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The Development of the Public Free School System in Virginia, 1870-1945

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM
IN VIRGINIA, 1870-1945
FLOYD HUDNALL CHRISTOPHER

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to trace the development of education in Virginia from the English settlement at Jamestown to the year 1869. Reference will be made only to outstanding events that had a significant influence on the development of our public free school system.

There were no children in Virginia before 1619, therefore there was little reason for the settlers to be concerned about education prior to that time. Governor Berkeley's famous words in 1671, "I thank God that there are no free schools in Virginia",¹ do not have much foundation. The first plan for a free school in Virginia was in 1619-20 and was designed for the education of the Indian youth in reading and in the principles of the Christian religion. This was brought to an end by the massacre of 1622. The second attempt, which was to establish a free school for the white children of the colony, shared the same fate, and also came to a premature end. Whatever became of these foundations after the revival of the colony from this great catastrophe

¹ I. Cornelius J. Heatwole, A History of Education in Virginia (New York: The Macmillan Company 1916), p. 37.

of 1622 we do not know.²

In 1634 the will of Benjamin Symms bequeathed the foundation for a free school in Virginia.³ This school, located in Elizabeth City County, was in continuous session through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and provided free education for the children in that county. The Symms Free School and Eaton Free School, both in the same county and endowed by Dr. Thomas Eaton in 1659,⁴ were permanent institutions and served as models for other sections of the colony. In 1805 these schools were united as Hampton Academy and in 1902 a portion of the endowment was used to erect Symms-Eaton Academy which became a part of the public school system.⁵ By the beginning of the eighteenth century it is quite certain that many schools of this type were established throughout Virginia, with instruction in English Grammar, including Latin, and also the primary subjects, such as reading and writing.

² Ibid., pp. 41-43

³ Matthew Page Andrews, Virginia The Old Dominion (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1937), p. 170.

⁴ Guy Fred Wells, Parish Education in Colonial Virginia (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1923), p. 36.

⁵ Philip A. Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), Vol. 1, p. 351.

Another type of school set up in the seventeenth century was the community school, later known as the "Old Field School". These community schools were the result of a spirit of cooperation among neighbors for the purpose of education and often the teachers were the regular clergymen of the parish. Furthermore, the well-to-do planters in Virginia followed the form of instruction in England (the tutorial system) which was most satisfactory due to the absence of towns. A tutor was employed under contract to be furnished "meat, drink, lodging and washing", and sometimes a few acres of land free of rent to plant tobacco and vegetables. In addition to this he received a fee which usually amounted to about twenty-five dollars a year.⁶

An interesting account of the tutorial system in Virginia is given in Fithian's diary, (1773-1774), which is found in "A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion",⁷

From the foregoing facts it will be observed that the general laws on early elementary education in Virginia were in the nature of apprenticeship regulations with the provisions for teaching children reading, writing, and the catechism, and some trade; that these laws referred entire-

6. Heatwole, op. cit., pp. 48-57

7. Hunter Dickinson Farish, editor, A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1943)

ly to orphans, and poor children of the colony; that some men of wealth endowed free schools where poor children of many parishes received their elementary training; that community schools were organized by a cooperative spirit among the planters and merchants, who selected a teacher and paid a fee for the tuition of their children; and that the leading planters and most of the wealthy men of the colony employed tutors for their children.

The close of the Colonial Chapter of Virginia history in 1776, found opportunities for free education largely restricted to paupers, an idea which seems to have persisted for many years after the close of this period. Neither conditions in Virginia, with its period of Indian warfare, rebellion, and hardship, nor the structure of the Colonial society, with its plantation system and slaves, provided a favorable setting for the growth of public education.

In the words of Margaret Meagher, "Colonial Virginia was a little England, deriving her social and educational customs from the mother country and seeking to maintain them in perpetuity. Like England, Virginia was individualistic and impregnated moreover with the aristocratic notion that education was a luxury and a privilege of the rich. Such ideas persisted long after the Revolutionary War in the teeth of the liberalism of Jefferson and men of like mind."

S. J. L. Blair Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia* (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Michigan), p. 21.

There was little system or order in the elementary educational activities in the early history of Virginia. No attempt to work out a state system of education was made until Jefferson's plan of 1779. As there was such a strong and powerful upper class and such a mass of people who could be designated "poor", the idea of such a democratic institution as universal public education was slow to take form. A state system of education was looked upon by the aristocracy as being intended for paupers. The Virginia Bill of 1799 for the "More General Diffusion of Knowledge", submitted by Jefferson is generally conceded to be the first American proposal for a modern state school system.

This bill proposes to lay off every country into small districts of five or six miles square, called hundreds and in each of them to establish a school for teaching, reading, writing, and arithmetic. The tutor to be supported by the hundred, and every person in it entitled to send their children three years gratis, and as much longer as they please, paying for it. These schools to be under a visitor who is annually to chuse the boy of best genius in the school, of those whose parents are too poor to give them further education, and to send them forward to one of the grammar schools, of which twenty are proposed to be erected in different parts of the country, for teaching Greek, Latin, geography, and the higher branches of numerical arithmetic. Of the boys thus sent in any one year, trial is to be made at the grammar schools one or two years, and the best genius of the whole selected, and continued six years, and the residue dismissed. By this means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually, and be instructed, at the public expense, so far as the grammar schools go. At the end of six years instruction, one half are to be discontinued (from among whom the grammar

schools will probably be supplied with future masters); and the other half, who are to be chosen for the superiority of their parts and disposition, are to be sent and continued three years in the study of such sciences as they shall chuse, at William and Mary college, the plan of which is proposed to be enlarged, as will be hereafter explained, and extended to all the useful sciences. The ultimate result of the whole scheme of education would be the teaching all the children of the State reading, writing, and common arithmetic; turning out ten annually, of superior genius, well taught in Greek, Latin, geography, and the higher branches of arithmetic; turning out ten others annually, of still superior parts, who, to those branches of learning, shall have added such of the sciences as their genius shall have led them to; the furnishing to the wealthier part of the people convenient schools at which their children may be educated at their own expense.- The general objects of this law are to provide an education adapted to the years, to the capacity, and the condition of every one, and directed to their freedom and happiness. Specific details were not proper for the law. These must be the business of the visitors entrusted with its execution. The first stage of this education being the schools of the hundreds, wherein the great mass of the people will receive their instruction, the principal foundations of future order will be laid here. Instead, therefore, of putting the Bible and Testament into the hands of the children at an age when their judgments are not sufficiently matured for religious inquiries, their memories may here be stored with the most useful facts from Grecian, Roman, European, and American history. The first elements of morality too may be instilled into their minds; such as, when further developed as their judgments advance in strength, may teach them how to work out their own greatest happiness, by shewing them that it does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed them, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits.- Those whom either the wealth of their parents or the adoption of the state shall destine to higher degrees of learn-

ing, will go on to the grammar schools, which constitute the next stage, there to be instructed in the languages..... As soon as they are of sufficient age, it is supposed they will be sent on from the grammar schools to the university, which constitutes our third and last stage, there to study those sciences which may be adapted to their views. By that part of our plan which prescribed the selection of the youths of genius among the classes of the poor, we hope to avail the state of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivated.- But of all the views of this law none is more important, none more legitimate, than that of rendering the people the safe, as they are the ultimate, guardians of their own liberty.

This plan of Jefferson's did not provide for any higher authority for administration than the local district or county. These same local authorities were to determine whether or not a school should be established. Here, we find the main reason for the failure of the plan, for those in authority represented the aristocracy, and often, they did not see the reason for taxing themselves to establish a school which they themselves would not patronize.¹⁰

From this time on to the Civil War efforts were made by the different legislatures to establish a system of

9. Francis W. Coker, Democracy, Liberty, and Property. Readings in the American Political Tradition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), pp. 106- 108.

10. Heatwole, op. cit., p. 101

free public education. The Literary Fund, established by an act of 1810, formed the nucleus for the support of free schools in Virginia. This bill ordered that "all escheats, confiscations, penalties, and forfeitures, and all rights in personal property found derelict, should be appropriated to the encouragement of learning, and the Auditor of Public Accounts was directed to open an account to be designated as the Literary Fund".¹¹ The apportionment of this fund was kept under direct control of the General Assembly from the time it was established to the Civil War. In spite of the fact that members of the Legislature often used this fund to further their political interests, many children were provided instruction throughout Virginia, though it took nearly half a century to convince the people that the system was an effective method for the support of public education. There were other obvious weaknesses in the public school system: (1) Provisions were not made for the colored population so recently freed; (2) Not more than half of the "poor" white children, for whom the schools were primarily intended, were reached due to the idea of being a charge on the State; (3) The rich refused to attend because the schools were intended for the indigents; (4) Financial support was

¹¹ A. J. Morrison, The Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia, 1776-1860 (Richmond: Davis Bottom, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), p. 25.

far short of its needs, and (5) no effective system of administration and supervision was provided. Thus, a sound and vigorous system of public education could not thrive in such a social disorder. It was necessary for these conditions to change before an effective system of education could be established.¹²

In the midst of these events came the Civil War with "all its deadening and blighting effect upon the political, social, and industrial conditions of the whole South, and Virginia, more than any of the other southern states, felt the awful results of this conflict".¹³ Virginia was the social and educational leader in the eleven states that had seceded, and the end of the war found her "social order and industrial institutions" in a state of collapse.

To a majority of the upper classes between 1865 and 1870 the idea of a state system of public education was distinctly objectionable. The institution, they declared, was a foreign one which their conquerors sought to force upon them. Its main purpose was to break down all social ranks and put the negro upon a plane of equality with the whites. It was an experiment too costly to be tried in the impoverished condition of the state. Others, however, ignoring its immediate origin, declared the institution theoretically good and practically a necessity, in view of the breaking down of the old system and the

12. Heatwole, op. cit., pp. 210-211

13. Ibid., pp. 213-214.

impossibility of fitting it to the negro even if it should be revived. As a sort of compromise between these two views, it had come to be generally agreed by 1869-1871 that since the constitution had been accepted with the provision for schools in it, the experiment ought to be made in good faith.¹⁴

The conditions just described existed in Virginia prior to the establishment of the public free schools. After nearly a century of agitation and discussion, the educational plan of Thomas Jefferson, in modified form, finally was made into the law of 1869, which established the public free school system in Virginia.

¹⁴. Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), p.60.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST STATE-WIDE SYSTEM OF FREE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The delegates assembled in Convention December 3, 1867 to frame a Constitution for Virginia. Records of the Convention and newspapers of that day, as well as living witnesses, testify that this was the "most conglomerate and heterogeneous body of men ever assembled in the history of the world to frame a Constitution for the government of a free and enlightened people." The hall of the Convention became "a bedlam of chaotic confusion, perturbation, and anarchy." Many men were frequently armed on the floor of the Convention and often street broils and fights were indulged in by members and others.

An interesting account of the personnel of the Convention printed in The Richmond Dispatch of April 20, 1868 is as follows:

The Convention consisted of one hundred and five members, of whom some thirty-five were Conservatives, some sixty-five were Radicals, and the remainder doubtful. The Radicals were composed of twenty-four negroes, fourteen native born white Virginians, thirteen New Yorkers, one Pennsylvanian, one member from Ohio, one from Maine, one from Vermont, one from Connecticut,

I. J. N. Brenaman, History of Virginia Conventions, (Richmond: J. L. Hill Printing Company, 1902), p. 76.

one from South Carolina, one from Maryland, one from the District of Columbia, two from England one from Ireland, one from Scotland, one from Nova Scotia, and one from Canada. Of the fourteen white Virginians belonging to this party, some had voted secession, others had been in the Confederate army; hardly one had a Union record. A large proportion of the Northern men and foreigners were drifted here in some non-combatant capacity by the war.

The Convention organized by electing a New Yorker president. A native of Maryland was elected secretary. A Marylander was elected sergeant-at-arms. An Irishman, resident of Baltimore, was elected stenographer. The assistant clerk was from New Jersey. Two negroes were appointed doorkeepers. A clergyman from Illinois was appointed chaplain. Even the boys appointed as pages, with one exception, were negroes, or sons of Northern men or foreigners; while the clerks of the twenty standing committees, with two or three exceptions, were also Northern men or negroes.²

Three days after the Convention met a public school system was advocated by the Radicals both white and colored. A Negro member introduced a bill giving the "right to every person to enter college, seminary, or other public institution of learning, as students, upon equal terms with each other, regardless of race, color, previous condition of loyalty or disloyalty, freedom or slavery".³ The question of mixed schools arose constantly during the

2. Ibid., p. 73

3. Richard L. Morton, History of Virginia, Virginia Since 1861 (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1924), Vol. 3, p. 239.

debates of the Convention. The Negro leaders admonished their white brethren for not advocating "mixed schools", which they had promised them prior to the Convention of 1867. W. A. Hodges, a Negro delegate from Princess Anne County, warned the white republicans that but for "de bone, and de sinews, and de muscles, and de skin, which was de colored people, de Rippublican party would hardly be a skeleton".⁴ Another Negro delegate, Samuel F. Kelso, from Campbell County, thought it "very strange that no white Republican had spoken in favor of" mixed schools.⁵ In reply to this a Conservative said that white Radicals would not send their own children to mixed schools. When a delegate from New York stated that he had patronized mixed schools for four years, a Conservative member from Virginia immediately wanted to know whether or not "the gentleman's children were mixed children".

It was under such unfavorable circumstances that the Underwood Constitution was produced. There was bitter opposition among many people in Virginia over this Constitution. This is recorded by E. L. Fox when he briefly describes the attempts to have the Constitution rejected:

No sooner had the Convention adjourned than a Conservative or Anti-Constitutional party was formed. Delegates were chosen from the counties and conservative conventions were held throughout the State. They hoped to succeed in having the people reject this constitution. And not the

4. Ibid., p. 240

5. Loc. cit.

least of their objections was to the provision which directed the legislature to adopt a system of common free schools.⁶

Through the political wisdom of Alexander H. Stuart, who gathered together groups of Virginians, which came to be known as the "Committee of Nine", Virginia escaped the adoption of the full Underwood Constitution. This Committee obtained permission from the Federal Government to segregate two parts of the Constitution for separate voting, the test oath and disfranchisement, these being the most obnoxious provisions of the new Constitution. As a result the Underwood Constitution was ratified by the people but little popular enthusiasm or approval was shown. At this time Virginians felt the awful results of the War Between the States and their problems became more complicated by having to provide schools for the children of the freed slaves. Dr. J. L. M. Curry, in his "History of the Peabody Education Fund", describes the conditions in the war stricken south as follows:

At the origin of the Peabody Education Fund in 1866 not a single southern state within the field of its operation had a system of free public schools and only in few cities were any such schools to be found. No state organization existed through which this fund could reach the people. The illiteracy of the inhabitants was appalling and by no means was confined to the 'freedmen' but included a large per cent of the white population. The Legislature of these states during the period of reconstruction, largely under

6. J. L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Michigan), pp. 54-55.

the influence of members from the northern states, where the common schools had been for years a recognized institution and of colored representatives who were filled with the laudable ambition for the schooling of children of their own people, had laid out a work entirely and sometimes absurdly beyond their people to sustain, for the support of this scheme was to fall upon the native white people, who held ninety per cent of the remaining property of these Commonwealths. During the war and the five years following, 1860-1870, the property value of these states had diminished to the extent of two billion dollars. There were in the ex-Confederate States two million children and youth within the years of instruction. In the effort to organize and put in successful operation a new and untried system of public schools adequate to the need of the entire population, the southern states, were under a weight of debt beyond their ability in their impoverished condition to pay. To add the expense of free education to this crushing weight was in their financial condition a perplexing and almost impossible task. Free schooling was a new question introduced and to be administered by novices in this work. To organize the freedom and equality of citizenship of a large class, lately the slaves of the white people, was not easy, because in conflict with the traditions, prejudices, social customs, and legal rights of a few years preceding. To impose voluntary, heavy burdens on the scant property which survived the demoralization of the war, so as to educate gratuitously their own children and the children of the late African slaves was a task of patriotism, of humanity, of civic duty which no people ever encountered.

The report of Dr. Curry gives a fairly accurate account of the conditions in Virginia under which the public free schools were inaugurated through the Underwood Constitution. Even though the new constitutional mandate for public free schools bore the marks of a legislature made up of a group

7. Cornelius J. Heatwole, A History of Education in Virginia (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), pp. 211-213.

of "scalawags, carpet-beggars, and Negro allies", this mandate was significant in the progress of public education in Virginia. A sound, state-wide, free school system was enacted in Article VIII of the Underwood Constitution. It reads:

Section 1. The General Assembly shall elect, in joint ballot, within thirty days after its organization under this Constitution, and every fourth year thereafter, a Superintendent of Public Instruction. He shall have the general supervision of the public free school interests of the State, and shall report to the General Assembly, for its consideration, within thirty days after his election, a plan for a uniform system of public free schools.

Section 2. There shall be a board of education, composed of the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction and Attorney-General, which shall appoint, and have power to remove, for cause and upon notice to the incumbents, subject to confirmation by the Senate, all county superintendents of public free schools. This board shall have regulated, by law, the management and investment of all school funds, and such supervision of schools of higher grades as the law shall provide.

Section 3. The General Assembly shall provide by law, at its first session under this Constitution, a uniform system of public free schools, and for its gradual, equal and full introduction into all the counties of the State, by the year 1876, or as much earlier as practicable.

Section 4. The General Assembly shall have power, after a full introduction of a public free school system, to make such laws as shall not permit parents and guardians to allow their children to grow up in ignorance and vagrancy.

Section 5. The General Assembly shall establish, as soon as practicable, normal schools, and may establish such grades of schools and agricultural schools as shall be for the public good.

Section 6. The Board of Education shall provide for uniformity of textbooks, the providing for school-houses, and the furnishing of school-houses with such apparatus and library as may be necessary, under such regulations as may be provided by law.

Section 7. The General Assembly shall set apart, as a permanent and perpetual "literary fund", the present literary funds of the State, the proceeds of all public lands donated by Congress for public school purposes, of all property accruing to the State by forfeiture, and all fines collected for offences committed against the State, and such other sums as the General Assembly may appropriate.

Section 8. The General Assembly shall apply the annual interests on the literary fund, the capitation tax provided for by this Constitution for public free school purposes, and an annual tax upon the property of the State, of not less than one mill, nor more than five mills, on the dollar, for the equal benefits of all the people of the State, the number of children between the ages of five and twenty-one years in each public free school district, being the basis of such division. Provision shall be made to supply children attending the public free schools with necessary textbooks, in case where the parent or guardian is unable, by reason of poverty, to furnish them. Each county and public free school district may raise additional sums by a tax on property for the support of public free schools. All unexpended sums of any one year in any public free school district, shall go into the general school fund for re-division the next year: Provided, That any tax authorized by this section to be raised by counties or school districts shall not exceed five mills on a dollar in any one year, and shall not be subject to re-division, as herein before provided in this section.

Section 9. The General Assembly shall have power to foster all higher grades of schools under its supervision, and to provide for such purpose a permanent educational fund.

Section 10. All grants and donations received by the General Assembly for educational purposes shall be applied according to the terms prescribed by the donors.

Section 11. Each city and county shall be held responsible for the destruction of school property that may take place within its limits by incendiaries or open violence.

Section 12. The General Assembly shall fix the salaries and prescribe the duties of all school officers, and shall make all needful laws and regulations to carry into effect the public free school system provided for by this article.

The Legislature which met on October 5, 1869 had the responsibility of creating a public free school system. The determination to bring about political harmony by meeting the requirements of the new State Constitution was uppermost in the minds of these conservative men. The Senate contained a majority of twenty Conservatives and the House more than fifty. There were three Negro Conservatives of the total twenty-seven negro members. Governor Walker called the attention to the General Assembly to the educational provisions of the Constitution. He was a Republican but had joined with the Conservatives. The membership of the educational committee in the House was eight Conservatives and four Radicals, two of whom were Negroes; in the Senate there were five Conservatives and two Radicals, one of whom was colored. Notwithstanding the fact that the Assembly seriously doubted the educational program as provided for in the Constitution they were determined "not merely to comply with" the document "as a matter of form, but to make the

experiment in good faith."⁹

On March 2, 1870 William H. Ruffner, D.D. was appointed by the General Assembly as the first Superintendent of Public Instruction. A wiser choice could hardly have been made for he was one of Virginia's "most earnest advocates of public free schools." Superintendent Ruffner presented his educational plan to the General Assembly twenty-three days after he had qualified as Superintendent, and five days before the thirty day period allowed by the Constitution expired. A detailed written plan of the school system in the form of a bill was made by Dr. Ruffner at the request of the chairman of the educational committee of the House. This, after a few changes, was considered by a joint committee of the Senate and House. Since there was little opposition in the legislature to the main features, the plan became law with the signature of Governor Walker on July 11, 1870.¹⁰

The Act of 1870 provided:

1. That there shall be established and maintained a uniform system of public free schools.
2. That the public free schools shall be administered by the following authorities: a board of education, a superintendent of public instruction,

9. Morton, op. cit., pp. 241-242.

10. Ibid., p. 244.

a county superintendent of schools, and district school trustees.

3. That the Board of Education shall consist of the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Attorney-General with the Governor as president.
4. That the duties of the board shall be:
 1. To make regulations for its own government, and for carrying into effect the school laws.
 2. To invest all income.
 3. To appoint and remove district school trustees.
 4. To appoint and remove county superintendents of schools, subject to confirmation of the Senate.
 5. To decide appeals from decisions of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
 6. To regulate all matters arising in the practical administration of the school system.
 7. To make an annual report to the legislature on or before the first day of November.
 8. To punish county superintendents for the neglect of duty or for any official misconduct.

"A Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be elected by the General Assembly by joint vote, within thirty days after the meeting of 1873-4, and every four years thereafter."¹²

His duties shall be:

1. Execution and interpretation of school laws.
2. Preparation of registers and forms for making reports.
3. Making tours of inspections of public free schools throughout the State.
4. Decision of appeals from county superintendents of schools.
5. Preservation of all important school documents.
6. Apportionment of school funds.
7. Provision for an official seal.
8. Submission of an annual report to the Board of Education.¹³

The county superintendent of schools was appointed by the State Board of Education, subject to confirmation by the Senate,

His duties were:

1. To explain the school system and to promote a desire for education among the people,
2. To ask for additional funds- if needed- from the taxpayers for the support of the public free schools,

12. Ibid., p. 404

13. Ibid., pp. 404-406

under directions from the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

3. To apportion state and county funds among the school districts within each county under his supervision, with the approval from the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
4. To examine and certify teachers, also to promote their improvement and efficiency, as directed from the State Superintendent.
5. To assist in the organization of boards of district school trustees.
6. To visit and examine all schools within his district.
7. To keep a record of his official acts.
8. To require from clerks of boards of district school trustees detailed annual reports.
9. To make an annual report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.¹⁴

Three district school trustees were appointed by the State Board of Education in each school district in the State, to serve one, two, and three years, respectively, and annually thereafter to be appointed to serve for three years.

Their duties were:

1. To enforce school laws.

14. Ibid., pp. 406-408

2. To employ teachers.
3. To suspend or dismiss pupils.
4. To decide what pupils should receive free text-books and to grant them.
5. To make special and annual reports to the county superintendent.
6. To visit schools within their districts.
7. To pay teachers. ¹⁵

This method of appointing district school trustees was changed by an Act of 1877,¹⁶ which created the school trustee electoral board, which appointed the district school trustees. The electoral board was composed of the county superintendent of schools, the county judge, and the commonwealth's attorney in each county.

The state of poverty that existed among the people of Virginia after the war made the introduction of the public school system a real problem. There were those who felt that the State debt should be paid before another financial responsibility should be taken on. On the other hand, after the war most of the people of Virginia were not able to educate their children, so that the demands for free schools were great. There were some who wanted to give their children that training of which they had been deprived. When the people of Virginia began to see

15. Ibid., pp. 408-410

16. Acts of Assembly, 1876-77, p. 9.

with Superintendent Ruffner that " a public school is no more a provision of charity than a town pump" then the public free schools were welcomed and loyally supported.¹⁷ By the year 1877 "nine-tenths of the families of the state were public school patrons, and it was accounted political death for a public man to oppose openly this institution of the people."¹⁸

However, there still remained the serious financial danger to the schools. Although the Constitution had made provisions for certain funds to be set aside for school purposes, State officials had diverted them for other obligations. When the school authorities protested this action in the courts it was held that paying interest on public debts is as much an obligation of the State as is the maintenance of the schools. "The people must be educated, but they must not be educated at the price of repudiation and dishonor. Better would be ignorance than enlightenment purchased at such a fearful price."¹⁹

The measure of 1878 which would have protected the school revenue, even at the expense of the bond holders, was vetoed by Governor Holliday who had been elected on a

17. Morton, op. cit., p. 251.

18. Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), pp. 60-61.

19. Morton, op. cit., p. 257.

platform of debt payment. Superintendent Ruffner did not complain of the sincerity and integrity of the State officials who decreased the state's assistance to the schools for he believed the schools had become more appreciated as a result of this unfortunate turn of events. Dr. Ruffner was soon to be compensated for his labor for in March 3, 1879 the Hankel Act was passed which gave to the schools the revenue that had been provided for them in the Constitution and laws of the State. Further legislation was soon enacted which repaid the schools the funds that were justly due them.²⁰

The earlier governors seemed to favor the public free school system but their attention was centered on the financial rather than the administrative side, due to the impoverished state of affairs. However, some very pertinent remarks were made by some of these men about the educational program. Governor Walker, 1869-74, said, "Virginia possessed educational advantages equalled by few and excelled by none of her sister states. These advantages are constantly increasing and developing, and I entertain the confident hope that Virginia will yet become the great educating State of the union. Her climate, her facilities of communication, as well as her geographical and historical position, will all contribute to this desirable result.

20. Ibid., pp. 257-258

The work of educating and elevating the people should be the highest and most patriotic aspiration of the Christian and the statesman." 21

Governor Holliday, 1878-1882, made this statement: "I said, and it gives me pleasure to repeat, that the public free school system in Virginia is the greatest benefaction of which we have any record in history. Though she came out of the war lacerated and torn as I have described her, she, in her poverty, not only provided for the support of her government and the payment of her debts, but she provided for the education of her poor of both races. This was done by common consent, not by force of arms, or the more subtle but none less dangerous force of the ballot." 2279

Governor McKinney, 1890-1894, in an address to the General Assembly in 1891 said: "The public schools are doing a great work for the State. They are increasing in number and efficiency yearly, and I hope the time is not far distant when a competent teacher may be found in every neighborhood and the advantages of a good English education be placed within reach of each child in the Commonwealth and every citizen will be able to read the Constitu-

21. Senate Journal and Documents 1872-73, Vol.19,p.12.

1922. Senate Journal and Documents 1878-79, Vol.19,p.17.

tion of his country, and the laws of God." ²³ 60

Governor O'Ferrall, 1894-1898, said of education:
 "Year by year our public school system grows in favor, resulting from superior management, the character of its training, and the proficiency of its pupils. We meet constantly in our daily walks men prominent in business and professional circles, whose education was acquired in the public schoolhouses. Virtue, justice, and liberty flourish more and more as a people rise in the scale of intelligence. Prisons and schools must exist in every well ordered country. So many less as you have of the latter, so many more must you have of the former." ²⁴ 81

60 23. Senate Journal and Documents 1891-92, Vol. 19, p. 37.

81 24. Senate Journal and Documents 1897-98, Vol. 19, p. 24.

CHAPTER III

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF 1901-1902

Although the Underwood Constitution was adopted by the people there was much opposition to this document from the very beginning. Any attempt to call a convention to revise or amend the Constitution during the period from 1869-1885 would have caused great agitation and probably bloodshed. Furthermore, it would have invited Federal interference which would have magnified and increased the already existing evils. Besides the Constitution prevented the question being brought before the people prior to the year 1888, when the general election would be held. Three times prior to 1900 the question of calling a convention to revise and amend the Constitution of 1868 was submitted to the people and each time it was voted down.

With the passing of years sectional and political prejudices and bitterness had given away to a healthy and wideawake interest in education and government. By 1900 the interest of the people had been aroused by a group of public spirited statesmenlike men and women who carried on such an active campaign, through the press, mass meetings, and organized citizens of the State, that a majority of the people saw the need for improvement in education and government and voted to have a constitutional

convention.

The members of the Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902 assembled in the city of Richmond on June 12th. Of the hundred delegates elected, sixty-two were lawyers and twenty-one were farmers. Thirty-one members had served in the General Assembly. The members of this Convention were men of exceptional talents and attainments. This was to be expected, since it was a great honor to be a member of a Virginia Constitutional Convention, which met on an average once every thirty years and had the "power to hedge society about with a government."¹ While the main purpose of the Convention was the disfranchisement of the Negro, it was by no means the only question of great importance.

Of the twelve standing committees appointed by the President of the Convention, John Goode from Bedford City, Virginia, one was the Committee on Education and Public Instruction, composed of fifteen members, representing each Congressional district of the State. The chairman of this committee was Richard McIlwaine, a Democrat from Hampden-Sidney, Virginia. The report from this Committee on Education and Public Instruction was read by the chairman on November 13, 1901. Two days thereafter the Convention resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of considering this report. Mr. McIlwaine, Chair-

1. James E. Pate, State Government in Virginia (Richmond: The Appeals Press, 1932), p. 46.

man, made the opening remarks as follows:

We have had the benefit of much expert testimony and of some inexperienced testimony. We have oftentimes been embarrassed on this account, but we have heard everybody, white and colored, who offered to come before us; have had large discussions; and whilst we cannot hope to have reached the wisest conclusions on all points, we believe that the report we present is largely in advance of that of its predecessor which is embodied in the present Constitution.²

Each section of the report of the Educational Committee was read and discussed by the Convention. There were some provisions that were debated at great length before definite conclusions could be reached. A review will be made of the changes recommended by the Educational Committee of Article VIII of the Constitution of 1868; of the pertinent arguments that followed; of the amendments that were offered by the Committee of the Whole; and of Article IX of the Constitution of Virginia of 1901-1902, as finally adopted. As recommended by the Educational Committee Section 1, Article IX was as follows:

Section 1. The General Assembly shall establish and maintain an efficient system of public free schools throughout the State.

The members of the Convention found themselves heartily in accord with this section, for it was an efficient school system that was the primary objective of the con-

². Debates Constitutional Convention 1901-1902, Vol. 15, pp. 1050-1051.

vention. This section was adopted with little discussion.

Section 2. The general supervision of the public free school system of the State shall be vested in a Superintendent of Public Instruction and a Board of Education to be composed of the Governor, Attorney-General, Chairman of the Faculty of the University of Virginia, President of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, President of the State Female Normal School at Farmville, and the Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute: provided, however, that should the General Assembly fail to make appropriations to any of said institutions, the Chairman of the Faculty, the president or superintendent of such institution, shall cease to be a member of said board.

The Committee departed from the established method previously followed by adding the heads of five State Institutions to the Board of Education. Many arguments were raised here by members of the Convention. First of all it was suggested that in composing this board as was recommended, not only the public school system but also the colleges would be brought into politics. But the Education Committee thought that these five gentlemen would form "a non-partisan, an intelligent, and an earnestly interested addition to the board as heretofore constituted";³ so, the recommendation was made.

It was generally agreed that the board should be composed of experienced educators. Mr. Eggleston, a delegate from Charlotte County, commented, however, "I see no reason why we should be limited in the choice of those men to the

3. Ibid., p. 1051.

4
faculties of these public institutions." He further comments that these men are not actually engaged in the public free school work of the State- the common schools. They are not in touch with the "common schools" nor do they know anything about the practical working of them. Further questions were raised as: why should we not have on that board the principal of one of our city high schools; or why not add to the board one or two city superintendents or three county superintendents? One delegate Mr. O'Flaherty, took a strong stand against having a State Board of Education composed of leading college presidents. He read before the Convention an article published in his county, Warren County, newspaper, which paraphrased his views:

His ground against such a board is that it is making a trust of education-- a consolidated syndicate monopoly of education in the hands of college institutions not in touch with the system of public free schools, and with but little knowledge of the complicated local work and gear of the public school system. He thinks that this board appointed by the Governor, is beyond the reach and wish of the people, with power to make rules and regulations for schools having the full force of law, is not only creating a board independent of the people, but is making a board co-ordinate with the Legislature, and in a measure independent of the same. He thinks the public free schools, which are the property and heritage of the people, should not be so far removed from the wishes of the common people as to have neither voice or local representation in the way they are to be managed and conducted. He thinks it is placing too much power in the hands of men not in touch with, and, in many instances, not in sympathy with, the public schools. He thinks it is too great a temptation to delegate such unlimited powers in the

4. Ibid., p. 1791.

hands of even good men, saying nothing against the learned institutions in question. He thinks this board could make or destroy the efficiency of the public schools at will, with such large delegated powers unrestricted ad libitum. ⁵

As adopted by the Convention, Section 2, Article IX, reflected modifications of the recommendations of the Education Committee and read as follows:

The general supervision of the public free school system of the State shall be vested in a State Board of Education to be composed of the Governor, Attorney-General, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and three experienced educators, to be elected by the Senate of Virginia, once every four years, from a list of eligibles to be furnished by the Board of Visitors or Trustees of the University of Virginia, the Virginia Military Institute, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, the State Female Normal School at Farmville, School for Deaf and Blind at Staunton, and William and Mary College (so long as the State shall continue its annual appropriations to this last named institution). The said list of eligibles shall be made up of one name from the official corps or faculties of each of the institutions indicated; and the board thus constituted shall associate with it one city and one county school superintendent, whose term of office shall be for two years and whose powers and duties shall be identical with those of the other members, except they shall not participate in the appointment of any public school official.

Next the Committee of the Whole considered section 3 as it was submitted by the Committee on Education and Public Instruction.

Section 3. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall hold office for a term of four years, and his duties and compensation shall be fixed by law. He shall be ex-officio president

5. Ibid., p. 1698

of the State Board of Education.

As Article VIII of the Underwood Constitution had provided that the Superintendent of Public Instruction be elected by the General Assembly, an amendment was immediately offered on the floor of the Convention as a substitute for section 3. The amendment proposed that the Superintendent of Public Instruction should be elected at the same time and in the same manner as the Governor. In opposition to this suggestion it was claimed by some that people in general do not always have the information that would make their judgments "desirable and satisfactory and safe" in matters such as educational questions.⁶ On the other hand, there were those who thought that the people of the State should have the right to say who should direct and control their public free school system and that they would use this right wisely and discreetly. In support of this position it was urged that if the people are capable of electing a Governor, a Lieutenant Governor, and an Attorney-General, then they will be able to make a creditable selection of a Superintendent of Public In-⁷struction.

The amendment was accepted by the Convention and section 3 was adopted as follows:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be elected by the qualified electors of

6. Ibid., p. 1106.
 7. Ibid., p. 1113.

the State; and after his first term, which shall be fixed by law, he shall be elected at the same time as the Governor and hold office for a term of four years. His duties shall be prescribed by the State Board of Education, and his compensation shall be fixed by law, and he shall be ex-officio president of the State Board of Education.

Since there were no further amendments to section 3 the chairman of the Convention asked the secretary to read section 4 of the report of the Education Committee.

Section 4. The duties and powers of the State Board of Education shall be as follows:

First. It shall, subject to the confirmation of the Senate, appoint a Superintendent of Public Instruction, and all superintendents of city and county public free schools, and may remove superintendents for cause and upon notice to the incumbent; provided, that no member of the State Board, except the ex-officio president thereof, shall be eligible for appointment to the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction during his term of office, nor within one year after the expiration of the same.

Second. It shall have, regulated by law, the management and investment of the school fund.

Third. It shall have authority to make all needful rules and regulations for the management and conduct of the public free schools, which rules and regulations, when published and distributed, shall have the force and effect of law, but all rules and regulations of said board may be amended or repealed by the General Assembly, and when so amended or repealed, shall not be re-enacted by said board.

Fourth. It shall select text-books and educational appliances for use in the public free schools of the State; provided, that the school boards of the cities of a population of five thousand or more shall choose the books and appliances for their schools, subject to such rules and regulations as the State Board of Education shall prescribe.

Fifth. It shall appoint a board of directors consisting of five members, who shall serve without compensation, in which

shall be vested the management of the State Library, and the appointment of a librarian and other employees therefor, subject to such rules and regulations as the General Assembly shall prescribe.

Of these duties and powers as listed above, only one sub-division was discussed at any length and amended. There was much contention over the office and the appointment of the county superintendent. This section was immediately attacked by those who wished to do away with the office of county superintendent. They contended that these officers were of little practical use, since they merely apportioned funds among the various districts, examined teachers, made regular reports to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and failed to perform the many other duties prescribed by law. It was the belief that these duties of the county superintendent could be performed by a member of the county school board.⁸

Other members of the Convention argued that the office of county superintendent was vital to the educational system as he must assume the responsibility of perfecting the organization and conduct of each school in the county. He must be qualified to judge teachers' work, be responsible for a plan of instruction, and provide the necessary educational equipment for a successful school system. It was urged that the elimination of the office

8. Ibid., pp. 1123-1125

of county superintendent would be nothing short of a calamity as the public schools in Virginia could not run without some supervision and head. Since the State Board of Education, as set up by the Education Committee, was invested with the responsibility of the public free school system, it could not be held to strict account for the discharge of its duty if efficient local agents were not provided.⁹

The method of the selection of the county superintendent was also a much debated issue of the Convention. To have him elected by the people was thought by some members of the Convention to drag the schools into politics.

Quoting Carter Glass:

Sir, your county school superintendent is more subject to local bias and prejudice and influence than any other public office. Every man who has a stupid child blames the county school superintendent and the teacher because his child is not bright. Every fellow who has an insubordinate child whose conduct is subject to the discipline of the public free school system, rails at the teacher and the superintendent every time the child is punished. Every fellow who wants to work his sister or his cousin or his aunt into the corps of teachers blames the county superintendent for not giving her a first-class certificate, when she ought not, perhaps, to have a third-class one. ¹⁰

Equally determined in their views were those members of the Convention who thought that a county superintendent elected by the people would be more directly responsible

9. Ibid., p. 1132.

10. Ibid., p. 1143.

to them. The remoteness of the State Board of Education from the counties made the intimate knowledge of the qualification of a man for the county superintendency impossible. It was further contended that educational qualifications may be determined by an examination but that other qualifications, as executive and administrative ability, could not be determined so easily.

In consideration of such ideas as those brought out in the discussion, sub-section one of section four, relative to the duties and powers of the State Board of Education, was amended and finally adopted in this form:

It may, in its discretion, divide the State into appropriate school divisions and, subject to confirmation of the Senate, appoint all superintendents of schools for such divisions, and prescribe their duties, and may remove such superintendents for cause and upon notice to the incumbent: provided, no such division shall comprise less than one county or city, nor shall any county or city be divided in the formation of any such division.

With these changes in Sub-section 1, Section 4 was adopted as proposed by the Education Committee. The Convention was now ready to hear section 5 as submitted by the Education Committee.

Section 5. Each magisterial district shall constitute a separate school district unless otherwise provided by law. In each school district there shall be elected by the people three school trustees whose term of office shall be four years: provided, that in cities and towns constituting separate school districts, school trustees shall be elected or appointed as may be provided by law.

The Chairman of the Education Committee in presenting this section, which was adopted as stated above, pointed out two great evils connected with the public school system of the counties. The first was the existence of what may be called "Nepotism", growing out of the method of appointing school trustees. When trustees were appointed they usually continued to hold their position, and often they used their power by appointing incompetent teachers, sometimes their children, their nieces and nephews, or more distant relatives. Another great evil was the multiplicity of school-houses in some counties, where school houses for white children were placed within a mile or a mile and a half of each other. This would increase the number of teachers, diminish their salaries, and their efficiency. The Chairman of this Committee believed that if the school trustees were elected by the people, and if they did not discharge their duties faithfully, they could be turned out of office and be replaced by more efficient and useful men.

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As there were no amendments to section 5 the secretary of the Convention was asked to read section 6.

Section 6. The General Assembly shall set apart as a permanent and perpetual literary fund, the present literary funds of the State: the proceeds of all public lands donated by Congress for public free school purposes; of

11. Ibid., p. 1828

all escheated property; of all waste and unappropriated lands; of all property accruing to the State by forfeiture, and all fines collected for offenses committed against the State, and such other sums as the General Assembly may appropriate.

This section was identically the same as in the old Constitution. It was adopted by the Convention as reported by the Education Committee.

Next, sections 7 and 8 were read and adopted without modifications.

Section 7. The General Assembly shall apply the annual interest on the literary fund; that portion of the capitation tax provided for in the Constitution to be paid into the State treasury, and an annual tax on property of not less than one nor more than five mills on the dollar to the public free schools of the primary and grammar grades, for the equal benefit of all the people of the State, to be apportioned on a basis of school population; the number of children between the ages of seven and twenty years in each school district being the basis of such apportionment. Provision shall be made to supply children attending the public free schools with necessary textbooks in cases where the parent or guardian is unable by reason of poverty, to furnish them.

Section 8. The General Assembly may establish Agricultural, normal, manual training and technical schools, and such grades of schools as shall be for the public good.

The Chairman of the Education Committee asked the Convention to give special attention to the provision on Compulsory Education as found in section 9.

Section 9. The General Assembly may enact laws to prevent parents and guardians from allowing their children or wards to grow up in ignorance.

The question of compulsory education was foremost in the minds of the Committee. Mr. McIlwaine, Chairman of

the Education Committee reported this information. "Thirty-two of the States in the Union, and every European State, so far as I am informed, have adopted in their Constitution Compulsory education. The only Southern States that have adopted compulsory education are Kentucky and West Virginia, but all the Northern States have adopted it."¹²

The argument was raised that compulsory education would force us to open schools where there were none but Negroes, who would be educated at the expense of the white man. There were some who thought there was too much "paternalism" in the proposed system; it may be consistent with the autocratic governments of Europe, but not with the spirit of the people of Virginia. Parents could be entrusted with the control and direction of the education of their children. Others argued that many parents were bringing up their children in absolute ignorance. An article published in the Richmond Dispatch stated that there were hundreds of parents who had moved to the city of Danville so that they could put their children to work in the cotton factory, and "that those little things, from eight years of age upward, were day in and day out having their nervous and intellectual systems strained to the utmost tension, and being dwarfed in body and in mind in order that their parents might live in idleness while

12. Ibid., p. 1835

their children grew up as ignoramuses and dangerous to society. " ¹³ This condition existed in many cities as Virginia was rapidly becoming a manufacturing State. The vote taken resulted in the adoption of section 9 with this amendment:

The General Assembly may provide for the compulsory education of the children between the ages of eight and thirteen years, except such as are weak in body or mind, or can read and write, or are attending private schools, or that are excused for cause by the district school trustees.

The last four sections of the report of the Education Committee were read to the Committee of the Whole. They were adopted, after a few changes in the wording and phrasing of some of the sections, and read as follows:

Section 10. White and colored children shall not be taught in the same school.

Section 11. No appropriation of public funds shall be made to any school or institution of learning not owned or exclusively controlled by the State; provided, first that the General Assembly may, in its discretion, continue the appropriations to the College of William and Mary; and provided, second, that this section shall in no wise affect the Act of the General Assembly passed February 23, 1892, relating to bonds held by schools and colleges; and provided, third, that cities, towns, and counties may make appropriations to non-sectarian schools of manual, industrial, or technical training, and also to any school or institution of learning owned or exclusively controlled by such municipality or county.

Section 12. The General Assembly shall make provision for the maintenance of the University of Virginia, and of the Virginia Military Institute, by an annual appropriation

13. Ibid., pp. 1835-1838

not less than now provided by law.

Section 13. Members of the boards of visitors or trustees of educational institutions required by law to be appointed by the General Assembly or the Governor, shall hold their position for the term of four years.

The new Constitution was remarkably conservative considering the conditions that existed in the State. There was not much included in the new Constitution that was not already in the old Constitution, so one can hardly say that any great forward step for public education was provided. The State Board of Education was enlarged to include five members in addition to the Governor, Attorney-General, and Superintendent of Public Instruction. The office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction was made elective for a term of four years. These changes were probably not of major consequence.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM SINCE 1902

The close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century marked a new awakening throughout the entire South. Recovering from the devastations of the Civil War and from the industrial, civil, and social disorganization, the leaders of the new South were directing their energies to the upbuilding of her institutions and to the development of her resources. This was a time when the southern states were "taking stock" of their possibilities, with the idea of entering upon a new and greater era of economic and social reforms. Education was one of the foremost and important factors to insure "stability and sanity" to this future progress.¹ It was during this time that the people of Virginia were being prepared for the constructive work of the administration of Joseph D. Eggleston who was elected Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1906.

Dr. Eggleston was the first Superintendent to be elected for four years by the qualified voters of the

1. Cornelius J. Heatwole, A History of Education in Virginia (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), pp. 305-306.

State. This was according to an Act of Legislature based upon the Constitutional provision and approved in 1903. Under the leadership of Mr. Eggleston, who was one of the most active Superintendents for nearly eight years, there was remarkable progress made along the lines of democratizing education in Virginia. The outstanding accomplishments of his administration were:

1. The coalescing of all the various educational forces in the state into one supreme directive force toward the goal of popular education.
2. The organizing and development of a system of extension work that carried a new type of practical teaching to the boys and girls in every part of Virginia.²

These two large achievements were made possible by the creation of a strong department of public instruction; by the development of a good public high school system, by an attempt to educate the Negro upon a satisfactory basis, by a broadened curriculum for the rural schools, and by the improvement of the sanitary and hygienic conditions of the rural school and home.

In 1905, the year before Mr. Eggleston's election, the State Board of Education, in fulfilling the intent of the New Constitution, divided the state into five divisions and appointed an inspector for each. These so-called ex-

2. Ibid., pp. 321-322.

aminers organized a system of supervision among the schools and began constructive plans that led to the establishment of high schools. Under the wise leadership of Mr. Eggleston these men became the "educational dynamos" in their respective areas of the State. Although this board of five was discontinued in 1910, some of these same men were retained as "inspectors" or "supervisors" of schools, in the Department of Education.

During Mr. Eggleston's administration a great stimulus was given to the development of high schools, when in 1906 the General Assembly passed "An Act to establish and maintain a system of public high schools and to appropriate money therefor". This was called the Mann High School Bill.⁴ It authorized: (1) the establishment of high schools by single magistrial districts or by two or more districts uniting; (2) separate buildings for these high schools or the same buildings with the elementary schools; (3) an annual state appropriation of \$80,000. from which any district school board or district school boards, appropriating from \$250.00 to \$400.00 for this specific purpose, would be given an equal sum by the state. This Act also made provision for inspection and regulation of such high schools by the State Board of Education.

3. Ibid., pp. 322-323

4. Acts of Assembly, 1906, pp. 305-352

In praising this Act Mr. Eggleston made the following recommendation:

I recommend that the General Assembly enlarge this appropriation and add to the present Act a feature permitting the State Board of Education, under proper restrictions, to establish in not exceeding 6 of the public high schools, agricultural education, manual training, and domestic economy. The subjects should be introduced in only a few schools at the start, in order that the work may be carefully supervised and nurtured. ⁵

Seemingly in answer to his wish, the Legislature of 1908 appropriated \$20,000.00 for the introduction of agriculture, manual training, and domestic economy in one high school of each of the ten Congressional districts. The high schools benefited by this bill were in the following towns: Hampton, Driver, Chester, Burkville, Elk Creek, New London, Manassas, Lebanon, and Appomattox. ⁶

In the Strode Bill ⁷ of 1908 Mr. Eggleston saw many of his ideas and those of his co-workers take the form of law. One of the important parts of this bill was the provision by which the division superintendent's salary could be increased by the counties to such an extent that more expert men, who could give full time to administration and supervision, could be secured. The Strode Bill

5. J.L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia (Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Michigan), p. 118.

6. Heatwole, op. cit., pp. 328-329

7. Ibid., pp. 325-328

had numerous other features, including, a fund of \$25,000 for the encouragement of elementary graded schools to take the place of one-room and one-teacher schools in the country districts; a Commission of leading educators to make a critical study of educational conditions and methods of taxation; specifications for the size and ventilation of school rooms; the establishment of normal training schools in connection with high schools already established; and provision for the testing of sight and hearing of children. Most of the provisions of this "Omnibus Bill" were ineffective as adequate appropriations were not provided.

The outstanding leadership of Dr. Eggleston was further recognized: in his perennial fight for better salaries for county and city superintendents as well as for teachers; in his interest for a teacher's retirement fund which resulted in the legislature establishing such a fund in 1908; and in his creation of the position of supervisor of elementary schools. A tribute to Dr. Eggleston's fine leadership is found in a commencement address, made at Hampden-Sydney College in 1941 by Dr. Jackson David:

The spread of education to all the people, the dream of Thomas Jefferson, was the epic achievement of the South in the first part of the Twentieth Century, and one of the most valiant captains in that fight was your President Emeritus, Dr. J. D. Eggleston, with whom I had the privilege of serving as

lieutenant, along with Mr. Tulane Atkinson. When Mr. Eggleston became Superintendent of Public Instruction, we used to hear about the public free schools with a sort of connotation of public charity on the word 'free'. Under his zeal and irresistible energy the people of the state in many counties were soon taxing themselves to the constitutional limit and then going down in their pockets to make up funds enough to build high schools, put on school buses, and extend the school term. The term 'free school' was forgotten. People everywhere talked with the pride of ownership of 'our schools' and they learned that this was the most profitable investment they had ever made.⁸

The World War Period from 1913-1918 was characterized by an interest in schools on the part of the public in Virginia, which perhaps had never been more widespread. The Cooperative Education Association,⁹ which had been organized in 1903, had by this time become effective in organizing active patrons' leagues, in directing the public attention to the value of public schools, and in influencing the Legislature to make larger appropriations to the schools. This was a time during which determined efforts were made to improve the quality of the high schools which had increased in number from 74 in 1905-06 to 448 in 1912-13 and to 575 in 1917-18.¹⁰ It was in 1912-13 that a "Virginia Commission on Accredited Schools" was established by the Southern Association of Colleges

8. Buck, op. cit., p. 123a.

9. Ibid., p. 124.

10. Ibid., p. 130.

and Secondary Schools. As stated by this Commission,
 "this is the first serious effort to apply some definite
 and uniform standard of measurement to the work of all
 the secondary schools of the State".¹¹

In 1914 Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act¹² which
 furnished the people of the United States useful and
 practical information on subjects relating to agriculture
 and home economics. Three years later Congress passed
 the Smith-Hughes Act which provided "for a Federal Board
 for Vocational Education, state acceptance of the pro-
 visions of the law, the even matching of federal appropria-
 tions for teachers' salaries, federal supervision of plans,
 work, and expenditures, the creation of a special state
 authority to be known as the State Board for Vocational
 Education, and for research and investigations in agricul-
 ture, home economics, industry, trade, commerce, and
 curriculums".¹³

By these Acts a serious attempt is being made to reach
 and serve all of the boys and girls of the community who
 represent a variety of individual environments and heredi-
 ties, resulting in a variety of interests, habits, apprecia-

11. Ibid., p. 132.

12. Arthur B. Moehlman, School Administration (Boston-
 New York-Chicago-Dallas-Atlanta-San Francisco: The River-
 side Press Cambridge, 1940), p. 817.

13. Ibid., p. 819.

tions, abilities, and attitudes. Education that will accomplish this must not be limited in its content. The "language" school is a thing of the past. The high school is no longer a preparatory institution for college. Its purpose is immediate and definite, so that each pupil may be a better citizen today than he was yesterday.

The period that followed the World War brought serious problems to educators as it did to almost everyone. The change from the district system of school organization to the county unit plan probably had more influence on the progress of public education than any single event during the period 1918-1931. In his first report for 1917-18 (page 14) Harris Hart, Superintendent of Public Instruction, proposed to reduce the complicated local school machinery previously in use to a single and direct system:

You are aware of the fact that in each county there is a trustee electoral board, composed of the county school superintendent, the Commonwealth's Attorney and a citizen appointed by the court. This board has the dual function of appointing school trustees for each school district, and also of hearing cases appealed from the local board of trustees. Each local district board is organized with a chairman and a clerk; is a corporate body, and under the laws of the state operates the schools of the district unit. This gives us in the State of Virginia five hundred twenty-three separate units of operation.

In my opinion the first serious step to take in producing uniform efficiency in the school system of Virginia is to establish at once county uniformity. To my mind, the schools should unquestionably be operated on

the basis of the county rather than the district unit with a county school board composed of one member elected from each magisterial district. The number of school trustees would be reduced by sixty-six and two-thirds per cent. The school affairs of the county would be viewed in the light of a common unified undertaking. Purely artificial differences in terms, teachers, salaries, etc., which now prevail inside of many of our counties, would naturally give place to uniform endeavor. It would be possible with this limited number of trustees to pay a reasonable per diem for the days the school board sits on school affairs.....

Mr. Hart was the first State Superintendent to demand the County Unit System, which he believed of major importance. In his biennial report for 1921-22, 1922-23, (page 26) he reports:

The County unit law became effective in September, 1922. The last school year, 1922-23, was therefore the first session under the new organization. Under this law, the county, rather than the district, became the unit of administration, and one small county school board succeeds a series of more or less independent district school boards. The separate units of operation were reduced from about seven hundred to about one hundred fifty (150) and the number of school board members and local school officials was reduced from about two thousand (2,000) to less than five hundred (500). Not only was simplification in personnel and general administration brought about by this measure, but more directness and promptness of action was encouraged. It is particularly gratifying to note the unusually fine personnel of county school boards under the new act. This combined with the tremendous simplification which has been brought about promises marked improvement in local school administration.

Some of the important duties of this county board which is composed of one member selected from each magis-

terial district by the electoral board were: (1) to prepare with the advice of the division superintendent, on or before the first day of April, an estimate of the amount of money which would be needed for the support of the public schools of the county during the next scholastic year; (2) to request the board of supervisors to fix a school levy sufficient to meet the needs for the operation of the schools on the basis of the estimate mentioned above; (3) to be custodian of all money, bonds, funds, and other property, real or personal, etc., acquired for the use of the county school purposes; (4) to publish on July first, or as soon afterwards, an annual statement of all receipts and disbursements of all the school funds in the county, in a local newspaper; (5) to approve agents to take the school census, on recommendation of the division superintendent; (6) to provide for the consolidation and transportation of pupils for efficiency of the school system; and (7) to make rules and regulations for the protection of the school property. ¹⁴

Since the overthrow of the old district system in 1922 with its numerous independent school boards, the local superintendents became determining factors in the administration of the schools in their divisions. With the revision of the Constitution of Virginia in 1928 the division superintendents were to be appointed by the county or city

14. Acts of Assembly, 1922, pp. 731-741.

boards from a list of qualified eligibles certified by the State Board of Education.¹⁵ To be eligible a person must have a master's degree and certain courses in school administration and finance.

Another important change, by the revision of the Constitution of Virginia in 1928, was made in the State Board of Education. Since 1902 this board has been composed of the Governor, the Attorney-General, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, three experienced educators (elected quadrennially by the Senate from a list made by having each board of visitors of six Virginia State institutions nominate a member of the faculty of their respective institutions), and two division superintendents, one from a city and one from a county (selected for a term of two years by the board). The revised Constitution provided for a board of seven members appointed by the Governor,¹⁶ subject to confirmation of the General Assembly.

Under the leadership of Governor Byrd, the reform known as the "short ballot", which was proposed in the General Assembly in 1926 was ratified by the people in 1928. The term "short ballot" was used to designate a plan of reducing the large number of elective officers by having some of them appointed by the Governor. The office of State

15. Acts of Assembly, 1928, pp. 1201-1203

16. Constitution of Virginia, Section 130, Article 9.

Superintendent of Public Instruction was one of those
 which the Governor was to fill by appointment.¹⁷

Dr. Pate, in his study of State Government in Virginia, stated that many teachers opposed the "short ballot" because they wanted to see the Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed by the State Board of Education rather than by the Governor.¹⁸

A large number of small high schools had been established before the district system was abolished in 1922. Often there were as many as five small high schools "within a solitary school district". The per capita cost of instruction was much higher in the smaller schools. In many cases the per capita cost of high school instruction was more than three times the cost of elementary instruction, thus in many communities the elementary schools were deprived of much needed money in order to support these inadequate high schools.¹⁹ Educational leaders have long advocated school consolidation as a means of more efficiently providing an adequate educational program. Through American history the issue has been debated. On the one hand there were those people who looked mainly at the prob-

17. J.L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia (Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Michigan), p. 195.

18. James E. Pate, State Government in Virginia (Richmond: The Appeals Press, 1932), p. 133.

19. Buck, op. cit., p. 182.

lem of efficiently providing buildings, equipment, books, qualified teachers, special educational services, and trained leaders. On the other hand there were those who wanted to keep direct control over their own schools as a part of their community life and to keep them on simple lines so that each parent and citizen could participate.²⁰

The progress of consolidation of high schools as well as elementary schools was largely controlled by road conditions and transportation. A well planned program of road building which began under Governor Harry Flood Byrd in 1928, with the resultant improvement of highways, had a far-reaching effect on the school program. Even though many secondary roads were in poor condition, as at this time they were not accepted as a state responsibility, the number of wagons and trucks increased from 348 in 1921-22, to 566 in 1922-23, and by 1930-31 the number had risen to 1493.²¹ From the annual report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 1941-42, the number of vehicles had increased to 2428.

Since transportation of children to and from school is one of the functions of the State, distances can no longer be accepted legally as an excuse for non-attendance.

²⁰. Schools in Small Communities, American Association of School Administrators 1939- Seventeenth Yearbook (Washington, D. C.), p. 212.

²¹. Buck, loc. cit.

Virginia was not one of the pioneer states in legislation on compulsory education. There was nothing mandatory in the clause in the Underwood Constitution of 1869 that authorized the cities and counties to make education compulsory and consequently no effective law was passed for a number of years. With the revision of the State Constitution in 1902 the age range to which compulsory education might be applied was between eight and twelve but even this was not mandatory. Efforts were made to improve the compulsory attendance law in 1916, 1918, and 1922 by urging the Legislature to replace "Virginia's ancient and ineffective local option measure"²² by a state wide compulsory education law but not until 1928 was the Compulsory Attendance Law adopted in this State. This law provided that every child who had reached the seventh birthday and had not passed the fifteenth birthday should attend school for a full school year, unless such child was physically or mentally handicapped, or had completed the elementary course of study, or lived more than two miles by the nearest traveled road from the public school, unless transportation was furnished within one mile of the place where such child lived.²³

22. Ibid., p. 141.

23. Acts of Assembly, 1928, p. 1214.

Several minor changes have been made but not until 1944 was the major amendment, which compels every child in Virginia to attend school until he is sixteen years of age regardless of the grade he has reached.²⁴ If a child must attend school until this age then the school system must provide a broad program of instruction so that the retarded child may profit to some extent.

A period commonly known as "the depression" began in the year 1930-31. For six or seven years such large numbers of men and women were thrown out of employment that various emergency measures were undertaken by the President and the Congress to provide employment. A relief program was organized for skilled and unskilled workers and for professional workers, including teachers, musicians, artists, writers, and actors. Another Federal Agency was organized to encourage public works by providing from 30 per cent to 45 per cent of the total costs, an agency through which many communities in the entire country obtained school buildings and other public buildings and many other kind of public improvements. The National Youth Administration another Federal Agency, was organized so that the youth in high schools and colleges could have an opportunity to earn money provided altogether from Federal funds. Also an adult education program was

²⁴. State Board of Education, Virginia School Laws, Bulletin Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Sec. 683, (Charlottesville: The Michie Company, August 1944), p. 38.

organized to give employment to teachers without jobs and to furnish opportunities to the underprivileged and illiterate for suitable education.²⁵

This period of depression had a serious effect on the payment of taxes in Virginia as well as in other states. Great reductions were made in school expenditures and the average annual salary of all Virginia Teachers, which had reached \$909.00 in 1930-31 was reduced to \$692.00 in 1933-34.²⁶

Virginia felt the effects of this depression period less than many other states, because of a rather favorable financial standing and because she was primarily an agricultural rather than an industrial state. However, it was evident that these conditions described had great influence on the public schools in Virginia. Despite the depression there was initiated in Virginia in 1931 an intensive program to improve instruction in the public elementary and high schools.

The Virginia Curriculum Revision Program was initiated by the State Department of Education, under the leadership of Sydney B. Hall, Superintendent of Public Instruction. The following paragraph which is found in the Study Course Bulletin published in 1932, states the purpose of

25. J.L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia (Unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of Michigan), pp. 245-246.

26. Ibid., p. 246.

this program:

The Curriculum Revision Program as set up will move toward a three-fold objective which centers around the child: first, to produce the best courses possible for the children of our State; second, the professional stimulation and growth on the part of the teachers through participation in this program, which in turn will result in more effective instruction; third, an increased interest and knowledge on the part of our citizens in problems of present day education to the end that fuller cooperation through wider understanding will result in a happier consummation of the aims of education. ²⁷

The program was inaugurated and in the intervening years it has gone "through the stages of study and orientation, production and try-out of materials, publication of materials and their use in the schools, and revision of materials and procedures as experience has suggested." ²⁸

Progress was made toward the realization of each of the above objectives. First, courses of study were published for the elementary schools, for the "core" program of the secondary schools, for special fields such as homemaking, business education, and music, and some work was done in providing courses of study for electives in the high schools, particularly in foreign language.

²⁷ State Board of Education, Handbook for Study and Discussion of Educational Problems in Virginia, Vol. XXIII, No. 6 (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, December 1940), p. 5.

²⁸ Loc. cit.

Manuals on guidance and on administration of high schools were prepared and distributed to the schools of the State. These and other publications relating to improvement of instruction were produced by the teachers with some help from the staff of the Department of Education, college faculties, and some out-of-state consultants.²⁹

The second objective, namely, "professional stimulation and growth on the part of the teachers through participation in this program" received special attention during the time the program was in operation. In the first year ten thousand teachers took part in the various organized study groups. In the workshops held at various colleges in the State during the summers hundreds of teachers produced material for courses of study and other bulletins. Principals, supervisors, superintendents, and other school workers held work-study conferences, usually of three days duration. District and local organization of teachers and administrators promoted and carried out programs dealing with the State-wide program for the improvement of instruction. The State Department of Education served as a clearing-house in distributing the materials and ideas developed in the study-groups and workshops throughout the State. "Evidence of Stimulation and growth on the part of teachers is apparent in thoughtful modification of instructional procedures, in the sustained

29. Loc. cit.

interest throughout the whole nine-year period, and in the universal willingness on the part of the school people to contribute their own time and energy in almost unlimited quantity to the work involved in the program".³⁰

The third objective was equally as well planned and organized. Study and discussion groups were organized by lay organizations, such as parent-teacher associations, Woman's clubs, service and civic clubs, for the purpose of studying child development and the program for improving instruction. The radio, press, and public forums were used to give information about the program. Interest of the people in the program was shown in the "increasing number of instances in which parents and others actively contribute to the program of the local schools, in the growing number of visits to schools, and in the widespread interest and support accorded legislative proposals for expanding the educational opportunity of the children of the State and for improving the conditions under which the school personnel is working".³¹

The plan for the core curriculum provided a situation in which pupils would not only have an opportunity for the expression and development of individual interests and abilities but also an opportunity for working together with others in small and large groups. The matter of following

30. Ibid., p. 6.

31. Loc. cit.

the core curriculum plan was entirely voluntary on the part of the teacher. From the beginning there was the determination to keep teachers from following fixed material in the course of study. The idea was to furnish suggestive activities and experiences which would stimulate teachers to study the needs and interests of their own pupils, to choose the activities or experiences appropriate for a particular class, and to use their own ingenuity with that of their pupils in finding other experiences. Furthermore, it was the idea of those who laid the plans for the core curriculum to encourage character building and citizenship training rather than memorize a few textbooks.

Though in September 1941 Dr. Hall, State Superintendent of Schools, who initiated the program for Improving Instruction, resigned, there was no reason to think that the program would not continue in general principles. It had furnished a number of school teachers, superintendents, principals, and supervisors with an understanding of children and of education, which had brought new life to the schools.

Dr. Dabney S. Lancaster succeeded Dr. Hall on September 1, 1941. Shortly thereafter, with our entrance in World War II, the instructional program was modified and the schools were placed on a war time basis. The activities of the Staff of the State Department of Ed-

ucation again within the period of a generation had to concern itself primarily with the task of operating the public schools as efficiently as possible under the unfavorable conditions of war. Emphasis was directed to expanding and adapting the school program to meet the needs of those students who were about to enter the armed forces or other related agencies.

Modifications of the high school program were made
32
in seven areas:

1. Physical Fitness.
2. Production and Conservation of Essential Goods and Services.
3. Skills and Emphasis in Mathematics and Science. (Pre-induction training)
4. Inflation.
5. Air-Mindedness.
6. International Relations.
7. Mobilization of Students and Teachers.

In nearly all the high schools in Virginia one full class period per day was devoted to physical fitness for all pupils. Emphasis was placed on correction of physical defects, development of strength, coordination, agility, and endurance. Production and conservation of foods,

32. State Board of Education. Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, School Year 1942-43. (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, September 1943), Vol. XXVI. p. 19.

clothing, and shelter were stressed in social studies, home economics, and agriculture classes. Courses in Mathematics and Science have been expanded and modified with emphasis upon practical and military applications. Courses in Fundamentals of Mathematics, in Refresher Mathematics, Pre-flight Aeronautics, Physics, Fundamentals of Machines, Electricity, Radio, Automotive Mechanics, and Shop Work have been added. Social Studies and English courses have been modified to include instruction on Inflation, and the effect and importance of the Air Age and International Relations. Students and teachers have been mobilized to contribute to the war effort through the Victory Corps, registration, and other essential activities.

The Program for Improving Instruction should always be a challenge to teachers and administrators. It is a challenge to teachers to regard the profession of teaching in the same importance of continuous improvement as that expected in the profession of medicine.

CHAPTER V

REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA EDUCATION COMMISSION

During the regular session of the General Assembly of 1944, a joint resolution was adopted, having for its purpose the appointment of a Commission to make a thorough and comprehensive study of the public school system of Virginia.¹ This commission was composed of nine members, two appointed by the President of the Senate from the members of the Senate, three appointed by the Speaker of the House from the members of the House of Delegates, and four, including the chairman appointed by the Governor. Dr. George H. Denny, of Lexington Virginia, was made chairman. The study was made by the Commission with the help of fifteen research Committees, composed of capable Virginia business and professional men and of experienced educators. Each Committee presented its own report. Citizens were given an opportunity to present their views through nine public hearings held in different parts of the State.

The interest of the people in having an opportunity to express their views, at these nine meetings, was manifested by the large attendance. Some of the outstanding

¹ Virginia Education Commission 1944, The Virginia Public School System (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing 1944), p. 5.

opinions expressed at these meetings were: that there was State-wide dissatisfaction with the present standing of the public schools of Virginia; that the management and operation of the schools are too far removed from the people; that the fundamental subjects, or "the three r's", are not being taught satisfactorily; that vocational education should be stressed more in the school curriculum; that the schools are not attracting superior talent for the teaching profession because of the low salaries; that there is an inadequate program of health education and physical fitness in the school system; that there is a general lack of interest shown by the parents in educating their children; that State funds are not distributed equally, consequently there is educational inequality between rural and urban schools; that the compulsory educational law be more strictly enforced; that the people of Virginia want better schools and that they are willing to pay for them by increased taxes.

In complying with the mandate of the General Assembly that the Commission "make a thorough and complete study of the public free schools in Virginia", and that, based upon those investigations, "recommend a complete over-all plan for improvements in the operation of the schools",² the Commission made definite recommendations concerning

2. Ibid., p. 13.

almost every phase of the public school program, with few exceptions which are to be studied separately.

The recommendations of the Commission are summarized herewith:

I ADMINISTRATION

In the recommendations regarding the State Board and the State Department of Education, the Commission proposes:

1. That the State Board of Education be increased in number to nine members, one from each congressional district of the State, to be appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly, for a term of four years, no member succeeding himself for more than one term. In the same connection, the Commission further recommends that no paid employee of the public school system of the State hereafter be considered eligible for membership on the State Board of Education.
2. That it would be of great value to the deliberations of the State Board of Education if each member would spend the time necessary each year to acquaint himself thoroughly at first hand with the operations of the public school system in his district, and to that end it recommends that a sum sufficient to pay the customary per diem and travel expenses of the Board members be provided for this purpose.
3. That periodically the State Department of Education should survey in a judiciously-minded manner the efficiency with which the several divisions of its work are functioning, making such changes or shifts in personnel as are found advisable in the interest of highly capable performance.³

3. Ibid., p. 14

The Commission found widespread dissatisfaction with the present method of selecting county school board members. In order to make the Virginia Public School System more democratic in functioning the Commission recommends:

That the Board of Supervisors, to be elected in June of an off-year from that of the other county officials and on the basis of an educational platform as well as one concerned with other county interests, appoint from the county at large the County School Board for staggered terms, no member succeeding himself for more than one term.⁴

At present the State Board of Education has the authority to divide the State into school divisions. It may combine two or more counties or a city and one or more counties into a single division but it does not have the power to have them operated as single school units. For more efficient and economical operation the Commission recommends that the State Department of Education be given authority "to create a division school board functioning for two or more counties or a city and one or more counties as a single unit".⁵

Because the division superintendent is the most important officer in the public school system, since the entire local educational program is molded around his leadership, the Commission feels that the local board should be given more help by the State Board of Education in making a wise selection of a superintendent. A capable

4. Ibid., p. 15.

5. Loc. cit.

superintendent means a good corps of teachers, a business-like administration of affairs, a well-planned curriculum, and thus a better prepared pupil. The principal job of a superintendent relates to instructional work of the school and if other matters exist to the extent of causing the neglect of this essential phase of his responsibilities, an assistant should be provided to take over the business duties. The Commission recommends that the division superintendent be selected by the local school board from " a list of not less than three nor more than five names submitted by the State Board of Education from its eligible list".⁶

That a well qualified division superintendent be employed in all school units of the State is desired and in order to secure this capable administrator the State make a substantial increase in their appropriation to the salaries of superintendents. At the same time to make sure the local school systems are operated with efficiency the Commission recommends "referendum and recall provisions be provided by law in connection with the office".⁷

Supervision is another important administrative function of the school system that was recognized by the Commission as an indispensable aid to good teaching. The supervisors are chosen from among the best teachers, who,

6. Ibid., p. 16.

7. Loc. cit.

because of their experience and training, are capable of helping new teachers adjust themselves to their new jobs and help older teachers to keep up with the more modern methods of instruction. These supervisors, besides aiding teachers in solving some of their many problems, can help unite the entire school program and assist in developing and maintaining morale among the teachers. To this end the Commission recommends that the service be provided for in all the divisions as a vital part of the instructional program and that the State Department of Education "prescribe the minimum qualifications of supervisors and establish a list of eligible persons from which supervisors are chosen in the local divisions".⁸

II FINANCE

The Commission concludes that "if Virginia is to have the high grade public school system that its children have the right to expect, it is going to cost a great deal of money", and that "it will not be possible for the State to provide for all of the increased expenditure that will be necessary".⁹ Though there are marked inequalities between the different sections in the State with regards to wealth and income ratings, it is a recognized fact that all children, rural and urban, white and negro, of all the

8. Ibid., p. 17.

9. Loc. cit.

State, have the right to equal educational opportunities, as far as possible. The present formula for the distribution of State funds to the localities for school purposes, "based on the teacher unit, together with the density of population and other duly weighted factors, represents a significant improvement over the inequities occasioned¹⁰ by the previous policy of a large discretionary fund".

The Commission's Research Committee on Finance, having carefully studied the operation of this formula, concluded that greater emphasis should be placed on the factor of ability to pay. To this end it suggests that several localities of the State be required to levy, as a requirement for the receipt of State aid, a uniform minimum rate of taxation "based upon the true value of taxable property as estimated by the State Department of Taxation"¹¹.

III COMPULSORY EDUCATION

In the realization that "Virginia, in common with her sister Southern States, has entirely too many illiterates and 'near' illiterates", that "an ignorant individual is more likely to be a liability to a state than a well educated person", and that "the remedy for illiteracy is education", the Commission urges the necessity of a uniform,

10. Ibid., p. 18 .

11. Loc. cit.

sound, and efficient enforcement of the Compulsory Attendance Law. It recommends "that the term 'attendance' or 'truant officer' be abandoned in favor of the designation 'visiting teacher', and that the services of at least one such visiting teacher, and more if found to be necessary, be provided in every school division of the State".¹² It further proposes that the Department of Education develop a list of eligible persons from which the visiting teachers might be chosen, and "that the State Board of Education prescribe the qualifications and minimum salary for such individuals on the same basis as those for supervision, so as to assure uniformly high quality of personnel and performance in this important position".¹³

IV TEACHERS AND SALARY STANDARDS

The Commission is "of the matured opinion that the matter of better teachers is of first importance in any effort towards securing improved public schools in Virginia. That Virginia has many good teachers is an obvious fact; that there are too many poor teachers in the public schools of the State is a condition calling emphatically for correction".¹⁴ It is believed that the

12. Ibid., pp. 19-20.

13. Ibid., p. 20.

14. Loc. cit.

most practical single step toward securing better teachers is the improvement of existing salary scales, which should be uniform for white and negro, rural and urban, elementary and secondary. The Commission recommends the adoption by the State and locality of a minimum salary scale, uniform for white and negro, rural and urban, elementary and secondary, based on training and experience, for ten months of work. Additional compensation is added for merit, along with assurance of employment to the satisfactory teacher, reasonable chance for promotion, recognition and reward for achievement, leaves of absence for sickness, and provision for retirement. Along with increase in salaries the Commission recognizes the importance of other factors that assure the quality of personnel in the public schools in Virginia. It recommends:

1. That division superintendents make early, active, and widespread search for the best qualified teacher for each position, regardless of sex, marital status, or place of residence, and that prime consideration be given to moral and social fitness.
2. That the State Department of Education study and provide a uniform method of appraising teachers entering a school division on the basis of ability, training, fitness, and that this method be uniformly followed in all divisions in the employment of teachers.
3. That after a carefully supervised probationary period, the teacher be given a continuing contract which insures early notification of the teacher and the superintendent of the intention on the part of either to terminate the contract.

4. That the State Department of Education take steps to relate the work done for renewal of certificate to the professional needs of the particular teacher.
5. That the State Department of Education give continuing study to every important practice that can be applied on a State and local basis to improve the quality of the teaching, supervisory, and administrative personnel of the public free schools of the State and take vigorous action with regard to such phases of the matter as lie within its jurisdiction. ¹⁵

V TEACHER TRAINING

To recruit and train an adequate supply of superior teachers, the Commission believes that the State must look to the teacher training institutions of Virginia. It is the opinion of the Commission "that the teacher colleges of the State should stress the original objective for which they were established - the training of teachers for the public schools". ¹⁶

The Commission recommends:

1. That the University of Virginia be made a center for graduate study in education which will have prestige equal to that of centers of this kind now generally conceded to be outstanding, and such that other Virginia institutions concerned with teacher training will look to the University of Virginia for guidance and leadership.
2. That these teacher training institutions be brought up fully in quality of personnel and physical facilities to standards

15. Ibid., p. 22.

16. Ibid., p. 24.

that are outstanding, so that these institutions will become really selective in regard to candidates for the teaching profession and will maintain scholarship standards for these future teachers at a level which will be generally regarded as superior.

3. That the University of Virginia, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and the Virginia State College for Negroes develop at once plans for the training of an adequate supply of qualified teachers of industrial arts and trade and industrial education for the high schools of the State. Such a program should be adopted not only to the immediate needs, but should clearly take into account the increasing demands that will arise in connection with the expanding future development of Vocational Education in Virginia. ¹⁷

It is an established fact that the teaching profession is not getting its proper share of the best talent from among the young men and women of today—particularly from the young men. The higher pay and less exacting requirements of business and other professions are attracting more than their share of superior talent and too often the schools are getting what is left. The Commission believes that the problem of recruitment is the responsibility of the teacher-training institutions of the State and it urges the heads of these institutions, individually and as a group, to make a thorough study of all phases of the problem.

17. Ibid., p. 25.

VI CURRICULUM

From its study the Commission found widespread criticism of the fact that too little emphasis is placed on the fundamental or so-called "tool" subjects in the curriculum, both in the elementary and high schools. However, a thorough examination revealed that this deficiency should not be placed in the curriculum but in the thoroughness with which the pupil is trained in these subjects. The Commission felt that it could not stress too strongly the fact that "a thorough competence in reading, writing, speaking, and practical use of figures is essential in all educational development, vocational as well as cultural".¹⁸ To give the child thorough training in the basic essentials of education, the Commission recommends, "that the State Department of Education apply measures, in the form of tests currently given, which will make certain that the teacher has developed in pupils such mastery of the basic skills as is consonant with the ability of each pupil at successive stages of his progress",¹⁹ and as a further step the department "increase its effort to familiarize supervisors and supervising principals with the current studies in child development and in the most economical and effective way to develop mastery of the three r's".²⁰

18. Ibid., p. 26.

19. Loc. cit.

20. Loc. cit.

Furthermore, the Commission considers this matter of curriculum of such tremendous importance that it recommends "the State Board of Education give constant attention to the functioning of the curriculum in the schools of the State and continue to adjust it soundly to the needs of an advancing civilization".²¹ It urges that "utmost consideration be given by the administrative authorities and teachers in every school to assure that the moral and social atmosphere of the school and the attitudes engendered in the pupil toward his work and associates will be such as to develop in him the finest character and integrity, accompanied by an unselfish spirit of constructive service to the welfare of Community and State".²²

Believing that the thoroughness of the training received by high school graduates will be greatly improved, the Commission endorses the proposal that all school divisions of the State be operated upon a basis of twelve grades, and that this goal be achieved as soon as practicable. The Commission sees the need for a guidance program throughout the entire State, both general and vocational, with well qualified personnel and adequate facilities.

21. Ibid., p. 27.

22. Loc. cit.

VII VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

As the larger proportion of pupils who enter the high schools in Virginia or any other state never go to college, the Commission believes that it is neither fair nor necessary that through the years the curriculum has been largely determined to fit the needs of the few who plan to go to college. The curriculum in the high school should be so arranged that it would meet the needs of those who wish to prepare for college and of those who plan to enter the various vocations directly from the high school. Vocational education is expensive, because of the special plant and equipment necessary, and so, achievement of the program will have to be based upon carefully planned consolidation of many existing high schools. The Commission recommends, "the development of a broad State-wide program of vocational education as rapidly as it can be done upon a thoroughly sound, well-planned basis".²³

The Commission "endorses the proposal that there be a general expansion of the vocational program in comprehensive high schools that are of such size that the per capita costs of instruction will not be prohibitive".²⁴

23. Ibid., p. 28.

24. Ibid., pp. 28- 29.

In this connection it recommends "that the State Board of Education carefully survey the location of the high schools of the State with the view to effecting such consolidation as may be necessary to place the facilities of this type of vocational education within the practical reach of all the citizens of the State", and that the Board "continue to give thorough study to the matter of establishing regional vocational schools at the high school level in appropriate areas of the State for both White and Negroes".²⁵

VIII HEALTH EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

Throughout the public hearings the Commission found that there was a State-wide realization that many children attend school badly handicapped by malnutrition, or in poor physical or mental health. The Commission favors the increasing attention which is being given to health and physical education in the public schools. Its recommendations call for: better training of instructors in health and physical education; closer cooperation and understanding between schools and health departments; improvement of the poor hygienic conditions, particularly in the rural areas, and of the inadequate physical education facilities of school buildings; extension of the school lunch program to all the schools of the State; and

25. Ibid., p. 29.

complete periodic physical examinations with an efficient follow-up system for correction of defects.

IX PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

The Research Committee on Plant and Equipment found many deficiencies in the city school plants, both in buildings and equipment, but the corresponding situation in the county schools was far worse. The survey of the Committee revealed that 50 per cent of the buildings in the counties are deficient in classrooms, 73 per cent in gymnasiums, 36 per cent in auditoriums, and 41 per cent lacked adequate library rooms. The Commission recommends that the localities take necessary steps to remedy the school plant situation in Virginia and that an Advisory Board be set up in the State Department of Education to assist local authorities in the development of sound building plans. It also proposes that the State provide sufficient funds at low rates of interest and convenient periods of payment for loans to the localities to cover the costs of new buildings and equipment.

X CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOLS

There must be a large amount of consolidation among the schools of Virginia, both at the elementary and high school levels, to eliminate " a large number of small, poorly equipped and inefficient schools, particularly in the rural areas". Consolidation must take in the high

schools in order " to establish units of sufficient size to give the broad programs that are required in the comprehensive high schools".²⁶ But the Commission agrees, with popular sentiment, that it is better to have small elementary schools with good teachers and reasonably good equipment within an easy distance of the young child than for him to spend too much time away from home, on roadsides, or in busses, in order to attend the larger consolidated schools. It is believed that great care should be taken in planning for consolidation so that what is done will not have to be undone later. The Commission urges a most mature study be made of the matter.

XI TEXTBOOKS

There are three ways in which pupils are supplied with textbooks- private purchase by the parents for their children; free textbooks supplied to all pupils alike by State and locality; and that of a rental system whereby the local school authorities furnish the required textbooks at a nominal rental fee. There are advocates to be found for each of these plans, with valid arguments in support of each method. But the Commission favors " free textbooks for both the elementary and high schools, but recommends that the objective be attained gradually. The first and immediate step should be the furnishing of free

²⁶. Ibid., p. 32.

textbooks in the elementary grades, and this should be mandatory in all school divisions, two-thirds of the cost to be borne by the State and one-third by the localities".²⁷

XII LIBRARIES

In the past fifteen or twenty years great progress has been made in school libraries in Virginia so that today thousands of young boys and girls have access to large library collections. The Commission recommends that "this trend be given continued encouragement and financial support". Cooperation between school and public libraries is suggested, so that, "both State and local authorities may give appropriate direction and supervision to co-operative efforts in the localities".²⁸

XIII THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL

"Good teachers and good parents, working in full co-operation, are the greatest assurance of a well educated child".²⁹ An intelligent interest of parent in the school, its teachers, its plant and equipment, and its operation, has a great influence towards maintaining a good public school system in a community. At the same time, teachers,

27. Ibid., p. 34.

28. Ibid., p. 35.

29. Loc. cit.

who have a sympathetic and direct acquaintance with the homes and families of their pupils, can do more effective teaching. The Commission believes that the homes of Virginia should give full support to the schools in the work of educating their children. Furthermore, it suggests that the State Board of Education give constant study to all possible practical measures to develop a strong relationship between the home and the school.

XIV NEGRO EDUCATION

The Commission treats Negro education as an integral part of the public school system of Virginia. It is recognized that the negroes should have equal educational facilities with those of the whites, so the recommendations of the Commission apply without distinction to both races. As there are "gross inadequacies existing with regard to the educational facilities available to the negroes",³⁰ the Commission urges that the State make a careful study of the possibility of aiding "disadvantaged areas" so that the Negro schools will be adequate in buildings and equipment.

The report of the Virginia Educational Commission recognizes: that education is a primary concern to the people of any state; that money spent for education pays rich dividends, not only to make better citizens, but also

30. Ibid., p. 37.

to increase wealth and income; that it is the obligation of the State to provide adequate educational opportunities for all children; that Virginia is still far short of a truly efficient public school system; that several million dollars of additional revenues are needed for school expenditures in Virginia.

Following are a few facts which underline the need of immediate substantial improvement in the public school system in Virginia:

1. Only 77 per cent of Virginians have completed the fifth grade, giving Virginia a rank of 42 among the states in this respect.
2. The median school year for Virginia is 7.5 years, placing it in 43 rank among the states of the nation.
3. Fully half of the 2,312 small one and two-room schools cannot be thought of as meeting any respectable plant standard.
4. 78 per cent of rural high schools are without adequate library rooms; 51 per cent are lacking in sanitary toilet rooms; and heating is inadequate in 40 per cent.
5. Only 10 per cent of the county elementary schools are adequately equipped.
6. Only 14 per cent of the county high schools have adequate equipment for teaching physical education; only 23 per cent for teaching science.
7. In 1940 only 55.5 per cent of 16 and 17 year old Virginians were in school.
8. During the school year 1943-44 the number of teachers teaching on local permits had risen to 1,766 and it is predicted that this number will be increased to

more than 2,000 during the present session.

8. Whereas it is estimated that approximately 900 to 1,000 elementary teachers are needed each year as replacements in Virginia schools, enrollment at teacher training institutions indicates that less than 90 graduates will be available each year for the next three years. ³¹

An editorial, "Education's Year of Grace", appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, December 16, 1945, one year after the Denny Commission had presented its report to Governor Darden. This editorial stated that on this first anniversary the State's public school system was running ahead of schedule on the major premises of improvement. The special session of the General Assembly actually appropriated the sum of \$3,014,960 to put the Denny Commission into operation. Of this amount \$2,225,000 was provided for teachers salaries and \$1,212,530 for special purposes such as plant improvement. If principals and superintendents are included, the average annual salary of Virginia teachers is now \$1,430 as compared with \$850 five years ago. Although this is not considered high enough it is a definite improvement.

The greatest improvement during the year was made in the field of administration. The State Department of Education directed its program to provide for supervision

³¹. Virginia Education Association, Leaflet, The Denny Report- A Call to Action, January 31, 1945.

on almost every level of teaching in the public school system. The State has been divided into seven districts and periodically each member of the board visits the district assigned to him. Supervising principals, on a twelve month basis, have been employed in 210 communities of the State. Sixty visiting teachers have been employed to assist the school authorities in diagnosing the root causes of absenteeism and truancy.

The progress made in the public school system as stated above is a source of great pride to the State and reflects credit upon the Denny Commission, the State Department of Education, and the General Assembly. One of Governor Darden's major interests has been the creation of the Denny Commission and the reinforcement of its recommendations. The editorial concludes:

If comparable progress is made by the public school system of the State in the next five years, Virginia's comparative rank in public education should reflect something of the prestige to which the State by tradition is entitled. 32

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters the development of public education in Virginia has been traced from 1619, when the first plan for a free school in Virginia was designed, to the report of the Education Commission in 1945. The period from the first English settlement at Jamestown to the Civil War was marked by many unsuccessful attempts to establish a public free school system. The English inheritance of the tutorial system, the plantation system, and the bi-racial nature of the population all supported the aristocratic idea that education should be for those who could pay for private schools or tutors, although a meager provision was made for orphans and paupers, and that it was not an obligation of the State to provide schools for all children.

It was not until 1779 that a state system of education was planned by Thomas Jefferson, who was one of the greatest and most influential educational leaders of that time. In modified form, Jefferson's plan, which was based on his political philosophy of local self-government, was made into the law of 1869, which established the public free school system in Virginia.

The period from 1870 to 1945 traces the beginning of a public free school system in a state whose social order and industrial institutions, as a result of the Civil War, were in a state of collapse; the supporting of this school system by its warmest advocates through years of caustic opposition; and finally the maturing of a sound and efficient school system for the education of all the children of the state.

In this study the development of the public free school system has been traced through two devastating World Wars. The added responsibilities in meeting the needs of a war-time program were accepted and discharged with credit. Appropriate modifications in the instructional program were made. Vocational education opportunities were increased even though a large number of instructors entered the armed forces or were employed by war industries. Partially qualified teachers were employed to take the places of many qualified teachers who sought more profitable work. The State is indebted to those qualified teachers who remained at their posts and to those who accepted teaching positions in the great emergency so that many schools would not have to be closed.

From this study of the public free school system in Virginia the following conclusions are evidences of progress:

1. Legal provisions were made to establish and maintain an efficient system of public free schools throughout the State.
2. Skilful and competent leadership of many of the state superintendents and keen interest shown by many Governors played an important part toward establishing a sound, efficient and democratic system of public education.
3. Various educational forces in the State were centralized into one unified force directed toward the goal of popular education.
4. Improvement was made in local school administration by the County Unit Act which made the county, rather than the district, the unit of administration.
5. The rapid development of vocational education through federal aid called for skilful planning and foresight. This movement to link education with life resulted in the introduction into the curriculum of such subjects as physical training, health education, home economics, music, manual arts, agriculture, and other vocational subjects.
6. In order to provide for a curriculum as broad in scope as the one suggested above, strong emphasis has been placed on a state-wide program of consolidation of the smaller schools

through transportation of pupils.

7. Compulsory education laws have not appeared to be satisfactory, but revision of the law in 1940 gives promise of better results.
8. Educational leaders, who planned the revision of the high school curriculum, provided a richer and fuller opportunity for citizenship training than did the old traditional practice of requiring pupils to memorize so many textbooks. Emphasis has shifted from requisition of knowledge for its own sake to the phase of guiding the growth and the development of boys and girls. The child must know the opportunities that lie before him. Teachers are helping him to determine his individual aptitudes and are advising him in his choice of course and vocation. Guidance has become a responsibility of every school system and of every individual school.

From the foregoing conclusions it is evident that superior teachers are necessary if our children are to obtain an education of high quality. No worker has greater responsibility than does the teacher, whose influence on the growth and development of our children is immeasurable. Therefore, the most capable men and women

should be recruited for teaching in our schools and they should find teaching a satisfying life's work. To help in realizing this goal it is suggested that teachers' salaries should be increased so they will compare favorably with those paid by other agencies who employ the most capable men and women; that elementary and high school principals should be employed for twelve months rather than nine, and teachers for ten months or more; that school boards should enter into contracts with teachers for a period of more than one year under regulations prescribed by the State Board of Education; that visiting teachers should be employed not only to deal with attendance but to supplement the efforts of the teacher in helping children adjust themselves satisfactorily to school life; and that the Retirement System should be improved by reducing the optional retirement age from 65 to 60, by providing disability benefits after 10 years of service instead of 20 years, and by increasing the maximum annuities.

Instruction may be improved in Virginia by the provision of audio-visual aids. Supplying teachers with the proper tools and equipment for their work is coming to be recognized as being just as important as supplying other workers with proper tools and equipment. It is felt that the instructional program will be improved greatly if teachers make skilful use of all visual aids

available in her teaching situation. However, it is important that teachers recognize that teaching aids are to be used as teaching aids and not as teaching substitutes.

Realization of the essential relationship between the school and society has been an important factor in the growth of our schools. If this progress is continued and wisely directed, the educational program in Virginia soon should rank favorably with those of other states of the nation. Governor Tuck in his inaugural address stated: "There is no longer any reason why Virginia should not go forward in expanding her educational facilities". He further stated: "If the people of Virginia want better schools, they will get them, but, unless they do, they will not".

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VITA

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He attended public schools in Northumberland County, Virginia; received the Bachelor of Science degree from the College of William and Mary in 1925; and did graduate work at the College of William and Mary.

He has been principal of the Chuckatuck High School, Chuckatuck, Virginia since 1925.