THE UNIVERSITY AS HEAD OF THE IOWA SCHOOL SYSTEM

*By Vernon Carstensen**

The State University of Iowa today stands at the head of the public school system of the state. Such is the organization of the system that each unit — the elementary school, the junior high school, the high school, and even the junior college — articulates with the one above. Complete from base to apex the educational pyramid stands as a massive symbol to attest the abundant faith of democratic people in education. This vast system is the result of years of slow educational evolution, but it does not represent the upward thrust of the elementary schools. It is one of the most striking features of American educational history that provision was first made for elementary schools and colleges. When Harvard College was founded in the seventeenth century, no general provision was made for the middle schools. Almost the same condition obtained when the University of Iowa was established a little over two centuries later. Only after a long struggle was the gap between the elementary schools and the university effectively bridged and there emerged that peculiarly American institution, the unified system of education.

It is not within the scope of the present study to treat the whole process of unifying the educational system of Iowa, but in order to view in proper perspective the movement which resulted in placing the University at the head of the public school system, it will be necessary to sketch in some detail certain aspects of the movement toward unification. It is the purpose of this article to describe certain phases of the process of articulating the high schools and the University in Iowa. In doing this it will be necessary to suggest the origin of the unified system of education and the circumstances which gave the movement support in America; to show how the idea was adopted in Iowa and found expression in law; and how the system became effective through the establishment of high schools, the articulation of the University and these high schools, and the abolition of the preparatory department of the University in 1878.

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The idea of a unified system of education is clearly linked, in its origin, with the spirit of nationalism. Nineteenth century leaders saw in education a powerful instrument which could be used to advance nationalistic ends. This idea found expression in the reports of Condorcet early in the French Revolution. By means of education, widely diffused among the people, the idealists of the Revolution thought to perpetuate the new order that they were in the process of creating. But their bright hopes faded before they found embodiment, and it remained for a Prussian king, Frederick William III, to create a centralized and unified system of education. In America, the Jacksonian era, with its multitude of humanitarian reforms, its vigorous avowal of democracy, its intense nationalism, brought renewed and active interest in education. In the movement which sought to extend and increase the opportunities of education the imperative need for some centralized control was clearly perceived. Because of the peculiar historical development of the United States, the states rather than the central government became the units of educational organization. In the movement which sought both the extension and central control of schools, the example of the Prussian system was not lost upon American educators. At the time when the state systems were beginning to take form, such men as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard were publishing descriptions of the Prussian system, ardently advocating parts of it to their countrymen, and in every way making possible the adaptation of the Prussian system to the American situation. The English translation of Victor Cousin's famous report on the Prussian system of education appeared in America early enough (1835) to have considerable effect. It was the effective state-wide organization which the Prussian system entailed that served as an example for progressive American educators.[1]

The Prussian system afforded an example of what efficient centralized education could be, but the undemocratic philosophy on which it rested found little support in the United States. There were forces at work which were to alter considerably the Old World concept of education. It must be remembered that the educational revival in the United States was part of the humanitarian movement as well as of the movement toward nationalism. Not only was education conceived to be the instrument by which demo-

[1] See Edward H. Riesner, *Nationalism and Education* (New York, 1922), 351-81; Ellwood P. Cubberly, *Public Education in the United States* (New York, 1919), 270-78; J. F. A. Pyre, *Wisconsin* (New York, 1920), 42-3.

cratic government would be transmitted, untarnished, to succeeding generations, but it was also looked upon as an instrument which would inevitably enable a person to improve his economic and social position. "Education" was often recommended and supported as the universal solvent of social ills: it would prevent crime, pauperism, and the like. The absence of a class system in America, the intense democratic sentiments of the time, the idealistic objectives of education — these factors gave to the American schools a democratic character distinctly unlike any European system. Moreover, there seems to have been, even at the beginning of the educational revival, a philosophy of education, never fully stated yet implicit in the very nature of the system, which is profoundly significant. Intelligence was conceived to be the natural possession of all men, and education was accepted as the instrument which would release this intelligence. Hence the constant and repeated use, even at the present time, of the terms literacy and intelligence, as if they were synonymous. Humanitarians, nationalists, democrats — all had just cause for desiring a unified system of schools.

Lying directly in the path of the westward movement of population, organized as a territory in 1838 and as a state in 1846, Iowa was to feel the full impact of the educational revival. Iowa, like other new states, had to build and adapt an educational system while settlement was taking place rapidly, while the settlers were in the very act of building a material civilization on the frontier.

The process of unifying the educational system did not begin at the outset of the political history of the territory, but numerous attempts were made to provide a basis for uniform organization of the schools. Early in his first message to the territorial legislature, Governor Robert Lucas pointedly called attention to the necessity of adequately providing for educational facilities in the territory. "There is no subject," he declared, "to which I wish to call your attention more emphatically than the subject of establishing, at the commencement of our political existence, a well digested system of common schools; and as a preparatory step towards effecting that important object . . . I urge upon your consideration the necessity of providing by law for the organization of townships."[2]

Although Lucas was not successful in getting the legislature to adopt laws providing for a uniform organization of the school districts of the

[2] Iowa, *Journal of the Council of the First Legislative Assembly, 1838*, 6.

state, his was not the only attempt to secure such legislation. The two territorial governors who followed him, John Chambers and James Clarke, repeatedly urged the legislature to enact laws which would make possible a complete and effective organization of elementary education, and would protect school lands from intruders.[3] Although the territorial legislature adopted many laws dealing with education, the only act which can be said to have in it the suggestion of state supervision of schools was one which provided for the establishment of the office of a territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction. This officer was empowered to organize the educational system of the territory and required to report to the legislature. Dr. William Reynolds was elected to this office, served for one year, made a report to the territorial legislature, and then the office was abolished.[4]

When Iowa became a state, at least one notable provision was made for the eventual unification of the schools. The constitution provided for a Superintendent of Public Instruction. It is true that during the first few years his duties were principally fiscal, but the act gave centrality to the educational program, and it created a responsible officer who, in the future, would assume a measure of supervision over the schools of the state. Furthermore, the first General Assembly, in providing for the establishment of of the State University, made the Superintendent of Public Instruction president of the Board of Trustees and declared that there should be established in the University a professorship for the training of teachers.

Little of real importance was done to unify or completely organize the school system during the early years of statehood. Provision was made for the establishment of elementary schools throughout the state, and in 1849, in answer to the request of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the legislature passed a law permitting communities to organize "union schools" to carry education beyond the elementary grades. In the years between 1846 and 1857, when a new constitution was adopted, the Superintendents of Public Instruction asked for better school laws, and the governors repeatedly called the attention of the legislatures to the need for more adequate provision for education, while the educators deplored the inactivity of the legislature and the lethargy of the communities. The legislature, not

[3] Benjamin F. Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa* (7 vols., Iowa City, 1903-1905), 1:257, 266, 341-2.

[4] *Laws of Iowa, 1841*, Chap. 46; *Iowa Council Journal, 1841-1842*, 278-88; *Laws of Iowa, 1841-1842*, Chap. 108.

to be outdone, passed more and more laws in a futile attempt to patch up an ill-digested educational system.

In his second biennial message, submitted as he retired from office, Governor Stephen Hempstead spoke of the immediate and urgent need of revising the school laws which provided for education. "Experience has taught us," he said, "that these laws are too complicated and by frequent amendment have become difficult to understand, or carry [*sic*] them into force without the commission of errors, which not unfrequently leads to protracted and burdensome litigation."[5] On the day that Hempstead delivered this message, there came to the office as governor a man who was to give impetus to the movement. James W. Grimes, himself an Easterner and a college trained man, brought to the governorship a broad conception of the function of government as an instrument for social improvement. In his inaugural address Grimes presented what he considered to be an analysis of the function of government. He realized the difficulty of making equitable and necessary laws for a state still in the throes of rapid settlement, but he contended that the time had come for the lawmakers to relinquish their local interests and to view the problems of the state as a whole. In words which strongly remind us of Horace Mann, he explained the function of government and the object of education.

> Government is established for the protection of the governed. But that protection does not consist merely in the enforcement of laws against injury to the person and property. Men do not make a voluntary abnegation of their natural rights simply that those rights may be protected by the body politic. It reaches more vital interests than those of property. Its greatest object is to elevate and ennoble the citizen. It would fall far short of its design if it did not disseminate intelligence, and build up the moral energies of the people. It is organized "to establish justice, promote the public welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty." It is designed to foster the instincts of truth, justice and philanthropy, that are implanted in our very natures, and from which all constitutions and all laws derive their validity and value. It should afford moral as well as physical protection, by educating the rising generation; by encouraging industry and sobriety; by steadfasting adhering to the right, and by being ever true to the instincts of freedom and humanity. To accomplish these high aims of government, the first re-

[5] "Biennial Message of the Governor of Iowa . . . December 9, 1854," *Iowa Senate Documents, 1854-1855*, 5.

> quisite is ample provision for the education of the youth of the State. . . . The State should see to it that the elements of education, like the elements of universal nature, are above, around, and beneath all.
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> It is agreed that the safety and perpetuity of our republican institutions depends upon the diffusion of intelligence among the masses of the people. The statistics of the penitentiaries and almshouses throughout the country, abundantly show, that education is the best preventive of pauperism and crime. They show, also, that the prevention of these evils is much less expensive than the punishment of the one, and the relief of the other. Education, too, is the great equalizer of human conditions. It places the poor on an equality with the rich. It subjects the appetites and passions of the rich to the restraints of reason and conscience, and thus prepares each for a career of usefulness and honor. Every consideration, therefore, of duty and policy, impels us to sustain the common schools of the State in the highest possible efficiency.

Education, he contended, should be supported by a general property tax, for "Property is the only legitimate subject of taxation. It has its duties, as well as its rights. It needs the conservative influences of education, and should be made to pay for its own protection."[6]

Nothing constructive was done by the General Assembly during the first session under the governorship of Grimes, but at a special session in the summer of 1856 a measure was approved which empowered the governor to appoint a commission of three to revise the school laws of Iowa.[7] To do this work, Grimes appointed Horace Mann, Amos Dean, then chancellor of the University, and Frederick Bissell, an Iowa teacher.[8] Bissell, much to the regret of the other two commissioners, was unable to assist in the work, but Amos Dean and Horace Mann drew up plans for the revision of the educational system and submitted them to the Sixth General Assembly.[9]

Although the revision proposed was not adopted at that time, the report

[6] "Inauguaral Message of James W. Grimes . . . December 9th, 1854," *ibid.*, 4-5.

[7] *Laws of Iowa, 1856*, 78.

[8] Leonard Fletcher Parker, who was in a position to know the facts of the case, explains the appointment of Dean and Mann thus: ". . . they were appointed . . . by Governor Grimes because of their well-known opinions as well as for their ability. He understood what kind of a law they would report, and appointed them for the sake of that report." Leonard F. Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa* (Washington, 1893), 29.

[9] *Iowa Legislative Documents, 1856*, 191-200.

of the commissioners revealed plans for a unified system of education extending from the elementary schools to the University. Among other things the commissioners recommended that provision be made for the establishment of "high academies" or "polytechnic" schools in counties having a population of 20,000 or over. They insisted that the University should be "the head and also the aim of Iowa education," and they desired "to send into every family of Iowa now, and through all future time, a spirit stirring impulse, an animating principle, which shall penetrate the depths of every young heart, and arouse the latent energies of every young spirit, and thus carry forward the common school system into the fullest and completest realization of its glorious mission."[10]

That the suggestions of the commissioners were not adopted and written into the laws of the state does not mean that a state-wide and unified sysem of education was in disfavor among the leaders in Iowa.[11] On the contrary, all indications suggest that the movement toward unification had set in strong and sure. In August of 1856 the people of Iowa, by an overwhelming majority, had voted to call a constitutional convention. In December the delegates to the convention were chosen. Of the thirty-six members of that convention, twenty-one had been elected by the newly organized Republican party.[12]

Education was the subject of much spirited if not always lucid debate in the convention. A Committee on Education and School Lands was appointed on the second day. Four days later Edward Johnson of Lee County offered a resolution recommending that this committee be requested to inquire into the expediency of so amending the constitution as to create a board of education. The board was to be made up of ten or twelve mem-

[10] *Ibid.*, 199-200. The Sixth General Assembly passed an appropriation bill allowing fifty dollars to Horace Mann and Amos Dean "for services as commissioners to revise the school laws." The measure which had created the commission provided that the commissioners were to receive four dollars a day. *Laws of Iowa, 1856-1857*, 446.

[11] George W. Ells, delegate to the constitutional convention, resident of Scott County, charged in debate on the convention floor that the reason for the failure of the educational reform bill to pass was that the General Assembly split over the question of admitting Negroes to the schools. *The Debates of the Constitutional Convention* (2 vols., Davenport, Iowa, 1857), 2:728-9.

[12] Benjamin Gue, *History of Iowa* (4 vols., New York, 1903), 1:284. The convention assembled at Iowa City, Jan. 19, 1857, and remained in session until March 5. The constitution drawn up was adopted by the people of the state in August of the same year.

bers, it was to govern the University and have "general charge of the common and other public schools of the state." After a short flurry of debate on the floor, the convention approved the resolution.[13]

On January 28 the Committee on Schools submitted a majority and a minority report. Both reports contemplated the creation of a board which would control the educational system of the state. The reports differed chiefly in that the majority one would assign definite powers and duties to the board and have these powers written into the constitution; the minority report sought to write into the constitution only the provisions which would create the board and declare its general function. The details of organization and duties were to be left to the legislature.[14] That there would be a board of education created to control the public system of the state seemed to be generally agreed upon. Why it should be created, and what it should do was best explained by James Hall, delegate from Des Moines County, in his defense of the majority report.

> By this majority report, you separate this subject, you divorce it, from all this variety of topics, subjects claiming the attention of the legislature. You take it from the legislature, to which men are elected upon other and different grounds from those which should be taken into consideration here, and whose minds are absorbed in the consideration of other topics. This report keeps the subject of education by itself, and places it in the hands of those elected solely in reference to that subject. . . . The leading feature of this majority report is to divorce and separate the cause of education from the wild and hurried scramble of the political arena, and consign it untrammelled and unfettered to the care of those who are best qualified by experience and education to promote its interests and mature it into healthful growth. . . . It must be acknowledged that the General Assembly is not the fit body to manage and have jurisdiction of the system of education.[15]

In a later debate on the same subject, he stated:

> I ask the convention to consider most thoroughly all the principles contained in this report, which is to give independence to the school district, which is to sever and divorce it from that great political cauldron which forever boils and bubbles throughout the State. Let it have a chance to breathe, where it may not inhale

[13] *Debates of the Constitutional Convention*, 1:21, 39-40.
[14] *Ibid.*, 1:78-9.
[15] *Ibid.*, 2:526-7.

> the festering atmosphere of political excitement. Give it a chance to rise, without being clogged by inattention, as it has been heretofore.[16]

The board was objected to by some of the delegates because it would create a second legislative assembly in the state and thereby violate that American tradition of having only three departments of government. Moreover, since no one was willing that the board should have the power to levy taxes for the support of the schools, the power to legislate on school matters would be divided between the General Assembly and the Board of Education.[17]

It is not necessary here, in tracing the development of unification of education in Iowa, to follow in detail the debates over the establishment of the board. The board was created without any great objection to the two important ideas on which it was based: that education should be placed beyond the reach of the ordinary legislature; and that the whole system should be organized under one body. It is apparent that Amos Dean and Horace Mann had not attempted to impose upon an unwilling state a system of education alien to the demands of the state.

In the last report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction under the constitution of 1846, Maturin L. Fisher emphasized the need for a complete organization from the elementary schools to the University, and he asked for a system of scholarships to support superior students in the "High Schools" and the University.

> A scheme of public instruction would be incomplete without some provision for a higher degree of mental culture, without an institution to facilitate the cultivation of philosophy in all its branches, and the pursuit of the sciences in all their ramifications. We have such an institution in the State University already organized and handsomely endowed. In the high schools young men should be prepared to enter the University, and in the University young men should be educated without charge for tuition, to become professors in the high schools. The proposed system, then, is thus constituted: 1st, the Common School; 2nd, the High School; 3rd, the State University — each in its order, preparatory to the other.[18]

[16] *Ibid.*, 2:753.

[17] *Ibid.*, 2:744ff., 748-9.

[18] "Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," *Legislative Documents, 1857*, 15ff., 18-19.

Although the constitution of 1857 created a Board of Education and expressly provided that "the board of education shall have full power to legislate and make all needful rules and regulations in relation to Common Schools, and other educational institutions, that are instituted, to receive aid from the school or University fund of this state . . .,"[19] the first General Assembly to meet under the constitution passed a general school law. The law then enacted was based largely upon the unadopted report of the school commissioners of two years before.[20] Approved by the governor on March 12, 1858, this law provided for free elementary schools, for the establishment of county high schools, and the government of the University. It provided a number of scholarships to both the "High Schools" and the University for those who sought to become teachers. A plain violation of the constitution, the law was held unconstitutional by the supreme court of the state the same year on the grounds that the legislature had exceeded its authority. The Board of Education, meeting in Des Moines in December of 1858, was then faced with the necessity of either drawing up a whole school law or enacting the one which had been declared unconstitutional. It reenacted what was substantially the old law, save for the provision for scholarships. Since the Board of Education had no power under the constitution to levy taxes and no source of income, the only scholarships which it could provide were free tuition scholarships to the University.[21]

The idea of a unified system of education was accepted by the end of the fifties, but the educational development of the state was not such that unification could be reckoned as more than an abstract principle. Moreover, no attempt had yet been made to define the exact relationship between the several units of the school system. It was not until 1870 that the legislature attempted a tenuous definition by declaring that "The University, so far as practicable shall begin the course of study . . . at the point where the same [is] completed in the High Schools."[22] Eight years later the legislature attempted further to define the function of the University by prohibiting the University from using any part of its funds for the support of any department which did not properly belong to the University. This law, which was passed for the purpose of abolishing the preparatory department

[19] *Constitution of Iowa*, Article IX, Sec. 8.
[20] Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa*, 29.
[21] *Acts . . . Board of Education . . . Des Moines, 1858* (Des Moines, 1858).
[22] *Laws of Iowa, 1870*, Chap. 87.

of the University, declared in effect that it was the function of the high schools, among other things, to prepare students for the University.

Thus, slowly and uncertainly was the idea of a unified system of education written into law. The last and final step in the process was taken when the State Board of Education, after the turn of the twentieth century, adopted a resolution which demanded that the three state institutions — the University, the Agricultural College, and the State Teachers College — accept all high school graduates who possessed the proper certificates from the high schools.

But the story is not told simply in a review of the legal steps taken to insure unification of education in the state. In 1856, when the idea of a unified system of education first found expression in Iowa, the population of the state did not exceed 500,000. At the time the preparatory department of the University was abolished, the population exceeded 1,500,000. Hence such unification as was achieved during the years under study was accomplished while immigration was at flood tide. The whole movement must be studied against the chaotic background which such a vast migration and increase of population implies and in terms of a fluid society, frontier conditions, rapid and materialistic building, and of all other concomitants to the rapid settlement of a new country. It was only with difficulty in this situation that anything resembling an organized and effectively executed system of unified education could be begun. Since it is as impossible as it is inappropriate in this study to consider the whole evolution of the middle schools during the period under discussion, the process of articulating the University to the high schools will be approached chiefly from the standpoint of what the University, as represented by the action of the governing board, the faculty, and the friends of the institution, did in working out the details of the unification.

Established at Iowa City, Johnson County, in 1847, the University did not open until the spring of 1855. After that haphazard session, the Board of Trustees made provision for the establishment and maintenance of a preparatory school in connection with the University. This was necessary, since at the time there was no place in the public school system where a student might prepare himself to enter the University. The preparatory department attracted a great many more students than did the collegiate department of the University. The great majority of these students came from Iowa City and Johnson County. Of the 125 students listed on the

rolls in 1857, over 100 were either in the normal department or the preparatory department — over 60 were in the preparatory department alone. Small wonder that the University, in the first years of its existence, was sometimes called the "Johnson County High School."

When the General Assembly first convened under the constitution of 1857, it adopted a new school law for the state. As has been noted above, this law made provision for a public school system extending from elementary schools to the University. With reference to the University, it provided a new governing board and a new act under which the University was to be governed. The Board held its first session in April, 1858.

During its three-day session the Board of Trustees adopted a new plan of organization for the University, abolished the preparatory department, and decided to close the University until more funds had accumulated and the high schools had prepared students for the University.[23]

Anson Hart, Secretary of the Board, in a public statement explained the action of the Board by saying that under the new law the Board assumed that it had no authority to continue the preparatory department. Because the Board desired to raise the standards of the University, because it could not legally maintain a preparatory department, and because the high schools had not yet become sufficiently numerous or effective to prepare students for the reorganized University, the institution was to be closed for a while. The Board had acted with reluctance. Hart asserted that "all western colleges and Universities have this department, which is used as a feeder to supply the institution with which it is connected." To continue the University without a preparatory department would be disastrous. Without this department, Hart proclaimed, "the University could at best amount to little more than a High School as it has hitherto been, for the benefit of Iowa City."[24]

Thus early in the history of the University the problem of the relationship between the University and the state school system vexed and perplexed the governors of the University, the faculty, and many a public man. It was assumed that the University was to be the head of the public school system of the state, but mere assumption did not make the Univer-

[23] Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Book A (1847-1876), April 27, 1858, p. 92 (University Archives). Unless otherwise noted, manuscript materials noted are in the University Archives at Iowa City.

[24] Iowa City *Weekly Republican*, May 5, 1858.

sity in actuality what it was conceived to be in theory. The years that followed this first attempt to abolish the preparatory department reveal the slow process by which the theory of a unified school system found practical expression in the abolition of the preparatory department and in the articulation of the high schools and the University.

The Board of Trustees created under the School Law of 1858 held only two sessions. When the law under which it had been created was declared unconstitutional, it was succeeded by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Board of Education. Attempts on the part of the new Board to reopen the University in 1859 failed. Not until 1860 did the collegiate department of the University, under a new faculty, resume work.

Hardly had instruction begun before the faculty was clamoring for the establishment of a preparatory department. Few of the students who came to the University were qualified for college work, and all were unequally prepared.[25] After discussing the situation informally, the faculty called a meeting "to discuss the propriety of organizing a preparatory department at the opening of the next term." What arguments were advanced we do not know, but the conclusion of the faculty is unmistakable: "It was unanimously agreed to establish, with the concurrence of the Board, a preparatory department under the supervision of the faculty and Professor Spencer was appointed a Committee of one to have a conference with Professor Guffin with reference to his taking charge of said department."[26] The faculty then addressed a circular letter to members of the Board, asking permission to open this department.[27] By the end of January a majority of the Board had assented to the request, and on January 31 the faculty adopted a resolution to organize a preparatory department "under the supervision of the several professors." A fee of six dollars a session was charged, and the fee was to be reduced by one third for each class which a student had in the University.[28] The department was opened at the beginning of the second semester.[29]

[25] Nathan R. Leonard, "The State University of Iowa in 1860-1," *Iowa Alumnus*, 4:227-30 (1907).

[26] Minutes of the Faculty, Book A (1860-1881), Dec. 6, 1860, pp. 8-9 (MSS, University Archives, Iowa City).

[27] Report of President Totten to the Board of Trustees, June 27, 1861 (MSS, University Archives).

[28] Minutes of the Faculty, Book A, Jan. 31, 1861, p. 10.

[29] Report of President Totten . . ., June 27, 1861.

In his report to the Board of Trustees in June, 1861, President Silas Totten asked that the preparatory department be given permanent organization. "It is the opinion of the Faculty," he wrote, "that such a department is essential to the success of the University in the present condition of Classical Education in the State. They hope, therefore, that provision will be made for its permanent organization. In order to do this properly, it will be necessary to furnish a study room in the University building, and employ a teacher, whose business it will be to maintain order in the room, and give instructions in the lower branches. This teacher need not be one of high attainments as the Professors will have time to instruct in all the higher studies of the department."[30] The Board of Trustees complied with the request the next day, prescribed the requisites for admission,[31] and provided that the course should be two years in length. Thus the preparatory department again became a part of the University, not because it was wanted but simply because there was no way to avoid having it.

The importance of the department in the 1860's is suggested by the enrollment figures. Of a total of 254 students at the University during the academic year 1861-1862, 104 attended classes in the preparatory department, 129 in the normal department. Five years later, 79 students were registered in the collegiate department, 62 in the normal, and 241 in the preparatory; 248 were classified as irregular.[32]

In 1865, in order to effect greater uniformity in the University and offer better facilities for preparation, the preparatory course was lengthened to three years.[33] The condition which made the University unwillingly responsible for the preparation of its students was inescapable. In 1865 the term "high school" still had very little meaning in practice. In fact there were only eighteen public high schools in Iowa, and these were vague and indefinite, often embracing no more than a year's work beyond the elemen-

[30] *Idem.*

[31] Minutes of the Board, June 28, 1861, pp. 185-6.

[32] *Catalogue of the University of Iowa, 1861-62* (Iowa City, 1862). (Hereafter, the catalogues will be referred to as *University Catalogue.*) These statistics are not exactly accurate since it often happened that a student attended classes in both the preparatory department and the collegiate department, but even though they may not show precisely what the enrollment was, they indicate the great popularity and the necessity of the preparatory department. *University Catalogue, 1866-1867.*

[33] Report of Nathan R. Leonard (president pro tem) to the Board of Trustees, June, 1867 (MSS, Univ sity Archives). See *University Catalogue, 1865-66,* 21, for report of additional year

tary schools.[34] None was adequate or willing to prepare students for the University. The Superintendent of Public Instruction might write in glowing terms of the high school, might insist that it "prepares its pupils for business life or for the University," and publish a high school graded course;[35] but this part of the unified system of education was still far from reality.

The fact that the middle schools were not yet ready to do their work did not save the University from criticism because of its preparatory department. As the first faculty of the University had observed, the preparatory department served the students from Iowa City and Johnson County principally. Hence the University came to be regarded as a local institution. Even though the middle schools had not yet been created, there were critics who insisted that in maintaining the preparatory department the University was pre-empting ground which should be the province of the high schools. Both the University faculty and the governing Board recognized the cause of the unpopularity of the preparatory department, and they did what they could to improve the situation.

In May, 1867, a faculty committee was appointed to "present to the Board a plan on the contraction of the course of studies in the preparatory department."[36] The committee report was presented to the Board at its June meeting, together with the report of the president pro tem of the University, Nathan R. Leonard. In his report, Leonard called the attention of the Board to the necessity of reducing the time for the preparatory course from three to two years. He explained that the preparatory department had been organized in the beginning because "it was thought necessary to meet a pressing demand in the then condition of the State for preparatory instruction, and also as affording the only means of drawing students to the university." In order to serve this purpose better, the course had been lengthened to three years. "It is believed that the condition of the public and high schools of the state is now such that we may by the modifications suggested reduce the number of years in this department from three to two . . . with advantage to the University and without detriment to the interests of the State."[37] The recommendations of the faculty committee and

[34] Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa*, map opposite p. 44.

[35] "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," *Legislative Documents, 1866*, Vol. I, 23, 25-6.

[36] Minutes of the Faculty, Book A, May 8, 1867, p. 226.

[37] Report of Nathan R. Leonard . . ., June, 1867.

the president were made the order of the day for June 23; after discussing the matter, the Board adopted the following resolution:

> Resolved that the preparatory department be raised to two years instead of three, that the rule heretofore established for admission in the preparatory department be strictly enforced, and that when there are children in the preparatory department who are inpacitated [*sic.* incapacitated] from any cause to make such advancement in education as to give hope of their ever entering the collegiate department they be dismissed from the preparatory department as that department is not intended to take the place of common school but to prepare children for the University.[38]

In accordance with this resolution the first year of the preparatory department was dropped, and the result was immediately to be seen in the enrollment. During the academic year 1867-1868, the collegiate department showed an aggregate of 100 students, the normal 103, and the preparatory 232, with only 14 irregular students listed.[39]

This act, however, did not quiet complaints about the preparatory department. In March, 1868, the University became the subject for severe criticism from the Davenport *Gazette*. In answer, C. A. Eggert published a long letter pointing out that it was only the preparatory department the *Gazette* was attacking and that this department would be abolished as soon as the high schools could take over the work.[40] At the meeting of the trustees the following June, the member of the Board of Trustees from Iowa City moved that the department be abolished, but the motion failed to carry.[41]

If the preparatory department could not be abolished, there were other ways the governors of the University might try to deal with the opposition it aroused. In September, 1868, James Black assumed the presidency of the University. Like Amos Dean, Silas Totten, and Nathan Leonard, he might object to the preparatory department, he might recognize that it mitigated against the welfare of the University, but he, too, found that it could not be dispensed with. But he did contrive to abolish the name. On June 29, 1869, the Board of Trustees adopted the new course of study by President

[38] Minutes of the Board, June 23, 1867, p. 270.

[39] *University Catalogue, 1867-68.*

[40] Iowa City *Republican*, Apr. 8, 1868.

[41] Minutes of the Board, June 23, 1868, p. 302.

Black. Although no mention is made in the minutes of the changes proposed, it is clearly shown that the Board understood that the preparatory department was to be altered. A few days after adopting this course of study the Board agreed to a resolution stating that since Professor Ebersole had been deprived of his position as assistant instructor of ancient language, he was to be reappointed to teach "introductory classes."[42]

Just what this new course of study involved is revealed in the catalog printed shortly after this Board meeting. "At a late meeting, the Board of Trustees ordered the discontinuance of the Preparatory Department as such, but provided for instruction in its more advanced studies by placing an additional year to the Collegiate Course. To meet the wants of those students who may not have in the public schools the means of preparing for admission to the Collegiate Department, as now arranged, Introductory classes will be formed for instruction in the more important of the remaining studies of the former Preparatory Course."[43] Thus, by making the collegiate course five years in length and by adding what the president chose to call an "Introductory class," the old preparatory department was discontinued in name. Thenceforth, although the "Introductory classes" were popularly referred to as the preparatory department, the actual words were never again to profane the University catalog.

A few weeks after this ostensible abolition of the preparatory department of the University, the Iowa City School Board voted to discontinue the "high school" which had been established a few years before. The Board justified its action on the grounds that the high school cost too much and that all the work which it offered could be secured either in the Iowa City Academy (a private school) or the preparatory department of the University.[44] Even before the Board's letter of explanation had appeared in the Iowa City *Republican*, the editor of the *State Press* had raised an indignant protest. He insisted that Iowa City should have a high school, that the abolition of the preparatory department of the University made it necessary. The high school should, he declared, prepare students for the University. "It can be easily arranged," he asserted, " so soon as the University course shall be permanently adjusted that this Academic curriculum shall terminate the work of education at that point where the University begins. Each can

[42] *Ibid.*, June 29, 1869, p. 334; July 1, 1869, p. 341.

[43] *University Catalogue, 1868*, 43.

[44] Iowa City *Republican*, Aug. 11, 1869.

thus be complete in itself and the Diploma of the City Academy can carry its possessor into the first classes of the University."[45]

The abolition of the Iowa City high school also provoked a spirited letter from Gustavus Hinrichs of the University faculty. Hinrichs stated that the preparatory department was simply a temporary arrangement, that it had already been reduced to one year, and that the introductory classes were provided only for students who came from the newer parts of the state. He contended that the high school should serve as a connecting link between the elementary schools and the University. Because Johnson County insisted on using the preparatory department of the University as a high school, the legislature was exceedingly reluctant to provide the University with adequate financial support. The suspension of the Iowa City high school was a serious menace to the rapid development of the University, for it would lengthen the life of the preparatory department. "If the University, freed from this terrible encumbrance, can devote its very limited funds to the legitimate object of High Collegiate and Professional training, students will flock hither from all parts of this and adjacent states, and Iowa would soon become a rival of Michigan." Three days after Hinrich's letter appeared, the Iowa City School Board by a special vote rescinded the motion to abolish the high school.[46]

The attempts to shorten the preparatory course and to maintain the high school in Iowa City are not the only indications that there were many influential people who looked forward to a more clearly defined system of education in the state, a system which would reveal the relationship of the University and the other public schools. When the Board of Trustees met in Des Moines in December of 1869, it resolved that "in the report of the Board to the legislature Dr. Black be instructed to incorporate in said report a suggestion pertaining to the status of the University toward the Public School system of the state that may extend the usefulness of the instruction and more efficiently result in the educational advantages of the whole people of the state."[47] This President Black did. In the "Report of the Trustees" he stated that the lower class of the preparatory department had been dropped because the subjects taught there belonged properly to the high

[45] Iowa City *Press*, July 14, 1869.

[46] *Ibid.*, Aug. 11, 1869. The letter was dated Aug. 9. Iowa City *Republican*, Aug. 18, 1869.

[47] Minutes of the Board, Dec. 22, 1869, p. 345.

schools, and the upper class had been attached to the collegiate department. Black insisted that in making the changes the Trustees had kept in mind "the place of the University in the system of State Education of which it is a part. . . ." Furthermore, in discussing the needs of the University, Black insisted that the University crowned the educational system of the state and that it should be so recognized.[48]

In his report for the same year, A. S. Kissell, Superintendent of Public Instruction, devoted considerable space to describing the attempts to secure a unification between the high schools and the colleges in Illinois under the leadership of Newton Bateman. He then called attention to the relationship between the high schools and colleges in Iowa. Each unit, he pointed out, must do its own particular work without encroaching upon the sphere of the other. The educational system in Iowa was far from realizing this aim, for "many of the graded schools and High Schools adopt courses of study which in no way harmonize with the curriculums of these higher schools." Kissell complained that all too often the teachers in these high schools did not encourage the pupils to go further than such schools allowed, and he sounded the note, now grown so familiar: "Every teacher in a high school should encourage his pupils to higher and more diligent efforts in the pursuit of knowledge, and the university and colleges should be stimulants to pupils in lower schools, and awaken within them aspirations for higher culture."[49]

This agitation was not without some effect, for the Thirteenth General Assembly in 1870 drew up and adopted a new law for the government of the University and for the first time essayed definitely to fix the relationship of the University to the high schools of the state. "The University, so far as practicable, shall begin the courses of study, in its collegiate and scientific departments, at the point where the same are completed in the high schools; and no students shall be admitted who have not previously completed the elementary studies in such branches as are taught in the common schools throughout the State."[50] In adopting this law, the legislature gave definite legal sanction to the belief which had so long been held that the Unversity was the head of the public school system.

[48] "Report of the Board of Trustees," *Legislative Documents, 1870*, Vol. I, 24ff.

[49] "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," *Legislative Documents, 1870*, Vol. I, 27, 28.

[50] *Laws of Iowa, 1870*, Chap. 87. See appendix.

When the law of 1870 was adopted, it was in many ways an act of sheer optimism to insist that the University should begin its work where the high schools left off. There were only forty-one high schools in the state in 1871, and of these only twenty-three had well-defined courses of study; no high school course of study was devised primarily for the purpose of preparing students for the University.[51] Hence the problem of connecting the University and the high schools even after 1870 involved a great many compromises on the part of both institutions. Articulation, such as it was, was brought about by the leaders in secondary education in the state, working through the Iowa State Teachers Association, the Board of Regents of the University, the faculty of the University, and the newspaper editors of the state. No one group can be given all credit for the work. It was the result of cooperation and compromise, and it was done in the face of great material difficulties.

The impulse toward standardizing the secondary schools found its first expression in the Iowa State Teachers Association. In 1871 a committee of that organization, made up of representatives of the high schools, the academies, the colleges, and the State University, arranged a course of study for secondary schools in the graded systems. The work of this committee was entirely without legal standing, but it focused attention upon the problem of standardizing the high schools so that they might prepare students for college. It meant that the high schools had begun to incorporate a function which had formerly belonged to the academies. At the June, 1872, session of the Board of Regents, the problem of the relationship between the high schools and the University was discussed. In order to effect a working basis of articulation between the two, the Board adopted the following resolution: "The academical faculty may admit to the various classes without examination students from such schools or academies as in their judgment offer sufficient facilities for preparation, but this privilege shall be withdrawn from any school found to be deficient in this respect."[52] Thus the Board placed in the hands of the faculty the power necessary for them to begin seriously to cooperate with the Iowa State Teachers Association and

[51] Clarence R. Aurner, *History of Education in Iowa* (5 vols., Iowa City, 1915), 3:223. See also Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa*, 39, 105. Parker asserts that before 1870 the word "high school" had no definite meaning in the state.

[52] Minutes of the Board, June 21, 1872, p. 406; Aurner, *History of Education in Iowa*, 3:225. On pp. 305ff, he presents the courses which this committee devised for two, three, and four-year high schools.

the high school officials of the state in the work of connecting high schools and the University.[53]

At the annual meeting of the Iowa State Teachers Association, held late in the summer of 1872, Professor Fellows, who had been elected president of the organization, devoted his inaugural address to a consideration of the relations between the schools of the state. The address was referred to a committee of which Professor Parker, also of the University, was a member. The committee reported in part, "That the munificence of the Federal and State Governments in the creation and support of State Universities has been timely and wise, that the growth and influence of these institutions have been gratifying, and that we welcome them as the crown and glory of our public school system."[54] The adoption of this report by the convention placed the Association on record as definitely espousing the plan of the unified system of education — a matter which was greeted with joy in University circles. President Thacher, in a letter to the *Iowa School Journal*, announced with delight the recent ruling of the Board with reference to the admission of properly certified high school graduates, pointed with pride to the fact that this arrangement was in entire agreement with the action of the State Teachers Association in recognizing the University as head of the public school system of the state, and invited the superintendents and principals of the high schools to investigate the proposition at once.[55]

The actual articulation of the high schools and the University was not a thing accomplished by passing resolutions and adopting reports, however. It required a great deal of work on the part of the faculty of the University, and on the part of the secondary teachers. It also required vast improve-

[53] In March, 1873, Dr. Thacher presented the following motion which changed slightly the rule of the preceding June: "Resolved that the action of this board in June, 1872, in reference to this admission of students from the Schools and Academies of the state is hereby repealed and that the following rule be adopted. The Academical faculty may admit to the academical department students from such schools and academies in Iowa as in their judgment offer sufficient facilities for preparation on condition that the applicants for admission present certificates of qualification from the principal of their respective schools but this privilege shall be withdrawn from any school or academy found deficient in the facilities named above." Minutes of the Board, March 5, 1873, pp. 426-7.

[54] *University Reporter* (Iowa City), 5:4 (October, 1872).

[55] *Iowa School Journal*, 14:94-5 (October, 1872). The Iowa City *Republican* in an editorial comment had given a favorable reception to this action of the Board even before the state teachers had adopted their resolution. Iowa City *Republican*, Aug. 21, 1872.

ments in the educational facilities of the state. Early in 1873 a high school committee of the University faculty was "instructed to ascertain what arrangements can be made for visiting the various schools." Two weeks later the committee returned the melancholy report that since no funds had been provided for this work, and since none was available, the matter had best be dropped. But if faculty members did not possess funds sufficient to enable them to travel about the state investigating high schools, they were nevertheless active during the next few years. In May of 1873, "upon favorable reference to our city High School by members of the faculty, Professor Currier was appointed a committee to visit the school to examine its status with a view to allowing the high school the same privileges of preparing for our Freshman Classes as is granted to the City Academy." One week later, upon receiving a "favorable report" from Currier, the faculty voted to admit students from the Iowa City high school to the sub-freshman class of the University provided they presented certificates from the principal of the high school. In June of the same year the faculty resolved "that students bearing certificates from Professor E. C. Ebersole of Cedar Rapids of having completed any of our preparatory studies shall be credited for the same here without examination, except as regards the last term of preparatory German."[56]

The practice of taking the case of each school under advisement and then rendering a decision on it was not entirely satisfactory. In May of 1874 the faculty, thinking to systematize the process, adopted a resolution providing that "admission to the Freshman Class shall be granted to all applicants bringing certificates of qualification from those high schools and academies whose course of study embraces the required branches and the quality of whose instruction shall be approved by the faculty." The faculty then appointed a committee, made up of Professors Leonard, Currier, and Eggert, to prepare a plan for carrying out the resolution.[57] Nevertheless, during the ensuing years the faculty continued to recognize individual schools as qualified to prepare students for the University.[58]

[56] Minutes of the Faculty, Book A, 336; Apr. 25, 1873, p. 337; May 23, 1873, p. 337; May 30, 1873, p. 338; June 13, 1873, p. 339.

[57] *Ibid.*, May 29, 1874, p. 358.

[58] The Faculty Minutes reveal that the faculty accepted the following schools as qualified to prepare students for the University: Washington Academy for sub-freshman class, May 7, 1875; Springdale High School "for work done preparatory to our sub-freshman year," June 2, 1876; Hampton (Franklin County) for proficiency in any

The faculty of the University was not compelled to work alone in the project of articulating high schools and University. A number of the University professors, notably Currier, Parker, and Fellows, had long been active in the Iowa State Teachers Association. The faculty regarded this Association as best fitted to bring about the practical unification of the educational system. In 1874 the subject was once more brought up in the state convention, and, after discussion, the convention adopted a resolution acknowledging the importance of the work which the University was doing in unifying the educational system.

> Whereas public high schools have been established and are vigorously maintained in the principal cities and towns of the State as a natural local head of the free school system and constitute an essential link in it, therefore,
>
> Resolved, That high schools should be encouraged to take the rank of academies and seminaries in the preparation of students for the ordinary duties of life and in fitting them for the University;
>
> Resolved, That we recognize the recent action of the officers of the University as an important movement in this direction.

The Association then went on to appoint a committee "to devise and recommend the best means for the speedy and complete unification of our school system and to report at our next annual meeting."[59]

The committee faced a difficult situation. President George Thacher pointed out in September, 1875, that there were only forty-one high schools in the state, and of these only fifteen were able to prepare students for the freshman class of the University. Students who came from these favored districts could enter the freshman class of the University, but most of the students in the University entered the collegiate department from the preparatory department. Of the eighty-six freshmen of the preceding year, sixty-nine had entered the collegiate department through the preparatory department, and each of the other seventeen was obliged to pursue some sub-freshman subjects in order to make up previous deficiencies.[60]

sub-freshman study, June 9, 1876; the Iowa City Academy as preparatory to the Freshman Class of the University, and the Mitchellville Academy, June 7, 1878; the Decorah Institute, Aug. 1878; and Council Bluffs Academy, Sept. 13, 1879. There is no reason to believe that this constitutes a complete list of the schools so accredited.

[59] *Common School*, 2:4 (1875).

[60] "Report of President Thacher to the Regents," *Legislative Documents, 1875*, Vol. I, No. 7, pp. 6-8.

The discouraging picture of secondary education was abundantly verified by the committee of the Association when it reported in 1875. The committee report, the work of a group of educators representing the entire state, asserted that it found scarcely a trace of anything worthy of being called a system. The schools had no uniform courses of study and no two of them were alike. Moreover they bore out Thacher's declaration that only fifteen of the high schools in the state were qualified to prepare students for the University, that the University could not make Greek a prerequisite to the college because in many schools the language could not be taught. This condition derived from the school law which allowed the various communities to determine by vote whether certain subjects were to be taught. Furthermore, the committee found the same lamentable condition to obtain in 1875 which had caused Superintendent of Public Instruction Kissell such grave concern in 1870. The teachers in the high schools were not attempting to point their students to the University. In fact there seemed to be in many high schools a feeling "of indifference or of virtual opposition to colleges." In few of the high schools did they find enough students anxious to pursue college work to undertake preparation for it. This condition was either the result or the cause of the attitude in the high schools which the committee found so objectionable. The committee was profoundly discouraged with its findings, and declared that only time could remedy the situation, since the local communities could not be forced to provide an education for which no demand was made. In conclusion, the committee asserted that it was "compelled to conclude by affirming the impossibility of devising the means of a speedy and complete unification of our public schools."[61] This report illustrates clearly the wide gap between theory and practice in Iowa in the middle seventies. The high schools had not yet succeeded in assuming the work of the academies.

Another committee of the Iowa State Teachers Association, possessing a different personnel, was assigned to make a further report in 1876 on the prospects of unifying the system. This committee, made up of L. E. Parker of Iowa City, S. J. Buck of Grinnell, C. W. Von Coelln of Waterloo, J. H. Thompson of Des Moines, and J. E. McKee of Washington, submitted a report drawn up by three of its members. More optimistic than their predecessors, they recognized the failure of the high schools of the state to con-

[61] *Common School*, 3:29-30 (1876).

nect with anything above themselves, and the general lack of uniformity among the various systems, but, unlike the committee of the year before, had suggestions to offer and held out hope for the immediate future. Admitting that the condition was bad, they insisted that it could be worse, and urged that each public school officer do all that he could to bring about a practical uniformity between high schools and colleges whenever it could be done without violating local sensitivity. In summing up the movement toward unification between high schools and colleges, and between the high schools and the University, Professor Parker, who was himself exceedingly active in the work, wrote: "No high school courses were created primarily to connect the lower with the higher education, yet many were modified for the purpose. In some college towns they were affected by the preparatory course of the local college. College and university conditions were materially influenced by high school possibilities."[62]

While the Iowa State Teachers Association was showing an active interest in effecting articulation between the secondary schools and the universities and colleges of the state, the University officials were by no means inactive. In June of 1876 the general faculty voted to appoint a committee to prepare a circular concerning the relation of the high schools to the University. Their report was made and accepted by the faculty one week later, and it reached the Board of Regents the next day.[63] This report, together with the resolution offered two days later by Thacher, was referred to the Committee on Course of Study.[64] Two days after receiving Thacher's resolution, the chairman of the Committee submitted a report which was adopted by the Board.

> Your committee to whom was referred the resolution of President Thacher, and the communication of Professor Parker, relating to the admission to the University of students duly certified by teachers of High Schools, such teachers to be selected [approved] by the Faculty or Regents of the University, have considered the same and beg leave to report:

[62] Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa*, 105.

[63] Professors Hinrichs and Parker were appointed such a committee. Minutes of the Faculty, June 9, 1876, p. 414.

[64] Minutes of the Board of Regents, Book B, p. 6, June 19, 1876 (MSS, University Archives). The committee on Course of Study was made up of Regents Kirkwood, Ross, and the president of the University, George Thacher.

When a new president was employed at the end of the year, he was selected, according to the statement of the Board, as a man well fitted to complete the work of unifying the high schools and the University. Josiah Pickard, who had been active in the secondary school work in Illinois and Wisconsin, assumed his duties as president of the University in the summer of 1878. It is true that he did much to continue the work which had been begun, but it is not true, as has often been asserted, that he brought about a unification of the high schools and the University. The idea had been conceived and accepted before the fifties ran out, and the general pattern was established by the time Pickard arrived in Iowa City. Professor Nathan R. Leonard has very well summarized Pickard's contribution: "He doubtless contributed to such salutary changes as were made, but for the most part his contributions were in the nature of the adoption or the carrying out of plans of which he was not the originator. The historic development of the University was in progress and falling in with it his position was such that his was the usufruct of advancement that was made, so far as reputation was concerned."[70] Thus it was that during the seventies the foundations of the educational pyramid were laid and the plan was sketched. Time, prosperity, and social consciousness combined to carry the structure to completion.

During the period of the seventies, while the work of unifying the high schools and the University was going on, the preparatory department became more and more the object of severe and often unfair criticism. It will be remembered that it had been ostensibly abolished in 1869 by lengthening the collegiate course to five years and forming an introductory class. In his report to the Regents in 1871 President Thacher explained that the collegiate course required five years. This condition existed from necessity, not from any desire on the part of the faculty.

> The boys and girls have only very poor advantages in the public schools of the state for pursuing the studies preparatory for the Freshman year. They come to us earnestly desiring to enter the University. It would be in the last degree unwise to refuse them admission. The time has not come for that, and will not have come until the standard of instruction in the primary and high schools shall have been raised far above its present grade. The

[70] Autobiography of Nathan R. Leonard, MSS, p. 44; examined and used through the courtesy of his son, L. O. Leonard.

only remedy for the evil is to supply *in the university* the facilities which they cannot enjoy at home. Unless we would largely diminish our numbers and deplete our classes we must furnish in our own recitation rooms the preparatory instruction which ought to be provided in every large town, or, certainly, in every county of the State. The Sub Freshman is therefore, at present, a necessity from which there is no escape that would not involve serious detriment to the important educational interests for the state for which the University exists. As soon as the Academical course can be limited to *four* years without manifestly greater loss than gain, it should be promptly done.[71]

Thacher might point out the immediate and undeniable necessity of providing preparatory work in the University, but the department was often subjected to attacks by the sectarian schools and politicians. This almost constant criticism during the seventies explains in part the eager interest of the faculty and the Regents in establishing, as early as possible, a working relationship with the high schools. Meanwhile the faculty did what it could to keep the preparatory department out of the public eye.

In February, 1872, a member of the Iowa College (Grinnell) faculty bitterly denounced the University for preserving the preparatory department under another name, thereby living up to the letter of the law but not the spirit.[72] How fair the criticism was, and how seriously it was taken by the faculty, is shown by the fact that in the following December, Nathan R. Leonard submitted a paper to the Regents on the subject of the preparatory work. The first item which he discussed was the name by which this part of the University should be known.

> We have stricken from our catalogue the name of Preparatory department but have preserved the thing itself under the name of Sub Freshman Class. This action was taken merely to placate those who either from ignorance of the needs of the University or from motives of enmity to the institution chose to make the Department the object of unfriendly criticism. It is not right nor wise in my judgment because it was an act well calculated to deceive the unsophisticated public, leading them to believe that we have abolished a thing which we had retained, and we are charged with the intent to so mislead and deceive, and can make but poor

[71] "Report of the Board of Regents, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," *Legislative Documents, 1872*, Vol. I, 58.

[72] Iowa City *Republican*, March 6, 1872, reprinted from Grinnell *Herald*.

> defence. I will say further that the name Sub Freshman Class seems to me singularly inappropriate when its work is to extend over two years instead of one. I prefer therefore for the sake of honest appearances and for appropriateness the name Preparatory Department.

Leonard suggested separate organization for the department. Such organization should render it relatively independent of the University faculty, and should make it self-supporting. He concluded, "the effect of a separate organization of the Preparatory department would be to prevent much of that intermingling of the higher preparatory and lower collegiate work which constitutes the prolific source of much that is annoying in the practical operation of the class system."[73] This well-meant advice was received, but no action was taken. The sub-collegiate work continued to be referred to in the catalog as sub-freshman work, while the newspapers referred to it as the preparatory department.

In the summer of 1874 a series of criticisms of the University was printed in the Iowa City *Press*. Written by J. P. Sanxay and J. P. Irish, these criticisms were concerned at first with the University in general; by July the discussion was centering on the preparatory department. The *Press* insisted that the preparatory department was infringing upon the work of the high schools and that the first year at least should be dropped. Irish contended that he was not motivated by any feeling of bitterness toward the University, but that for the good of the institution he intended to continue the agitation against the preparatory department until that part of the University was abolished. He considered this the only method of getting the University to advance and the high schools and academies to assume the responsibility of providing students for the University.[74]

On the other hand the Iowa City *Republican*, in the interest of presenting the case fairly, pointed out that while the preparatory department was an unwelcome appendage to the University, it was, nevertheless, quite necessary to the institution. Most of the students entered the University classes through the sub-freshman classes. If they did not come that way, the *Republican* averred, they would not come at all. Furthermore, the

[73] N. R. Leonard, "Letter to the Board," Dec. 24, 1872 (MSS, University Archives).

[74] Irish, in order to give point to the assertion, insisted that Principals Rogers of Marengo Schools, Witter of Muscatine Schools, Saunderson of Burlington Schools, and Lytle of Oskaloosa Schools had admitted as much to him either orally or by letter. Iowa City *Press*, July 15, 1874. See also, *ibid.*, July 22, 1874.

Republican contended that the preparatory department was virtually self-sustaining and, unless it was maintained, students would go to other colleges which had such facilities.[75] The argument advanced by the *Republican* was borne out by the editor of the *Iowa School Journal*, who, while admitting along with all the others that the dignity of the University would be exalted without the sub-freshman course, pointed out that three-quarters of the counties of Iowa did not have high schools in which to train students for the University, and that of the denominational colleges in the state, sixteen had preparatory departments.[76]

The newspaper strife over the question of the preparatory department quieted down in the fall, but it did not die until the preparatory department was finally abolished by legislative action in 1878.[77] The first vigorous opposition to the preparatory department appeared just before the committee of 1874 was appointed. The discussion had begun in July; the Teachers Association appointed the Thacher Committee on High School and College Unification in August of the year. It is not correct, however, to say that the movement toward unification had its inception in these attacks. It is rather that the attacks show how general had become the idea of a unified system, and the Teachers Association was simply continuing a program which had been adumbrated years before. The University officials were keenly aware of the nature of the struggle concerning the preparatory department, and although George Thacher might have proudly boasted in 1870 that the University could no longer be styled the "Johnson County High School,"[78] in 1875 he felt called upon to present a rather lengthy

[75] Iowa City *Republican*, July 8, 15, 29, 1874.

[76] *Iowa School Journal*, 15:279-81 (October, 1874).

[77] In March, 1875, a letter was printed in the Iowa City *Press*, advocating that Iowa City build a high school to serve the town and the University as a preparatory department. Iowa City *Press*, March 18, 1875. In June the occasion of the publication of the University catalog gave rise to another attack on the preparatory department. Again insisting that the preparatory department was created as an expedient, John P. Irish argued that the need for it was gone, that it should be abolished. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1875. In November there appeared a letter signed "Citizen" in which the author came forward to praise as laudable the desire of the editor of the *Press* to secure a permanent endowment for the University. The author insisted, however, that the legislature was right in refusing that endowment so long as the University continued to support a work which belonged properly to the high schools. *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1875.

[78] "Report of the Regents of the University, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," *Legislative Documents, 1872*, Vol. I, 41.

argument for the preservation of the preparatory department as a part of the University. President Thacher asserted that there were two leading arguments against the preparatory department: it cost too much, and it interfered with the public high schools. The first objection he disposed of by showing that the cost was almost negligible, since it amounted to no more than four mills per household in the state. As to the argument that it "entices from the high schools the promising students thereby exercising a discouraging and repressive influence on the schools of the state," he was more elaborate. He pointed out that there were not more than forty high schools in the state, hence at least sixty counties entirely escaped the "evil of the University." But only fifteen of these schools were prepared to train students for the University, and few students who came to the University from the districts so favored entered the preparatory department. It was from the counties having poor high schools or no high schools at all, he asserted, that the majority of the students of the preparatory department were drawn.[79]

Admitting that a preparatory department "is an undesirable appendage to a college or university and is endured or encouraged only as an unavoidable evil," Thacher urged that it be retained. To abolish it would save the state very little money, and it would increase tremendously the work of the professors of the collegiate department who would then have to tutor many students otherwise taken care of in the preparatory department. "Allow me," he wrote, "to inquire, gentlemen, whether there is any such stress of circumstances as to justify this ruinous policy and most respectfully to sugguest that this Board should set their faces with unfaltering purpose against every attempt to cripple this institution under the poor pretense of saving a little money."[80]

But the pleas of the president and the obvious usefulness of the preparatory department were to avail against public sentiment only a little while longer. The preparatory department became a political issue in one sense; in another it stood as a denial of the conception of the unified system of education. A little over two years after Thacher had presented his plea for the preparatory department, and in the face of the united opposition of the Board of Regents, the General Assembly, almost without dissent, passed a

[79] "Report of the Regents," *Legislative Documents, 1876*, Vol. I, No. 7, pp. 6-17.
[80] *Ibid.*, 10, 17.

bill abolishing the preparatory department of the University.[81] There was then nothing the Regents could do but adjust the University to the change. At their June meeting the subject was referred to a committee made up of Messrs. Duncombe, Ross, and Pickard.[82] After adopting a resolution providing that "irregular students are entitled to full privileges in their classes and that the professors and instructors shall not discriminate against them in recitations and practical work,"[83] the Board went on to consider the report of the committee on the sub-freshman course. After considerable difficulty it was finally decided to drop the first year of the preparatory department in 1878, the second year in 1879.[84]

[81] The bill which provided for the abolishment of the preparatory department was entitled, "An act to prevent the use of funds of the State University for support of the Preparatory Department after July 1, 1879." It provided, "That after the 1st day of July, 1879, no part of the funds belonging to or appropriated for the state university shall be used for the support of the preparatory or non-collegiate course of studies heretofore taught in said university." *Laws of Iowa, 1878*, Chap. 115. Approved, March 25, 1878. This bill, registered as S. F. 311, was introduced into the Senate on March 18, read twice, referred to the University Committee, reported out by that committee on March 20, voted on the next day, and passed, 42 to 2, with 2 not voting. It was adopted instead of an amendment to the appropriation bill restraining the Regents from using any of the appropriated money for a preparatory department. *Iowa Senate Journal, 1878*, 340, 371, 394. On March 22, S. F. 311 reached the House. It was taken up, read a first and second time, and on motion the rules were suspended and it was read a third time, and passed, 80 to 3, with 17 absent or not voting. *Iowa House Journal, 1878*, 543. Thus the bill passed without the sanction of the Board of Regents or the Faculty of the University. It passed because the legislators wanted the University to confine its activities to a specific field, and to cease offering so many advantages in secondary education to the citizens of Iowa City. Gustavus Hinrichs has left an interesting account of the attitude of the faculty toward this activity. Hinrichs had, since the beginning of his tenure as professor, been insistent on the abolition of the preparatory department. He asserted that he had urged its abolition long before the question came before the legislature, but that many of the faculty of the University were loath to see it abandoned. Hinrichs recorded that when the bill was up before the legislature, he was called to Des Moines to testify, and much against the wishes of President Slagle and some of the members of the faculty, he advocated the immediate abolition of the department. Gustavus Hinrichs, *False Statements Made by the Regents* (St. Louis, 1892), 20.

[82] Minutes of the Board of Regents, Book B, June 14, 1878, p. 84.

[83] *Ibid.*, June 17, 1878, p. 88. This motion seems obviously to have been adopted for the purpose of allowing students unqualified for the collegiate department and yet eager to come to the University the opportunity of attending.

[84] *Ibid.*, June 17, 1878, pp. 88-91. The secretary was obviously confused as to exactly what took place, since the records at this point reveal only that there was considerable dispute in the Board. Most of it seems to have centered in the question of whether the sub-freshman classes should be dropped one at a time, or whether both should be continued until July, 1879, and then dropped together. By a vote of six to three it was decided to drop the lower class that year, the next in 1879. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Thus, one more step was taken toward the unification of the public school system of the state, an achievement which had been envisaged by Horace Mann thirty-three years before. The law of 1870 had described the relationship between the high school and the University in demanding that the University take the students as the high schools prepared them. The law of 1878 limited the sphere of University activity. Henceforth the students of the University would have to be prepared outside the institution. Many years were to pass before a unified system would be complete from base to capital, but the outline was fixed, and the general relationship of each part to the others was defined.[85]

[85] As late as 1893 about 40 per cent of the University freshmen were still obliged to make up some deficiency either by a local school in Iowa City or by tutoring. Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa*, 103n.