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Senate Committee Report on the Normal Colleges, State of Illinois

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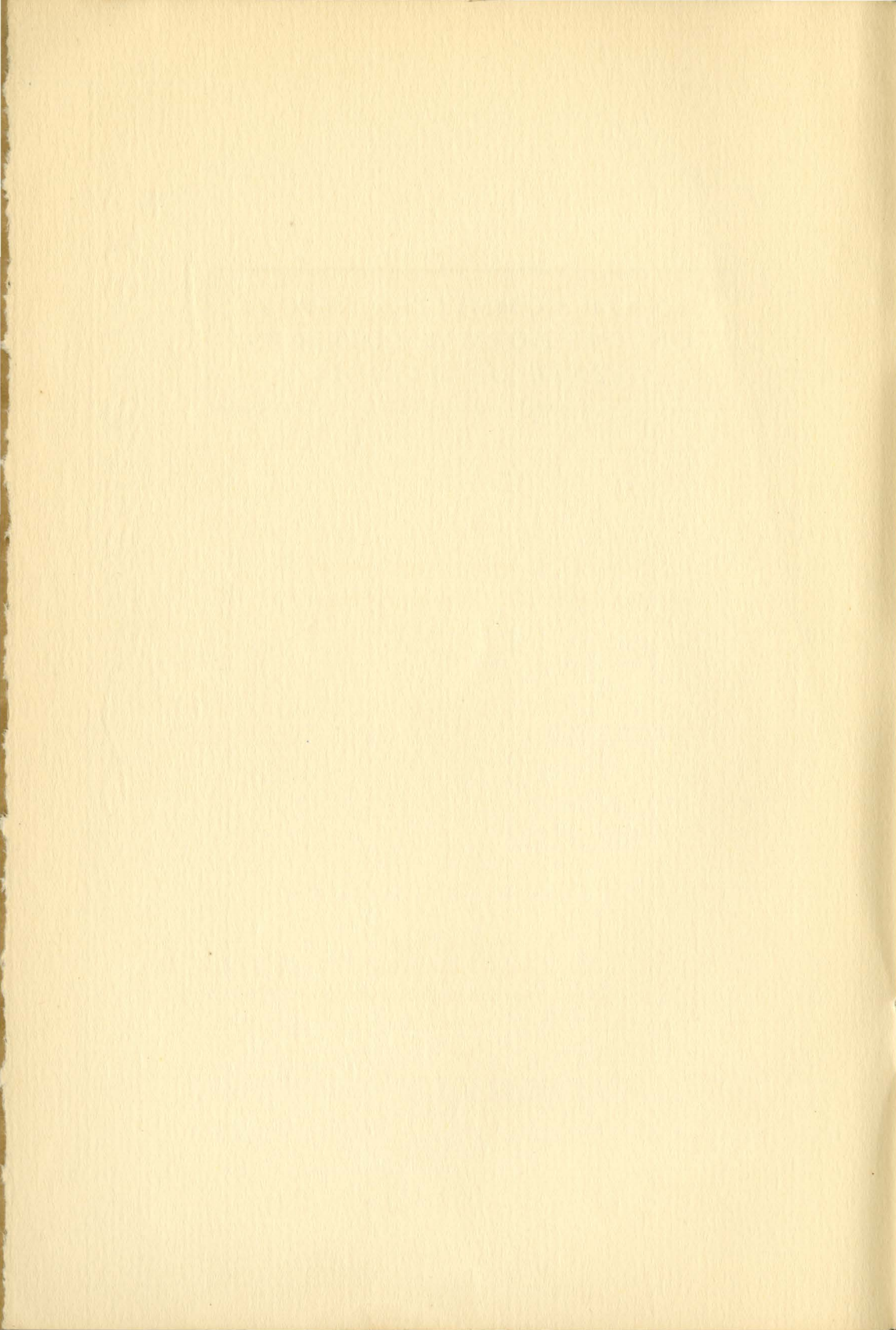
A report by the Senate Committee to Visit Educational Institutions. This report provides a broad assessment and conclusions on the teachers colleges in Illinois, including Southern Illinois State Normal University. It provides insight into the nature and impact of Illinois' normal schools in the mid 1930s. The Committee's conclusions are shaped by the following issues:

- Recruitment and retirement policies as applied to the faculty
- Increase or decrease of demands, present and probable future demands, for teachers
- Desirable expansion and possible contraction of educational services offered
- Distribution of graduates in and outside the teaching profession
- Comparative per capita costs of the services rendered by you and similar institutions in and out of Illinois
- Best thought for utilizing, say a ten per cent increase of educational appropriations when, if, and as such increased appropriations be found possible
- The least painful and hurtful method of absorbing further decrease in educational appropriations when, if, and as such decrease appears inevitable

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**SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
ON THE NORMAL COLLEGES
STATE OF ILLINOIS**



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ON THE NORMAL COLLEGES
STATE OF ILLINOIS

by

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SENATE COMMITTEE TO VISIT EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS REPORTS ON THE
NORMAL COLLEGES

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Senate:

Your Committee to Visit Educational Institutions begs to submit as a report of progress the following observations and recommendations upon the normal colleges of Illinois:

I.

ON THE outskirts of five middle-sized towns, gracing four extremities of our State with one in the center for balance, five of our State educational institutions are situated—the teachers colleges at Carbondale, Charleston, DeKalb, Macomb, and Normal. Located outside the larger cities, they provide the State's major contribution to the teacher replacement and growth in instruction of all Illinois elementary and secondary schools save those of Chicago, which has its own city supported normal college.

The stalwart men, Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Senate, who came to this assembly before our day, in founding these schools when and where they did, perhaps hardly foresaw a day when we should be so civilized as we now are. Assuming that we have spent, as well as worked, ourselves into civilization, we now boast among our cultural graces an annual national bill for tobacco, cosmetics, chewing gum, gambling and liquor that each runs into the millions and altogether totals into the billions of dollars. In all these excellencies and extravagancies Illinois participates more than its pro rata share. Could our legislative predecessors have foreseen all this and forefelt our pride in these great and garish goods of life, would they not have located these normal colleges in the thick of things, where men can drink and gamble like gentlemen, where women can be ladies or not as they list, and where both men and women together, and apart, display the graces, dubious and indubious, of our vaunted 1935-model civilization?

And yet who can say for certain that the founders would be sorry to see even in this later time five institutions oldfashionly free of these adjuncts of our up-to-date culture? Senators rate one spittoon each, furnished free and freely kept in polished form. Senators smoke as they please. Senators can drink when necessary to soothe legislative or other cares. Senators sport and run on a two-and-one-half-day-a-week schedule, an upper house costing more

than \$1,000.00 a day for some two hundred days or so a biennium, and themselves draw almost as much pay for three months' work a year as normal school teachers average for nine months. Senators would find amusing, if not instructive, a peep at institutions where tobacco is taboo, where liquor is banned, where one can be awakened naturally, just like Adam and Eve, by the melodious crowing of the lusty cock in the morning, where students enter upon free instruction only by pledging themselves to accept indigence and service as their professional lot, where the homely virtues that furnish the solid base for our city civilization are still exemplified by teachers and recommended in word and deed to students, and where money, among students as well as teachers, is still precisely reckoned in humble pennies (some students living on as little as \$15.00 a month). Such at any rate is the temper of these teachers colleges of Illinois.

Simple in taste, austere in conduct, devoted to making boys and girls into such teachers as can teach other boys and girls to be simple, honest citizens without the frills and fads regarded necessary by us legislators for ourselves, these schools are places where education is studied and carried on to the wholesome rythm of plain living and high thinking. They are the State's recruiting and hardening grounds for the indigent profession of teaching, in which almost a half hundred thousand men and women are this day sworn and devoted to servitude in Illinois. In these five normal colleges, combined, there are slightly more than four hundred teachers, teaching something less than six thousand teachers to teach the more than one million four hundred thousand boys and girls of Illinois tomorrow.

Your committee, joining forces with the companion House committee, as was intended by the statute (Smith-Hurd 63-24-24½, p. 1563), has visited all these teacher training institutions, has inspected their buildings and grounds, and has asked their responsible officers to disclose their minds—sustaining hopes, inner fears, and fiscal needs. That we were everywhere graciously received, we leave to be inferred from the fact that educators are gentlemen and legislators are custodians of State funds.

II.

WE WENT to visit the normal colleges with such questions as these—questions previously submitted in writing and pressed in personal interviews at each institution:

1. Recruitment and retirement policies as applied to the faculty.

2. Increase or decrease of demands, present and probable future demands, for teachers.
3. Desirable expansion and possible contraction of educational services offered.
4. Distribution of graduates in and outside the teaching profession.
5. Comparative per capita costs of the services rendered by you and similar institutions in and out of Illinois.
6. Your best thought for utilizing, say a ten per cent increase of educational appropriations when, if, and as such increased appropriations be found possible.
7. The least painful and hurtful method of absorbing further decrease in educational appropriations when, if, and as such decrease appears inevitable.

III.

AMONG the many things which we learned we here set down the main ones, with certain conclusions which we have reached. We learned:

1. That five normal colleges are not more than enough to supply the downstate need for teachers in usual times. The normal demand for replacement (due to retirement, death, marriage, etc.) is heavy, being in 1933, for example, 4,700. Altogether the five normals have never graduated in a single year more than 1,500. This includes both those who graduate with degrees after four years of training and those who get certificates after two years of work. Moreover, the unemployment among normal school graduates in prosperous times is negligible and during these abnormal times is less than we had anticipated. It has averaged less than one-quarter of those graduating during the depression.

Conclusion 1: Illinois is not over-supplied with teacher-training institutions.

2. That with the further raising of standards for the teaching profession, which is foregone, more teachers with higher training will be demanded than the normals as now staffed and equipped can supply. The steady raising of certification requirements, in Illinois as throughout the United States, looks quickly to the time when the master's degree will be required for high school teaching, as the bachelor's degree is now, and when the bachelor's degree will be required for elementary teaching, as low-grade certificates now are.

Many high schools, indeed, are already enforcing this first advance for themselves, and the Illinois State Teachers Association is already officially

recommending the second advance for the whole State. Such improvements of standards is highly praise-worthy on the sound theory that nothing is too good for any of our children and in emulation of the practice that has brought all the other professions to their present greatness in America. The normal colleges will have to bear a share, if not the main burden, of the advanced teaching called for by rising standards; and the advance itself will be held back unwisely or the State will have to do for these colleges all at once by way of equipment and staff an heroic thing, unless they are kept up to a high level in the work they are doing and that level steadily, even if it must be slowly, raised. Less than one-third of present Illinois teachers have college degrees (14,599 out of the 48,000 in 1933); more than 12,000 having had only one year or less beyond the high school.

Conclusion 2: Teachers should be encouraged to raise their standards as high as they will and as rapidly as they can; and to this end the normal schools should be enabled to strengthen their staffs and improve their equipment gradually but continuously.

3. That the per capita cost is slightly above the median for 31 other representative teachers colleges in the United States (being in 1933-34, \$260.00 in Illinois to \$249.00 elsewhere) and that the average faculty salaries in Illinois are below other comparable institutions (being for the same year \$2,337 to \$2,400 elsewhere.)

Conclusion 3: The Illinois normal school student is getting more for his time and the teacher is giving more for his money than obtains in similar institutions in many other states.

4. That the enrollment is rising rapidly in these colleges, the increase averaging 24 per cent during the last four years of the depression. The proportion of men to women is also rising, being in round numbers now 2 men to 3 women. This increased enrollment in the normal schools reflects in part the pressure of poor boys and girls for an education in spite of national depression and family adversity, and in an indeterminate part the fading lure of business enterprise as a vocation. This increased drawing power of the indigent profession, for men as well as for women, may well portend the return of that larger sanity which seeks to serve rather than to snatch. There are goods which for one man to have more of, does not mean for other men to have less of. They are not the most gaudy goods of life, but they are great goods. The several professions compensate their lower financial income by devotion to these goods of the spirit; and of all professions, with the possible

exception of the ministry and priesthood, the teaching profession, being most indigent, illustrates this compensation most fully.

Conclusion 4: The increasing enrollment in the normal colleges is a good sign—of surviving ambition surmounting adversity, of sanity in ideals of life for the State, and of better personnel for the teaching profession. Until we pay teachers commensurate with their services or/and until we make up our minds to select much more carefully those who may attend the normal colleges to enter teaching as a profession, we may welcome the larger enrollment. Operating with such unemployment as attends the depression, this surplus over demand will help to guarantee better teachers through the placement of the most fit in competition for positions. Meantime, the social loss, while bad, of having trained teachers without positions, is not completely bad; for the training has developed the mind and enhanced the quality of citizenship of each one undergoing it. The unemployment here does not appear disproportionate in comparison with the situation in other professions.

5. That many of the buildings at these normal colleges were poorly planned and are with difficulty adapted to educational use. The castle type of construction—all honor, nevertheless, to the sturdy Altgelt—is not an ideal architecture for education. These castles, where they exist, as well as the other buildings are not kept in repair, either inside or outside. There is not a school of the five where new buildings are not badly needed. But pending an adequate construction program, the present buildings with minimum but indispensable outlays can be more fully utilized and more completely preserved. With maintenance appropriations cut to the bone the last biennium, the normals have with Federal aid and their own ingenuity been able to do something toward keeping their plants in repair, but not enough.

Conclusion 5: It is shortsighted economy on the part of the State not to keep in repair and full use the buildings it owns for educational purposes. Repairs that are desperately needed and must be done eventually, should be done now. It is good sense as well as wise economy. Economy that decrees otherwise but advertises inadequate leadership.

6. That these schools have been modest in their requests for equipment and unfortunate in what they have been able to get appropriated for this purpose. While there are favored spots in several schools, the equipment for science, for arts, and for recreation is not on the whole as good as is to be found in the best high schools of the State. Teachers are thus being trained with poorer equipment than they will have for the training of their own stu-

dents. This makes happy no doubt the escape from training to teaching of those who go to the best communities; but it reveals clearly the inefficiency of State administration that will play step-mother to her local units, condemning them to accept teachers from the State on whom the State lavishes less care than the local communities spend on equipment.

Conclusion 6: The normal colleges should be encouraged to press their claim for equipment as good as the best and the Assembly should count this investment its indispensable duty not merely to the normals but also to the local units in which these teacher-wards of the State go for their life service.

7. That the normal schools are obliged to purchase such commodities as they can from the prison shops of Illinois. The workmanship on these commodities, done as they are with little joy and less pride, is often inferior to goods bought on the open market; and the price that must be paid is sometimes higher than that required for superior goods. Replacement of downright shoddy material thus bought is possible; but to effect it requires a kind of persistent audacity more common in prisons than among professors or presidents, wastes much time, and necessitates stubborn refusals to receive goods and equally vigilant return of the shoddy goods sent. We are not blind to the problems of other departments of State, nor do we pass judgment upon their efforts. But we are authorized to report upon educational institutions. And we must report that many of the educational institutions are being made the victims of the prisons. The most indigent profession is thus made to subsidize those who are in the most unfortunate predicament in the State. Whatever kind the justice here involved, there is neither efficiency nor economy for the educational institutions.

Conclusion 7: Normal schools should not be required to buy commodities of the prisons save upon observed specifications, competitive prices, and assured promptness of delivery.

8. That the honesty, sincerity, devotion to duty, and in a word the patriotism of the teachers in the normal colleges are of a high order. No group of men and women in the State are less likely to sell their country short in their daily lives than these. Their contacts with students are both fraternal and parental. We have found no efforts to indoctrinate anything save the established virtues and these more by example than by preaching; nor have we discovered suspicion or rebellion on the part of the students. If the faculties of these institutions are not good Americans, then there are no such Americans. Those who argue them unpatriotic convict themselves either of ignor-

ance or of ulterior ends obscured by the cry of patriotism. Such efforts at impeachment remind us that there is, and has always been, a false brand of patriotism which can easily become "the last refuge of scoundrels."

Have not those who have taken the vows of poverty to enter this indigent profession, forswearing along with riches, tobacco, liquor, gambling, night clubs, and all save constant service in the interest of good citizenship for this and the next generation—have not such as these earned the right not to be judged and set upon by those of us who, enjoying all these shadier goods of life, puff ourselves with wordy pride to the effect that we are more patriotic than these humble pedagogical patriots?

Conclusion 8: The Senate Committee for investigating radicalism in colleges had best save their time and the State's money by assuming that the normal colleges are as patriotic and as safe as the committee itself, which admittedly is patriotic enough. Moreover, if any oath aiming at greater assurance of loyalty is to be given, the normal colleges should be authorized to give it to us rather than take it from us.

9. That the single State Normal School Board which supervises all these teachers colleges represents a great improvement over the not too distant days when every normal school sought directly from the Assembly the maximum appropriation in order to achieve some minimum greater than its competitors. Largely through the functioning of this board, the Assembly is now saved these multifarious direct approaches, and the presidents of the several schools are spared the necessity of competing with those engaged in cooperative work with them. Indeed, we have seen concrete evidence that the competitive spirit as between these institutions, for students and prestige as well as for funds, is now transformed into the type of cooperation long needed and now proving so useful to all concerned. Only the finest rivalry in good works remains, and the fullest sharing of results with one another. Enhanced morale has resulted from the board's wise allowance of variety in a pattern of uniformity and from its concern with security for the retiring members of the several staffs.

We remark upon these facts not merely to congratulate the Assembly upon an earlier act of re-organizational wisdom, not merely to compliment the board upon the good results observed by us of its harmonizing and planning work, but to remind the Chief Executive, present and prospective, of the high reward in concrete results of keeping the personnel of this normal school board well above the level of ordinary political manoeuvring. The present board with several members long over-serving their terms is confront-

ed now with the selection of a president for the college at Carbondale, as successor to the late and justly famous President Shryock, whose unexpected death occurred only one week before our visitation there. Public attention should be called to the high opportunity of the board to combine in the successor to President Shryock the highest educational ability and attainments with a temperament sensitive to the peculiar needs of Southern Illinois, which is served by this school.

Conclusion 9: The recommendations made by the Normal School Board for the several teachers colleges should be taken very seriously as representing the minimum provision for teacher training in Illinois for the next biennium.

As generalizing all our previous conclusions, we recommend:

1. That a silent vote of confidence be given the normal schools of Illinois for carrying on as efficiently and uncomplainingly as they have on a greatly reduced budget their augmented tasks throughout the last biennium.

2. That the Senate graciously refrain from investigating the normal schools for radicalism. No cause has been shown or exists for adding to the injury enforced upon this indigent group of professional people by the depression, this avoidable insult. Moreover, why harass with lightly proposed oaths of loyalty a group which, while others talk loudly of patriotism, is itself actually training loyal and intelligent citizens to practice what others preach? There are fair weather patriots and there are patriots regardless of weather—or publicity. These teachers are patriots of peace as well as of war: tolerant, devoted, intelligent men and women putting to the daily test the scriptural maxim: "Swear not at all . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea: Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one."

3. That the fiscal recommendations of the board be accepted as a harmonious adjustment of the claims upon the State of the several teachers colleges, as a more just assessment of their needs than we or any other temporary committee can give independently, and as, therefore, the minimum necessary to carry on this total enterprise of great magnitude and of even greater significance for the next biennium.

In conclusion, let us hark back to the wise words of a committee similar to this one, reporting to this Assembly in 1887, the Honorable D. D. Hunt being its chairman:

"The members of your committee," so runs the report of 48 years ago,

"fully agree upon the policy to be pursued in regard to State normal schools. We heartily concur in the following views:

"If the education of youth is a matter with which the State has a right to deal, nay, if it is a matter which the State dare not neglect; if the State may take money from all its citizens to pay expenses of it; if the State assumes to say what kind of schools shall be sustained, what and how much shall be taught in them; if the State through the officers it provides determines who is to teach in its schools; if a teacher is absolutely necessary to the success of a school, and a poor teacher causes the money expended for his school to be wasted; if the requisite number of good teachers cannot be found unless the State helps to supply them; if normal schools actually do efficient work in supplying this fundamental want of a fundamental work, then clearly the State ought to provide and support normal schools."

Since those wise words were written nearly a half century ago, these normal schools have grown in number and multiplied in size. Two of them are now, as to attendance, among the half dozen largest teachers colleges in the United States. Our children are heirs to their honorable past; we ourselves are the makers or un-makers of their future. So long as cultured mind is the guardian genius of democracy, we protect our State in planning and providing for such teachers as through quiet labor guard our gates against ignorance, budge our children toward the light of learning, and in their own humble way represent among us the truest statesmanship of the human spirit.

The normal schools maintain no lobby, and their teachers quietly admit that they are no match for us politicians. There are high placed elected officials who declare that the State cannot afford to maintain these schools at the minimum level recommended by their board. But any man who knows enough to remember that politics is the science of "who gets what when"—and how!—he will take these *crystal-ball dicta* with more than a grain of salt.

Such cock-and-bull computations will become credible when the officials making them demonstrate three points: (1) that they themselves can serve the State as contentedly on the salaries given these well-trained normal teachers; (2) that their own rolls are, like the rolls of the normal colleges, unpadded with patronage; and (3) that their staffs are giving themselves as unstintedly—both day shift and night shift—as are these teachers. Until that distant day, such statements will be taken by knowing ones for exactly what they are, namely, *private convenience or public lethargy flaunted by little officials as the principle of public policy.*

Your Committee to Visit Educational Institutions commends the opposite principle: *that the State cannot afford not to support substantial education for all its children.* To provide instruments for this substantial education, is the prime duty of the normal colleges. This provided, other departments of State that have achieved the same efficiency of economy may be then allowed the luxury of playing patronage with any remaining surplus funds of the State. *Put first things first by reversing the places now occupied by patronage and principle, and we shall soon enough see how much easier it is to afford education, from normal college to one-room school, than it is to afford public officials who mince every educational appropriation like a miser, but play the patron to many a lesser need. Only pudgy politicians will treat like a step-mother this fine mother of all our stoutest virtues, the educational system of Illinois.*

Respectfully submitted,

SENATOR W. E. C. CLIFFORD

SENATOR T. V. SMITH, *Chairman*

This brochure is distributed by:

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