

SOME FACTORS IN VIRGINIA'S RELATIVE POSITION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Some weeks ago I was requested to speak to the Richmond Section of the Virginia Manufacturers Association on the assigned subject, "The Truth about Virginia's Relative Position in the Public Education Field." This was prompted by the contradictory claims made during the recent gubernatorial campaign as to Virginia's rank in this important state function.

Realizing my inadequacy to handle this assignment, I called Dr. Francis G. Lankford, of the Department of Education at the University of Virginia, and asked if I might suggest his name as being the best equipped person I knew to deal with this important subject. Dr. Lankford was the research director who had compiled a study on Virginia high schools some six years ago under the auspices of the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce and did an outstanding job in this connection.

Dr. Lankford declined to permit me to suggest his name, but volunteered that he would get together the information that I would require if I would present it. The result was that I did present most of the facts that are outlined in this paper to a group of about one hundred executives of manufacturing concerns located in and around Richmond.

I have changed the subject of this paper from that originally assigned me, since it is impossible to assign a definite rank to our position in the public education field. There are many reasons why this is an impossible task. For example, there is no exact standard by which to measure the end product, and the measurement of the end product at best is only an approximation. Furthermore, there is natural lack of uniformity in the data obtained from the forty-eight states, and such data is seldom available from all of the states on anything approaching a current basis. It happened that both Dr. Lankford and I were very fortunate, however, in that there has in

the last several months been published a very remarkable work entitled "The Forty Eight State School Systems." As the name indicates, this is a study and report on these forty-eight state school systems and was undertaken by the Council of State Governments at the fortieth annual meeting of the Governors' Conference on June 16, 1948. The Council is a joint governmental agency, established and supported by the states for service to the states. It is interesting and a matter of pride for Virginians to observe that the Executive Director of this important organization, Mr. Frank Bane, is a Virginian, and this study was made under the direction of Francis S. Chase, a native Virginian, who until the last year or two was Executive Secretary of the Virginia Educational Association.

Before entering into any of the comparisons which I shall present, I would ask that you realize how very much the negro question enters into all of these matters. In the first place, the fact that a very large proportion of our population is of a low income level reduces the per capita income of our state. The high birth rate of the negro population tremendously increases the school population and thereby increases the problem of the cost thereof. The necessity for a dual school system naturally increases the expense, and, lastly, it is a very real fact that the negro school children fail to achieve on as high a level as the white pupils. These very real facts certainly do not furnish Virginia with any excuse, but it does emphasize the problem before us.

Now, as to some of the comparisons:

#### Local School Organization and Administration

Virginia is one of only eleven states where the county is used as a unit of local school administration. This is recognized as a natural and

efficient unit of local organization. As a result, Virginia is one of only eight other states that has no district with fewer than nine teachers, and our state also ranks fifth in the percentage of districts employing forty or more teachers. When it is realized that we have only 126 school districts in the state -- 100 county, and 26 city, as against Wisconsin with 6,000 school districts, and Illinois with over 11,000, it is obvious that we have a very real advantage in comparison with these other states.

Texas has recently passed much new school legislation, among which was a provision for eliminating some 1300 districts out of 5000 school districts on the basis that none of these 1300 districts had operated any kind of school within the past two years.

Virginia also stands well in the matter of consolidation of schools, although there is ample room for improvement. There are 22 states below us in percentage of our elementary schools that are one-room schools, a total of 1178 and there are 29 states below us in percentage of high schools enrolling fewer than 100 pupils, while we rank 18th in percentage of high schools enrolling 300 or more pupils.

While it is impossible to rate the top administration of our public school system, there is no doubt that we do stand well in the state level of administration, as well as in the local level. We compare well with other states on the salaries paid the department heads, and certainly Virginia does not suffer from the public school system being used as a political machine.

PREPARATION OF TEACHERS

Virginia, in this important field, also has a favorable rank, being one of only eleven states requiring the bachelor's degree for an elementary certificate.

We rank 20th in the percentage of the teachers actually holding the bachelor's degree, which in 1947-8 was 45.5%. However, when bachelor's or higher degrees are considered, our rank drops from 20 to 31. This is probably better than the average, but it is not too pleasing to realize that among the slightly less than half of our teachers who had no degree, there were 810, or approximately 4%, who had no college preparation whatever.

Our situation is not too bright for the future, either, for our rank is 36th in the ratio of total teachers prepared in college programs of two years or longer in 1947-8 when related to the total number of teachers needed in 1948-9.

PRODUCT OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AS stated above, it is impossible to evaluate the end product of this important enterprise. However, we are fortunate in that there are available two types of very interesting information relating to this subject: first, Virginia's rank in Selective Service Registrants classified as educationally deficient, and those who were rejected by the Service because of educational deficiencies. This data was obtained from the reports of the Selective Service Registrants from 1940 to 1944.

Selective Service Registrants who had not completed the 4th grade in school were denominated as educationally deficient. In this we ranked 41st. In other words, there were only 7 states that had a larger percentage of such educationally deficient registrants. Incidentally, all seven of these were southern states. The armed service then attempted to screen through certain tests those classified as educationally deficient but capable of being taught. Virginia's rank on this was 42nd rather than 41st, with 24.8% of the rejections being due to educational deficiencies. In this connection it is interesting to note that while the total percentage rejected in Texas for this reason was 22.8%, this figure dropped only 1/10th of 1% when it related to the white registrants alone.

The other measure of the product of the public schools was the result of a very wide program of uniform tests given during 1946-7 and 1948 as a result of the work of the Denny Commission. From these tests it is impossible to rank the several states, but sufficient data has been compiled to give what is considered a national norm of achievement on these uniform tests. The results of these tests were just released within the last sixty days.

One of these, the Iowa Silent Reading Test, was given to all pupils enrolled in the 8th grade of the 12-grade school systems in the state,

which resulted in 18,644 receiving these tests. The results indicated that these 8th grade pupils were on the average at the 7.2 level (8.2 would have been equal to the national average) or exactly one year retarded in the vital skill of reading.

It is significant to observe the breakdown of these tests. The average for city white children was exactly equal to the national norm, while for the county white children the average was only the 3rd month in the 7th grade, or approximately nine months retarded, as contrasted with one year for the whole state. For city negro children, the reading was at the seventh month in the 5th grade, and for the county negro pupil, in the first month for the 5th grade, as contrasted with the national average of the second month in the 8th grade.

The other tests given included arithmetic, reading, spelling, and language usage and were given in grades 3, 6, and 10 in 1946 and in grades 4, 7, and 11 in 1947. The 1947 results showed Virginia's county pupils to be retarded in these subjects, when compared with national norms, an average of one month in the fourth grade, two months in the seventh grade, and one year in the eleventh grade. Our city white children were exactly equal to the national norm in the fourth grade, two months above in the seventh grade and equal the norm in the eleventh grade.

County negro children were four months below the national norm in grade 4, one year below in grade 7, and 3 years, 6 months below in grade 11. City negro children were five months below the national norm in grade 4, one year below in grade 7, and 3 years, 4 months below in grade 11.

In general we may say, on the basis of very extensive testing, that in basic school subjects, Virginia equals or exceeds the average in the nation in the city white schools, is not too far behind in the county white schools, but is far behind in the negro schools.

HOLDING POWER OF OUR SCHOOLS

One index of the holding power of the schools is the percentage of school-age population in average daily attendance in public schools. It is difficult to make an entirely fair comparison on this, since figures are not available to include the parochial and private schools, but considering the percentage of school-age population in our public schools, Virginia ranks 18th with a percentage of 73.4, and 25th in the percentage of the total enrollment enrolled in high schools. This figure was 24.6% of the total enrollment.

On the percentage of high school graduates related to the total enrollment, Virginia stands very low, having only two states with a smaller percentage than our 15.2% of graduates out of the total high school enrollment. It is believed that the fact that we are in the process of adopting a 12-year school system probably affects this particular figure on the basis that in changing from an eleven to a 12-year system, it usually means that there is one year when a high school has no graduating class. At present, we have 57 out of 126 school districts with a 12-year system, or in the process of adopting it. The fact that we are making this transition is regarded as a conspicuous advance. At present there are only four states that have not changed, or at least undertaken the change from the 11-year system. As to some other aspects of our work before proceeding to comparison of expenditures -

Without attempting to rank Virginia, I am advised that we are recognized as one of the leaders among the 48 states in our program of Visual Education, the expenditure for this one purpose exceeding one million dollars per annum.

The program of rehabilitation for handicapped pupils is also highly satisfactory and the work done at the Woodrow Wilson Center near Staunton is considered outstanding in this important field.

Up to this point, we have not considered financial expenditures, which is one of the most frequently quoted factors in determining rank. Before considering the financial expenditure, it might be well to consider some of the difficulties attendant in this connection.

It is interesting to note that those states which have the highest per capita income generally have the lowest school-age population in proportion to the total population. For instance, New Jersey is 9th in per capita income and 1st in the amount spent per pupil in average daily attendance, but is 48th in school load; viz., the proportion of school-age population to the total population.

Mississippi, which is 3rd in this school load is 48th in per capita income. Nevada, 1st in per capita income, is 41st in school load. In other words, "the rich get richer, and the poor get children!"

In this matter of school load, Virginia ranks 19th (our rank tied with one or more states and is therefore ranked 19.5). This means that we have 22.6% of our total population in the age group 5 to 17. Of this group, almost 86% were in public or non-public schools in 1947. It is easy to see, however, that Virginia has more than its share of the problem resulting from this high percentage of the population being of school age.

While we are on the subject of educational load, I think it important to consider something of what is regarded as being immediately ahead of us in the increase in school enrollment.

The Moses Education Commission estimates that by 1954 we will have enrolled approximately 675,000 children, contrasted with approximately 570,000 pupils enrolled in 1947-8, or an increase of 18% in these seven years contrasted with an increase of only 12% in the preceding 27 years. In other words, our school enrollment grew from 508,000 in 1920 to 570,000 in 1947,

and estimates based on children already born and reported by the Bureau of Vital Statistics indicate an increase from 570,000 to 675,000 by 1954.

The implications of these estimates are almost appalling, and especially so when considered in connection with some recent statistics released by the State Department of Education. These figures indicate that over 700 of our 3800 school buildings are over 40 years old; that nearly 60% of the total number of school buildings lack electric lights; that almost 1/3 fail to have flush toilets or central heating.

An estimate made within the last year as to the cost of supplying Virginia's school building needs totals almost \$400,000,000.

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF OUR SCHOOLS

Most states share the trend observed in Virginia for the state to share a larger part of the cost of public education. In 1937-8, 31.6% of our total revenue receipts were derived from state sources. Ten years later this had increased to 39.3% and at that time we stood 23rd among the states in the percentage of cost contributed by the state.

It is interesting to observe that Virginia receives from the Federal Government 4.8% of its total school expenditures. This percentage is exceeded only by North Carolina and Nevada, the former with 7-1/2% of its total expenditure, and the latter with 5.3% received from Washington.

Note: This is probably accounted for - at least in a large measure - by Virginia counting Federal "lunch money" and other states not.

TEACHERS SALARIES

This is one of the most frequently quoted figures in attempting to compare Virginia with other states. While the average salary increased from \$886 in 1937-8 to \$2062 ten years later, our rank increased only from 37th to 35th.

It is interesting to note that our rank in total amount spent per pupil drops to 40th, compared with our 35th position in average teacher salary. My own idea is that this discrepancy is largely attributable to two factors. First, that our teacher load averages 28 pupils against a national figure of 24, and most states furnish text books, which is not true on a state-wide basis in Virginia.

In relation to this increase from \$886 to \$2062, Mr. Chase points out that when these figures are adjusted by the Consumers Price Indices, this becomes an adjusted increase of only \$354, or the adjusted salary of 1947-8 in terms of 1935-9 cost of living drops from \$2062 to \$1224. The following table gives the percentage description of salaries for 1947-8:

|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Below \$1500          | 18.2% |
| Between \$1500 - 1799 | 27.8% |
| Between \$1800 - 2399 | 31.7% |
| Between \$2400 - 2499 | 13.2% |
| Between \$3000 - 4000 | 8.8%  |
| Above \$4000          | .3%   |

It will be observed from the above that almost 78% of our teachers are paid below \$200 per month. Our rank in percentage of teachers paid over \$200 per month places us in 34th position.

I think it is a fair observation to make that with Virginia standing

20th in preparation of teachers and 35th in salary paid, we certainly seem to be getting an excellent value in this important phase of our educational system.

The following table gives the average annual salaries of the nearby states, together with their rank in the 48 states:

AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARIES 1947-8

|                | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Rank</u> |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| Delaware       | \$2663        | 20          |
| Maryland       | 3335          | 3           |
| North Carolina | 2125          | 34          |
| South Carolina | 1762          | 43          |
| Tennessee      | 1649          | 45          |
| Virginia       | 2062          | 35          |
| West Virginia  | 2364          | 26          |

EXPENDITURES AND EFFORT

In considering the expenditure of any state to support its public school system, certainly consideration should be given to the resources of that state and the effort which it is making to provide proper support for this function.

There is no single index to answer the question of ability, but I believe that personal income per child enrolled in school is as near a gauge of ability as we have. Here Virginia's rank is 35, this rank dropping to 36 on income per school-age child in the population. Our rank in per capita income for the total population is also 36th.

Statistics have been compiled showing the percentage of the total income payments to individuals used for public schools for each state. This percentage ranges from a low in Illinois of 1.4% to a high in New Mexico of 3.6% in 1947-8.

In the year 1947, Virginia spent 2% of her income for the support of public schools. In this our rank was 34. In other words, 14 states spent that amount or less of their income. This rank increased from 43rd ten years before, when we were spending 2.4% of our income on schools. The increased income is largely the explanation of the apparent anomaly.

There are various statistics compiled as to the total expenditure for public schools, but it would seem that the expenditure per child in average daily attendance is the most revealing figure. In the past 10 years, from 1937 to 1947, this figure increased from \$44.45 per child per year to \$119.42 about 170%. Ranking Virginia with other states in the percentage of increase shows that we were only excelled by 4 states in this effort. However, our rank in the actual expenditure is 40th. In other words, there are only 8 states that spent less than we, and our rank in the actual expenditure changed

only from 41st to 40th in this 10-year period.

I give below a table setting forth these expenditures per pupil and the percentage of income spent for education, together with the resultant rank for each of the southern states and for those states that expend a smaller percentage of their income for education:

Here is, to my mind, one of the most significant factors. There are 13 states that make less effort than Virginia; i.e., they spend a smaller percentage of their income for schools than does Virginia. Yet in every one of these cases, more was spent per child in school.

On the other hand, there are 8 states that spend less than we, but in all of these states, the percentage of income devoted to education is greater than Virginia's 2%.

As I stated at the beginning of this paper, it is impossible to assign to any state a definite rank in the educational field, but I believe that it is clear that Virginia is not in danger of over-emphasizing her educational program.

There is no easy answer as to what we shall do to remedy this situation, and all of us, I think, are conscious of the fact that merely increasing appropriations from the State Treasury will not furnish the answer. However, in the long run we will not get more than we pay for, and until our rank in expenditure is materially improved, I doubt if our standing in the education our youth are receiving will be a matter of pride.

|                        | <u>Percent of<br/>Income for<br/>Education</u> | <u>"Effort"<br/>Rank</u> | <u>Expenditure<br/>per Pupil</u> | <u>Expenditure<br/>Rank</u> |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <u>SOUTHERN STATES</u> |  |                          |                                  |                             |
| Florida                | 2.9%   | 6.5                      | \$165.50                         | 29                          |
| Texas                  | 2.8  | 8.5                      | 197.00                           | 18                          |
| Louisiana              | 2.6  | 14.5                     | 160.81                           | 32                          |
| North Carolina         | 2.6  | 14.5                     | 110.40                           | 42                          |
| South Carolina         | 2.6  | 14.5                     | 110.09                           | 43                          |
| Alabama                | 2.5  | 17.5                     | 99.06                            | 45                          |
| Tennessee              | 2.4  | 19.5                     | 105.69                           | 44                          |
| Arkansas               | 2.3  | 23.5                     | 85.32                            | 46                          |
| Mississippi            | 2.3  | 23.5                     | 66.54                            | 48                          |
| Kentucky               | 2.2  | 27.5                     | 118.34                           | 41                          |
| Georgia                | 2.1  | 31.0                     | 80.79                            | 47                          |
| Virginia               | 2.0  | 34.5                     | 119.42                           | 40                          |
| New Hampshire          | 1.9  | 36.5                     | 163.19                           | 30                          |
| North Dakota           | 1.9  | 36.5                     | 159.98                           | 33                          |
| Maine                  | 1.8  | 39.5                     | 129.00                           | 39                          |
| New York               | 1.8  | 39.5                     | 250.75                           | 3                           |
| Nebraska               | 1.8  | 39.5                     | 178.85                           | 24                          |
| Ohio                   | 1.8  | 39.5                     | 178.89                           | 23                          |
| Delaware               | 1.7  | 43.5                     | 210.72                           | 14                          |
| Pennsylvania           | 1.7  | 43.5                     | 155.84                           | 34                          |
| Rhode Island           | 1.7  | 43.5                     | 220.65                           | 7                           |
| Wisconsin              | 1.7  | 43.5                     | 161.22                           | 31                          |
| Massachusetts          | 1.5  | 46.5                     | 197.47                           | 16                          |
| Connecticut            | 1.5  | 46.5                     | 220.92                           | 6                           |
| Illinois               | 1.4  | 48                       | 170.39                           | 22                          |