friday. Held in the Will Rogers Hotel, the convention heard State Superintendent John Vaughan speak on "Present School Finance Needs." Another interesting speaker was Mrs. Sallie McSpadden, sister of Will Rogers, who addressed the luncheon meeting on "Will Rogers' Philosophy of Life."⁴

In 1940, regional conventions replaced the district conventions as the Oklahoma Congress combined its eight districts into four regions. "Finding the Way Together" reappeared as the theme for the Southwest Regional Convention which met in Clinton, March 5, 1940. The convention was most favorably received by the city of Clinton. Superintendent

¹Mrs. George E. Calvert, "The President's Message," *ibid.*, p. 9.

²The Anadarko Daily News, March 8, 1939, p. 1.

³The Altus Times-Democrat, March 10, 1939, p. 1.

⁴Claremore Messenger, March 2, 1939, p. 1.

Arnett Cross invited all Clinton parents to attend, and local merchants presented a full page advertisement in the local paper welcoming the parent-teacher delegates with this tribute:

Unquestionably, the parent-teacher association throughout the state of Oklahoma is doing some wonderful work in the schools in all the various cities. It is true democracy wherein the parents and teachers of our children can work harmoniously in the interests of every child in our schools, and true democracy is something in which we should all be justly proud and cling to with our very lives.¹

Conventions were held in each of the four regions in March and April of 1940. Dr. Alice Sowers appeared on the program of all the regional conventions; other speakers were Mrs. Sidonie M. Gruenberg, director of the Child Study Association of America, and Mrs. Edyth Thomas Wallace, home counselor of the Oklahoma Publishing Company. Twenty-five sectional meetings also were held with PTA members attending from an area of one to five counties.²

With the beginning of World War II, travel restrictions forced cancellation of regional and state conventions. Instead the Oklahoma Congress, in 1942, sponsored a series of "regional war conferences." All persons interested in wartime activities for women and young people were urged to attend. Mrs. Claude Koch, president of the Clinton PTA council said of the regional war conference scheduled for that city:

This meeting is sponsored by the PTA but we want everybody in town to understand that it is an open session and other groups are urged to take advantage of this opportunity to talk over common problems with state leaders.³

¹The Clinton Daily News, March 5, 1940, p. 1.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Omaha, Nebraska, 1940, p. 298.

³The Clinton Daily News, October 21, 1942, p. 1.

Mrs. John A. Wadlin told a group of eighty mothers at a regional war conference in Bartlesville that the safety of the child was the primary interest of the PTA in the war program. She urged parents to study nutrition, home nursing, and first aid, and to keep in mind the information furnished for local defense programs.¹ In addition to Bartlesville and Clinton, cities in which regional war conferences were held in 1942 included Okmulgee, Miami, Ponca City, Stillwater, Shawnee, Ardmore, McAlester, Altus, Hobart, Cordell, and Vinita.

The eighteen regional war conferences sponsored by the Oklahoma Congress in October and November of 1943 placed emphasis on juvenile protection through improvement of home and family life,² and health and safety. Conferences were held in the following cities: Oklahoma City, Ada, McAlester, Poteau, Cordell, Mangum, Duncan, Chickasha, Ardmore, Durant, Idabel, Drumright, Tulsa, Muskogee, Blackwell, Guthrie, Cushing, and Pawhuska.

Although the information presented in this chapter illustrates the patterns which developed in district (later regional) conventions, much additional detail could be presented if space permitted. Usually these conventions were extensively reported by local newspapers. They were important meetings and they served important functions, particularly in an early period of organizational development. District conventions and conferences presented speakers and provided discussion leaders of a quality comparable with those provided by the annual state convention. Many persons who could not attend state conventions traveled the

¹Bartlesville Enterprise, November 10, 1942, p. 1.

²National Congress, Proceedings, New York, New York, 1944, p. 413.

relatively short distances necessary to attend the district conventions and conferences. These meetings furnished an intermediate level for the development and testing of future state leaders. Opportunity was provided for larger service and participation than that offered at the local level but with less selectivity than that which obtained in the annual state conventions.

Following World War II a new and interesting pattern emerged which, in effect, combined regional and state conventions. State conventions were held triennially with regional conventions in the intervening years. Since these post war regional conventions performed some of the functions formerly accomplished in annual state conventions, more about them later. To continue their discussion at this point would anticipate the history of the annual convention.

Early State Conventions

Because of attendance at this convention we are better prepared to meet the challenge of this new year. We return to our communities inspired by the discussion we have heard, strengthened by the contributions we have made, warmed by the friendship we have found, and heartened by the increasing awareness of our place in a national movement.¹

With these well-turned phrases, Dr. Alice Sowers closed her summary of the Nineteenth Annual Convention of the Oklahoma Congress. The statement illustrates the inspirational value of conventions. In 1932, Mrs. Hugh Bradford, president of the National Congress spoke of their educational value:

Attendance at the annual meeting brings an enlarged vision of service as well as information. Conventions bring together those

¹Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Convention, October 8-10, 1941.

who seek to learn, and those who are contributing the information and experience. To both comes an enrichment of life to be rededicated in serving those who are our joy and responsibility, the children.¹

Aside from its educational and inspirational values, the annual convention of the Oklahoma Congress was essential from the standpoint of organization. It was the highest legislative and policy making body; it elected state officers; it served as a guide to an evaluation of the programs and projects undertaken.

The First Annual Convention

Preceding the first state PTA convention in April, 1923 a state conference was held in the Episcopal Parish House, Oklahoma City, on February 9, 1923. After repeating the Lord's Prayer in unison, the delegates heard a reading of the minutes of the founding meeting. The original minutes of that meeting had inadvertently been mailed to Boston, and those read at the first state conference were compiled hurriedly from memory. No decision was made on the first question on the agenda, selection of a city in which to hold the first annual convention. Ada, Tulsa, Bartlesville, and Muskogee were suggested. The first state treasurer, Mrs. Earl Foster, reported a balance of \$104.30 after only three months of state organization. Mrs. J. P. Slaughter reported that Oklahoma had joined a nation wide PTA protest to Will Hays, administrator of the motion picture code, asking that Hays not permit Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle to enter again into the movies. The legislative chairman reported on bills relating to kindergartens and crippled children. The group endorsed

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (February-March, 1932), p. 3.

both measures. After a "roundtable of questions" the morning session adjourned. In the afternoon Edgar Vaught spoke on the need for closer cooperation of parents and teachers. Other talks were given on recreation and humane education.¹

A few weeks later the scene shifted to Tulsa. Reverend C. W. Kerr, pastor of a Tulsa Presbyterian Church, gave an invocation; a Mr. Dickerson "favored" the assembly with a solo; Dr. Gordon, president of Kendall College (now Tulsa University) gave an address of welcome and Mrs. J. P. Slaughter responded. The date was April 20, 1923 and the First Annual Convention of the Oklahoma Congress was in session. Mrs. W. R. Holloway presented the convention theme, "Mothers Influence in Education." She was followed by Mrs. William Ulman, president of the Missouri Congress, who reported PTA progress in that state. The delegates then adjourned for lunch in the high school cafeteria. The afternoon session included entertainment by the Tulsa High School Girls' Glee Club after which J. R. Barton, superintendent of schools in Sapulpa, spoke on "The State's Most Urgent Educational Needs."² Then after a song by the Boys' Glee Club, E. E. Oberholtzer, superintendent of schools in Tulsa, spoke on "The Relation of This Association to Child Welfare." Oberholtzer criticized Governor John C. Walton for efforts to cut state appropriations for weak schools in an economy move.³ After another speech by Mrs. Ulman and a report by Mrs. Slaughter, the convention

¹Minutes, Statewide Parent-Teacher Conference, February 9, 1923 (Slaughter Files).

²Minutes of the First Annual Meeting, April 20, 1923.

³Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), April 21, 1923, p. 3.

elected officers and adjourned.

Other Conventions of the Formative Years

The variety of convention themes from 1924 to 1929 reveals no pattern of interest. The organization was new and worthwhile programs were many. "Needed Educational Legislation" (1924), "Training for Parenthood" (1925), "Home and School in Education" (1926), "Juvenile Protection" (1927), "Informed Membership--Trained Leadership" (1928), and "Worthy Home Membership" (1929) were the conference themes of the period.

In the matter of conference structure, however, patterns soon emerged. Entertainment, usually by schools in the host city, was always interspersed throughout the conventions. Opening ceremonies invariably included a round of welcoming addresses by local PTA leaders and civic dignitaries followed by a PTA leader's response. There was always a presentation of the convention theme, usually given by a representative of the National Congress. There were speeches and more speeches. Scheduling so many speakers and topics within the limited convention time must have been a remarkable feat in itself. They spoke at general sessions, luncheon sessions, and dinner meetings. And they were prominent speakers, leaders in welfare, government, and education. Finally there was in each convention the reports, resolutions, and election of officers, a primary purpose in bringing together the delegates from all parts of the state.

There was keen but friendly rivalry among state cities in efforts to secure the annual convention. Telegrams from chambers of commerce and other efforts were used in attempts to influence the convention on

its choice of the convention city for the succeeding year. The city fortunate enough to secure a state convention offered its best effort in the matter of hospitality. Usually the convention covered a period of three days with at least two days of rather intense activity. The local newspaper in the convention city usually treated the meeting as front-page news with complete reports of each of the many speeches delivered and with pictures of the most prominent PTA leaders participating in the convention. General sessions featuring prominent speakers often were open to townspeople as well as the registered delegates and convention guests.

The second annual convention was held in Perry, March 28-29, 1924. It heard Tulsa Superintendent P. P. Claxton, Sapulpa Superintendent J. R. Barton, Guthrie Superintendent H. L. Allen, and E. Robert Palmer of the National Home and School Association praise the work and value of the parent-teacher organization. The convention endorsed a campaign to eliminate illiteracy in the state and passed legislative resolutions calling for public school kindergartens, better moving pictures, a law for full time compulsory attendance of children between the ages of seven and sixteen and a state textbook commission composed of "real school people." Efforts of some cities to reduce taxes at the expense of schools were condemned.¹

"Mothers Swamp Ada at Parent-Teachers Convention" was the eight column headline of that section of the Daily Oklahoman reporting the third annual convention. The convention was described as a gathering of "old-fashioned mothers, modern mothers with rolled hose and lipstick a

¹Ibid., March 30, 1924, p. A-10.

few dads, and teachers with bobbed hair." A pre-convention board meeting for the purpose of discussing parliamentary procedure departed from that subject from time to time for "frank talks on the present jazz age and its cause."¹ Delegates attending the sessions from March 11-13, 1925 were extended hospitality worthy of note. Ada boy scouts met every incoming train to assist delegates, and a sufficient number of cars with their drivers were lined up at the railway station to provide free transportation.²

"Training for Leadership," the theme for discussion, was presented by the National Congress representative Frances Hayes. B. L. French of Oklahoma City spoke on PTA in the junior high school. The convention was interrupted at one point when Oklahoma City delegates decided to give "a very spirited yell" for Mr. French, a popular junior high school principal.³ This is the only instance recorded in the minutes of state PTA conventions in which such a spontaneous demonstration occurred. Entertainment was furnished by music groups of East Central State College and Dr. A. Linscheid, president of the college, addressed one of the evening sessions. The National Congress representative was impressed with the progress in Oklahoma and with the cooperation between PTA leaders and the profession.

"Home and School in Education" was the theme of the fourth annual convention which met at Pawhuska, March 10-12, 1926. Convention speakers included Mrs. H. A. Adams, the state organizer; J. O. Hall, the Pawhuska

¹Ibid., March 12, 1925, p. 9.

²Ada Weekly News, March 12, 1925, p. 1.

³Minutes of the Third Annual Convention, March 11-13, 1925.

Superintendent; Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma; and others. The convention considered a proposed revision of the constitution section by section and voted to accept it.¹

Convention arrangements apparently went awry at one point. On the morning in which the Pawhuska convention closed, a member of the transportation committee discovered four Oklahoma City delegates carrying their bags down a Pawhuska street and invited them to ride. She found them "somewhat disgruntled." Upon leaving the home where they were housed during the convention, each was presented a bill for \$1.50 per night for lodging. Superintendent Hall thought he had made it clear that "room was to be furnished free but that a moderate charge would be made for breakfast."² Apparently that had also been the understanding of the four Oklahoma City delegates. The state president, approved Hall's suggestion that he reimburse the Oklahoma City delegates from convention registration fees.

The fifth annual convention which met in Cushing March 16-17, 1927 was the first Oklahoma convention attended by a president of the National Congress. Mrs. A. H. Reeve was warmly received by the convention and addressed almost every session. R. W. Clark, who had recently been appointed president, announced to the opening session the resignation of Mrs. J. P. Slaughter. On the motion of a Mrs. Kidwell of Guthrie, the convention conferred on Mrs. Slaughter the title of honorary vice-president. The convention received the following telegram from Mrs.

¹Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention, March 10-12, 1926.

²Letter from J. O. Hall to Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, March 13, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

Slaughter:

Greetings extended to Mrs. Reeve. Love and greeting for kindness and support to me in my four years of service also to members of state board and members over state for their loyalty and cooperation. Sorry on account of ill health I cannot be with you. Success for coming year.¹

Mrs. Reeve spoke to the convention on PTA publicity and "gave a splendid talk on PTA councils."² The convention extended a vote of thanks to the Oklahoma Education Association for making space available for a PTA page in the Oklahoma Teacher and recommended that each local unit subscribe to the Oklahoma Teacher. Mrs. P. P. Claxton of Tulsa "made a very appealing and convincing talk on juvenile protection." Even though the convention adjourned with an afternoon session on March 17, "Cushing continued to be a very charming host and took the delegates for a car ride over the city."³

Delegates present for the opening session of the Sixth Annual Convention which met in Ponca City, March 27-30, 1928, heard John Vaughan, state superintendent, and Mrs. S. M. N. Marrs of Austin, Texas. Mrs. Marrs, first vice-president of the National Congress spoke on the role of men in parent-teacher work and addressed a dinner meeting on "The Tie that Binds." On the following morning, Dr. Paul Voght, dean of extension at the University of Oklahoma addressed the convention. This was followed by a discussion of the question, "What Does PTA Mean in my Community." A parent's answer was given by Mrs. W. A. Windham of Picher; the superin-

¹Telegram from Mrs. J. P. Slaughter to Mr. R. W. Clark, March 15, 1927 (Slaughter Files).

²Minutes of the Fifth Annual Convention, March 16-17, 1927.

³Ibid.

tendent's view by Dr. P. P. Claxton of Tulsa; and the county superintendent's view by Mrs. Ada B. Sims of Noble County. A unique feature of the Ponca City convention was the buffalo barbecue staged for delegates at the famed 101 Ranch.¹

Financing of annual conventions was a subject of discussion in a meeting of the state board of managers on July 11, 1929. Mrs. Virgil Browne, third vice-president, moved that the organization divide convention fees from funds raised locally, a move apparently designed to give the state organization closer supervision of registration fees. The Tulsa convention committee objected to this suggestion, and after discussion the board agreed to use as large a part of the registration fees as needed to pay any indebtedness not met by the entertainment fund raised locally.²

Many delegates attending the seventh annual convention in Tulsa, March 28-29, 1929 were said to have expressed strong feelings on the question: "Why should city boys and girls have so much more set before them in the way of education . . . than the country or small town children?"³ There was a consensus that parent-teacher associations, working together, could demand and secure legislation to raise sufficient taxes to provide equal educational opportunity.

Nearly 300 delegates registered for the Tulsa convention but muddy roads forced a group from the Panhandle to abandon their cars at Enid and take a train the remainder of the way. The convention rules,

¹Minutes of the Sixth Annual Convention, March 27-30, 1928.

²Minutes of the State Executive Board, January 11, 1929.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (May, 1929), p. 22.

presented to the opening session by M. J. Glass, prohibited the distribution of literature at the convention without permission of the state board of managers.¹ With emphasis on "Worthy Home Membership," the convention heard Mrs. Wiley Swift of New York City on the subject of child labor, and Eugene Lies of the National Recreation Association. Dr. Merle Prunty, principal of Tulsa Central High School spoke on "Character Education in the Schools."

An important feature of the convention was a tour of Tulsa during which Mrs. H. A. Adams, the state president, planted two trees, the first in honor of Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, and the second in honor of Dr. and Mrs. P. P. Claxton. In a brief ceremony on the Lincoln School grounds in Tulsa, Mrs. Adams said of Mrs. Slaughter:

She was a woman of splendid character, a woman of great dignity, strong in her convictions, and determined in her purpose, undaunted by the many reverses with which she met in establishing the work in Oklahoma So to honor our founder and first state president, we plant this tree, pledging service anew, as from each educational district in Oklahoma we bring soil to deposit around this tree, adding strength to strength in the cause of child welfare for which our departed Mrs. Slaughter gave her all.²

Conventions of the Depression

Depression which rocked Wall Street in 1929 arrived without fanfare in Oklahoma. The eighth annual convention of the Oklahoma Congress which met in Oklahoma City in April, 1930 discussed as its theme, "Character Education." It was not until 1934 that a recognition of the devastating effects of depression were reflected in the convention theme,

¹Minutes of the Seventh Annual Convention, March 28-29, 1929.

²Mrs. H. A. Adams, "Tree Planting Ceremony," March 29, 1929 (Adams Files).

"Oklahoma Neglects Her Children." "Partners in Progress," theme of the convention of 1937, was largely an expression of hope rather than the announcement of reality. The slow ascent from the depths of depression was in sharp contrast to the dizzy spiral downward, particularly in the field of public education.

Although more complete and adequate convention rules were adopted, few changes were made in convention procedure during the depression. Organized PTA choral groups known as Mothersingers appeared frequently on convention programs and community singing was usually included. A "fun night" was added to some of the convention programs. Cities lost much of their interest in playing host to conventions. In fact, the eleventh annual convention in 1933 adjourned without having received a single bid for the convention of 1934. Lawton apparently was the pre-convention favorite, but an invitation from that city was not forthcoming, and "several cities withdrew their invitations when such a large delegation poured into Sapulpa"¹ Apparently depression had made it difficult for cities to support the convention in the manner to which it had become accustomed.

Delegates to the eighth annual convention, which met in the First Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City, April 10-12, 1930, heard thirteen speeches on opening day. The principal speaker was Dr. Randall Condon, fifth vice-president of the National Congress and superintendent of schools in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dr. Condon presented the convention theme, "Character Education" to the morning session, and addressed the dinner meeting on his own philosophy of life. Other speakers included Dr. John

¹Sapulpa Herald, April 6, 1933, p. 1.

M. Dodson, executive secretary of the bureau of health and public instruction of the American Medical Association; Edna McDaniel, dean of women at the University of Oklahoma; State Superintendent John Vaughan; Dr. Ned R. Smith of Tulsa, state PTA chairman for mental hygiene; Mrs. George E. Calvert; J. R. Holmes, superintendent of the Okmulgee schools; and Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma.¹

On the following day, the convention heard Dr. A. Linscheid, president of East Central State College; Miss Kate North, state department of education; Miss Ethel Bowers of the National Playground and Recreation Association of America; Dr. Carl Puckett, Oklahoma Tuberculosis Association; and Eileen Harrison. The convention closed with an address by Dr. Condon on "The Art of Living." A total of 600 attended the convention of which 252 were registered delegates.

Delegates attending the ninth annual convention in McAlester, April 22-24, 1931 were assisted by pages who wore "cunning little costumes" trimmed with the National PTA colors. The Grand Avenue Methodist Church, which served as convention headquarters, also maintained its nursery for several small children who attended the convention with their mothers.² The convention theme, "Child Health and Protection" reflected interest in a recent White House Conference on that problem. The National Congress president, Mrs. Hugh Bradford of Sacramento, California, presented the theme, expressing the fear that life had lost some of its humanity in the age of machines. Depression was not a major topic of convention discussion. The only reference to the problem was that of

¹Minutes of the Eighth Annual Convention, April 10-12, 1930.

²McAlester News Capital, April 23, 1931, p. 1.

Superintendent Vaughan who said it was unwise for business or professional people to say, "we must curtail educational privileges in shorter terms and fewer schools."¹

The tenth annual convention, April 6-8, 1932 was the first depression convention to deal with depression problems. Mayor George P. Selvidge of Ardmores was on hand to welcome delegates in their first general session in the First Methodist Church. His solution to the problems of depression was implied in a suggestion that the convention adopt as its slogan, "more efficiency and less expense in home, church and school."

Superintendent J. J. Godbey of Ardmores, who followed Selvidge, implied that an entirely different slogan was needed. Said Godbey, "The greatest benefactor to the child outside the home is the public school. We cannot think in these times of depriving a child of this heritage."²

Dr. A. Linscheid, who spoke on progressive education, digressed from his subject to deplore the depression practice of firing women teachers whose husbands were fortunate enough to be employed. "It isn't a question of whether the woman has a husband earning a living, but whether she is educationally, culturally, and personally fitted to teach."³ Linscheid scored the financial retrenchments of the depression which resulted in the curtailment of educational facilities at the expense of children. The tenth annual convention was attended by such a large number of delegates that housing facilities, badges, programs, and other

¹Minutes of the Ninth Annual Convention, April 22-24, 1931.

²The Daily Ardmoresite, April 6, 1932, p. 1.

³Ibid., April 8, 1932, p. 2.

local arrangements of the committee were exhausted on the second day of the convention. The local newspaper editor called this record attendance "a ray of brightness that renews hope and confidence in the future."¹ Registration, a banquet, two lunches, and two breakfasts cost each delegate a total of \$2.95.² Room was furnished free of charge.

Convention delegates were treated to a scenic tour of the Arbuckle Mountains which included a picnic lunch at Turner Falls. Along the way, the group paused long enough to plant two trees on the grounds of Ardmore Junior High School. An elm was planted in memory of George Washington's Bicentennial, and an oak in memory of Mrs. Slaughter. The Ardmore high school journalism class published a daily mimeographed news sheet for the convention.

The official minutes of the eleventh annual convention held in Sapulpa, April 4-5, 1933 are no longer to be found in the files of the Oklahoma Congress which contain no entries in the official book of minutes for the period November 5, 1932 to November 4, 1934. News accounts of the convention indicate it was one of the largest on record; 476 delegates registered and an equal number of visitors was reported.³ A district president complained that she and her group were turned away from a district breakfast because of overcrowding and she added, "There was absolutely no place I could find to make or give in to anyone a

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²"Ardmore Urges Large Quota at Convention," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (February-March, 1932), p. 4.

³Sapulpa Herald, April 5, 1933, p. 1; National Congress, Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, 1933, p. 317.

report of our district."¹

Dr. A. Linscheid, president of East Central State College, presented the convention theme, "The Child First in Home, School and Community." Dr. Henry G. Bennett, president of Oklahoma A. and M. College spoke to the dinner meeting attended by 630 persons. "Formal and informal addresses were given by leading educators of the state"²

The Sapulpa Herald spoke of a "heated campaign" followed by a "turbulent election" in which "the Tulsa delegation formed a coalition in favor of the Okmulgee delegation" which was backing the candidacy of Mrs. John R. Burns.³ In a disputed election Mrs. Burns won over Mrs. George E. Calvert of Oklahoma City. Before adjournment the convention went on record as opposing repeal of the eighteenth amendment and further resolved, "We declare ourselves as being opposed to malicious propaganda aimed to bring about the defeat of the eighteenth amendment."⁴ Delegates also resolved to oppose any bills that tended to cripple the public schools and lessen the educational opportunities of youth, and to encourage movements designed to study and strengthen local state government. The Sapulpa Herald correctly predicted that Okmulgee would entertain the twelfth annual convention since there were no invitations issued at the eleventh and since the president, Mrs. John R. Burns, was from Okmulgee.⁵ Perhaps the "turbulent election" of the eleventh convention stimulated

¹Letter from Mr. C. O. Green, president of Northwest District, to Mrs. John R. Burns, April 7, 1933 (Burns Files).

²National Congress, Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, 1933, p. 318.

³Sapulpa Herald, April 6, 1933, p. 1.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

the new set of convention rules prepared by a committee headed by W. Max Chambers and adopted for use in the twelfth annual convention held April 17-19, 1934.¹ The convention dispensed with the presentation of reports from the floor by officers and state committee chairmen. Instead, each delegate was furnished a convention notebook containing copies of all necessary reports. Seven of the eight districts held conferences during the first day of the convention followed by schools of instruction.

This depression conscious convention heard State Superintendent John Vaughan present the theme, "Oklahoma Neglects Her Children." Other addresses were "The Spirit of Education in the New Deal," "The Straight Gate in Education," and "The Hard of Hearing Child." The business of the convention was combined with music, a play hour, a historical pageant presented by the Okmulgee High School Association, and an appearance by the mother of General Hugh Johnson, administrator of the New Deal NRA.² Mrs. Johnson lived in Okmulgee.

On November 3, 1934 the state board of managers discussed the problem of conflicting dates for state conventions and agreed to hold future state conventions in the fall.³ The first of these fall conventions, the thirteenth annual convention, was held in Norman, October 8-9, 1935 on the campus of the University of Oklahoma. Governor E. W. Marland, Fifth District Congressman Josh Lee, Superintendent Vaughan, and

¹W. Max Chambers, "Rules to Govern the 1934 Convention (Burns Files).

²National Congress, "Field Service Reports," April 17-21, 1934 (Burns Files).

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, November 3, 1934; Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VII (December, 1934), p. 1.

President W. B. Bizzell were the prominent speakers of the convention.¹ Mrs. B. F. Langworthy, National Congress president, presented the convention theme, "The Call of Today."²

The Mayo Hotel in Tulsa served as headquarters for the fourteenth annual convention. In order to secure as speaker Mrs. J. K. Pettengill, first vice-president of the National Congress, Mrs. Calvert found it necessary to alter the previously scheduled dates of the convention.³ The record number of registered delegates attending the sessions on October 12 and 13, 1936 heard Mrs. Pettengill discuss the "Children's Charter"⁴ which came out of President Roosevelt's White House Conference on Children in a Democracy. The PTA was praised by Governor E. W. Marland for its efforts "to provide better educational facilities for children of all the people."⁵ An important reorganization of the Oklahoma Congress, discussed in an earlier chapter, was effected. The convention endorsed a referendum measure for removal of Oklahoma A. and M. College and four other agricultural institutions from "state politics" and gave unanimous approval of a proposal by the Brookings Institute for removing the state health department from partisan politics.⁶ A comprehensive program of school legislation also was advocated. For the first

¹Norman Transcript, October 8, 1935, p. 1.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1936, p. 263.

³Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Executive Committee, May 20, 1936 (Calvert Files).

⁴Tulsa Daily World, October 13, 1936, p. 3.

⁵E. W. Marland, "Address of Governor E. W. Marland to the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," 1936 (Calvert Files).

⁶Tulsa Daily World, October 13, 1936, p. 1.

time in four years there developed an active campaign for selection of the next convention site. "Floods of telegrams from Stillwater"¹ offering the facilities of Oklahoma A. and M. College gained that city the unanimous choice of the convention.

The fifteenth annual convention assembled on the campus of Oklahoma A. and M. College, October 7-9, 1937 to discuss the theme, "Partners in Progress." A measure of needed progress was indicated in Governor Marland's plea that the PTA help in putting 100,000 children of needy families in school within the next few weeks. "If we can do this, we can cut down the future penitentiary population," Marland said. "The state has the money and if you will help us find the children, we'll furnish them with books, clothing, and lunches."² The isolationist sentiment of the 1930s found expression in a "peace resolution" which called for a constitutional amendment giving exclusive power to the electorate to declare war, except in the event of invasion. Andrew Holley, director of curriculum for the state department of education, conducted a conference on safety at which Safety Commissioner J. M. Gentry spoke.³ A legislative resolution which attracted considerable notice in newspapers called for compulsory physical examinations preceding marriage.⁴

¹Ibid.

²Suzanne Arnote, "Marland Asks Council Aid in School Drive," Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), October 7, 1937, p. 7.

³Suzanne Arnote, "Parents and Teachers Go for Fun, Too," ibid., October 8, 1937, p. 9.

⁴Suzanne Arnote, "Tests Before Marriage Get Parents' Help," ibid., October 9, 1937, p. 3.

Changing Patterns of Annual Conventions

In 1938 a new ingredient was added to Oklahoma Congress conventions in the form of the able and energetic Dr. Alice Sowers. An expert in family life education, competent in modern adult discussion techniques, and experienced in PTA work from the local to the national level, Dr. Sowers soon provided important leadership in the Oklahoma Congress. Convention themes from 1938 through World War II reveal an accent on family life education; "Changing Patterns for Group Living" (1938), "To Promote the Welfare of Children and Youth in Home, School, Church, and Community" (1939), "Education for the Pursuit of Happiness" (1940), "Home, America's Strength" (1941), "Victory, PTA War Time Pledge" (1942), "Health, Safety, Home and Family Life, Juvenile Protection" (1943), "Growth; Who, Why, How?" (1944), and "Pulling Together Always" (1945). At least six of these themes revolved about the family. It is interesting to note that themes were adopted even when conventions were cancelled because of war time travel restrictions.

Changed also was the pattern of convention attendance, program, and procedure. In an earlier period convention guests often were as numerous as registered delegates, but in 1941 convention attendance included 590 registered delegates, and only fifteen visitors. In the matter of programs, convention planners no longer divided the time among the largest feasible number of speakers; more use was made of the panel discussion, and frequently the convention was broken down into a number of smaller groups for larger participation in the discussions. Having changed the annual convention date from spring to fall in 1935, the state board of managers reversed itself and returned to the practice of holding

the convention in the spring for 1941.

In addition to the changes adopted by choice, conventions were affected by war time conditions over which the PTA leadership had no control. In 1942 and 1943, conventions were cancelled because of war time travel restrictions and after the Oklahoma Congress experimented with a dual convention in 1944, the state convention was again cancelled in 1945. When the conventions resumed in the post war period, a new pattern emerged. It consisted of triennial state conventions with regional conventions in each of the two intervening years.

When the sixteenth annual convention (October 5-7, 1938) opened in the Shawnee Municipal auditorium, delegates were called to order by the first vice-president, Mrs. R. V. Rorabaugh of Tulsa. Mrs. George E. Calvert, state president, was unable to attend because of the death of her sister. Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma presented the convention theme,¹ after which Dr. Sowers led a panel discussion on "Youth and Changing Patterns of Today." In summarizing the discussions as the convention drew to a close, Dr. Sowers voiced a strong plea for integrated PTA programs. "No one committee chairman can work alone toward a single goal, the entire program of the association . . . must be integrated into one general pattern" ² In a period of "changing patterns" Dr. Sowers saw both the confusion of the day and the hope of a better tomorrow.

Remarkable news coverage preceded the seventeenth annual conven-

¹Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Convention, October 5-7, 1938.

²Alice Sowers, "Summary of Convention," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (November, 1938), p. 4.

tion which met October 11-13, 1939 in the Scottish Rite Cathedral, Guthrie. The Guthrie Daily Leader published the entire official program of the convention with photographs of the six women who had prominent convention roles. The convention also was noteworthy for the unusual number of prominent state educators in attendance. Three university presidents, two state college presidents, the president of the OEA, and a number of school superintendents were among the delegates and guests.

E. N. Comfort, dean of the Oklahoma School of Religion, enlivened the discussions at one point when he criticized educators for submitting to pressures from "main street." Comfort said these pressures resulted in too much emphasis on athletics and often the use of high school bands to play at political rallies or for chamber of commerce parades. As the discussion continued, Guy Lackey of the Oklahoma A. and M. College School of Education recommended that parents tell school officials the results they wanted and then give them free rein in accomplishing those purposes. "As it is," said Lackey, "schools listen to preachers, temperance leaders, and every Tom, Dick, and Harry who try to put their pet projects into the schools."¹ Mrs. Calvert pointed out that the policy of the Oklahoma Congress was to understand and support the school program, not to meddle in it. The principal social event of the convention was a "Pioneer Banquet" addressed by Dr. Eugene Briggs, president of Phillips University, Enid, and attended by Governor and Mrs. Leon C. Phillips.²

Dr. and Mrs. Gary Cleveland Myers of Cleveland, Ohio, were the

¹Suzanne Arnote, "Meddling in Schools Denied, Main Street, Not Parents, Blamed," Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), October 12, 1939, p. 15.

²Guthrie Daily Leader, October 9, 1939, p. 5.

featured speakers and discussion leaders of the eighteenth annual convention which met in the Skirvin Hotel, Oklahoma City, October 9-11, 1940. Myers was editor of Children's Activities. Discussions included such topics as "Babyhood," "The Baby Grows Up," "The Pursuit of Happiness through Intellectual Development," and other variations on the convention theme, "Education for the Pursuit of Happiness."¹ Mrs. William Kletzer of Portland, Oregon, president of the National Congress, attended the convention and installed the newly elected officers.

Thundershowers slowed registration as delegates gathered in Ada for the nineteenth annual convention, October 8-9, 1941. In the local newspaper a banner headline thundered, "German Armies Smash Nearer Moscow!" "Home, America's Strength" was the convention theme presented by Mrs. William Hastings, first vice-president of the National Congress. She spoke of the need for a "vital faith."

I think the German people may be wiser in one way than we are. They have given their youth a faith in their future. We don't approve that kind of faith, but it is something they believe in.²

Superintendent Joe Holmes of Muskogee spoke of "Parental Delinquency" and feared that church and home had lost their places as centers of attraction for American youth. Another convention speaker called on fathers to take larger responsibility for spiritual training in the home.³ "Home, The Gateway to Mental Security," "Building Well-Rounded Personalities," and "The Family Meets the Present Crisis" were discussed. The convention closed with a panel discussion by the several convention speakers led by

¹ Minutes of the Eighteenth Annual Convention, October 9-11, 1940.

² Ada Evening News, October 8, 1941, p. 1.

³ Ibid., October 9, 1941, p. 2.

Dr. Alice Sowers.¹

A decision by the state board to schedule the next annual convention in the spring resulted in the elimination in 1942 of regional conferences usually held in the spring. Instead, a two-day workshop was held at the University of Oklahoma at which a large group of leaders came together to develop plans for the war time PTA program. War time travel restrictions subsequently forced cancellation, not only of the convention of 1942, but also the conventions of 1943 and 1945. Elections of officers in 1942 and in 1943 were conducted by mail. A meeting of the state board of managers canvassed the elections, installed officers and conducted other essential business ordinarily accomplished in convention.²

In 1944 a "new venture" was announced. A dual convention was held with one section in Oklahoma City and the other in Tulsa. Identical programs were planned for the two cities. Delegates attended the section which involved the least travel and spent only one night away from homes or work.³ Although three years had elapsed since the nineteenth convention, the one held in 1944 was labeled the twentieth. The Tulsa section met in the Mayo Hotel, April 11-12, and the Oklahoma City section met April 13-14 in the Skirvin Tower. A total of 786 delegates and visitors registered for the two sections and the response to the dual convention was generally favorable.

¹Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Convention, October 8-10, 1941.

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, February 17, 1943.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVI (March, 1944), p. 3.

Post War Conventions

Although the state convention was cancelled in 1945, a series of college PTA institutes was held to pursue the theme, "Pulling Together Always." "Forward Together" was the theme of the twenty-first annual convention which met in Shawnee, April 10-11, 1946. It was an appropriate theme for the first post war convention and ably presented by Mrs. L. W. Hughes, fifth vice-president of the National Congress. It was discussed by speakers, panels, and a "PTA Town Meeting" in relation to organizational growth and activities, needs of children and youth in the post war atomic age, service to the home, service to the school, and service to the community. Speakers and discussion leaders included Dr. Sowers, Dr. Thurman White, director of the University of Oklahoma Extension Division, Dr. Arnold E. Joyal, dean of the University of Oklahoma College of Education, and Judge Donald Darrah of Clinton. Dr. Sowers presented a convention summary on "Activating the Platform." A total of 509 voting delegates and 31 visiting delegates attended the convention.¹

Meanwhile the changing patterns of convention activity, born of war time necessity, may have mothered a voluntary study of new approaches to convention and conference activity in the post war period. A "convention continuity committee," appointed in December, 1946 to evaluate conventions and convention organization, presented the following recommendations:

1. That the registration fee be increased to \$2.50.
2. That no formal arrangements be made for meals except for the all-state dinner and council presidents' luncheon, and the pre-convention luncheon of the board of managers.

¹Minutes of the Twenty-First Annual Convention, April 10-12, 1946.

3. That the convention open in an afternoon session.
4. That the convention close at noon of the final day.
5. That general sessions be limited to three with one open meeting at night.
6. That sectional conferences be combined into larger groups, not more than four in number, and meeting on three separate occasions.
7. That a fee not to exceed 75¢ be charged to the general public for the open meeting.
8. That a cooperative arrangement be made with the Elementary Principals' Association for sharing speakers and expenses of speakers. (This applied only to the meeting of 1947).
9. That the dinner program at the all-state dinner in 1947 commemorate the silver anniversary of the Oklahoma Congress.
10. That the state program committee be authorized expenditures for speakers and other usual convention expenses.
11. That councils refrain from courtesy gifts and entertainment of the state board of managers.
12. That the Oklahoma Congress adopt a three-year convention theme: "Building Together."¹

The state board of managers adopted all of the committee's recommendations.

In September, 1947 the state board accepted an additional recommendation of the committee. It called for four regional conventions in 1948 instead of the annual convention.² The objectives of the new plan were to bring the convention closer to the individual local officer and to provide opportunity for the discovery and training of new leaders. In April, 1949 the state convention adopted a revision of by-laws which included a provision that a state convention be held every third year with regional conventions in the intervening years.³ The post war pattern had emerged; thereafter a state convention was held only on the year a state president was to be elected.

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, December 11, 1946.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, September 23, 1947.

³Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Convention, April 20-22, 1949.

Since 1947 was the silver anniversary of the Oklahoma Congress, the convention which met in Tulsa April 15-17 was designated the twenty-fifth annual convention. But since conventions had been cancelled in 1942, 1943, and 1945 the number assigned interrupted the consecutive numbering of conventions. There exists no twenty-second, twenty-third, or twenty-fourth annual conventions of the Oklahoma Congress.

The principal address of the opening session was that of Dean Joyal who spoke on "Education, the Nation's Greatest Investment." In the evening, delegates heard Dr. Elbridge T. McSwain, professor of education at Northwestern University speak on "Education is a Community Investment." Another general session heard Dr. Sowers present "A Program for Every Family In Oklahoma," and Dr. McSwain speak on "Parents are the Teachers of Tommorrow's Citizens." The convention closed with an address by Dr. Oliver Hodge, state superintendent, on "An Educational Policy for Oklahoma." The convention also took note of a recent tornado which had struck Woodward, Oklahoma, and authorized the regional director to "examine the needs and recommend immediate action."¹ Official attendance at the convention was 362.

Mrs. Newton P. Leonard, vice-president of the National Congress attended each of the four regional conventions of 1948 to discuss the theme "How Well Are We Building." The Northeast Regional Convention was held in Alice Robertson School, Muskogee, April 12-13, 1948;² the Southeast Region met in the Junior High School auditorium, Ada, April 15-16;³

¹Minutes of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention, April 15-17, 1947.

²Minutes of the Northeast Regional Convention, April 12-13, 1948.

³Minutes of the Southeast Regional Convention, April 15-16, 1948.

the Southwest Region met in Emerson School auditorium, Lawton, April 19-20;¹ and the Northwest Region met in the Alva High School auditorium, April 22-23.² Local participants varied, but the pattern for these regional meetings was quite similar. Mrs. Leonard presented the theme. Two panel discussions on the subjects, "How Firm are Our Foundations," and "Are We Meeting Present Needs and Building for Future Demands," were summarized by Dr. Alice Sowers. Mrs. Leonard returned to address a dinner meeting on "Building Codes" and a final session on the following morning included a summary by Dr. Sowers on the subject, "Building Inspection."

Dr. Ralph McDonald, world citizenship chairman of the National Congress, presented the theme for the twenty-seventh annual convention held in the Skirvin Tower Hotel, Oklahoma City, April 20-22, 1949. "Our Unfinished Business: The Child and His Future," as presented by Dr. McDonald was expanded in several additional discussions: "Unfinished Business in School Education," led by G. T. Stubbs, director of public school relations, Oklahoma A. and M. College; "Unfinished Business in Home and Family Life," an address by Dr. Alice Sowers; "Unfinished Business in Mental Health" by Dr. Charles F. Obermann, director of mental health in Oklahoma. The convention saw a demonstration by the Hearing Clinic of University Hospital and closed with a clinic on problems of local associations conducted by Mrs. O. W. Jones. Dr. Sowers presented the platform, and Mrs. H. V. Thornton the legislative program of the Oklahoma Congress for the period 1949 to 1952. Both were adopted by the

¹Minutes of the Southwest Regional Convention, April 19-20, 1948.

²Minutes of the Northwest Regional Convention, April 22-23, 1948.

convention.¹

The four regional conventions held in 1950 were designated in the official minutes as the second biennial convention and also as the twenty-eighth annual convention. The Southeast Region met at Ardmore, April 10-11; the Southwest at El Reno, April 13-14; the Northwest at Ponca City, April 17-18; and the Northeast at Okmulgee, April 20-21. Each of these regional conventions explored the theme, "Teamwork Today for A Better Tomorrow." Presenting the theme to each of the conventions was Mrs. C. C. Clark, vice-president of the National Congress. Dr. Alice Sowers conducted a clinic at each of the conventions on the question, "What Seek Ye Here?" Other panel topics included "Teamwork of the Home Team," and "Are We Pulling Together for a Better Tomorrow?" Music groups from high schools in each of the four convention cities furnished entertainment preceding the convention openings. A total of 960 persons registered at the four conventions.²

The third biennial convention, also designated twenty-ninth annual convention, was held as four regional meetings. Southwest Region met at Chickasha, April 16-17, 1951; Southeast met at Poteau, April 19-20; Northwest at Woodward, April 23-24; and Northeast at Bartlesville, April 26-27. The only variations in the convention programs were in the entertainment given by high schools in each of the convention cities and the membership of the panels which discussed such topics as "Opportunity

¹Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Convention, April 20-22, 1949.

²Minutes of the Second Biennial Convention: Southeast Region, April 10-11; Southwest Region, April 13-14; Northwest Region, April 17-18; and Northeast Region, April 20-21, 1950.

for Service Through Organization in Rural, Elementary, and High School Associations," "Preparedness Through Active, Spiritual Faith," and "Opportunity for Service Through Projects in Home, Family Life, Schools and Education and Community Planning." Joining Dr. Sowers as the key convention leaders were Mrs. James Ryan, national vice-president, and General Carl McGee. Mrs. Ryan presented the convention theme, "Preparation for Living in Today's World;" General McGee spoke on "Responsibility for Civil Defense."¹ Although no record was made in the convention minutes of attendance, the state president estimated a total attendance of 1,500 persons.²

Knox Walker, second vice-president of the National Congress, was the outstanding guest speaker of the thirtieth annual convention held in the First Presbyterian Church, Tulsa, May 6-8, 1952. Walker presented the convention theme, "Child Today--Citizen Tomorrow," and J. Win Payne, superintendent of schools in Ponca City, expanded the theme in his discussion of "Schools for the Citizens of Tomorrow."³ An interesting feature of the convention was a series of conferences for PTA leaders with the discussion groups arranged according to the size of units. The four divisions and their discussion leaders were: rural PTAs, Mrs. Virgil England; elementary school PTAs of 100 members or less, Mrs. O. W. Jones; of 100 to 400 members, Mrs. John A. Wadlin; of more than 400 mem-

¹Minutes of the Third Biennial Convention: Southwest Region, April 16-17; Southeast Region, April 19-20; Northwest Region, April 23-24; Northeast Region, April 26-27, 1951.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Miami Beach, Florida, 1951, p. 213.

³Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Convention, May 6-8, 1952.

bers, Mrs. W. Fred Scott; junior-senior high school units, Mrs. Harry Neuffer. Each leader prepared a summary of her conference group and these were published in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher.¹ With more than 1,000 delegates and visitors in attendance, Dr. Chambers called the convention "a grand climax to the closing administration."² The closing session included a presentation of the platform by Ira Armstrong, and the legislative program by Mrs. H. V. Thornton.

Regional conventions of 1953 were shortened to one day because of the emphasis on preparation for the National Congress convention scheduled for the first time in Oklahoma City. Similar to schools of instruction, the four regional conventions were held early in April at Duncan, Durant, Blackwell, and Tahlequah. Discussion centered on development of project committees to carry out an action program for "Better Homes, Better Schools, and Better Communities," as a means of further implementing the convention theme, "For Every Unit a Challenge; For Every Child a Promise." Approximately 1,100 delegates attended the four conventions.³

Regional conventions of 1954, held in Sand Springs, McAlester, Clinton, and Alva, also were limited to one day. "A PTA that Knows Is a PTA that Grows" was the theme. Programs were based on the National Congress theme, "Action for Better Homes, Better Schools, and Better Commu-

¹"Highlights from Convention Conferences," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIV (July, 1952), p. 10.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1952, p. 230.

³National Congress, Proceedings, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1953, p. 214.

nities for a Free Society." Mrs. Otto Eisenstein of Warrenton, Missouri, national vice-president for Region Six, was the principal speaker at the four meetings.¹ Total attendance was 1,527.²

The thirty-third annual convention, the last to be held prior to the completion of this study, met in Oklahoma City, May 2-4, 1955 in the First Christian Church. In her presentation of the convention theme, "Progress Through Action," Mrs. Rollin Brown of Los Angeles, California, reminded the delegates, "Children are not in school all the time. Therefore, we have to take into consideration an adequate program to reach parents, particularly very young parents."³ The first vice-president of the National Congress called for better qualified persons in schools and nurseries and for instruction of young people in "the financial aspects of marriage."

Bertram Beck, an expert on juvenile problems and an official of the U. S. Children's Bureau, urged delegates to support the establishment of detention homes for juvenile offenders. "It is an amazing and startling thing," said Beck, "the manner in which we have abrogated the civil rights of children Children can be placed in jail and held there in a manner that adults cannot."⁴ Other speakers and discussion panels dealt with such topics as civil defense, education for family living, "Progress Through Action in Education," and "Progress Through

¹Press Release, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, March 16, 1954 (Burkitt Files).

²National Congress, Proceedings, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1954, p. 217.

³The Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), May 3, 1955, p. 9.

⁴Ibid., May 4, 1955, p. 10.

Action in Mental Health." Prominent educators, psychiatrists, and PTA leaders were included in the interesting group of convention participants.

Much additional material could be presented on conventions, illustrating their organizational significance, their inspirational value, and their educational function. One of the many PTA publications is titled, "Conventions Point the Way." It appropriately states the role of conventions in the history of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers.

CHAPTER IX

PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community" is the first object of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. Four additional objects find a place in the program of the Oklahoma Congress. The first three of these objects, which are best achieved through programs and projects, are the subject matter of this and the two succeeding chapters. The fourth and fifth objects,¹ which find their achievement indirectly through the organizational work of the Oklahoma Congress, were covered in the eight preceding chapters.

In 1957, standing committees at the state level on art, audio-visual education, character and spiritual education, citizenship, community health, exceptional children, juvenile protection, mental hygiene, recreation, safety, school education, school lunch, summer round-up, and others evidenced the emphasis which the Oklahoma Congress placed on the many areas affecting the welfare of children and youth.

Early PTA leaders had the vision of moving forward along the entire front of child welfare activity, and efforts were made to secure local chairmen to correspond to the many committees set up at state and national levels. This often resulted in more organization than effort,

¹See Page 1 for a list of the five objects.

more activity than achievement. At a later period goals were defined and programs of action planned for step by step achievement. In 1950, for example, Stubbs recommended that local units give emphasis each year to "a few areas of approved interest . . . rather than try to carry a program that covers all areas supported by state and national."¹ In 1949, Dr. Sowers advised local units to limit committee organization:

We recognize the difficulty experienced by local units in securing good chairmen for each of the committees on the Congress list and do not urge that these be appointed unless the unit is concerned with problems and activities connected with that committee. We urge, rather, that good chairmen be found to head up committees to carry on programs of study and action when the unit decides upon them.²

In 1952, Mrs. Burkitt gave the following advice to local units:

Real good is accomplished . . . when strength gets behind a project and makes itself felt. Unless you have a large membership and much good leadership, it is good sense to restrict the number of your projects. Take on no more than you can carry through successfully. Appoint chairmen for only those activity or project committees through which you intend to carry out a project this year.³

In 1953, Mrs. Burkitt quoted the National President, Mrs. Newton P. Leonard as saying:

There is immense difference between action and activity. Action is activity with a clearly designed purpose that looks to some large goal often more immediately at hand than we in our small vision are willing to admit.⁴

Mrs. Burkitt suggested "Action rather than Activity" as a slogan every PTA member should adopt permanently and felt it would eliminate "many

¹G. T. Stubbs, "What Can the PTA Do?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (July, 1950), p. 5.

²Alice Sowers, "Report of Meeting of Group 'B' Chairmen," September 8, 1949 (Chambers Files).

³Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, [Vol. XXV] (October, 1952), p. 4.

⁴Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, ibid., Vol. XXVI (October, 1953), p. 4.

futile activities and transitory results." Mrs. Burkitt also pointed out the difference between local committee organizational needs and committee requirements at state and national levels.

A local association should never appoint chairmen on the same basis as the council, the state, or national congresses. Because needs differ from school to school and community to community guidance for a variety of chairmen must be furnished by these advisory organizations. The local unit, however, is the doer, the achiever, and the efforts of members should never be spread so thin or diverted to so much meaningless activity that accomplishment of desirable objectives is frustrated and the enthusiasm and vitality of its leadership is burnt out.¹

The extent and nature of local PTA projects varied widely from place to place and from year to year. In 1929 Whitley quoted the following report as typical of "do nothing" units:

As for the PTA work here, we are really not doing any. Our object for last year was to secure a piano for the school. The piano was installed a few weeks ago and we find little interest in the district for continuing the organization. In fact, the president elected for the next year refused to serve.

As for programs, the school children have furnished nearly all we've had. Just dialogues, songs, and readings. I feel to have a worthwhile PTA we must get patrons on programs.²

This picture was in sharp contrast to that presented in the report of another PTA unit in January, 1934.

When one of the buildings was tumbling down, the support of the PTA was enlisted It was no trouble for the PTA to visualize improved conditions, and enthusiastically they set to work and aided in a bond issue which carried almost unanimously

For a number of years committees have been appointed for carrying on the pre-school medical examination . . . and many recognized defects remedied before children started to school. For several years they have sponsored the Christmas Seal sale and their share of the money has been used in the remedial work for children who are not able to have this work done otherwise For awhile the PTA supplied milk to one of our schools for undernourished children

¹ Ibid.

² Whitley, "Parent-Teacher Associations," p. 88.

. . . . They have sponsored noonday lunches for several years.

Most of our units have a committee on attendance. This committee helps in checking up on the laggards, finding out why they are not in school, encouraging parents to keep them in, and in many instances supplying relief in the form of books, clothing, sometimes food or medical attention.¹

In 1932, Kennon discovered a wide range of activity among local units much of which was concerned with promoting the welfare of children. In a state wide survey, she found that 71 per cent of the units provided clothing for the poor, 51 per cent provided milk, 45 per cent sponsored health campaigns, 43 per cent bought library books, 62 per cent equipped playgrounds, and 62 per cent bought pictures for the classroom.²

A measure of the relative emphasis given to different types of projects was revealed in a summary of projects completed in 210 local PTA units in 1937.

There were 12 special projects on alcohol and narcotics; 42 programs on art; 11 on character education; 43 on child hygiene; 10 on the exceptional child; 145 on founders day; 53 on home education; 27 on humane education; 16 on international relations; 44 on juvenile protection; 33 on legislation; 38 on library service; 30 on mental hygiene; 34 on motion pictures; 74 on music; 103 on parent education; 18 on radio; 55 on recreation; 95 on safety; 46 on school education; 26 on social hygiene; 27 on student aid; and 50 on the summer round up.³

Fund Raising Projects

Fund raising by local school patrons is much older than PTA. It was not surprising, therefore, to find that fund raising projects were

¹M. J. Hale, "The PTA in Action," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VI (January, 1934), p. 1.

²Kennon, "The Objectives and Achievements of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," p. 52.

³"Fifteenth Annual Convention, Official Program and Yearbook," 1937, p. 23 (Calvert Files).

among the more frequent activities of local PTA units. In January, 1929 fund raising was a topic for discussion in the PTA page of the Oklahoma Teacher.

The first move of nearly all new units is to make some money to buy necessary school equipment. This is usually well-intentioned, frequently much needed, and often the best move for the new body of workers as it unites them into something practical and gives them touch with each other and the school. This,¹ however, far too often continues to be the aim and end of the unit.¹

Less charitable in its judgment of the value of fund raising projects was Kennon's comment in 1932.

It is short-sighted policy for a few school patrons to pay for school essentials from their own private funds. Adequate provision for public education is essential in a democracy, and it is only necessary to have an aroused public opinion to secure essentials for the public schools through public taxation. Parent-teacher associations with a proper vision can arouse the sentiment for this kind of taxation.²

A different point of view was expressed in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher as late as December, 1946.

Entertainment and money making are of minor importance. Programs and activities are planned for the purpose of furthering the objects of the organization. Although entertainments and money making devices often contribute a valuable and legitimate service to the school and community, care is exercised to keep such activities in proper relationship to the real purpose for which the organization is formed--the welfare of children.³

Dr. Arnold E. Joyal discussed fund raising activities of the PTA in a speech to a state convention in 1946, pointing out potential dangers in the practice.

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. X (January, 1929), p. 24.

²Kennon, "The Objectives and Achievements of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," p. 52.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (December, 1946), p. 12.

Many well-intentioned local associations think that they do the community and the school a good service through their everlasting attempts to raise money. This money-making idea becomes a regular fetish. At every turn there is a cake sale, or a card party, or a nickel lunch. People are called on to donate cakes, and then go to school and pay to eat them and while there to take chances in a raffle to take one of them home.

I believe it is unwise to encourage boards of education to feel that they can lean on the PTA for the purchase of educational necessities A local PTA renders doubtful service when it assumes a substantial burden for the support of the local school system.¹

Mrs. Cecil Moon of the Frederick PTA Council had neither praise nor blame for the fund raising activities carried on in her city in 1947.

I've had several PTA presidents rather apologetically tell me about money-making schemes and funds being used to purchase school equipment and supplies for schools. They know, of course, that this is not the ideal situation. We also know that this is a time of emergency when school district's finances are being stretched to the utmost and then, in many cases, are pitifully inadequate. Therefore, in such cases, it will have to be up to the executive board of the local PTA's to use their best judgment about such things.²

PTAs in Frederick had used the funds to purchase equipment, and Mrs. Moon added, "If we had had to wait for the board of education to purchase these items, we feel sure that we would have been years in securing them."

In 1947, Mrs. George Flesner, state president, opened her discussion of fund raising by local PTA units with the following statement:

Parent-teacher associations sometimes make the mistake of believing that giving material aid to the school is their main reason for existence. Sometimes teachers and principals develop the habit of expecting an association to provide equipment for their work which is the natural product of adequately supported public institutions. Rather than making haste to supply obvious or fancied material needs . . . a parent-teacher association should be about its business of

¹A. E. Joyal, "Forward together through Service to the Schools," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (Yearbook Issue, 1946), p. 11.

²Myrl Davenport, "This 'N That," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (April, 1947), p. 16.

arousing public opinion. If they realize this goal, material needs will be forthcoming through the regular channels.¹

Mrs. Flesner noted three instances in which she felt the local PTA should raise funds for material aid to schools: (1) emergencies which must be met before a board of education has time to consider them, (2) purchases of small supplies which will make a teacher's room more attractive and comfortable, and (3) purchase of such permanent equipment as radios, projectors, phonographs, or books when the last hope of obtaining them through taxation is exhausted. Mrs. Flesner singled out four types of fund raising as being particularly objectionable: (1) exploiting the health or morals of children, (2) disregard for fire hazards, (3) abuse of public property, and (4) games of chance, including raffles, drawings of various types for prizes, etc. She concluded her discussion as follows:

Set about the task of removing a misconception concerning parent-teacher associations--that they are money-making organizations. If this is corrected, the real objects of the congress can be accomplished. The associations will then command the respect of their communities, and the approval and admiration of their boards of education.²

There followed a list of seventy-three ways to raise money.

That fund raising projects continued to present problems was indicated in a discussion of the subject by Mrs. C. E. Scott in May, 1954.

Well it would curl your hair! What I read in the newspaper clippings that come through to us from the clipping service to which we subscribe Screening the clips is an interesting activity.

¹Mrs. George Flesner, "Is Your PTA Just an AID Society," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (October, 1947), pp. 20-21.

²Ibid.

Some are good, and some--well, they almost make us weep!

During the month of March PTA money making "doings" were going full tilt state wide and some of the affairs given violated all the rules and policies of the National and State Congress.¹

A month later, Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt attacked the same problem in her "President's Message."

Carnivals continue to flourish across the country, with mild gambling and donations from reluctant merchants to entice the money from parents and children. The result very often is that more money than needed is raised and that old bug-bear buying equipment for the school is a natural when it comes to suggestions for spending the money.²

Although state and national leaders consistently discouraged emphasis on fund raising activities of local units, the practice continued to be a frequent local PTA project. Perhaps a former president of the National Congress, Mrs. Frances Pettengill, was close to the reason for this when she defined the PTA as having the characteristics of a folk-movement.

The folk-movement has certain additional qualifications in that its action is largely unconscious, spontaneous, uncoordinated. It faces the problems of immediate needs; it looks to immediate satisfactions.³

That satisfactions came as a result of "material aid" from the PTA to the schools was suggested in a selection from the National Congress "Song Sheet" which was sung in PTA meetings of an early period to the tune of "Smiles."

There are schools that make us happy,
There are schools that make us blue,

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (July, 1954), p. 4.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher (July, 1954), p. 4.

³Mrs. Frances S. Pettengill, "The Philosophy of the Parent Teacher Movement," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (December, 1930), p. 22.

There are schools that make a boy play "hookey"
 Just as much as studies ever do.
 There are schools that seem to smile and greet you,
 Where the sunbeams always seem to play
 Where the pictures and the new piano
 Show that they have a PTA.

A report of PTA fund raising projects in Norman for the 1929-30 school year illustrate some of the ways of raising money. The Norman PTA council conducted the T. B. Christmas Seal campaign which raised \$475.12. The McKinley PTA held a carnival and two jitney lunches from which it received sufficient funds to pipe gas into the building and to buy \$200.00 worth of books. The Woodrow Wilson PTA activities were "directed toward acquiring funds for the purchase of a piano, furniture for the rest room, books and pictures." The Washington PTA, one of the first units organized in Norman, raised \$470.90 from jitney lunches, a cooking school, moving picture show, sandwich sales, and a carnival. Jefferson PTA raised \$219.00 by holding similar events while Lincoln PTA raised a total of \$428.01 for the year from jitney lunches and a carnival.¹

The frequency of fund raising events encouraged some cities to sponsor a single PTA fund raising event for the year. Miami reported such a plan in 1943 which consisted of a spring carnival sponsored by the PTA council and the student council of the junior-senior high schools. The secondary schools sponsored a queen contest and each elementary school sponsored a lunch room, a cake walk, a "country store," or some other event. In 1943 these cooperative efforts raised \$1,184.56 in Miami. The Miami PTA council bought textbooks for needy children of the city and then allocated \$300.00 to the student council of the junior-

¹The Norman Transcript, November 6, 1930, p. 1.

senior high school and \$132.00 to each of the five elementary school PTA units.¹

The disappearance of money during the depression produced at least one interesting variation on the fund raising theme.

The parents and teachers of Yuba High School, under the leadership of Superintendent Joe McKinnis, have organized a PTA and have taken as their first project the beautifying of the school grounds. Mrs. E. C. Smith . . . tells of a plan whereby each family will donate a bushel of corn or a dozen eggs, while each child will contribute a fence post.²

Beautification of school grounds was a frequent PTA project and parents often donated time, shrubs for plantings, or money for the project.

In May, 1924 the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher reported briefly on the activities of eighteen PTA units in Oklahoma City for the 1923-24 school year. Fund raising was carried on in most of the units and the most frequent use of the money was for the purchase of books, financing of school cafeterias, and pupil welfare work.³ In 1925, Mrs. Fred Donoho reported:

Some associations have furnished playground equipment, cafeterias, outfitted the less fortunate with clothes and books, bought milk for the undernourished children, supplied money for the teachers of the adult education schools.⁴

In 1926, the practice of earning money through sale of subscriptions to magazines resulted in the following ruling by the state board

¹"Miami Suggests a Plan for Money Raising," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XV (May, 1943), p. 12.

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIV (February, 1933), p. 25.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, May, 1924, pp. 10-11.

⁴Form letter from Mrs. Fred Donoho, state publicity chairman, to Co-Workers, November 12, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

of managers:

. . . such endorsement or participation will be contrary to the aims and purposes of the organization and is likely to divert attention from the purposes of PTA. Being a public organization for all the children of all the people, it seems wrong to boost any one's business to the detriment₁ of others, for such would cause prejudice against the organization.

In some communities PTAs cooperated with other groups in fund raising activities. The Altus Kiwanis Club presented a minstrel show each year in the 1930s and the PTA council sold ninety per cent of all the tickets. All proceeds from the show went to the local units and the council. A report in 1938 showed a total of \$312.00 raised for PTA work through the event.²

In most instances the amounts of money raised by local PTA groups was not large, but a few notable exceptions produced surprisingly large funds. In 1941, Cameron PTA, a consolidated school unit near Poteau, raised \$782.40 with a membership of only fifty persons. Each Saturday night the unit sponsored entertainment. Parents operated a concession stand at Saturday night shows which furnished money to run the school busses to bring rural children to the entertainment. The unit bought a 16 milimeter movie projector, a screen, a microphone stand with two loud speakers, and a radio-phonograph.³ In 1954, the sixth annual PTA Minstrel Show, "Along Broadway," sponsored by the Clinton PTA Council, played to 3,200 spectators. Ticket and concession stand sales grossed

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, March 10, 1926.

²"Council Reports," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (September, 1938), p. 39.

³Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (May, 1941), p. 6.

\$1,654.40.¹ The money was used to support a PTA kindergarten program, and the summer playground program.

The Oklahoma Congress refrained from fund raising at the state level for programs and activities not directly connected with PTA work. The state organization, for example, conducted a vigorous campaign to raise a state quota assigned for financing a new national headquarters building, and it collected donations from local units for its scholarship program for recruitment of teachers. But in 1951 the executive committee refused the request of a prominent citizen of the state to assist in raising funds for a fountain to be erected in honor of the United Nations, recommending that "the Congress confine its activities to those projects directly affecting children."²

Welfare Projects for Underprivileged Children

Providing food, clothing, and medical attention for underprivileged children is only one aspect of the child welfare objective of the Oklahoma Congress. The PTA is not primarily a welfare agency. In the depression, however, the unmet needs of many children of the unemployed and the under-employed caused one district president to ask, "What are we going to do educationally when the emergency work of feeding and clothing children has fallen so heavily upon us?"³

In 1929, the PTA council in Sapulpa made a social survey to dis-

¹The Clinton Daily News, March 7, 1954, p. 1.

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, and Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 2, 1951.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIV (March, 1933), p. 16.

cover needs, and set up a central welfare agency to supply books and clothing to needy children. Superintendent W. Max Chambers reported a noticeable increase in school attendance.¹ In Picher, a PTA committee made a house-to-house canvass asking each home to donate a school book or the price of one or more books in an effort to supply every child in grade school with all textbooks needed.²

In 1931 "auxiliary clothing rooms" were established in several schools in Tulsa. Under the direction of a student aid committee of the PTA, 3,000 garments were distributed to Tulsa children. Unemployed fathers repaired 100 pairs of shoes and many mothers worked to repair and distribute clothing. Free lunches were maintained for 800 Tulsa school children.³ In Putnam City, the largest rural PTA in the state, members helped to sponsor free lunches for children who came to school without lunch.⁴ The Altus PTA Council in cooperation with Altus civic clubs clothed twenty-six children, secured books for sixteen, medical examinations and glasses for two, and furnished milk for undernourished children.⁵ From October 1 to December 23, 1931, the PTA clothing room sponsored by the Oklahoma City Council distributed 3,002 garments to needy children, including 318 pairs of used shoes and 91 new pairs. A

¹Ibid., Vol. XI (November, 1929), p. 28.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IV (November, 1930), p. 3.

³Ibid., March, 1931), p. 3.

⁴"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers Association," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XII (March, 1931), p. 20.

⁵Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (September, 1931), p. 12.

total of 849 children received aid.¹

In 1932, the Bartlesville PTA Council established a student loan fund to assist "some worthy student who otherwise would not have been able to attend college."² Beggs PTA members supplied more than \$100.00 to purchase books for needy children in the first two months of the school year and then turned their attention to providing needed clothing.³ At the close of the 1931-32 school year, Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, the state president, reported:

To keep all children in school during this critical time . . . emergency measures have been taken by associations over the entire state. Clothing and book exchanges have been major projects in many localities; hot lunches in others. One of the larger cities reports that the county commissioners have given \$8,000.00 this year to be expended by the Parent-Teacher council on clothing for children who could not otherwise remain in school. This was in addition to funds supplied for school lunches by the units themselves. Another city of about 25,000 population reports that the parent-teacher associations are . . . keeping 2,000 children in school this year.⁴

In 1933, Mrs. Key Boyd, president of Woodrow Wilson PTA in Norman reported the theme of the year was "safeguarding children through the depression." At Gowen school in Latimer County the PTA furnished hot lunches for eighty-five needy children and made clothing for children from materials furnished by the Red Cross. During the summer the Gowen PTA women canned a total of 426 quarts of vegetables, and prepared twenty gallons of kraut in a welfare project shared by the entire community.

¹Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, "Work of the Parent-Teacher Council of Oklahoma City," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin (January, 1932), p. 8.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (January, 1932), p. 8.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIV (November, 1932), p. 26.

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1932, p. 271.

Vegetables were furnished from the garden of Eastern Oklahoma College at Wilburton with the mothers and children doing the harvesting.¹ Mrs. J. H. Parks, a PTA leader in Shawnee, reported child welfare as the "main project" for that city in 1932-33 as PTAs, through the home room mothers, helped to care for and feed three hundred children.²

In 1934, Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, Central District president, reported a similar emphasis on welfare throughout the district. Feeding and clothing indigent children to maintain their health and keep them in school, purchasing books, and furnishing hot lunches were the most frequent projects.³ The state president reported that PTAs in the state had collected and used more than \$15,000.00 for student aid in addition to the clothing, food, and books contributed.

In December, 1935 Mrs. George E. Calvert, state PTA president, reported a conference with Governor E. W. Marland. It was agreed that local PTAs should make a survey of needs and report to county welfare boards. The Governor invited local PTAs to send shoes needing repairs to the training school for Negro boys at Boley, adding that other state penal institutions would be used if necessary to repair all shoes collected by the PTA.⁴

In Oklahoma City, a PTA clothing room, born of depression, con-

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (February, 1933), p. 8.

²Letter from Mrs. J. H. Parks, to Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, March 16, 1933 (Johnson Files).

³Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, "Report from Central District," 1933-34 (Johnson Files).

⁴Letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Members of the Executive Committee, and District Presidents, December 10, 1935 (Calvert Files).

tinued for several years. Much usable clothing was donated to this room including many shoes which needed repairs. In October, 1933 Mrs. H. J. Freede was elected "shoe room chairman" of the Oklahoma City Council, and obtained permission to set up a shoe repair room in a coal bin at Franklin school. Through her efforts the room was furnished with two WPA workers and with machinery and materials donated by Oklahoma City business men. In two years the shoe room outgrew its location and was moved to Lincoln school where it remained throughout the depression.¹

Welfare projects continued to occupy much attention of local PTA units until the beginning of World War II. On November 8, 1938, for example, an eight column headline in the Daily Oklahoman announced, "Winter's sudden visit catches many city school children without shoes." Mrs. Freede was quoted as follows:

At the various schools dozens of children put in applications for shoes. This cold wave finds our stock lower than it has ever been at this time of the year. More than anything we need shoes for children of grade school age.²

On the following day the Oklahoman reported:

An army of eager school children, some barefoot despite the cold that followed Monday's snow, and others with footwear frazzled and worn out, poured steadily into the Lincoln school repair shop Tuesday to ask for shoes--any kind of shoes. They came alone and they came in groups led by teachers at their schools.

Before the day was over 126 boys and girls had been taken to the repair shop at Lincoln, sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Association and the Works Progress Administration. They sat down and waited as five cobblers went through piles of old shoes, fitted them, then applied new half-soles.³

¹"The Oklahoma City Council Shoe Project," no date (Wadlin Files).

²Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), November 8, 1938, p. 2.

³Ibid., November 9, 1938, p. 9.

In 1939, Ponca City PTA groups fed 112 underprivileged children at the six ward school buildings. Four WPA workers prepared the food at a central kitchen in the Garfield building. It was transferred by truck to the several elementary schools and high school students ate at the Garfield building.¹ At Ardmore, the PTA council established a central clothing room where needy children were fitted with proper clothing. The aim of the council was "that every underprivileged child be properly clothed and provided with a warm lunch." A special matinee arranged at a local theater offered a ticket in exchange for a wearable piece of clothing. This produced 500 garments. A patron of one of the Ardmore PTA units provided a new pair of shoes for each underprivileged child at Christmas.²

A report of the Oklahoma City PTA Council in 1940 said many units in that city had had as their major project "taking care of their own children who were needy for clothes, food, or medical care."³ Fourteen of the fifty-five Oklahoma City units reported their welfare activities. Included were such items as 71 tonsilectomies, 21 pairs of glasses fitted, 144 baskets of Christmas food and toys distributed, and 200 children supplied with all their clothing. Lee school PTA alone served 5,000 free hot lunches. When school opened in September, 1939 the Horace Mann PTA in Oklahoma City took as its guide the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians. They read it in open meeting and as they went into

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XX (January, 1939), p. 31.

²"Ardmore Council," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XII (February, 1940), p. 20.

³"Oklahoma City Council," ibid. (March, 1940), p. 10.

the community to put its message of Christian charity into practice, they discovered the following conditions:

We found school children who needed everything that a child could possibly need. We explained to the mothers that we could not offer them an unlimited source of help, but of what we had we were willing to divide so that their children might walk side by side with their school mates and not feel improperly dressed.¹

As late as 1947 the Sapulpa PTA Council regarded welfare as its primary project for the year. The council secured an unused room in the high school building where it placed a clothes rack for each of the schools in the city. Each rack was labeled with the name of the school. Parents could bring outgrown clothing, hang it on the rack for their own school, and then select a similar item of clothing from the rack of another school. This permitted low income families to trade outgrown clothing without fear that a discarded garment would show up in the school their youngster was attending. The council accepted only clothing in good condition with buttons sewed on, mended, and freshly cleaned or laundered.²

It probably would be difficult to over estimate the good accomplished by these welfare activities which became a large part of the local parent-teacher work during the depression and continued when for most people the depression had ended. If at times welfare activities overshadowed other important objectives and other important programs of the PTA they were none the less important for their services rendered to the many underprivileged children of the state.

¹Ibid.

²"Across the State," ibid., Vol. XX (November, 1947), p. 6.

Health and Safety Projects

Of the many types of projects to promote the welfare of children and youth, health and safety activities were most frequent at the local unit level.

Summer Round Up of the Children

One of the earliest health projects was the annual PTA summer round up of the children. The activity was initiated in 1925 by Mrs. A. H. Reeve who served as National Congress president from 1923 to 1928. To Mrs. Reeve the project title suggested a "gathering of little children for physical examinations--a campaign to send into the first grade a class of children one hundred per cent free from remedial defects."¹ From this beginning the objectives of the summer round up were extended until, by 1951, they included the following:

The Summer Round Up of the Children is a health project sponsored by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers through its local units to arouse the interest of parents in improving the health of children entering school for the first time. It also aims to bring about continuous medical and dental supervision of children of all ages, especially those who are apparently healthy. It is carried on in cooperation with the community medical, dental and nursing professions and the community health agencies.

The Summer Round Up program includes a spring canvass of the local community to locate the children who will be entering school in the fall; a personal visit to the parents to inform them of the value of the health examination; and an examination by physicians and dentists to discover the child's physical condition. After the examination, follow-up visits are made to the home to urge that the advice of the examining physicians and dentists be followed and to make arrangements for the treatment of indigent children. A check-up is then made to see whether the advise of the examining doctor has been carried out.²

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (May, 1928), p. 18.

²"The Summer Round Up of the Children," January 11, 1951, unpagged (Chambers Files).

The Oklahoma Congress joined in the first National summer round up in 1925, but there is no record of the number of units which participated. Mrs. Slaughter urged local units to cooperate in the national effort which she called "the latest and possibly greatest call to arms."¹ In March, 1926 the state board of managers adopted the summer round up as the major objective of the year.² Eight units registered, one from Oklahoma City, two from Okmulgee, and five from Sapulpa. The only association which completed the campaign was Emerson PTA in Okmulgee where twenty-two children were examined, thirty-three defects discovered, and six corrected.³ In 1927, local PTA groups in Tulsa cooperated with the Tulsa Mothers' Clubs in a campaign to have every pre-school child examined by the family physician. An incomplete listing of other cities participating in the 1927 round up included Oklahoma City, Cushing, Okmulgee, Goltry, and Bartlesville.⁴

By 1931 participation had increased to a total of sixty local associations. Three hundred twenty-eight children were examined; 753 defects were found; 110 corrected. Many local associations held clinics in connection with the summer round up where children were immunized against smallpox, typhoid fever, and diphtheria.⁵ Dr. Carl Puckett,

¹Form letter from Mrs. J. P. Slaughter to Local Presidents, July 3, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, March 10, 1926.

³"Oklahoma Report of 1926 Summer Round Up of Children," unpagged (Slaughter Files).

⁴Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (May, 1927), unpagged.

⁵National Congress, Proceedings, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1931, p. 326.

state chairman of the summer round up, thought the effort had been far more successful than was indicated by the number of children examined. Puckett accurately predicted that summer round up would cause parents to wonder why they permitted defects in the first place and, in time, would encourage prenatal care to prevent many of the defects of infancy and early childhood.¹ In 1933 the president of Central District reported, "Summer round ups continue to grow both in quantity and quality. Without a doubt this is our outstanding activity."² The Checotah PTA received national recognition in 1933 for 100 per cent completion of its campaign.³

Mrs. W. S. Jerkins, state chairman of the summer round up for 1941, called the local round up committee "one of the most important in the parent-teacher association for building future citizens." In a campaign packet mailed to each local chairman, she suggested the following activities:

1. Canvass your school district to ascertain the number of children who will enter school next fall.
2. Contact the parents of these children and inform them concerning the spring examination
3. Register your unit and obtain medical forms by filling out the registration blank and mailing it to the state office at least three weeks before the examination is to be held.
4. Plan examination to discover physical condition of children.
5. Cooperate with other agencies working in the field of health for your community.⁴

During World War II, the summer round up was restricted in many

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. V (November, 1931), p. 7.

²Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, "Report of Central District," 1932-33, unpagged (Johnson Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, 1933, p. 317.

⁴Form letter from Mrs. W. S. Jerkins to Local Summer Round Up Chairmen, January, 1941 (Wadlin Files).

communities because of a shortage of doctors and nurses. This, however, challenged Sapulpa PTAs to expand the program. By September, 1946 under the direction of Mrs. Paul East, the Sapulpa units adopted a three-point program:

1. Individual units were to provide funds for paying nurses who would inoculate and examine all children.
2. Individual units petitioned the board of education for a full time nurse to be paid with school funds.
3. Units were to provide funds in the amounts based on pupil enrollment for the purchase of an audiometer for testing hearing.

The PTA, with the aid of the Sapulpa Junior Chamber of Commerce, had previously purchased a telebinocular for screening visual defects. Other organizations and individuals offered unsolicited aid to the health program in Sapulpa, and improvement was noted "in the attitude of the whole city toward child health."¹

In 1948 a total of 177 PTA units registered for the summer round up and 4,084 children were examined. Of these examined, 1,368 were referred to a physician.² A total of 222 local units participated in 1955-56.

Emphasis had shifted during the years from one of concern with examinations of children entering school for the first time to that of better health for children throughout the pre-school years. The special campaign approach, needful and effective in the early years of the summer round up, was replaced by emphasis on continuous medical care. In 1955 the National Congress discontinued recognition to local units for annual

¹Gladys Bartholomew, "Ill Wind Blows Good to Sapulpa's Children," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (March, 1947), p. 6.

²Mrs. C. A. Belva, "Annual Report of Summer Round Up Chairman," March 14, 1949 (Matofsky Files).

reports of summer round up activities although the project was encouraged at both state and national levels. The summer round up accomplished more than the early detection and correction of physical defects in pre-school children. It undoubtedly educated citizens of hundreds of communities in Oklahoma on the need for city and county health departments to furnish continuous preventive medical services for children.

Promoting Community Health Services

On October 9 and 10, 1931 an Oklahoma Conference on Child Health and Protection was held as a follow-up to President Hoover's White House Conference on the same problem. Hoover had told the delegates in Washington, "If we could but have one generation of properly born, trained, educated, and healthy children, a thousand other problems of government would vanish."¹ Mrs. George E. Calvert directed the Oklahoma conference which was held under the auspices of the Oklahoma Council of Child Development and Parent Education of the Oklahoma Congress. Kate S. North served as secretary of the conference. The program was divided into four sections; medical service, public health, education and training, and the handicapped child. Among the recommendations of the conference were those of adequate health for the school child, further emphasis on vocational guidance, support of the state department of labor in securing funds for administration of child labor laws, and further training of teachers for accomplishing the educational objective of "worthy home membership."²

Lack of community health services throughout the state was appall-

¹Kate S. North, "The Oklahoma White House Conference on Child Health and Protection," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIII (November, 1931) p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 20.

ing. According to Cooper, 50,750 infants under one year of age died in Oklahoma in the thirteen year period, 1922-35. From 1927 to 1935 inclusive the state health department recorded 32,000 cases of typhoid fever resulting in 3,368 deaths. In 1935 the Oklahoma Congress organized its community health department. The purpose as stated by Mrs. Calvert was that of working in cooperation with state and national health services to eliminate public health hazards and menaces and to assist in the establishment of additional health agencies.¹ E. L. Baldwin, district supervisor of community sanitation for the U. S. Public Health Service, wrote Mrs. Calvert to commend the action of the Oklahoma Congress. Said Baldwin,

This department created within that great organization of parents and teachers can do more to accomplish the purpose of the state health department in preventing diseases and death than any means within my knowledge.²

In 1948, Dr. John F. Hackler, state PTA chairman of community health, suggested that the Oklahoma Congress concentrate on securing county and district health departments. Hackler maintained, "With local health service for all our people, achievement of other goals can quickly follow."³ Promoting inter-agency cooperation in child health prompted the Oklahoma Congress participation in the First Oklahoma Rural Health Conference, September 8-9, 1953 in the Skirvin Tower, Oklahoma City. Mrs. Opal Lute, state PTA rural service chairman, urged rural PTA leaders

¹C. E. Cooper, "Community Health Department, Parent-Teachers' Association, State of Oklahoma," 1936 (Calvert Files).

²Letter from E. L. Baldwin to Mrs. George E. Calvert, January 14, 1936 (Calvert Files).

³Dr. John F. Hackler, "Annual Report, Community Health," April, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

to attend. A principal speaker at the conference was David Steen, executive secretary of the Oklahoma Advisory Health Council, and state PTA chairman for community health.¹

Other PTA Health Projects

Health projects sponsored by the Oklahoma Congress and local PTA units range from "elimination of all girls' interschool athletic contests from the high schools and colleges of the state"² in 1929 to the anti-rat project of the North Rock Creek PTA in Pottawatomie County in 1952.³ In 1937 the Fairview PTA at Lovell had each water well tested to determine its safety as a source of water for drinking.⁴ In the fall of 1937 a newly organized PTA council in Claremore sponsored a dental clinic and secured tuberculin tests for several hundred children.⁵ The Ada PTA Council carried on an extensive program of medical care for needy children in 1938 and voted to hire a full time public health nurse for the succeeding year. Each month the Altus PTA Council sponsored a well-baby clinic. The council also assisted the state health department in giving tuberculin tests to all children desiring them, and promoted a standard milk ordinance for the city of Altus.⁶ Among its many activities, the Tulsa PTA

¹Form letter from Mrs. Opal Lute to Co-Workers, August 17, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 29, 1929.

³Ruby Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIV (April, 1952), p. 19.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (May, 1937), p. 7.

⁵Ibid., Vol. X (December, 1937), p. 5.

⁶"Council Reports," ibid., Vol. XI (December, 1938), p. 39.

Council in 1937-38 equipped a physiotherapy room in the Lincoln School and worked out an arrangement with the Oklahoma Crippled Children's Commission for a physiotherapist.¹ Immunizations for diphtheria, smallpox and typhoid fever were promoted in a program sponsored by the Pawhuska Council.² In cooperation with the Tulsa Kiwanis Club, the Tulsa Council provided glasses for 155 children in 1937-38 and in 1939 the project was expanded to include dental care for underprivileged children. One hundred eighty-nine pairs of glasses were fitted and 563 dental appointments made for the 1938-39 school year.³

In 1947 the Ada PTA Council assisted with arrangements to spray all alleys with DDT. Central PTA in Wewoka sponsored dental work for underprivileged children and arranged for milk at mid-morning and mid-afternoon for underweight and undernourished children.⁴ Cooperation with two other schools in securing the services of a school health nurse was reported as the primary health project of Webb City PTA. The Chelsea PTA organized a program in which a local dentist examined free of charge the teeth of each child. When defective teeth were found, he mailed a card to the child's parents suggesting the defect be corrected. When parents were not financially able, the teeth were treated and the PTA billed for the services. Home room mothers certified need after a visit

¹Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, "Tulsa Council Report," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin (October, 1938), p. 6.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (November, 1938), p. 5.

³"Tulsa Council Parent-Teacher Associations," ibid., Vol. XII (December, 1939), p. 10.

⁴Myrl Davenport, "This 'N That," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (April, 1947), pp. 15-16.

to the homes of the underprivileged. Teachers capitalized on the interest in dental care and combined an instructional program for children with the examination and treatment programs.¹ In 1951 the Nowata PTA in cooperation with local civic clubs secured flouridation of city water as a preventive of tooth decay. This may have been the first such project completed in the state.²

Many of the PTA school lunch programs originated in the depression as welfare projects, but in succeeding years efforts were made to secure adequate school lunch facilities for all children. In April, 1948 the state PTA school lunch chairman reported only one-third of the children in Oklahoma were being reached with a school lunch program and that only half the needy children of the state were included in that number.³ From 1949 to 1952 the school lunch and nutrition committee of the PTA cooperated with the state health department, the school lunch department, and the health committee of the PTA in developing a check sheet of minimum standards of equipment and a sanitary code for lunch rooms. Local PTA units also were encouraged to include nutrition education as a phase of their school lunch activities.⁴

On January 27, 1941 the Oklahoma Congress and the Oklahoma City PTA Council sponsored a lecture by H. V. Kaltenborn in Municipal Audi-

¹"Chelsea Promotes Health," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (November, 1950), p. 10.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, [Vol. XXIV] (November, 1951), p. 12.

³Mrs. Irvin Hurst, "Annual Report, School Lunch," April, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

⁴Mrs. Irvin Hurst, "School Lunch and Nutrition, Three Year Report," 1949-1952 (Chambers Files).

torium. Half of the proceeds were given to the Infantile Paralysis fund and half to the Oklahoma Family Life Institute.¹ In succeeding years, presidents of the Oklahoma Congress maintained active interest in the annual March of Dimes.

On November 17, 1953 the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis announced extensive tests to be conducted on an experimental polio vaccine which later became known as the Salk Polio Vaccine. When the National Congress called on state presidents to cooperate in these validation tests, Mrs. Joel Burkitt was one of the first to respond. She quickly organized local leaders to aid in the important study,² and Oklahoma was one of the states chosen for extensive field trials of the vaccine.

Promoting Safety of Children

Be it resolved: that whereas the increased number of accidents to children in the home and community has reached an appalling number, and many casualties have resulted directly from the carelessness of those interested with the lives of children, that a program of safety education be encouraged by our association.³

The emphasis on safety revealed in this resolution from the state convention of 1928 continued to be a primary interest of the Oklahoma Congress. In 1935 Governor E. W. Marland asked the Oklahoma Congress president, Mrs. Calvert, to serve as state chairman of the Governor's safety campaign. The state board of managers approved her appointment and asked

¹Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin to Local Unit Presidents, January 9, 1941 (Wadlin Files).

²"Oklahoma Lends Aid in Polio Project," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (February, 1954), p. 16.

³Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (April, 1928), unpagged.

that she choose three individuals from the executive committee to assist her in the selection of educational materials to be used. Mrs. Calvert appointed Floyd Coates, Mrs. E. E. Brown, and Mrs. J. P. Mattox.¹ Governor Marland commended the work of this committee as follows:

Please permit me to express my appreciation for the fine work you and your committee are doing in our campaign for highway safety. It is my opinion that your work in arousing the interest of our school authorities and the parent-teacher association in the problem of traffic safety will be recognized as one of the most important contributions to the campaign.²

One of the important contributions of the Oklahoma Congress was the work of its state school safety curriculum committee. Members of the committee were Florette McNeese, director of curriculum for junior and senior high schools in Oklahoma City; Dr. F. A. Balyeat, professor of education at the University of Oklahoma; Floyd Coates, Kay County Superintendent; and W. E. Hagar, an elementary school principal from Tulsa. Chairman of the committee was J. Andrew Holley of the state department of education. In a meeting on October 2, 1936 the committee charged the school with responsibility for safety instruction in all grades and in connection with all subjects. The committee felt integration of safety education into the entire school program a better approach than the development of a separate subject in the curriculum. Centers for the development of safety instructional materials were located at Bartlesville, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City. Out of these materials the committee hoped to develop "one course of study in safety for grades one to

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 11, 1935.

²Letter from Governor E. W. Marland to Mrs. George E. Calvert, February 26, 1936 (Calvert Files).

twelve."¹

In 1937 the Oklahoma Congress distributed 50,000 copies of safety leaflets and the booklet, "Organized Safety," among local units. Proper warning signs in school zones and programs to improve playground safety also were frequent PTA projects.² In 1938 three primary objectives of the state PTA safety program were:

1. To develop among parent-teacher association members an awareness of traffic accident causes.
2. To encourage home and school cooperation for safety.
3. To encourage local PTA safety activities by having an active safety chairman and committee in each unit.³

In 1949, H. E. Wrinkle, state PTA safety chairman, reported his committee had encouraged the offering of credit courses in driver education at the high school level. He also noted that 400 local units had devoted at least one PTA meeting to some aspect of safety.⁴ In 1950 state safety chairman, DeWitt Hunt, urged all PTA councils to organize junior patrols for their cities. He furnished the councils information for operating the patrols.⁵ In the winter of 1953, McAlester PTA leaders launched a move to protect children in that city from the hazard of abandoned ice boxes. The PTA proposed not to wait until tragedy struck, but

¹J. Andrew Holley, "Safety Education for Oklahoma Schools," Report of Meeting of Safety Curriculum Committee, October 2, 1936 (Calvert Files).

²"Fifteenth Annual Convention, Official Program and Yearbook," 1937, p. 19 (Calvert Files).

³Mrs. R. H. Hughes, "Safety Is a Way of Living," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (February, 1938), p. 17.

⁴H. E. Wrinkle, "Annual Report of Safety Committee," 1948-49 (Matofsky Files).

⁵Form letter from DeWitt Hunt, state PTA safety chairman, to Local PTA Councils, February, 1950 (Chambers Files).

asked the city council to pass an ordinance making it an offense punishable by fine or jail to abandon an old refrigerator without first removing lock and hasp.¹

Civil Defense

Civil defense became an important project area of the Oklahoma Congress in 1952-53 under the leadership of Mrs. W. Fred Scott, state PTA chairman for civil defense. Her first activity was to explain civil defense to local unit presidents:

Some PTAs are finding it hard to decide the role our organization should play in the Civil Defense program. So often the members think of civil defense as war emergency planning. The basic concept of the entire civil defense program is self reliance in modern living. As an educational organization the PTA has a definite responsibility to help . . . local civil defense volunteers for their own community.²

In July, 1953 Mrs. Scott reported civil defense projects in eight PTA councils. Sixty local units had sponsored education for civil defense; thirteen units had sponsored study courses; and 172 PTAs had participated in blood bank projects which resulted in donations of 1,070 pints of blood.³ In 1954 the civil defense chairman arranged a tour of eleven cities in the state for Mattie E. Treadwell, director of women's affairs of the Federal Civil Defense Administration. These meetings, which happened to follow a series of tornado alerts, found PTA members very receptive to the recommendations offered in Miss Treadwell's discus-

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (December, 1953), p. 9.

²Form letter from Mrs. W. Fred Scott to Local Unit Presidents, December 16, 1952 (Burkitt Files).

³Mrs. W. Fred Scott, "What Are We Doing in Civil Defense?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (July, 1953), p. 17.

sions.¹

Projects for Juvenile Protection

The objectives adopted by the Oklahoma Congress during the term of its first president emphasized prevention of delinquency, cooperation with other community agencies, better understanding of laws for juvenile protection, and the fostering of an informed public opinion on juvenile problems.²

By 1928 the problem of child labor was receiving considerable attention. Mrs. C. E. Moon of Bartlesville, public welfare director of the Oklahoma Congress, suggested that local units make a survey of child labor in their communities. She furnished local units arresting data on child labor in Oklahoma. They revealed 22,981 children between the ages of ten and sixteen years gainfully employed. They told of 50,560 children ages seven to fourteen who were not attending school. A child in Oklahoma could go to work at age fourteen without obtaining a certificate of physical fitness.³ Mrs. Moon arranged with the National Child Labor Committee to print a summary of the report, "Education and Child Labor in Oklahoma." Ten thousand copies were distributed without cost to local units.

Motion pictures received much attention in the years preceding the depression. In 1930 an Okmulgee PTA reported a "better film council"

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1954, p. 217.

²Mrs. R. E. Lee, "Outline for Juvenile Protection Program by the Oklahoma Branch of Parents and Teachers," 1926 (Slaughter Files).

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. X (December, 1928), p. 24.

study which found that the state had no laws regulating attendance of children at motion pictures or the type of pictures available to children.¹ For many years, the Oklahoma Congress worked for national legislation to prohibit block booking of motion pictures, a practice which forced local theater operators to take objectionable films in order to get the group in which they were included.

A committee for the study of the use and effects of alcohol and narcotics functioned in the 1934-35 school year, but the chairman, M. A. Nash, reported the work was not as active in Oklahoma as it should have been. Teachers did most to promote the study. Prizes were awarded to children who wrote the best essays on the problem. Nash suggested closer work with such agencies as the Federated Women's Clubs, the WCTU, the press, and youth organizations.²

Some of the local PTA units carried out recreation projects as a preventive of juvenile delinquency. As a result of the work of the juvenile protection committee of the Tulsa PTA Council, seventy-two back yard playgrounds were established throughout that city during the 1937-38 school year. The Tulsa board of education furnished supervisors and six assistants to establish these play yards for children three to twelve years of age.³

In 1944 the Stillwater High School PTA conducted three important

¹Mrs. John R. Burns, "Report of Committee on Motion Pictures," undated (Johnson Files).

²M. A. Nash, "Report of Chairman of Committee for Study of Use and Effects of Alcohol and Narcotics," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

³Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, "Tulsa Council Report," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (October, 1938), p. 6.

projects in juvenile protection. First, the unit set up a standard minimum wage for the community to observe in the employment of high school girls for work outside the home. On the basis of its study, the committee also recommended that high school girls work not more than twelve hours per week and that they be provided a way home at night. The PTA secured the services of a visiting teacher to deal with the problem of truancy. After a youth committee reported there was no place for high school youth to meet in groups, a recreational survey was completed which resulted in the organization of a Teen-Town.¹

In 1948 Durant PTAs decided to do something about city parks which had never been fully developed and were badly eroded. With PTA support an increase was voted in the sewer tax. In a year this produced \$10,000.00 for park improvements.² In 1954 PTAs in Oklahoma City carried out one phase of a city-wide recreation survey directed by Dr. Genevieve Carter of Los Angeles, California. Two hundred PTA members of both white and separate schools took part in the study. They not only gathered needed information but also gained valuable insights into community needs.³

In 1948 Mrs. Frank Cleere, juvenile protection chairman, reported to the state board of managers on a survey of comic books. She recommended that the sale of undesirable comics be discouraged. At Mrs. Cleere's suggestion the board authorized the state president to appoint a committee to make further study and to carry out the recommendations of

¹Mrs. Ray L. Six, "Why Stillwater High School PTA Is Glad It Did Not Disband," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVII (October, 1944), p. 2.

²O. W. Davison, "Why A PTA? - Durant Gives the Answer," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (September, 1948), p. 21.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (May, 1954), p. 7.

the National Congress on the problem of comic books.¹

One of the most unusual projects was that of Witwer PTA at Wann. In an effort to help children earn money, each year the PTA furnished every child over ten years of age with twenty-five chickens. In the fall the PTA collected two hens and one rooster and sold them to finance the project the following year.² The child kept the profits, if any, from the sale of the remainder of the flock.

Projects for Peace and International Understanding

The desire for world peace had strong expression in the PTA meetings, and to a lesser degree in projects, of the Oklahoma Congress. In the decade of isolationist sentiment which preceded World War II, peace was a frequent topic at state conventions. As late as October 12, 1939 Dr. Eugene S. Briggs, president of Phillips University, exhorted the PTA to "stand squarely for peace, for independence, interdependence, and dependence in Christ and Almighty God"³ in a speech which criticized propaganda and "war mongers."

As early as 1933 Mrs. Earl Foster, state PTA chairman on international relations, observed that attitudes of children were fashioned by the prejudices of parents. She called on PTA presidents to appoint local chairmen on international relations and to devote at least one meeting or part of a meeting to the discussion of some phase of the problem. Among the suggested objectives of such a local committee was that

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 12, 1948.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (April, 1938), p. 20.

³The Guthrie Daily Leader, October 12, 1939, p. 6.

of promoting international understanding and "non-controversial" inter-racial relations.¹

Perhaps the strongest expression of Oklahoma Parent-Teacher attitude toward war was stated in the following resolution from Shawnee which later was adopted by the state PTA convention:

Whereas any war which involves the U. S. would tend to thwart the fundamental objectives of the Parent-Teacher Associations . . . whereas wars are waged for economic reasons far removed from the best interest of those who actually fight them, and whereas war is essentially inhuman, unnecessary and contrary to the best interests of the majority of the citizens of these United States, Be it therefore resolved that the Parent-Teacher Associations of Shawnee . . . demand that the week of November 8-12 be declared "Peace Week"²

The rapidly developing events which culminated in World War II resulted, of course, in a change of viewpoint on the problems of keeping the peace, and in a substantial contribution by the Oklahoma Congress to the war effort. During the war years the Oklahoma Congress supported the ideal of the United Nations and following the war, the ideal of UNESCO. The concept of world citizenship became so strong within the organization that a standing committee on world citizenship was added to the other major state committees of the Oklahoma Congress. The committee was headed by O. W. Davison, superintendent of schools at Durant.

In the period of hysteria which followed the war, the state board changed the name of its world citizenship committee to international relations. The board also appointed a committee to consider the advisability of a resolution from the Oklahoma Congress opposing subversive

¹Form letter from Mrs. Earl Foster to Local Unit Presidents, 1933-34 (Johnson Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (December, 1937), p. 15.

activities.¹ The committee met under the chairmanship of G. T. Stubbs and, unswayed by the prevailing temper of the times, it recommended that the Congress take no action on such a resolution.² In a letter to local units Stubbs made clear, however, the position of the Oklahoma Congress on State Question 344, a referendum measure which had the support of the World Federalists. Said Stubbs:

For your information the Oklahoma Congress has taken no stand for or against this issue and is making no recommendations to any member of this organization or any individual as to how he shall vote on the issue.

Stubbs then defined the PTA concept of world citizenship as follows:

The term, "world citizenship," . . . does not imply that the Congress views the creation of a world government to which American citizens will owe their first allegiance and responsibilities. The meaning here is that the congress recognizes that we have relationships to all of the peoples of the world and that we should be concerned with issues and problems that are world wide because they have implications for our welfare.³

He reiterated the strong support of the Oklahoma Congress and the National Congress for the United Nations, not as a "super world government," but as an organization providing machinery whereby nations might work together for peace rather than resort to wars destructive of all.

Protecting Children in Wartime

In September, 1942 Mrs. C. E. Scott told local council presidents, "We have a war time program to put over which, simmered down, may be expressed in two words: 'protect children.'"⁴ In addition to meeting

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 10, 1950.

²Ibid., October 11, 1950.

³Form letter from G. T. Stubbs to Local Unit Leaders, November, 1950 (Chambers Files).

⁴"Council Communique" from Mrs. C. E. Scott to Council Presidents, September 16, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

this primary objective, however, local PTAs made many other contributions to the war effort. A state war committee of seven members was appointed to act as a clearing house for wartime PTA projects, and a special bulletin was issued to assist local units.

In 1942, Norman students assisted in salvage campaigns. In Okmulgee a visitation program was planned in which "block mothers" called at the homes of new families to see that children of war workers soon were enrolled in school and families made welcome. In Shawnee, a PTA committee met all trains carrying troops. Men were given local newspapers, magazines, and coat hangers, a scarce item in war time. McKinley PTA in Bartlesville set up a day nursery to care for children of working mothers. This was only one of many child care centers established by PTA units. PTAs also helped to develop better understanding of war time nursery school programs, not only in the public schools, but throughout the entire community. Each unit in Blackwell sponsored a nutrition class in cooperation with Red Cross and the Office of Civil Defense. High school room mothers in Blackwell volunteered their services each week to prepare surgical dressings.¹

In 1943 Whittier PTA in Muskogee operated a galosh exchange through which outgrown galoshes could be traded for larger sizes. Hayes PTA in Ada cooperated with the AAUW to establish a nursery school. In Oklahoma City PTA units assisted in salvage drives and helped to find farm labor for rural areas. PTAs in all sections of the state assisted with the war time salvage programs and with rationing programs. Jeffer-

¹"PTA War Committee Activities," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIV (December, 1942), pp. 5-6.

son PTA in Shawnee gathered magazines and newspapers for service men, contributed funds toward a day nursery and sponsored nutrition classes.¹ At Healdton most PTA members enrolled in first aid classes and many completed a class in home nursing. Altus PTA members called on new families who moved to that city as a result of the location of the Altus Air Base. This type of visitation also was carried out by units in Tulsa and McAlester where new war industries had located. Talihina PTA sponsored nutrition classes and established a school lunch program.² Central PTA in Bartlesville sponsored a recreation night each month and assisted in recruiting teachers to meet the growing war time shortage. Claremore PTA also sponsored recreation and sent gifts and Christmas boxes to service men.³

Mrs. Roy Stephenson told this interesting story of the beginning of a PTA project in Hailyville:

One day a long troop train pulled into our little town. All the men seemed tired and weary and not very friendly. A group of our high school girls, gathered near one coach, heard one boy humming to himself. One of the girls began to sing with him. The next thing we knew they were all singing, laughing, and talking about Oklahoma just like a bunch of school boys The train pulled out with a happy group of boys, different from those we saw when the train came in.⁴

This incident prompted the PTA to plan a project so that other troop trains which stopped in Hailyville would leave with a happier group of

¹Alice Sowers, "PTA War Bulletin Supplement," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIV (January, 1943), p. 5.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIV (February, 1943), p. 5.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXIV (March, 1943), p. 17.

⁴Alice Sowers, "PTA War Bulletin Supplement," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XV (April, 1943), p. 7.

boys.

Woodlawn PTA in Sapulpa sponsored a reading program. Through this project 65 children read 560 books and received attractive certificates of award. The school library was supplemented by 100 volumes from the Oklahoma Library Commission. Supervised games also were planned with PTA members taking turns as hostesses.¹

The types of projects mentioned above were carried out by many units. Mrs. George Flesner reported that 400 units helped in salvage drives, 215 worked for the Red Cross, 59 had home nursing projects, 25 had first aid projects, 37 sponsored victory gardens, 59 sponsored canning for food conservation, and 26 sponsored nutrition classes.² Many other types of projects were included all of which contributed directly to the war effort or to the welfare of children in war time.

The Oklahoma Congress cooperated in the "Schools at War" program, which the director, Paul R. Taylor of El Reno, described as follows:

Schools at war is a convenient designation for the over all program of the school which aids, directly or indirectly, a community's participation in the war effort. It fits the needs of city, village, or hamlet; it is for all schools large and small.³

H. E. Wrinkle who was chairman of the PTA division of Schools at War credited the Oklahoma Congress with the following contributions:

1. It assisted and encouraged children in the sale of savings stamps and bonds.

¹Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVI (February, 1944), p. 12.

²Mrs. George Flesner, "War Activities Report," undated, unpagged (Flesner Files).

³Paul R. Taylor, "Oklahoma Schools At War," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVI (December, 1943), p. 6.

2. PTA units served as media through which the schools informed the public of the necessity of war time measures.
3. PTAs throughout the state cooperated with all community agencies in the various drives.
4. PTA members bought war bonds.
5. More than 100 PTA units were awarded special U. S. Treasury Department Citation Certificates for reporting that 90 per cent of their members had purchased war bonds during the 1944-45 school year.¹

Improving the Learning Situation

One of the earliest approaches of the Oklahoma Congress to the improvement of educational opportunities for children was its encouragement of better library facilities. Mrs. J. R. Dale, secretary of the Oklahoma Library Commission, served as state PTA chairman of children's reading activities in the formative years of the organization. She spoke to many PTA groups throughout the state, furnished graded book lists to teachers and children, and cooperated with other agencies in efforts to give rural children easier access to good books.²

One of the first state committees of the Oklahoma Congress was its standing committee on school education. In 1946 Mrs. O. W. Jones outlined the following objectives of the committee:

1. To interpret the school program to people who are not informed and interested.
2. To educate people to the needs of the schools.
3. To stimulate interest in, and support for, laws affecting the welfare of children and the schools.³

In 1932 the Blackwell Heights PTA held classes during the summer

¹H. E. Wrinkle, "Oklahoma Schools at War Report," February 16, 1946 (Matofsky Files).

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. X (November, 1928), p. 24.

³Mrs. O. W. Jones, "Annual Report of School Education Committee," 1945-46 (Matofsky Files).

months for children who had failed classes during the preceding school year. Blackwell teachers expressed appreciation to the mothers who conducted this remedial work.¹ In 1952 Cherokee PTA members volunteered to serve a day as substitute teachers to permit regular teachers to visit other schools as a technique of in-service training. Lincoln and Jefferson PTAs in Cordell carried on a similar program to permit teachers to observe methods in Oklahoma City.²

From March, 1951 to February, 1953 Pauls Valley PTAs participated in one of the outstanding community wide school improvement programs of the post war period. A lay committee of fifty-one persons, with authorization of the Pauls Valley Board of Education, conducted the improvement survey with the professional advice of members of the University of Oklahoma College of Education. Consultants were secured through contract with the Research Institute of the University. Among the contributions of the PTA was the circulation of a questionnaire to every citizen of the community. One hundred PTA women made the population survey and every school faculty member worked on curriculum evaluation and served on one or more sub-committees.³

As early as 1934 the Oklahoma Congress interested itself in the problem of special education for exceptional children, but the state chairman reported that her work had been haphazard, consisting primarily of talks to interested groups. If early efforts produced few tangible

¹Blackwell Morning Tribune, September 28, 1932, p. 10.

²Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIV (April, 1952), p. 19.

³Paul Allen, "The Pauls Valley Experiment," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (September, 1953), p. 22.

results, they were none the less important in the gradual process of education. In 1947, under the able leadership of Dr. Leo Cain of the University of Oklahoma College of Education, a four-point program was launched:

1. Local units were informed of the problems of education of exceptional children in Oklahoma.
2. Opportunity was provided for discussion of basic issues involved in the special education of exceptional children.
3. Efforts were made to review and revise legislation affecting the education of exceptional children.
4. Plans were made for extending programs of education for exceptional children.¹

To discuss basic issues, a conference on exceptional children was held at the University of Oklahoma from July 9 to 11, 1946. This was well attended by PTA representatives and received nation wide attention. A special education meeting also was held at the OEA convention in February, 1946 at which Mrs. S. S. Matofsky served as discussion leader. These and other conferences ultimately resulted in the enactment of a state appropriation for special education of exceptional children.

Audio-Visual Education

In addition to the purchase of audio-visual equipment which was discussed under the heading of fund raising projects, the Oklahoma Congress in the post war period furnished considerable leadership in the promotion of audio-visual aids in the classroom. In 1947 the state organization added a standing committee on audio-visual education with Thurman White, director of audio-visual education for the University of Oklahoma Extension Division as its first chairman. In the fall of 1947, White

¹Leo F. Cain, "Annual Report, Exceptional Child," April 4, 1947 (Matofsky Files).

obtained a leave of absence from the University to complete his doctorate at the University of Chicago. W. R. Fulton, the new director of audio-visual education at the University, became chairman of the committee and continued in that capacity through May, 1952.

During that period the audio-visual program expanded rapidly. Perhaps the most significant work accomplished by Fulton was the organization of 44 audio-visual clinics throughout the state for the purpose of promoting the use of audio-visual materials in the public schools. While this was a phase of his work for the Extension Division of the University, Fulton urged PTA leaders to attend the clinics and reported that the PTA was represented in practically every instance.¹ He also spoke to many PTA groups and wrote articles on audio-visual education for the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher and the Oklahoma Teacher. In 1952 Fulton reported that 200 PTAs had used audio-visual materials in their regular programs during the past three years. In 1951-52 additional audio-visual clinics were conducted in 21 counties, and audio-visual information centers had been established in thirty public libraries. In the period of three years total film circulation in the state had increased from 50,000 to 130,000 per year.²

The PTA Scholarship Program and Teacher Recruitment

During the 1947-48 school year the Shawnee PTA Council initiated a project to help alleviate the critical shortage of teachers. Under the leadership of Mrs. Harry Higley, and with the cooperation of Superinten-

¹W. R. Fulton, "Three Year Report, Visual Education," March 29, 1949 (Matofsky Files).

²Ibid., 1949 to 1952 (Chambers Files).

dent A. L. Burks, a high school club was formed for students who planned to become teachers. The Shawnee PTA Council offered two scholarships of \$50.00 each to a boy and a girl. The scholarships could be applied to the college of the student's choice within the state of Oklahoma. Mrs. Goldie Crouch, a high school science teacher, sponsored the new club which soon grew to twenty-five members. This was not the first "future teachers" club in the state, but it was the first one in which the PTA assisted by the presentation of scholarships.¹

The idea that the PTA should encourage young people to enter teaching through scholarships soon spread to other parts of the state. In 1954 Mrs. J. J. McCombs was appointed chairman of a committee to plan a state wide scholarship program. Initially a fund of fifteen hundred dollars was established to finance ten scholarships of \$150.00 each. Support for the fund was sought in the form of contributions of ten dollars each from local PTA units. Applications for scholarships were confined to graduating seniors from high schools in Oklahoma. The criteria for rating applications were based on aptitude for teaching, leadership ability, good character and personality, scholastic records, need for assistance, and soundness of health. Recipients of the scholarships had to agree to teach in Oklahoma at least one year for each scholarship granted and to attend an approved teacher education institution in Oklahoma.²

The first ten scholarships were awarded to Julia Ann Page of

¹Ruby Scott, "A PTA Apple for the Teacher," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (April, 1948), p. 6.

²"Scholarship Plan Presented," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (March, 1954), p. 8.

Goltry, Gene Crowder of Blanchard, Luann Harvey of Atoka, Ann Evelyn Spears of Woodward, Oliver Stepp of Headrick, Joan Selle of Gotebo, Mary Jane Hessel of Okeene, Loretta Parsley of Pocola, Laree Williams of Midwest City, and Eva Jo Arnald of Cushing.¹ The scholarship certificate was presented to each winner at his own high school commencement by a member of the Oklahoma Congress Board of Managers.

In May, 1955 Mrs. McCombs reported a balance of \$2,614.00 in the scholarship fund which made it possible to grant seventeen scholarships for the 1955-56 academic year.² The program proved to be so popular that at least one local unit, Southeast Junior-Senior High School PTA in Oklahoma City, not only contributed its ten dollars to the state fund but also sponsored a fund of \$150.00 for a scholarship to be awarded a graduating senior of Southeast High School.³

It would be difficult to estimate the total state wide impact of the many types of PTA projects sponsored by hundreds of local PTA units. That their total effect has been "to promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community" there is no doubt.

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (September, 1954), pp. 10-11.

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, May 1, 1955.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (May, 1954), p. 7.

CHAPTER X

RAISING THE STANDARDS OF HOME LIFE

"To raise the standards of home life" (the second objective of the Oklahoma Congress) implies the need for PTA programs of parent education. In 1930, a leader in the Oklahoma Congress called parent education "the most vital purpose" of the National Congress. She described the need for parent education as follows:

Only by studying ourselves and other members of our families can the problem of community and family life be adjusted. A good home gives the greatest opportunity for people to develop their individual personalities as well as to learn to live happily with others.¹

Although parent education was a most important factor in parent-teacher efforts to raise the standards of home life, projects in recreation, housing, safety, nutrition, health, and other fields also were important. Since the first two objectives of the Oklahoma Congress are so closely related, some of these projects were discussed in the preceding chapter on improving the welfare of children.

The Oklahoma Congress standing committee on "Education for Family Living" which existed in 1957 grew out of earlier approaches to committee organization at the state level for the achievement of the second objective. In 1928, home improvement efforts were promoted through a "Home

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XII (November, 1930), p. 30.

Service Department" headed by Kate North, state supervisor of home economics education. Under her capable leadership, several bulletins were issued as guides to units in projects for improvement of home and family life. The department was divided into committees on children's reading, home economics, social standards, standards in literature, thrift, and spiritual training, each with a state chairman.¹

Literacy Education

One of the earliest concerns of the Oklahoma Congress was the extent of illiteracy in the state as revealed by the federal census of 1920 and of 1930. In May, 1925 the state board of managers approved a plan offered by Victoria Lisle to raise \$26.00 in each county to help stamp out illiteracy.² In promoting this fund, R. W. Clark, vice-president, promised that funds raised would be spent in the counties contributing the money.³ These efforts produced some results but were hampered, of course, by lack of funds.

In 1933-34, under the leadership of State Superintendent John Vaughan, special classes were organized and extensively promoted in areas of the state where illiteracy was highest.⁴ Vaughan was the state PTA chairman for illiteracy education, but as state superintendent, his report of activities probably reflects the work of the state department of education to a greater extent than it reflects activities entirely

¹Ibid., Vol. IX (April, 1928), p. 22.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 29, 1925.

³Form letter from R. W. Clark, vice-president, to Local Units, November 6, 1925 (Slaughter Files).

Floyd L. Coates, "Report of Fifth Vice-President, Department of Education," 1933-34 (Johnson Files).

stimulated by the Oklahoma Congress. The Federal Relief Administration provided funds in the 1934-35 school year which permitted Vaughan to hire unemployed teachers to work with adult illiterates. Eight hundred sixty of these teachers worked on a part time or full time basis, and reached some 25,000 adults with their programs of adult education. Not all of these adults were illiterate, but at least 16,000 studied elementary subjects. In addition to those in regular attendance, Vaughan reported,

. . . Any number of adults have been reached . . . for a short period of time, during which time they learned to write their names and perhaps continued on in many cases to where they could write a letter¹

Literacy education apparently gave way to more pressing problems as the relief programs of the depression were terminated.

The Mothersingers

Another interesting parent-teacher project which undoubtedly contributed to happier home life was the organization of groups of mothersingers in many local units. The Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin credits the Shields Heights PTA in Oklahoma City with the organization of the first mothersingers in 1929.² In 1930, the Oklahoma Teacher reported a group of mothersingers who were members of the Harmony PTA in Oklahoma City. The report described the group in these words:

In their attractive costumes of white crepe trimmed in red these busy but tuneful mothers have appeared at numerous affairs and sung harmonies of old ballads to the delight of their audiences. They

¹John Vaughan, "Annual Report, Elementary Subjects for Adults--Illiteracy," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (November-December, 1929), unpagged.

hope to join the mothersingers at the convention next spring.¹

On October 9, 1937 the Stillwater PTAs organized a mothers' chorus with Mrs. Florence M. Barr as director.² During the 1937-38 school year, Mrs. J. H. Hodge, the Tulsa Council's mothersinger chairman, reported fifteen active mothersinger groups in that city. These groups had appeared twice on radio, furnished special music at three council meetings, and sung at local PTA programs.³ Guthrie mothersingers were organized in 1939. The Guthrie PTA Council bought the music and the group practiced once each week at Capitol School. The Guthrie Council sponsored a movie in 1940 to provide funds to take this group to the state PTA convention in Oklahoma City.⁴ A combined chorus, consisting of mothersingers throughout the state appeared at this and some of the other state conventions.

The name, mothersingers, was registered with the U. S. Patent Office and could be applied only to parent-teacher choral groups sponsored by a PTA council or a local association. In most instances participation in a group of mothersingers was limited to active, paid members of the sponsoring unit or council, but the group was not limited to women with children as the name implies. Qualification in terms of vocal ability was left to the judgment of the director. The director and

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parent and Teacher Associations," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XII (December, 1930), p. 18.

²Ibid., Vol. XIX (December, 1937), p. 24.

³Mrs. J. Lloyd Lewis, "Tulsa Council Report," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (October, 1938), p. 5.

⁴Mrs. C. E. Scott, "Among Ourselves," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XIII (March, 1941), p. 10.

accompanist usually were not paid for their services, and each member of a mothersingers group usually bought her own music.¹

The activities of these groups varied with the size of the city in which they were located. In 1951-52 the mothersingers in Tulsa reported such activities as Christmas caroling, sponsoring needy families, contributing to the Milk Fund Board, and twenty-four scheduled performances for PTA units. The numerous groups of previous years had become a single chorus of 40 members with representatives from almost every PTA unit in Tulsa.² This same trend to a single mothersingers chorus for each city could also be noted in Oklahoma City.

In the fall of 1953, the Oklahoma City Mothersingers presented a city-wide concert. The music sung on this program ranged from "Ten Little Indians" to Handel's "Holy Art Thou." A large number of city PTA units was represented in this group of mothersingers sponsored by the Oklahoma City Council. The council provided a large library of music and the group rehearsed for two hours each week in one of the church buildings. A nursery was provided for mothersingers with pre-school children.³

Parent Education Classes

The Oklahoma Congress sponsored parent education in a number of forms including public school classes, study groups, schools for parents, conferences on family life, home demonstration groups, and others.⁴

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (January, 1951), p. 14.

²Ibid., Vol. XXIV (February, 1952), p. 8.

³"Mothersingers Present Concert," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (October, 1953), p. 13.

⁴Mrs. George E. Calvert, "Report of Parent Education Committee," 1930-31 (Johnson Files).

Mrs. Earl Foster described early parent education efforts as follows:

The study courses marked real progress in the life of many a mother, and opened up trends of thought and training she would never have known otherwise The meetings opened up many opportunities for friendship and helped to unite communities on many issues.¹

In March, 1926 the state board of managers adopted a resolution that local organizations, where possible, provide child study courses free of charge to individual members.² In the fall of 1927, the PTA at Duncan cooperated in sponsoring a series of lectures at the high school each Monday by B. B. Bassett of the University of Oklahoma.³ In 1928 Jefferson PTA in Stillwater organized parent education classes which were taught by members of the faculty at Oklahoma A. and M. College. The purpose of these classes was to study children and their needs.⁴ In El Reno, Eileen Harrison of the state department of vocational education conducted classes in parent education in 1929. The El Reno superintendent said of this work, "These classes have done more to bring about intelligent understanding of school problems and needed cooperation from parents than anything heretofore experienced."⁵

Parent education for fathers was the objective of the Lee PTA in Tulsa. On November 22, 1929, 196 men and boys met together for Thanks-

¹Mrs. Earl Foster, "Reminiscence," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (March, 1947), p. 19.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, March 10, 1926.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. IX (November, 1927), p. 15.

⁴Ibid., February, 1928, p. 40.

⁵"What Are We Doing--In General?" Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. II (March, 1929), p. 2.

giving dinner in the school cafeteria. This was the first of a series of men's meetings planned for parent-education of fathers.¹

In 1930, Mrs. George E. Calvert, state chairman of parent education, reminded local unit presidents that a PTA goal for the year was to organize at least one study group in every school. This also was a state requirement for local PTA units to achieve standard or superior rating.²

In March, 1930 Mrs. Charles E. Roe, field representative of the National Congress, described the parent education program in Oklahoma as follows:

The state of Oklahoma is outstanding in its parent education program. Smith-Hughes funds are used to provide a specialist to direct demonstration and leaders classes, and state and district schools. Several Oklahoma cities have these teachers

The state Congress has a very active parent education bureau whose manager cooperated with the state president and the state department of public instruction in planning combined schools for parents and schools of instruction for parent-teacher members under the auspices of the district presidents.³

McAlester and Wilburton PTAs completed six weeks of class work in parent education in January, 1931 and about thirty certificates were awarded to those successfully completing the work⁴ directed by Eileen Harrison. The Gowen PTA in Latimer County completed twelve weeks of parent education with an enrollment of thirty-four members. In Sapulpa, a full time instructor was employed and parent education classes organized "all over the city."⁵ On January 8, 1931 a parent education rally

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (January, 1930), p. 4.

²Ibid., Vol. IV (October, 1930), p. 1.

³Mrs. Charles E. Roe, "Field Service Report, State of Oklahoma," March 11 to March 28, 1930 (Johnson Files).

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IV (January, 1931), p. 3.

⁵Ibid. (March, 1931), p. 2.

was held in Sapulpa. The speakers included Eileen Harrison, Mrs. Charles Johnson, state PTA president, and W. Max Chambers, superintendent of schools. In Tulsa, Mrs. Martha French, director of parent education, reported twenty-one active study groups including three in the Negro schools. She credited cooperation of the PTA with increasing attendance in these classes by twenty-five to thirty per cent. She found considerable interest in organizing evening classes in order that fathers might study, and reported that fathers of Negro children were attending regularly in classes offered in their schools.¹

At the close of the 1930-31 school year, Mrs. Johnson reported that more than 150 parent education classes had been conducted by trained leaders. In addition, several hundred study groups were formed with lay leaders.² After two years of work, a speakers bureau was established and the Oklahoma Congress completed a listing of topics and speakers available to schools for parents that might be held in the state. The lists included speakers from educational institutions of the state and from several cities. A complete list was furnished on request by Norma Brumbaugh of Oklahoma A. and M. College or individual lists might be secured from other institutions cooperating in the work.³

Parent education classes continued to flourish within the state through 1936. In the Southeast District, Mrs. Edyth T. Wallace taught classes in five counties as director of parent education for Southeastern

¹Ibid., p. 3.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1931, p. 325.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIII (November, 1931), p. 21.

State College at Durant.¹ Dr. Lucille Blachly conducted classes in Sayre under the supervision of Kate North, state department of education.² Mrs. Ada B. Sims of Central State Teachers College, Edmond, taught seventy parent education classes in six counties during the 1933-34 school year. The total enrollment was more than 4,000 persons.³ Mrs. Johnson reported a total of 371 parent education classes, study groups, and leadership training classes for the 1933-34 school year and estimated a total enrollment of 6,652.⁴

For the 1934-35 school year, Hedwig Schaefer, state PTA parent education chairman, reported "about 235" study groups with an enrollment of 9,000 parents.⁵ A number of units reported a continuous program under the leadership of a director of parent education employed by the local board of education. Others held a series of lessons which covered a period of one or two weeks with assistance of parent education specialists from the colleges, and some study groups functioned with lay leadership.

In 1936 Mrs. Calvert reported that much of the parent education was carried on through cooperation with the home economics division of

¹Mrs. Guy Sigler, "Southeastern District Activities," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIV (February, 1933), p. 25.

²"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIV (April, 1933), p. 14.

³Mrs. T. E. Kennedy, "Report of Central District," 1933-34 (Johnson Files).

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Des Moines, Iowa, 1934, p. 257.

⁵Hedwig Schaefer, "Report of Parent Education Chairman," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

the state department of education. The programs included fifteen leadership groups, fifty-eight pre-school and kindergarten groups, fifty-five groups led by lay leaders, and about 200 classes taught by professional leaders with an approximate enrollment of fifteen thousand persons.¹

In May, 1937 Mrs. Edyth Wallace, home counselor for the Oklahoma City Schools reported a total enrollment of 1,879 in her parent education classes.² One of Mrs. Wallace's experiments in parent education was a series of radio broadcasts over WKY each Monday morning at 10:45. Individuals or groups could enroll by completing blanks in newspapers.³ The use of radio in parent education was later developed into an important work by Dr. Alice Sowers, who became director of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute in 1939. In her annual report for 1938-39, Mrs. Calvert called the Family Life Radio Forum the outstanding project in parent education.⁴ Mrs. John Hayes, first vice-president of the National Congress, revisited the state in 1939. She noted a change in interest in parent education as compared with her observation on a visit to Oklahoma twelve years earlier. She found "A great many more young people . . . taking an interest in the work of child education. Formerly it was mostly the older parents."⁵ This, she added, was an encouraging trend.

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1936, p. 264.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VIII (May, 1937), p. 7.

³"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XVII (January, 1936), p. 34.

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1939, p. 312.

⁵The Guthrie Daily Leader, October 13, 1939, p. 5.

Schools for Parents

A parent-teacher leader defined a school for parents as "a concentrated program devoted to child development and the scientific interests of the home in relation to children."¹ The schools for parents differed from parent education classes in that they were intensive periods of instruction lasting for one or more days. These special programs of instruction had the advantage of reaching more parents than classes or study groups which met over an extended period. They also made it possible for both mothers and fathers to come together for study.

On April 9-11, 1929 the University of Oklahoma Extension Division cooperated with the Norman PTA Council in conducting a school for parents. Speakers included Dr. Allen Ruggles, an educational psychologist at the University; Dr. Lucille Blachly of the bureau of maternity and infancy, state department of health; Mrs. Henry D. Rinsland, a graduate of Columbia University; Eileen Harrison, state department of vocational guidance; Professor J. P. McKinsie, department of sociology of the University; Charles D. Wallace, superintendent of Lindsay public schools; and Dr. Eleanor C. Kemp, clinical psychologist from New York. Topics ranged in scope from social habits of children to promotions in school. Most of the topics, however, dealt with the psychological and sociological problems of children.²

The first school for parents sponsored at the state level met in Tulsa, December 12-13, 1929. The project was jointly sponsored by the

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIII (March, 1932), p. 20.

²Norman PTA Council, "Program of School for Parents," April 9-11, 1929 (Johnson Files).

Tulsa Board of Education, Oklahoma A. and M. College, and the Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education of the Oklahoma Congress. One thousand seven hundred parents were invited to attend.¹ Dr. Ruth Andrus, state specialist in parent education, spoke on "A Forward Look in Parent Education," "What May Be Expected of Children at Various Ages," and "Your Child at School." Edith Thomas of the Federal Board of Vocational Education, Washington, D. C., spoke on "Training for Future Parents." Flora Thurston of the National Council of Parent Education, New York City, spoke on "A Philosophy for Parents." Martha French, director of parent education in the Tulsa schools, was chairman of the meeting. The Baptist Church in Tulsa not only donated its building for the school but also opened the nursery to enable parents of small children to attend.²

On March 13 and 14, 1930 a school for parents was held in Ardmore. It was sponsored by Southeastern State College which sent invitations to parents within the territory served by the college. Speakers included Superintendent J. J. Godbey of Ardmore, Eileen Harrison, state specialist in parent education, Annie E. Wooten of Southeastern State College, Dr. F. A. Harrison of Ardmore, Arty B. Smith of Southeastern, and Dr. Eugene S. Briggs, president of Southeastern.³ On March 17 and 18, 1932 Okmulgee County held a school for parents attended by five hundred parents. The themes discussed were: Personality Development of Children, The Scope of the Parent-Teacher Movement, Successful Parenthood, Health and the Family, Mental Health for the Family, and Spiritual and Moral Development of

¹Blackwell Morning Tribune, December 7, 1929, p. 1.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (January, 1930), p. 1.

³The Daily Ardmoreite, March 14, 1930, p. 2.

Children.¹

During the summer sessions of 1932, schools for parents or parent education courses were offered in each of the six state teachers colleges, at Oklahoma A. and M. College, and the University of Oklahoma. These courses were offered through the cooperation of the state department of home economics with funds for vocational home economics.²

One of the principal topics for discussion at a Parent-Teacher Institute held on October 13 and 14, 1932 at Idabel was "The Meaning of Parent Education." The Lawton Council sponsored a school for parents on November 7, 1932 climaxing six weeks of instruction in parent education classes taught by Dr. Lucille Blachly. The McAlester Council sponsored a Southeast District Convention which included a school for parents.³

Conferences on Child Welfare and Parental Life

The conferences on child welfare and parental life held at the Oklahoma College for Women, Chickasha, in 1934 and 1936 were one-day meetings similar to the schools for parents. The first of these opened at eight p.m. on December 14, 1934 in the fine arts auditorium at the college. The public was invited to attend all sessions. The principal speakers were Dr. Valeria Parker of the American Social Hygiene Association, and Mrs. George E. Calvert, director of the Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education of the Oklahoma Congress. Other speakers included Dr. Allen M. Ruggles of the University of Oklahoma; Virginia

¹"Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XIII (April, 1932), p. 20.

²Ibid., Vol. XIV (September, 1932), pp. 20-21.

³Ibid. (December, 1932), pp. 26-27.

Messenger, supervisor of emergency nursery schools; Dr. Dura Louise Cockrell, director of parent education, Fort Worth; E. L. Morrison, director of Oklahoma's emergency education program; and Kate North, supervisor of home economics for Oklahoma A. and M. College. Round table discussions were held in which many state PTA leaders took part.¹

Dr. Alice Sowers was the principal speaker for a second conference on parent education at Oklahoma College for Women, October 16, 1936. "Partners in Progress" was her theme and she told the group, "As a conference we can move forward no more rapidly than the slowest thinking back home."² Dr. Sowers suggested three primary aims of education as living successfully, intelligent citizenship, and a balanced life. Dr. J. J. Gable, associate medical director of Central State Hospital, discussed mental health from the standpoint of prevention, rehabilitation, and reformation. He told the parents:

A simple life and an orderly environment are conducive to a happy life. The spoiled apron string child of today too often is the neurotic of tomorrow. The person who is mentally sick needs friendliness, sympathy, and encouragement.³

The Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education

In October, 1929, Mrs. George E. Calvert announced the organization within the Oklahoma Congress of the Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education. The objectives of the Bureau were "to make possible more intelligent parenthood, better homes and better communities, and to promote further the proper care, training and understanding of children

¹The Chickasha Daily Express, December 14, 1934, p. 1.

²Ibid., October 16, 1936, p. 1.

³Ibid.

everywhere."¹ Mrs. Calvert announced that the bureau would sponsor training for parents by occasional state wide meetings, district and county programs, and by supporting parent education classes conducted under the home economics programs of schools and colleges. An advisory board was created with Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma, as chairman. The executive committee for the bureau included: John S. Vaughan, state superintendent; Mr. Charles W. Briles; Dr. W. B. Bizzell; Kate S. North; Eileen M. Harrison; and Joe N. Hamilton. There was a central council composed of all state board members of the Oklahoma Congress and representatives of some two dozen state agencies interested in serving children. The Bureau included a department of organization, a speakers' bureau, and a department of legislation and research. It undoubtedly stimulated much of the parent education activity which has been described above.

The Oklahoma Family Life Institute

In the fall of 1936, Dr. Alice Sowers visited Oklahoma as a specialist in parent education for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. In January, 1938 she was employed by the University of Oklahoma as professor of family life education in the department of home economics. Under her energetic direction the scope of the program of family life education quickly expanded.² Dr. Sowers traveled extensively over the state and became acquainted with many leaders in parent-teacher

¹Mrs. George E. Calvert, "Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXI (October, 1939), p. 18.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "An All-American Plan for a Program in Family Life Education," Oklahoma Teacher, Vol. XXII (April, 1941), p. 36.

associations.

In June, 1939 the University suffered a cut in appropriations which threatened to terminate Dr. Sowers' services. Mrs. Calvert reported this crisis to the state board of managers of the Oklahoma Congress, and after much discussion, Dr. I. N. McCash offered the following motion which was adopted: "It is the consensus of the board of managers that the services of Dr. Sowers be continued provided financial support can be provided."¹ The board then adopted a motion by Mrs. H. B. Caldwell authorizing Mrs. Calvert to appoint a committee to inquire into ways and means of providing funds to supply the necessary two-thirds of Dr. Showers' salary. Mrs. Calvert appointed the entire executive committee of the Oklahoma Congress.

On June 14, 1939 the executive committee discussed the problem of raising funds to continue the work of Dr. Sowers. W. Max Chambers moved that the state board approve a plan for raising a "Foundation Fund" for the support of the Family Life Institute by appealing to each unit for funds. This plan was adopted. Mrs. Homer J. Green, the state PTA treasurer, then suggested that the funds from the last three state life membership dues be used to start the Oklahoma Family Life Institute Fund and that the Institute be incorporated. This plan was adopted and Chambers was appointed to confer with President Bizzell on the preparation of a charter of incorporation.²

On July 14, 1939 the Oklahoma Family Life Institute was incorporated under a state charter. The charter was signed by Mrs. George E.

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, June 12, 1939.

²Minutes of the Executive Committee, June 14, 1939.

Calvert, Mrs. C. E. Scott, and Mrs. H. B. Caldwell. The purpose of the institute as stated in the charter was "to develop and extend the services which had been started at the University in January, 1938, with the appointment of Dr. Alice Sowers as professor of family life education."¹ Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University became president of the Institute, and Herbert H. Scott, director of extension at the University, became its vice-president. Under the agreement between the University and the Oklahoma Congress, the University agreed to furnish Dr. Sowers with office space, a full time secretary, office supplies and equipment, and a portion of travel expense and salary. The Oklahoma Congress agreed to secure funds to supplement the contribution of the University.

Financing the Institute

In September, 1939 Mrs. Calvert addressed a form letter to local PTA leaders requesting financial contributions to the Oklahoma Family Life Institute.

In order to make it possible for Dr. Sowers to continue her work with us it was necessary for the University to have financial assistance. We are, therefore, asking units, councils, and individuals to make contributions to the Oklahoma Family Life Institute.²

Mrs. Calvert asked that each parent-teacher leader send as much money as could be raised in her council or unit. Those who contributed were known as "Founders of the Institute" and their names were written in a permanent record book to be displayed at state and district meetings.

Personal endowments and voluntary subscriptions did not provide

¹ Alice Sowers, "Founding of the Institute," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (May, 1946), p. 6.

² Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Parent-Teacher Friends, September 18, 1939 (Calvert Files).

sufficient funds. At a board meeting on October 13, 1939, Mrs. Charles E. Young suggested that each board member attempt to secure at least one life membership for the Oklahoma Congress and that proceeds of life memberships be placed in the Institute Fund.¹ This suggestion was adopted, but life membership dues of \$25.00 each did not produce a sufficient increase in funds. In November Mrs. Calvert made a second appeal for contributions:

If Dr. Sowers is to remain with us it will be necessary for her friends and co-workers to raise \$1,000.00 each semester--that means about \$5.00 for each local unit and about \$25.00 for councils.²

On March 14, 1940 Mrs. Calvert gave a detailed report of the progress of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute. Receipts to the Institute Fund had totaled only \$564.65 and withdrawals had reached \$473.75, leaving a balance of \$90.90. As an emergency action, Mrs. Calvert had loaned the Family Life Institute \$100.00 from a surplus in the Bulletin Fund. This was used to pay interest on money borrowed by the director to sustain the Institute until further donations were received. The executive committee approved the action of the president.³

In January, 1942 Mrs. Calvert again reported on the financial problems of the Family Life Institute. The following suggestions were adopted for fund raising projects for the Institute:

1. That Oklahoma City bring Sergeant York or some other well known person to deliver a public lecture for which the Oklahoma Congress would charge an admission fee.

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 13, 1939.

²Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to Parent-Teacher Leaders, November 18, 1939 (Calvert Files).

³Minutes of the State Executive Committee, March 14, 1940.

2. That money raising projects be sponsored by councils in the larger cities including: home talent plays, speakers, athletic contests, etc.
3. That each member be assessed five cents.
4. That each unit hold a State Birthday, family life day, or unit birthday at which a collection would be taken.
5. That a contribution to the Oklahoma Family Life Institute be made a minimum requirement on the "goals and achievements" score card before a local unit would be eligible for rating.¹

These methods of fund raising continued in succeeding years to provide the major portion of the Oklahoma Congress support to the Oklahoma Family Life Institute. Significant additional support came in February, 1943 when Mrs. Anton Classen, honorary vice-president and state life member, made a contribution of \$500.00 to the Institute Fund;² and in January, 1944 when Governor Robert S. Kerr presented a New Year's gift to the Oklahoma Congress in the amount of \$500.00 for the support of the Family Life Institute.³

As the financial position of the Oklahoma Congress improved with the great post war growth in membership, budgeted funds were allocated to the support of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute when such additional support was required. On April 9, 1946 the executive committee recommended that every attempt be made to meet the obligation of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute by July, 1946 through the usual methods of securing the support, and that any amount not raised by that time be paid from Oklahoma Congress funds.⁴ The board of managers confirmed this recommend-

¹Ibid., January 7, 1942.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XV (February, 1943), p. 2.

³Ibid., Vol. XVI (January, 1944), p. 4.

⁴Minutes of the State Executive Committee, April 9, 1946.

ation.¹ In 1948 the executive committee included in the budget an item of \$100.00 as a contribution to the Oklahoma Family Life Institute to be expended for extra services of the secretary of the Institute.²

Programs of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute

In the six months which preceded the founding of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute, Dr. Sowers met some 12,000 persons in Oklahoma through conferences and meetings in all sections of the state. She found three difficulties which many mothers experienced in their participation in parent education programs:

1. Lack of leadership for group discussion and program planning.
2. Inability of mothers to get away from home for meetings, and
3. Failure of fathers to participate in programs, due to conflict of working hours with those of meetings or lack of motivation.³

Based on these and other observations made in her association with parents throughout the state, Dr. Sowers formulated the following objectives for the Oklahoma Family Life Institute:

1. To study the needs of the state in regard to education for home and family living.
2. To interpret and put into action the institute program.
3. To stimulate further reading, study, and discussion on the part of individuals and of groups.
4. To help present programs for parent education.
5. To assist with new programs of family life education for youth and adults.
6. To aid in strengthening the program of organizations which have family life education as one of their objectives.
7. To aid in introducing and using various adult education methods.
8. To assist with the development of leaders.

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 9, 1946.

²Minutes of the State Executive Committee, April 27, 1948.

³Alice Sowers, "Summary of Report of Family Life Education Program," January 15, 1938 to June 10, 1939, p. 4 (Calvert Files).

9. To prepare materials for use by individuals and by groups.
10. To recommend books and other literature for use by individuals and by groups.
11. To suggest and assist with plans for cooperative programs and councils dealing with problems of home, school, and community.¹

During her first year as director of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute, Dr. Sowers visited forty-two counties of the state and spoke to meetings attended by 45,312 people. She organized and conducted a radio series, "The Family Life Radio Forum," which gained members in thirty-nine counties.² The Family Life Radio Forum, a new approach to the use of educational radio, operated through 85 organized PTA listening groups. These groups, ranging in size from five to forty-two members, met together to hear the broadcasts and remained to discuss the program after it was completed. At the completion of the series of broadcasts, Dr. Sowers awarded 910 certificates to members of these groups who met consistently and reported to Dr. Sowers.³

In addition to her broadcasts on the Family Life Radio Forum and her frequent meetings with parent education groups throughout the state, Dr. Sowers wrote two monthly features for the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, and published leaflets on a variety of topics in the field of family life education. She organized forum discussions with high school groups in which she answered the questions of students.

In 1949, the Oklahoma Family Life Institute celebrated its tenth anniversary. The summer issue of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher was dedi-

¹Alice Sowers, "Founding of the Institute," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (May, 1946), p. 14.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Omaha, Nebraska, 1940, p. 299.

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XII (May, 1940), p. 10.

cated to the institute in observance of its contribution to family life education. The board of managers authorized Judge Donald Darrah to make the necessary plans with radio station managers for the re-broadcasting of the Family Life Radio Forum.¹ The family of President George L. Cross joined Dr. Sowers in a birthday celebration complete with cake and candles. Later, in a letter to the Oklahoma Congress Dr. Cross said:

I believe that the educational program of the Institute has been consistently helpful to the thousands of individuals reached by it each year. This is due, in a significant way, to the excellent leadership and cooperation the presidents of the Oklahoma Congress, during this period, have provided.²

By 1952, the Family Life Radio Forum was distributed to a network of twenty-seven stations in Oklahoma with a combined listening audience of more than 300,000. A series of newspaper articles on family life was offered to local newspapers in the state and by 1955, newspapers with a total circulation of more than 900,000 were carrying these feature articles. In 1956, the Family Life Radio Forum was offered to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters by Radio Station WNAD, where the program originated. It was accepted for distribution to educational stations throughout the United States.

At a meeting of Institute trustees in Norman on Friday, February 12, 1954, Dr. Sowers presented a brief report of the first fifteen years of service by the Oklahoma Family Life Institute. The Family Life Radio Forum had completed its four hundred fortieth broadcast. Dr. Sowers was cooperating with state colleges by furnishing their coordinators of family life education with counseling, guidance, and materials from the

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 20, 1949.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (July, 1949), p. 3.

Institute. She reported a program of cooperation with churches in which she assisted them with programs on family life and with developing parent's book shelves on family life. She had completed a course for baby sitters, and had prepared a film, "The Dangerous Stranger," which dealt with the subject of child molestation. In her fifteen years of service, Dr. Sowers had produced a total of 165 publications which were available to parents. She continued to conduct high school forums which had reached 7,750 students in Lawton, Tulsa, and Woodward during the 1953-54 school year.¹ She appeared on television programs in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

So extensive was her work that Dr. Sowers became the focal point for programs of parent education, or family life education, in the Oklahoma Congress. In 1951 the state board of managers combined its three state committees dealing with parent education into a single committee on home and family life with Dr. Sowers as chairman of the committee.² Of the many contributions of the Oklahoma Family Life Institute, two in particular were noteworthy. The Oklahoma Family Life Institute served as a vehicle for unifying and expanding the earlier programs of parent education, and Dr. Sowers demonstrated the true potential of the mass media; radio, television, newspapers, films, and publications, in achieving educational objectives.

¹Maude Calvert, "Fifteen Years of Service," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (July, 1954), p. 7.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 2, 1951.

CHAPTER XI

SECURING ADEQUATE LAWS FOR THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth" is the third object of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers. "No improvement in school conditions is possible," said Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, state president, "until strong public opinion approves and demands it, and no group can so influence public opinion as an enthusiastic group of parents."¹ Yet in the early days of the parent-teacher movement, not only in Oklahoma, but throughout the nation, there was considerable hesitancy in the matter of promoting a legislative program. When did such activity fall within the scope of parent-teacher work? When did it become political activity of a nature which threatened the non-partisan character of the organization? These were questions not easily answered. It took a considerable period of time and much discussion at state and national levels for widespread consensus to develop.² As late as 1956, Mrs. W. Fred Scott found it necessary to point out:

People who do not understand PTA objectives sometimes question our program of legislation. They confuse political action with partisanship. The third object of the organization gives us a clear

¹Mrs. Charles D. Johnson, "From the President," Oklahoma Bulletin, May, 1929, unpagued.

²Interview with Mrs. George E. Calvert, June 24, 1957.

mandate to legislative action. Where the interest and welfare of children are concerned, the PTA is concerned.¹

Early Efforts to Secure Legislation

On February 9, 1923 a state parent-teacher meeting was held in the Episcopal Parish House in Oklahoma City. Among the topics discussed were two bills then before the state legislature. One would have permitted any town with twenty-five children of kindergarten age to petition the board of education for a "real" kindergarten in their school. Another provided state aid for a hospital for crippled children. The group voted unanimously to support both of the measures.² The state convention which met in Perry in March, 1924 also resolved "that we go on record as favoring state wide establishment of kindergartens at public expense."³ In November, 1926 the Oklahoma Congress agreed to support a proposal of the national recreation committee for state enabling legislation to "permit any community to determine by referendum whether or not it will tax itself to support a year round recreation system."⁴

The state convention which met in Pawhuska, March 10-12, 1926 supported an OEA legislative proposal calling for state aid at the rate of \$15.00 per pupil. The convention urged PTA members to work for the

¹Mrs. W. Fred Scott, "An Open Letter from the State President," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIX (November, 1956), p. 7.

²Notes taken by Mrs. Fred Donoho, First Historian, February 9, 1923 (Slaughter Files).

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, May, 1924, p. 6.

⁴Letter from J. W. Faust, National Chairman of Recreation, to Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, November 20, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

measure which was scheduled for referendum vote in the fall of 1926.¹

In 1928 the sixth annual convention at Ponca City called for "rigid observance of the Oklahoma law relative to the sale of cigarettes to minors." The convention also endorsed a teacher retirement plan sponsored by the OEA, and a uniform child labor law calling for better enforcement of existing child labor legislation. The convention supported legislation for a bureau of maternity and infancy in the state department of health.²

In 1930 the Oklahoma Congress was one of the organizations represented in a semi-official education commission appointed by the Governor. The Oklahoma Congress supported the statement of principles adopted by the commission. These called for:

1. A minimum term of nine months of standard elementary school work for every child of school age in the state
2. Adequate high school education within the reach of every child in Oklahoma.
3. Properly trained teachers for every school.
4. Suitable school hours.
5. Adequate equipment and library facilities
6. Reasonable supervision.³

In addition to legislation supported at the state level from 1923 to 1930, the Oklahoma Congress promoted three legislative proposals under consideration in the United States Congress. One measure, known as the Curtis-Reed Bill, would have established a national department of education. Another measure designated as Senate Bill 1,667 by Brookhart

¹Resolutions, Pawhuska Convention, March 13, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

²Resolutions of the Sixth Annual Convention, Ponca City, March 28, 1928 (Adams Files).

³National Congress, Proceedings, Denver, Colorado, 1930, p. 287.

of Iowa would have prohibited "block booking" of motion pictures, a practice which virtually forced local movie theaters to schedule objectionable films.¹ Another measure designated as Senate Bill 255 and House Bill 1,195 was designed to promote the health and welfare of mothers. It called for federal funds of one million dollars to carry on programs of maternity care.²

In this early period there was no particular plan for formulating legislative programs. Apparently the Oklahoma Congress followed the lead of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers in the federal legislation it supported, and was guided, to a large extent, in its support for state school legislation by the recommendations of the OEA. The child welfare measures it supported often were suggested by active PTA councils and parent-teacher leaders to the board of managers or to the state convention.

Measures supported by the Oklahoma Congress often were issued as resolutions of annual conventions. This seems to have been the most frequent, at times the only, action taken. Copies of resolutions often were mailed to legislators and PTA members were urged to write letters to their state and national lawmakers. A statement by a state leader in 1926 indicates a rather naive approach to the problem of securing legislation.

I am inclined to think we had better let the legislature get really into their work for a few days anyway before approaching them. Then get in touch with the education committee and see if

¹Oklahoma Bulletin, Vol. I (April, 1928), unpagged.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. III (March, 1930), p. 4.

we can find a friend or more there.¹

Needless to point out, not much legislation was enacted through this approach.

But the promotion of legislation is a long-term process. Failure rather than success usually greets any proposal on its initial consideration by a legislative body. The primary value of these early legislative efforts of the Oklahoma Congress was not in the successful enactment of the measures supported but in the education of PTA members.

Parent-Teacher Legislative Programs in the Depression

Depression brought such chaos to the public schools and so restricted their financial support that much of the legislative effort of the Oklahoma Congress from 1930 until World War II was aimed at the solution of school problems. In November, 1932 the state board of managers adopted a motion "pledging the support and hearty cooperation of all units in the state with the plan for preserving the schools of the state to be presented to the . . . legislature by the department of education, the OEA, and the department of superintendents."²

The following resolution was adopted by the state PTA convention which met in Okmulgee, April 17-19, 1934.

Resolved, that as the continued maintenance of our public schools is essential to growth and development of our state, the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers deplores such reductions in school budgets as are seriously affecting the education of our youth through shortened school terms, impoverished curricula, and lowered morale

¹Letter from Mrs. Mabel M. Ashton to Mrs. J. Y. Allen, January 6, 1926 (Slaughter Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, November 5, 1932.

of teachers and students. We recommend that the total budgets for all purposes be studied to determine whether reduction in governmental costs might not be made in other fields with less dangerous results to children, and that an effort be made to discover supplemental sources of revenue for educational budgets.¹

In November, 1934 the Oklahoma Congress called for legislation to make the county the unit for administering the public schools, for tax measures to give adequate support to schools without overburdening the property owner, for the creation of a textbook commission free of political manipulation, and for the enactment of teacher tenure and retirement laws.² The Oklahoma Congress supported House Bill 212 in the Fifteenth Oklahoma Legislature which provided a guaranteed minimum program of public education. Other educational legislation advocated in 1935 called for more dependable financial support for schools than that offered by the ad valorem tax, a modernization of all school laws, and a single board of regents for all state schools.³ In 1936 the state board of managers endorsed legislation permitting local boards to employ doctors and nurses.⁴ The Oklahoma Congress supported a referendum measure submitted by the Fifteenth Legislature providing for the establishment of a nine-member board of regents with overlapping terms of office for agricultural and mechanical colleges of the state.⁵

¹"Report of Resolutions Committee, Okmulgee Convention," April 17-19, 1934 (Burns Files).

²"Parents Must Rescue Schools through Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VII (November, 1934), p. 1.

³E. H. Black, "The Report of the Activities of the Legislative Committee of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

⁴Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 24-25, 1936.

⁵Form letter from Mrs. George E. Calvert to District Officers, City and County Council Presidents, September 15, 1936 (Calvert Files).

During the Sixteenth Legislature the Oklahoma Congress worked for House Bill 6 and Senate Bill 270. House Bill 6 provided \$12,600,000.00 for support of a state guaranteed program of public elementary and secondary education. Senate Bill 270 permitted schools to employ doctors and nurses. The PTA also supported Senate Bill 286 which provided a supplemental appropriation of \$750,000.00 for the aid of weak schools for the current year.¹ The annual convention, held in Stillwater, October 7-9, 1937, adopted the following resolutions on legislation:

1. Better financial support for education.
2. Financial support for adult education.
3. Federal Aid for education.
4. Maintenance of adequate schools for rural children.
5. The extension of the elementary school to include kindergarten as a part of the public school program.
6. Requirement of physical examinations preceding marriage.²

In addition to school legislation, the Oklahoma Congress worked for improved laws in the field of child welfare. Mothers' pensions, probation, maternity homes, and child care agencies received attention in 1934. In 1935 the Brookings Institute completed a study of government in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Congress supported many of the recommendations growing out of that study, particularly that legislation be enacted to remove the state department of health from partisan politics.³ As a phase of its cooperation in Governor Marland's safety campaign, the Oklahoma Congress supported House Bill 261 in the Sixteenth Legislature

¹Mrs. J. P. Mattox, "About Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. IX (April, 1937), p. 12.

²"Resolutions and Suggestions from Conference of Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (December, 1937), pp. 14-15.

³"Report of Resolutions Committee," 1936 (Calvert Files).

providing for state licensing of drivers. In the Seventeenth Legislature the Oklahoma Congress supported House Bill 287 which made it a crime for an adult to contribute to the delinquency of a minor.¹

On the national level, the Oklahoma Congress continued to work for the Neely-Pettengill Bill to abolish block booking of motion pictures. It also supported legislation to strengthen the federal food and drug bill, to establish a division of library service in the U. S. Office of Education, and to provide general federal aid to education.²

The crisis of depression with its devastating effects on public schools had a strong unifying effect on groups seeking to promote the welfare of children and youth. In September, 1934 Mrs. John R. Burns, state president of the Oklahoma Congress, called at the office of Clyde M. Howell, executive secretary of the OEA. Howell was not in his office at the time of her visit, but he wrote to express his regret and to assure her that the OEA would welcome the opportunity of working with the PTA legislative chairman.³

By December Mrs. Burns organized a "State Emergency Committee on School Legislation" composed of Mrs. John A. Wadlin of Tulsa as Chairman, and Mrs. George E. Calvert of Oklahoma City, Mrs. M. D. Harbough of Miami, and Mrs. Thomas E. Young of Ponca City. Mrs. Burns wrote letters to each local president asking that he suggest three names of local PTA

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. XI (April, 1939), p. 10.

²"Report of the Legislative Committee," ibid., Vol. VIII (January, 1936), unpagged.

³Letter from Clyde M. Howell, Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma Education Association, to Mrs. John R. Burns, September 27, 1934 (Burns Files).

members who would agree to act as a parent-teacher emergency committee at the local level.¹ This committee was designed as an action committee rather than a policy-making group. It was, however, the most extensive state wide organization for promotion of legislation that had been accomplished in the history of the Oklahoma Congress to that date. Each local unit appointed an emergency committee to work with the state committee. The names of these persons were on file in the state office and each member was kept informed on progress being made and on ways he or she might help to create public opinion in support of a recommended legislation.² Committee members were advised to write their legislators and to urge others in the community to do so. "In case of great emergency" they were to see that a local group was present at Oklahoma City to meet with other groups throughout the state to "appeal to the governor or legislators for support of such measures."³ By February, 1935 the state PTA office was "besieged with inquiries" from these local groups on the legislation to be advocated. Although the legislature had been in session for almost a month, the office replied: "When we can be sure that we are recommending measures that are best for the state and for the individual, we are ready to notify every member of this huge committee."⁴

During the 1934-35 school year a legislative committee headed by E. H. Black, superintendent of schools at Bristow, formulated an exten-

¹Form letter from Mrs. John R. Burns to Local Unit Presidents, December 26, 1934 (Burns Files).

²National Congress, Proceedings, Miami, Florida, 1935, p. 231.

³Form letter from Mrs. John R. Burns to Local Unit Presidents, December 26, 1934 (Burns Files).

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. VII (February, 1935), p. 1.

sive program of legislation. Since Black also was active in the OEA, the resulting program was quite similar to that advanced by the organized teachers. In addition to the work of this committee the state convention continued to issue resolutions on many items pertaining to legislation. There was, as yet, no plan for initiating legislative proposals within the Oklahoma Congress, of studying them to arrive at consensus, and adopting them as the program of the organization. The Oklahoma Congress continued, for the most part, to support nationally the programs advocated by the National Congress and to support locally the programs advanced by the OEA and other groups interested in the welfare of children and youth.

Much of the discussion of the April, 1935 meeting of the state board of managers concerned two bills before the legislature. These were House Bills 212 and 453. After an explanation of these measures by State Superintendent John Vaughan, Mrs. J. P. Mattox suggested that the PTA "stand behind Mr. Vaughan" and do whatever his office recommended. After much additional discussion the board adopted a motion by Floyd Coates that it go on record as opposing the legislators' leaving the capitol until they had "established a nine month's school in every community in Oklahoma."¹ The board also appointed a committee to draw up a resolution and deliver it immediately to Governor E. W. Marland and to each legislator. The text of the resolution follows:

Be it resolved that we, the State Board of Managers of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, which Congress is composed of 400 units of Parent-Teacher Associations, with a total membership of 18,853 school patrons, in executive session assembled on April 6, 1935 in Oklahoma City, do request and implore that the Oklahoma Legislature remain in session until it has passed legislation which

¹ Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 6, 1935.

will guarantee reorganization and financial support which will provide a nine month's term of school for every boy and girl in Oklahoma.¹

The local emergency committees were urged to write legislators to reinforce the resolution.

Meanwhile, E. H. Black, the legislative chairman, advised PTA members to "help elect men to office . . . acquainted with school conditions and . . . educationally minded." Black saw no conflict in this advice with the non-partisan character of PTA. "Being non-political," he reasoned, "does not mean that we must sit idly by with folded hands and see the children of the state deprived of their rights."² One weakness of the Oklahoma Congress in the past, in Black's opinion, had been that of too little effort in the field of legislation. In addition to their letters to state legislators, Black urged members to write and wire their congressmen asking that they support federal aid for education.

These legislative efforts of the Oklahoma Congress, when added to those of the OEA and other interested groups, resulted in the enactment of some of the proposals advocated. Most important was House Bill 212 enacted by the Fifteenth Legislature which, for the first time, established a guaranteed minimum program of education for the state of Oklahoma. The state had never abandoned that important concept. The enactment of Senate Bill 178 by the Sixteenth Legislature also was important in that it permitted school districts to employ doctors and nurses. In

¹Form letter from Mrs. John R. Burns to Members of the Legislative Committee, undated (Burns Files).

²E. H. Black, "Report of the Activities of the Legislative Committee of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers," 1934-35 (Burns Files).

its June, 1935 meeting the state board of managers heard read a letter from Clyde Howell thanking the Oklahoma Congress for its legislative work, particularly its pressing for enactment of House Bill 212.¹

But while some beneficial legislation had been secured, other legislation had been enacted during the depression which portended problems for the years ahead. In October, 1936 Harvey M. Black, Superintendent of schools at Hugo, told a state PTA convention in Tulsa:

Legislation has been enacted . . . greatly to the benefit of the public school. We have struggled for national financial assistance, but as yet this has not been realized. I warn you, the fight is in its infancy. There are forces today which would do away with the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades of our high schools today if they could. Old age pensions and homestead acts that have been recently enacted if not properly² met will retard the public schools of Oklahoma for years to come.²

At the national level, the Neely-Pettengill Bill to abolish block booking of motion pictures passed the Senate and Paul Harrup, state PTA chairman of motion pictures, expressed "sincere appreciation" to every PTA unit for efforts in support of the bill.³

Legislative Programs in the War Period

From 1939 to 1946 the Oklahoma Congress continued to press for school legislation, but the interests were broadened to include child welfare programs and a proposal to revise or rewrite the Oklahoma Constitution.

In June, 1942 Mrs. John A. Wadlin, the state president, reminded

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, June 8, 1935.

²Harvey M. Black, "Response to Welcome at State PTA Convention in Tulsa," pp. 1-2 (Calvert Files).

³Oklahoma Parent-Teacher Bulletin, Vol. X (May, 1938), p. 7.

PTA council presidents of an election scheduled July 14 on State Question 306. This was a proposal to amend the state constitution to make possible the establishment of a state wide teacher retirement system. This measure had been defeated in the general election of 1939, but the OEA continued to press the campaign and had succeeded in getting the measure on the primary election ballot in which the "silent vote," so lethal in the earlier campaign, would not be a factor.¹

In 1945 Mrs. Flesner notified county extension chairmen that the Oklahoma Congress was promoting legislation that would provide a permanent program of school finance, emphasize the need for adequate school finance for better schools and better school services, and provide smaller classes and higher salaries for teachers.² In general, these proposals followed those of the OEA. Mrs. Flesner also urged council presidents to oppose House Bill 465. This bill proposed to strike the word "theater" from a law prohibiting the employment of children under fourteen years of age. She pointed out that most states set a minimum age of sixteen years for the employment of children in any occupation other than agriculture and domestic service.³

Mrs. H. V. Thornton, who became state chairman of the PTA legislative committee in May, 1946 called for action on a number of proposals. Included were bills to strengthen the compulsory attendance law and to

¹Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin to Council Presidents, June 27, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

²Form letter from Mrs. George Flesner to County Extension Chairmen, undated, 1945 (Flesner Files).

³Form letter from Mrs. George Flesner to Council Presidents, March 29, 1945 (Flesner Files).

provide for the education of exceptional children, school district reorganization, free textbooks, and other school finance measures.¹ On April 13, 1944 the state PTA convention in Oklahoma City voted to press for a constitutional amendment permitting each town to vote an additional school levy of five mills. A committee was appointed to present this proposal to Governor Robert S. Kerr. The Governor favored the measure and said it would be brought up at a later session of the legislature.²

Having succeeded in its election on teacher retirement, the OEA in 1944 decided to take its school finance proposals directly to the people through the initiative and referendum. After months of planning the proposals emerged in the form of four amendments to the state constitution. They became Initiative Petitions 224, 225, 226, and 228; and State Questions 314, 315, 316, and 318.³ Prior to the circulation of the petitions, OEA leaders were invited to present the proposals at a series of parent-teacher meetings throughout the state. Parent-teacher members were urged to assist in securing the necessary number of signatures to the petitions.⁴ The petitions were circulated in November and December, 1944 and signatures far outnumbered the minimum necessary for the calling of a special election. But the State Chamber of Commerce attacked the sufficiency of the petitions and the legal action which followed delayed

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Call for Action," Spring, 1945 (Matofsky Files).

²Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Convention, April 13, 1944.

³Letters of Transmission from the Oklahoma Education Association to Frank Carter, Secretary of State, January 22, 1945 (Files of the OEA).

⁴Mrs. Charles E. Roe, "Field Service Report," November 6 to December 8, 1944 (Flesner Files).

balloting on the amendments for two years. When the amendments finally came to a vote in November, 1946 they received strong support from parent-teacher units throughout the state.

State Question 314 enabled local school districts to vote an excess levy of fifteen mills instead of the former ten mills. State Question 315 obligated the legislature to provide annually a state school fund equivalent to at least \$42.00 per pupil. State Question 316 authorized a levy of one mill annually at the county level for construction of separate schools, and State Question 318 provided for free textbooks for public elementary and secondary schools.

The Oklahoma Congress strongly supported House Bill 175 of the Nineteenth Legislature. This bill, co-authored by Representative E. H. Weaver of Stillwater, and Senator Clint Braden of Wilburton, provided for:

1. Immunization against smallpox and diphtheria for all children before their entrance into school.
2. Rules and regulations for enforcement of the bill.
3. Immunization of all persons not attended by their private physician.
4. Penalty for failure to observe the law.¹

The state board of managers also called on Governor Kerr to appoint a Children's Code Commission,² and the Oklahoma Congress joined other groups in forming a special committee known as "The Citizens Committee for Calling a Constitutional Convention." Much of the effort to get a revision of the Oklahoma Constitution came, however, in the post war

¹Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin, president, and Mrs. L. K. Cecil, state legislative chairman, to Local Unit Presidents, January 28, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 10, 1944.

period.

In March, 1943 Mrs. John A. Wadlin urged local legislative chairmen to oppose, in the United States Congress, Senate Bill 575 by McKellar of Tennessee. The McKellar Bill provided that after June 30, 1943, "every employee of the federal government receiving \$4,500.00 or more must be approved by a majority vote of the Senate." This bill was opposed by state PTA leaders on the ground that it "would greatly facilitate the upbuilding of a one-party system of government devoted, not to serving the public interest, but to maintaining itself in power."¹

Considerable progress was achieved in the war period in the matter of cooperative planning of legislative programs. In June, 1944 Mrs. George Flesner, state president, wrote to Harry Simmons, president of the Oklahoma Education Association, as follows:

A representative group of the board of managers of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, meeting in conference in Oklahoma City . . . voted to request that a joint legislative committee of the OEA and the OCPT be formed to study, plan, and act together on legislative problems affecting the schools and children of Oklahoma.²

A joint committee was formed including the Oklahoma Congress, the OEA, and the Oklahoma State School Boards Association. Mrs. Flesner felt that the formation of this committee and the results obtained from the cooperation probably was the outstanding achievement of her administration as state PTA president.³ Mrs. Flesner also appointed Elmer Petree of the State Department of Education to serve in an advisory capacity to an

¹Form letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin and Mrs. Lawrence K. Cecil to Parent-Teacher Leaders, March 13, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

²Letter from Mrs. George Flesner to State Executive Committee, June 21, 1944 (Flesner Files).

³Letter from Mrs. George Flesner to J. E. Burkett, April 25, 1957.

expanded parent-teacher legislative committee authorized by the board on June 20, 1944.¹

On January 31, 1946 the joint committee on legislative proposals met at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City with Judge Donald Darrah as chairman. The Oklahoma Education Association was represented by C. W. Darrah, Armstrong, and Clyde M. Howell. The Oklahoma Congress was represented by Mrs. George Flesner, Dr. Alice Sowers, Mrs. S. S. Matofsky, and Darrah. Joe Hurt represented the state school boards. This group proposed to secure closer cooperation among the three organizations.

1. Continuing the operation of the joint committee.
2. Providing for a common legislative program where interests coincided.
3. Recognizing each organization in all organizations where common interests were affected.
4. Planning special meetings, inviting all groups having an interest in public education, where positive proposals could be expounded and initiated.
5. Encouraging the promotion of parent-teacher course and teacher preparation institutions.
6. Having heads of all three organizations meet together from time to time to formulate policies for future joint action.
7. Planning and calling a meeting for March 20, 1946, to plan a common program.²

Having clarified its approach in formulating state legislative proposals, the state board of managers on September 28, 1946 adopted a proposal by Mrs. Calvert for screening national proposals. It requested the state president to appoint a committee of five to study and report on the national legislative program. The committee included the legislative chairman and three members of the executive committee.

¹Letter from Mrs. George Flesner to Elmer Petree, June 20, 1944 (Flesner Files).

²Donald B. Darrah, "Findings of Joint Committee of OEA, OSSBA," January 31, 1946 (Flesner Files).

³Minutes of the State Executive Committee, September 28, 1946.

During the war period, the Oklahoma Congress developed a varied approach to the problem of actively promoting legislation. There was recognition that resolutions and letters to legislators employed in previous years had not been markedly successful. In the referendum elections on State Question 306 and later on State Questions 314, 315, 316, and 318 the Oklahoma Congress and its local units conducted vigorous "get out the vote" campaigns. This included the distribution of informative pamphlets to local members and to other citizens of the community.¹ Council presidents were active in arranging local speakers bureaus in support of State Question 306 and worked with the local school superintendent in arranging for telephone committees to call people on the day of the election urging that they vote for the amendment.² Each local unit was urged to appoint a legislative chairman to maintain liaison with the state chairman.

Members were urged not merely to contact their lawmakers by telephone, personal interview, or letter but rather to maintain a "constant flow of communication" with their senators and representatives throughout the legislative session. Mrs. Flesner advised that letters be written by individuals; that the legislator not merely receive form letters signed by members or signed as an organization.³ In one situation Mrs. Flesner suggested that local unit presidents write special delivery letters to

¹"State Board--Information--Please Relay," May 29, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

²Letter from Mrs. John A. Wadlin to Council Presidents, June 27, 1942 (Wadlin Files).

³Form letter from Mrs. George Flesner to County Extension Chairmen, undated, 1945 (Flesner Files).

their legislators on an issue which demanded immediate communication.¹

There was more attention to the planning of specific campaigns to achieve specific legislative goals. An example of this was a meeting in Oklahoma City on January 19, 1943 to formulate plans for action on the immunization bill. The state PTA president, Mrs. Wadlin, presided at this strategy meeting and the state legislative chairman, Mrs. L. K. Cecil, acted as secretary. Dr. John W. Shackelford of the state health department presented the facts on the need for the legislation in Oklahoma. Dick Graham, executive secretary of the Oklahoma Medical Association, gave the viewpoint of the medical profession. The bill was read and studied after which a steering committee was authorized to "carry out all details pursuant to the final passage of the bill."² Another technique was illustrated in the incident mentioned earlier in which the state convention dispatched a special committee to call on Governor Robert S. Kerr to request support of a specific bill.³

In 1945, Mrs. H. V. Thornton suggested a five-point approach to the problem of promoting legislation. She advised local leaders to:

1. Arrange interviews with your senators and representatives.
2. Have a telephone committee phone your membership and get as many members as you can to write or telephone both your senator and representative.
3. Get your editor to write some editorials for his paper.
4. Use every meeting you have and any local publicity as a means for publicity about legislation.
5. Talk about these bills to every one.

¹Form letter from Mrs. George Flesner to Council Presidents, March 29, 1945 (Flesner Files).

²Mrs. Lawrence K. Cecil, Minutes of Immunization Legislation Meeting, January 19, 1943 (Wadlin Files).

³Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Convention, April 13, 1944.

"Apathy, not opposition on the part of the general public," said Mrs. Thornton, "is our number one enemy."¹

The Oklahoma Congress was successful, at least in part, in its legislative efforts during the war period. It is doubtful if State Question 306, which made possible a teachers' retirement system, would have succeeded without the support given by PTAs throughout the state. In the field of child welfare legislation, House Bill 151 of the Twentieth Legislature provided for education of physically handicapped children. Three bills on juvenile protection passed the Twentieth Legislature. One made the parent a party in all actions of delinquency or neglect, and another protected children from molestation by adults. Failing of passage were bills sponsored by the Children's Code Commission including the child study center and adoption bills.² It is possible that some of the bills could have been passed with crippling amendments, but these were rejected by the Commission. The bill for a state wide immunization program also failed. The four "Better Schools Amendments" submitted as State Questions 314, 315, 316, and 318 were conceived and sponsored by the OEA, but their success at the polls undoubtedly resulted from strong PTA support. Mrs. Matofsky reported the effects of PTA efforts as follows:

In the field of legislation the passage of four better schools amendments to the state constitution has been attributed in a very great measure to the efforts of the Oklahoma Congress. Statistics bear out this opinion, for they show that those counties with the

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Call for Action," Spring, 1945 (Matofsky Files).

²"Report on Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVII (May, 1945), p. 19.

strongest PTAs gave the largest majorities to the measures. On the contrary, counties with smaller or newer PTAs barely held their own, and in those counties where there are few if any PTAs the amendments were lost!¹

Post War Progress in Securing Adequate Laws

In 1946 the Oklahoma Congress adopted a legislative policy statement which was to serve as a frame of reference in selecting specific legislative measures for PTA support. This legislative policy, which follows, stated very briefly the goals sought in the areas of home, school, and community:

Home:

In view of the national emergency both in housing and nutrition, it is recommended that we support constructive legislation which will improve conditions in Oklahoma in these fields.

School:

In order to offer better educational opportunities to the children of Oklahoma, it is recommended that there be provided a stabilized, permanent plan for the financial support of the schools.

In view of the inequitable distribution of local school costs, it is recommended that larger tax areas be formed. It is also recommended that provisions be made to raise the standards of teaching and school administration, and to further enrich the school program.

Community:

In view of the fact that we fall below the average of the United States in health standards for children, it is recommended that we support legislation to raise those standards for Oklahoma.

It is further recommended that we continue to support a Children's Code Commission for Oklahoma in order that adoption laws, child labor laws, laws affecting dependent and neglected children, family courts, and other laws concerning children be integrated and vitalized.

We believe that the constitution of Oklahoma should be simplified and clarified in order that progressive legislation may be more easily enacted. It is recommended that we support the calling of a constitutional convention.²

¹National Congress, Proceedings, Washington, D. C., 1947, p. 224.

²"Legislative Policy, Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1946-49," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XVIII (May, 1946), p. 15.

On November 13, 1947 the state board of managers added the following statement to the PTA legislative policies:

We recommend increased public support for adequate community recreation services. We encourage the support of state agencies authorized to assist local governments in setting up recreation programs.¹

On April 27, 1948 the state board adopted three specific proposals. These called for a one-mill levy for separate schools, an increase in the salaries of legislators, and opposition by the PTA to a proposal for recall elections based on a petition signed by fifteen per cent of the voters of the preceding election.²

On February 6, 1948 representatives from state parent-teacher congresses in eight states met in Little Rock, Arkansas to study the question of natural resources and their possible relation to school finance. Since oil and natural gas were resources common to all states represented at the meeting, much of the discussion centered on the need for severance taxes on the production of those resources. In a report of the meeting Mrs. Matofsky stated:

It was evident from the discussion held that the natural gas industry was escaping its fair burden of taxation by playing one state against the other. By using the argument that if one state placed a tax on natural gas it would prevent the sale of this commodity by royalty owners of the state and would prevent the use of the same. Those people present at the meeting in Little Rock decided that the problem was of such importance that a permanent organization should be perfected in order that all states so affected could promote the same type of program on these particular items.³

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XX (February, 1948), p. 15.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 27, 1948.

³Letter from Mrs. S. S. Matofsky to Mrs. O. N. Summers, November 9, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

On December 3, 1948 an eight-state committee headed by Mrs. Matofsky adopted resolutions urging:

1. Conservation of irreplaceable resources.
2. Enactment of severance taxes uniform among the states in so far as practical.
3. Careful study of means of financing the employment of a coordinator of activities for the eight states represented on the natural resources committee.
4. The cooperation of all organizations interested in the problems of conservation and the equitable taxation of natural resources.
5. A permanent organization on this problem and periodical meetings.

The committee further agreed that

Boys and girls . . . deprived of their rightful heritage by rapid depletion of . . . resources, can best be compensated by an investment of tax proceeds in education and the development of human resources through adequate educational opportunities.¹

In spite of the interest displayed in this important problem, the brave beginning did not result in the formulation of specific legislative proposals to vitalize the work of the eight-state committee. But it did represent an interesting and valid approach to a legislative problem which was not confined within the limits of a single state.

On April 20, 1949 the state board of managers urged favorable consideration by the state legislature of the following proposals:

1. The bills sponsored by the Children's Code Commission.
2. The enabling legislation for Oklahoma to qualify for federal aid for housing. (House Bills 292 and 293 of the Twenty-first Legislature).
3. The state law on fluid milk.
4. Senate Bill 11 which authorized a special election on the question of calling a constitutional convention.
5. The general provisions of the school code.²

¹Mrs. S. S. Matofsky, Chairman, "Resolutions Adopted by the Eight States Natural Resources Committee," December 3, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 20, 1929.

While the Oklahoma Congress was committed to support school district reorganization, many of the rural members were "firmly opposed" to what they considered to be the provisions of Senate Bill 102 and House Bill 120 of the Twenty-first Legislature. This prompted Mrs. Matofsky and the state legislative chairman to propose a new district reorganization plan which would have authorized local reorganization planning groups rather than apply the immediate force of legislative enactment to the problem.¹

In October, 1950 the Oklahoma Congress submitted six questions to candidates for the state legislature. Candidates were asked if they would support legislation to assure fair, equal, and complete assessment of property, an increase in the five per cent debt limit for school building bonds, a permanent plan for financing education, a permanent children's code commission, adoption of sound child welfare laws, construction and maintenance of access roads to schools, and uniform personnel practices by the state government.²

In January, 1953 the joint committee of the OEA, OCPT, and OSSBA agreed to support five measures requiring amendments to the constitution of the state. These included:

1. A proposal to raise the limitation on bonded indebtedness for school districts from five per cent to ten per cent of the assessed valuation.
2. A proposal to raise the limitation on the building levy of a school district from five mills to ten mills.
3. An amendment authorizing continuing contracts for teachers.
4. An amendment creating a severance tax on natural resources

¹"Legislative Notes," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (May, 1949), p. 9.

²Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (October, 1950), p. 6.

(probably natural gas only) to be earmarked for the teacher retirement program and for road building.

5. An amendment providing for the election of a State Education Commission which would appoint the state superintendent of public instruction.

Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, Mrs. W. Fred Scott, Mrs. H. V. Thornton, and Paul Allen represented the Oklahoma Congress on the joint committee. They supported all of the proposals with the exception of that earmarking state revenue. Mrs. Thornton stated the position of the Oklahoma Congress as follows:

Although the majority of the joint committee voted to support this measure, the parent-teacher representatives were bound by their program of legislative policies to oppose the principle of earmarking funds. They would not actively oppose measures designed to secure financial support of schools, however.¹

On December 18, 1953 Mrs. Thornton was invited to present recommendations of the Oklahoma Congress to the Legislative Council's Committee on Education. Mrs. Thornton presented a carefully prepared statement in which she outlined the major legislative proposals advocated by the Oklahoma Congress and the principles on which those proposals were based. She told the committee that the Oklahoma Congress considered it erroneous to classify automobile registration and license fees as a "road-user tax," pointing out that the language of the law stated that such taxes were in lieu of ad valorem taxes on the same vehicles. She reiterated the position of the Oklahoma Congress in opposition to the practice of earmarking funds, giving four reasons for opposing the practice. She stated the belief of the Oklahoma Congress in state aid for equal opportunity for all children of school age, and proposed measures

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislation Information, Report of a Meeting of the Joint Committee on Legislation," January 9, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

for alleviating the inadequacy of school buildings and facilities in Oklahoma. These included an amendment to the state constitution to increase the debt limit of local districts, consolidation of school districts to provide a more adequate tax base, and reform in the administration of the general property tax.¹

In December, 1954, on the eve of the opening of the Twenty-fifth Oklahoma Legislature, Mrs. Burkitt urged local units to have a "lively concern for legislation." The Oklahoma Congress sought a change in the school finance law necessitated by the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation, a constitutional amendment making it possible for school districts to build more buildings, good adoption laws, funds for special education, and adequate salaries for teachers.²

In the post war period, the Oklahoma Congress expanded its interest and efforts in the field of national legislation. In 1948 local units were urged to support renewal of the reciprocal trade agreements which were in danger of being scuttled by Congress. Local units also were asked to support legislation for displaced persons, the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Housing Bill, repeal of margarine taxes, and the local public health services act of 1948.³ In the state convention of 1952, which devoted most of its closing session to legislation, the Oklahoma Congress approved the legislative program of the National Congress which

¹Statement of Mrs. H. V. Thornton for the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers to the Oklahoma Legislative Council Committee on Education, December 18, 1953, pp. 1-5 (Burkitt Files).

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (December, 1954), p. 4.

³Form letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton to Council Presidents, undated, 1948 (Matofsky Files).

included recommendations for federal aid for education and a number of measures for child welfare and protection.¹ In 1955, the Oklahoma Congress supported national efforts to secure federal aid for the construction of school buildings.² This proposal also received support in 1957, but Mrs. Mary K. Johnson, state legislative chairman, warned:

There is great activity for emergency school construction aid but the opponents to such aid are also very active Taking the lead in this opposition is the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, with the NAM, the American Legion, American Farm Bureau Federation, and many other taxpayers' groups--with our Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council at the fore--solidly behind them. If we . . . really want classrooms for our children, we must work to let the public have some facts about the need, and to exclude from the bills any federal control.³

New Approaches in Formulating Legislative Programs

In April, 1947 Mrs. Thornton discussed the need for wider participation in the formulation of legislative goals. She asked PTA members to pool their experiences and ideas and to ask questions and find answers together. While, in the past, there had been wide discussion of policy, it had been "left to the few" to determine the bills to be supported.

Mrs. Thornton said:

Seventy-five thousand PTA members can exert a tremendous influence on government in this state. But this influence will not be exerted, and efforts may be misdirected, unless the general membership is well informed. This does not mean detailed knowledge about a specific bill before the legislature. It does mean having an understanding of the principles involved and knowing what

¹Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Convention, May 8, 1952.

²Agatha Thornton, "Legislative Notes," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (May, 1955), p. 15.

³Mary K. Johnson, "A Report on School Construction Bills," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIX (May, 1957), p. 10.

standards might be considered good.¹

In May, 1949 Mrs. Thornton again discussed the need for wider participation in the formulation of legislative programs.

We are trying to devise new plans of developing our legislative programs so that they will represent the opinions of a vast majority or our membership. Our organization has such a turnover in membership and is growing so rapidly that many of our members probably do not understand basic principles involved in much of the legislation they are asked to support.²

She announced plans to prepare discussion materials on legislation which would reflect varying points of view in order that recommendations growing out of PTA discussions might represent the opinion of a large majority of the group.

In March, 1950 Mrs. Thornton advised the board that too much was involved in the legislative program to be delegated to one person. She proposed an eight-member program committee on legislation to include the first and second vice-presidents, the four regional directors, the state legislative chairman and the state program chairman. The plan was similar to that used by the National Congress. The proposed committee would (1) screen legislation proposed by the legislative committee and select items for support, (2) indicate emphasis and order of importance of items, and (3) cooperate in getting the legislative program before the organization. Mrs. Thornton proposed a second committee to be designated "emergency committee on legislation." This would be composed of the first and second vice-presidents, the legislative chairman and the chairman of

¹Agatha Thornton, "S. O. S. for Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XIX (April, 1947), p. 25.

²"Legislative Notes," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXI (May, 1949), p. 9.

the subject involved. The duty of this committee was to "take responsibility when items on program, or pertinent to program, come up between meetings of the legislative committee." A third committee was called "the standing committee on legislation." It included state committee chairmen whose committees dealt with subjects included in the PTA legislative program and others appointed by the president. Duties of the standing committee were to propose legislation for study and action, make plans for program of legislation approved by program committee on legislation, and designate the degree of support. She recommended subcommittees on "study groups," "action," and "lobbying."¹ At its meeting of May 3, 1950 the state board adopted the general provisions outlined in the plan.²

Efforts to improve the mechanics for formulating and promoting legislation were accompanied by changes in procedure. At the request of Mrs. Thornton, the executive committee included a discussion period of two hours as a part of the fall schools of instruction in 1949.³ In 1950, Mrs. Thornton described the entire procedure as follows:

Each three years when the time for the general state convention draws near each local unit is asked for suggestions for the legislative program for the next three years. The legislative committee then goes over these suggestions and revises the current legislative program. This tentative program then passes through the hands of both the executive committee and the board of directors, and then is submitted to the convention body for discussion and action. The program as finally accepted by the convention represents the will

¹Form letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton to the State Board of Managers, March 7, 1950 (Chambers Files).

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 3, 1950.

³Minutes of the State Executive Committee, June 21, 1949.

of the whole PTA membership.¹

Mrs. Thornton advised individual PTA members to take action on state and national legislative proposals only when requested to do so by the state legislative committee. The state legislative chairman presented requests for action on specific bills to the state board of managers. The board was at liberty to consider only those measures in harmony with the legislative policy previously adopted in state convention.² On March 12, 1950 Mrs. Thornton explained to a group interested in housing legislation that the PTA could not be committed to membership in a proposed state council on housing since that question would have to be referred to the executive committee or board of managers. Having represented the Oklahoma Congress at the meeting, she submitted a concise report of the meeting and summary of the question to the state board for its consideration.³

At a meeting of the state board of managers in May, 1951 Dr. Harrell Garrison, president of Northeastern State College and a member of the board, offered an interesting suggestion for increasing the activity and effectiveness of the PTA legislative effort. Garrison suggested that the Oklahoma Congress recommend to the legislature the appointment of a committee of twelve laymen and six school men to be selected by the state superintendent of schools, the legislature, and the governor. This

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Your Legislative Program," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIII (December, 1950), p. 16.

²Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislative Notes," ibid., Vol. XXII (April, 1950), p. 19.

³Letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton to State Board of Managers, April, 1950 (Chambers Files).

lay-professional group would be given the task of setting up county groups to study needed school legislation. Garrison proposed that the personnel of the state and county groups be representative of all areas of the economy.¹ It is interesting to note that this plan offered by Garrison was almost identical with the plan which later developed in the local and state conferences which culminated in the White House Conference on Education in November, 1955, and it anticipated that conference by four and one-half years. The board adopted a motion by Mrs. Thornton that a committee be appointed to study the plan and to work with Dr. Chambers, the state president, in carrying it out.

In 1952 the membership of the state committee on legislation was increased, and from June 16-18, 1953 a planning session, concerned primarily with legislation, was held in Norman. Mrs. H. V. Thornton, the chairman of the standing committee on legislation, and Mrs. W. Fred Scott, who as first vice-president was chairman of the program committee on legislation, were co-chairmen of the meeting. Sixty PTA leaders attended.²

On March 8, 1954 the state board of managers agreed to channel all legislative matters through two state committees, the program committee on legislation and the standing committee on legislation. The program committee on legislation was constituted as follows: chairman, first vice-president; secretary, chairman of standing committee on legislation; members, committee chairmen in the fields of welfare home service,

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, May 3, 1951.

²The Oklahoma Daily (University of Oklahoma), Wednesday, June 17, 1953, p. 1.

education, and health, two council presidents, and one extension chairman. The program committee had two functions, to study and consider legislative items referred to it, and to recommend final disposition of the proposals. The program committee on legislation could disapprove, recommend no action, or recommend "affirmative action." Affirmative action could involve including the proposal in the legislative policy, including it in the legislative program, or merely including it for study. The program committee also specified the degrees of support to be accorded proposals which in the descending order were sponsorship, active support, or interest. The legislative policy and program was then submitted to the triennial state convention at the first session of the convention with final action by the delegates at the closing session of the convention. This provided ample opportunity for discussion of the proposals by delegates.¹

The state board recognized that a council or unit might, by majority vote of members in attendance at a regular meeting, find itself opposed to a specific item in the legislative program adopted for the Oklahoma Congress. In such an instance the local group was expected neither to support the proposal nor to work against the adopted policy as a parent-teacher group. Members, of course, were free to take whatever position they chose, as individuals.

In October, 1954 Mrs. Thornton, chairman of the standing committee, and Mrs. W. Fred Scott, chairman of the program committee on legislation mailed a questionnaire on proposed legislation to each unit president. The PTA presidents were asked to get a vote of the local member-

¹Minutes of the State Board of Managers, March 8, 1954.

ship on the proposals and to enter that vote on a poll sheet and return it to the state PTA office. Members were asked to indicate the degree of support, "active," "endorse," or "study" for those items they approved.¹

In January, 1955 a second legislative workshop was held in the State Capitol. Four hundred thirty persons attended the all-day session to discuss the legislative program to be presented to the Twenty-fifth Oklahoma Legislature. During the legislative session, the PTA had a representative who attended hearings and other meetings and kept the state committees informed.² On November 12-13, 1956 a third legislative workshop was held at the extension study center, University of Oklahoma. Purpose of the workshop was to "give information concerning processes of legislation in general and to consider significant measures for the welfare of children and youth."³ Dr. Madaline Kinter Remmlein, assistant director of research of the National Education Association, was a featured speaker.

In 1954 the Oklahoma Congress joined the state department of education, the OEA, and the State School Boards Association in organizing the Oklahoma Commission for Public Education. This organization of lay citizens furnished some of the necessary leadership in 1955 for the local and state conferences on education which preceded the White House

¹Form letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton and Mrs. W. Fred Scott to Local Unit Presidents, October 25, 1954 (Burkitt Files).

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "Report of State President," 1952-55 (Burkitt Files).

³"Dr. Remmlein to Speak at Legislation Workshop," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIX (November, 1956), p. 6.

Conference. Mrs. Burkitt and Mrs. W. Fred Scott were two of the Oklahoma Congress leaders appointed by Governor Gary to the committee for the Oklahoma Conference. Thousands of local PTA members participated in the local conferences. Mrs. O. W. Jones of Tahlequah and Mrs. W. Fred Scott were delegates to the White House Conference in Washington.

New Approaches in Promoting Legislative Programs

In addition to the new and mature approaches designed by the Oklahoma Congress for a comprehensive and democratic approach to the problem of formulating legislative programs, the post war period also saw the development of more effective techniques for the promotion of legislative programs. In the summer of 1946, the Oklahoma Congress submitted five questions to candidates for the state legislature. Responses to this questionnaire were summarized and printed in the October issue of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher. The replies, or lack of replies, gave local members an opportunity to examine the position of each candidate and take appropriate action at the polls.¹ Two shortcomings in the technique were the failure of many candidates to respond and the amount of space required to print responses in the bulletin. In 1948, twenty of the twenty-nine senatorial candidates neglected to respond to the survey, and 109 of the 173 candidates for the House of Representatives ignored the questionnaire.²

In 1950 a questionnaire again was mailed to legislative candidates and candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. Both candi-

¹"Legislative Candidates Answer Questionnaire," ibid., Vol. XIX (October, 1946), p. 6.

²Ibid., Vol. XXI (October, 1948), pp. 6-13.

dates for lieutenant governor failed to respond as did Johnston Murray, the successful candidate for governor. Only fifteen candidates for the state senate responded and forty-five candidates for the house.¹ After the elections of 1952, the legislative questionnaire was shifted to the local unit. In July, 1954 a group of PTA presidents was selected to distribute questionnaires to political candidates. They were advised to reach each candidate in their individual localities and to publicize the replies they received with every means at their disposal.²

In 1955 Mrs. Pat (Mary Knowles) Johnson became chairman of the standing committee on legislation, a post she held at the time this study was completed. In October, 1955 Mrs. Johnson emphasized that the "off year" was the time to "study, learn, and lay our ground work."³ In April, 1956 Mrs. Johnson urged members to study each candidate for legislature. "Do not hesitate to talk to your candidates. This is the time when they can be most easily approached Ask them questions about issues in which you are interested" ⁴

Having made the wisest possible judgment in their choice of candidates, PTA members were urged to talk with the successful ones. Said Mrs. Thornton in 1950, "We want to make plans so that every member of the legislature will be interviewed by PTA members of his district before

¹Ibid., Vol. XXIII (October, 1950), pp. 6-9.

²Form letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton and Mrs. W. Fred Scott to PTA Presidents, July 1, 1954 (Burkitt Files).

³Mary Knowles Johnson, "Keep Informed on Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVIII (October, 1955), p. 12.

⁴Mary Knowles Johnson, "A Message Concerning Legislation," ibid., Vol. XXVIII (April, 1956), p. 13.

he goes to the next session of the legislature."¹ And in December, 1954

Mrs. Thornton offered this advice on conducting such interviews:

1. Take a small committee, from three to five members, and do not take notes during the interview.
2. Let the legislator do most of the talking. Just be sure he knows our position and why we take it.
3. Don't try to cover the entire program.
4. Be sure to touch on reform of administration of general property tax, retention of motor vehicle license tax now going to schools, the five proposed amendments, child welfare legislation and other items you wish to stress.²

Recognizing the need for the education of PTA members on legislative policies and programs, the Oklahoma Congress in 1950 prepared study kits on several important topics. These were used in organized study groups and in the planning of local PTA meetings.³ In a report to the National Congress convention in 1951, Dr. Chambers noted:

Emphasis has been placed on instruction in legislation at the local level this year. Realizing that local leaders need a better understanding of legislative processes, the state committee on legislation conducted an extensive program of study and information An awakening interest in legislation needs has resulted and local leaders and members are becoming more aware of what they can do toward securing adequate laws⁴

Much of this education of the membership on questions of legislation was accomplished through a series of excellent articles by Mrs. Thornton in the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher. "In planning legislative study," said Mrs. Thornton, "it is necessary to take the long view, to plan so

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislative Notes," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (May, 1950), p. 18.

²Form letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton to Local Unit Presidents, December 21, 1954 (Burkitt Files).

³Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislative Notes," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (April, 1950), p. 19.

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Miami Beach, Florida, 1951, p. 213.

that there is continuity from one year to the next." She advised local leaders to plan with the following objects in mind:

1. The unit membership will, over a period of years, become informed concerning our entire legislative program, state, national, and local.
2. The membership, over a period of years, will become well grounded in desirable practices and standards in legislation involving child welfare, health, education, etc.
3. The membership will keep abreast of changing needs, improved techniques, etc.
4. The membership will compare the provisions in any specific bill with the criteria it believes desirable.
5. The membership will remember that good government is all of one piece, and that no matter how good a particular bill may appear to be in carrying forward some one function of government, its effect on other functions of government must be considered.¹

In another article she listed effective techniques for promoting legislation.² Other articles discussed legislative issues and current developments.

In 1952 the executive committee authorized the mimeographing of the legislative report and the purchase of sufficient reprints of the national PTA legislative program that copies might be included in the convention packet issued to each delegate.³ Special study kits on current bills before the legislature were distributed to local units,⁴ and a study kit, "The American Way," was designed to give local leaders information on legislative processes.

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Planning for Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXIV (July, 1952), p. 7.

²Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "What Are You Doing About Legislation," ibid., Vol. XXVI (July, 1954), p. 10.

³Minutes of the State Executive Committee, January 23, 1952.

⁴National Congress, Proceedings, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1952, p. 231.

In 1953 Mrs. Thornton recommended that local program chairmen allow at least five minutes of each meeting for a report on the legislative activities of the unit or to bring information on legislation to the unit. She asked that one complete program, during the legislative year, be devoted to legislation.¹ Mrs. Burkitt made legislation a frequent topic in her "President's Message" which appeared each month in the bulletin. She saw the growing emphasis on legislative matters as a sign the Oklahoma Congress was "growing up." "Truly these are adult, mature concerns," she said.² Units and councils received information early in the legislative session listing legislation for which support was to be given. Specific action, or a minimum effort, usually was requested and local units were encouraged to provide additional support.³

In March, 1953 the state office mailed a questionnaire to council and unit presidents to discover what action had been taken to promote the legislative program. Many units reported "programs and intense interest" but had no idea of the number of letters written to legislators or the frequency with which other promotional techniques had been used. Detailed reports from 152 PTA units in sixty-five towns indicated a total of 6,082 letters to, and 762 interviews with, legislators.⁴ Many additional activities undoubtedly were carried out by other units.

¹Form letter from Mrs. H. V. Thornton to Local Legislative Chairmen, July, 1953 (Burkitt Files).

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "President's Message," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVI (December, 1953), p. 4.

³Minutes of the State Board of Managers, March 8, 1954.

⁴Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (May, 1953), p. 20.

Legislative Accomplishments in the Post War Period

In the post war period the Oklahoma Congress achieved increasing maturity and effectiveness in the important area of legislation. But in spite of the sound, democratic approach in formulating programs and the improved techniques of promotion, many important proposals met defeat at the hands of legislators. Mrs. Thornton's realistic appraisal of the successes and failures of the Oklahoma Congress at the close of the Twenty-fourth Oklahoma Legislature indicated the extent of continuing need.

A quick glance back at the record of the recent legislative session is sufficient to show us that we have not done enough. The measures we supported were opposed by powerful interests. Our only hope of counteracting such opposition is to become a unified, articulate body; speaking with the full volume of our 130,000 voices.¹

On October 12, 1948 Mrs. S. S. Matofsky reviewed OCPT legislative accomplishments for the preceding two years. She saw increased recognition of the Oklahoma Congress, citing as an example Governor Turner's appointment of the state president to the Children's Code Commission.² Nevertheless the Oklahoma Congress failed to secure public housing legislation in the Twenty-second Legislature and although some of the non-controversial bills recommended by the Children's Code Commission were passed, eleven of the measures approved by the house died in the senate. The Commission bills fared no better in the Twenty-third Legislature; none became law.³ Some of the Code bills might have been

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (July, 1953), p. 20.

²Minutes of the State Board of Managers, October 12, 1948.

³Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Child Welfare Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXV (November, 1952), p. 8.

enacted, but the Oklahoma Congress and the Commission could not accept the crippling amendments which would have been attached. At the close of the Twenty-third Legislature, Mrs. Thornton made this significant comment:

The success of the PTA work year just drawing to a close is not measured so much in terms of supporting legislation at the national capitol or state house, important as that is. It is measured best by the type of citizenship expressed by the PTA members.¹

Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, the state president, added:

Efforts in legislation have been richly educational, but not especially successful in passing needed legislation. Perennial efforts to secure a good adoption bill and a bill licensing child care and placement agencies have so far resulted only in substitute bills being offered that we could not support. An attempt to secure legislation necessary to remove a constitutional limit on bonded indebtedness of school districts has engaged the whole congress but with doubtful results so far.²

Meanwhile, the Oklahoma Congress secured enactment of a state wide standard milk law which set minimum standards for Grade A and Grade B milk, but did not prohibit the sale of ungraded milk.³ The OCPT successfully supported a measure which referred to the people the question of calling a constitutional convention to revise Oklahoma's basic law, but the measure failed at the polls. The Oklahoma Congress successfully supported the five-point "better schools amendment" submitted to the people by the Twenty-fifth Legislature and enacted in a special election. The amendment raised the ceiling on bonded indebtedness and included

¹Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislation," ibid., Vol. XXIII (May, 1951), p. 13.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1953, p. 214.

³Mrs. H. V. Thornton, "Legislation," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXII (November, 1949), p. 12.

permissive legislation for increased local support for current school expenditures. It also amended the state constitution to bring Oklahoma into conformity with the supreme court decision on segregation. The Twenty-fifth Legislature also enacted permissive legislation for establishment of joint recreation facilities by two or more local governmental units, such as city and school district.

The extensive program of legislation submitted by the Oklahoma Congress to the Twenty-sixth Oklahoma Legislature in 1957 again contained important proposals which did not receive favorable attention. The legislature did nothing to improve the administration of the general property tax, nor did it make any effort to revise the homestead exemption law which permitted many home owners in Oklahoma to escape payment of any ad valorem tax. State financing of kindergartens received no more attention than it had in preceding legislatures. On the other hand, the strong support by the PTA for more nearly adequate salaries for teachers and for sound financing of the Oklahoma Teacher Retirement System undoubtedly contributed to the substantial improvement in these two areas by the Twenty-sixth Legislature. Warm praise was given the Oklahoma Congress by OEA officials in public comments following the adjournment of the legislature.¹

The Twenty-sixth Legislature also enacted, with certain amendments, legislation long sought by the Oklahoma Congress in the field of child welfare. Mrs. W. Fred Scott, the state president, regarded the passage of three bills relating to the adoption and guardianship of minors as the major legislative accomplishments of the Oklahoma Congress

¹Interview with Mrs. W. Fred Scott, July 9, 1957.

in the Twenty-sixth Legislature. These included a licensing law for adoption agencies, a uniform adoption act, and prohibition of child trafficking.¹ Progress also was made in the matter of establishing additional juvenile courts in the state.

Efforts of organizations to promote legislation are cumulative and continuous rather than immediate and discrete. Success and failure are relative. It would be difficult to over-estimate the intangible effects of Oklahoma Congress legislative activity in terms of the education of its members and of the general public. Approaches to formulating legislative goals and techniques of promotion improved steadily throughout the post war period and indicated a more effective structure for the future. Many of the legislative successes of the organized teachers, particularly when special elections on referendum measures were involved, were achieved in large measure through the support given by PTA units throughout the state. The Oklahoma Congress secured certain needed legislation, but it also developed public opinion, educated its membership on good legislation and good citizenship, and developed the necessary promotional techniques, all of which were necessary prerequisites for successful pursuit of the "third objective."

¹Ibid.

CHAPTER XII

THE OKLAHOMA CONGRESS OF COLORED PARENTS AND TEACHERS

It is not the purpose of this study to write in detail the history of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers. It is important, however, to develop briefly the relationship of the Oklahoma Colored Congress to the Oklahoma Congress and to show how the two organizations finally were integrated in a single state branch.

Early Negro PTA Units

The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers had been founded only a few months when Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, the first state president reported, "The colored people over the state are begging us to help them light the torch for PTA."¹ Interest was unusually strong in the Negro schools of Muskogee where the local superintendent and Mrs. Slaughter were called "white angels" by one of the Negro leaders for their help in organizing a local Negro PTA unit in that city. Soon W. E. Day, principal of the Manual Training High School in Muskogee, issued a call to Negro people of the state to organize their own association under supervision of the Oklahoma Congress.

¹ Mrs. J. P. Slaughter, "Oklahoma Is Still on the Map," 1924 (Slaughter Files).

Mrs. Slaughter offered to help any Negro school by advising leaders on the proper way to conduct PTA affairs and to give them any of the PTA publications which might be helpful in organizing local PTA units, but the affiliation of Negro PTA units with the Oklahoma Congress was another matter. Mrs. Slaughter stated her position in these words:

If a Negro school is progressive enough to want a parent-teacher association in their school no one in the state work would think of hindering them in the least, but it of course is out of the question as to their affiliating with the state branch.¹

Mrs. Slaughter promised that she would take the initiative in organizing Negro PTA units into a state branch of their own when they achieved a total state membership of 500, the minimum requirement for national affiliation. She urged that local school superintendents immediately provide opportunity for Negro schools, in their cities, to organize PTA units.

The January, 1925 issue of the Oklahoma Parent-Teacher announced that a Mrs. J. A. Ashton of Edmond was "exceedingly anxious" to get in touch with every Negro PTA in the state. Mrs. Ashton apparently had been appointed by Mrs. Slaughter to assist in the organization of Negro PTAs. The announcement further stated that if fifty local Negro PTA units could be located a state branch would be perfected.² It is interesting to note that this organizational effort for Negro PTAs in Oklahoma preceded by one year the founding of the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers at the National Congress Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1926.

¹Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, May, 1924, p. 4.

²Ibid., January, 1925, p. 7.

Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents
and Teachers Organized

On February 11, 1927 a state meeting, initiated by W. E. Day, met in the Manual Training High School, Muskogee, Oklahoma. At this meeting the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers was formed. R. W. Clark, president of the Oklahoma Congress, and Mrs. Earl Foster, state organizer for the Oklahoma Congress, attended the meeting. Clark had served as the Oklahoma Congress "advisor" to Negro PTAs throughout the state and was very eager to help Negro leaders promote the organization of new units. Mrs. Nellie Stephens was elected president; Mrs. T. W. Grissom of Bristow, vice-president; Mrs. Vanilla Brown of Sapulpa, secretary; Mrs. A. T. Waring of Muskogee, assistant secretary; Mrs. H. P. Jacobsen of Oklahoma City, treasurer. A committee on constitution and by-laws was appointed consisting of Mr. E. M. Watson, Luther; Mr. W. E. Day, Sapulpa; Mrs. J. B. McCrutcheon, Boynton; Mrs. J. B. West and Mr. W. H. Fort, Okmulgee.¹

The charter members of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers came from twenty-nine units in the following cities: Sapulpa, Okmulgee, Oklahoma City, Muskogee, Beggs, Boynton, Wellston, Claremore, Luther, Ardmore, Bristow, Rentiesville, Grayson, Atoka, Wagoner, Coweta, Perry, El Reno, Guthrie, and Hartshorne.

Mrs. J. H. (Nellie M.) Stephens served as president until April 7, 1929 when she was succeeded by Mrs. Thomas W. Grissom of Bristow. Mrs. Grissom also served as national treasurer during four of her seven

¹Tedie O. Grissom, "History of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers," pp. 4-6. (Colored PTA Bulletin 1956-57, mimeographed, cited hereafter as "History of Colored PTA.")

years as state president. Mrs. Grissom's work was concerned with the building of the organization which continued to receive the support and encouragement of the Oklahoma Congress. She also tried to develop closer cooperation between Negro parents and teachers. In this she received much help from Dr. W. E. Anderson of Langston University who was the first executive secretary of the Oklahoma Colored Congress. Anderson assisted in all phases of the work, but was particularly effective in getting Negro fathers interested in PTA. Near the close of her administration, the Negro Congress selected Mrs. Grissom to establish the W. E. Day Fund. This was a memorial fund in honor of the founder who had died during Mrs. Grissom's administration.¹

The third president, Mrs. Eula Dobson, was elected in 1936 and served four years. The fourth president, Mrs. Velma Ashley, served from 1940 to 1944 during the time the Oklahoma Colored Congress "came of age." At the close of her administration nearly every Negro school in the state was served in some degree by the Oklahoma Colored Congress. Mrs. Ashley placed parent-teacher literature in all the schools whether they were members of the PTA or not. This increased the interest among the Negro schools. In some of the larger cities, the PTA council presidents encouraged and assisted with the organization of Negro units. Mrs. Guy Selfridge, president of the El Reno (white) PTA council reported to the state president in 1936 that the principal of the El Reno Negro schools had asked for help in organizing a PTA. "He is a very fine school man," she said, "and we have a fine Colored school, always willing to cooperate

¹Ibid., p. 6.

with us in any way."¹

Ira D. Hall became president in 1944. He was described as a man "full of youthful energy, interest and new ideas that were carried out successfully."² Under Mr. Hall's administration, the Oklahoma Colored Congress adopted a regional division of the state similar to that used by the Oklahoma Congress, except that six regions were used rather than four. Six leaders were appointed as regional "directresses" and regional meetings were held. Hall later became executive secretary of the Oklahoma Colored Congress and served in that capacity until the organization was integrated with the Oklahoma Congress in 1956.

Mrs. Beulah Ellsberry, the fifth state president of the Oklahoma Colored Congress, was both a parent and a teacher with many years of experience in PTA work. In her administration the W. E. Day Fund was placed under the administration of Langston University to be used as loans for college students.

The sixth president of the Oklahoma Colored Congress was Mrs. Gladys Dobson, a housewife from McAlester. The fact that she was the first non-teacher ever elected to that office indicated a broadening of the leadership base within the organization. During Mrs. Dobson's administration, the number of local Negro PTA units in the state increased from 62 to 123, and Negro PTA membership increased from 2,600 to 3,996. Mrs. Dobson had served six years as a local unit president and as a district president before her election as state president. Under her

¹Letter from Mrs. Guy E. Selfridge to Mrs. George E. Calvert, March 2, 1936 (Calvert Files).

²Tedie O. Grissom, "History of Colored PTA," p. 7.

leadership the Oklahoma Colored Congress received national honors for having the best mental health program of any state for 1953. Mrs. Dobson served on many national committees and received all honors awarded by the National Colored Congress for outstanding work of state presidents.¹

The seventh, and last, president of the Oklahoma Colored Congress was Mrs. Maggie Noble. Under the national theme, "Meeting Today's Challenge," the Oklahoma Colored Congress worked toward the successful implementation of the Supreme Court decision on segregation.

The National Convention of Negro PTAs was held at Langston University in June, 1954. The president of the (white) Oklahoma Congress was invited to extend greetings to the convention and ten members of the state board of managers attended sessions of the convention at the invitation of the Oklahoma Colored Congress.²

Members of the state board of managers of the Oklahoma (white) Congress often were invited to Oklahoma Colored Congress Conventions and in many instances one or more attended. Representatives of the Oklahoma Congress also attended district conventions of the Oklahoma Colored Congress. In addition to participation in meetings, the Oklahoma (white) Congress assisted the Colored PTAs from time to time by furnishing publications from the state office. These were not always the most recent publications, but they undoubtedly provided valuable supplementary materials for the Negro PTAs. Mrs. John A. Wadlin, field service director for the Oklahoma (white) Congress, also assisted the Negro group

¹Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), April 6, 1955, p. 9.

²National Congress, Proceedings, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1954, p. 217.

from time to time in its leadership training. The state convention of the Oklahoma Colored Congress was held in Okmulgee in 1954. Mrs. Wadlin conducted a school of instruction in connection with that meeting and later held a school of instruction for members of the state board of managers of the Oklahoma Colored Congress.¹

While white officers and board members often attended Negro PTA meetings and conventions, no instances were observed in news reports of white conventions and meetings in which Negro leaders were introduced as speakers or as platform guests. When the National Congress Convention came to Oklahoma City in 1953 an interesting situation developed. Negro delegates attending the convention from states which did not have segregation were accorded the same treatment as other convention guests. Pages were instructed to seat delegates where they wanted to sit and to embarrass none of the delegates because of their race. The Oklahoma Colored Congress, however, was not a branch of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. Officials in the Oklahoma (white) Congress decided to hold a special dinner meeting inviting officials of the Oklahoma Colored Congress, Negro delegates from non-segregated states, and state board members of the Oklahoma Congress who wished to attend. The stated purpose of the joint meeting was to discuss mutual problems, but undoubtedly a second purpose was to give state Negro PTA leaders some recognition in lieu of an unrestricted participation in the National meeting.

Some difficulty was experienced in securing adequate dining facilities for the integrated group. One major hotel in Oklahoma City

¹ Interview with Mrs. John A. Wadlin, June 26, 1957.

refused to serve the group, but the dinner was served by another. The fact that a special meeting had to be arranged in order for them to participate in the convention was not entirely satisfactory to some of the state Negro PTA leaders, and they declined invitations to attend the meeting. Apparently the meeting was a sincere effort on the part of Oklahoma (white) Congress officials to deal with the problem of segregation in Oklahoma and at the same time to give some recognition to Oklahoma Negro PTA leaders during the National Congress Convention.¹

Committee on Intercultural Relations

On April 28, 1948 the state board of managers authorized a joint committee of the Oklahoma Congress and the Oklahoma Colored Congress to work on the problem of intergroup relations. The board took this action at the request of Dr. O. W. Davison, chairman of the world citizenship committee.² After a series of discussions, a joint statement was prepared and issued by Dr. Davison and Ira D. Hall. It made the following announcement of objectives and pledge of cooperation:

In order to achieve better democratic outcomes, and to further the goal of mutual appreciation and human understanding, the joint committee of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers and the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers recommends that every effort be made by members of both organizations to find more effective methods of working together to achieve common goals.

Through united effort the two congresses pledge themselves to do all within their power to give each child within the state a better opportunity to develop good citizenship, health, sound ethical character, and command of fundamental processes.³

¹ Interview with Mrs. C. E. Scott, May 13, 1957.

² Minutes of the State Board of Managers, April 28, 1948.

³ O. W. Davison and Ira D. Hall, "Report of Committee on Intercultural Relations," unpagged (Matofsky Files).

The joint committee approved a continuation of the policy in which Oklahoma Congress furnished the Negro Congress with publications, exchanged such materials, and assisted in workshops and conventions. The committee recommended a permanent state committee with an equal number of representatives from each of the congresses to serve as a coordinating agency between them. It also recommended that local intercultural committees be formed, and that city and county councils invite representatives of the other local unit to attend meetings and participate in discussions.

This joint committee continued to function nominally, but its activities were revived in Mrs. Burkitt's administration and the membership was expanded to include Indians as well as members of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers for the discussion of minority problems. Meeting once each year, the committee prepared material for a study kit on brotherhood. The list of suggestions from this kit on how PTAs might work to promote brotherhood was requested by the National Congress committee on group relations for nationwide distribution.¹

While the accomplishments of this committee were unspectacular, the existence of such an approach to intercultural understanding for six years prior to the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation undoubtedly had considerable value in preparing the membership of both congresses for problems raised by the court decision. It should be pointed out, however, that nothing was done by the joint committee on the actual question of desegregation until after the Supreme Court

¹Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "Report of State President," 1952-1955 (Burkitt Files).

decision of May 17, 1954.¹

In November, 1954 Mrs. Burkitt gave emphasis to the court decision in a message on brotherhood. "We need many and first-class American citizens," she said, "no matter what the color of our skins." Mrs. Burkitt reviewed the history of the joint committee which she said had been working for several years toward a "mutual approach to minority problems." The committee had adopted as its theme and its purpose "Rearing children of good will." Commenting on the Supreme Court decision Mrs. Burkitt said:

The parent-teacher organization has no provision to limit membership. When schools are no longer separate, there will be no reason why local units should not open their doors to Negro parents and teachers if they live in the area which the school serves. There will be no reason why councils should not accept units in membership which consist in whole or in part of Negro members. It rests with the minds and hearts of parent-teacher members, both white and Negro, whether this adjustment will be made in a spirit of brotherhood designed to help "rear children of good will."²

Following the Supreme Court decision the group relations committee formulated a statement on the problem of integration. The committee report of April 14, 1955, encouraged "integrated community or church services with Indians, Negroes, and white fellowship." The report further stated: "Wherever service or civic clubs recognize students in their areas, that they be encouraged to include all schools in the community--White, Negro, and Indian."³

Included in the group relations committee report was the follow-

¹Interview with Mrs. John A. Wadlin, June 26, 1957.

²Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt, "President's Message, Brotherhood," Oklahoma Parent-Teacher, Vol. XXVII (November, 1954), p. 4.

³Leota Quiett, Secretary, "Report of Final Meeting of Group Relations Committee," April 14, 1955, p. 2 (Burkitt Files).

ing statement by Mrs. Joel L. Burkitt. It was based on the policy of the National Congress and adopted by the Oklahoma Congress. The text of Mrs. Burkitt's statement follows:

Inasmuch as the statement of policy adopted by the Board of Managers of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, May 22, 1954, states unequivocally, "realization of constitutional guarantees of citizenship requires the integration of all people" and inasmuch as the bylaws of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, which are in conformity with requirements laid down by the National organization and approved by the National Board of Managers, state: "Any person interested in the objects of the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers and willing to uphold its policies and subscribe to its bylaws may become a member upon payment of dues as hereinafter provided," So--

Guided by these policies and under the existing framework of the organization, when schools are no longer separate because of racial lines, all interested persons will then be eligible for membership in parent-teacher associations in Oklahoma.

The guiding principle of this statement shall be to assist communities to take action as they are ready for it and to strive always for the best interests of the children of all races. When schools in a school district or a county are no longer segregated, and when it is possible for parent-teacher membership to include all races--

1. Negroes will be accepted in membership in local PTAs.
2. PTAs attached to schools where students are predominantly or entirely Negro may join the Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers by the same procedure as is now prescribed for any group desiring to become a Congress unit:
 - a. Sending in bylaws for approval.
 - b. Sending list of elected officers to state office.
 - c. Sending to the state office the state and national portion of dues per capita.
3. City and county councils will accept all local parent-teacher associations into membership if the schools which they represent are within the same school district or county.¹

Had there never been a state Congress of Negro Parents and Teachers, the statement of policy undoubtedly would have been accepted by the large majority of Negro leaders in the state. But there was such a state organization with an executive secretary, a board of managers,

¹Ibid., pp. 2-3.

regional directors, and many other officers comparable in status, within their own organization, to those same officials within the new organization to which Negroes were now to be admitted. There also were certain traditions which had been developed within the Negro Congress which leaders felt might make a contribution if carried over into the integrated organization.

These matters were discussed by Negro leaders in their state convention at Okmulgee in 1954 and six objectives were formulated by the convention as a basis on which the Negro group hoped integration might be accomplished in parent-teacher organization. In the fall of 1955 a meeting of the joint intercultural committee was held in the YMCA in Oklahoma City. Integration of PTA membership was discussed for the greater part of the afternoon. The position of Oklahoma (white) Congress representatives was that membership was now open to all regardless of color, but that there was to be no merger of the two state congresses. Negroes were free to join as individuals but without regard to their previous status as officials within the Negro congress. The Negro congress officials felt that some consideration should be given in the matter of state offices to Negro leaders who had long demonstrated their abilities in PTA leadership.¹ They felt that the proposal of the white PTA leaders placed officers of the Oklahoma Colored Congress in the position of novices in the integrated organization. Having attained the highest elective positions in their own state branch, the Negro leaders were required to start again "at the bottom" and attempt to work upward

¹Interview with Ira D. Hall, Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma Colored Congress of Parents and Teachers, July 13, 1957.

through the processes of election in a predominantly white organization. No compromise was effected as the meeting adjourned in an atmosphere which was not particularly friendly. Nor was any compromise offered at a later date. The position adopted by the Oklahoma Congress apparently was that of the National Congress; the only question involved so far as Oklahoma Congress officials was concerned was the question of eligibility of membership. They felt entirely justified in declining to discuss any proposal that took on the nature of a merger of their organization with another group. The position taken by each organization was, of course, logical to that organization.

The action of the Oklahoma Congress cleared the way for accepting Negro members and units into the Oklahoma Congress, but it was necessary for the Oklahoma Congress of Negro Parents and Teachers to decide on the future status of that organization. "New Responsibilities in a Changing Society" was the theme adopted by the National Colored Congress and by the Oklahoma Colored Congress. Majorie L. Pierce, counselor of women at Langston University, urged members to join the Oklahoma Congress.

Meeting the challenge in an integrated school program immediately moves us from our complacency. Too long we have lived in our own little world. Now the time demands strength and courage.

Our children and our schools need us more than ever as we adjust to a new way of life. We cannot let anything deter us from our goal. We must join the new organization and work as we never worked before to help our children adjust to a new life situation.¹

Ira D. Hall, a member of the joint group relations committee and the executive secretary of the Oklahoma Colored Congress, reminded the

¹"PTA Bulletin," 1956-57 (Mimeographed, Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers), p. 2.

Negro PTA members:

. . . The responsibilities and obligations of the Negro parent have not increased or changed. They are the same responsibilities and obligations as ever except the environment is spreading into a larger culture.¹

Mrs. Ira D. Hall, writing on the subject of human relations praised the developing pattern of PTA integration in Oklahoma:

To date only reports of cooperation and friendliness have come from PTA units of former separate schools, and formerly of our Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers who have now joined the state Congress of Parents and Teachers. Likewise individual parents of Negro descent whose children are now attending all-white schools have been warmly received in the PTA units of the schools where their children are now enrolled. This is the² result of well-laid plans on the part of state leaders in the PTA.

Last Convention of the Oklahoma Colored Congress

On April 19 and 20, 1956 the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers held its twenty-ninth and final annual convention. The meeting was held in the auditorium of the Booker T. Washington High School in Enid, Oklahoma. The Carver elementary school in Enid was co-host to the convention. Mrs. Maggie Noble presided at the convention and at the special convention banquet held at 6:00 p.m. Thursday evening, April 19, in the Grayson Baptist Church. Guest speakers were Mrs. Ira D. Hall of Oklahoma City who spoke on "Mental Health," and Mrs. Cernoria D. Johnson, executive director of the Oklahoma City Urban League, who presented the convention theme, "Meeting Today's Challenge."³

The last session of the convention was held Friday afternoon, April 20. This business session of the convention followed a morning

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 26.

³The Black Dispatch (Oklahoma City), May 3, 1956, p. 1.

panel on the convention and an official welcome to the Oklahoma (white) Congress of Parents and Teachers given by Mrs. W. Fred Scott, president.¹ The convention voted to discontinue both the state and district organizations of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, leaving the way open for Negro parents and teachers to join the Oklahoma Congress. In view of the decision to terminate the organization, officers were not elected.² The executive committee of the Oklahoma Colored Congress was retained to accomplish the necessary work of discontinuing the organization. In fact, this group continued to meet on call as late as 1957. It had two primary functions; to write a summary of the history of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, and to safeguard the rights of Negro parents and teachers in non-integrated communities.³

The First Year of Integration in Parent-Teacher Organization

In dealing with the matter of integration in local parent-teacher organizations, the Oklahoma Congress adopted the policy that the local PTA should follow the practice of its local school and community. All Negro schools were eligible to form local PTA units, but the question of integrated PTAs at the local level depended on whether or not there was an integrated school. Integrated schools had integrated PTAs and held integrated local meetings. As Mrs. John A. Wadlin, the OCPT field

¹Official Program of the Twenty-Ninth Annual Session of the Oklahoma Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (Courtesy of Mrs. Gladys Dobson of McAlester).

²The Enid Morning News, April 21, 1956, p. 2.

³Interview with Ira D. Hall, July 13, 1957.

director, traveled over the state during the 1956-57 school year, Negroes participated in the majority of local schools of instruction conducted by Mrs. Wadlin and such participation was "without incident."¹ Mrs. Wadlin could recall only two communities in which objections were raised against the participation of Negro members.

Since the Oklahoma Congress made no inquiry nor record of the color of its members, it was not possible to discover the number of Negro members included in the 172,014 Oklahoma Congress members for 1956-57. Since PTA units take the name of the local school, it is apparent from the names included among the PTA units for 1956-57 that a substantial number of Negro schools and integrated schools formed Oklahoma Congress units. No difficulties were reported by Negro leaders in the matter of joining the PTA, but the extent of Negro participation at the state level in the first year of integration left something to be desired from some of the Negro leaders' standpoint. There was no participation by Negroes either as speakers or platform guests at the state convention;² there were no Negroes serving on the state board of managers or holding any state committee chairmanship within the Oklahoma Congress as of July, 1957.³ In the larger cities, however, Negroes had achieved positions of leadership in PTA councils, the first stepping stone to a place on the state board of managers.

At the time this study was completed (1957) sufficient time had not elapsed to determine the extent to which Negroes could achieve status

¹ Interview with Mrs. John A. Wadlin, June 26, 1957.

² Interview with Ira D. Hall, July 13, 1957.

³ Interview with Mrs. John A. Wadlin, June 26, 1957.

and position within the Oklahoma Congress commensurate with their ability and without regard to color. Progress undoubtedly had been made in one respect. A unified state organization existed. It provided a vehicle, an opportunity, and a challenge for parents and teachers regardless of color to work together in an effort to implement the joint-committee's slogan on intercultural relations, "rearing children of good will."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

It has been said that an institution which forgets its history is like an individual who has lost his memory; it faces the future without the guidance of past accomplishment or past failure. For the record of the past is the challenge of the future. This implies organizational stock-taking; an evaluation of accomplishments in terms of the stated goals for which the organization was founded. For thirty-five years the Oklahoma Congress has pursued five objects:

To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community.

To raise the standards of home life.

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

To bring into closer relation the home and the school that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.

To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.

These five objects could not have been pursued without the development of organization. Achieving the necessary organizational prerequisites to goal achievement, accordingly, became the first order of business when the Oklahoma Congress was founded in 1922, and the maintenance of those prerequisites involved, and involves, major effort.

Prerequisites for Achievement

In its first thirty-five years the Oklahoma Congress attained the following prerequisites for goal achievement: (1) a substantial and representative membership, (2) a competent and democratic leadership, (3) an informed and participating membership, (4) financial stability, (5) an adequate state headquarters and professional headquarters staff, (6) sound organizational structure and effective promotional techniques, and (7) procedures for continuous evaluation.

With a membership of more than 172,000 at the close of the 1956-57 school year, the Oklahoma Congress had grown beyond the most optimistic dreams of its founders. Its units were distributed over the entire state and its members came from all ethnic and socio-economic groups in the state. The existence of a competent and democratic leadership within the Oklahoma Congress in 1957 was not the result of chance. From its inception the organization never ceased to provide leadership training. It never indulged the naive hope that people who join organizations know the aims and goals of those organizations and possess the necessary leadership to achieve them. Conscious and persistent effort to educate leaders was productive in its working and cumulative in its effect. Continuous study and improvement of publications, conventions, schools of instruction, workshops, conferences, and local meetings advanced the goal of an informed and participating membership.

It was not until the post World War II period that the Oklahoma Congress achieved the financial stability to assure continuous publications, enrich the services of its state headquarters, employ an adequate headquarters staff, and support state wide projects independent of

special contributions. Throughout its history, and particularly in the post war period, the Oklahoma Congress diligently searched for better organizational structure and for more effective procedures and techniques for the democratic determination and achievement of goals. The committee organization and tested procedures for formulating legislative programs, for example, evolved from years of study and effort. Conceived with imagination and refined through practical use, they were consistent with the policies and democratic ideals of state and national associations.

The attainment and maintenance of these important prerequisites to organizational achievement involved tremendous organizational effort. The task was so great, in fact, that it often required the major effort of the Oklahoma Congress and thus encroached on the time available for actual pursuit of the ultimate goals of the organization. Bonaro Overstreet's figure of the PTA as a "sleeping giant," often quoted by Oklahoma Congress leaders to stir members to action, was an expression of concern that organizational achievement keep pace with organizational growth. But a more appropriate figure would have been that of a giant so diligently engaged in the necessary task of girding for the battle that he had not sufficient time to fight it.

Improving the Welfare of Children

The Oklahoma Congress performed outstanding welfare work in the depression, feeding and clothing hundreds of children and providing them with needed medical care. The summer round up of the children which began as a special, annual campaign to send beginners to school without remedial defects evolved in many communities to the development of com-

munity concern for continuous medical care of all children. Concern of the Oklahoma Congress for juvenile protection resulted in campaigns for better movies, literature, radio, and television and in the provision of recreational facilities for children in many communities. The cooperation of the Oklahoma Congress with the Oklahoma Society for Crippled Children, and the concern of the organization for the special education of exceptional children helped achieve important improvements in those fields. During World War II the Oklahoma Congress promoted nursery schools for working mothers and helped mitigate the effect of war time conditions on children.

Projects of the Oklahoma Congress for improving the learning situation produced tangible results. Even the questionable practice of PTA fund raising almost invariably had the worthy motive of immediate improvement in school supplies, library, equipment or the beautification of the building and grounds. The Oklahoma Congress joined in the effort to expand the use of audio-visual aids in the post war period. It launched a scholarship program to attract young people into the profession in an effort to ease the post war shortage of teachers. In these and other ways the Oklahoma Congress promoted the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community.

Raising the Standards of Home Life

Parent education classes, study groups, and schools for parents were outstanding activities of the Oklahoma Congress in its formative years. Later a Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education was launched in an effort to develop and coordinate a comprehensive state

wide program for the improvement of family life.

Under the able leadership of Dr. Alice Sowers, the Oklahoma Family Life Institute was launched in 1939 as the first state wide PTA project. Of its many contributions to the improvement of home and family life, three were particularly significant. The Institute served as an agency for unifying and expanding earlier programs of parent education, expanded the use of modern adult education techniques in parent education, and demonstrated the value of radio and other mass media in programs of family life education.

Securing Adequate Laws

Having overcome an early-day hesitancy and naivete in political activity, the Oklahoma Congress in 1957 showed signs of becoming a vigorous and effective champion of adequate legislation for children and youth. While maintaining a cooperative approach with allied agencies, the Oklahoma Congress no longer depended on those agencies to direct its legislative thinking but developed an excellent structure of its own for the democratic formulation of legislative goals and for the effective promotion of legislative programs. With the accent on the quality of citizenship displayed by members, legislative principles evolved which were defensible from the standpoint of good governmental policy. The volume of legislation enacted as a direct result of PTA promotion was not impressive, but in at least two referendum elections the Oklahoma Congress demonstrated its effectiveness at the polls. It was growing in stature with the state legislature and among the leaders of OEA.

Bringing into Closer Relationship
the Home and the School

The burgeoning membership of the Oklahoma Congress in the post war period evidenced a growing respect for the parent-teacher movement in Oklahoma. In a period of violent criticism of public education, Oklahoma was relatively free of the damaging hysteria which characterized the criticism of education in many communities in the United States. Several outstanding examples of cooperative study and planning for post war improvement in education, such as that noted in the Pauls Valley experiment, suggested the real potential of the Oklahoma Congress for the development of understanding between the home and the school.

The PTA and the Profession

In the early period of its history, the Oklahoma Congress found its organizers unsought if not unwelcome among the majority of the school administrators of the state. Fears of school administrators were well founded in those instances in which local units departed from state and national principles and usurped administrative functions of the superintendent or policy-making functions of the board of education. Such deviation from accepted PTA policy became increasingly uncommon as organizational maturity was achieved, and while the response of superintendents did not always keep pace with the change, few administrators in 1957 were openly hostile to parent-teacher organizations. The degree of administrative enthusiasm varied, but by 1957 most administrators accepted PTA as definite part of public education.

An important factor in the improved relations between the PTA and the profession was the existence within the Oklahoma Congress of a nation-

ally outstanding field service. In its program of cooperation with colleges, the Oklahoma Congress provided pre-service teacher education in parent-teacher work, and in schools of instruction throughout the state, it helped translate the ideals of state and national organization to the local unit, its individual leaders and members.

Miles to Go

Having achieved the remarkable feat of building an organization of more than 172,000 members, leaders of the Oklahoma Congress could easily become preoccupied in the future with the attractive and necessary task of promoting and maintaining the continued growth and functioning of the organization. But the future holds challenges for greater emphasis on goal achievement. ("The woods are lovely, dark and deep but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep.")¹ Some of the "miles to go" lie in the direction of organizational growth and improvement; but having achieved, in its first thirty-five years, the prerequisites to great accomplishment, the future beckons the Oklahoma Congress and bids it live up to its "great expectations" through goal achievement. Among the challenges of the future, the following seemed particularly significant.

1. While continuing to embrace within its objects an action front as broad as the problems and needs of children and youth, the Oklahoma Congress must achieve greater concentration of effort on specific tasks. A virtually endless array of worthwhile projects, indeed of crying needs, demand attention of the Oklahoma Congress and its many

¹From the poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," by Robert Frost.

local units. While special and standing committees exist with responsibilities in these many fields, the result often has been to diffuse leadership rather than concentrate effort. In the functioning of many committees there was not effective action; effort committed piece-meal along the entire battle line did not gain objectives. As an instrument for waging progress, the Oklahoma Congress must learn more effectively to reduce the war to battles, the battles to operations, and the operations to the mission for the day.

2. Communication presents the two-fold challenge of linking PTA members in a cycle of initiation, study, discussion, decision, execution, and evaluation of ideas within the organization, and of securing identification of the general public with the aims and programs of the organization. Publications, study kits, letters, radio and television, newspaper publicity, and face to face meetings do not necessarily result in communication; but their optimum development and skillful use offer the best hope of effective communication. Evaluation of communication within the organization and between the organization and the general public should receive primary consideration in the years ahead.

3. The Oklahoma Congress needs a professional salary scale, commensurate with qualifications, responsibilities, and duties, for professional members of its headquarters staff. The Oklahoma Congress has achieved effective use of both lay and professional leadership. But having recruited its professional staff primarily from its unpaid, volunteer leadership, the Oklahoma Congress has been able to operate an efficient state headquarters with a relatively modest financial outlay. While this was necessary and adequate procedure for a growing organiza-

tion, it is not becoming to the mature organization. It is unlikely that the professional personnel will continue to subsidize the headquarters operation. Eventually the quality of professional leadership within the state office may be expected to seek the level of the salaries paid.

4. Having removed the color barrier to PTA membership, the Oklahoma Congress is challenged to utilize the reservoir of Negro PTA leadership in an integrated association.

5. The greatest challenge to local PTA units is that of vital programs. PTA activity is adult education; it must serve the needs and interests of its local members. Meetings must have important purposes which are shared by those expected to attend, and programs must utilize good techniques of group discussion and incorporate modern methods of adult education.

6. Having developed vital programs of intrinsic value to members, the Oklahoma Congress of the future may find extrinsic motivation, which was used effectively in the past, increasingly unnecessary if not unwise. "Room count," "Toppers Clubs," "Acorn Awards," "Emerald Star Clubs," "Silver Seals," "Gold Seals," and many other similar awards or recognition for attendance or promotional work have a certain efficiency in getting some members to do things. But unless local programs, state programs, and PTA publications have the intrinsic values to attract and hold the interest of the membership, they labor in vain who plan them.

7. Without losing sight of broad legislative goals and sound policy, and while advocating a comprehensive legislative program, the Oklahoma Congress must concentrate effort on specific legislative

proposals at those critical moments which favor their enactment. Legislative proposals are not enacted simply because they are known to be favored by a majority of the citizens. The majority must be vocal. It must accept the challenge to serve as a counter-pressure group and actively promote constructive legislation in opposition to the programs of selfish interest groups. Legislation is a continuous process; there are no "permanent gains." Legislative problems cannot be solved and shelved; legislative goals must be attained and held. No greater potential exists in Oklahoma for effective promotion of sound legislation pertaining to schools and the welfare of children than that available through concerted action by the vast membership of the PTA.

8. The Oklahoma Congress undoubtedly will continue its efforts to balance the masculine-feminine leadership ratio. While the post war period has seen more men in leadership roles within the Oklahoma Congress and its local units, no one who studies the history of the Oklahoma Congress can escape the conclusion that, with few noteworthy exceptions, women have played the outstanding leadership roles in the first thirty-five years of organizational progress. To become an increasingly effective instrument of improvement, the PTA of the future must not be labeled in the minds of boards of education, legislators, or the general public as a mothers' organization.

9. In a society characterized by rapid change, the Oklahoma Congress must be ever sensitive and responsive to changing needs. The organization and its goals must be dynamic. There is a lesson to be learned by the Oklahoma Congress (and the National Congress for that matter) from the rapid growth of citizens' councils and citizens' com-

mittees for public schools following World War II. PTA members were citizens and all citizens were eligible for PTA membership. What did these local citizens' groups offer which might not have been the outgrowth of an adequate local PTA? That these citizens' committees and councils developed independently of PTA effort evidenced unsolved problems and unmet needs, and new groups arose within the nation, state, and community to deal with those problems and needs.

10. The Oklahoma Congress will profit from continued study of its relationship to other voluntary organizations and to governmental agencies and boards which have responsibilities or goals relating to home, school, and community. In addition to its cooperation with such agencies and its stimulation of additional groups to function in special areas, the Oklahoma Congress, when it is necessary and appropriate to do so, should furnish leadership in coordinating the efforts of the "family" of organizations in the state or community on matters pertaining to schools and to child welfare.

In its first thirty-five years the Oklahoma Congress met and solved the overwhelming task of building an effective organization and yet found time and energy to accomplish many improvements implied in its five objects. In its next thirty-five years may it achieve equally remarkable progress in goal development and achievement while finding the time and energy to maintain its vast and growing organization. This is the challenge of the future.

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