

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRENDS IN IOWA

("Committee of One Hundred")

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Final Report of the Sub-Committee on

E D U C A T I O N

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I. TRENDS INFLUENCING EDUCATION IN IOWA

Several basic social and economic trends have already had a profound effect upon education in Iowa and in the Nation. The intensification of these trends anticipated in the next ten or fifteen years is certain to call for extraordinary efforts on the part of the general citizenry and those responsible for education to improve and expand our elementary and our secondary schools, and our colleges and universities.

Notable among these trends are the following:

(1.) The so-called "population explosion", particularly the increased birth rate after World War II, which has already overcrowded the elementary schools, is now reaching our secondary schools, and will greatly expand the college age population within the next ten years.

(2.) There are not only more children at present but a larger number of them are going to school than in the past and they stay in school longer. There has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of college

age youth seeking opportunities for education beyond high school. This factor alone has been primarily responsible for the fact that the total enrollment in Iowa colleges has risen by more than 40 per cent in the last four years, in spite of the fact that the students coming out of high school during that time were born during the low birth-rate years of the depression.

(3.) The greatly accelerated trend in migration from rural to urban areas. This means a reduced school population in many rural areas and a vastly increased population in many urban areas.

(4.) The increased complexity of the modern world and our growing responsibility for world leadership greatly enhances the need for highly trained manpower, a well-educated citizenry, and requires lengthening the time for formal education to secure adequate preparation.

(5.) Increased knowledge of child development and learning processes, plus the increasing complexity and specialization of the school curriculum have led to the recognition that teaching is a highly skilled profession which requires an extensive period of training.

(6.) The need of modernization of teaching tools, supplies and buildings for the educational plant at all levels has added to the cost of education.

(7.) The inflationary trend of our national economy has also contributed directly to increased costs of education.

(8.) World War II and the postwar inflation has contributed to a critical shortage of well-qualified teachers due to competition from other areas of our economy for highly trained people with advanced education.

(9.) The increased recognition that the general advancement of learning, and, more specifically, our health, economic and social welfare, and national defense depends upon progress in basic and applied research, carried on to a significant degree in the large, complex universities and colleges.

The Congress of the United States, taking cognizance of these basic trends and the important educational problems resulting from them, has declared that, as a matter of national policy, our facilities for advanced education and research must be strengthened and expanded. The Congress has recently provided special funds through the National Science Foundation and through the National Defense Education Act in support of teaching, graduate study and research, particularly in science and mathematics, but it is up to the people of the several states to maintain the necessary basic facilities for education.

II. IOWA'S RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION

A. Elementary and Secondary

At the beginning of the present (1958-1959) school year, Iowa has 2,779 public school districts, of which 694 have high schools. In addition, there are 389 private and parochial schools, 129 of which are at the secondary level. Combined enrollment of all these schools in Iowa is over 650,000. Approximately 92 per cent of this total is enrolled in the public schools.

Since 1954-1955, there has been a 37 per cent reduction in the number of public school districts and a 15 per cent reduction in the number of public high school districts, but Iowa still contains ^{1,117}.....one-room rural schools* and almost 80 per cent of the public high schools have fewer than 200 pupils. Only three states in the United States, which are: Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas, have more public high school-districts than Iowa.

B. Colleges and Universities

Iowa has 51 colleges and universities located within its boundaries: 6 private junior colleges, 16 public junior colleges, 26 private four-year colleges, and 3 state-supported institutions of higher education. Undergraduate enrollments are divided about evenly between public and private institutions. The public institutions carry the major share of the load of advanced professional and the graduate instruction and research. It is important that both pri-

*In 1957-58 there were 1,904 one-room rural schools in Iowa. This year, 1958-59 the number has been reduced to 1,117.

vate and public institutions be maintained in strong condition in order to provide a wide variety of opportunity for Iowa youth and to maintain variety in the types of control of such institutions.

III. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

A. Higher Education

In view of the trends described earlier in this report, it is of crucial importance that both the public and private colleges and universities be enabled to provide their facilities to meet increased demands. Of all the many recommendations which might be made regarding the future of higher education in Iowa, the Committee views three as most vital at this time.

1. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly appropriate the sum of \$70,000 (seventy thousand dollars) for the use during the next biennium of the "Study Committee on Higher Education", under the supervision of the State Board of Regents and the State Board of Public Instruction, and adequate sums each biennium thereafter so long as the need for co-operative study of higher education exists.

It is clear that there must be a substantial expansion of facilities for higher education in Iowa in the next few years. It is not clear, however, just what additional facilities and programs should be developed and by whom. The responsibility for the necessary planning is divided between the state government and local school boards with respect to publicly supported colleges on the one hand, and 32 separate and independent private college boards of trustees on the other. To assure wise use of existing facilities and sound investment of additional tax monies and private funds, there must be accurate collection and analysis of factual data, careful planning, and active co-operation between the many diverse institutions of higher education, both public and private.

Forseeing these needs, the State Board of Regents and the

State Board of Public Instruction, in co-operation with the Iowa College Presidents Association and the Iowa Junior College Association, created in 1956, "The Study Committee on Higher Education in Iowa". This study Committee represents all the colleges in Iowa, both public and private, junior and senior colleges. Its purpose is to study continuously the field of higher education in Iowa and report basic data and information to the administrators and governing boards of all Iowa colleges, to the Governor and members of the General Assembly, and to the citizens of Iowa.

The importance of this Committee and its functions can not be over-emphasized. Since it represents both private and public interests in higher education throughout the State, it is the logical vehicle to gather and distribute the type of data and information needed by all such groups.

To date, this Committee has been seriously handicapped by lack of financial resources. It has not been able to make the necessary studies. The Committee needs a reasonable annual budget to provide the services of a staff with expense funds to carry on its functions. It is clearly in the interest of the State of Iowa to provide such funds.

2. The Committee on Education believes it is imperative that the operating funds of Iowa colleges and universities be increased substantially during the years immediately ahead.

The major problem common to all colleges is that of lifting faculty salaries to substantially higher levels in order to secure and retain competent persons for teaching and research, in the face of stiff competition from other employers. In addition, as enrollment expand, more staff members will have to be obtained.

It is therefore, extremely important that the citizens of Iowa should make possible sizeable additions to the staffs and substantial increases in faculty salaries in Iowa colleges and universities by:

a. Supporting the private institutions

more generously through individual and corporate giving and through maintenance of tax exemption privileges for these colleges, and

b. Supporting sizable increases in legislative appropriations for operating funds of the State University, State College, and State Teachers College, and providing strong local support for junior colleges.

3. The Committee on Education endorses the \$68,000,000, (sixty eight million dollars) long-range building program of State Board of Regents and urges the responsible administrative and legislative officials and the people of the State to take the necessary steps to make this program a reality.

Relatively little building has been done with State funds on these three campuses during the last twenty five years. During the depression in the 1930's, funds were not available. During World War II, materials were not available. As a result of the inflation in the post-war period, the funds that were made available did not go far in providing the necessary buildings. The temporary barracks brought onto the campuses in order to cope with the increase in enrollments of the G.I. period immediately following the war are now wearing out. Twenty per cent of the total number of classrooms and laboratories in the three schools are in temporary, obsolete or hazardous structures. Thus, there is a serious need for buildings to provide the adequate facilities for the present number of students.

Faced with the prospect of substantially increased enrollments in the next ten years and with continuing demands for more research to improve the health and welfare of Iowa's people and strengthen their economy, the three State schools are increasingly conscious of an important "building deficit", which ought to no longer go unheeded.

Analysis reveals that Iowa has not made a substantial effort with regard to this matter; most of the States in the Mid-West have spent

more than twice as much per capita as Iowa has for appropriations for buildings at State institutions of higher education since World War II. Most of the new buildings one sees on our campuses as he drives by these institutions have been built without tax support from the room and board payments made by the students. The great need now is for classroom and laboratory facilities which are the responsibility of the State as a whole.

On May 9, 1958, the State Board of Regents formally declared its conviction that the future building needs of the State institutions of higher learning (the State University, the State College, and the State Teachers College) will call for the expenditure of a total of not less than \$68,000,000 (sixty eight million dollars) over the next twelve years; that such building needs can be met by providing for them in whole or in part by a State bond issue; and that it is imperative that this program be inaugurated at the earliest possible date. The Board recommended specifically:

a. An appropriation by the General Assembly at its next regular session (1959) of not less than \$26,000,000 (twenty six million dollars) from the general fund, to begin said building program at the State institutions of higher learning.

b. Action by the same General Assembly authorizing a vote of the people at the general election in November, 1960, on incurring a State debt for the unappropriated balance of said \$68,000,000 (sixty eight million dollars) and issuing twenty-year general obligation bonds secured by a direct tax to pay for buildings, land, and utilities at the State institutions of higher learning, and

c. Approval of said bond issue by the people at the general election in 1960.

The Committee believes that it is the duty of the people of the State of Iowa, as part of the nationwide effort to strengthen programs of

education and research, to see to it that its three institutions of higher education are prepared to meet the challenges of the next dozen years. It, therefore, endorses this building program, without recommendation as to the method of financing.

B. Elementary and Secondary Education

The Committee strongly urges adoption of the following recommendations concerning elementary and secondary education in the State of Iowa.

1. The Committee recommends that the citizens of Iowa support the objectives of our State Legislature for re-organizing our school districts into efficient administrative units and of requiring all taxing districts in the State to be in a high school district for the following reasons:

a. All children of the State are entitled to equal educational opportunities. Some youngsters are attending schools at the present time which do not offer either an adequate terminal program nor effective college preparation work.

b. It is a well established fact that good schools cost money. As standards of education are raised higher, the costs of schools are certain to increase further. To fail to organize school districts into as economic and efficient units as possible is wasting tax funds which are seriously needed for the educational program.

c. Good teachers are in short supply. The qualified teaching personnel in the State should be used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

d. In fairness to our taxpayers we should make every effort to see that State funds are not supporting districts which offer poor programs.

e. All taxpayers in the State should contribute to the education of the young people of Iowa.

f. Providing education for youngsters on a tuition basis deprives parents of the right to have a voice in the kind and

quality of the program offered.* Local control of our schools has always been a feature of our American school system and is, no doubt, a very responsible factor in the great contribution our schools have made toward developing our society and our economy.

2. The Committee wholeheartedly supports the recommendations of the State Board of Public Instruction to the 58th General Assembly in regard to revisions in the present law concerning the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The State Board recommends that the limitation on the maximum salary of the Superintendent and of his two assistants be removed and that the provision requiring Senate confirmation of the Superintendent's appointment be eliminated.

We cannot expect to get and keep qualified men in top positions in education in Iowa when we have written into our State law a limit upon salaries, particularly when that limit is below most accepted administrative salary standings in many local districts.

The Legislature, by removing the necessity of Senate confirmation on the appointment of the State Superintendent, will be further carrying out its established policy of removing the Department of Public Instruction from political influence.

3. It is recommended by this committee that the State Board of Public Instruction be authorized to prepare a proposed revision and codification of the laws of Iowa relating to education for consideration by the 59th General Assembly meeting in January of 1961. It is further recommended that funds to carry out the above revision and codification be appropriated to the State Board of Public Instruction.

The school laws of the State of Iowa have been in the pro-

* At present many small elementary districts send their students of high school age to adjoining high school districts on a tuition basis. Parents of these students have no direct control through voting in the affairs of said high schools.

cess of development for many years with present statutes containing numerous conflicts, ambiguities and omissions which interfere with proper efficiency and economy in the operation of the school system. This has cost the citizens and taxpayers of this State thousands of dollars and wasted time in legal actions.

No serious attempt has been made by the Legislature to service the school code since 1941-1943. The 49th General Assembly meeting in 1941 established a School Code Commission authorized to clarify and recodify the school laws. The recommendations of this Code Commission were presented to the 50th General Assembly for their adoption. The General Assembly failed to adopt these recommendations. However, they did establish a second Code Commission authorized, primarily, to make recommendations to the 51st General Assembly on the financing of education in the State.

In the intervening 15 years, the addition of new statutes and revisions of old have added to the confusion and ambiguities of the present code.

The 57th General Assembly adopted the policy that all of the areas of the State shall be in high school districts by July 1, 1962. To achieve this objective, it is imperative that the School Code be brought up-to-date, so that school district reorganization and consolidation will be facilitated and encouraged. All the obsolete sections of the Code, such as those pertaining to rural districts should be eliminated. The patrons and administrators of the school districts of the State have the right to expect the Legislature to provide them with a school code that is clear, concise and free from uncertainties of interpretation.

4. This Committee supports the recommendation of the State Board of Public Instruction to the General Assembly for an increase of State funds for the support of elementary and secondary schools.

We further recommend that the requirements for receiving state distributive funds be strengthened with special regard to hastening the reorganization of school districts throughout the state in order to help produce a more efficient educational program, both from the standpoint of size and quality.*

The 51st General Assembly adopted the principle that financing elementary and secondary education is a shared responsibility of the State and local districts. This change in policy had as objectives:

a. The equalization of education opportunities throughout the State, and

b. The distribution of money collected at the State level to all school districts in the recognition of the State's responsibility for the education of all of its children, and for

c. Local property tax relief.

From 1951 through 1958 funds collected at the State level and distributed to school districts have increased only slightly more than 5 million dollars while over the same period local school property taxes have increased at the approximate rate of 7 million dollars per year.

School costs are certain to increase further if we are to provide our young people with better teachers, better facilities and more meaningful curricula. We cannot meet these costs without increased support in funds from State-collected revenues.

IV. TOPICS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The foregoing recommendations by no means then cover the whole subject of the future needs for education in Iowa. This Committee in the few

* Dr. James Conant recommends that high schools should be large enough to maintain a student enrollment sufficient in size to produce a graduating class of at least 100 pupils per year.

For many years the Department of Rural Education of the National Education Association, made up entirely of rural school people, has maintained that a school district should have a minimum student population of 1,200 pupils from Kindergarten through 12th grade.

months at its disposal believed that it was more important to concentrate on some of the more urgent immediate problems. Many questions were raised in our discussions that we were unable to cover adequately in the limited time at our disposal.

For example: The whole area of local, state, and federal fiscal and tax policies as they relate to the financing of education in Iowa raises the question, "Have our tax and fiscal policies for support of education kept pace with the rapidly moving, complex society in which we are living?"

A specific problem in this area is the limitation on the millage rate which local school districts in Iowa may levy for retirement of bonded indebtedness and payment of interest.

The financing of higher education is a subject that requires careful study. Increasing costs of attending college are making it more difficult for families to provide for their children's education beyond high school at the same time that the nation's need for highly trained personnel is increasing. To what extent should society underwrite the educational expenses of such deserving students? Whenever a student of ability is unable to pursue his education to the point that he can make the best use of his talents, both the individual and society are the losers. Recognizing this problem the Federal government has recently extended the support of education by setting up a program to provide low-interest rate loans to deserving students; and several states, including Illinois in this area, have established State scholarship programs for residents of the State who attend State institutions of higher education, both public and private. This Committee believes such programs should be studied in relation to Iowa's needs.

We have not touched on the matter of content of the educational program at the various different levels. Many of the governing boards, administrators and teachers of this State have been giving this serious attention. Citizens and lay groups should acquaint themselves with the improvements and

changes that are taking place at every level.

We have not gone into the matter of the organization of higher education in Iowa, which involves such questions as expanding the program for adult education through an increased extension program or otherwise; the role of the junior colleges; the possible need for new professional schools; and the most efficient utilization of the existing facilities of higher education.

Citizens of Iowa need to take a greater interest in studying the issues and problems of local and State school affairs, both public and private. We believe that a citizen's committee can serve a valuable purpose by giving serious consideration to such issues, and by helping to make the people of Iowa more aware of the educational needs of the State.