THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

Volume XVI APRIL, 1935 No. 4

THE A. B. DEGREE AND THE STATE TEACHERS COLLEGES

THE present State Board of Education was appointed January 30, 1930, and held its organization meeting February 6, 1930. Unlike its predecessor, it was not, and is not now, composed entirely of educators. Two of us (Miss Rose McDonald and Mr. Joseph H. Saunders) are officially connected with public school work, two others (Governor Trinkle and myself) have at various times had some experience with it, and the other three (Messrs. Bohannon, Daniel, and Shackleford) have had a college education. I may claim, without being accused of undue conceit, that it is a board of average intelligence.

When we first met, the five-year contracts with the textbook publishers had but five months to run. It was impossible to select new books in that time, so the board decided to continue the contracts in force for a year. The question of new contracts took up a great deal of time and study. In addition, urgent financial problems confronted us, many of them novel.

Before we came into office the General Assembly had abolished the Board of Visitors for the four State Teachers Colleges, and devolved that duty on us. That also put us up against many financial questions which, so far from diminishing, have greatly increased with the construction of new buildings. While we all realized the importance of the college curricula, we could not for some time give it the thought and study that it required. It first came formally before us at the meeting of October 27, 1932, when the presidents of the colleges brought up "the advisability of broadening the curricula of the colleges in order that the teacher-training institutions may attract as students not only those preparing specifically for teaching, but as well those who may be interested in other phases of education." Since then the matter has been closely studied by special committees, and has been the special order at several meetings. Both the literary and financial phases have had our earnest investigation. We are not gifted with flashes of inspiration, such as those which coruscate around the editorial chairs like the lightning around the throne of Olympian Jove, but we have given it our best thought and study. We may be mistaken—we are not infallible—but under such circumstances the presumptions are in our favor.

The Legal History

In order to understand the question, we must consider its legal history.

The poverty of the Commonwealth long prevented any attempt to provide trained teachers for the public schools. The first step in that direction was the establishment at Farmville on March 7, 1884, of a "State Female Normal School," which was a normal school pure and simple, for those women who desired to teach in the public schools. This was followed by the act of March 5, 1888, by which the General Assembly made an appropriation to revive the College of William and Mary (which had been compelled to suspend on account of its losses in the Civil War) on condition that it should establish "in connection with the collegiate course" a system of normal instruction and training for the purpose of educating and training white male teachers for the public schools. This was a step forward as establishing a normal department in connection with a collegiate course,

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and not merely creating a normal school. This was emphasized by the act of March 7, 1906, under which the college was taken over by the State, and which provided that the college should establish "in connection with the collegiate course, which shall be maintained," a normal department.

By the act of March 14, 1908, female normal schools were established at Harrisonburg and Fredericksburg, followed by the act of March 10, 1910, establishing one at Radford. The act of March 27, 1914, provided that these and the Farmville school "shall be called State Normal Schools for Women . . . and shall have power to grant certificates of graduation." This was followed by the act of March 2, 1916, which authorized their governing board "to grant certificates of graduation and to confer appropriate degrees in education." And this was followed by the act of February 13, 1924, which abolished their characterization of normal schools, and expressly required that they should be called "State Teachers Colleges."

This recital shows that, if there has been any "Hatching New Colleges" (as one editorial is headed), our board is not responsible for it. The nest eggs of the four institutions were laid by the General Assembly itself from 1884 to 1910. And they were "hatched" by the legislative incubator as far back as 1924. I am ignorant of any right of our board to unhatch them, or to throw them away as bad eggs, unfit to hatch. If there is anything extravagant or unwise in having so many as four, the responsibility is on the General Assembly to abolish or consolidate in whole or in part. When our board came into office, it found them as a fait accompli; and our sole problem was to decide what to do with them.

Personal Viewpoint

I must now ask pardon for making extensive use hereafter of the first person singular. It is necessary, because I am giving my own reasons for approving the action taken. I do not profess to speak for my associates. They will see this article for the first time when it is in print.

My guiding star throughout the discussion (extending over a period of two years and a half) has been a reluctance to authorize the degree until I was satisfied that it was to be an A. B. in scholarship not inferior to that of a standard institution of higher learning.

I think that the review of the legislation above shows that the policy of the General Assembly in reference to these institutions has been one of gradual expansion and not of arrested development. They are first called normal schools and allowed to give nothing but "certificates of graduation." They are next, while still normal schools, authorized to give also "appropriate degrees in education." And then they are called colleges. The intention must have been to make them colleges in fact as well as in name. I can not think that it was the legislative intent to set up a lot of diploma mills. I prefer to believe that they were influenced by the results at William and Mary. When it was revived, the normal training was a department in a college giving the old cultural course leading to an A. B. For the first few years it gave a special degree in the normal department called Licentiate of Instruction. Many young men of narrow means came there intending to take that degree and go at once to teaching. But they acquired a taste for learning while taking that course, and remained to take the full A. B. degree, thus filling the schools with teachers who had learned not only how to teach, but what to teach. That is exactly what we have done with these four colleges, and that is what I believe the General Assembly expected us to do. This is confirmed by the fact that on March 7, 1930 (only a month after our organization), it passed a joint resolution authorizing us to expand the curricula of these colleges by making such changes along

certain vocational lines "as will best serve the needs and demands of the women of the State."

At one of our meetings, Dr. Jarman, of Farmville, expressed and pressed the view that a teacher should have, if anything, a better preparation than one taking a cultural degree as evidence of a good education. I agree with him. In the rural districts especially a teacher influences an entire community. As rural schools necessarily have a small teacher staff, its members must often teach many subjects, instead of handling only a few as is the case in the city schools. Such teachers in rural communities are leaders not only in the schoolroom, but in all public questions.

Confusion of Minds

There is much confusion in the mind of many as to what is included in normal instruction. The preliminary training of a teacher for the first two or probably two and a half years covers the same course as that leading to the regular A. B. degree. The instruction in methods does not begin until towards the end. It is like the scaffold of a building, which is not erected till the foundations are laid and the wall has reached a certain height. Hence, if we wish a high standard of scholarship for the teachers who are to train our children, it must be more economical for the teacher training schools to carry their students a step further, thus utilizing the equipment and plant to its fullest extent, than to turn them out with mere normal training and send them elsewhere if they wish further preparation.

My friends, the four presidents, may not agree with me in what I shall now say, but I have said it in their presence, and I now repeat, that I have never thought the preparation they now give a sufficient one for teaching, certainly as far as the secondary schools are concerned. I think their present B. S. degree, on which we base authority to teach, is too weak. It requires neither mathematics nor any foreign language, ancient or modern, and might be strengthened in other subjects. On the other hand, we require in the core curriculum for our degree nine session hours in foreign language (one ancient and one modern), and three session hours in mathematics, besides six session hours in history.

A noticeable feature of our degree is the requirement of an ancient language, which practically means Latin, as but few take Greek. I have been an earnest advocate of this from the beginning of the discussion. When I was at college I was told that two-fifths of the words in an English dictionary came from the Latin. The proportion is probably less now, owing to the growth of technical terms, but it is still great. I can not see how English can be taught properly without a knowledge of Latin, and the same is true of the Romance languages. The teachers even in the primary country schools are constantly consulted by parents on subjects of general culture. If they can not translate "E Pluribus Unum" and "Sic Semper Tyrannis," or show a parent how to solve a simple equation in algebra, their influence is impaired.

Courses Above Average

I have made a study of every cultural college in Virginia, male or female, public or private, from their catalogs (except Lynchburg and Bridgewater, whose catalogs were not accessible); and I venture the assertion that the A. B. course mapped out by us is above the average, and will result in better teachers for our public schools. Dr. Combs, of Fredericksburg, in a paper submitted to us on the subject, well said:

"If any one more than another needs to possess culture, it is the teacher, in order that she may be able to pass it on to others. We demand for those in charge of the mental, physical, and moral development of our children, and who are responsible for their welfare during the most plastic years

of their lives, not only skill, but broad culture, sound scholarship, and a clear insight into human nature."

The effect of our action upon the other colleges must now be considered. I can not see that it will affect them seriously. If there is any competition between them and the teachers colleges, the latter, by giving an easier degree heretofore, have underbid them. Under our degree this is changed. In fact, as to some of them, conditions are reversed, and they must strengthen their degree to make it equal ours. As to the women's colleges, their appeal now is largely, not to Virginians, but to outsiders. Their recent catalogs (possibly not their very last) show that Randolph-Macon Woman's College had Virginians 215, outsiders 349. Sweetbriar had Virginians 64, outsiders 344. Mary Baldwin had Virginians 104, outsiders 154. Hollins had Virginians 88, outsiders 151. Chatham had Virginians 22, outsiders 103. At the State teachers' colleges the percentage of outsiders is small, being greatest at Fredericksburg. There is no reason to suppose that the percentage will materially change. The reason for it is the difference in cost, and that is not apt to change.

The argument most stressed by those who disapprove our action is the fear that it will involve increased appropriations, and that this will bring hosts of lobbyists down upon the General Assembly at every session.

The public opinion of the Commonwealth is apparently that women should have equal opportunities with men in educational facilities. Our action solves this problem. Women now have five colleges where they can get a scholarly general education whether they intend to teach or not; namely, William and Mary (co-educational) and the four teachers' colleges (for women only). They can then enter the University for graduate work, and professional work. And under the joint resolution of March 7, 1930, those colleges are already authorized, by act of our board, to add vocational courses. So there is ample provision right now for such courses "as will best serve the needs—if not the demands—of the women of the State."

As to the lobbying danger, any other scheme is liable to the same objection. The General Assembly has provided two safeguards against it. Under section 944 of the Code, the budgets for these colleges are in the hands of our board, not in the hands of the colleges themselves. And do not forget the budget director, who stands like the angel with a flaming sword at the gate of the financial paradise. If I may change my figure of speech, his working tools in actual practice seem to be not a yardstick and scissors, but a footstick and shears.

Answers Editorials

One of the editorials which condemn our action dubs these colleges "academic quadruplets," and suggests that the logical and economical plan would be to make one of them a big sister dressed sufficiently fine to play with a big brother, and make the other three Cinderellas. Or to use plain English, the suggestion is to expand one of them into a college co-ordinate with the University. and make the others simply training colleges for teachers. This in the first place ignores the importance of giving teachers ample cultural instruction, in addition to mere teacher training. And it would be necessarily more economical to utilize them, even if their appropriations were increased 50 per cent, than to found what would be practically a new institution and equip it physically and intellectually to such an extent as to give all the instruction now given at the University. It would duplicate the teachers' colleges if it had a department of education, and the University if it had professional courses. It would be bound to have these unless it was located at the University. It would hamper the attempt of the University to secure the necessary appropriations. Every time the big brother was given a new coat, the big sister would expect a new dress.

Personally, I have always been opposed to a co-ordinate college on other grounds than that of expense, unless it was located at the University. This would make the University co-educational in all but the name; and the sentiment of the University alumni has always been opposed to that. If not located at the University, the latter would be held responsible for all the former's shortcomings. The University would be bound to leave matters of discipline to the local authorities, subject only to slight supervision. If, for instance, the co-ordinate branch was located at Fredericksburg, and some of the students took a joy ride to Washington and landed up in the police court, the papers would be right apt to call them university students. In matters of scholarship also its control would be largely supervisory. The distance apart would permit only a limited use of the University faculty; and yet the co-ordinate college would expect the University president to sign the diplomas and the University seal to be affixed to them.

The class of girls who attend the teachers' colleges is mainly an earnest hard-working class of narrow means, to whom our action gives an opportunity of a general education not limited to preparation for teaching. Those who would attend a co-ordinate college are mainly able to live in higher style than their Cinderella sisters. Many of the latter could not afford a co-ordinate college and yet do not want teacher training. Our action gives them the chance. It gives the women of the State the same educational opportunities as the men, and that at reasonable cost.

I disclaim any intention of apologizing for my action. I have tried to render patriotic service to my native State in several ways. As I review my work, I can now, in the evening of my life, think of nothing which gives me more satisfaction than my labors on the State Board of Education.

Robert M. Hughes

THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOLS

It is a far cry from the provisions for public secondary education as offered in the first American high school in Boston in 1635 to the present nation-wide system of public secondary education. The first permanent settlements in America had hardly gotten under way at Jamestown and Plymouth before serious efforts were inaugurated to provide educational opportunities for the boys and girls of the settlers and for the instruction of the Indians. The first serious attempt to establish a secondary school in America was made in Virginia when plans were laid in the year 1621 for the establishment of the "East Indie Schoole" at "Charles Cittie," Virginia. According to the plans this school was designed as a secondary institution to prepare youth for admission to the University "intended to be built" at Henricopolis. This school, however, was never established due to the great Indian Massacre of 1622 which prevented any successful educational efforts in Virginia until the founding of the Symms free school in 1644. The first successful secondary school in America, founded in Boston in 1635, was called the Boston Latin School. Here Ezekiel Cheever taught for thirty years and became the outstanding educational leader of the colonial period. The movement for secondary education, begun in Boston, soon spread throughout the colonies and by the close of the colonial period all of the thirteen colonies had made some provision for the education of their youth in such schools as the Latin grammar schools, the colonial grammar schools, the

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In the preparation of this article the writer wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. C. H. Phippins.

Presented before teachers of District C. Virginia Education Association, meeting at the Westhampton High School on March 15.