

## DEPARTMENTAL CHANGE AND GROWTH THROUGH THE YEARS OF DEPRESSION AND WAR, 1927--1945

Clement C. Young, elected Governor of California in 1926, had attitudes toward education very different from those of Richardson, and thus the new educational legislation that had been prepared by Superintendent Wood and others met a friendly reception by the Governor and the Legislature. In 1927 a bill was introduced by Senator H. C. Jones to change the bifurcated control of the Department of Education by having a reorganized State Board of Education, with members appointed to ten-year terms, and an appointive Director of Education who would in due course take over the duties, powers, and responsibilities of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This bill was approved overwhelmingly by the Legislature, but it required an amendment to the Constitution, which failed to pass in the general election of 1928. However, changes were made in the Political Code that provided for a new Board of Education and a reorganized Department of Education. Despite the continuance of the old double-headed responsibility, the newly organized Department served satisfactorily with very few changes through the trying days of the Depression and World War II.

The amendments to the Political Code, which became effective on July 29, 1927, brought about the following changes: (1) a new State Board of Education of ten members, appointed by the Governor with Senate approval, was created; (2) the three commissionerships established in 1913 were abolished; (3) the Board was given power "to establish upon recommendation of the Superintendent, such divisions in the State Department of Education as appear advisable for the efficient transaction of the business"; and (4) the chiefs of these divisions were to be elected by the Board, on nomination of the Superintendent, at salaries fixed by the Board, subject to the approval of the State Board of Control.

### Reorganization of the Department of Education

Governor Young immediately appointed the ten new members of the State Board of Education for four-year terms -- three expiring in 1928, two in 1929, three in 1930, and two in 1931. (If the Jones amendment had passed, the terms would have been ten years.) The Board met on August 1, 1927, and acting on the recommendation of the Superintendent, established ten divisions in the Department of Education. Five of these divisions were functional in character -- responsible for promotional, administrative, and supervisory activities in the schools of the state. The remaining five were service divisions, in that their responsibilities were not directly related to the instructional activities of the schools. The ten divisions, together with their responsibilities, were as follows:

1. The Division of Rural Education was responsible for administrative and supervisory relations between the State Department of Education

and the rural schools of the state, both elementary and secondary.

2. The Division of City Secondary Schools administered and supervised city high schools and junior colleges. The principal concern of this division was to supervise vocational education, except in the field of agriculture (which was under the Division of Rural Schools).
3. The Division of Adult Education was responsible for developing standards and promoting education for adults in high schools and junior colleges. It carried out research and developed courses in parental education and child study, and it promoted and directed the education of immigrants.
4. The Division of Health and Physical Education was responsible for supervising health education and physical education of boys and girls in the public schools.
5. The Division of Special Education was responsible for supervising programs for the education of physically handicapped, mentally retarded, and otherwise exceptional children, and for mental hygiene.
6. The Division of Research and Statistics was assigned the functions of compiling statistics; drafting official records and report forms; stimulating, coordinating, and conducting educational research; apportioning state school funds; and distributing forms and data.

The Division of Teacher Training and Certification was responsible for the general supervision of teacher training in institutions approved by the Department of Education and for the issuance of teachers' credentials.

8. The Division of Publications and Textbooks was responsible for editorial and clerical activities in connection with all publications compiled, listed, or distributed by the Department.
9. The Division of Schoolhouse Planning, created by an addition to the Political Code, was to serve schools by giving expert advice concerning the planning and construction of school buildings. It had responsibilities in three areas: (1) establishing standards; (2) conducting surveys; and (3) checking and approving plans and specifications for new buildings.
10. The Division of Libraries was created by special legislation that brought the State Library (established in 1850) into the Department of Education. It performed library services for the people of the state, the schools, and school officials, and it was responsible for supervising the county library system and the libraries of the state teachers colleges.

Acting on recommendations of the Superintendent, the State Board of Education appointed chiefs for all divisions except two. No budget had been

provided for the chief of the Division of Publications and Textbooks, and the State Librarian, then as now, was an appointee of the Governor. All state officers, including the three commissioners of education, were appointed to appropriate positions in the new organizational structure with the result that there was little or no disruption of functioning.

Wood had been reelected Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1926, but he resigned early in 1927 to become State Superintendent of Banks. Governor Young appointed William J. Cooper (who had been unacceptable to the Board of Education as president of a state college) to fill out Wood's unexpired term. Cooper, then, became responsible for inaugurating the legislative changes. In his first report to the Governor in 1928, Cooper spoke of the smoothness with which the changes had been effected and expressed appreciation for the work of the members of the Department of Education, who "have given themselves wholeheartedly to the service of the State."<sup>10</sup>

#### Departmental Changes, 1927 -- 1931

The reorganization of the Department and other educational legislation brought about further changes in the following years, a few of which should be mentioned.

A Curriculum Commission was set up in July, 1927. The creation of such a body had been recommended after a thorough study of the instructional program of the public schools had been made under a subvention of the Commonwealth Fund of New York. The study was begun in 1923, and the results were published in 1926 under the title of The California Curriculum Study. Following publication of the study, the number of subjects prescribed by law for elementary schools was reduced from 32 to 12. The creation of the Curriculum Commission was a second result of the study. This body was directed to outline minimum courses of study for use in the elementary and secondary schools of the state and to study textbooks in elementary subjects before they were adopted. The Commission soon expanded its activities to include the preparation of guides for teachers, the first of which, Teacher's Guide to Child Development, Manual for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers, appeared in 1930.

A School Code was drafted and enacted by the Legislature in 1929 in an effort to make available in one body the provisions of the several codes and general laws relative to public education. The work of codifying the laws was done by Alfred E. Lentz, Assistant Chief of the Division of Research and Statistics, later Administrative Adviser to the Department.

An expanded publications program followed the appointment, in 1931, of a chief of the Division of Textbooks and Publications. Even before this

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<sup>10</sup> Biennial Report of the State Department of Education, 1927-1928  
Sacramento: State Department of Education, 1929, p. 46.

event, a monthly educational journal, California Schools, had been inaugurated as an official organ of the Department. In January, 1932, a numbered series known as the Department of Education Bulletin replaced the division or bureau publications. In 1932 the Department began publishing the California Journal of Elementary Education, a quarterly devoted to articles dealing with administration and instruction in elementary schools.

The California Nautical School (later renamed the California Maritime Academy) was established by an act of the Legislature in 1929 and began actual operation in 1931. The state legislative action was based on an act of Congress of 1911, which provided that, on request of the governor of a state, the U. S. Navy would furnish a ship to be used for training officers for the merchant marine. A board of governors for the school, created within the Department of Education, consisted of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and four other members to be appointed by the Governor.

In August, 1927, the State Board of Education became the board of Trustees of the California State Historical Association. The administrative functions were handled through a part-time director. In 1928 a new home for the State Library, the Library and Courts Building, was completed, and the Department of Education moved its headquarters there.

### Effects of the Depression and an Earthquake

Governor Young's annual message to the Legislature in January, 1929, included recommendations for a comprehensive survey of the school system. "When a governmental function costs as many million dollars a year as education," he said, "it is good economy to make certain that it is returning one hundred cents of value for each dollar expended."<sup>11</sup> But Young's successor, Governor James Rolph, who took office in 1931, showed little interest in the schools. One reason, of course, was the Depression. When severe deficits in the state budget occurred because of the paralysis of the economy, Governor Rolph asked the Legislature to cut costs everywhere and specifically to amend the Constitution to reduce the fixed sums for schools. However, this action was not taken, but school appropriations and the budget for the Department of Education were cut drastically.

School districts felt the Depression keenly; they cut educational services to the bone. In March, 1933, Vierling Kersey, then Superintendent of Public Instruction, published an article entitled, "Shall Public Schools in California Be Closed?" He pointed out that demands for relief from taxes,

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<sup>11</sup>Roy W. Cloud, Education in California. Stanford, Calif. Stanford University Press, 1952, p. 171.

strengthened by local taxpayers' associations, resulted in a decrease of almost \$10 million in the public school expenditures for 1931-32 as compared with 1930-1931:

This reduction was effected by postponing construction of new buildings and purchase of needed equipment; by increasing teaching loads, thus avoiding the employment of new teachers to care for increased enrollments; by consolidating functions; by reducing teachers' salaries; and by every other device available.<sup>12</sup>

The total reduction for the following year, 1932-33, was a staggering \$48,767,573.98. This, said the Superintendent, would make it literally impossible for many districts to maintain schools until the close of the school year. In hundreds of other districts, education services had been so cut that the children would receive very little actual schooling. Kersey called for the restoration of funds insofar as possible, and also for a radical revision of the state tax system.

Even as Kersey's pleas for support to keep the schools open were being presented, a disaster occurred that increased the financial burden of the schools even more -- the Long Beach earthquake of March, 1933. School buildings in the vicinity were destroyed and others so damaged as to be made unsafe for use. Fortunately, school was not in session at the time of the earthquake, but the frightening prospect of a recurrence focused attention on the safety of school buildings throughout the state. The Field Act, passed as an emergency measure, provided that school construction must be supervised by the state. The federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation loaned funds to impoverished school districts that suffered building losses in the earthquake.

As a result of the critical tax position of the schools, the voters passed a constitutional amendment in June, 1933, which made a radical change in the method of financing the public schools. The compulsory county school taxes for school support were eliminated, and the amounts previously required to be raised by county taxes were provided as apportionments from the State General Fund.<sup>13</sup>

### Recovery of the Schools

The federal government gave much assistance to the schools through the depression years. Beginning in 1934, funds were made available to pay unemployed teachers for certain special educational needs under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Under the Civil Works Administration,

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<sup>12</sup>Vierling Kersey, "Shall Public Schools in California Be Closed?" California Schools, IV (March, 1933), 119.

<sup>13</sup>Walter E. Morgan, "Major Changes in School Finance Resulting from 1933 Legislation," California Schools, IV (August, 1933), 256-67.

schools could hire unemployed persons for construction and other needed work. Federal funds for vocational education were increased and allocated to agricultural education, trade and industrial education, home economics education, education in distributive occupations, and training teachers of vocational subjects. <sup>14</sup>

Federal funds were utilized to restore normal school facilities and to supplement those facilities, especially in classes for adults. This gave great impetus to education in many fields: adult education, radio programs, nursery schools, school health services, library facilities, museum projects, audio-visual aids, the construction of school plants and equipment, and the retraining of jobless workers. <sup>15</sup>

By 1936, with the assistance of state and federal agencies, school districts were recovering from the effects of the Depression. Superintendent Kersey was able to look on the bright side when he reported:

In spite of all evils resulting from the depression, at least one benefit resulted. This benefit which applies to education as well as to other social agencies, came from the reexamination of purposes and procedures which took place in all fields of social planning during this period, and gave immediate promise of more efficient planning for the future. <sup>16</sup>

Superintendent Kersey resigned in 1937. During his term of office, no additional divisions were created in the Department of Education, but the vocational education bureaus were placed under the Commission for Vocational Education, independent of the Division of City Secondary Schools. The names of some divisions were changed slightly. A few additions were made to the administrative staff, including an Assistant Superintendent in Los Angeles, but a number of administrative staff offices had been discontinued. The Commission for Special Education was organized to operate in lieu of a chief of the division. Members were the Superintendent and the chiefs of bureaus of the Education of the Blind, Education of the Deaf, Correction of Speech Defects, Mental Hygiene, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The state teachers colleges became state colleges, and were thus legalized as regional four-year collegiate institutions not limited to teacher training. A Public School Teachers Retirement Investment Board was established for the purpose of investing the funds of the teachers' retirement system. The Superintendent of Public Instruction served as an ex officio member of the Investment Board, and two other members were teachers appointed by the State Board of Education.

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<sup>14</sup>"George-Deen Vocational Education Law," California Schools, VII (July, 1936), 236.

<sup>15</sup>"Services Provided in California Public Schools Under the Federal Emergency Education Program," California Schools, XI (July, 1940), 203.

<sup>16</sup>Biennial Report of the California State Department of Education, 1936. Sacramento: State Department of Education, 1937, pp. 15-16.

Kersey's successor, Walter Dexter, was appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction by Governor Frank F. Merriam in 1937. The Governor was friendly to education, and his Lieutenant Governor, George J. Hatfield, was a strong supporter of the schools. Hatfield said: "I prefer to spend thousands today for better education -- better training and better opportunities -- than to spend millions tomorrow for bigger prisons, bigger institutions for society's castoffs, and bigger pensions for unemployables."<sup>17</sup> The 1937 Legislature voted for a minimum salary of \$1,320 a year for teachers in public schools; this action meant a substantial raise for almost every teacher in the rural areas of the state. In 1939 bonus funds were provided for educating physically handicapped children, and an additional appropriation allowed spastic children to enter school at age three.

### The Influence of World War II on the Schools

The first pressure from World War II to be felt by the schools in California was an enormous increase in demands for vocational training. To assist with the needs in this area, the federal government increased its activities relating to education; in some cases this increased effort brought about anxiety that the public school system would be unduly controlled by the federal government.

By November, 1940, the schools began to feel the pressure to provide for the acquisition of technical skills needed in defense industries and other types of training specifically demanded by the national emergency. In 1941 National Defense Training courses were established with federal funds under the State Department of Education's Commission for Vocational Education. By July 31, 1941, there were 118,920 students enrolled in these classes. Rural schools had classes in farm machinery repair and vocational agriculture.

A proliferation of state and federal agencies, social or educational in character and designed to supplement the work of the schools, led Aubrey A. Douglass, the Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, to state the case for the Department of Education's role in the public school system

For the most part, representatives of these organizations are amenable to the suggestion that the state has an educational program, that the schools intend to operate that program, and that the particular agency should co-operate with rather than dictate to the governing boards and administrators of the schools. Co-operation is sometimes hampered by a lack of understanding of function, by ignorance of one group of the purposes or even the existence of another group, or by lack of time for conferences. Disposition is shown by some of the agencies to promote their programs without reference to, or contact with, the State Department of Education, and without reference to, or contact with, other

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<sup>17</sup>Roy W. Cloud, Education in California. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1952, p. 195.

federal agencies, even though they are engaged in projects of a similar nature.

That school administrators have anticipated that federal agencies with funds to spend may encroach upon the program which belongs to the schools need only be mentioned. Certainly representatives of more than one federal agency have felt perfectly competent to tell the schools of their faults, and to imply that they themselves were quite capable of redirecting the educational program in whole or in part. While conditions are probably more satisfactory than they formerly were, the State Department of Education nevertheless is inclined to believe that legislation should be proposed which will require federal agencies to make their contacts with the public schools through the State Department of Education. If such legislation occurs, it should be for the purpose of co-ordinating these numerous activities, and not for the purpose of supervising local schools.

In carrying on the regular program of the schools, and in providing training for the national emergency, the educational organization of California is such as to throw responsibility upon local authorities for the organization and administration of the schools. There are, to be sure, provisions in the School Code and rules and regulations of the State Board of Education which must be observed. For the most part, these provisions merely set standards which administrators endorse because they buttress the schools; they encroach very little upon local autonomy. The policy and the practices involved are thoroughly understood.

The State Department of Education not only accepts the policy, but endorses it fully and completely. The function of the Department is to co-operate with local units and to render every possible assistance to them in developing local programs. It is the full intent of the State Department of Education to work co-operatively with teachers, supervisors, administrators, and governing boards in this respect, and to take steps which vitally affect schools only after consultation with those who are immediately charged with the conduct of the schools.<sup>18</sup>

The State Board of Education took note of the problem of federal-state relations and in its meeting of October 17-18, 1941, approved regulations providing that each federal agency should "submit to the State Department of Education a statement of the policies under which it operates, a description of its program, and contemplated developments," and that "a member of the State Department of Education shall be assigned to act as a liaison officer between the Department and each of the federal agencies," who shall

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<sup>18</sup>Aubrey A. Douglass, *The Policies and Program of the California State Department of Education*, "California Schools, XI (November, 1940) 293-97.



be aware of questions of jurisdiction "so that there may be no violation of law and no assumption by the schools or by the federal agency of functions recognized as belonging to the other."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the difficulties the school system encountered during the war in the shortage of teachers, the postponement of building programs, the loss of young people who dropped out of school to enter the defense industries and shortages of material of all kinds, the schools contributed greatly to the war effort. The State Director of Vocational Training for War Production Workers, John C. Beswick, was credited with having developed the largest program of vocational training for essential war industries in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

### Postwar Problems and Solutions

When the war ended, a great number of school facilities were needed, and the need was also great for retraining workers for peacetime pursuits and aiding veterans and school dropouts to complete their education. A shortage of trained teachers still existed; thousands of teachers held only the emergency credential that had been issued during the war. In addition, a great number of people had come into the state during the war, and few of them left when the war was over.

In 1944 several influential groups of school administrators called upon the State Department of Education to recommend various changes in the school system. Among these administrators were the State Superintendent's Advisory Council, the Association of California County Superintendents of Schools, and the Association of California Secondary School Principals.

At a meeting in Sacramento on January 28-29, the State Education Council reconstituted itself as the State Superintendent's Advisory Council. The council defined its purposes as the following: (1) to advise the Superintendent of Public Instruction on matters he may wish to refer to the council and to interpret and present to him problems or conditions having to do with the efficiency or the proper functioning of the state's school system; (2) to endeavor to coordinate the work of the divisions of the State Department of Education, the various state professional organizations, and lay groups and organizations concerned with educational problems, practices, and support; (3) to assist in implementing the programs of the Department and other organizations; and (4) to carry out research needed by the Superintendent and his staff.

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<sup>19</sup>"State Board of Education Actions, California Schools, XII (November, 1941), 226.

<sup>20</sup>"In Memoriam." California Schools, XV (April, 1944), 89.

This group set up committees to consider the following problems: (1) rehabilitation of disabled veterans of the military forces; (2) study of legislative proposals; (3) teacher selection and training; (4) audio-visual education; (5) standards for school buildings and equipment; and (6) post-high school education.<sup>21</sup> Each of these committees in turn made specific recommendations. The one on post-high school education concluded with an overall suggestion that the schools "provide the educational service that the individual needs, wherever and whatever it may be."

The Association of California County Superintendents of Schools met on January 26-27, 1944, and adopted resolutions covering every facet of public education. The Association went on record as being strongly in favor of federal aid to equalize educational opportunity; and of state aid for more suitable financing of education and equalization of opportunity. The group suggested certain changes in the Department of Education: (1) addition of an audio-visual division; (2) initiation of a cooperative committee on radio services in education; (3) survey of county library services to schools; (4) credentialing of teachers in cooperation with county superintendents of schools and repeal of the provision for granting elementary school certificates on the basis of examination by county boards of education; (5) preparation of legislation for more effective units of school organization and administration and for better equalization of educational opportunities and costs; and (6) leadership in developing postwar building plans.<sup>22</sup>

Meeting on April 3-4, 1944, the Association of California Secondary School Principals adopted certain proposals and resolutions touching on the work of the State Department of Education. Among them were the following

- 1 That the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Superintendent's Advisory Council, and the Governor of the State of California be urged to secure immediately personnel for the present unfilled positions in the State Department of Education, and that an effective division of educational research be established, properly staffed, and adequately financed to make the administration of education in the state efficient, adequate, and forward looking.
2. That the State Department of Education be requested to develop a plan whereby the work of the junior high schools of the state may be surveyed and evaluated in line with their functions and objectives, and the findings printed for distribution.

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<sup>21</sup>"Statement of Organization and Summary of Committee Reports of the State Superintendent's Advisory Council," California Schools, XV (March, 1944), 47-58.

<sup>22</sup>"Resolutions of the Conference of the Association of County Superintendents of Schools," California Schools, XV (March, 1944), 77-81.

3. That the State Department of Education and the State Legislature be urged to oppose vigorously any lowering of standards for regular credentials, or any proposal to extend the period of validity of credentials issued on the emergency basis beyond the close of the school year during which the President declares the emergency ceases to exist.<sup>23</sup>

The State Board of Education responded to these suggestions. A Division of Audio-Visual Education was established within the Department of Education in April, 1944, and a Division of Readjustment Education for the education of veterans was established in August.

A special legislative session was called June 3, 1944, to consider educational bills. One bill provided \$4.5 million for elementary schools, all to be spent on teachers' salaries and supplies for the schools. A teachers' retirement bill was also passed. And an appropriation of \$20,000 was allocated to the State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission for the purpose of making a study of the administration, organization, and financial support of the public school system of the state. Responsibility for the supervision of the study was assumed by the Citizens Advisory Committee on Readjustment Education. George D. Strayer, Professor Emeritus of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, was employed as consultant. To speed up the study, subgroups worked on various aspects: a method of equalizing the burden of the educational program among the school districts; supply and demand for teachers; reorganization of school district administration; and analysis of the internal organization of the State Department of Education and of its administrative procedures. A study of the last-named aspect was made by J. N. Mills, head of a firm of management consultants. The Mills study was presented in December, 1944, and the Strayer study in February, 1945. These studies resulted in far-reaching changes in the Department of Education.

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<sup>23</sup>Frank B. Lindsay, "Articulation of Areas of Secondary Education: Proposals of High School and Junior College Principals," California Schools XV (June, 1944), 154-55.