

## THE GOVERNORS OF IOWA AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS, 1838 to 1949

By Irving H. Hart\*

Throughout the entire period of Iowa history, the Governors, both of the territory and of the state, have by virtue of their high office exercised a potent influence upon public education. To the prestige inhering in the office itself some of the incumbents have added the zeal of the reformer and the prescience of the statesman. Some Governors have taken positions in support of the cause of public education far in advance of their day and have set goals which were reached only after the lapse of a considerable length of time; some of these goals have still to be reached. Other Governors have been followers rather than leaders, but have proved themselves true friends of education. A few have rendered lip service to the cause but have in reality not stood for its best interests.

*Robert Lucas, 1838-1841.* Robert Lucas, the first territorial Governor of Iowa, set a high standard for all of his successors in his message to the First Legislative Assembly (November 12, 1838) when he said: "There is no object to which I wish to call your attention more emphatically than to the subject of establishing at the commencement of our political existence a well digested system of common schools, and as a preparation toward effecting that important object I urge the necessity of provision by law for the organization of townships."<sup>1</sup> The Assembly followed the lead of the Governor only part of the way. It did enact a general school law, but it left the responsibility for organizing school districts to the county commissioners on petition of a majority of voters in any proposed district; it failed entirely to provide for township organization.<sup>2</sup>

\*Irving H. Hart is archivist at Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls.

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin F. Shambaugh (ed.), *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa* (7 vols., Iowa City, 1903-1905), 1:9. To avoid repetition, all the quotations from the Governors' messages and proclamations, from Robert Lucas, 1838-1841, through Leslie M. Shaw, 1898-1902, are taken from these volumes and will not be individually footnoted. From Shaw's successor, A. B. Cummins, through the administration of Governor Robert Blue, the messages can be found in the *House Journals* of the years indicated.

<sup>2</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1838-1839*, 191.



In his message in 1839, Governor Lucas renewed his recommendation for the organization of townships, and characterized the school act passed at the last session as "too limited to serve as a foundation." He recommended its revision and suggested that the school law of Michigan was worthy of attention. Provision was made by this Assembly for township organization, but the suggestion regarding the Michigan statute was accepted too literally by enacting it, practically verbatim, as the second Iowa general school law.<sup>3</sup>

*John Chambers, 1841-1845.* Of this second school law, Governor Chambers said, in a message in 1841, that the plan of public instruction had "but partially been put into operation," either "from defect in the law or from inattention on the part of the public." He called for its alteration or amendment and said that "No delay or neglect ought to be tolerated." The legislature took no positive action whatsoever regarding schools; instead, it took a backward step by abolishing the office of superintendent of public instruction.<sup>4</sup> The relatively ineffective law of 1840 remained on the statute books throughout the remainder of the territorial period.

*James Clarke, 1845-1846.* James Clarke, the third and last territorial Governor, in his final message (1846), devoted his attention to the school land problem. He reported a total of more than 1,400,000 acres in the grants made by Congress for educational purposes in Iowa, recommended additional laws for the protection of these lands, and questioned the wisdom of their immediate sale on the ground that these grants were intended for the whole people, not for individual townships, a point of view far in advance of his time.

*Ansel Briggs, 1846-1850.* The First General Assembly of the state enacted the third Iowa general school law, which placed the disposition of the school lands and the distribution of the school funds under the control of the new offices of superintendent of public instruction and county school fund commissioners.<sup>5</sup> Because the act had not been published as provided in the state constitution, the Iowa Supreme Court held it unconstitutional and declared all elections of school officers under it invalid.<sup>6</sup> This led Governor Briggs to call an extra session of the Assembly "to enact speedy measures for the support of the common schools."

<sup>3</sup> *Revised Statutes of Iowa, 1843*, p. 411.

<sup>4</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1841-1842*, Chap. 108.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1846-1847, Chap. 99.

<sup>6</sup> *Calkins v. State*, 1 Iowa Reports (Greene), 68.



An act was passed by the extra session legalizing the act of 1847,<sup>7</sup> but little else was done to relieve a critical situation. This was made clear by Governor Briggs in a message in 1848 in which he referred to the existing school law as "exceedingly defective," stated that the amendment of this law or the substitution of another had been the "prominent cause" of calling the late extra session, and that the failure to do so was to be regretted as frustrating the earnest wishes of the people. In response to this challenge, the Assembly enacted a new general school law, the fourth for Iowa in eleven years. This law established the "rate system," by which the expense of hiring teachers, over and above the amount received from the apportionment of the interest on the state school fund, was to be met by collecting from each patron an amount of money proportionate to the number of pupils enrolled from each family.<sup>8</sup> This Assembly also provided for the establishment of state normal schools at Andrew, Oskaloosa, and Mount Pleasant, and for branches of the State University at Dubuque and Fairfield.<sup>9</sup>

In 1850 Governor Briggs expressed his deep concern for the newly established normal schools, saying that they "should receive the fostering care of the legislature." Any opposition to them, he believed, "would seem to arise from misapprehension of their objects. . . . As experience teaches that these schools are productive of much good, any measure adopted which will conduce to their permanent prosperity will meet with the approbation of the friends of education." No addition, however, was made by the Assembly to the original appropriation from University funds of \$500 annually for each such school. Even these meager appropriations were never paid, and the two schools at Andrew and Oskaloosa died for want of support.

With reference to the common schools, Governor Briggs expressed the hope that the system might be perfected, since there were still many "deficiencies which demand action." Nothing was done with regard to this recommendation, however.

*Stephen Hempstead, 1850-1854.* From Governor Hempstead, the General Assembly received in 1852 a recommendation for careful revision of the school laws, with an added plea for "free schools," in order that there might be placed "within reach of every child the opportunity for acquiring those indispensable elements of education which shall fit him for the en-

<sup>7</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1848 (extra)*, Chap. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1848-1849*, Chaps. 59, 80.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. 78.



lightened discharge of the civil and social duties to which he may be called." Two years later Hempstead said that the school laws were "complicated, inexplicit and contradictory," and that a greater number of school officers was employed than necessary, among them the school fund commissioners, whose duties could be performed by the county treasurers with less expense.

*James W. Grimes, 1854-1858.* This straight-from-the-shoulder message from retiring Governor Hempstead was a fitting prelude to that from the new Governor, James W. Grimes, who, in his inaugural address, gave ample evidence of the statesmanship that characterized his career from its beginning to its end in heroic tragedy fifteen years later. The period of the Grimes governorship is that of the first Iowa educational renaissance, to which no man contributed more than he. This was the period of the Horace Mann Commission and of the adoption of the second state constitution. No other Governor showed a greater interest in the total educational program; no other Governor gave more attention in his messages to the interests of education; and no other Governor is more quotable.

The inaugural address of Governor Grimes in 1854 is a state paper of unusual worth. In it he discussed "the foundations of the educational institutions of a new state." He held that government "reaches more vital interests than those of property"; that "its greatest object is to elevate and ennoble the citizen"; that "the safety and perpetuity of our republican institutions depend upon the diffusion of intelligence among the masses of the people"; that "the prevention of the evils of poverty and crime is much less expensive than the relief of the one or the punishment of the other"; and that therefore "every consideration of duty or policy impels us to sustain the common schools in the highest possible efficiency." Specifically, Governor Grimes recommended the free public school through the abolition of the rate system, the establishment of school libraries at public expense in every district as centers "around which within a few years would be gathered libraries accessible to all," and the use of the University fund for the establishment of a "school of applied science," "a practical scientific or polytechnic school."

The abolition of the rate system and the establishment of free public schools, open to all and supported by local taxation of property, were accomplished within the next four years. The idea of making the University a "scientific or polytechnic" school was embodied in the recommendations



of the Mann Commission, but failed to be enacted into law. The type of state institution envisaged by Grimes in 1854 became a reality later in the organization of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. The Governor's idea concerning the establishment of school libraries was to remain an ideal for a later generation to realize.

This was the period of the alleged mismanagement of state school funds by State Superintendent James D. Eads. In consequence, in 1856, Grimes recommended "entirely disconnecting the office of superintendent of public instruction from all control of school money and school lands." In an extra session, the superintendent of public instruction was prohibited from loaning any funds, except on order of the Assembly, but no general revision was made of the system of handling school funds and lands. Later, the act allowing the state superintendent to receive school funds was repealed, and their supervision was transferred to the state treasurer.<sup>10</sup>

The appointment of the Mann Commission to revise the school laws was made in 1856 by Governor Grimes, in compliance with an act passed on his recommendation.<sup>11</sup> The report of this commission was transmitted to the Assembly with a special message recommending the adoption of the system of public education suggested, as one embodying "the wisdom and experience of the best educationists in the country." No action on this report was taken at this session.

Another important phase of the education program, to the development of which Grimes made significant contributions, was the organization of the State University. As early as 1840, Congress had granted two townships of public lands in Iowa to be used in establishing a University. This act was confirmed by Congress in 1845, at which time five sections were added to the grant, to be used for the erection of public buildings, or as the legislature might direct.<sup>12</sup> These grants were a part of Iowa's dowry of statehood. The First General Assembly passed an act establishing and locating the University at Iowa City, providing that the University lands be disposed of in the same manner as the school lands and that the University fund be deposited with the state treasurer.<sup>13</sup> Little was done under this act other than to dispose of most of the University lands at relatively low prices.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1856 (extra), Chap. 50; *ibid.*, 1856-1857, Chaps. 1, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1856 (extra), Chap. 31.

<sup>12</sup> 6 U. S. Statutes at Large, 810; 5 *ibid.*, 455.

<sup>13</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1846-1847*, Chap. 125.



The University Act of 1847 had anticipated the transfer of the public buildings at Iowa City to the proposed institution, when the state capital should have been moved to a new location. The Assembly in 1855 designated Des Moines as the future capital. In a special message, Grimes recommended specific action providing for the surrender of the capitol building at Iowa City for University purposes. Legislation to this effect was enacted.

In a veto message in 1857, Grimes set forth a conviction regarding the University and the University fund, which was to be embodied in the state constitution. This veto was of a bill for the grant of \$5,000 from the University fund for the relief of the medical department of the University at Keokuk. This proposal Grimes regarded as "an unwarrantable diversion of this fund and a violation of the act of Congress granting the land from which this fund was derived." Calling attention to the amount of the annual net proceeds of this fund, as not exceeding \$12,000, "a sum barely adequate to support a respectable university," the Governor expressed disapproval of the "unwise attempt" to fritter away the University fund by establishing branches and normal schools to be supported from it. The veto was effective. Later in the same year, this problem was solved by a provision of the new state constitution, that "The State University shall be established at one place without branches at any other place, and the University fund shall be applied to that Institution and no other."<sup>14</sup>

The new state constitution embodied a radical change in state control of public education through the creation of a Board of Education to which was committed "full power and authority 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 and University fund of this State"; but with the qualifying provision that "all acts, rules and regulations of said Board may be altered, amended or repealed by the General Assembly"; and that "at any time after 1863, the General Assembly shall have power to abolish or reorganize said Board of Education, and provide for the educational interest of the state in any other manner that to them shall seem best and proper."<sup>15</sup>

In his message as retiring Governor (1858), Grimes commented approvingly upon the educational provisions of the new constitution, called for the

<sup>14</sup> *Constitution of Iowa, 1857*, Art. IX, Part I, Sec. 11; Part II, Sec. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. IX, Part I.



transfer of supervision of school funds from the county school fund commissioners to the Board of Education, and for the enactment into law of the recommendations of the Mann Commission. He repeated his conviction that the rate system should be abolished, inasmuch as it was "based upon the idea that education is a personal benefit for which those who receive it should pay whilst the true theory is that it is a public benefit for which the public should pay."

The recommendations of the Mann Commission were in the main embodied in the fifth Iowa general school law, approved March 12, 1858.<sup>16</sup> Under this law, school elections were held in the spring of 1858, and it was on its way to being made effective when the friends of education were shocked by a decision of the Iowa Supreme Court that the act was unconstitutional. The grounds of this decision were that "the General Assembly possessed no primary power to pass laws for public instruction until the Board of Education was elected and organized."<sup>17</sup>

*Ralph P. Lowe, 1858-1860.* By the new state constitution, the term of office of the Governor had been reduced from four to two years. Ralph P. Lowe was elected to this office in 1858 and served only one term.

The Board of Education, immediately after its organization, legalized the elections, acts, and contracts held and made under the act of March 12, 1858, and enacted a new school law in December, 1859.<sup>18</sup> The most important school legislation enacted by the General Assembly in 1858 was the establishment of the State Agricultural College. The appropriation for this purpose was sufficient only to purchase a farm upon which the College was to be located, and it was six years before the institution actually came into being. By another act, the office of school fund commissioner was abolished, and the management of the funds and lands was placed in the hands of the county judge and the county treasurer.<sup>19</sup> Two years later, this responsibility was transferred to the county supervisors, while loans were to be made by the county clerks.<sup>20</sup>

Governor Lowe's message in 1860 dealt with the work of the Board of Education and particularly with the general school law adopted by the

<sup>16</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1858*, Chap. 52.

<sup>17</sup> *District Township of Dubuque v. City of Dubuque*, 7 *Iowa Reports*, 262.

<sup>18</sup> *Journal, Board of Education*, 1st Sess., 33, 46.

<sup>19</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1858*, Chaps. 91, 158.

<sup>20</sup> *Code of Iowa (revised) 1860*, 348.



Board in December, 1859. He recommended that only necessary changes be made in this law, a recommendation which was followed by the Assembly. He reported that the trustees had purchased a farm in Story County for the site of the Agricultural College. He discussed the handling of school funds and recommended that the counties be made corporately responsible for losses to the fund due to default by their citizens, either as officers or as borrowers. Nothing was done with this recommendation.

*Samuel J. Kirkwood, 1860-1864.* The four years of Samuel J. Kirkwood's governorship saw the beginning of the struggle between the North and the South and its progress through the decisive year of 1863. Naturally, the attention of both government and people was centered upon the war. The management of the public school system was, for this period, in the hands of the Board of Education. The Governor, in his messages, confined himself almost entirely to the perennial problem of school lands and the school fund. In both his inaugural message in 1860 and his retiring message in 1864, he discussed these matters, saying (in the latter) that the present system was a bad one; that the county clerks were not fitted to make judicious investments, and the money might be used to promote personal objects. He stated that there was a large amount of insufficiently secured principal and delinquent interest, recommended that the lending of these funds by county clerks be prohibited, and that the funds be invested by the state treasurer in stocks of the United States or of Iowa.

It is unfortunate that many members of the General Assemblies in the fifties, sixties, and early seventies did not have the vision and the unselfish interest in the welfare of the public schools which would induce them to follow the lead of the Governors of these years. There was no lack of inspired guidance.

*William M. Stone, 1864-1868.* Governor William M. Stone recommended in 1866 withdrawing the school fund entirely from the counties, making the state responsible for it, and using the money to redeem outstanding state bonds, thus "liquidating our indebtedness by transferring it to ourselves." Two years later, Stone renewed this suggestion, and called attention to the fact that the return of this fund to the state treasury had been urged by Governors Grimes, Lowe, and Kirkwood. "For reasons I am unable to understand these wholesome recommendations have been disregarded and this sacred fund has been permitted to float about the state under the precarious guardianship of county authorities. The principal has



already been diminished by over \$125,000. . . . Our imperfect discharge of this solemn trust is a dereliction of duty." These strong words, however, fell on deaf ears.

The agitation for abolishing the Board of Education came to a conclusion under Stone. As early as January, 1860, Governor Lowe had said, "The discontinuance of the Board of Education has been discussed in the public press. I question the expediency of such a measure at present." The constitution had authorized the Assembly to abolish or reorganize the Board at any time after 1863, but it had left in the Assembly's hands the fixing of the time and place of sessions after their first meeting in December, 1858. Taking advantage of this grant of power, the General Assembly in 1860 passed a bill for an act to postpone the next meeting of the Board to March, 1865. This bill was returned by Governor Kirkwood without approval, with a special message in which he held that such action would be too hazardous "in the present condition of our common school system."

There was not sufficient strength in the opposition to the Board at that time to enable the bill to be passed over this veto; but by 1864 the tide of opposition had grown so strong that Governor Stone invited attention to the expediency of abolishing this Board. He complimented the Board on its accomplishments, as having provided "the framework of our present admirable system of common schools, which needs but little attention to render it sufficiently comprehensive to meet the demands of educational interest for many years to come." In case of the abolishment of the Board, he noted the necessity of recreating the office of superintendent of public instruction. The Assembly had apparently been merely awaiting the strategic moment for such action, and an act was passed abolishing the Board of Education and providing for the election of a superintendent of public instruction.<sup>21</sup>

*Samuel Merrill, 1868-1872.* Consideration of the problem of handling the state school fund was again urged by Governor Samuel Merrill in 1870. He recommended the return of the school fund to the state treasury, the immediate withdrawal of all school lands from the market, and the fixing of a minimum price of \$6.00 an acre for the future. These recommendations were followed by the Assembly.<sup>22</sup> In 1872 the Governor went a step further by recommending that all losses to the school fund since 1846 be

<sup>21</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1864, Chap. 52.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid., 1870, Chap. 29, Res. No. 1.*



assumed by the state, since a tendency had become evident to interpret the provision of the state constitution making all losses to these funds a permanent debt against the state as applying only to losses incurred after 1857. Merrill reinforced his recommendations regarding the school fund by vetoing a bill proposing to excuse an Iowa county from responsibility to replace school funds stolen from its safe.

The Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts finally came into being in the administration of Governor Merrill. The passage by Congress in 1862 of the Morrill Act, granting to each state public lands for the endowment and support of a college of agriculture, made available 240,000 acres for Iowa.<sup>23</sup> The proceeds of the sale of these lands were to be maintained as a perpetual fund, the interest on which could be used for institutional support only, not for buildings. Attention had been called to this act by Governor Kirkwood in 1862. The Assembly formally accepted the grant, but did nothing further for the College at that time.<sup>24</sup> Governor Kirkwood again called attention in 1864 to the "rich endowment" of land, "five times as large as that for the university," and to the fact that, in order to secure this grant, funds must be provided to erect buildings and meet the current expenses of the institution. The Assembly transferred to the Agricultural College the five sections of land originally granted by Congress to Iowa to aid in the construction of public buildings.<sup>25</sup> With the money thus available, a building was begun on the site previously selected in Story County.

That this appropriation was quite inadequate is shown by the statement of Governor Stone in 1866: "The Act of Congress requires the state to provide a college within five years; if not, the lands revert to the United States. To lose this donation by neglect would reflect disgrace upon the state. . . . I recommend an appropriation for the completion of the building within the time fixed by the grant." The Assembly finally acted upon this recommendation and made an appropriation of \$91,000.<sup>26</sup> Iowa owes much to Governor Stone for his courageous insistence on the foundation of what has come to be one of the outstanding institutions of its kind in the entire country. The new institution opened its first session in October, 1868.

<sup>23</sup> 12 U. S. Statutes at Large, 503.

<sup>24</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1858, Chap. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1864, Chap. 117; 5 U. S. Statutes at Large, 799.

<sup>26</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1866, Chap. 112.



*Cyrus C. Carpenter, 1872-1876.* The administration of Governor Cyrus C. Carpenter was marked by one positive gain and one definite loss to the interests of public education. The gain came through the enactment of a law making the counties responsible for the collection and payment of interest and losses to the school fund.<sup>27</sup> The Governor referred to this act in a message in 1874 as "one of the most salutary changes made for many years in the management of the school fund." This left the actual handling of these funds still with the county officers, but it established the principle of county responsibility. The loss to education in this administration resulted from a law authorizing the establishment of rural independent school districts.<sup>28</sup> In providing for this type of decentralization in district organization, the Assembly closed its ears to the advice of educational leaders from the time of Governor Lucas to their own day, and increased the undesirable features of the Iowa district system.

Governor Carpenter can neither be credited with the improvement in handling of school funds nor charged with the creation of rural independent districts, since both actions were taken within a few weeks after he came to occupy the executive chair. In his 1874 message, however, he deprecated the rural independent district law and said that he favored "simple township organization."

Provision by the state for the training of teachers was a matter upon which Governor Carpenter placed marked emphasis. In his inaugural address (1872), he said that the normal department at the University had accomplished much, but that facilities for larger results should be provided. "What is done depends on your wisdom and the condition of the treasury." Nothing was done.

In the matter of the support of the University, Governor Carpenter was far in advance of his day. In 1876 he said that the University should be enlarged beyond the income of the grant for its support; that when the grant was made it was supposed that it would be sufficient for all future wants, but that the land had been sold at too low a price and that the state should be bound to make good the conditions upon which the grant was accepted. To this end he suggested a special levy of 1/10 or 1/15 of a mill as a permanent fund for the University. This is the first suggestion of

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1872, Chap. 34 (86).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. 73 (156).



a policy adopted later and followed for a number of years to the great advantage of the state institutions of learning.

*Samuel J. Kirkwood, 1876-1877.* In 1875 Samuel J. Kirkwood was re-elected Governor. In the legislative session immediately following, he was elected United States Senator, and he entered upon his new duties after having served only one year of his term. In his inaugural address in 1876 Kirkwood stressed the importance of the common school as a "potent means to make Americans of the children of immigrants," a problem already weighing heavily in the political and social scales. He also voiced the fear of "a purpose to divert the school fund from its legitimate object to the maintenance of private and sectarian schools and thus destroy the public school system." He hoped that this fear was groundless and that such a purpose, if entertained, would be abandoned; but he called this matter to the "grave consideration" of the Assembly.

The movement to provide for the expansion of the system of teacher training by the state culminated during this administration in the establishment at Cedar Falls of the Iowa State Normal School,<sup>29</sup> which began its work in September, 1876. State responsibility for the establishment of such a system had been recognized from the beginning of Iowa as a state, as is shown by the inclusion in the act of 1847, establishing the State University, of a provision for a professorship for the education of teachers, and the authorizing of free instruction in the theory and practice of teaching to fifty students each year, as soon as the revenues of the University should reach \$2,000 a year from state and federal sources.<sup>30</sup> The Mann Commission made no recommendation for the establishment of separate state normal schools. It proposed rather the establishment of a normal department in the State University, to be supplemented by county high schools, which were to be supported in part by the state "for training and educating young men to become teachers in the common schools." This plan was accepted and embodied in the school law of 1858.<sup>31</sup> The normal department of the University was opened in the fall of 1858. Several county high schools were organized under this act, but the Iowa Supreme Court in 1859 held this part of the act unconstitutional and not validated by the curative act of the Board of Education in December, 1858.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1876, Chap. 129.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1846-1847, Chap. 125.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1858, Chap. 52.

<sup>32</sup> *High School of Clayton County v. Clayton County*, 9 *Iowa Reports*, 175.



Governor Stone, in a message in 1866, questioned whether the normal department in the University was adequate to meet the need for trained teachers, and he earnestly invited attention to the importance of establishing a special school for this exclusive purpose, as suggested by State Superintendent Oran Faville. This suggestion was repeated by Superintendent D. F. Wells and was endorsed again by Stone in 1868. This pattern was repeated in 1870 with the recommendation of Superintendent A. S. Kissell and its endorsement by Governor Samuel Merrill, who recommended using the buildings of the soldiers' orphans' homes at Glenwood and Cedar Falls for the purposes of normal instruction, retaining the home at Davenport for its designed use.

The new building for the orphans' home at Cedar Falls was then less than one year old, and it was full to capacity. This year, however, saw the first reduction in the number of soldiers' orphans for whom the state had assumed responsibility. Governor Merrill was looking ahead to the time when three such homes would not be needed. So far as the records show, his was the first suggestion for such future use of these buildings.

The act authorizing the utilization of the buildings and grounds of the soldiers' orphans' home at Cedar Falls for a state normal school was passed with an appropriation of \$14,500 to support the new institution for the biennium,<sup>33</sup> but the Assembly neglected to select members of the board of directors as provided in the law. The law might still have become a dead letter had not Governor Kirkwood taken it upon himself to appoint a full board.

*Joshua G. Newbold, 1877-1878.* J. G. Newbold, who succeeded to the governorship, reported Kirkwood's action to the General Assembly in 1878 and urged that further steps be taken to enlarge the facilities and capacity of the normal school. He endorsed the recommendation of State Superintendent C. W. von Coelln for the creation of a state board of educational examiners, and for free textbooks. Newbold also called attention to "the looseness, not to use a stronger term, in the financial management of the school districts" and to von Coelln's recommendation that the number of school treasurers be limited to one to each township. He deprecated the needless expense arising from the increase in the number of school districts.

*John H. Gear, 1878-1882.* The period of the administration of Governor John H. Gear was one comparatively lacking in significant educational leg-

<sup>33</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1876, Chap. 129.*



isolation. In his inaugural address (1878), he suggested the enactment of a compulsory education law and provision for the permanent support of the State University. He laid continued emphasis on the necessity for improving the system of public school finance. In his message in 1880 he said that deficiencies and defalcations of school treasurers from 1873 to 1879 had amounted to \$491,518.51, and that it would be better to abolish the office and place the school money in the hands of the county treasurers. No legislative action was taken.

Governor Gear was the first to suggest a reduction in the number of boards for the control of the eleemosynary and the educational institutions of the state, saying that there were at that time nine such boards, and suggested that the eleemosynary institutions should be placed under a board of control and the State Normal School under the regents of the State University. This suggestion was to bear fruit more than twenty years later. In 1882 Gear repeated his school finance recommendation, saying that the system was "not entitled to any large degree of confidence," and that "this matter demands your attention." It did not receive such attention.

*Buren R. Sherman, 1882-1886.* From the point of view of advanced legislation, public education in Iowa drifted in the doldrums for the four years following 1882. Only one important piece of school legislation was enacted, the creation in 1882 of a state board of educational examiners to supervise the issuance of state teachers certificates and in general "to encourage training in the art of teaching."<sup>34</sup>

The subject of chief educational interest to Governor Buren R. Sherman was that of school textbooks. In 1884 he recommended state adoption and publication of textbooks, saying that this plan would save hundreds of thousands of dollars. This idea seems to have been the Governor's own. In his final message in 1886, Sherman noted that the proposition for the state to become its own editor and publisher of textbooks had not been adopted by the General Assembly, although the idea "had been discussed at every fireside"; that the superintendent of public instruction favored free textbooks; and that, if the latter plan were the better, it should be adopted. In his report for 1883-1885, State Superintendent J. W. Akers had characterized as "unwise and prejudicial to education" any plan for enforced state uniformity of textbooks, and had said further that textbooks should be free, in harmony with free schoolhouses and free instruction. He called

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1882, Chap. 167.



upon the state to "make the schools free in fact as they are now in theory."<sup>35</sup> Governor Sherman added his influence also to the growing demand for more permanent provision for the financing of the State University, recommending in 1886 a levy not exceeding  $\frac{1}{8}$  mill annually for this purpose.

*William Larrabee, 1886-1890.* The year 1886 brought to the Governor's chair in Iowa another dramatic personality, who ranks with Grimes and Kirkwood among Iowa's great political leaders. Larrabee said, in his inaugural address (1886), that "the adoption of a compulsory education law is imperatively demanded and should no longer be delayed"; that "teachers should by law be required to instruct their pupils in the injurious effects of the use of alcohol and narcotics"; that the State Normal School should be given hearty support, the Agricultural College "should not be allowed to deteriorate either in tone or usefulness," and that adequate appropriations should be made for extending the sphere of action of the State University.

This was the period of successful agitation for the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages in Iowa, a movement to which Larrabee gave effective leadership. His recommendation as to the teaching of the harmful effects of alcohol and narcotics was enacted into law.<sup>36</sup> The repeated recommendations by the Governors for the enactment of a compulsory education law led this Assembly to go so far as to request the superintendent of public instruction to make an exhaustive study of such laws in other states and report to the next General Assembly.<sup>37</sup> This was done by Superintendent Akers in his biennial report for 1885-1887.

Larrabee in 1888 commended this report on compulsory education as worthy of "thoughtful attention and judicious action." "The last census," he said, "showed that Iowa had the lowest percentage of illiteracy in the Union. We may not retain this advanced position unless decisive steps are taken to bring into the schools a much larger percentage of children. Compulsory education is not an untried experiment. I recommend the passage of a suitable law."

Governor Larrabee, in his final message (1890), referred approvingly to the observance in the schools of the new law requiring instruction in the effects of stimulants and narcotics, and he endorsed the recommendation of

<sup>35</sup> *Iowa School Report, 1883-1885.*

<sup>36</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1886, Chap. 1.*

<sup>37</sup> *House Journal, 1886, 148, 480.*



Superintendent Henry Sabin for more careful supervision of rural district schools. He also recommended legislation prohibiting nepotism in the employment of teachers, requiring county superintendents to inspect the books of school treasurers, prohibiting school officers from being involved in school contracts, and making it the duty of school boards to supply free textbooks to all pupils.

*Horace Boies, 1890-1894.* The general election of 1889 resulted in a political upheaval which brought the Democratic party to power in Iowa for the first time since the 1850's. Horace Boies, Governor from 1890 to 1894, proved to be a leader worthy to rank among the great executives of the state. In his administration an act was passed providing for uniformity of textbooks for rural schools on vote of the electors of any county, and creating county boards of education (consisting of the county superintendent, the county auditor, and the county supervisors) to select textbooks after an affirmative vote for county uniformity.<sup>38</sup> Boies's greatest contribution to public education, however, was his successful establishment of the principle of permanent support for all the state institutions of higher learning. Such a policy had been recommended by Governors Merrill, Carpenter, Newbold, Gear, and Larrabee, and by Boies in 1890.

The state legislatures had not entirely ignored these repeated recommendations but had responded in 1878 by an appropriation of \$20,000 for the support of the State University, to be paid "annually hereafter."<sup>39</sup> A similar small appropriation had been made for the State Agricultural College in 1880, and for the State Normal School in 1890.<sup>40</sup> In 1892 Boies expanded his earlier recommendation, saying that the revenues of the schools supported by the state "should be made reasonably certain. They should not be required to beg from year to year for subsistence." As a result, beginning with 1896, appropriations for current support, payable "annually hereafter," continued to be made for all three institutions until 1924.

Continuity of funds for building purposes for the state colleges was likewise assured by the adoption of the policy of millage levies for periods of five years; for the State University alone in 1896, and for all three institutions in 1902. Such millage levies were twice renewed for five-year periods in 1906 and 1911. In 1915 the millage levy act was repealed, and provision

<sup>38</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1890, Chap. 24.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid., 1878, Chap. 76.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid., 1880, Chap. 67; ibid., 1890, Chap. 79.*



was made for the levy of special taxes on real property in specified amounts biennially for building purposes in the state educational institutions. The adoption of the state budget act in 1924 operated to repeal all continuing appropriations,<sup>41</sup> and since that date both support and building funds for these institutions have been provided on the biennial basis.

*Frank D. Jackson, 1894-1896.* No reference whatsoever to public education was made by Governor Frank D. Jackson in his inaugural address in 1894, and the then current General Assembly gave comparatively little attention to schools. It did, however, make it possible for school boards to furnish free textbooks to "indigent children."<sup>42</sup>

In his message in 1896 Jackson, noting that many graduates of the State Agricultural College found their way into the public schools as teachers, suggested "the establishment of a chair intended to instruct them." He endorsed the recommendations of Superintendent Sabin for raising the qualifications of teachers, for making free textbooks mandatory, and for the enactment of a compulsory education law.

*Francis M. Drake, 1896-1898.* Francis M. Drake, in his inaugural address in 1896, set for Iowa the ideal of a system of education from the kindergarten to the University, "open to all and adequate for all," since "The keynote of Iowa's future is education." In this year, a law was finally placed upon the statute books providing that textbooks might be furnished to pupils without cost on petition of one-third the number of voters in the last district election.<sup>43</sup>

Governor Drake's one term ended in 1898, at which time he struck a note of undue complacency when he said, "It seems that the entire school law may remain unchanged for years to come without detriment." He complimented retiring Superintendent Sabin for his "long and useful incumbency of that high office," and commended his current report as worthy of attention in all its recommendations. The Governor's assumption that Iowa had reached its educational millenium was probably based upon the fact that the General Assembly in 1896, in adopting a new code for the state, found reason to make only minor revisions of the school laws. With reference to higher education, Drake reminded the Assembly of "the right-

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1896, Chap. 114; *ibid.*, 1902, Chap. 117; *ibid.*, 1906, Chap. 183; *ibid.*, 1911, Chap. 201; *ibid.*, 1915, Chap. 248; *ibid.*, 1923-1924 (extra), Chap. 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1894, Chap. 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1896, Chap. 37.



ful demand" of the University, "this summit of our common school system," to "the liberality of the state"; recommended a chair of pedagogy for the Agricultural College; and suggested that while "more normal schools are needed . . . this is impractical for some time to come." He said that the State Normal School was "growing in popularity and usefulness" and "is deserving of liberal fostering care."

*Leslie M. Shaw, 1898-1902.* Leslie M. Shaw came to the governorship with the background of a country banker and without any previous political experience. Few Governors of Iowa, however, have more adequately represented the best thinking of the people of the state in their days. In his three messages to the General Assemblies, he devoted such attention to the problems of public education as to entitle him to rank as a leader in this field. He said, in his inaugural address in 1898, that the state had made no provision of means to enable the country pupil to close the "ever widening gap between the rural school and the college"; thus foreshadowing the need for legislation providing for the payment of high school tuition for rural pupils. He called attention in 1900 to the experiment already "tried in several counties of maintaining a central township school to and from which pupils are conveyed in carriages at public expense," and suggested that "encouraging legislation should be enacted looking toward the establishment of graded schools within easy access of every farm in Iowa." In his final message (1902), Governor Shaw elaborated his recommendation for central township schools, and further said, "If to this could be added provision for the employment of a county superintendent at an adequate salary to be chosen in the same manner as a city superintendent and with analogous duties and responsibilities, it would revolutionize the school system for good."

*Albert B. Cummins, 1902-1908.* The retirement of Governor Shaw brought to the fore another of the outstanding men who have honored the office of chief executive of Iowa, Albert B. Cummins. His inaugural address in 1902 recalls the spirit of James W. Grimes in the words, "Property must have its protection, but men and women are worth more than property."

The General Assembly responded favorably to the new Governor's endorsement of Shaw's recommendations and passed acts raising the compensation of county superintendents and requiring compulsory education. This



brought to an end the long campaign to extend the benefits of education to all the children of the state.<sup>44</sup>

Cummins' address at the beginning of his second term (1904) was also imbued with the spirit of his outstanding predecessors. The General Assembly, however, enacted no school laws of particular moment, but they did take a significant forward step in the provision by resolution for the appointment of a joint committee of the two houses to investigate the advisability of a change in the system of management of the state institutions of higher education. The General Assembly in 1906 made gains through the enactment of laws raising the qualifications of county superintendents, providing for the issuance by the state of uniform county teachers certificates, and authorizing the establishment of consolidated school districts.<sup>45</sup>

Governor Cummins was re-elected for a third term in 1906. Under a constitutional amendment ratified in 1904, the terms of incumbent elective officers had been extended one year, so Cummins would have served to 1909 had he not resigned to take a seat in the United States Senate. He was succeeded by Lieutenant Governor Warren Garst.

A number of minor changes in the school laws were made in 1907, but the most important act was the authorization of the appointment of a commission to revise and codify the school laws.<sup>46</sup> The chairman of this commission was F. E. Bolton, head of the College of Education in the State University.

*Warren Garst, 1908-1909.* In his message, Governor Garst devoted attention chiefly to the report of the Bolton Commission without committing himself further than to say that codification along the lines suggested by the commission was essential.

*Beryl F. Carroll, 1909-1913.* The election of 1908 resulted in the choice of B. F. Carroll as Governor. In his inaugural address he referred briefly to the Bolton Commission report: "Its importance requires your best thought and attention. The fact that some radical changes are proposed should neither condemn it nor commend it."

The proposals of the Commission did involve radical changes. They included the dissolving of all school corporations, except town and city independent districts; and the substitution of the county unit with a county

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, Chaps. 124, 128.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1904, Joint Res. No. 7; *ibid.*, 1906, Chaps. 122, 141.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1907, Chap. 222.



board of education, which was to have charge of all rural schools, elect the county superintendent, employ all teachers, and organize township, union, or consolidated schools when authorized to do so by the electors. Two constitutional amendments were proposed: one, to place the public school system of the state under a state board of education, to be appointed or elected, who were to be paid good salaries and devote full time to their work, with power to appoint the superintendent of public instruction; and, second, to provide that money from the state for the support of schools should be distributed according to need rather than to school population.<sup>47</sup>

The report of this Commission had been completed so late that it was impossible to give it wide distribution before the meeting of the legislature. It was unfavorably received by the press and the people in many parts of the state. As State Superintendent John F. Riggs said in his 1910 report, "A measure to be approved by the people must be understood by them."<sup>48</sup> The proposed school code was not recommended for passage in either house and "died in committee." Its chief fault was that all the proposals were included in one exceedingly bulky bill. Had the main proposals been presented in separate bills, they might have received more consideration.

The 1909 General Assembly, however, was not entirely barren of educational legislation. In particular, they created a state board of education, appointive by the Governor, to have control of the state institutions of higher learning; and they authorized the change of the name of the State Normal School to the State Teachers College.<sup>49</sup>

To the General Assembly in 1911, Governor Carroll urged the necessity of giving the school problem more than usual attention. This Assembly responded by establishing a system of normal training in high schools. It also took an important forward step, along lines originally suggested by Governor Shaw, in providing for the payment of high school tuition for pupils from non-high school districts.<sup>50</sup>

The Thirty-fifth General Assembly (1913) passed more than thirty acts relating to public education, among which were acts: (1) reorganizing and enlarging the department of public instruction, making the office of state superintendent appointive by the Governor for a term of four years, in-

<sup>47</sup> *Report of Education Commission, 1908.*

<sup>48</sup> *Iowa School Report, 1910.*

<sup>49</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1909, Chaps. 170, 171.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid., 1911, Chaps. 131, 146.*



creasing the salary to \$4,000, and adding inspectors of rural, graded, and high schools to the staff; (2) providing for the election of the county superintendent for a three-year term by a convention of county school officers, and increasing the salary, powers, and duties of this officer; (3) substituting a one-day inspirational institute, to be held while schools were generally in session, for the former six-day normal institute held during the summer vacation, and requiring all teachers in school systems employing less than twenty-five teachers to attend without loss of salary; (4) requiring twelve weeks of normal training in an approved institution of all candidates for uniform county certificates; (5) establishing a minimum wage for teachers; and (6) providing state aid for consolidated schools.<sup>51</sup>

These and other acts comprise a record of educational achievement unequalled by any other legislature in Iowa. This did not come about by chance. It was rather the culmination of long years of leadership and agitation by Governors, state superintendents, county and local superintendents, teachers, and professional organizations. Most of all it came about as the result of the demands of an intelligent, informed, and aroused public.

Credit for the initiation of the movement which accounts for the occurrence of this educational renaissance just at this time must be given to the Iowa State Teachers Association, under the leadership of its president, Fred L. Mahannah, and to State Superintendent Albert M. Deyoe. The Association appropriated \$2,000 to finance the work of an educational commission, composed of representative citizens of Iowa, to be appointed by Deyoe. This commission was to make a study of rural schools and rural life in Iowa, prepare a program of school legislation for the next General Assembly, and arouse state-wide interest in the betterment of schools.<sup>52</sup>

Thus came into being the Better Iowa Schools Commission of 1912-1913. The Commission was set up with a membership of twenty-two persons, almost equally divided between educators and laymen from all parts of the state. They labored long and earnestly, and prepared a comprehensive and forward-looking report, which was printed and given wide circulation well in advance of the meeting of the legislature. The nature of their recommendations is indicated in the record of enactments given above, for most

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1913, Chaps. 103, 107, 225, 243, 249.

<sup>52</sup> *Proceedings, Iowa State Teachers Association, 1911.*



of their recommendations became laws. They were wise enough to embody their proposals in separate bills, thus insuring detailed and careful consideration and eliminating the danger of having opposition to individual propositions affect the fate of others. The success of their program was due in no small part to the work of their legislative committee, which consisted of Ex-Governor Warren Garst, Chairman, State Senators Byron W. Newberry and John Hammill, Representatives Arthur Springer and J. B. Sullivan, and Bernard Murphy, a prominent newspaperman.<sup>53</sup>

*George W. Clarke, 1913-1917.* Superintendent Deyoe had foreshadowed the results of the work of the Commission in his biennial report in 1912.<sup>54</sup> Governor Carroll endorsed Deyoe's recommendations in his final message in January, 1913, and Governor Clarke seconded his predecessor's attitude in his inaugural address in the same year. But all these were "still, small voices," almost lost in the grand chorus of endorsements from the people "back home." No wonder the legislature listened.

It became Governor Clarke's duty to appoint a superintendent of public instruction for a four-year term, beginning July 1, 1915. His choice of the incumbent superintendent, A. M. Deyoe, was a thoroughly defensible one; but it gave the opponents of the new legislation a basis for criticism which they eagerly adopted. The charge was made that the whole intent of the new program had been to continue Deyoe in office with increased salary and power.

It is unfortunate that the words of Governor Cummins had been forgotten: "It is to be feared that we have been so well contented with the laurels already won that we have forgotten that eternal vigilance is the price of other things than liberty." The forces of reaction were rallying. The work of the Thirty-fifth General Assembly was violently assailed by these forces all over the state. Some of its members were defeated for reelection. That Governor Clarke was fully aware of this trend is evident in his message in 1915, in which he said that time would vindicate the wisdom of providing that the state superintendency and "through it the schools of Iowa" should not be made "the football of politics," and also vindicate the courage of the members of the legislature "who laid down their political lives for the people." Clarke followed this with a defense of the "violently condemned" Thirty-fifth. The friends of education in the Assembly in

<sup>53</sup> *Iowa School Report, 1914.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid., 1912.*



1915, however, were able to do little more than to hold the ground already gained. Reaction set in in earnest with the next administration.

*William L. Harding, 1917-1921.* Governor Harding's single educational recommendation in his inaugural address was that military training be introduced into the schools. The General Assembly in 1917 showed a reactionary tendency by putting the office of superintendent of public instruction back into politics, making it once more elective on a partisan basis. This Assembly also revised the statutes relating to the formation of consolidated districts.<sup>55</sup> Of this particular revision, Deyoe said in his 1918 report, "Recent legislation has practically stopped the consolidation movement."<sup>56</sup>

State Superintendent Deyoe continued to set advanced goals for public education, but Governor Harding, in his 1919 message, limited himself to recommendations that all instruction below high school should be in the English language only, and that teachers' salaries should be increased. This Assembly enacted several school laws, but none of them on recommendation of the Governor, except that of requiring the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in all schools, public and private.<sup>57</sup>

Harding's final message (1921) contained considerably more material on education than his previous messages. In it, he recommended establishing three additional state normal schools, saying, "This legislature ought not to adjourn without launching this program." He also recommended hiring teachers for twelve months, with twelve months' pay; authorizing teacher contracts for more than one year; increasing the compensation of county superintendents; and requiring American citizenship of candidates for certification. The Assembly passed laws raising county superintendents' salaries and requiring the teaching of the Constitution of the United States and of Iowa in all public and private schools.<sup>58</sup>

The return to the system of political election of the state superintendent brought into this office P. E. McClenahan, 1919-1923, and May E. Francis, 1923-1927. Public education in Iowa made no significant gains during these administrations.

*Nathan E. Kendall, 1921-1925.* Governor "Nate" Kendall evinced an active interest in the schools, but his messages, while they contain many

<sup>55</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1917, Chaps. 318, 432.*

<sup>56</sup> *Iowa School Report, 1918.*

<sup>57</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1919, Chap. 198.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid., 1921, Chaps. 91, 112.*



complimentary references to education, did not offer definite suggestions for its betterment. In his message in 1923 he noted that, "Within the biennium, we have compelled more than national attention. Iowa City dispatched eleven unconquered athletes to humble the haughty partisans of old Eli with the first midwestern touchdown ever inflicted upon that ancient and honorable academy." The Governor complimented Cedar Falls for its "preeminence" and "the superb service of its venerable president," and said that "more buildings, more apparatus, more faculty, more dormitories are absolutely indispensable. There is no alternative. We cannot retreat without reaction; we cannot suspend without stagnation; we can but advance to our obvious and unescapable duty."

The record of the 1923 legislative session on education is notable only for the enactment of a statute requiring the teaching of health and physical education in all public and teacher training schools, an action enforced by the support of a number of lay organizations. Governor Kendall's chief claim to be remembered in connection with school legislation rests upon his veto of a bill passed by this Assembly providing for the extension of state aid to private schools and colleges engaged in elementary teacher training.<sup>59</sup>

*John Hammill, 1925-1931.* Governor John Hammill gave evidence during his administration of attitudes and convictions gained from his experience as a member of the Better Iowa Schools Commission. In his inaugural address in 1925, he called for a solution of the tax problem "without detriment to the efficiency of the schools"; for the divorce of the office of superintendent of public instruction from political influence; and for the elimination by the State Board of Education of all avoidable duplication in the work of the state institutions.

To these suggestions and recommendations, the Assembly paid no attention, except to direct the State Board of Education to provide for the elimination of all unnecessary duplication in the work of the state colleges, "both in the course of study and in other work."<sup>60</sup> Governor Hammill reported the compliance of the Board with this resolution, in his 1927 message, and struck a positive note in his evaluation of these institutions. Hammill referred to public education as continuing to be a matter of major concern, but he made only two recommendations: the abolition of the teacher placement bureau in the department of public instruction, as "op-

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1923, Chaps. 64, 68.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1925, Chap. 281.



posed to good public practice"; and the close examination of all appropriations for state aid, with the elimination of those not being spent to secure the best results. The latter recommendation was taken to refer to standard rural school aid, the one point of school policy most enthusiastically advocated by State Superintendent May Francis.

In 1929, John Hammill was elected to a third term. In both his biennial message and his inaugural address this year, he continued to display qualities of educational leadership. In the former, he repeated the recommendation for doing away with the office of school district treasurer, and in the latter he discussed taxation as a means of equalization of educational opportunity, saying, "The organization for purposes of administration of a school unit should include taxing valuation sufficient to establish this equality of opportunity. . . . Anything less than the attainment of this end is selfish and foolish economy."

Once again, the state of Iowa was fortunate in having a conjunction of educational leadership in both the offices of Governor and superintendent of public instruction. Agnes Samuelson was elected to the latter position in 1926, and for the following twelve years she performed the duties of the office with exceptional efficiency and vision, in spite of the fact that these years included those of the depression.

In his final message (1931), Hammill suggested an equalization fund, derived from "taxes on cosmetics, tobacco, soft drinks, gum and other non-essentials," to be distributed to schools on the basis of need and effort. As to teacher qualifications, he said that the next step should be advancement to two years of normal training above high school. These ideas became, by force of circumstances, ideals unrealizable in the immediate future.

*Dan W. Turner, 1931-1933.* Governor Dan W. Turner said in his inaugural address (1931) that many localities had set up more elaborate programs than their financial abilities justified, and he called for a conscientious scrutiny of school costs. The wave of economic depression had at last reached Iowa, and the schools were called upon to bear more than their fair share of the efforts for retrenchment. Turner served but one term, going down to defeat in the Democratic landslide of 1932. He failed during his administration to evince an active interest in the welfare of the schools. His only reference, even indirectly, to public education in his final message (1933) was a recommendation of a further mandatory tax reduction law.



Such a measure was passed in 1931 (the Elliott Bill) requiring all school districts to reduce their levies for the coming biennium to a level not to exceed 95 per cent of the 1930 levy.<sup>61</sup>

Governor Turner's attention, so far as education in general was concerned, was chiefly directed to an attack upon the State University and the State Board of Education. On his recommendation, a legislative investigation of the financial management of the University was undertaken, which revealed nothing which would justify the time and money expended upon it. Critics of the Governor charged him with attempting to bring political influence to bear upon the State Board of Education. With the change of administration in the state, the controversy ended. The Governor, however, had the last word, saying in his final message (1933), "The business methods of the university have been the cause of grave concern to all thoughtful citizens and new plans should be devised to eliminate extravagance and encourage sound business administration in this great institution."

*Clyde L. Herring, 1933-1937.* The period of Democratic party dominance in the state government of Iowa continued from 1933 to 1939, including the depression years. Economic problems forced themselves upon the attention of everyone. It is possible now, looking back upon these years, to derive satisfaction from the change in the tax structure of the state brought about through the adoption of the "three tax plan," and the consequent transfer from real property to other forms of wealth a part of the responsibility of public finance.<sup>62</sup>

Governor Herring opened his inaugural address (1933) by saying, "We are met in one of the darkest hours of our history. Corn is selling at 12 cents a bushel, oats at 8 cents, hogs at 2 cents and cattle at 4 cents a pound." At the end of his first term, he could say, "Two years ago I came before you at a time when the tide of adversity was running high; when our country had fallen on evil days; when men of courage had all but lost hope. Today the sun is shining again and hope and confidence fill the hearts and souls of men." He expressed, in his first inaugural address (1933), appreciation for the splendid manner in which the schools had met the emergency in both its social and educational aspects. His recommendation that a state planning board be organized and that education be one of

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1931, Chap. 244.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1933-1934 (extra), Chap. 32.



the main features of its program was effected by statute and procedure.<sup>63</sup>

The public school program had been carried on, thanks to the loyal and untiring efforts of administrators and teachers, in spite of the Beatty-Bennett Act of 1933, making mandatory reduction in tax levies in all school districts to 20 per cent of those of 1930.<sup>64</sup> To this measure, which was opposed by practically all of the educational leaders and organizations of the state, Herring is said to have thrown his personal support at a strategic moment in the consideration of the bill, and its passage was attributed by many to this action on his part.

*Nelson G. Kraschel, 1937-1939.* Governor Kraschel, in his two messages, gave a considerable amount of attention to public education and its problems. In his 1937 message, he suggested "a careful study by a proper tribunal" of "the exact obligation that the people of Iowa want to assume for the education of their youth," as preliminary to changes in the financing of the educational system. He suggested also divorcing the school system from politics by making the superintendent of public instruction appointive "by the State Board of Education or by some other nonpartisan body." In 1939 Kraschel called upon the state "to reverse the trend of destructive and false economy" in support of the state institutions of higher education which had characterized the recent past. This was done with a degree of moderation.

The twelve years from 1927 to 1939 were those of the educational administration of Agnes Samuelson as state superintendent, and of the political administrations of Governors Hammill, Turner, Herring, and Kraschel. The Assemblies in 1927 and 1929 accepted the progressive educational leadership of Hammill and Samuelson, which was ably reinforced by an active State Teachers Association. In these two sessions, acts were passed providing for the establishment of public junior colleges, making the organization of kindergartens mandatory on petition of a prescribed number of parents, authorizing the establishment of tuition-free evening schools, calling for a survey of the educational needs of handicapped children, and making high school graduation the minimum basis for teacher certification.<sup>65</sup>

The year 1931 ushered in a period of reaction. The recommendation of Governor Turner for forced economy in school expenditures was acceded

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1937, Chap. 235.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1933, Chap. 123.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1927, Chaps. 86, 90, 91; *ibid.*, 1929, Chaps. 96, 114.



to by passing the Elliott Bill and the Beatty-Bennett Bill, by reducing the teachers' minimum wage to \$40 a month, and by making the organization of kindergartens permissive rather than mandatory. The one positive educational gain in 1933 was the enactment of a new certification law, which set a new standard of two years of college preparation for state teachers certificates. This act also recognized administration and supervision by providing new types of certificates for these services.<sup>66</sup>

In the legislative sessions of 1937 and 1939 few important school acts were passed, but a large number of existing school laws were revised, clarified, and harmonized through the influence and efforts of Fred L. Mahannah, Deputy State Superintendent.

*George A. Wilson, 1939-1943.* Governor Wilson came to the chief executive's office of Iowa with a record of efficient service in the state legislature, where he had been accounted a firm friend of the public schools. His inaugural address (1939) gave promise of his continued interest in public education. He said, "It is not enough to say that our state had the least percentage of illiteracy and then blind ourselves to the problems needing attention. Improvement in the financing of our schools and the welfare of teachers and pupils should no longer be delayed." In his message in 1941 he made no reference to public education.

Three forward steps in the improvement of schools were taken by the 1941 Assembly: the passage of a foundational law for the education of handicapped children, and of a school library law authorizing the apportionment of the entire proceeds of the interest on the permanent school fund to be expended for the purchase of library books for the public schools, the realization of the dream of Governor Grimes almost ninety years earlier. Provision was also made for a school code commission, consisting of four members appointed by the Governor, with the state superintendent as ex officio chairman.<sup>67</sup> The members of this commission were: Mrs. S. E. Lincoln, J. Kendall Lynes, J. A. Anderson, Floyd E. Page, and Jessie M. Parker, Chairman.

*Bourke B. Hickenlooper, 1943-1945.* Governor Hickenlooper, in his inaugural address, said that he was making some general suggestions, rather than "a complete and detailed program of legislation." He recommended careful study of the report of the educational commission.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1933, Chaps. 51, 56, 65.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 1941, Chaps. 32, 152, 163.



This commission failed to profit by the experience of the Bolton Commission of 1907, and presented the entire codification and revision in one bill.<sup>68</sup> The bill failed of passage. A joint resolution was adopted by the 1943 Assembly setting forth their reasons for not taking action on the proposals of the commission, and providing for the appointment of another commission to make further study of the matter. It was said in this resolution that, since time had not been available for the study of this "voluminous" bill by either the legislature or the public, another commission should be created to give particular attention to the tax structure of the state, as it concerned the school system, and to complete their report with drafts of proposed bills by November 10, 1944.<sup>69</sup>

The personnel of the new commission of 1943-1944 included four legislators — Senators G. W. Hunt and Robert Keir, Representatives A. L. Doud and B. D. Moyle — and three lay members — Mrs. Raymond Sayre of the Farm Bureau, H. K. Peterson, attorney, and N. D. McCombs, a city superintendent of schools.

State Superintendent Jessie M. Parker, in her report for 1944, accounted for the failure of action on the report of the 1943 commission by saying, "The legislature which received the report was engrossed with war responsibilities and not inclined to act in school matters." She hoped that the new commission might induce the General Assembly to solve such problems as "state support for public education, reorganization into larger districts, state aid for transportation, and the gradual raising of teacher qualifications."<sup>70</sup>

Hickenlooper was elected to the United States Senate in 1944, and in his message as retiring Governor he referred to the school code commission as having recommended some twenty bills for consideration. He spoke of the report as "a capable job" and recommended it for "thorough study and enactment of such legislation as in your judgment may be constructive."

*Robert D. Blue, 1945-1949.* Governor Blue, in 1945, urged that the school code report "ought to receive early and careful consideration." In 1947 he endorsed making the state superintendency appointive, reducing the number of rural schools and high schools, and recommended an optional county unit bill.

<sup>68</sup> *Report of School Code Commission, 1944.*

<sup>69</sup> *Laws of Iowa, 1943, Chap. 314.*

<sup>70</sup> *Iowa School Report, 1944.*



Of the bills recommended by the commission, ten were enacted into law in 1945 and three in 1947. Among the proposals not approved were those for the reorganization of the department of public instruction, adult education, and kindergartens. Among the bills enacted into law were ones dealing with state support, retirement, reorganization of school districts, certification of teachers, minimum wage, handicapped children, and with the creation of a county school system along lines originally suggested by Governor Shaw.<sup>71</sup>

The passage of these acts in 1945 and 1947 constitutes, on the whole, the most significant advance in public education in Iowa made since 1913, and justifies calling this the period of the third Iowa educational renaissance. Credit for these accomplishments must be given to the members of the two school code commissions of 1943 and 1944, to educational leaders, official and unofficial, to lay and professional organizations, and to the ardent friends of education in the two houses of the state legislature. Much remained to be done and much was to be accomplished in the years immediately following 1947, the point at which this survey ends. The improvement of public education through legislation has come to be accepted as a matter of supreme importance.

<sup>71</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1945, Chaps. 91, 126, 128, 131, 134, 135; *ibid.*, 1947, 147, 150, 152.