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Public opinion as related to the Omaha public schools

Don R. McMahon

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PUBLIC OPINION
AS RELATED TO THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by
Don R. McMahon

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the
Department of Education
of the
Municipal University of Omaha

1944

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PREFACE --ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The need for a reliable reference text in the field of public relations which would lend guidance to educators has long been apparent. It is our hope that ultimately this scientific approach to the problem will lend itself to those who enter the teaching profession teeming with ambition and idealistic theory, yet unskilled and unversed in the art of public relations. For the administrator who finds himself perplexed and unable to meet the daily challenges made by pressure groups, such a study would be of high value. This, then, marks the first step toward the creation of such a contribution.

It is difficult to acknowledge in full the many kindnesses which have been extended by those who feel that a study of public relations in connection with the Omaha Public Schools is worthy. On every hand, it has been gratifying to note the keen display of interest when the problem is introduced. Not only have educators been very willing to provide assistance, but social agencies, local and state labor unions, church groups, industrial leaders, business men, advertising executives, newspaper executives, and certain political men as well have given valuable viewpoints.

Foremost among the educators have been Dr. L. O. Taylor, Department of Education; Dr. T. Earl Sullenger,

Department of Sociology; and Dr. W. H. Thompson, Department of Psychology, and others of the Municipal University of Omaha faculty. As members of the graduate committee, R. M. Marrs and Fred Hill have given aid. The late Henry M. Eaton, superintendent of Douglas County schools, was very kind. All secondary school principals of the Omaha Public Schools made suggestions in setting up the questionnaire. In addition to Fred Hill, principal of Central High School, and R. M. Marrs, principal of South High School, we must thank Miss Mary McNamara, principal of Benson High School, and Dwight E. Porter, principal of Technical High School. The late E. E. McMillan, principal of North High School, was very helpful.

Interest in the progress of the survey was manifested by Dr. Donald Tope of the superintendent's staff, and Leon O. Smith, assistant superintendent. Lester M. Beal, formerly of the university faculty, built an evening course, "Community and the School," around salient features of the questionnaire. To him we are indebted for certain survey findings at the mid-point of this four-year study.

Data and techniques were supplied by the Omaha Council of Social Agencies, the Omaha Community Chest, the Bureau of Advertising, and the World Publishing Company. J. J. Gunther, head of the Omaha Central Labor Union and the Nebraska State Federation of Labor, and J. E. McKimney, president of the Omaha Typographical

Union, have emphasized labor's foster-parent interest in public education. Floyd F. Mellen, assistant general advertising manager, and John Prell, classified advertising manager, Omaha World-Herald, encouraged use of the Bureau of Advertising technique. Clyde C. Minnis, advertising manager, Times-Herald, Washington D. C., lent guidance in graphing statistical data. Of the Omaha World-Herald Promotion Department, Wesley Summers and Robert Laird displayed a functional technique of manipulating public opinion. It was our privilege to observe and participate in a World-Herald campaign to collect scrap metal for victory--a drive which brought national recognition and the Pulitzer Prize.

As president of the Omaha Junior Chamber of Commerce, Glenn Cunningham has displayed the young businessman's interest in bettering the status of public education in Omaha.

To these and all others we extend our sincere appreciation. If this device does not become, as all have suggested, a Continuing Study of Opinion as Related to the Omaha Public Schools, then the fault is that of the author. Should it succeed, all credit is due those who have so graciously helped.

-- The Author

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The future growth of the Omaha Public School System depends greatly upon its status as related to public opinion. This study is an effort to determine that status through employment of a random survey technique, and to explore the possibilities which lie within propaganda and public relations procedures. Further determination of status is possible through examination of documentary evidence published during the 1939 school mill levy election.

America's public schools, supported by taxation, are very subject to the will of the electorate. Free public education is sustained only to the degree that the people are enlightened.

The pattern through which public will is exercised has assumed the form of committees, trustees, and boards of education chosen chiefly at popular elections. Public opinion also exercises its influence through bond issue and tax levy elections, and by the general climate of opinion operating within a given community. 30

Public opinion forms itself in a given time and place under the stimulation of social forces. To understand the nature of this opinion it is necessary to deal with parents directly and through such agencies as the Parent-Teacher group. To this has been added the random poll. 30

More than a score of school problems will be put to the decision of 544 adult Omahans, and a trend of sentiment at least will be produced for consideration.

Having ascertained this public opinion as related to the Omaha Public Schools, what is the next step? Should experimental measures be continued if the public seems favorably inclined? If the public is vague, or hostile, should an educational program of enlightenment be inaugurated?

Such action within a community is determined, of course, by the nature of the school administrator. Whether his philosophical concepts are those of the idealist, the pragmatist, or the realist, it must be assumed that he will appreciate the manifest needs. His course of action, the degree of vigor and acumen displayed, will indicate his personal philosophy and upon this much depends. "He cannot be all things to all persons concerned without losing the respect of a large proportion of those with whom he deals." 25

Philosophy

Plato pointed out that every form of government tends to perish by excess of its basic principle. "Even democracy ruins itself by excess of democracy. The right of all to hold office and determine public policy is a delightful arrangement; but it would be disastrous because people are not all properly equipped by education to select the best rulers and the wisest courses." 10

The people, Plato insists, have no understanding, and only repeat what their rulers tell them. To get a doctrine accepted it is only necessary to have it praised

or ridiculed in public. The protector of the people rises to supreme power swiftly. 10

H. G. Wells has fired this broadside at all democracies:

Our world today is still far from solving the problem of representation and from producing a public assembly which will really summarize, crystallize, and express the thought and will of the community; our elections are still largely an ingenious mockery of the common voter who finds himself helpless. 40

Such is the somewhat negative view as given by a philosopher and an historian. But a very characteristic curiosity, a spirit of inquiry typical of America, leads us on. What has been the history of propaganda? What do other philosophers say?

History and Philosophy

It seems that propaganda has existed since the first human made his first signs of communication. Surely we find it used in the Crusades, in the Reformation and Counter Reformation, in the Puritan Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Russian Revolution. In the earlier Roman world there is evidence that organized propaganda had its share in the spread of the Egyptian Isis and the Persian Mithras worships until they were the dominant religions in the first two centuries of the Empire. Julius Caesar seems to have relied upon Aulus Hirtuis to assist in keeping his military exploits before the public. Alexander the Great certainly influenced the historical work of Kallisthenes which fostered his propaganda of

divinity. The verses of Solon of Athens (594 B. C.) have also been cited as an early example of the use of literature for political propaganda and public instruction. 22

Sir Francis Bacon evaluated propaganda as a very evil thing:

Untruths must be exposed. Man's sense is to be falsely standard in all things. Because some heavenly bodies are said to move in circles, we must not say that all heavenly bodies move in circles. But these are Idols of the Tribe. It is not possible for men to have the same views because of the Idols of the Den. Words, Idols of the Market, do not mean what they say. Systems of living are so many stage plays, more elegant than true. 10

Definitions

Before proceeding, it is best to clarify what is meant by the many terms which enter this study. There is at once utter confusion in words (see Idols of the Market, above) when we attempt to define "public mind." It is indeed a phenomenon which appears to be the result of propaganda. Let us then define propaganda, as:

Propaganda is any organization for the spreading of a particular doctrine or system.

and proceed to an examination of the many interpretations and evaluations of the term.

According to the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, it is:

The expression of opinions or action by individuals or groups, deliberately designed to influence opinion or action of other individuals or groups with reference to pre-determined ends. 17

Gustave Le Bon evaluates it in this fashion:

"The errors of a doctrine do not hinder its propagation, so that all we have to consider is its influence upon men's minds." 23

Arthur B. Moehlman, editor of The Nation's Schools, writes:

Propaganda may be considered as those individual or group efforts, including attitudes, opinions, or actions, that seek to convert other individuals, or groups, to the maintenance of old or the acceptance of new attitudes, beliefs, or actions through open or secret methods for the purpose of helping or injuring a person, cause, or an institution. 29

Moehlman's view of the status of propaganda may be considered here and later. "The leadership responsibility of educators means that the profession must always be ready to present to the people complete and unbiased information concerning the conditions and needs of their educational institutions." 29

More sentiment favoring constructive use of propaganda is observed as we find Woodrow Wilson often quoting Edmund Burke as follows:

Public duty demands and requires that what is right should not only be known, but made prevalent; that what is evil should not only be detected, but defeated. 21

If propaganda creates the phenomenon known as the public mind, how is this done? Aristotle apparently held some vague understanding of what is known today as the psychology of learning, 10 but it is more clearly expressed by Leonard W. Doob in his "Psychology of Propaganda" as follows:

Repetition of the same or similar stimulus-situations enables the propagandist to re-arouse the desired integration of attitudes. He may vary the content by changing the stereotypes, and re-inforce integration with related attitudes. The propagandist prevents the desired integration from remaining latent or from disintegrating through the principle of re-inforcing. 9

This need for mutual relationship in learning is also noted by T. R. McConnell in his "Reconciliation of Learning Theories." 27 A stereotype represents the knowledge which men imagine they possess. 9 And such a stereotype lends itself nicely to the process of accurately manipulating public opinion since the degree of relationship seems high.

Routes to the public mind are many. An excellent summary is found in "Words That Won the War," 28. The blueprint is as follows:

Channels of Publicity

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| News | Advertising | Civic Co-Operation |
| Periodicals | Billboards | Exhibits |
| Newspapers | Posters | Religious Groups |
| Radio | Films | Welfare Groups |
| Speakers | Scenarios | Minutemen |
| Script | Cartoons | |
| Press | | |

Delimiting the study to avenues or channels of approach which lend themselves to creating public opinion regarding public schools, we find this problem treated specifically by Alexander and Theisen in their "Publicity Campaigns for Better School Support."

Under present conditions in most school systems, publicity campaigns are advisable in connection with all efforts to secure any increased school support.

Avenues of approach are meetings and speakers; the press; advertising; objective demonstrations of school work; personal campaigning; school surveys; visits to the school by prominent people; endorsements of school work or policy; letters and post cards; petitions; advance polling; active workers; instructions to voters. 36

The authors offer a psychological basis for such a campaign. "Build all on the proposition that the people of the community wish to do the right thing by the children, and that they will make any necessary sacrifices to this end if needs are clearly and convincingly shown.

"Make the good of the children the paramount issue.

"Subordinate this in particular to all considerations of the cost. Let the school authorities appear to be speaking for the whole people on school matters, and not in the interests of any special class." 36

The wealth of definitions is endless. It must be assumed, however, that added points of view will help this study in its approach to the problem. More and more, public relations appears to be the skill of manipulating public opinion through the use of propaganda techniques. That emotions must be considered is emphasized by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis:

Propaganda is related to human hatreds, fears, aspirations, and traditions. Certain ideas arouse our emotions quite automatically without our knowing why, and mental conditions like anxiety and frustration can be utilized by the propagandist to direct people's hatreds for his own ends. "Good" causes and "bad" can be popularized likewise, by the emotion-stirring use of symbols. 17

Even wars are the result of the skilled use of propaganda. That it was applied to the German people is

suggested in "Propaganda for Blitzkrieg" as follows:

When we cannot achieve the goals we seek, we are frustrated. Some individuals become shy, lose their morale, give up. Others express their frustration by becoming aggressive, or they seek other goals. To the successful propagandist, dissatisfied people are made to order. He offers new goals for which they can pitch in and work--goals which seem to them to provide a way out of their troubles; or he shows them how to express their aggression and thus obtain a feeling of some accomplishment. 17

There is no single formula for discovering why people think and act as they do. Their thinking is most certainly regulated by propaganda. The advertising man knows how effective his campaign has been when the sign of the dollar looms large. Wilder Breckenridge recently told members of the National Dry Goods Association:

The windows of your stores are designed to do three things--
1) To accurately reflect the character of your business;
2) To bring people off the street into your aisles; and
3) To sell specific items of merchandise. 4

Termining the Continuing Study of Newspaper

Reading (which technique is used in this study) a research into the human mind, he continued:

Department store advertising, particularly for style merchandise and the better class specialty shops, enjoys two distinct advantages in attracting reader attention--
1) Readers look for department store advertising because they have become accustomed to see it in their newspapers. They are familiar with the store, with its policies, and with the kind of merchandise it carries, and this familiarity carries over to the store's advertising; 2) Women approach the advertising of high style merchandise with two interests to be served, a style interest--in other words, they want to see what is being worn and what will be worn--and second, an active buying or shopping interest. The newspaper is by all odds the heaviest traveled street in each of your towns. Design your advertisements with that in mind.

While many sociological facts lie back of the attitudes unearthed by the National Education Association Research Division, we may at least speculate now on the nature of the public mind as related to public schools in Omaha. The following data seem pertinent:

Proportionately more of the better-educated favor much freedom of discussion.

On questions involving need, the benefits that may be expected apparently exert a special influence on opinions. Although a majority of groups favor educational aid for the poorer families, the lower economic groups show marked approval; the highest economic group shows relatively more opposition to the proposal.

When it comes to questions of fact, the educational level of groups again exerts special influence upon responses.

Where respondents have no definite opinions, they are likely to state opinions colored by their attitudes toward education in general. 30

It seems logical to assume that the Omaha public will think along these lines. There is no unique status here to indicate a departure from the normal pattern, that of living, experiencing propaganda stimuli, and forming opinions.

Many factors indeed play a part in forming the public mind. Urban or rural geographic locale, economic status, age, sex, color, and political affiliation all make up the public mind. But covering these factors is a veil of propaganda which appeals to the individuals in terms of such bases. The businessman checks the skill of his hired propagandist by reading sales charts and indices. The schoolman may check the skill of his system by noting the success or failure of any school

issue when the electorate acts upon it at the polls. Too often, the schoolman checks infrequently, and verges on bankruptcy as a result. It is with this that we are concerned.

To summarize, the public mind is a phenomenon of propaganda. Public relations is the art of applying propaganda. And propaganda itself is any organization for the spreading of a particular doctrine or system.

The Problem

What is the status of the Omaha Public Schools in terms of public opinion? What technique will lend itself to accurately estimating this public phenomenon as related to the public schools? And, last, will the propaganda devices of business become applicable within the Omaha schools?

Delimitations

Of necessity, a graduate thesis must confine itself to a limited examination of specific data or issues. Trends may be noted which will lead to a more complete investigation, and that is the purpose of this study. Many assumptions must be made since adequate financial support for full inquiry is lacking; also, the process of adequate analysis in the field of public relations calls for the full-time employment of an expert, plus a trained staff, and a well-equipped laboratory.

Such physical delimitations make it certain that this cannot, for example, be a sociological study of Omaha similar to "The Madison Community." 26

The national techniques of established surveys cannot be employed. Elmo Roper; 12 George Horace Gallup; 14-33 William G. Carr, Hadley Cantril, Paul T. David; 30 the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Denver; and many others are currently examining the public mind on a national scale with consistent validity. But their processes are beyond reach at this time.

The study cannot deal long with the philosophical aspects of the use or non-use of propaganda. Nor can any of the basic sciences and pseudo-sciences be considered completely. The statisticians as well must await the acceptance of a public relations program in Omaha before detailed analysis of trends is undertaken.

What, then, is to be done? First, ascertain the status of the Omaha Public Schools as evidenced in the most recent school election wherein opposition was clear-cut, wherein documentary evidence will sustain assumptions and permit conclusions. Second, employ a reliable technique for sampling public opinion at random on pertinent school problems. Third, interpret findings and evaluate the use of propaganda in a program of enlightenment.

Here, too, we must delimit the interpretation of the Bureau of Advertising findings. Percentages given favoring and opposing more than a score of school problems are not necessarily the total opinion of Omaha. Viewed

rather as the opinions of 544 adults, the findings become more scientific. While businessmen would accept such percentages as relatively true of the whole community, it behooves us to maintain a scientific attitude and proceed cautiously. If continued surveys of this type indicate validity, then a more general acceptance will be in order.

Since the Bureau of Advertising technique is not available to the public, an exploration of its use and its value is now in order.

The Continuing Study of Newspaper Reading has much prestige backing it. Members of the Board of Directors of the Advertising Research Foundation include: John Benson, American Association of Advertising Agencies; Lee H. Bristol, vice-president, Bristol-Myers Company; Allan Brown, advertising manager, Bakelite Corporation; Richard Compton, president, Compton Advertising, Incorporated; Chester J. La Roche, president, Young and Rubicam, Incorporated.

When the published findings of George Gallup indicated a high degree of validity, the American Newspaper Publishers' Association determined to make available to editors, retail advertisers, and national advertisers factual information gleaned from a simple adaptation of the Gallup method. It was to be local in nature, and would not attempt to survey more than the area supplied by the circulation of a single newspaper.

Wilder Breckenridge explained the technique to businessmen as follows:

In line with scientific integrity, we approached the Advertising Research Foundation, which is jointly sponsored by the Association of National Advertisers and the American Association of Advertising Agencies, and suggested that the findings by the Bureau of Advertising be turned over to the Foundation. The first study under this program was made July 27, 1939.

The actual field work, or interviewing, is done by Publication Research Service of Chicago, formerly known as the Gallup Research Service, under the direction of Carl J. Nelson and Harold H. Anderson, co-founder with Dr. Gallup of the American Institute of Public Opinion.

Actually, the method is comparatively simple. If you don't think this technique doesn't work, I suggest you try it on yourselves. You will be astounded at the accuracy. 4

Since the Continuing Study of Newspaper Reading deals with facts of readership--a single issue of one newspaper being analyzed thoroughly, Breckenridge went on to illustrate how a random reader may remember which departments of the newspaper were read first, second, third, and so on. Since advertisers are concerned with male and female trade, this single factor was included as a "control" in the questioning. Apparently no thought is given to the complete sociological status of the informant. Skilled interviewers, of course, are careful to select such readers at random.

A sample of between 200 and 250 men and an equal number of women has been determined to be statistically adequate to give results which will vary only minutely from those which would be secured from an infinitely larger sample. Let me remind you that the best research brains in the advertising business have approved it, after careful study. 4

THE CONTINUING STUDY OF NEWSPAPER READING

Random sampling of 400 to 500 adults is accepted as evidence of the readership habits of the populations given. Circulation figures are for a single edition, and do not necessarily indicate the total coverage of newspapers.

Index of Reports

| Newspaper | Date | Circulation |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Akron Beacon Journal... | July 27, 1939..... | 97,790 |
| 2. Memphis Commercial Appeal... | August 10..... | 115,401 |
| 3. South Bend Tribune... | August 24..... | 66,689 |
| 4. Decatur Herald... | September 8..... | 20,624 |
| 5. The Kalamazoo Gazette... | September 21..... | 30,583 |
| 6. The Cedar Rapids Gazette... | October 5..... | 42,443 |
| 7. St. Paul Pioneer Press... | October 19..... | 81,537 |
| 8. The Hamilton Spectator... | November 2..... | 56,220 |
| 9. The Daily Oklahoman... | November 16, 1939..... | 101,154 |
| 10. Evening World-Herald... | December 7..... | 87,831 |

Study Number 10, source of these figures, like all other studies conducted by the Advertising Research Foundation is highly confidential in nature. No portion may be reproduced or published without written permission of the Advertising Research Foundation. This study may be seen at the Promotion Department of The Omaha World-Herald. Private subscriptions are available at \$200 yearly.



Delimitation of the survey questionnaire before it was used was made by the heads of the five secondary schools in Omaha. Twenty-five questions constituted the questionnaire. Surveys were made in 1940 and in 1944, while in 1942 a similar study was made by students who were enrolled in "Community and the School," Education 400X at the Municipal University of Omaha. Eight of the 1942 questions are correlated with the percentages of 1940 and 1944.

The school campaign to raise the tax levy by two mills in 1939 is selected for analysis.

Thus, with minor additional limitations, the stage is set for an examination of Omaha's school system and what the public thinks of it.

Reason for Selection of Problem

A gloating summary on the part of the opposition at the close of the 1939 school campaign marked the start of this study. Read here the headlines which appeared in a national real estate magazine:

\$2700 STEMS AN OMAHA TAX TIDE

With Odds Heavily Against It, the Omaha Real Estate Board Works Fast to Take the Wind Out of a Militant School-Tax Increase Campaign

After a discussion of the methods used in the campaign to defeat the school increase, Rudy C. Mueller, then secretary of the Omaha Real Estate Board, emphasized that there was no apparent need for more money for the

public schools, and concluded: "As a result, the Omaha Real Estate Board has placed itself in a very effective position with Omaha taxpayers. The entire cost of the board's campaign was \$2700." 13

To anyone interested in promotional activities, as was the author who had observed Omaha's school program for 30 years, it was apparent that a highly skilled worker was propagandizing against the schools. We came to know this person, and to somewhat admire his abilities. His barbed jests during the miserable give-and-take of the 1939 campaign stimulated again the present study.

There is also authoritative basis for selection of the problem:

Under present conditions in most school systems, publicity campaigns are advisable in connection with all efforts to secure any increased school support. There is probably not one school system in a hundred where the people can be induced to vote increased school taxes for the amount needed without a well-directed and vigorous campaign of publicity. 36

It is a well-established principle of business practice that in order to successfully develop any enterprise, a campaign of advertising and publicity must be carried on. 32

"The need for making a successful technique available for others is all the more urgent since we have strong evidence that in most instances the amount of money spent in a community for public schools depends mainly upon how well the cause of the schools is presented to the public by school authorities." 37

Walter Lippmann 24 points out that men in a complicated world cannot have an accurate picture of reality; consequently they construct a picture of that world which pleases themselves. And Doob says a stereotype represents the knowledge which men imagine they possess. This is formed through certain suggestions:

Suggestion results from the manipulation of stimulus situations in such a way that, through the consequent arousal of pre-existing related attitudes, there occurs within the mental field a new integration which would not have occurred under different stimulus situations. 9

Surely the people of Omaha were accepting a stereotyped school system, one that was not true nor accurate. This stereotype was inflicted skillfully, in accord with all the laws of learning:

The propagandist prevents the desired integration from remaining latent or from disintegrating through the principle of re-inforcing. 9

Attitudes, Doob further revealed, may be ascertained by interviewing or submitting questions to a random or selected sample. This, then, would become a part of the study of why Omaha refused to increase its support of its school system.

Probable Contribution

It is our hope that the devices used in this study will lend themselves to a Continuing Study of Public Opinion as Related to the Omaha Public Schools. However, there are many difficulties to surmount. Just as the people of Omaha have accepted a stereotyped school system in lieu

of any real knowledge, so have those who are primarily concerned: the teachers. Examination of files of the Forum Quarterly, pamphlet of the Omaha Teachers' Forum, will disclose that hundreds of committees have been assigned the problem of "public relations," "taxes," "bond drives," and similar issues. The stereotype here seems to be that once a committee is appointed, the problem is met.

Other factors are negative. The locale of Omaha as a midwestern city in an agricultural belt, the domination of vested interests, the lack of rugged leadership among educators, the monopoly of press and radio, conflicting religious views, and the absence of class consciousness may be cited.

On the promising side is the interest of organized labor in improved public schools, the formation of an aggressive Omaha Federation of Teachers, the encouragement of youthful leaders in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the very personal interest displayed by advertising men, the devotion of certain mothers to Parent-Teacher Association activities; and, to crystallize these factors, the apparent resolve to seat liberal members on the Board of Education. Once the Board of Education permits the administrator to employ a skilled public relations director, the school child in Omaha will benefit.

Much of the study has necessarily been given to defining terms, stating the problem, the technique, the reasons for selection, and estimating the contribution. Now that certain stereotypes have been exposed, we are prepared to examine the election of 1939 as our first step.

CHAPTER II

One View of Public School Status

The status of the Omaha Public Schools may be sampled by selecting the most recent school election wherein opposition was clear-cut, wherein documentary evidence will sustain assumptions and permit certain conclusions regarding trends. In Chapter III a reliable technique will be used to sample certain adult opinions at random as related to school problems which were generally brought out during that election. In Chapter IV findings will be interpreted, and an evaluation will be made of the possible use of propoganda techniques by the schools.

Discussion of the 1939 election will be carried on descriptively. It would not be possible to sense "the heat of a political campaign" through any other treatment. However, scientific data will not be passed by. Such propogandizing skills as appeal to the emotions would be lost to this study through a purely scientific examination at this point. Proceed, then, to the 1939 election with the point of view held by the Omaha citizen who has little real interest in his school system.

The 1939 Election

As the Spring term of school drew to a close in 1939, Omaha parents heard astounding things about the conduct of their teachers. To be sure, depression wages were still in force, and the inroads sociologically and economically

were great. School budgets had felt the pressure on a national scale, and large numbers of children were attending school without adequate food or clothing. 20

Some teachers, to be sure, were giving portions of their salaries to make good the most serious deficiencies, but no alarming changes in the stereotyped school were apparent. Newspaper stories told of 135,000 city school children in New York who were too weak and under-nourished to profit through school attendance--but that was in New York, not in Omaha.

Private sources were certainly not crippled. Bonds and federal notes had been over-subscribed six times. Funds for continued investments were available. Apparently this was but a passing condition which would surely end at vacation time.

But school children continued to carry tales home, stories of teachers who spent the entire day talking about such things as taxes, the cost of living, closing the schools for several months, a shortened school year, and the coming election. And the tornado of activity cast before it a barrage of cheap handbills which stated: "Vote for two mills to help our school." Could there be something behind all this? How much was two mills anyway?

Members of the Omaha Real Estate Board (protectors of the weak) stepped forward to explain. When the chairman of the board, a fairly active P.-T. A. member, concluded one real estate meeting he carried with him a brand new slogan: "Taxes must be spiked--not hiked!" The realtors were not

in favor of the issue, and seemed determined to fight it.

Catholics were instructed to vote against the public school tax increase. 38 Labor apparently had not been consulted, so leaders said little, although the labor press accepted paid advertisements from all comers. Most of this advertising opposed the issue, hence most laboring folk were so influenced.

Emotional upheavals were apparent on all sides. Children of public and parochial schools fought it out on the sidewalks and in the alleys. Housewives stopped their friendly chats with teachers' wives. Landlords refused to have teacher renters on the premises. Property owners told teachers they could not erect yard signs favoring the issue. Certain businessmen ceased to extend credit ratings to teachers.

The citizen who possessed real property, but had no children of school age, felt that he saw the handwriting once again. He would be asked to pay more taxes, just because the teachers couldn't manage what they had. And he wouldn't pay more, not by a jugful!

The real estate committee used radio scripts, made addresses to civic clubs, issued pamphlets, and purchased large display space in all local publications. The teachers attempted to duplicate this process, but the impression was not equal to that made by the "defenders of the small home owner," the real estate men.

THE TRUE VOICE

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REV. PATRICK J. MORAN

Editor and General Manager

GEO. F. McSHANE, Advertising Director



NOT IN FAVOR

We never like to "knock" any cause that we consider worthy for the good of our community. We have been asked to boost for the public school levy of two mills additional tax for the Omaha public schools. We cannot see our way to favor this additional tax. Keep in mind we are not opposed to the public schools.

Bear in mind the Catholic schools of Omaha have taken a heavy load financially off the public school funds. The Catholic schools receive no financial aid from the public tax. Not only that. The Catholics are doubly, if not triply, taxed. The Catholic schools are supported by Catholics alone. The Catholic people also pay tax levy for the public schools. Then again the Catholic school teachers receive but a pittance of salary, not over twenty-five dollars a month. Light, heat, water and all other incidentals that have to be met by the public schools have to be met by the Catholics alone for their schools. The standard required by the State for the public schools is met, if not surpassed, by the Catholic schools. We do not want to be considered partial, but facts are facts. The Omaha Real Estate Board, after carefully considering the proposition, is of the opinion that it is for the best interest of the public schools and their value in building a greater city and the future of Omaha that the proposed fifteen percent boost in school taxes be defeated on June 6.

Naturally the parents in Omaha want the best public schools they can afford. Omaha has a splendid school system and it must be maintained within the capabilities of homeowners to pay. Then certainly Omaha cannot afford to harm its school system or community standing by increasing taxes. The manager of a business industry which is going in the "red" would be considered inefficient if he hired more employes to force his business concern deeper in the red with no practical solution to strengthen the industry.

Now in justice to all, consider the following facts.

The public school system's financial position is better than anticipated because collection of school taxes up to May 1st of this fiscal year has increased \$85,000 over the same period last year. The number of pupils in the grades has declined over 2,400 the past three years.

Omaha property owners—including those owning real estate, furniture and automobiles—are paying \$37.80 per \$1,000 valuation, the highest levy in the city's history. The property tax levy has increased over 40 per cent since 1925. Higher taxes probably would mean no increase in collection.

Delinquent school taxes amount to **TWO MILLION DOLLARS** and a major part of these unpaid taxes can be collected. A concentrated effort to collect from tax dodgers should be made before the tax burden is increased.

Business conditions and the crop outlook at present do not warrant any hike in taxation. Rainfall in Nebraska this year is 50 per cent below normal and farm prices are at rock bottom. The Nebraska legislature is considering a 10 per cent reduction in the state's budget.

An efficiency survey by experts, and a cost analysis of all departments, should be made before any tax raise is considered. The result: A better school system at minimum cost. We want the best schools we can afford, but we do not favor a further increase in taxes which we cannot afford.

Have we Catholics a right to protest this two mill raise for the public schools? Judge the following statement for yourselves:

Operation of 112 Catholic elementary and high schools in the Omaha Diocese alone last year saved no less than one million dollars on the Nebraska Tax Bill for Public Education and furthermore saved \$62,000 in the City of Omaha alone. The savings to tax payers are based solely on instructional costs and do not include expenditures for debt service or for improvements. With those cold statistical facts, we see no reason why we should support additional taxes on the citizens of Omaha.

In cold truth are we Catholics not justified in opposing this additional tax? Tax payers of Omaha, the matter is in your hands, but you must vote. Otherwise the increase will be levied.

See
page
20

This appeal by the realtors had dramatic appeal:
PROPOSED 15 PER CENT TAX INCREASE WOULD HIT YOUR HOUSEHOLD
GOODS, PERSONAL PROPERTY, AUTOMOBILE, REAL ESTATE!

Introduced into the campaign was an individual whom the propagandist might term "the fall guy." He was the stereotyped tax dodger, the little man who is never there at the tax payment window. (It is interesting to note that he has never been found, during an election, nor after.) Whether he represented the combined two million dollars in delinquent taxes, whether he represented real estate holders who evaded tax payment through buying up their own holdings at tax auctions, and whether he was the big businessman who notoriously submits a tax estimate that would make Aunt Emma blush--is all conjecture. It appeared, however, that two million dollars in taxes were due. That, the opposition was agreed, would be the solution. Collect back taxes! Get right after the treasurer of Douglas County. Get after the sheriff! But don't raise the mill levy.

Incidentally, and while we're so interested in our schools, they said, it might not be a bad idea to look into the conduct of our teachers, principals, and the superintendent's office. Is it possible that some funds are not being properly administered? H-m-m? At once, the pace of the school teachers slackened. It would not be possible to rationalize certain expenses in the face of the present emotional state of the campaign. This was indeed dangerous territory. Some over-wrought classroom teachers confessed having dreams in which a beet-faced inspector peered into their school room and shouted: "What

Proposed 15% Tax Increase Would Hit Your---

- Household Goods
- Automobile
- Personal Property
- Real Estate

Any increase in school taxes is levied against every person in Omaha owning household goods or only an automobile. . . . It hits the renter who owns only household goods and it hits the apartment-dweller who possesses an automobile. . . . **THOSE ARE FACTS!**

Let's collect from the tax dodgers who owe \$2,000,000 in delinquent taxes to the Omaha schools . . . **HERE'S THE ANSWER!**

Before any tax raise, let's have an efficiency survey of the entire school system. . . . We want the best schools **WE CAN AFFORD!**

Vote "NO" Increased Taxes

"TAXES MUST BE SPIKED---NOT HIKED"



did you do with the money?"

The realtors, through their agent, drove on, and hard. "We want the best schools we can afford," they cried. "No increased taxes!" The Omaha World-Herald accepted and published black-faced display advertisements which again and again screamed: "NO! Vote NO!" 31

And what did the teachers do? They used the only tools they knew, the devices of logical treatment, citation of dull statistical data, and hinted at legal recourse. Emotional appeals were beneath the dignity of the teachers, and their best efforts, cited next, did not carry much in the way of emotional dynamite:

If the school year is cut to eight months, our grade schools and our high schools will no longer be first class. Our high schools will no longer be accredited. We can afford the best for our schools. Omaha cannot afford to have its school year cut to eight months. 31

Superintendent Homer W. Anderson, unable to obtain space elsewhere, issued a small bulletin entitled "Facts." In this he stated: "The cuts already made are seriously affecting the quality of the educational program of boys and girls in spite of sincerity and the loyalty of all employees."

Apparently this bulletin was intended to replace The Omaha World-Herald. On one hand was a great metropolitan newspaper with a long tradition of journalistic triumphs. Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock had ridden to the nation's Capitol on the wings of this daily publication. Yet, with its circulation of nearly 200 thousand daily and Sunday paid subscribers, The Omaha World-Herald was to be pushed

aside or duplicated by a tiny handbill such as a neighborhood shoemaker might issue. Dr. Anderson steadfastly held to the status of the professional educator, and wrote:

Experience and sound business judgment at the present time indicate that reliance cannot be placed only on an additional mill levy. This does not mean that the assessed valuations should not be increased, nor that a larger portion of taxes should not be collected. The two sources, however, offer little hope.

Since 1926 the mill levy had been set at 13 mills. In this fight to defeat an increase to 15 mills, the Real Estate Board declared: "Omaha taxpayers are paying the highest levy in the city's history on their real estate, furniture, and automobiles!"

Unskillfully, the school board pointed to lowered evaluations again, but the issue was about decided. Here on one hand were the educators attempting to raise taxes, and here on the other were the realtors doing everything to stop it. Campaign funds were not lacking, however, and the drive continued.

Whenever the pamphlet "Facts" put in appearance, the opposition shrewdly said: "Let us be guided by what the real facts disclose." When Dr. Claude Mason, school board president, said of the issue: "They are not threats, but facts!" an editorial somehow appeared in The World-Herald which began gloriously: "Keep the facts in mind..." 31

On radio station KOIL (June 2, 1939; 7:30 P.M.) the realtors presented their facts to the listening audience:

An Omaha business woman says: "I was told this proposed 15 per cent increase in school taxes affected only real estate,

but now I've learned the truth. The increase also affects persons owning furniture and an auto. Omaha taxpayers are paying the highest levy in the city's history. That's why I say taxes must be spiked--not hiked. That's why I'm going to tell all my friends to go to the polls next Tuesday and vote NO on the increased tax proposal."

"Hold that line, or else." This was a final plea by the schools. Teacher salaries had been cut 25 per cent, and Omaha teachers were underpaid. This statement appeared during the final week of the campaign:

Your child gets out of school what he and his teachers put into it. Keep salaries too low and the more capable men and women will shun the profession. We cannot continue to cut teachers' salaries.

Apparently some new publicist had entered the scene in favor of the schools, but his appeal to parenthood was still hazy and indefinite. And the strong hand of the statistician soon destroyed that promising element completely. Bulletins proclaimed that the mill levy increase was not to insure an increase in salaries; a minimum of 36 weeks of schooling, and accreditation, was the goal.

On June 3, The Omaha World-Herald saw fit to publish an article which explored the retirement pension system of the teachers. The implications were that teachers were looking after their own old-age interests and not the interests of the school child.

One member of the school board ignored the majority decision of the group to sponsor a campaign to win, and took space in The Omaha World-Herald on May 29 with this view:

Before the school board asks the taxpayers for an increase in the mill levy, it should first make honest efforts to put its own house in order. What it needs is a competent survey, both as to finances and curriculum, so the members

of the board themselves will know the true situation and can pass it along to the people.

what an admission that school finances no longer permitted the hiring of efficient school personnel! But the opening was missed by the school folk. The blunder passed by, and no effort was made to capitalize upon it. The gentleman, playing to the gallery, continued:

I favor the increase in pay of our teachers and other labor just as soon as conditions justify. The average salary of grade teachers is \$1,440 per nine-month year; high school is \$1,600. I want to ask how many small business men and skilled mechanics and laborers are assured of a permanent job until the sunset of life, and thereafter a pension of \$900 per year?"

On June 5, the Omaha Real Estate Board inserted a large display advertisement in The Omaha World-Herald, and took a similar stand regarding salaries:

We favor good salaries for Omaha teachers--the best we can afford. It is our belief, however, that the present scale which averages \$1,440 in the grades and \$1,600 in high schools for a nine-month term--with a pension of \$900 per year--represents reasonable compensation for present conditions.

Omaha teachers contribute a total of \$27,000 per year to their pension fund while taxpayers contribute a total of \$144,000 per year.

This much may again be emphasized. The effectiveness of presentation, right or wrong, was greatly in favor of the realtors. Professional advertising men said as much to the author. Examine, for instance, one school advertisement which began: Do You Want Omaha's School Year Cut to 8 Months? and ended with this catchline: "VOTE YES!" Surely amateurs were at work for the schools in this instance when the very elements of advertising were so shamefully violated.

Do You Want Omaha's School Year Cut to 8 Months?

Omaha's school year will be cut to 8 months unless voters approve the small increase in school taxes at the special election next Tuesday.

If the school year is cut to 8 months, our grade schools and our high schools will no longer be first class. Our high schools will no longer be accredited.

Many of those who are actively opposing the small increase in school taxes, so that we can continue a 9-month school term, can afford to send THEIR CHILDREN to eastern schools.

The character of our Omaha school system, therefore, does not mean so much to them as it does to those whose children are educated in Omaha.

The opposition has issued a circular, but those who had the circular printed didn't sign it.

The circular says: "We want the best schools we can afford."

We, representing the small taxpayers, say: "We can afford the best for our schools."

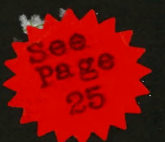
We say also: "Omaha CANNOT afford to have its school year cut to 8 months."

Vote YES on Tuesday

THE OMAHA COUNCIL OF
PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

MRS. R. N. GOULD, President

MRS. H. T. JONES, Past President



The use of pictorial art work in the realtor ads was also effective. In GET THE FACTS, a boy and girl were shown at classroom recitation. Yet this advertisement was used to cut down the amount of funds available for the education of the children who were pictured! Yes, it seems that anything is possible in the gentle art of advertising and propagandizing.

The Omaha Council of Churches in 1940 estimated that some 21 per cent of all Omahans belonged to the Catholic faith. If this were true, then a fifth of all voters were influenced by The True Voice 38 whose writers made much of the tax delinquency and told readers: "Not in Favor."

Alfred C. Kennedy, chairman of the Real Estate Board's tax committee, gave this statement to The Omaha World-Herald on May 29, 1939:

We wish to clarify the confusion that has arisen in the minds of many renters and apartments dwellers in the city who apparently feel the proposed hike affects only taxes on real estate.

The increase of \$2 per one thousand dollar evaluation would be added to the present levy of \$37.80 per thousand--the highest levy in the city's history.

Such statements also appeared in The True Voice; the Negro publication "Omaha Star"; the "North Omaha Booster," an advertising throw-away; the Jewish press; Labor News; and kindred smaller newspapers.

The opposition calculated to reach the businessman as he left home for work, and his wife as she finished the breakfast dishes. (KOIL, May 31, 1939; 9:30 A.M.; June 1, 7:15 A.M.; 1000-word scripts.) In full credit to those

Get the FACTS Before HIGHER TAXES!

Our schools are a vital part of the strength of our community. Omaha cannot afford to harm its school system or community standing by increased taxes . . . Higher taxes affect the earnings of our citizens . . . cause higher rents . . . retard home building . . . drive away business and industry.

LET'S BE GUIDED BY WHAT THE FACTS DISCLOSE

For the sake of our schools, teachers, children and the business life of Omaha, we urge you to—

CONSIDER THESE FACTS

The proposed 15% increase in school taxes would hit your household goods, personal property, automobile and real estate. The tax hike would hit renters and apartment dwellers, as well as property owners . . . *This is the worst possible time to consider any kind of an increase of the load now being carried by the conscientious taxpayer!*

We favor good salaries for Omaha teachers—the best we can afford. It is our belief, however, that the present scale which averages \$1,440 in the grades and \$1,630 in the high schools for a nine-month year—with a pension of \$900 per year—represents a reasonable compensation for present conditions. *Omaha teachers contribute a total of \$27,000 per year to their pension fund while the taxpayers contribute a total of \$144,000 per year!*

Let's collect from the tax dodgers who owe \$2,000,000 in unpaid and delinquent taxes to the schools, before we increase the tax burden on those who do pay . . . Kansas City voters were told their school term would be shortened unless a 1-mill school levy increase was approved. *The proposal was voted down and now Kansas City is turning to the collection of delinquent school taxes!*

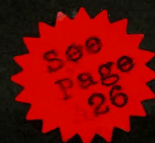
Omaha taxpayers are paying the highest levy in the city's history on their personal property, autos, and homes. The tax levy on your property—both personal and real property—has increased 40% since 1925 . . . *Higher taxes probably would mean no increase in collections because the tax burden is so great!*

Omaha schools were \$119,000 better off on May 1st than they were a year ago. Payment of school taxes up to May 1st of this fiscal year had increased \$85,000 over the same period last year. During June, the city will pay to the school district liquor taxes amounting to \$117,025, a surplus of \$15,000 over the figure set-up in this year's school budget. The county has in escrow \$35,000 belonging to the schools . . . *The school budget must be kept within the ability of taxpayers to pay!*

Before any tax raise, let's have an efficiency survey and cost analysis of the Omaha school system. The result: A better school system at a minimum cost! . . . St. Louis schools had a survey by outside experts who uncovered possible savings of \$526,000 a year . . . *We want the best schools we can afford! TAXES MUST BE SPIKED—NOT HIKED!*

Vote "NO" Increased Taxes!

SPONSORED BY THE OMAHA REAL ESTATE BOARD
IN THE INTEREST OF A BETTER OMAHA



who supported the schools, mention must be made of the prestige which was brought in at the last moment. W. F. Cozad, former president of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce; Mace Brown, local labor leader; Frank C. Heinisch, attorney and P.-T. A. supporter; State Senator Sam Klaver; Rabbi David Wice, Jewish leader; and others spoke for the schools. There was no lacking in energy at the last moment. But the apparent lack of propagandizing skills and techniques in timing produced defeat. Tardily, William Jeffers, Union Pacific president, was led forth to give this statement: "Vote Yes." Tardily and weakly, "Citizen School Volunteer" was published. But its circulation was low, its appearance infrequent, and its effect nil.

George Grimes, then managing editor of The Omaha World-Herald, has written to the author: "I give up. We always stood for the schools, but never received credit." This was perhaps because of the newsiness of releases from the realtors as opposed to the dullness of data given out by the schools. Unusual statements, abnormalities, always "made" page one. The more ordinary accounts are usually relegated to inside pages, and that was the fate of the school-sponsored releases. The reading public, and especially the teachers, felt that the local daily was opposed to the issue, despite a favorable editorial which appeared on the eve of election day.

The triumphant statement of Rudy Mueller which appeared in a national real estate journal has already been given: It cost just \$2700 to defeat the teachers.

Why did it happen that way? What should the schools have been doing? What can the schools begin doing now so

that we will be supported in coming elections? How may we improve our relations with the public so that citizens will understand more fully our aims, methods, desires, and goals?

These, and countless other inquiries, came to teachers when the votes were tabulated, and it was apparent that the schools had lost the election of 1939 forevermore.

Summary

In 1939 the opinion of the Omaha public was that their stereotyped pattern of schools was satisfactory.

Teachers and those interested in elevating the standards of the public school system lacked necessary promotional skills; did not understand the technique of emphasizing and re-emphasizing through constant channels of press and radio; did not sense the importance of timing; did not possess even an elementary knowledge of advertising and layout arts.

Through skillfully using all the devices of the propagandist, and not overlooking emotional appeals, one unit of businessmen was able to defeat the schools at a published cost of not more than \$2,700.

The Next Step

Is it possible to examine more carefully the true nature of this stereotyped school which Omahans feel exists? What are the re-actions of parents and non-parents on specific school problems?

CHAPTER III

Having sampled the status of the Omaha Public Schools as indicated by the electorate in 1939, it is now in order to select a reliable technique to be used in further sampling public opinion as related to more specific school problems.

Questionnaire Procedures

It is clear that once teachers understand this phenomenon of the public mind and how it may be manipulated by propaganda, a better educational program will ensue. Use of the questionnaire in determining the status of the public mind seems well within the bounds of modern educational practice. It is authoritatively supported:

The uses to which the questionnaire is put may be classified under three heads, 1) to ascertain the state of practice in some field of activity, 2) to secure basic data to be used in ways more fundamental than to afford a mere description of practice, 3) to secure opinions, judgments, of the expressions of attitudes from which, if nothing more, tentative measures or evaluations may be derived. 19

•- "The questionnaire permits the gathering of much information which is obtainable in no other way." 35

"Rightly used, the questionnaire is a proper and indeed inevitable means of securing information." 6

The Committee of Methods of Research of the National Committee on Research in Secondary Education went so far as to recommend four stages in constructing the questionnaire: a) Very careful formulation by the author and arrangement in some form to be used, b) Submission to some expert for advice and correction, c) Tryouts on teachers or others not primarily concerned, disinterested persons, d) A tryout of the revised questionnaire on a group as nearly

like the ones to whom it will be sent as possible. These tryouts will often show the inaccuracies of statements, the equivocal questions, and other undesirable features that can be corrected before the questionnaire is actually sent out for replies. 19

The four stages developed by the Committee on Methods of Research of the National Committee on Research in Secondary Education were followed in building such a questionnaire.

The original problems were a result of subjective observation, extended conferences with educators in Omaha, chats with the man-on-the-street, talks over coffee cups with Omaha advertising men, interviews with members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, bank-fence meetings with school mothers, sessions with Omaha labor leaders, ministers, and others. A definite effort was made to bring the problems before a representative group of the citizens who make Omaha what it is. It is quite likely that a background of editorial and reporting experience for many years was of value in this process.

Opinions were freely given. Here was no census taker with pad and pencil in hand, but merely a casual acquaintance who wanted to know more about Omaha schools. Over the course of a year, the problems resolved themselves somewhat in this manner:

"The principal is too stuck up. I never see her."

"That superintendent is some guy."

"Our teacher's all right."

"There's something crooked down at that school board."

"The kids are doing better than I did, but they don't know as much as I did when I went to school."

"They ought to show 'em more about mechanics."

"Religious training? I heard they were trying it, but that stuff should ought to be taught by a minister."

"Look at them girls. Riding bicycles with shorts on. They're just asking for trouble. You people in the high schools sure see a lot of that, don't you? Does your woman up there ever tell them about things?"

"What do they do with all the tax money?"

"Yes, I think medical examinations should be given at the schools. We never suspected that Bill's tonsils were bad until they told us about it. But they don't keep very good records. They called me up and asked if I was going to have his tonsils taken out, and I said, 'What? We took them out a year ago!'"

"I heard a teacher at Lake school say that the building was unsafe, but look at the rat traps some of those people live in around there. I say it hadn't ought to be much better than the shacks the kids live in."

"Now isn't this silly? This report card says Bettsy is 'improving' in arithmetic! Why don't they come right out and tell me what's wrong with her? I used to get 89's and 90's all the time, but you can't tell nothing by this? Are them teachers lazy?"

"Labor is one hundred per cent for the public schools. In fact we started the public school system and can prove it. But there ought to be more vocational classes."

"I always like to read about Vinton in the school page of the World-Herald."

"There should be more sports news about South."

"Sure, we get the school newspaper once in a while. We clip out the articles about kids we know."

"I never go to the P.-T. A. There's always some guy peddling his stuff, like a dentist they had up there last week. But I guess it's a good thing."

"You've sure got it soft, getting paid for twelve months and loafing around all summer like that."

"I didn't like the idea of teachers handing out cards during the campaign in 1939. They ought to be neutral like."

To express such statements formally and yet retain the sweet simplicity of an informal interview was difficult. Yet there were certain themes running through this mass of conversation which had to be singled out, and treated in a respectable, academic way. Having established a tentative list of questions, the writer then presented it to several experts, both in the advertising business and the teaching profession. It was interpreted, and corrected.

Over some protests, certain formalities were not observed in an effort to gain the confidence of the person interviewed. For example, instead of saying: "Do you believe that the Parent-Teacher Association has high professional value, both to your child and to your school?" we stated: "Do you think the Parent-Teacher Association is a good thing?" and finally: "Is the Parent-Teacher Association a good thing?"

It would appear that the average American views everything as either "good" or "bad." In this may be a clue for those who devise future questionnaires.

In trying out the revised questionnaire on teachers, a snag was struck in the question: "Should schools provide religious training?" Teachers felt that the question should appear in this manner: "Do you think that schools should co-operate with churches in providing religious training?" That was the final form.

Other statements were too conclusive. "Does your school newspaper keep you informed as a parent?" was not accurate in that all schools do not have established papers. The question was further delimited.

Suggestions were made to provide for additional comments, so at the heading of the questionnaire the interviewee was invited to write on the back if he desired to give additional information. (Not many took advantage of this, although a few expressed a keen desire to remove the more elderly teachers from their posts.) This provision did not bring in sufficient evidence for any conclusion.

We had hoped to bring out allied questions which seemed very pertinent. The general lassitude of clerks who are supposed to serve patrons at high school offices, we felt personally, should be examined. The character and moral habits of the custodial staff, especially the janitor who is often the only male on the grade school campus, might well be studied. The success or failure of progressive education experiments here and there might be evaluated. But these were apparently minor issues, and were not

included in the final questionnaire. Discussion of promotion methods was retained, and to that extent the progressive movement was included.

Now it was interesting to gain the final opinions of each of the five principals of the secondary schools. The original problems that were retained in the questionnaire had, for the most part, been suggested or discussed by those whose comments follow:

NORTH HIGH SCHOOL
Omaha, Nebraska
E. E. McMillan, Principal

April 16, 1940

Your questionnaire is interesting. I see no reason why anyone should hesitate to answer any of the questions you have now listed. Your findings will be good reading. The only problem that presents itself to me is that of getting the questionnaire to the patrons. Since you understand newspaper work and the handling of publicity, that little item will not be at all difficult for you. I hope you do not find out what I have almost come to believe, namely that it is impossible to get a majority of the people in favor of anything.

Wishing you pleasure and success in your study, I am

Sincerely yours,

E. E. MCMILLAN, Principal

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
Omaha, Nebraska
R. M. Marrs, Principal

April 11, 1940

I have gone over your questionnaire on Public Opinion and the Omaha Public Schools and feel that it certainly should do no harm and it might do a lot of good in the way of causing people to be more thoughtful about this old problem of the place of the schools and support and what they should do.

You will probably get all kinds of answers and I hope will stir up enough discussion to keep the topic alive in the minds of the people until more of them arrive at improved notions about the schools. I should like to know what kind of material you get back from this questionnaire.

Wishing you the best of luck, I am

Sincerely yours,

R. M. MARRS, Principal

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
Omaha, Nebraska
Fred Hill, Principal

April 10, 1940

I think your questionnaire is very good. Under Item 21 I think you might add "Do you read the school newspaper?" in addition to the questions given.

There are several other items that I would like to get some information on such as: "Defaulting on bonds," "Independent business manager," "Should every normal child be entitled to a high school education," "Should free education extend two years beyond the present high school," "Should high school education lay more stress on functional subject matter," "Should students have a larger share in the running of the school," "Should we have different classes of diplomas."

I shall be anxious to get public re-actions on some of your questions. It would probably do us all good if we got a little information about what the public thinks about us.

Very truly yours,

FRED HILL, Principal

BENSON HIGH SCHOOL
Mary McNamara, Principal
Omaha, Nebraska

April 13, 1940

Public opinion shifts so quickly these days that your thesis may be like the wandering IQ after you have put hours of research and study upon it. Since a thesis should be a masterly production I am inclined to feel that "yes and no" answers will not be particularly helpful to you. Perhaps you could re-arrange your questions so as to provide space for more amplification of opinion. The following questions may be more indicative of what I mean: 8) Do we find many newspaper articles about any specific school? 16) The question does not seem well put since it is not a matter of feeling but one of definite information. 18) How would patrons know? I hope these hasty remarks will be helpful.

Sincerely yours,

MARY MCNAMARA, Principal

TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
Omaha, Nebraska
Dwight E. Porter, Principal

April 8, 1940

As far as I can see, nothing in the questionnaire as it now stands could be classed as dangerous. Everything seems to be in good order.

Sincerely yours,

DWIGHT E. PORTER, Principal

Assistant Superintendent Leon O. Smith sent this note of encouragement:

Mr. Anderson asked me to check your questionnaire. I have done so, and I have also conferred with Dr. Tope about it. I think it is a good idea and most of the questions should be valuable. I should be glad to talk with you about any ones in question.

LEON O. SMITH
Assistant Superintendent

Thus having established what seemed to be a valid questionnaire, in that most of the experts agreed that it was properly prepared for the most part, what method would lend itself for taking the actual survey? Also, what simplified method would lend itself year after year to a Continuing Study?

In 1936 the Fortune Survey, managed by Elmo Roper, predicted a Roosevelt victory by 61.7 per cent. The actual victory was by 60.5. Surely this valid method should be examined, and Fortune had this to say about itself:

There is no black magic about sampling public opinion. It is mainly a matter of common sense and leg work in executing the stages of the work to be set forth here.

The questions: The greatest chance for serious error in gauging public opinion by sample, for distortion of the truth, lies in the framing of the questions. A loaded question can produce almost any result desired. Consequently, Fortune's questionnaires are drafted with extreme care. First the subject matter to be covered is mapped out. Then the questions are so written as to be answerable by people of the simplest intelligence. The questions are pre-tested by scores of trial interviews to discover whether their wording proves, in the asking, to be confusing, misleading, or unconsciously loaded. Many questions are discarded, all are revised. 12

This much had already been done. To this extent, the Fortune technique would lend itself to the survey.

The sample: The second element of potential error is the use of faulty samples--that is, a sample that does not truly represent the entire population, or divisions of it, economic and geographic. Fortune's sample for each installment of the survey consists of 5,000 U. S. adults. About half are men, half are women. About half are between the ages of 20 and 40. This division checks roughly with the U. S. Census.

The sample is further divided by income levels, under five classifications: Prosperous, 6 per cent; upper middle class, 23 per cent; lower middle class, 41 per cent; poor (among whom Negroes are reported separately) 30 per cent. Necessarily this distribution is arbitrary, as there is no index comparable with the Census figures on which it can be based.

The normal probable error should never be more than 6 per cent.

Obviously, such a process would involve a complete sociological study of Omaha. While such precautions are quite necessary because of the great national population, the technique of the Fortune poll is too costly for continued application in local random polls.

The George Horace Gallup poll is likewise based upon scientific controls: Urban and geographic locale, economic status, age, sex, color, and political affiliation. 14-33

The Research Division of the National Education Association³⁰ utilizes the controls of Gallup as followed by the American Institute of Public Opinion at Princeton, New Jersey. Here again, however, are national polling methods, and the sampling must be based upon all significant elements present in the total group. Elements must moreover be represented in the sample in the same proportions.

Advertising executives at The Omaha World-Herald pointed to the advantages of the Bureau of Advertising poll.⁴ As previously discussed (Page 12) this method is local in nature and not many controls beyond randomness are deemed necessary. Advertisers are convinced that "the opinions of 200 women, taken at random, will constitute a very accurate opinion of all women within the community. The opinions of 200 men, likewise taken at random, will represent the male populace." While this cannot be accepted as fully scientific, it does seem that a survey of 500

adults, taken at random, should indicate the trend of opinion regarding certain school problems. However, it would seem reasonable to attempt to follow whatever sociological data had been compiled for Omaha.

Would it be possible, as Principal McMillan visualized, to carry the questionnaire to the patrons in all sections of Omaha, and to gain a random sample of opinion on a score of questions?

At Technical High School, no limitations are set up to prohibit any student from any part of the city from enrollment. This unique lack of restriction (other high schools serve designated areas) lent itself to the distribution of the questionnaire. A count of hands among the twelfth grade students who had experienced survey techniques in the author's advanced journalism classes revealed that very few students were near neighbors. While all areas of Omaha were not represented, it became apparent that here was a near-valid cross section of the greater portion of Omaha.

Students were from Florence (north), South Omaha, Benson (west), East Omaha, and downtown (central) Omaha. About half were Catholic, half Protestant, one or two Jewish. In one class of 30 students, three were Negroes. These informal data were in harmony with the general sociological status of Omaha, although it became impossible to follow these controls closely as the survey progressed. Data appearing on the following pages will indicate how near-valid were the homes of the student interviewers in terms of the actual sociological status of the city.

There is a certain informality which is of vital importance in taking an interview. A survey made in 1942 under the direction of Lester Beal of the Municipal University of Omaha (Education 400X--Community and the School) carried a questionnaire of three closely typewritten pages. As a preface to the actual questioning, 17 qualifying "control statements" were asked. The body of the study included 30 additional questions. Adult students who participated in this survey complained that it was difficult to hold the attention of the interviewee throughout the length of 47 questions. The tendency to "freeze," or to "put on airs" became marked as the questioning proceeded.

The degree of this psychological tenseness was less apparent when the control questions were eliminated. Judgment of whether the individual was adequate was left entirely to the student who carried on the surveys in 1940 and in 1944. Indeed, by selecting students whose homes and neighborhoods were typical of Omaha, no other controls were necessary. Certain correlations between the 1942 survey and those of 1940 and 1944 indicate that a satisfactory result may be obtained through either method.

Tabulation of results, no easy task, was carried on by students as a part of their exploration of survey techniques. This was done under direct supervision. It would seem from the percentages found that opinions did not change greatly during the four-year period. While it would not be scientific to say that opinions on these questions is constant, and was constant during the 1939 campaign, we may assume that they will tend to remain the

same unless acted upon by propaganda influences.

In the following tables the reader will find the total of opinion as found by random survey techniques already explained. For reference purposes, a definite "Yes" or "No" answer is emphasized through graphing of intensity. Other breakdowns attempt to clarify the total view.

For those who ask, "What should be done to improve the status of the opinion which public schools hold?" certain "Areas of Action" are presented.

If a very accurate study of opinion were to be attempted, a complete sociological investigation would of necessity come first; then a statistical process, such as that advocated by Treloar, would lend itself to conclusions which would be highly scientific. Such steps are, as we have previously stated, beyond the scope of a ~~master's~~ study, and we must concern ourselves primarily with the percentile findings within the limitations already set up. Indeed, it would be possible to select several questions as basic, and to proceed to determine the relative opinions, for example, of those who want religious training as opposed to those who do not; or those who want vocational training as opposed to those who do not.

Such additional steps await the coming of a skilled public relations administrator who is provided a trained staff and a well-equipped laboratory. We want at this point to learn simply what the people of Omaha expect of their schools, and what they may be expected to do for their own children within the schools. That is the contribution made within the following pages.

The following tables give certain sociological aspects of Omaha which might be considered in interpreting the findings.

Religions

24 % of Omaha residents are Protestant
21 % of Omaha residents are Catholic
5 % of Omaha residents are Jewish

This estimate, given in 1940 by the Omaha Council of Churches, is based upon actual church membership. It was informally said that perhaps 150,000 Omahans have Protestant leanings, that is, they occasionally attend church, but have not actually affiliated themselves.

Home Ownership

51.7 % of Omaha residents own their homes
48.3% of Omaha residents rent their homes

These figures are from the Editor & Publisher Yearbook, 1938. It was further stated in 1940 that Czechoslovakians are the largest foreign born group in Omaha. This finding does not appear in later yearbooks. Standard Surveys, Inc., employed by Editor & Publisher, produced this nationality data:

Nationality

94.3 % of Omaha residents are native American
5.7 % of Omaha residents are naturalized

Race

94.3 % of Omaha residents are White
5.2 % of Omaha residents are Negro
.5 % of Omaha residents are other races

Foreign settlements of Omaha have been studied at length by Dr. T. Earl Sullenger 34 who includes these groups:

Italian, Bohemian, Polish,
Mexican, German, Swedish,
Irish, Norwegian, Jews

A study of occupations under WPA sponsorship in 1939 disclosed that 15.7 of Omaha's workers were craftsmen, but conditions of wartime living make present comparisons unreliable. Normally, occupational status might be used to determine scientifically the proper proportions of the city to be surveyed.

Tabulation of Opinions

As previously outlined, the total view will be presented first, with breakdowns for 1940 and 1944 following.

Also following, and not included in this total view, are 1942 survey results obtained by those enrolled in Education 400X--Community and the School--an evening course instructed by Lester Beal under the direction of Dr. L. O. Taylor. The 544 adult opinions, secured at random, and here presented are entirely the work of the author.

Presentation

In the graphic presentation following, colored signal dots represent the percentage of "Yes" and "No" opinions expressed.



indicates 5 % "YES"



indicates 5 % "NO"

Percentages of "No Opinion" replies
are not illustrated.

Cautions

Findings herein presented should be viewed within the limitations as outlined in previous pages of this study. Percentages are not necessarily conclusive.

Question 1

Do you have a child in the public schools?

YES.....391.....71 %

NO.....153.....29 %



Question 2

Should parents visit grade school classes?

YES.....490.....90 %

NO..... 47..... 8 %

No Opinion... 7..... 2 %



Question 3

Should parents visit high school classes?

YES.....298.....55%

NO.....217.....39%

No Opinion... 29..... 6%



Question 4

Do you feel free to visit your principal?

YES.....382.....70 %

NO.....143.....26 %

No Opinion... 19..... 4 %



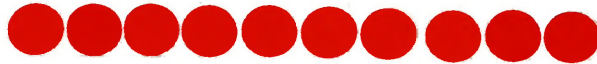
Question 5

Do you feel free to visit your superintendent?

YES.....307.....56 %

NO.....213.....39 %

No Opinion... 24..... 5 %



Question 6

Would you like to have the teacher visit you?

YES.....293.....53 %

NO.....148.....27 %

No Opinion...103.....20 %



Question 7

Should everyone know about school policies?

YES.....503.....93 %

NO..... 32..... 6 %

No Opinion... 9..... 1 %



Question 8

Do you read newspaper articles about your school?

YES.....470.....86 %

NO..... 55.....10 %

No Opinion... 19..... 4 %



Question 9

Are your children getting a better education than you did?

YES.....411.....76 %

NO..... 75.....13 %

No Opinion... 58.....11 %



Question 10

Would you like to see more vocational training emphasized
in school?

YES.....386.....71 %

NO.....126.....23 %

No Opinion... 32..... 6 %



Question 11

Do you think schools are lowering standards?

YES.....118..... 22 %

NO.....362..... 66 %

No Opinion... 64..... 12 %



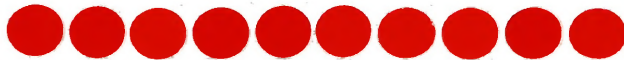
Question 12

Should schools spend more time on reading, writing and arithmetic?

YES.....309..... 57 %

NO.....202..... 37 %

No Opinion... 33..... 6 %



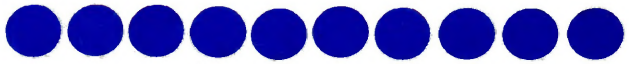
Question 13

Are you teaching things at home which should be taught in school?

YES.....178..... 33 %

NO.....303..... 55 %

No Opinion... 63..... 12 %



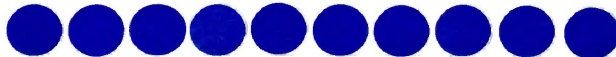
Question 14

Do you think that schools should co-operate with churches in providing religious training?

YES.....197..... 36 %

NO.....282..... 52 %

No Opinion... 65..... 12 %



Question 15

Are children suffering from a lack of "old-time discipline"?

YES.....205..... 38 %

NO.....285..... 53 %

No Opinion... 54..... 9 %



Question 16

Do you feel that most of your tax money goes for schools?

YES.....136..... 25 %

NO.....336..... 63 %

No Opinion... 72..... 12 %



Question 17

Should schools provide free medical examinations?

YES.....433..... 80 %

NO..... 91..... 16 %

No Opinion... 20..... 4 %



Question 18

Do you think your school building safe?

YES.....417..... 77 %

NO.....103..... 19 %

No Opinion... 24..... 4 %



Question 19

Do you like the present type of report used in the grades?

YES.....262..... 48 %

NO.....250..... 46 %

No Opinion... 32..... 6 %



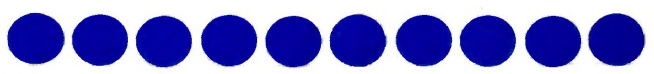
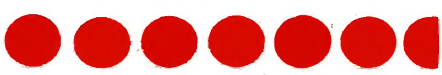
Question 20

Would you like to be consulted before changes are made in the method of promotion?

YES.....181..... 33 %

NO.....288..... 52 %

No Opinion... 75..... 15 %



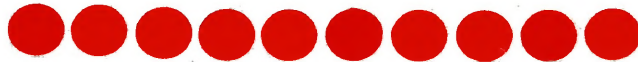
Question 21

If your school has a newspaper, does it keep you informed as a parent regarding the school?

YES.....332..... 61 %

NO.....171..... 32 %

No Opinion... 41..... 7 %



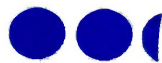
Question 22

Is the Parent-Teacher Association a good thing?

YES.....429..... 79 %

NO..... 58..... 11 %

No Opinion... 57..... 10 %



Question 23

Should teachers take part in political campaigns which concern the schools?

YES.....259.....48 %

NO.....248.....45 %

No Opinion... 37..... 7 %



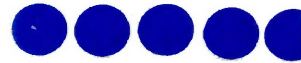
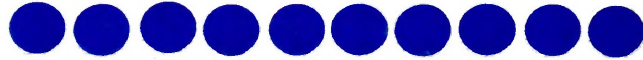
Question 24

Is it your understanding that teachers receive pay during vacation periods?

YES.....115..... 21 %

NO.....404..... 74 %

No Opinion... 35..... 5 %



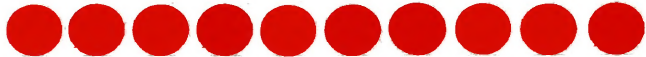
Question 25

Would you like to express your opinions from time to time through questionnaires such as this?

YES.....354..... 65 %

NO..... 79..... 14 %

No Opinion...111..... 21 %



Abstract of Data

Assuming better than 50 percent to constitute a majority, the following general conclusions may be observed:

(Question)

1. Nearly three-fourths of those interviewed had children in school.
2. Parents should visit grade schools. So said 90 percent.
3. Slightly more than half felt that parents should visit the high schools.
4. Nearly three-fourths said they would be welcome at the office of the school principal.
5. About half would feel welcome at the superintendent's office.
6. By a light majority, teacher is welcome at school homes.
7. More than 90 percent want school policies made public.
8. Newspaper articles about the school are read.
9. Children are getting a better education than parents did.
10. An elaborate program of vocational training is wanted.
11. Schools are not lowering standards.
12. A few more than half the adults want more time given to the three R's.
13. Homes are not teaching things which should be taught at school.
14. The question of religious training in co-operation with the public schools is opposed by slightly more than half. Only a third were in favor; 12 percent didn't know.
15. Children are not suffering from a lack of "old-time" discipline.
16. Tax money does not for the most part go to schools. That is the opinion of two thirds.
17. Schools should provide free medical examinations.
18. School buildings are rated as safe.

19. The present type of report card used in the grades is not generally approved; however, general disapproval is not apparent, and opinion is divided.
20. Consultation prior to changes in the method of promotion is not necessary. A third would like to know about it beforehand.
21. Where school newspapers exist, they keep parents informed.
22. The Parent-Teacher Association is generally approved.
23. A majority could not be established for or against the teacher taking part in school political campaigns.
24. Only one-fifth felt that teachers receive pay during periods of vacation. The majority said, "No."
25. A majority would like to express themselves from time to time through similar questionnaires; a high percentage in the "No Opinion" column apparently indicated that it mattered little.

Placement of "No Opinions"

It would be unwise to accept the above abstracts as final. The question of placing "No Opinion" answers has never been settled. Whether lack of understanding, inability to evaluate the issues, hesitancy to commit an opinion, or other factors were present, the validity of an apparent majority opinion is strengthened with addition of "No Opinion" answers to the minority.

This step is taken with two questions, however, with opposite results. That is, the majority is reversed with the hypothetical addition of "No Opinions" to the minority.

19. While 262 approve of the present report card used in the grades, 250 are opposed. Adding 32 "No Opinions" to the opposition yields 282 against the report card. On the other hand, adding 32 to those who favor the card, it might appear that 294 would support it.
23. Although 259 favored teachers in school campaigns, 248 were opposed. "No Opinion" was the answer of 37. Adding these to the plus group, we find 296 possible favoring; conversely, 285 might be the total vote against it.

All other questions support the majority, even when "No Opinion" answers are assumed to be all "Yes" or all "No." Thus we may assume that the majority findings are valid to a great degree.

Areas of Action

In graphing these opinion percentages, certain "Areas of Action," if they may be so termed, reveal themselves at once. By subjecting the actual findings to the tests just applied, that is, adding the "No Opinion" groups first to the "Yes" answers, then to the "No," these areas become more apparent.

These two steps are taken in the two graphs which follow. The lines of action are, of course, arbitrarily drawn. The administrator who wishes to deal with many issues which are controversial in nature might well expand the lines; if he wishes to deal with a few specific issues, the lines about the mid-point of indecision may be narrowed.

Interpretation of Graphs

The first graph assumed the area of primary action to be centered around the midpoint, 50 percent. Questions 6, 14, and 15 immediately present themselves within this area; this before any validating is undertaken. Questions 19 and 23 fall to the left of the midpoint, and there is obviously no established majority of opinion in either instance.

Viewing this graphic presentation in another way, the greater the distance between the points of "Yes" and "No," the greater the fixation of opinion. Such issues,

Graphic Areas of Action

Exclusion of "No Opinion"

| 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 | 85 | 90 | 95 | 100% | |
|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|--------|----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|------|-----|
| 1 | | | | | no | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | | yes |
| 2 | no | | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | | yes |
| 3 | | | | | | | no | | | . | . | yes | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | no | | | | | . | . | | | | yes | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | no | | | . | . | yes | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | no | | | | | . | yes | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | no | | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | | yes |
| 8 | | no | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | | yes |
| 9 | | no | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | yes | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | no | | | | | | . | . | | | | yes | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | yes | | | | | | . | . | | | no | | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | no | | | . | . | yes | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | | yes | | | . | . | no | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | yes | | | . | no | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | | yes | | | . | no | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | yes | | | | | . | . | no | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | no | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | yes | | | | | |
| 18 | | no | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | yes | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | no-yes | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | | | | | | yes | | | | . | no | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | | | | | | | no | | | . | . | | | yes | | | | | | | |
| 22 | | no | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | yes | | | | | |
| 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | no-yes | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | yes | | | | | . | . | | | | | no | | | | | |
| 25 | | no | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | yes | | | | | |

The purpose of this chart is not to indicate opinions on specific problems, but rather to show the degree of crystallization, and the areas which are not crystallized. Where YES and NO answers fall near the 50 per cent midpoint, the propagandist may bring pressure to bear with good or poor results for the schools in terms of the problem at hand. See also Page 71.

Graphic Areas of Action

Inclusion of "No Opinion"

| | 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 | 85 | 90 | 95 | 100 | % | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|---|----|
| 1 | | | | | | * | | | | | . | . | | | | * | | | | | | | |
| 2 | * | / | | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | | | */ |
| 3 | | | | | | | | * | | / | . | . | * | / | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | / | * | | | | | | . | . | | | | * | | | | | | | / |
| 5 | | | | | | | | * | / | | . | . | * | / | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | * | | | | / | . | . | | | | | | / | | | | | |
| 7 | */ | | | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | * | / | |
| 8 | | */ | | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | * | / | | |
| 9 | | * | | / | | | | | | | . | . | | | | * | | | / | | | | |
| 10 | | | | * | / | | | | | | . | . | | | | * | / | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | * | | / | | | | | . | . | | | * | | / | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | * | / | | | . | . | | | */ | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | * | | | | / | . | . | * | | / | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | * | | | / | . | . | * | / | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | | * | | | / | . | . | * | / | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | * | | / | | | | . | . | | * | | / | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | * | / | | | | | | | . | . | | | | | | | | | | | */ |
| 18 | | | * | / | | | | | | | . | . | | | | * | / | | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | ** | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| 20 | | | | | | * | | | | / | . | . | * | | / | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | | | | | | * | / | | | | . | . | | * | / | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | * | | / | | | | | | | | . | . | | | | * | | / | | | | | |
| 23 | | | | | | | | | | ** | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| 24 | | | * | / | | | | | | | . | . | | | * | / | | | | | | | |
| 25 | * | | | | | | / | | | | . | . | | * | | / | | | | | | | |

Theoretical crystallization increases in trends shown here. * equals original; / equals inclusion of "No Opinion." In pairing, consider the mathematical "means and extremes" of the four points indicated for each question. See page 72.

desirable or not, are greatly crystallized. It would be much more difficult for the propagandist to alter the status of such opinions, than to force those ranking near the midpoint one way or the other. Other assumptions in this respect appear at the close of this study.

Assuming, in the second graph, the "No Opinion" group to be a part of the "Yes" or "No" percentages, the following questions come within the midpoint range:

3. High school class visitation by parents.
6. Teacher visitation of school homes.
13. Home teaching of essentials which should be at school.
14. Religious training co-operation by schools.
15. Lack of "old-time" discipline.
19. Present type of grade report card.
20. Method of promotion.
23. Teacher participation in school campaigns.

This listing still includes those which have already been cited for study without the "No Opinion" factor.

Now another presentation can be made through ranking the questions in degree of intensity, that is, ranking the most definite opinions at the top of a scale, the least definite at the bottom.

It would not be practical to continue to assume all "No Opinion" replies as belonging to the "Yes" or "No" groups, and they will not be included beyond this point. One trend, however, should be noticed in the second graph following. When opinions are not fully crystallized, the range of "No Opinion" seems to increase. Note in the ranking of questions 7, 2, 8, and 17 that the percentage of "No Opinion" is comparatively low. At the other end of the scale where intensity is less, questions 6, 15, 14, and 20 carry a much greater percentage of "don't know."

BAR GRAPH # 1--Intensities of Opinion

In this graph, questions are ranked according to intensities of opinion expressed. Question 7--"Should everyone know about school policies?"--heads the list with 93 per cent saying YES. Question 2--"Should parents visit grade school classes?"--is next with 90 per cent saying YES. Question 8--"Do you read newspaper articles about your school?"--ranks third with 86 per cent saying YES.

Reading from the bottom up, Question 23--"Should teachers take part in political campaigns which concern the schools?"--and Question 19--"Do you like the present type of report card used in the grades?"--are accorded 48 per cent YES of the three degrees of opinion obtained.

Thus it would appear that of the 24 actual opinion questions, only seven (9, 18, 22, 17, 8, 2, 7) were 75 per cent or better in favor, while less intense feelings were registered regarding the remainder, 17 specific school problems.

In one sense, those problems rating less than 75 per cent approval are open to suggestion, either by educators or by those who are opposed to public school growth.

40

50

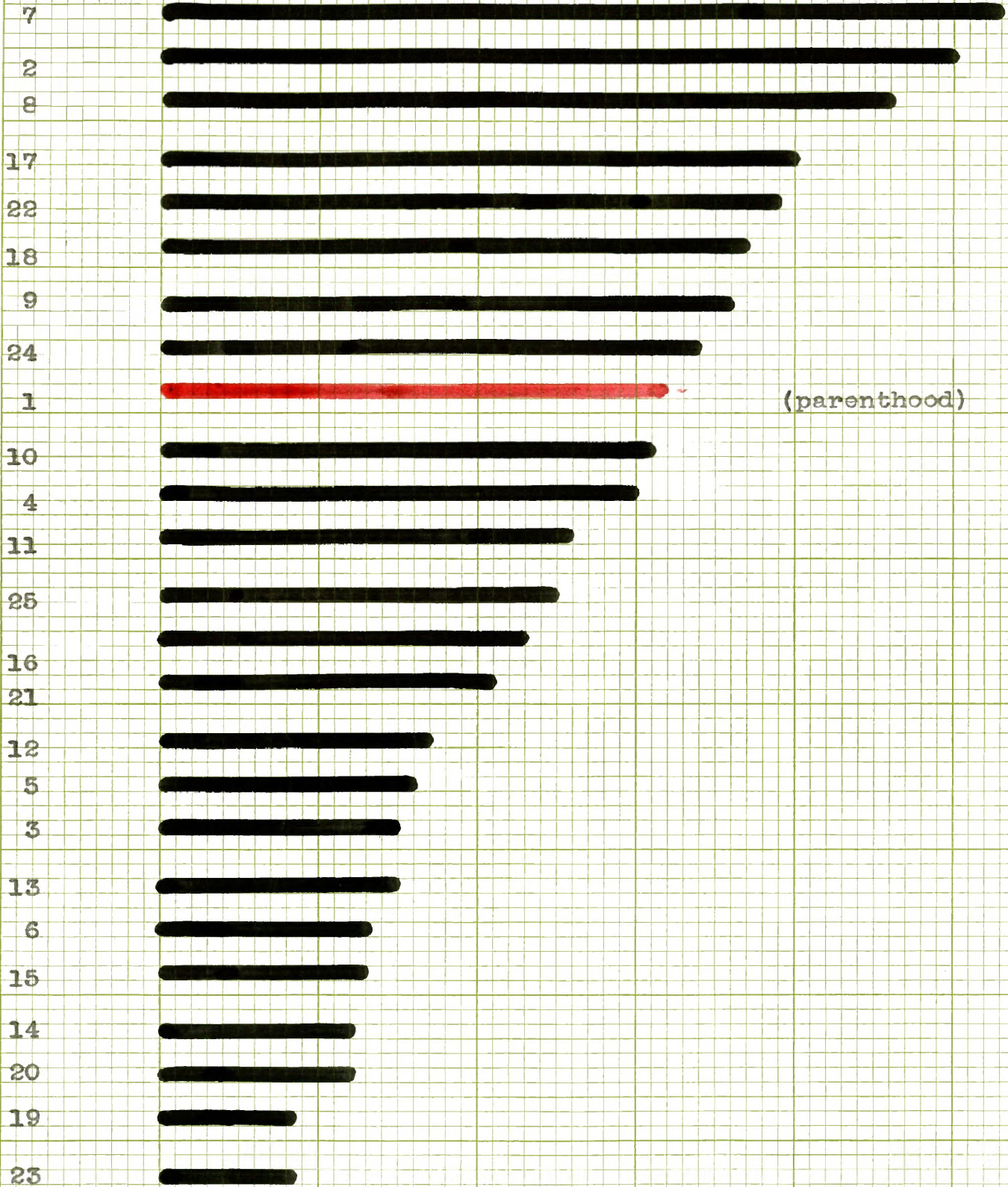
60

70

80

90 %

Question



(parenthood)

See discussion,
page 72

#1
Intensities of
Opinion

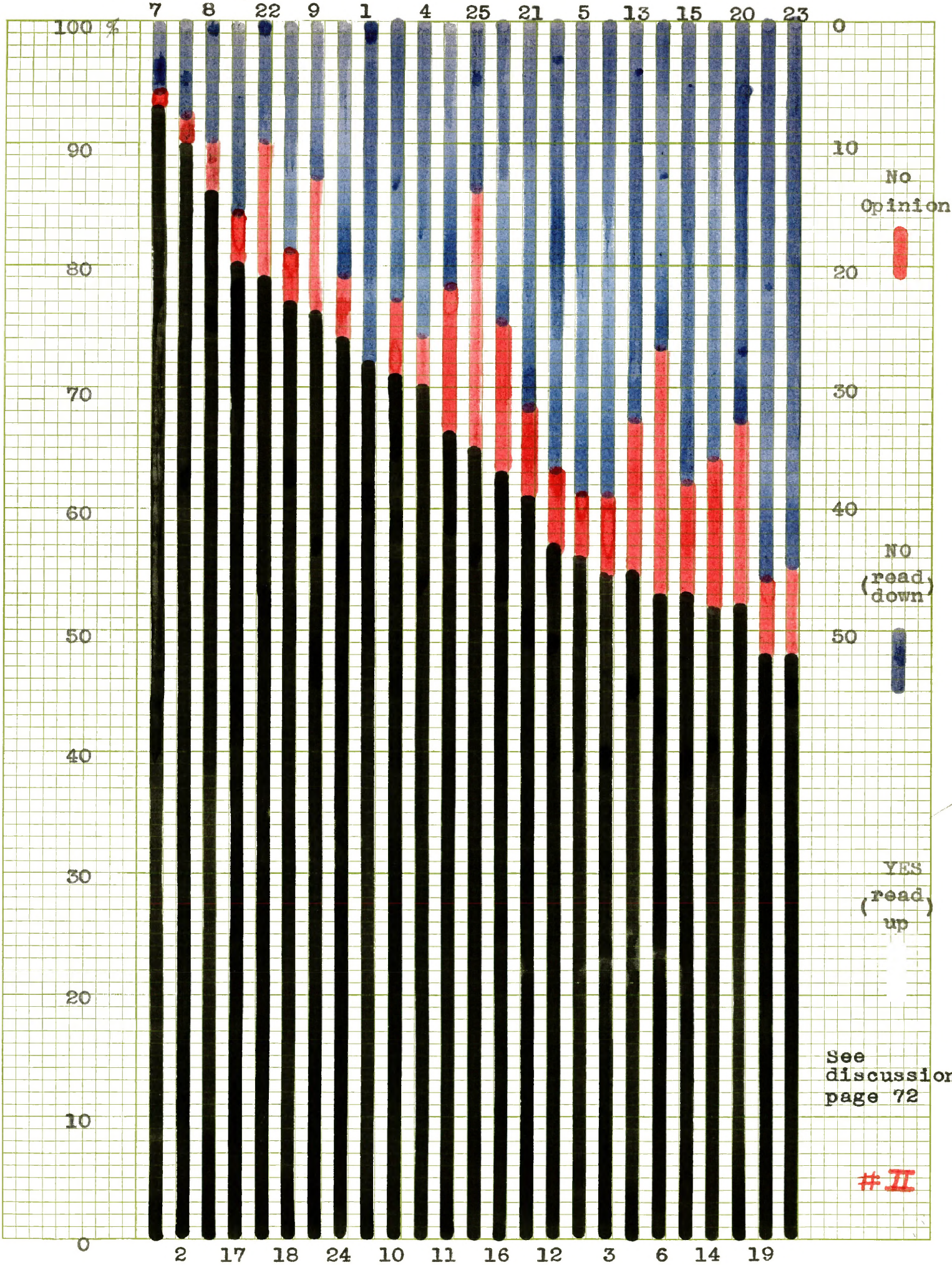
BAR GRAPH # 2--Relationship of Yes, No, and No Opinion Replies

In this graph, the tendency of NO OPINION answers to increase as the intensity of YES or NO decreases is at once apparent. Follow the growth of the red bars from left to right. Here again the questions are ranked according to intensity of reply. Questions 7, 2, 8, and 17 received rather high response, and the degree of NO OPINION is relatively low. At the opposite end of the scale, where intensities are less, Questions 6, 15, 14, and 20 carry a much greater percentage of NO OPINION.

It seems reasonable to assume that those who manifest NO OPINION are quite ready to form definite views when informed. Again, if they are enlightened by educators they will likely join those who favor the growth of public schools. On the other hand, if neglected, they are apt to remain neutral until a negative force drives them into areas of opposing public school development.

Bar graphs #1 and #2 are directly related to "Graphic Areas of Action" which follow Page 71. In each of the first four graphs given, it is clear that Questions 6, 14, and 15 represent those problems on which the public sampled has not crystallized its opinions.

Question



See discussion, page 72

II

Before taking the next step and presenting the findings of 1940, 1942, and 1944, it might be well to re-classify the questions in terms of the degree of intensity with which they have been answered. Graphic "Areas of Action," already given, manifest this range. The first bar graph following gives it in another manner. And now a third approach, a listing of the actual questions in order of intensity should completely clarify the findings.

Ranking of Replies in Order of Intensity

7. Should everyone know about school policies?
2. Should parents visit grade school classes?
8. Do you read newspaper articles about your school?
17. Should schools provide free medical examinations?
22. Is the Parent-Teacher Association a good thing?
18. Do you think your school building is safe?
9. Are your children getting a better education than you did?
24. Is it your understanding that teachers receive pay during vacation periods?
10. Would you like to see more vocational training emphasized in school?
4. Do you feel free to visit your principal?
11. Do you think schools are lowering standards?
25. Would you like to express your opinions from time to time through questionnaires such as this?
16. Do you feel that most of your tax money goes for schools?
21. If your school has a newspaper, does it keep you informed as a parent regarding your school?
12. Should schools spend more time on reading, writing, and arithmetic?

5. Do you feel free to visit your superintendent?
3. Should parents visit high school classes?
13. Are you teaching things at home which should be taught in school?
6. Would you like to have the teacher visit you?
15. Are children suffering from a lack of "old-time" discipline?
14. Do you think schools should co-operate with churches in providing religious training?
20. Would you like to be consulted before changes are made in the method of promotion?
19. Do you like the present type of report card used in the grades?
23. Should teachers take part in political campaigns which concern the schools?

Breakdowns

The very apparent high degree of correlation between the survey findings obtained in 1940 and in 1944 has been of great concern in this study. No trends reveal themselves, but a careful checking of sample tabulations made by students who assisted revealed no considerable error. In certain instances, where answers were highly qualified so as to indicate the existence of no real opinion, such replies were relegated to the "No Opinion" group. Other than this, the findings remain as they were taken in 1940 and 1944.

A sample of the questionnaires distributed in 1942 during Education 400X explorations appears at the close of this study together with that of the author. In the breakdown which follows, those questions which seem pertinent are given, together with percentages. Since a total of 25 similar questions did not exist, totals are for comparison only.

Breakdown and Tabulations

| Question | YES | % | NO | % | No Opinion | % | Years |
|----------|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|-------|
| 1. | 256 | 75 | 86 | 25 | --- | -- | 1940 |
| | <u>135</u> | 67 | <u>67</u> | 33 | | | 1944 |
| | <u>391</u> | 72 | <u>153</u> | 28 | | | |
| 2. | 313 | 92 | 23 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 1940 |
| | <u>177</u> | 88 | <u>24</u> | 11 | <u>1</u> | 1 | 1944 |
| | <u>490</u> | 90 | <u>47</u> | 8 | <u>7</u> | 2 | |
| 400X | | 81 | | 18 | | 1 | 1942 |
| 3. | 189 | 55 | 135 | 39 | 18 | 6 | 1940 |
| | <u>109</u> | 54 | <u>82</u> | 41 | <u>11</u> | 5 | 1944 |
| | <u>298</u> | 55 | <u>217</u> | 39 | <u>29</u> | 6 | |
| 400X | | 81 | | 18 | | 1 | 1942 |
| 4. | 229 | 67 | 111 | 32 | 2 | 1 | 1940 |
| | <u>153</u> | 76 | <u>32</u> | 15 | <u>17</u> | 9 | 1944 |
| | <u>382</u> | 70 | <u>143</u> | 26 | <u>19</u> | 4 | |
| 400X | | 80 | | 8 | | 12 | 1942 |
| 5. | 179 | 52 | 145 | 42 | 18 | 6 | 1940 |
| | <u>128</u> | 63 | <u>68</u> | 33 | <u>6</u> | 4 | 1944 |
| | <u>307</u> | 56 | <u>213</u> | 39 | <u>24</u> | 5 | |
| 6. | 187 | 54 | 88 | 25 | 67 | 21 | 1940 |
| | <u>106</u> | 52 | <u>60</u> | 29 | <u>36</u> | 19 | 1944 |
| | <u>293</u> | 53 | <u>148</u> | 27 | <u>103</u> | 20 | |
| 400X | | 67 | | 26 | | 7 | 1942 |
| 7. | 314 | 92 | 21 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 1940 |
| | <u>189</u> | 94 | <u>11</u> | 5 | <u>2</u> | 1 | 1944 |
| | <u>503</u> | 93 | <u>32</u> | 6 | <u>9</u> | 1 | |
| 8. | 294 | 86 | 34 | 10 | 14 | 4 | 1940 |
| | <u>176</u> | 87 | <u>21</u> | 10 | <u>5</u> | 3 | 1944 |
| | <u>470</u> | 86 | <u>55</u> | 10 | <u>19</u> | 4 | |
| 9. | 266 | 77 | 41 | 12 | 35 | 11 | 1940 |
| | <u>145</u> | 71 | <u>34</u> | 16 | <u>23</u> | 13 | 1944 |
| | <u>411</u> | 76 | <u>75</u> | 13 | <u>58</u> | 11 | |
| 10. | 244 | 71 | 80 | 23 | 18 | 6 | 1940 |
| | <u>142</u> | 70 | <u>46</u> | 23 | <u>14</u> | 7 | 1944 |
| | <u>386</u> | 71 | <u>126</u> | 23 | <u>32</u> | 6 | |
| 400X | | 81 | | 15 | | 4 | 1942 |

Note similarity of 400X findings given here for comparison.

Breakdown and Tabulations, Continued

| Q. | YES | % | NO | % | No Opinion | % | Years |
|------|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|-------|
| 11. | 74 | 21 | 232 | 68 | 36 | 11 | 1940 |
| | 44 | 22 | 130 | 64 | 28 | 14 | 1944 |
| | <u>118</u> | 22 | <u>363</u> | 66 | <u>64</u> | 12 | |
| 12. | 191 | 56 | 130 | 38 | 21 | 6 | 1940 |
| | 118 | 58 | 72 | 36 | 12 | 6 | 1944 |
| | <u>309</u> | 57 | <u>202</u> | 37 | <u>33</u> | 6 | |
| 400X | | 52 | | 48 | | 0 | 1942 |
| 13. | 112 | 33 | 189 | 55 | 41 | 12 | 1940 |
| | 66 | 32 | 114 | 56 | 22 | 12 | 1944 |
| | <u>178</u> | 33 | <u>303</u> | 55 | <u>63</u> | 12 | |
| 14. | 123 | 36 | 174 | 51 | 45 | 13 | 1940 |
| | 74 | 36 | 108 | 53 | 20 | 11 | 1944 |
| | <u>197</u> | 36 | <u>282</u> | 52 | <u>65</u> | 12 | |
| 15. | 125 | 37 | 175 | 51 | 42 | 12 | 1940 |
| | 80 | 40 | 110 | 54 | 12 | 6 | 1944 |
| | <u>205</u> | 38 | <u>285</u> | 53 | <u>54</u> | 9 | |
| 16. | 87 | 25 | 200 | 59 | 55 | 16 | 1940 |
| | 49 | 24 | 136 | 67 | 17 | 9 | 1944 |
| | <u>136</u> | 25 | <u>336</u> | 63 | <u>72</u> | 12 | |
| 17. | 267 | 78 | 62 | 18 | 13 | 6 | 1940 |
| | 166 | 84 | 29 | 14 | 7 | 2 | 1944 |
| | <u>433</u> | 80 | <u>91</u> | 16 | <u>20</u> | 4 | |
| 18. | 250 | 73 | 77 | 22 | 15 | 5 | 1940 |
| | 167 | 83 | 26 | 13 | 9 | 4 | 1944 |
| | <u>417</u> | 77 | <u>103</u> | 19 | <u>24</u> | 4 | |
| 19. | 166 | 49 | 155 | 45 | 21 | 6 | 1940 |
| | 96 | 47 | 95 | 47 | 11 | 6 | 1944 |
| | <u>262</u> | 48 | <u>250</u> | 46 | <u>32</u> | 6 | |
| 20. | 119 | 35 | 185 | 54 | 38 | 11 | 1940 |
| | 62 | 31 | 103 | 51 | 37 | 18 | 1944 |
| | <u>181</u> | 33 | <u>288</u> | 52 | <u>75</u> | 15 | |
| 400X | | 76 | | 15 | | 9 | 1942 |
| 21. | 204 | 60 | 109 | 32 | 29 | 8 | 1940 |
| | 128 | 63 | 62 | 31 | 12 | 6 | 1944 |
| | <u>332</u> | 61 | <u>171</u> | 32 | <u>41</u> | 7 | |
| 400X | | 84 | | 10 | | 6 | 1942 |

Breakdown and Tabulations, Continued

| Q. | YES | % | NO | % | No Opinion | % | Years |
|-----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|-------|
| 22. | 268 | 78 | 39 | 11 | 35 | 11 | 1940 |
| | <u>161</u> | 80 | <u>19</u> | 9 | <u>22</u> | 11 | 1944 |
| | <u>429</u> | 79 | <u>58</u> | 10 | <u>57</u> | 11 | |
| 23. | 156 | 45 | 156 | 45 | 30 | 10 | 1940 |
| | <u>103</u> | 51 | <u>92</u> | 45 | <u>7</u> | 4 | 1944 |
| | <u>259</u> | 48 | <u>248</u> | 45 | <u>37</u> | 7 | |
| 24. | 75 | 22 | 248 | 72 | 19 | 6 | 1940 |
| | <u>40</u> | 19 | <u>156</u> | 77 | <u>16</u> | 4 | 1944 |
| | <u>115</u> | 21 | <u>404</u> | 74 | <u>35</u> | 5 | |
| 25. | 205 | 60 | 60 | 17 | 77 | 23 | 1940 |
| | <u>149</u> | 73 | <u>19</u> | 10 | <u>34</u> | 17 | 1944 |
| | <u>354</u> | 65 | <u>79</u> | 14 | <u>111</u> | 21 | |

Comparative Questions, 400 X

Percentages on the following findings in 1942 by adult interviewers using a different questionnaire form, have been given in the above breakdown and tabulations. The complete questionnaire appears at the end of this study; those questions which were most closely related were as follows:

- 2.-3. (27) Do you think parents should visit school, especially classes, more and attempt to become acquainted with what is going on in the school?
- 4. (28) Do teachers and principals make you feel welcome when you visit the school?
- 6. (25) Would you like to have the teachers visit more in your homes, particularly those teachers who work with your children in school?
- 10. (12) Would you like to see more vocational training emphasized in the schools?
- 12. (3) The schools give attention at the present time to the teaching of the so-called fundamentals: reading, writing, arithmetic, etc. Do you feel that these subjects are not given enough attention; given about the right amount of attention; or too much attention? (Extremes were used in determining percentages for comparison.)
- 20. (29) Would you like to be consulted oftener concerning such things as courses, promotions, possible failures, etc., affecting your child?

21. (30) Would you be interested in having the public schools give you more information about what is going on in the schools, and why changes are being made, etc.?

Graphic Correlation 1940-1944

On the following page, a graphic presentation shows the percentage of correlation between the surveys of 1940 and 1944. Findings seem to indicate that very similar groups were questioned in the surveys, although different high school seniors conducting the questioning. It should be repeated here that an effort was made to secure interviewers who were somewhat representative of the various sections of Omaha, and that a degree of sociological likeness was also present. In addition, certain adult opinions were contributed by the author each year. This was done to include businessmen, labor leaders, advertising executives, college professors, and others who might not ordinarily be available to high school students. It seems safe to assume that every walk of life in Omaha has some voice in the findings.

Graphic Comparison, 1940, 1942, 1944

A graphic comparison of eight 400X tabulations in 1942 with those of 1940 and 1944 concludes this breakdown. While percentile variations are obvious, the consent of the majority is constant in all but a single instance. It is possible that the unique wording of the 400X question brought about this difference in majority opinion as related to methods of promotion.

GRAPH # 3--Showing Percentage Correlation of Surveys Taken
in 1940 and in 1944

Questions are here graphed in normal sequence, the black line representing the range of YES replies in 1940, and the red line representing the range of YES replies in 1944. The high degree of relationship which the two lineal graphs display may be interpreted in several ways:

- 1) the questionnaire is authentic and valid
- 2) the groups questioned were quite similar
- 3) no great change of opinion is manifest

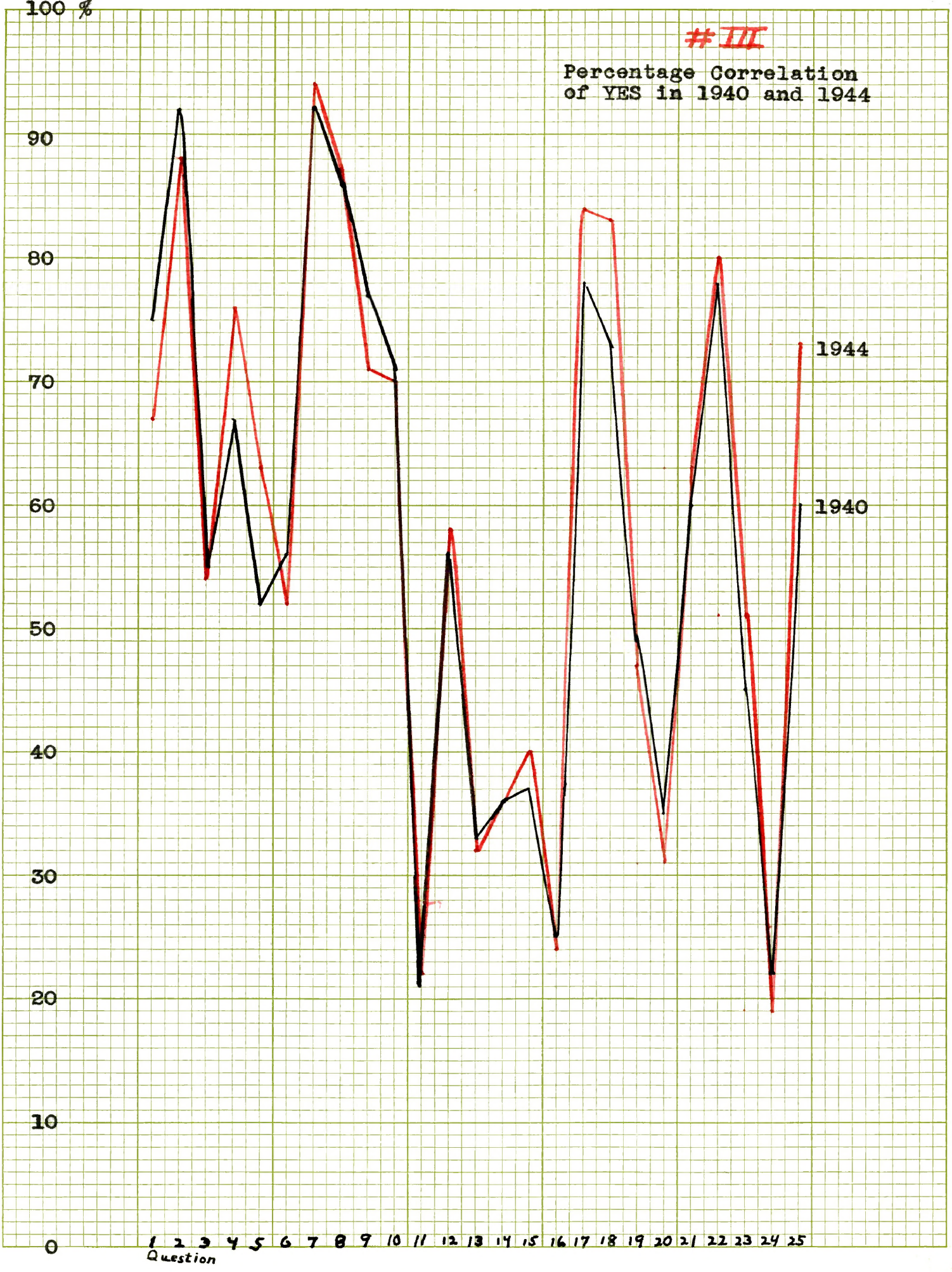
This again evidences the phenomenon of the public mind. While opinions do change from time to time, unless a definite move is made through propoganda channels, attitudes toward specific school problems tend to remain the same. This might be termed the result of stereotyping.

The contribution of this graph is to lend increased validity to the study. It would seem probable, also, that the number of adults questioned is sufficient to be rather representative of the entire public mind.

100 %

III

Percentage Correlation
of YES in 1940 and 1944



1944

1940

0

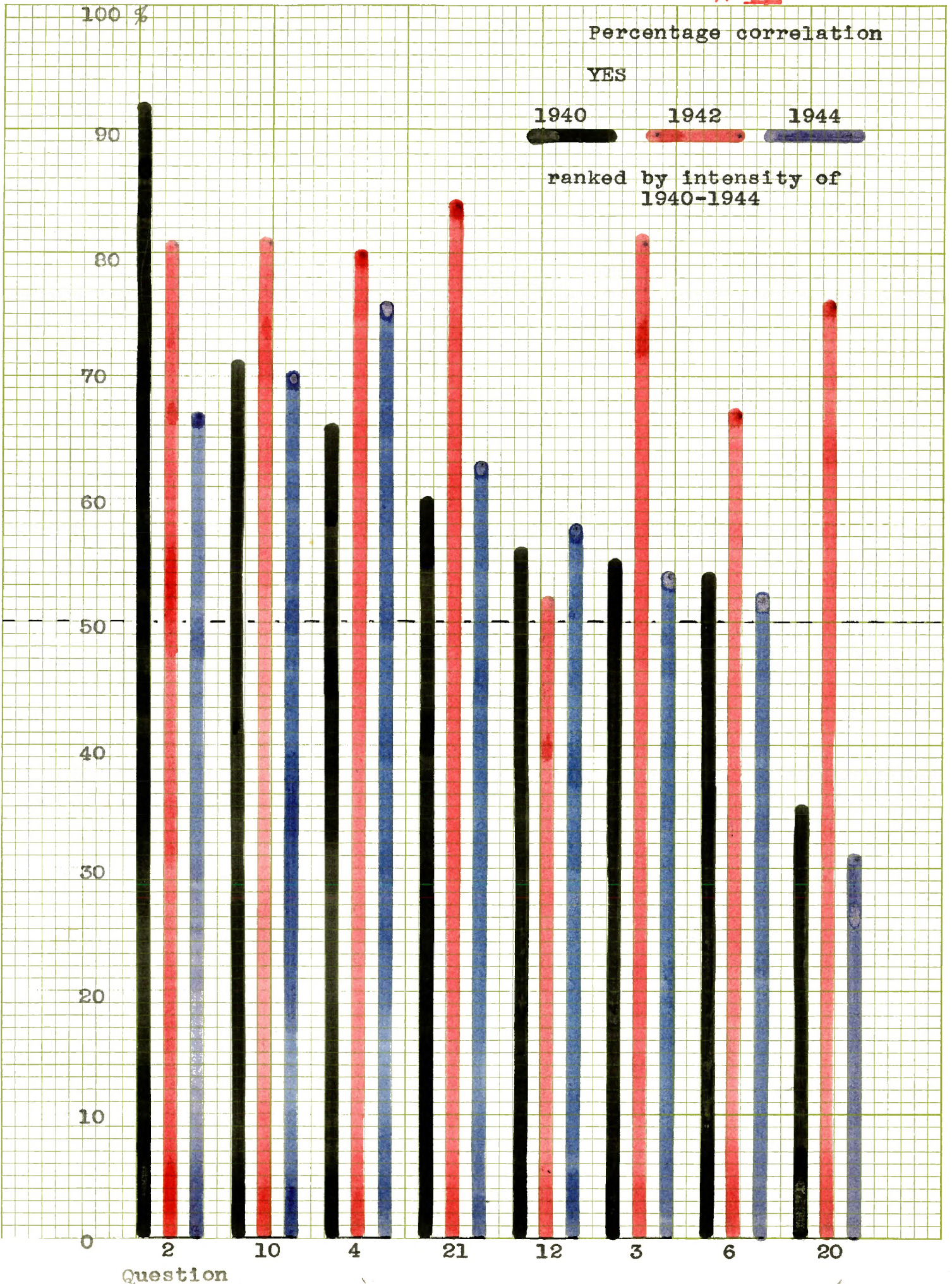
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
Question

GRAPH # 4--Showing Percentage Correlation of Surveys Taken
in 1940 and in 1944 Together With Eight Similar
OPINIONS Surveyed in 1942.

In this graph, the consent of the majority is achieved in seven of eight questions of almost identical nature. The black bar represents replies received in 1940; the blue bar represents replies received in 1944. The red bar represents replies received in 1942 through a separate questionnaire which was distributed by other means. Adult students enrolled in Education 400X at the University of Omaha obtained opinion replies represented by the red bar, yet the correlations are approximately the same in all three surveys.

The one deviation, Question 20 in the 1940 and 1944 surveys, might be explained as the result of differences in wording which appeared in the two questionnaires. Compare further the two types which are given in original form at the end of this study.

For the most part, the similarity of replies received on identical problems indicates once again that a high degree of validity was attained in the 1940-44 questionnaire.



CHAPTER IV

With the status of the Omaha Public Schools generally fixed at a low degree by the election of 1939, and with public opinion on a score of school problems now evident through use of a valid questionnaire in a random survey, it is now in order to interpret these findings. Before proceeding to that, it may be well to refresh our point of view in terms of what certain educators have said regarding the problems at hand. Harold D. Lasswell writes:

Democracy depends on public opinion in support of the ends and means of democratic government. The role of public opinion in support of democratic government may be summarized 1) to make permanent demands for justice and majority rule; 2) to make provisional, ever-changing demands for popular policies consistent with permanent demands. 21

The level of democratic attainment, Lasswell asserts, depends upon public opinion, and that opinion, like democratic government, is a social variable of ever-shifting scope, direction, and intensity of expression. The processes of public opinion are conditioned by the total flow of private, intimate, and public experience.

Floyd H. Allport seems to deny the possibility of obtaining an accurate indication of the public mind:

Opinions are re-actions of individuals; they cannot be allocated to publics without becoming ambiguous and unintelligible for research. 1

But then he gives the survey credit by saying: "The inter-action of the survey does bring out issues more definitely, and it shows more clearly how the

individuals are aligning on different sides. It gives a clearer picture of what individuals want."

Edward L. Bernays, who is perhaps the highest ranking public relations counsel of today, defines public opinion in this manner:

It is the aggregate result of individual opinions--now uniform, now conflicting--of the men and women who make up society or any group of society. In order to understand public opinion, one must go back to the individuals who make up the group. The public forms its opinion through observance of individuals connected with any program. It might be termed an individual-individual affair in which each is keeping an eye on the other. 3

Arthur B. Moehlman writes:

The leadership responsibility of educators means that the profession must always be ready to present to the people complete and unbiased information concerning the conditions and needs of their educational institutions. The people are entitled to all of the truth regarding their social efforts. 29

Albion H. Horrall, whom we will refer to on several occasions in interpreting the findings, gives a clue to the problem of creating pleasant relations between school teacher and parent:

"Perhaps the best way to evaluate the work being accomplished in any school situation is actually to spend some time in that school, talking with the teacher and children, observing the experiences occurring from day to day in the classroom, watching the action of the children in the corridors, and at play; talking with the children about their school, their teachers, and their social attitudes." 16

Assuming the adults interviewed to represent Omaha citizenry, it is obvious that they feel very free to evaluate the schools in this manner. Indeed, the replies reveal of 90 percent quite in favor of visiting grade school classes. The intensity of this feeling is second only to that which indicated that everyone should know about the policies of the school system.

"One of the first criteria by which a school should be measured is the degree to which the children like their school." 16

While no question asked this directly, we may assume that parents do reflect their children's attitudes, and that their willingness to visit the grade school, the high school principal, or the superintendent may be called "liking" or "not liking" the schools.

Visiting the high school or grade school principal obtained only 70 percent consent in the questioning. This again may be interpreted in several ways. Perhaps childhood memory of unpleasantness during such visitations still is with the adults; or perhaps the fact that such offices are visited for the most part only when trouble arises, produced the findings. At any rate, a majority do feel free to make such visits, although a degree of hesitancy is present.

"It is not sufficient that boys and girls like school. In addition to being a happy place, the elementary school must be a place where children learn to read, write, spell and figure." 16

The question of the three R's found 57 percent feeling that more time should be spent, with some 37 percent

indicating that sufficient time is now given over to these traditionally basic subjects.

"Writing for the daily paper is really an integrating experience in that all children who read the paper watch for stories from their school and classmates." 16

That newspaper articles about the school are read is evidenced in the analysis which finds 86 percent doing just that. This reply ranked third in intensity of response.

The question of whether the school newspaper keeps the adult informed won 61 percent approval, although it has since developed that all schools do not have newspapers.

Inquiry along this line would divulge whether such a newspaper should be a propaganda device, or a learning device; also whether such newspapers should be the product of student writers or teachers in charge.

If any question may be accepted as final, it is the one which asks: "Should everyone know about school policies?" The degree of intensity here was highest with 93 percent saying, "Yes." Thus, closed sessions of the school board, secret goings-on, and any appearance of subterfuge are at once opposed by the public. Now the way through which every citizen learns of school policies is another matter. Whether he must rely upon somewhat questionable reports in the daily press (31--the "Joslyn Castle" series), or whether the schools should provide a reliable organ of information such as has been attempted in other communities, is directly dependent upon public relations comprehension by the administration. Not only should this understanding be held by the superintendent, but it should also be manifest

in the activities and conduct of every school employee:

Public relations is as simple as ABC--it is nothing more than good morals and good manners. Good morals are the relations of a company and its executives toward its employees, the customers, its competitors, and its owners. Good manners is intelligently presenting these morals in the written or the spoken word as well as in everyday action. 8

As for the desire on the part of the public for information, in this instance for news of school policies, Will Irwin writes:

We need it, we crave it; this nerve of the modern world transmits thought and impulse from the brain of humanity to its muscles; the complex organism of modern society could no more move without news than a man could move without filaments and ganglia. 3

With question 10 gaining 71 percent approval, it appears that vocational training is a "must" on the school curriculum. This sentiment may or may not have been influenced by the emphasis which wartime preparation and wartime activity have placed upon industrial production.

While religious training in co-operation with the schools (question 14) was not supported by a majority, nor rejected (a scarce 52 percent said "Yes"), it would seem that learning a vocational job is all-important. It might be said that so much depends upon getting and holding a job that everything else is of little importance:

A person's occupation determines not only his income, economic status and prestige, but his personal interests and behavior as well; such things as political participation, religious participation, activity in general community organizations and contributions toward their support, reading habits, recreational activities, etc. 26

When the high mobility of wartime living returns to normalcy, questionnaires might well be based upon the occupational status of the informant.

Are you teaching things at home which should be taught at school? Of those surveyed, 55 percent said "No," 33 percent said "Yes." It might be suggested that this statement was too general, that parents do not actually know what should be taught at home, at church, or at school. On the other hand, society definitely expects more of its schools today than formerly:

The tendency has been for society to assume many of its educational functions for which other social institutions have in the past been responsible. Schools now carry on programs of character training, formerly a major function of the church and the home. Some now offer courses in social etiquette, sex education, and similar matters for which the home was formerly held responsible.

The system of medical examinations required in all schools and the provisions made for corrective treatment demonstrate the extent to which society expects the schools to assume responsibility for the physical development of its youth. The guidance function carried on in many schools by highly trained specialists is a responsibility formerly undertaken by parents and friends. 5

Thus, although schools are now within an accepted stereotype and are not lowering standards (question 11, with 66 percent saying "No"), parents do expect the schools to provide free medical examinations (question 17, with 80 percent "Yes"), and the "new-type" report cards which tend to give generalities should perhaps tell more exactly what percentile rankings are (question 19, no majority).

"The errors of a doctrine do not hinder its propagation." 23 So said Gustave Le Bon, and it would seem that the public is content with the state of its

school buildings. Although many grade schools have been rated as "fire-traps" by city inspectors, and on several occasions Central High School was condemned because of its structure, 77 percent of those interviewed felt that school buildings were safe. Perhaps the glowing eloquence of Benson and North High Schools, the reported nine-million-dollar investment in Technical High School, the comparative majesty of South High School have given the impression of security and safety. Few adults have seen all of the grade school buildings, but few have not seen the high schools. This is, of course, conjecture, but it offers a possible explanation for the finding.

At the bottom of the list we find teacher participation in school campaigns. Some 48 percent said "Yes," and 45 percent said "No." Was it the spectacle of teachers and children working at the polls in the 1939 campaign which caused this lack of agreement? Could it have been the stories which were carried home from school classrooms which were so very upset by politics? It is clear that the public is not at all pleased when teachers become involved, although the practice was not condemned by a majority.

Not many feel that all tax money goes for schools, and a considerable portion would like to express themselves time and again through questionnaires. Thus, to the status of opinion in 1939 may be added trends of opinion on 24 specific issues in 1940 and 1944. All findings point to a single recommendation which will be given in the final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER V

"Action is certainly an excellent thing, and all real progress is the result of action, but it is useful only when properly directed. The men of the Revolution were assured men of action, yet the illusions which they accepted as guides led them to disaster." 23

How may the school teacher, the superintendent, and all others interested in the real progress of education set out to improve the relations which the schools have with the supporting public? By openly meeting the issues when they finally burst like a great bomb over the heads of the school children? What is the real status of the educator, and what is his fate?

Le Bon quotes M. Bourdeau:

There is a low demagogic instinct without any moral inspiration which dreams of pulling humanity down to the lowest level, and for which any superiority, even of culture, is an offense to society. It is the sentiment of ignoble equality which animated the Jacobin butchers when they struck off the head of a Lavoisier or a Chenier. 23

Should the educator meet the crowd face to face, such would likely be his fate; indeed such has been the fate of many an administrator. For these reasons, we do not find industrial and business leaders confronting the public on many occasions. Indeed, even religious leaders speak cautiously and in groups when the general public is addressed. The "gang" idea was seen in the 1939 election when a "Board of Realtors" opposed the issue. Even school teachers have learned to rely upon "strength in numbers"

and in Omaha lean heavily upon the Omaha Education Association and the Omaha Federation of Teachers. But the superintendent is, in one sense, alone. How do businessmen meet this single problem?

A public relations organization provides a single authoritative outlet for company news; expert execution of publicity activities, including right timing; skilled advice on public relations questions, creating opportunities and interpretation and selling of management policy. 18

Elemental rules of public relations programs which will not be sterile and ineffective are outlined by Bronson Batchelor as follows:

- 1) Know accurately what public relations can and cannot do. Realize that miracles cannot be accomplished overnight, and that constructive results come only from patient effort in building long-term, carefully defined objectives.
- 2) Don't guess. Set your targets only after you know the facts. Get the facts through detailed studies and impartially conducted surveys. Face unpleasant truths realistically and honestly. Don't minimize or seek to cover them over.
- 3) Be positive, frank, and truthful. Newspapers and newspapermen have an uncanny instinct for detecting attempts at deception. Say what you mean as simply and directly as possible. Avoid legalistic phrasing or defensive arguments.
- 4) Remember that prevention is far better than last-minute apologies for situations that have been permitted to get out of hand. Watch small details and correct immediately upon appearance what may appear to be unimportant grievances but which, if neglected, often spread to become dangerous infections.
- 5) Do not over-dramatize to make news or to create an emotional re-action. Straightforward sincerity is far more effective and avoids backfires that frequently follow over- or under-statement.
- 6) Trust the judgment of the public relations director. He can usually appraise psychological re-actions and intangibles far more accurately than can corporation executives. That's his particular job. Back him up to see it through. 2

Business recognizes the importance of the citizen of tomorrow; school employees would do well to bow to the voters of tomorrow. Sam Vining, one of industry's leading exponents of salesmanship, has a story with a moral for business and education alike:

Last week with my wife I drove through Union City, Ohio. I was out of cigarettes and I pulled up at the curb in front of a corner drug store. But I went across the street to a grocery and made my purchase. Many years ago as a little tousle-headed country kid--all dressed up in my Sunday best--but, oh, so apparently from the farm, I walked into that drug store with ten pennies in my hand and traded them for a flip rubber with which to make a sling-shot. That was my very first business transaction and it turned out disastrously. When the deal was complete I bashfully waited to examine my new possession until I was out on the sidewalk. Then I found the rubber had a long jagged hole right in the most vital spot.

Back into the store I went--with confidence. But I came out again with tears in my eyes. I had been told very gruffly that those rubber strips were sold without any guarantee.

I didn't know what the word "guarantee" meant--but I did know of the long weeks it took me to collect those pennies and of the hours I had spent picking just the right hickory fork from which to make my weapon. I ran from that store crying, "Cheat! Cheat!!"

That was forty years ago. But last week, even though my mind tells me my grievance is with a generation past and gone, there was no power on earth that could have dragged my feet through the doorway of that drug store. 39

It is not difficult to visualize a school boy in a similar predicament with his principal, his teacher, his superintendent, or his school janitor. Nor is it difficult to predict his lifelong attitude toward schools if the adult who personifies the school is stupid and unworthy at the moment.

If each school worker would paraphrase the many slogans, talks, and rules of business as related to the skill of public relations, it would soon become clear that

much is to be gained through a sound program of building public good weal. For example:

Don't tell people how good you make your goods. Tell them how good your goods make them. 15

Don't tell people how good your schools are. Tell them how good your schools are for them.

That the supporting taxpayers want to know more about their schools is apparent from the findings of this survey. That they read newspaper articles about their schools has also been ascertained. But what channels must be utilized in this program of giving the public news about the schools? We have already seen that teachers are not very adept in creating advertisements, and their skill in writing news stories is not great. What system might be recommended to meet these issues?

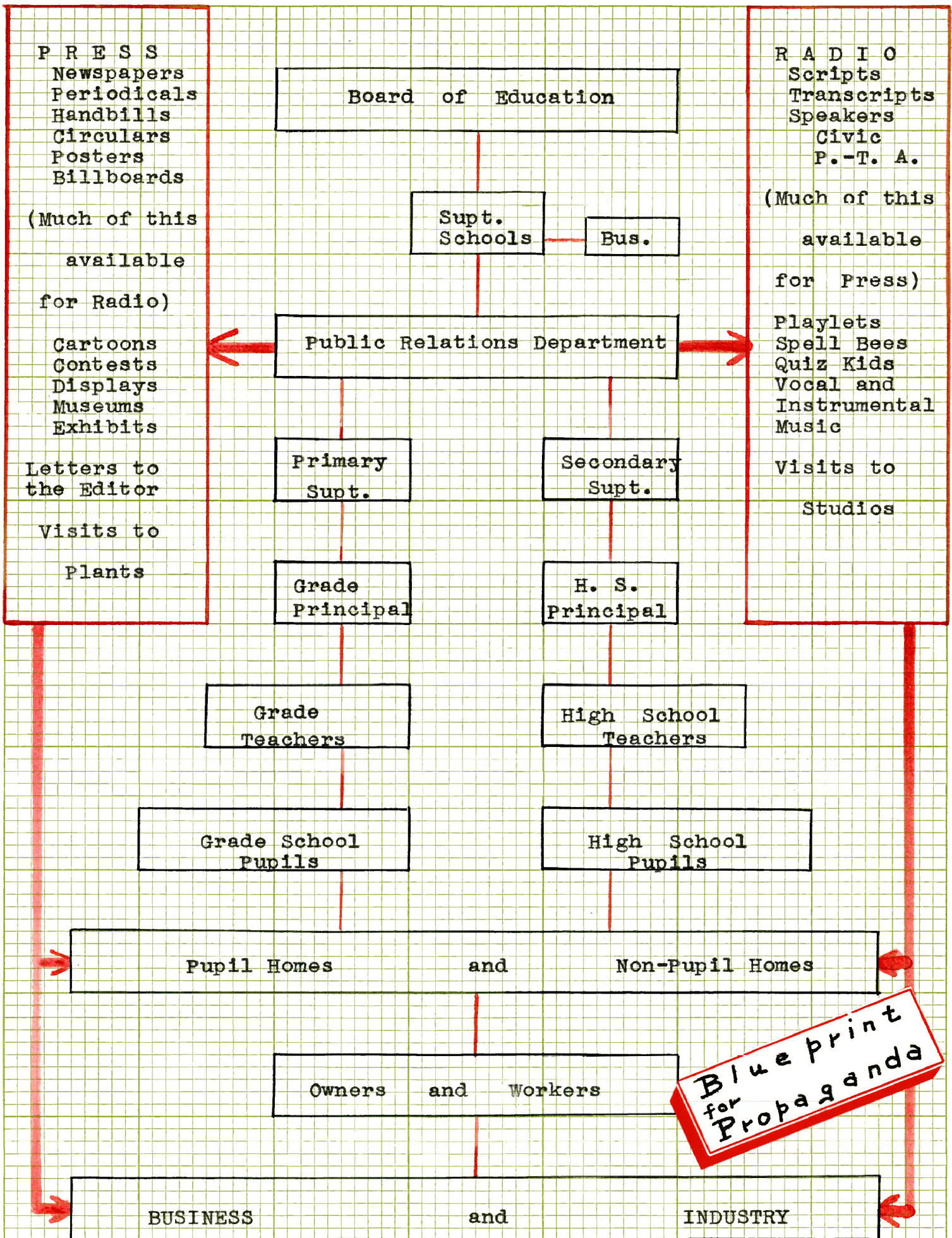
On the following page will be found the author's Blueprint for Propaganda which is proposed as a solution. While the Public Relations Department is so arranged that, like the Office of War Information in World War II, its function might be interpreted as one of censorship, such is not the intent.

Just as the administrator is skilled in bringing about a smoothly functioning school system of high benefit to the child and community, just as all school executives and classroom teachers are specialists within their fields, so is the public relations administrator to be regarded. It will be his aim to lend guidance to all school activities which normally can be termed legitimate news. In the all-important minor catastrophes which beset school personnel,

RECOMMENDATION CHART--Blueprint for Propaganda

This diagram is not necessarily a conclusion of the study, but rather one form of recommendation. The immediate establishment of a Public Relations Counsel as a member of the administrative staff of the public school system would be in keeping with similar growth on the part of churches, institutions of higher learning, and business and industry. The question of openly recognizing such a department is answered in the early treatment by others, i. e., in most instances the public relations official is a vice-president, an assistant minister, an assistant to the president, or an assistant to the superintendent. The old-time publicity man of circus days has left his mark indeed, and the stigma of propaganda is still with us. Until the public is willing to recognize the need for an established agency within the public schools, it would not seem wise to announce the counsel as such. Titles are optional, but the relationship of the counsel, as diagramed, is vital.

As further explained in the discussion which starts on Page 89, the counsel must not be all educator, neither must he be all publicist; he must be a splendid combination of those phases of each profession, so skilled that the public schools will greatly benefit in the course of time.



P R E S S
 Newspapers
 Periodicals
 Handbills
 Circulars
 Posters
 Billboards

(Much of this available for Radio)

Cartoons
 Contests
 Displays
 Museums
 Exhibits
 Letters to the Editor
 Visits to Plants

Board of Education

Supt. Schools

Bus.

Public Relations Department

Primary Supt.

Secondary Supt.

Grade Principal

H. S. Principal

Grade Teachers

High School Teachers

Grade School Pupils

High School Pupils

Pupil Homes

and

Non-Pupil Homes

Owners

and

Workers

BUSINESS

and

INDUSTRY

R A D I O
 Scripts
 Transcripts
 Speakers
 Civic P.-T. A.

(Much of this available for Press)

Playlets
 Spell Bees
 Quiz Kids
 Vocal and Instrumental Music
 Visits to Studios

Blueprint for Propaganda

he will lend guidance. A custodian who is arrested for law violation, a principal who is confronted with a strike among the students, a school teacher who is mentally ill and behaves abnormally in her classroom and on the public streets, a superintendent who plans to expand his administration offices, a school board member who sponsors a test law suit-- these and all others come within the scope of the public relations expert.

His relations with the press and radio will be such that few school items will be released for public appraisal without his approval. He will be both educator and publicist. He will be both reporter and teacher. He will know the status of organized labor. He will be very familiar with the business management of the school system.

Having this knowledge, he must have the complete confidence of the superintendent, and of the entire school personnel. This cannot, of course, be won overnight.

If findings of this survey were under consideration, the public relations counsel would begin his work in this manner:

1. Manage teacher participation in school elections so that the watching public could not misinterpret actions or conduct.
2. Promote a more complete understanding of the new type report card, and failing in this, re-construct the report card so that it meets approval of the parents.
3. Follow a program of enforcing the real reasons for changing promotion methods. Make it very clear that these are not experimental processes, and that children are not being used as guinea pigs in some crackpot, fadistic educational scheme.

Each of the findings, ranked in order of intensity, would be so treated.

A questionnaire dealing with problems which seem to be of greatest importance to the administrator would be devised, tested, given. Lacking a competent staff, the journalistic laboratory at any of the high schools might lend suitable aid in the distribution and tabulation of opinions. Thus, a Continuing Study would evolve.

A more complete sociological study of Omaha would be encouraged and used as a basis for calculating to a more accurate degree the actual sentiment or opinion of the Omaha people regarding specific school problems.

In the absence of such a program, it will be quite interesting to observe the conduct of future school programs and campaigns in the City of Omaha. Although we have stated the problem, determined the facts within the limitations described, and reached the above conclusions, the outlook is pessimistic and the future insecure.

The professional person, whose thin wallet carries little beyond a membership card in the National Education Association, is prone to peer dimly out of his classroom window. Noting the great walls of business beyond, he declares: "That's just a lot of propoganda."

To him we say in conclusion: "Take up the tools and the weapons of the businessman. Use them honestly and well. Fight for America's children."

When he does that, the walls and stacks of big business will recede beneath the stalwart towers of learning-- of free education for a free people.

As observed in Chapter I, the future growth of the public schools in Omaha is greatly dependent upon the status of the school system as related to public opinion. This study has determined the trend of that status, and has examined two specific phases:

- 1) the documented opposition which was manifest during the school election of 1939,
- 2) the opinions of 544 adults on 24 school issues in 1940 and in 1944.

The possibilities which lie within the practice of propaganda and public relations have been explored, and, within professional limitations of honesty and fair dealing, are recommended in conclusion.

That this type of research should be continued periodically is the hope of the author. A Continuing Study of the Status of the Omaha Public Schools as Related to the Public Mind will surely reveal again and again the elements which tend to restrict the full development and growth of the public schools in Omaha.

To the educator who appreciates the increased tempo of contemporary living, the procedure is quite obvious. Should educators neglect too long to adopt public relations practices, a dismal future awaits those in the teaching profession as well as their innocent charges.

--the end--

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Actual Copy

SURVEY FORM

1940 - 1944

Public Opinion and the Omaha Public Schools

Please check the following. If you wish to add a statement regarding the schools, please write on the back of this sheet. It is not necessary to sign your name. Thank you.

| | Yes; | No; | No Opinion |
|---|-------|-------|---------------|
| 1. Do you have a child in the public schools? | | | |
| 2. Should parents visit grade school classes? | | | |
| 3. Should parents visit high school classes? | | | |
| 4. Do you feel free to visit your principal? | | | |
| 5. Do you feel free to visit your superintendent | | | |
| 6. Would you like to have the teacher visit you? | | | |
| 7. Should everyone know about school policies? | | | |
| 8. Do you read newspaper articles about your school? | | | |
| 9. Are your children getting a better education than you did? | | | |
| 10. Would you like to see more vocational training emphasized in school? | | | |
| 11. Do you think schools are lowering standards? | | | |
| 12. Should schools spend more time on reading, writing, and arithmetic? | | | |
| 13. Are you teaching things at home which should be taught in school? | | | |
| 14. Do you think that schools should co-operate with churches in providing religious training? | | | |
| 15. Are children suffering from a lack of "old-time discipline"? | | | |
| 16. Do you feel that most of your tax money goes for schools? | | | |
| 17. Should schools provide free medical examinations? | | | |
| 18. Do you think your school building safe? | | | |
| 19. Do you like the present type of report card used in the grades? | | | |
| 20. Would you like to be consulted before changes are made in the method of promotions? | | | |
| 21. If your school has a newspaper, does it keep you informed, as a parent regarding the school? | | | |
| 22. Is the Parent-Teacher Association a good thing? | | | |
| 23. Should teachers take part in political campaigns which concern the schools? | | | |
| 24. Is it your understanding that teachers receive pay during vacation periods? | | | |
| 25. Would you like to express your opinions, from time to time through questionnaires such as this? | | | |

Actual Copy

SURVEY FORM

400X 1942

A SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION IN REGARD TO SCHOOL PRACTICES

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

In an attempt to find out what you as a citizen and patron of the schools think and know about the present school program, we are making this brief survey and asking you to give us your frank and critical opinion. We hope that the information which you give us, will help us in improving our school program, will help us in interpreting it to you, and will lead to better, all around school and community relationships. We hope you will give careful consideration to each item in this survey.

Kind of work you do: (Be specific) _____

Are you a member of a church? _____ If so which? Protestant _____
Catholic _____ Jewish _____.

How long have you lived in Omaha? _____

Did you attend the Omaha Public Schools? _____

Did you graduate from 8th grade? _____ From high school? _____
What year? _____

Did you attend college? _____ If so, how many years? _____

If you attended college, what course did you take? _____

Have you ever had children in the public schools? _____ Do you have
now? _____

Have you ever had any children in parochial schools? _____ Do you
have now? _____

Have you ever had any children in private schools? _____ Do you have
now? _____

1. The Omaha Schools are attempting to keep up with the best educational
practices. In your opinion are the Omaha Schools too progressive?
_____ About right? _____ Too conservative? _____ (Check one)

2. Do you think the schools have changed for the better since you were
in school? _____ State in what way _____

3. The schools give attention at the present time to the teaching of the
so called fundamentals: reading, writing, arithmetic, etc. Do you feel
that these subjects are not given enough attention _____ Given about
right amount attention _____ Too much attention _____ (Check one)

4. Schools attempt to keep the school program in line with social changes.
Do you think that the schools should change the material they present,
in other words the subjects and subject material, from time to time as
social needs demand? _____ (yes or no)

5. Do you think that the Omaha Schools are making such desirable changes in what they teach? _____ (yes or no)
6. Do you think that parents and citizens of the community should actively assist in deciding what material should be presented in the schools? _____ or should this be left to the teachers and administrators _____ (Check one)
7. The schools try to give freedom to the students in allowing them to make their own decisions and to share in the running of the school. Do you think that they are given: Not enough freedom? _____ About right amount of freedom _____ Too much freedom _____ (Check one)
8. Do you think that we are spending enough money on our schools in Omaha? Too much _____ About right _____ Not enough _____ (Check one)
9. Do you think that our high school program tends to be too academic and not practical enough? _____ (yes or no)
10. Would you like to see the high school curriculum more academic _____ Remain the same _____ More practical _____ (Check one)
11. In your opinion are the so-called "Frill" subjects such as art, music, and athletics overemphasized? _____ (yes or no)
(In this case practical mean more attention to such things as home-making, leisure time interests, personality problems, etc. Academic means such subjects as English, history, arithmetic, and mathematics.)
12. Would you like to see more vocational training emphasized in the schools? _____ (yes or no)
13. Do you think our high school program is about the best kind of training that could be provided under the present situation? _____ (yes or no) If your answer is no please make suggestions _____

14. Do you think that teachers receive sufficient salary considering the work and training required? Too much _____ About right _____ Not enough _____ (Check one)
15. Teachers in Omaha and some other cities are paid for nine months; Do you think they should be paid for a basis of 9 month _____ 10 months _____ 11 months _____ or a 12 month basis _____ (Check one)
16. Is it your opinion that teachers get paid for vacations such as at Christmas and Easter? _____ (yes or no)
17. Do you think teachers are better trained than they used to be? Better trained _____ About the same _____ Poorer trained _____ (Check one)
18. In most systems such as the Omaha Schools, is it your understanding that all teachers must have a college degree based on four years of intensive work _____ (yes or no) If your answer is NOT YES state the number of years beyond high school you think are required? _____

19. Do you think that our taxing system should be changed so that the state through some kind of a tax such as gasoline or cigarette should contribute much more to the support of the school rather than in placing most of the burden on the local community? _____ (yes or no)
20. Do you think that the federal government should give more financial support to the schools? _____ (yes or no)
21. Do you think that our educational facilities should be expanded in Omaha? Should be increased _____ Left the same _____ Decreased _____ (Check one)
22. Teaching requires as much training as other professions such as law, medicine, or the ministry. Do you consider teaching on the same social and professional level as other professions? _____ (yes or no)
If your answer is no please state why? _____
23. Teachers are citizens as well as members of their own profession. Do you think that teachers mingle enough with the other members of the community or do they tend to remain somewhat isolated? Not enough _____ About right _____ Too much _____ (Check one)
24. Do you think that married women should be allowed to teach? _____ (yes or no) If your answer is either yes or no please state your reason briefly. _____
- _____
25. Would you like to have the teachers visit more in your homes, particularly those teachers who work with your children in school? _____ (yes or no)
26. How many times have you visited the schools in the past year? _____
27. Do you think parents should visit the school, especially classes, more and attempt to become acquainted with what is going on in the school? _____ (yes or no)
28. Do teachers and principals make you feel welcome when you visit the school? _____
29. Would you like to be consulted oftener concerning such things as courses, promotions, possible failures, etc., affecting your child? _____ (yes or no)
30. Would you be interested in having the public schools give you more information about what is going on in the schools, why changes are being made, etc.? _____ (yes or no) Would you be interested in a newspaper put out by the schools every week or so to give you a better understanding of the schools? _____ (yes or no)

Comments: Please make any you care to concerning this survey or any other comments _____
