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Rochester's Public Schools

A Testing Ground For Community Policies

By BLAKE MCKELVEY

Three decades have slipped by since the publication by the Rochester Historical Society in 1939 of an extended review of "The History of Education in Rochester." Few comparable eras of time have been more crowded with revolutionary events focussing in one way and another on the city's schools. Indeed the schools in recent years have served as a proving ground in a very real sense for the experimental testing not only of educational theories but also of civic policies of major concern to the larger community. Yet, dramatic as this recent experience has been, a backward glance over Rochester's history reveals that many of the dominant issues and controversies of each successive era found early expression in the administration of the city's schools. Moreover it is interesting to discover that the schools frequently pointed the way for a resolution of community problems. We may therefore hope that our educators will again provide leadership in achieving fruitful settlements of contemporary issues as they did at an earlier date in first recognizing the democratic rights of all citizens, and later in promoting responsible governmental practices, to mention only the two most pertinent examples.

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Milltown and Flour City

Rochester's educational history supplies numerous examples of creative community leadership. One of the first actions of the pioneer settlers was the provision of a district school to serve all village youths. As the children increased in number the community opened new district schools and private academies and erected for their accommodation buildings that also served as meeting places for struggling religious sects and, on occasion, for civic and social functions as well. The primary need at the start was for adequate facilities for the essential services, which definitely included education in the Three R's, and each ward in the newly incorporated village hastened to provide its district school. Parents interested in giving their children more advanced training joined in the 1820's to establish a half dozen private academies. This development, unobjectionable at first, soon tended to sharpen the distinction between the more and the less fortunate families and drew many of the paying pupils from the district schools, threatening to brand them, especially in the more affluent districts, as pauper institutions. Thus by the mid-century the Rochester schools were struggling to supply not only adequate but also democratic facilities.

The crucial issue facing the newly chartered City of Rochester in the mid-thirties was the question of free schools. The practice, continued from village days, of admitting children whose parents were unable to make the required payments and collecting their fees from the poor fund, was divisive and became increasingly unpopular. Repeated efforts to persuade the city to assume full responsibility for all district schools, which numbered 13 in 1836, finally bore fruit with the adoption by the Common Council and the State Legislature in May 1841 of an amendment to the city charter calling for the support of free public schools under the supervision of an elected Board of Education. The first Board took office in June that year and

named Isaac Mack, a miller and Alderman from the 2nd Ward, as Superintendant. Through the forthright efforts of the early board members, including such men as Henry O'Reilly, Abelard Reynolds, and Levi A. Ward, the school facilities were improved and the enrollment was increased by 1844 to 4,246 or four-fifths of all children eligible.

A disturbing new issue emerged in the early forties as the Board assumed responsibility for maintaining a separate school for Negroes. That school, conducted in rented quarters on Spring Alley in 1841, was the result of a petition signed by 32 colored residents of Rochester in 1832 for the establishment of a separate school in order to assure their children an education free from the ostracism they met in the regular district schools. The Board assumed responsibility for that struggling school in 1841 and soon rented a room on North Washington Street for a second Negro school and then, in an economy move, combined the two in that more suitable location. Frequent protests arose against the maintenance of this separate school. Some citizens complained of the excessive cost involved because of the limited number of Negro children enrolled; others denounced the discrimination inflicted upon these children. Frederick Douglass, refusing to send his daughter to the Negro school, enrolled her instead in a private school for girls. He later engaged a tutor to instruct his younger children at home. Other Negro parents likewise boycotted the segregated school, making the outlay for a limited enrollment even more disproportionate, which finally in 1857 prompted the Board to discontinue the separate school and order the free admittance of Negro children to the public schools in their neighborhoods.

The 1850's was a crucial decade in Rochester's educational history. Not only did the Board of Education recognize the rights of Negro children to equal and unsegregated educational opportunities—a full decade before the state granted their fathers the right to vote—but the schools also abolished separate

classes for girls and boys and treated them as equals more than a half century before the state extended full suffrage to women. Even more important, from an educational point of view, was the decision of the Board, under the enlarged powers granted by the revised state education law of 1850, to organize and maintain senior departments in several of the more adequately equipped district schools in order to provide more advanced instruction to older pupils from these and neighboring districts. This recognition of an educational responsibility for instruction beyond the Three R's prompted the adoption at first of a three divisional system—the primary, junior, and senior divisions—from which the graded system evolved by the close of the decade and received its first full application at Rochester in the new No. 9 School, which supplied separate rooms for each of the nine grades that now offered instruction leading up into the academy level.

A move for a free academy was the next step. Superintendent Mack had voiced the need in 1844, and a Citizens' Committee had pushed successfully a year later for a provision authorizing the Board of Education to establish a high school at a cost not to exceed \$8,000. The Common Council, however, had refused to appropriate the funds, and more than a decade slipped by before a new board and a new superintendent determined, in June 1857, to discontinue the senior departments in four schools and to use the funds thus saved to remodel and staff School No. 1 as a central high school. It opened in September with 160 pupils selected by rigid examinations given to the applicants from all grade schools and afforded a choice between an academy program, a college preparatory program, and an eclectic course. Despite numerous protests from tax payers who objected to the use of public funds for such advanced studies, the Central High School won popular backing and, after securing a charter from the State Board of Regents, changed its name to the Rochester Free Academy in 1862. The continued ex-

pansion of its enrollment soon taxed the capacity of the two-story structure and compelled the Board of Education in 1872 to authorize the construction of a more adequate building on that site. The new 4-story structure (the present Board of Education building) was erected and occupied in March 1874 with 300 pupils in attendance.

The Cosmopolitan Years

The Rochester schools faced new challenges in the 1860's and after. As the city's population acquired a more cosmopolitan character with the influx of newcomers from Central and Eastern Europe, it pressed new demands on the public schools. Not only did many newcomers want their cultural traditions recognized, but the city's changing economic character required curricular developments to meet its needs. Moreover the emergence of a separate system of Catholic parochial schools confronted the Board of Education with new dilemmas involving the separation of church and state and prodded the schools into taking the lead in fostering the growth of a secular society and in promoting the assimilation of the city's diversified population into a more unified American community.

Rochester's schools hesitatingly followed the lead of schoolmen in Quincy, Oswego, and Brooklyn in several reforms of these years. Once adopted, the graded system, introduced from Quincy, was permanently maintained though the number of grades was increased to ten in some years. The Oswego method of object teaching, adopted briefly in the late sixties, was soon abandoned in most schools, as was the early teacher-training program in the Free Academy. Intensive political rivalries in the seventies prompted many aspiring politicians to run for the school board as a stepping stone to the position of alderman, and the safest campaign promise appeared to be a reduction in the school budget. When elected, however, their chief concern often seemed to be the appointment of worthy backers to the

teaching staff. With the growth of the city's population and the adoption by the state of the first compulsory education law in 1874, the demand for new schools increased, and the city gradually built new graded schools on the pattern of No. 9 School, which had originally been adopted from Brooklyn. It was not until the 1880's when Sylvanus A. Ellis, who had first served as superintendent in 1869-75, was again named to that office that the Rochester schools began to re-institute earlier reforms and achieved a measure of stability.

That stability, however, was based on the acceptance of limited objectives. The public schools met the requirements of the state attendance law only because of the determination of the Catholic Diocese to supply a parochial school in each city parish. Although Bishop McQuaid's advocacy of Christian free schools supported by public taxation failed to win acceptance, he successfully fostered the establishment of ten parochial free schools by 1890 to overshadow an earlier trend towards select schools under rival Catholic orders. His campaign also challenged the Board of Education to review and abandon the practice of daily Bible readings in the public schools. This action, taken in 1875, brought a heated debate over the proper objectives of the public schools and turned them more directly towards secular ends.

One of the new functions assumed by the schools was the teaching of German. The rapid influx of German immigrants had swelled their total from 1316 in 1845 to 7730 by 1870. By the end of that decade they had reached 11,000, which nearly doubled the Irish-born in number and comprised almost an eighth of the city's population. In that total the American-born children of German parents now formed a significant block, and the speed with which they learned English created a fissure in some German families, which could only be bridged, many of their elders felt, by formal instruction in German in the schools. The first two classes, introduced in 1872, proved so

successful that the Board soon increased their number and reported an enrollment of 1000 in such classes by the mid-sixties.

The German influence combined with other cosmopolitan and urban influences to back a further expansion of the school curriculum. Agitation for public kindergarten classes commenced at Rochester in 1883 and, although the tax-conscious majority and the absence of any charter provision for such expenditures diverted this effort to the support of private kindergartens, the movement gained such popularity that when the State Legislature finally in 1893 granted cities the authority to maintain these classes, the Board of Education promptly established kindergarten departments in nine public schools. In the meantime the manual-training program, first introduced experimentally in 1885 as a course in mechanical drawing, was expanded to include wood-working at School No. 26 in 1892 and soon won application in several other schools. A cooking class experiment at one school in 1894 spread quickly to other schools, and a sewing class made its appearance in one school before the end of the century. The dramatic success of a summer camp conducted by Professor Arey for the students of his natural science course at the Free Academy in the early 1890's prompted the inclusion of some of the older boys from the grade schools in this program in the mid-nineties and the introduction of formal natural science instructions in the upper grades.

A student-sponsored effort to conduct gymnastic exercises on the top floor of the Free Academy in 1884 had soon to be abandoned, but the students were encouraged to organize an Athletic Association and to hold an annual Field Day with track events. By the late nineties the Academy boys had a bicycle club, a canoe club, and a baseball team. The expansion of the Academy's program of academic subjects was less impressive. In addition to history and geography, both firmly entrenched at the opening of the new building, physics and chemistry as well as biology early made their appearance. But, in the mid-

nineties, when advanced manual training for boys and home economics for girls were proposed, advocates of economy protested that such courses were available for a modest charge at nearby Mechanics Institute, and the Common Council refused to supply the necessary funds.

In 1886 the Free Academy revived an earlier practice of offering free evening classes. Such classes offered first at No. 1 School in the 1840's and at the Central High in the late fifties had chiefly served young mechanics unable to attend during the day hours. After their suspension during the Civil War, Superintendent Ellis had supplied teachers for two evening classes at Schools No. 5 and 14 in the poorer districts of the mid-seventies, but advocates of economy had soon closed them. Now Superintendent Ellis, back on the job, persuaded the Board to supply two and later six teachers for such classes at the Academy; and when the applications of numerous foreign-born adults for admission to classes in English and simple arithmetic overtaxed the Academy's facilities, he removed them to the recently remodeled Schools No. 5 and 9, which were more conveniently located in the immigrant districts.

Following a political hassle with the Board of Education, Ellis resigned in 1891 and was replaced by Milton Noyes, one of its members and an ambitious lawyer who soon developed a close working arrangement with George Aldridge, the Republican boss. When the onset of the depression prompted a cut in the budget, some teachers including the music instructors were dropped and all salaries were reduced except that of the Superintendent, which was advanced to \$3000. An investigation by a group of industrialists headed by Joseph T. Alling, concerned over the poor schooling of young applicants for jobs, soon revealed that the schools were hamstrung by politics. Determined to free them from such influences, Alling and his associates formed a Good Government League and moved for the adoption of a small nonpartisan board of education. When

Aldridge refused to cooperate, the League agreed to support the Democrats who accepted some of its candidates. The reformers successfully backed the election of George E. Warner as mayor in 1895 and again in 1897, but they failed to break the Republican hold over the Board of Education and won little influence on the Democratic controlled Common Council.

The Good Government Reforms

Frustrated by continued bickering, the Good Government forces accepted the promise by Aldridge of a free hand in the schools if they would back his nominees for Council. Alling thus secured the passage of the Dow law creating a small school board and the election of his slate of candidates late in 1899. But early the next year when the reform board moved to oust Superintendent Noyes, it discovered that a clause inserted at the last minute safeguarded his tenure. Indignant over the chicanery and stymied by his control of appointments and of the purchase of books and supplies, the Board investigated a petty cash account under the Superintendent's jurisdiction and found sufficient evidence of peculation to prompt his hasty resignation.

Again the new Board served as a proving ground for social experimentation. One of its most prominent members was Mrs. Helen Barrett Montgomery, the first woman to serve as a commissioner of this or any other civic function in Rochester. Her able performance not only assured her reelection but also assured the nomination and election of at least one woman on all succeeding boards. Moreover, Mrs. Montgomery assumed the lead, together with Professor George M. Forbes of the University who served as president of the Board for five years, in pressing for the adoption and implementation of most of the reforms introduced during the decade. These included such innovations as vocational education, health education, and the use of school buildings as social centers. In addition the Board promoted an

extension of manual training, music, and evening classes to reach all segments of the community. As Superintendent Weet later declared, "No other period in the history of the Rochester schools has made a comparable extension in the range of public school activities."

The Board provided another innovation, later adopted by some other civic departments, when it canvassed the country for a professional administrator. It brought Dr. Charles B. Gilbert, the able superintendent of schools at Newark, New Jersey, to Rochester to fill that post early in 1901, and when he resigned two years later to become an editor for one of the publishers of school books, the Board chose a promising young professional from the New York City system who died unexpectedly before his arrival. Dr. Forbes served as acting superintendent during the Board's third and longer search, which brought Clarence F. Carroll from a similar post in Worcester to fill the job in Rochester from 1904 until 1911. These men helped to launch Rochester into the main stream of the nation's educational development, but it was the vigor of their local backers that propelled Rochester into a position of leadership.

Several of the new educational advances were direct responses to community needs. Many of the pupils now forced to continue their schooling through their 16th year had no aspiration for college and little interest in academic subjects. Some, backed by their parents, asked for more practical courses, and as the Board extended manual training courses into the upper grades and into the new high schools they acquired a more vocational character. After a considerable debate of the objectives of public education, the Board opened an experimental Factory School in an abandoned elementary building in 1908. The response was so enthusiastic that the first two teachers had to be increased to seven within two years. The girls, too, demanded attention and a second abandoned school soon housed an active program of instruction in domestic arts, household management, and train-

ing in some of the industrial arts open to women.

The expanding city presented increasing health hazards, and the schools accepted new responsibilities in this field too. The appointment of an instructor of physical culture to the faculty of the Rochester Normal and Training School in 1901 promised to supply the Rochester schools with teachers alert to the health problems and physical fitness of their pupils. Meanwhile the opening of the new East High School in 1903, equipped with the first public school gymnasium and shower baths, set a new standard. Again the response was so enthusiastic both from pupils and parents that the Board soon engaged a supervisor of physical training to organize indoor and outdoor exercises in the elementary schools. The Board opened the schools to occasional visits by medical inspectors supplied by the Chief Health Officer and welcomed the school nurses assigned to accompany them. The Board also provided a room in No. 14 School for a free dental clinic organized there by the Dental Society of Rochester in 1910, and it supplied a teacher to instruct a class of tubercular students in an open air school in a tent supplied and equipped by the Rochester Public Health Association.

Other advances occurred in high school and evening school programs. In addition to its facilities for physical education, the newly opened East High School soon provided instruction in commercial subjects and in instrumental music. To meet the needs of children over 14 whose parents secured work permits to enable them to work during the day, the Board strengthened its Evening School program by offering night courses at No. 26 School in mechanical drawing, electricity, manual training, sewing and cooking, and vocal music. These classes, designed to hold and instruct older boys and girls through their 16th year, also attracted young adults and prompted the opening of an evening high school, which by the end of the decade had 954 students while nine other evening schools enrolled over two thousand in elementary classes.

Despite the vigor of its leadership the Board of Education was not the only advocate of reform in these years. A group of mothers clubs, first organized in 1897, held an annual mass meeting for several years starting in 1900 and prompted the development of parent-teacher groups in many schools. A Teachers Club formed in 1901 to agitate for higher salaries soon achieved results and was able six years later to announce a third salary advance in four years. The students, too, were asserting themselves, and a survey in 1907 revealed the existence of ambitious student papers produced by young editorial committees in eleven elementary schools. Some of these activities aroused criticism, which found expression in a mass meeting held at St. Paul's parish house in the early fall of 1908. However the investigating committee appointed at that meeting and headed by Professor Walter Rauschenbusch found more to praise than to condemn in the public schools and presented in its 19-point report requests for further advances in teachers salaries and further improvements in educational methods as well as a greater emphasis on the fundamentals.

Perhaps the most remarkable innovation was the Social Center movement launched in 1907. Mrs. Montgomery had been talking of such a development ever since Jacob Riis in a lecture at B'rith Kodesh in 1901 had proposed that public schools in slum areas be used after hours for community functions. Several leaders of the Children's Playground League took up the proposal early in 1907 and, after an earlier Rauschenbusch survey had pointed up several unmet community needs, representatives of eleven interested societies formed a Social Extension Committee to promote the new program. Mrs. Montgomery persuaded the Board to designate No. 14 School as the social center for its neighborhood and to extend its facilities on successive nights to groups of adult men, adult women, teenage boys, teenage girls, and a joint forum among other activities under the direction of Edward J. Ward who was brought to

Rochester to direct the experiment. Its early success promoted the opening of two and later three additional schools for Social Centers and resulted in the organization of men's clubs and civic leagues in ten other school neighborhoods. The fourteen men's clubs formed a League of Civic Clubs in 1909 and invited distinguished speakers to Rochester to address their city-wide conventions and visit the individual clubs. Rochester received wide praise from some of these visitors, including Lincoln Steffens and Governor Charles Evans Hughes of New York, and provided the model for social centers in many other cities. Unfortunately the harsh criticism frequently leveled at Boss Aldridge in these public forums prompted the Common Council to cut the school budget so drastically that the Board determined in 1910 to continue the centers only on a volunteer basis. The Mayor deflected criticism by transferring the funds saved to a new playground department, but the city's leadership in community action was ended.

Boss Aldridge had likewise refused to renominate Mrs. Montgomery in 1909, replacing her with an able and popular teacher, Miss Helen E. Gregory. Two years later he blocked the renomination of Professor Forbes but did not attempt further interference. On the resignation of Superintendent Carroll in 1911 the Board chose his able assistant Herbert S. Weet, who had grown through the Rochester system, to fill the post. An administrator of consummate skill, Superintendent Weet won the cooperation of the board members and teachers and the backing of many politicians for a program that progressively improved the school facilities and extended them in the course of the next two decades to meet the increasing demands of a growing school population.

The Weet and Spinning Years

The school housing problem presented Weet with his most critical and most enduring problem, but he managed to make it

the basis for the introduction of several constructive reforms. New elementary schools were required and each new building introduced new features, such as the adjustable desks invented by Samuel P. Moulthrop, principal of No. 26 School, to facilitate both elementary and evening school use, the single story pattern at No. 24 School, the manual training shops supplied in seven new elementary schools, and other improvements. A rapid growth of the school population, increasing the enrollment of the elementary schools from 20 to 30 thousand during the second decade, compelled the city to build one or more new schools almost every year. The new East and West High Schools of 1903 and 1905 were filled to capacity by 1910 and while plans were under consideration for a North High, Superintendent Weet proposed the adoption of a new junior high school program to relieve the congestion in the elementary schools in several crowded districts by transferring their 7th, 8th, and 9th grades to new schools designed to serve their adolescent needs. The Board expanded and remodeled No. 26 School in the populous northeast district as Washington Junior High in 1915 and in the next eight years opened Jefferson Junior High in the northwest district, and Madison Junior High and Monroe Junior High in the southwest and southeast quadrants respectively. Each of these schools supplied special facilities and all hastened to organize extra curricular activities such as school papers, yearbook committees, camera, bicycle, and stamp-collecting clubs as well as sports teams and science societies. A tabulation at Madison in 1924 listed the officers of 65 such student organizations.

Superintendent Weet and the Board had to battle tax-conscious opponents for each forward step. The Superintendent answered local critics of the extravagant costs of some of the new buildings by citing testimony by school men from Detroit and elsewhere praising his fiscal accomplishments at Rochester. But the Common Council, limited in its taxing power for all

functions to 2 per cent of the city's assessed valuation, was increasingly appalled by the soaring demands of the school board. A new state law requiring the attendance of all children who had not passed the 8th grade until their 18th year prompted the organization in two Junior Highs of continuation classes on a part-time basis for those who secured work permits. These and other expenditures forced the city to resort to short term notes to meet part of the Board's operating expenses that year. All other cities in the state faced similar problems, and to relieve them the State Legislature appropriated funds the next year to supply salary advances for the teachers in the major city school districts thus launching a new program of expanded state aid to schools.

Encouraged by the recommendations of several groups of public spirited citizens, the Board determined in 1920 to provide special facilities for handicapped children. It introduced an orthopedic class at No. 5 School and welcomed the offer of a guild organized by the Elks to transport all physically handicapped children to and from that school. It offered an evening course at East High School in lip reading for adults with serious hearing difficulties similar to one previously conducted for elementary pupils. Everybody applauded these improvements, and when a budget cut forced the Board to announce a curtailment in its citizenship and health programs, the popular outcry was strong enough to persuade the Common Council to find the necessary funds to restore them. Superintendent Weet's efforts to secure a law exempting the school budget from the city's statutory limitation and making the Board fiscally independent were defeated, but his presentation of the urgent needs of the schools was so strong that the Board was authorized to prepare an expansion program to add 14 new schools in three years at a cost of \$10,000,000 to be raised by special bond issues. The third and fourth junior highs and six new elementary schools were opened in five years making a total of 44 and pro-

viding the city by 1925 with facilities superior to those of any other city in the state. Still the student population was growing, necessitating the continued use of several annexes and portable units to accommodate the 34,296 elementary pupils and the 11,244 now enrolled in four Junior Highs and two Senior Highs.

Renewed criticisms of the mounting expenditures, which soared to \$6,400,000 in 1924, had prompted the Chamber of Commerce to sponsor an investigation by the Bureau of Municipal Research. Unable to find areas for significant budgetary cuts, it recommended the creation of a larger school district, to include the areas in Greece and Brighton where the children received free schooling in the Rochester schools. Its proposal that this enlarged school district be created and be given independent taxing powers failed in 1929 to receive the necessary support, and the Board's only consolation that year was the fact that, despite the increasing number of free-school registrations, the total in the elementary grades dropped for the second year in a row, and the junior and senior high enrollments increased by only a thousand.

A demographic shift and the onset of the depression presented new challenges in Superintendent Weet's last years and saddled his successor, James M. Spinning, with grave problems. Although the decline in the elementary school enrollment persisted, relieving congestion in many schools, the mounting enrollments in the high schools continued producing an all-time high of 53,470 public school registrations in 1930. An extensive reorganization of the curriculum, approved that year, facilitated the shifting of pupils into classes according to their abilities in a "continuous process" program as they advanced through four major divisions—the primary, the elementary, the grammar, and the senior high. Rochester's early and confident response to the depression saved the schools from fiscal cuts until 1931 when \$1,080,000 was slashed from the budget. In order to reduce its impact, the 3000 members of the Teachers Association agreed to

accept a 10 per cent cut in their salaries, which absorbed most of the reduction, but the Board drastically curtailed several programs. It abolished the summer school program and most of the night classes, though popular demand forced it to maintain the Evening School at East High. The next year brought new cuts forcing Weet in his last year to sharply curtail the kindergarten classes and to drop 72 non-tenure teachers of music, public health, and other specialties.

Superintendent Spinning, chosen by the old Board several months before, early achieved harmony with the new Democratically controlled Board of Education in January 1934 as both faced the problems of continued retrenchment. To relieve pressure on the high schools, the Board progressively transformed the junior highs into senior highs, transferring 7th and later 8th grade pupils to the elementary schools where the registration was down. The high schools reached their peak enrollment in 1935, but much of the relief afforded by the retention of the younger pupils in the grade schools was offset by the higher proportion of older children who continued until graduation and after because of the dearth of jobs in the city. The Board took eager advantage of the various New Deal agencies that supplied funds to reopen the kindergartens, night schools, and gym programs, and it achieved an additional economy by closing No. 26 School because of a rapid decline in enrollments.

In the face of these retrenchments the Rochester schools made a noteworthy advance with the organization in 1936 of the Rochester School of the Air. Most of the schools had acquired slide and motion-picture projectors several years before, and the establishment in 1935 of a film library made it possible to launch a program of visual education which, in cooperation with the broadcasting facilities of WHAM, soon reached schools in many surrounding towns with twice-weekly science classes and cultural programs. When in a renewed economy drive a committee of the Chamber criticized the Board for sub-

mitting a budget in 1938 that showed a per capita cost higher than that of any other upstate city, its president replied that it was endeavoring to maintain "the quality and range of services to which the city had become accustomed." He also cited the state law which fixed the minimum salaries of Rochester's teachers at a higher rate than those of all other upstate cities except Buffalo.

With the outbreak of the Second World War the schools faced new problems. New job opportunities drew off many high school lads and brought a sudden drop in enrollments and a comparable decline in state-aid funds. The Board expanded its kindergarten program to accommodate the young children of mothers who wished to accept war jobs; it also added new courses in practical arts at the evening schools. It participated in the War Food Administration's new school-lunch program to supply a wholesome meal to children whose parents were employed at that hour. It consolidated several schools where the registration was low, yet these economies were insufficient to enable it to grant the salary increments the teachers desired, and their association leaders joined the administrators in appeals to Albany for additional school-aid funds.

When the close of the war brought, instead of the expected depression, a booming economy, the schools faced several new problems. The teachers, whose salaries had remained close to the depression level despite the steadily advancing wage scales of the war years, redoubled their efforts to secure a living wage. Miss Mary A. Sheehan of Rochester accepted the post of executive secretary of the State Teachers Association and started a state-wide campaign to persuade Governor Dewey to present an adequate salary level to the Legislature. When a committee named by the Governor prepared to recommend moderate increases, chiefly for new teachers, the Rochester Teachers Association joined with the newly formed teachers union to condemn the report. Governor Dewey's proposal when finally

announced came much nearer to the demands of the teachers and assured a minimum pay scale of \$2200 for first-year teachers in Rochester, rising to \$4710 for teachers with a master's degree and 16 years experience. The teachers were assured a \$300 increase at the start and annual increments to reach their levels. The bill, signed by the Governor in April 1947, also called for merit increases above those levels after the sixth year of service and Rochester was the first city in the state to institute such a system in 1948.

The mounting costs of the schools brought renewed demands for economies. A Bureau of Municipal Research report in September 1947 noted that Rochester's teacher-pupil ratio had risen because of the declining school population and recommended larger classes to effect major economies. Superintendent Spinning attacked the report for confusing teacher-pupil ratios with class sizes and protested that Rochester would sacrifice the quality of its education by increasing class size as proposed. The Board backed the Superintendent's stand and the Bureau revived its earlier proposal for a Metropolitan School District to encompass the four adjoining towns in order to eliminate the free-school districts, but again the action was deferred. When a move developed in 1949 to persuade the Legislature to slash the Governor's school-aid allotments, most of the Parent-Teacher's Associations of Rochester joined with the Teachers Association in battling to preserve the full budget. A proposal that the state seek aid from the federal government brought a quick protest from several groups in Rochester, including the editor of the *Democrat and Chronicle* who warned that Rochester taxes would pay for more than it received in return. But many teachers, impatient of waiting until the community would discover a method of raising its own school budget, urged both state and federal assistance. State aid was retained and federal aid would come in time, but meanwhile the urgent needs of the schools hastened the adoption of a local sales tax by the County of Monroe in 1951 for distribution to its various divisions.

The Last Two Decades

The schools in the decade following the war received an early hint of crucial problems soon to arise. An increasing number of drop-outs prompted a study of their causes by Dr. Howard C. Seymour, coordinator of guidance services in 1948. A number of cases of rowdiness at one of the high schools that fall attracted considerable publicity but Superintendent Spinning reported that an investigation had revealed only isolated incidents that occasionally marked large gatherings of spirited youths. Miss Mary Sheehan, now in charge of Monroe High School and Rochester's first woman principal, took a strong stand at a Teachers Association convention against the employment of any Communists as teachers, but when the McCarthy Committee proposed the inclusion of public schools in its investigation, Superintendent Spinning spoke out forcefully against such a probe declaring, "I would match the loyalty of teachers against that of any group in the country." Another national issue made its appearance locally when a campaign by the NAACP against the use of "Little Black Sambo" as a reader in the public schools prompted Spinning in 1951 to order its elimination from all reading programs and its removal from school library shelves. In a similar response to minority group demands the Board engaged an instructor to give a course in ancient Hebrew at Benjamin Franklin High that year.

The most alarming warning signal of 1950 was the sudden rise in number of registrations in the public kindergartens. A quick estimate revealed the prospect of a thousand additional registrations for the next year and prompted Superintendent Spinning to advise the Board of the impending impact of a new generation of "war babies" on the city's now aged school facilities. Mounting enrollments were soon evident even in the upper grades and the high schools. The trend reflected much more than the higher birth rate, for an increased appreciation of the

value of education was prompting more students to finish their high school years and press on to college. Congestion in the schools was more severe in the suburbs than in the city, and several suburban districts were paying part or all of the tuition fees required for the admission of their children to the city schools. The number of paying registrants mounted to 1848 in 1955 when the number from the free districts reached 1348, which was almost a tenth of the total enrollment that year. These children found places in the newer schools in the outer wards and encouraged the Board to move for the expansion of four of these schools in the mid-fifties. It also pressed successfully for the construction of a new East High School on a spacious site near the eastern outskirts of the city.

Long before the construction of the new building was commenced, Superintendent Spinning, having completed 22 years in the post, announced his retirement, and the Board promptly chose Dr. Seymour to succeed him in January 1955. As deputy Superintendent in the spring and summer of 1954, Dr. Seymour faced several mounting crises. The favorable rating the Rochester salary schedule had held in the early fifties was suddenly lost that year when salary boosts in other comparable cities and even in surrounding towns wiped out the advantage Rochester had enjoyed in bidding for new teachers. By earnest appeals to Albany he helped to secure the passage of an emergency aid bill that supplied funds for modest salary increases for all teachers, but the size of the increments proved more humiliating than gratifying to many teachers and spurred the organizing efforts of the teachers union.

Fiscal problems clouded the administration of the new Superintendent. An effort sponsored by the Republican city administration to grant fiscal independence to the schools failed to make headway, compelling the city to seek a larger income by a boost in the sales tax. The teachers received salary increases as a result, but Seymour had to submit a supplementary budget late

in 1955 to cover them and had to win approval for new schedules in 1956. Increased costs for the construction of East High School presented another fiscal problem, as did the mounting demands for new elementary schools to meet a swelling flood of children particularly in the inner-city districts. An overflow registration at No. 3 School in the old Third Ward forced the opening of an annex in a nearby church basement in 1958 pending the construction of a new School No. 2 on nearby Cady Street. The completion and dedication of the new East High School in May 1960 provided a moment of triumph and promised relief from over-crowding at that level for a few years though the heavy costs made the elementary school needs appear more ominous.

Fiscal problems were somewhat overshadowed in the late fifties by concern for educational improvements to enable America to match the Russian achievements in the launching of Sputnik. Some departmental supervisors favored new educational techniques, such as the new math and the project assignments in some courses; other emphasized the need for greater use of visual aids, and the Board engaged the services of a television consultant to plan and produce a series of experimental programs in 1958. Dr. Seymour accepted chairmanship of a Rochester Area Educational Television Association organized to mesh this school program with the broader efforts of other educational programs sponsored by the University and other institutions in order to present an effective bid for the new channel announced as available for Rochester.

But the Superintendent's chief reliance in his quest for quality education was in improved teaching, which focussed attention on the task of recruiting the best teachers. Unfortunately Rochester's salary schedule, though improved somewhat in 1956, had again been overshadowed by the higher schedules adopted in some of the suburban towns, and the city system faced a teacher shortage of 50 unfilled appointments in July 1959. With great

difficulty the administration filled most of these gaps and Seymour prepared to request a larger salary budget for the coming year. Despite much criticism of the resulting taxes, two of the Democratic candidates for the school board that fall advocated increased salaries for teachers and on their successful election moved to give classroom teachers a 12 per cent boost. Seymour, who had included an 8 per cent increase for all in his budget, threatened to resign if the Board upset his carefully graded salary structure, and the Board sustained him by a 3 to 2 vote. A full discussion of these differences in the press so aggravated the controversy that the four Democratic members of the Board refused to renew Seymour's contract at the end of his first six-year term that December.

Indignant protests greeted this announcement and two of the Superintendent's principal assistants refused to accept an appointment to replace him. After a hectic week, Dr. James E. Wishart, principal of West High, agreed, with Seymour's encouragement, to serve as acting Superintendent until a replacement could be found, and that summer the Board brought Dr. Robert L. Springer from Long Island to Rochester to fill the post. Seymour had meanwhile accepted an appointment as Superintendent of Schools in Phoenix, Arizona, and the RAETA board had chosen Harold S. Hacker, Director of the Public Library, as chairman to direct its campaign for a separate channel. The controversy, which had in part been one of personalities, subsided when the Democrats, despite the criticism they received, successfully won control of the City Council in November 1961. Unfortunately for the Board of Education one of their candidates ran on a pledge of economy, and the fiscal problems which had plagued Seymour contributed to the early death of Dr. Springer who succumbed to a heart attack in June of 1963.

The fiscal problems continued, but Herman R. Goldberg who was appointed as the city's 27th Superintendent in August

1963, soon had other and more difficult problems to contend with. Two were already on the desk at the time of his appointment as acting Superintendent in June—the need to replace several top administrative assistants who were retiring or accepting appointments elsewhere, and a request from State Commissioner of Education Dr. James E. Allen Jr. for a report by September 1st on the extent and character of local discriminatory practices and conditions in the Rochester schools together with a plan for their eradication.

Rochester had been alerted to the need for desegregation a full year before when ten inner-city families instituted a civil action against the Board and the Superintendent alleging that defacto segregation deprived their children of the opportunity to attend racially integrated schools. A court hearing on the charge had awakened the Board to the existence of defacto segregation, and it was ready to press for a full report on local conditions in response to commissioner Allen's request. The report submitted on September 1st recalled that Rochester had abolished its separate Negro school in 1857 and declared that the Board had taken no formal action since then to promote racial segregation. An imbalance had nevertheless developed, it conceded, as a result of the residential clustering or segregation of Negroes in the inner-city wards. The children in seven schools serving these districts were found to be over 50 per cent non-white, and in five the ratio was over 80 per cent non-white. One of these schools, No. 2, was a new one, opened in 1960 in an area which had since become predominately non-white because of the rapidity of the expansion of Rochester's Negro community. The new No. 6 School scheduled to open in September would also be heavily non-white as it was built to serve the urban renewal housing recently erected in the Seventh Ward. The modern facilities and improvements in the other inner-city schools compared favorably, the Report declared, with those in any portion of the city, and the teacher-pupil ratio was appreciably higher

there than in the system as a whole. These circumstances, however, did not obscure the presence of racial imbalance, and the Board on August 27 directed the Superintendent to prepare a plan to reduce that imbalance and to have it ready for implementation in September 1964.

Superintendent Goldberg had his first recommendations ready for the board that December. He received their full approval of a proposal to launch an open enrollment plan on an experimental basis in February in order to prepare for its wider application in September. All parents of children attending the six schools that were 80 per cent non-white who wished to have them transferred were asked to apply for one of the 600 openings available in 16 receiving schools. Meanwhile, because of severe congestion at No. 3 School, its 5th and 6th grades were transferred to School No. 30, which had ample space and was totally white. Protests erupted, but the Board and the media backed the Superintendent, and the transfers were affected peacefully, though the number of volunteers was not as large as expected either in February or in September. To upgrade the instruction and improve the image of those who could not participate in these transfers the staff prepared an extended supplementary account of "The Negro in American Life" for use in the eighth grade program of studies. Yet for some this merely emphasized the deficiencies of the printed materials.

The situation had in fact become more grievous, partly because of the riots that erupted in these inner-city wards in July 1964 and partly because a rapid increase in their population was seriously crowding their school facilities and increasing their non-white ratios. Something more was needed and Goldberg in November recommended the adoption of a new triad plan linking two nearby schools to each of three heavily non-white schools in an exchange of pupils by classes and prodded the Board to plan the construction of a new school in each of these larger neighborhoods. The Board shortly gave its approval

and later directed the Superintendent to prepare a more comprehensive long-term plan for desegregation of the city's schools.

Plans for the construction of new buildings brought the fiscal problems back into focus. When rising costs in 1966 forced the Board to increase its budget for six new schools from \$10 to \$12 million, tax conscious citizens began to cry out for stricter economies. The teachers, who with the aid of a fact finding committee had secured a salary boost that spring, saw their chances for further raises diminished and voted to strengthen the bargaining power of the Association leaders in 1968 by giving them authority to call a strike if necessary. Unwilling to accede to such a threat and unable to find adequate revenues under the city's fiscal formula to meet the demands of the Teachers Association, the Board and the Association engaged the services of a panel of fact finders who recommended a salary schedule that assured the city district the bargaining advantages it needed to compete with the suburban school districts and encouraged it to return the responsibility for finding the necessary funds to the City Council where it legally resided. The Board accepted the committee's proposal and negotiated a compromise contract with the Association, but it was forced to defer action on the report of another Citizen Advisory Panel on Financing Public Education until the Council and the County Legislature could be brought into the deliberation.

The Board and the Council, aided by a timely state grant, met the increased salary costs and other operating expenses, but both reacted negatively when the Superintendent presented them in 1967 with four alternative plans for the desegregation of the schools each of which would have cost many millions of dollars. Despite the Report's detailed analysis of how each could be applied, it was apparent that the Superintendent as well as the Board was not sufficiently convinced of the merits of any one of the plans to give it full endorsement. Instead, the Board adopted a 15-point plan listing specific

measures designed to encourage voluntary transfers and to provide compensatory opportunities to children in inner-city schools.

In pursuance of this program Superintendent Goldberg redoubled his efforts to promote voluntary transfers not only within the system, where the total reached 1500 in 1969, but also from the inner-city to suburban schools where he found places for 428 children not counting those involved in several suburban summer school programs. With the collaboration of concerned citizens of the city and the towns the Superintendent developed a reverse transfer of 225 white children to the inner-city schools. He also submitted plans for a new intermediate school to relieve the pressure on No. 19 School, and he endeavored to assure the new Frederick Douglass Junior High a racially well balanced enrollment. At the same time Superintendent Goldberg seized every opportunity to stress the importance of compensatory education for the disadvantaged child. In this connection he looked hopefully to the World of Inquiry School opened in old No. 58 School in September 1967, an experimental project financed by federal funds, and laid plans for a broader application of its educational innovations.

It is much too early to judge the results of these recent programs. Yet a glance at the registration statistics of Rochester's schools in 1967 reveals that although the number of schools with non-white enrollments of 80 per cent or more had increased to nine, the distribution of non-whites among the schools had also increased, insuring an integrated school experience to larger numbers of both white and black children. The total number of non-whites enrolled had doubled in five years and over three thousand were attending high school where they comprised a fifth of the total. The fact that non-whites in the graduating class have increased from 12 to 16 per cent in the past year represents a positive gain for the city as well as for its black residents. This has been accomplished partly through the efforts of dedicated teachers and partly because of the

assistance of such outside programs as Project Uplift maintained with federal backing by the Urban League. These accomplishments are only a beginning but it can at least be said that the public schools of Rochester are again supplying, in addition to many educational services, a proving ground for the demonstration of vital community policies.