

A HISTORY OF THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION, 1945-1965

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ASSOCIATION, 1945-1965

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## PREFACE

The two decades following the Second World War saw education become a major issue in American life and the subject of one of the great fundamental debates in our national history. During those years the developments in education made up an important segment of the history of each state. Central to the history of education in the state and in the nation was the status and progress of the teaching profession. Most of the teachers in Oklahoma, from elementary to higher education, joined the Oklahoma Education Association, an organization whose stated purpose was to improve professional services and to gain professional rewards for its members. Its impact upon the state justifies its special study. This paper is an effort to record the essential history of this organization in the postwar period.

Oklahoma historian Arrell M. Gibson, in his Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, expressed a widely prevalent view that the OEA had become in midcentury a "power bloc in state politics." While the organized educators consciously pursued political influence, many of their numbers felt that the press and public gave too little attention to the nonpolitical activities of the Association. This paper undertakes to present an accurate and proper balance between the legislative struggles, which were reported fully, though often raucously, in the press, and the less spectacular professional activities to which the members gave a greater portion of their time and attention.

The terminal dates of the study are significant. The year 1945 is

a recognized turning point in the history of the world, of the United States, and of every aspect of American life. The OEA in 1945 faced a dual crisis, a deteriorating school finance situation brought on by the war, and internal divisions threatening the breakup of the Association. Out of this emergency came a new constitution, hailed as a great advance in democratic leadership of the organization, and an aggressive legislative program that pointed the direction and provided momentum for twenty years of legislative effort. The year 1965 was also crucial in OEA history. Repudiated at the polls, pilloried by the press, and again threatened with internal schisms, the organization took the unprecedented step of applying sanctions against the state. The Association won its immediate goals, but at a cost many feared was too high. It was apparent that after 1965 the OEA would never be the same as it had been before.

Many people assisted and encouraged the author in the preparation of this dissertation. Most helpful were Louise Cook and Jack Wettengel of the Newspaper Room of the Oklahoma Historical Society; Joe Hurt, director of Information Services and the Professional Library, State Department of Education; Standifer Keas, executive secretary of the Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System; and J. Bruce Selby, retired educator and OEA leader from Enid. Ferman Phillips, executive secretary of the OEA, most graciously placed the records and the facilities of the Association at my disposal, and he and his staff gave generously of their time and resources to help in the location and clarification of material. Members of the library staff at Oklahoma State University were consistently cooperative.

Dr. Theodore Agnew, chairman of my doctoral advisory committee, was extremely kind and patient, as he supervised the study from its

inception to its conclusion, providing invaluable guidance and raising many provocative questions and suggestions. Dr. Daniel Selakovich, a member of the committee, joined the chairman in reading the first draft and offered much useful criticism and encouragement. Recognition is extended also to other members of the committee, Dr. LeRoy H. Fischer, Dr. Norbert R. Mahnken, and Dr. Robert E. Sweitzer.

Dr. Clarence Petrowsky, chairman of the Department of Social Sciences at Southwestern State College, facilitated the study by adjusting the author's teaching schedule and work load. Finally, my wife contributed immeasurably by giving many hours to typing and proofreading and by providing unflagging encouragement at every stage of the research and writing.

The author extends to all of these people his sincere gratitude for their contributions. He holds none of them responsible for any errors or shortcomings in the work; he alone assumes this burden.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE YEAR 1945: A LOOK FORWARD AND A LOOK BACK

Nineteen hundred and forty-five was a year of new beginning all over the world as the greatest war in history came to an end. For the Oklahoma Education Association it closed an era of struggle against the obstacles that depression and war bring peculiarly to education, and the beginning of a period of peace and prosperity that was expected to permit giant strides in the growth of the teaching profession. The Association was to make progress in the postwar years, but would also experience persistent frustration, as the demands upon schools and teachers outstripped the ability or willingness of the public to support or to comprehend the educators' efforts. In 1945 the organized teachers grappled with the problems of school finance and the internal tensions of their professional organization. Twenty years later the same battles were being fought, but on a larger scale, with greater bitterness, and with outcomes more crucial both to the profession and to the public.

#### A Look Forward

Nineteen hundred and sixty-five may be remembered as a "watershed" in American education history, the year of milestone legislation in Congress and of record achievement in the school systems of the states.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>U. S., Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1965, Year of Legislative Achievement, Washington, 1966. The many notable educational enactments of the Eighty-Ninth Congress are summarized in this volume.

The end of the second decade after the Second World War found education one of the major issues in American life, the subject of one of the great fundamental debates in our national history. During these years developments in education occupied an important place in the history of every state. In Oklahoma it was not only the major item in the budget at every level of government, but the topic of a never-ending discussion as to what education is or should be, who should receive it and how much, who should pay for it, and who should have the greater voice in answering these questions.

Central to the growth of education in the nation and in every state was the rise of the teaching profession, and growing professionalism was inseparable from the expanding and strengthening of teacher associations. Educators in Oklahoma enrolled almost completely in the Oklahoma Education Association, a group that gained increasing attention in the state as it worked to improve the profession and to gain the recognition and rewards of professional service. The year of 1965, the "watershed" year, found the organized teaching profession of Oklahoma in a state of siege, defeated at the polls, pilloried in the press, and themselves accused of besieging the state.

The Oklahoma Education Association, hereinafter called the OEA, was the only all-inclusive organization of teachers in Oklahoma. While all persons "professionally engaged in the work of education" were eligible for membership, over ninety percent of the active members were from the public schools. Seventy percent classified themselves as classroom teachers. Ninety-nine percent of all public school teachers were enrolled in the OEA; fifty-five percent of college and university personnel

were members.<sup>2</sup> Counting student members, retired teachers, and associate members, the total enrollment in 1965 was almost 35,000. Active membership was 28,437,<sup>3</sup> nearly double the 1945 figure of 14,577.<sup>4</sup>

As the OEA membership mounted steadily through the two decades following World War II, its activity increased impressively. The purpose of the organization, as stated in its constitution, was "to promote the welfare of the teachers and the educational interests of all the people of the State of Oklahoma."<sup>5</sup> This statement turned out to be a declaration of war on two fronts; for the Association and its members found themselves engaged in a struggle to meet the demands for more and improved educational services, while at the same time they sought diligently to improve themselves as professionals and to gain recognition and support for their professional effort.

School enrollment and attendance increased throughout the two decades as the postwar "baby boom" rolled like a wave through the elementary and secondary schools into the halls of higher education. Students stayed in school longer, as technology dictated and prosperity permitted the young to advance beyond the aspirations of their parents. Expanded

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<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma Education Association, Report of the Oklahoma Education Association to the National Council of State Education Associations Evaluation Committee, Oklahoma City, 1968, Schedule III, p. 30. (Mimeographed. In files of the Association.) Hereinafter referred to as OEA Report to NCSEA.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Schedule III, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, May 5, 1945. (In files of the Association.) The Board of Directors cited here is not to be confused with the new and larger Board created by the new constitution adopted later in May, 1945. This is the last meeting of the old Board; at its next meeting, June 26, 1945, it took its new name of Executive Committee.

<sup>5</sup>Constitution of the Oklahoma Education Association, 1945, Article III, The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1945, p. 4.

and enriched programs and higher quality instruction became imperative. Teachers of America, and of Oklahoma, accepted the flood of students and their explosion of expectations. They met large classes that seemed to defy reduction right into the sixties, and accomplished the impossible by improving their own qualifications and offering an ever-growing opportunity for learning.

Individually and in association the teachers of Oklahoma served their public with growing competence, but without the measure of support and acclaim they felt should have been forthcoming. Depression-level salaries persisted into the inflationary forties and fifties, materials and equipment were inadequate or non-existent, and building programs lagged as though depression or war were still in progress. The wartime exodus of teachers to higher paying states or to more lucrative occupations continued after the war and into the sixties. Whether they remained in the state or moved out, teachers throughout the land were subjected to unjust and unrelenting criticism, often rising to the proportions of attack. Their patriotism was questioned, their competence challenged, and when they asked for professional salaries and conditions of work that only higher appropriations could provide, they were often charged with being less than worthy of their cost to the public. Such charges were rarely proved, but incalculable damage was done to teachers and to public confidence in them.<sup>6</sup>

For strength to fight the two-front war the teachers looked to their professional organization. Collectively they asked for and gained higher standards of preparation and licensing. They worked for and made

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<sup>6</sup>John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education, 2d ed. (New York, 1966), p. 490. This is but one of many, though one of the more reliable, general histories of education in this period.

improvements in instruction, through individual effort, graduate programs, summer school, workshops, conferences, and conventions. They adopted a code of ethics and organized to discipline its violators, and they established machinery to protect themselves from unfair practices and from attacks from within or without the profession. The organization instituted welfare and security measures and sought additional and stronger ones in the legislature. Year after year, biennium after biennium, through gubernatorial administration and legislative session, the organized teachers promoted the interests of education for all the people of the state as they fought for adequate salaries and for financial support of education commensurate with the needs their professional knowledge told them must be met.

#### From 1889 to 1930

The OEA's effectiveness in promoting the cause of education in the postwar years and its reputation as a "force" in state affairs were built upon the accomplishments of its predecessors. The teaching community had grown with the state, and the trials of the frontier and the hardships of depression and war had prepared a tough breed to face the challenges of mid-century.

The dust had hardly settled from the Run of 1889 when Oklahoma teachers met at Guthrie on October 19, "the first Saturday after public schools opened," and founded the Oklahoma Teachers' Association. Organization was completed on Christmas Day at their first "convention" attended by thirty-two members. Before Congress passed the Organic Act of May 2, 1890, the new association had held a special meeting to make plans for future legislation, and when the first territorial legislature convened in August, Governor W. Steele called upon the teachers to draft

a school code for the new territory. Thus both the teachers' organization and its bent to take the initiative in legislation pre-date the establishment of government in Oklahoma.<sup>7</sup>

The territorial school code was only the first in a steady stream of proposals to come from the Oklahoma Teachers' Association and its successors. Virtually every area of school legislation that would perennially confront the state for the next three-quarters of a century was faced in some measure before Oklahoma became a state. One of the earliest recommendations was for bond issues to meet the desperate need for school buildings. In an attempt to control the size and number of school districts, a problem that was to become a chronic embarrassment to the OEA, the territorial teachers recommended the township as the basic district, and the county as the high school unit.<sup>8</sup> They advocated "state aid" for weak schools before there was a state.<sup>9</sup> They proposed a teacher retirement law in 1901, a measure not to be realized for over forty years. Other recommendations included a compulsory attendance law, a non-partisan county superintendent, and promotion and location of institutions of higher learning. Not only was positive action proposed, but the Association served as a "watchdog" against adverse legislation, and resisted such efforts as that aimed at selling the public land which had

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<sup>7</sup>Oscar W. Davison, "History of Education in Oklahoma, 1907-1947," (Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1949), pp. 68-70.

<sup>8</sup>Dewey H. Neal, "A Capsule Story of the Oklahoma Education Association," The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1960, p. 18. This is the first of three installments appearing in the February, March, and April issues. These recommendations by the early Association were not followed, as the settlers insisted upon smaller districts, the three-by-three mile square becoming the basic unit.

<sup>9</sup>Davison, p. 73.

had been set aside for schools.<sup>10</sup>

Looking to the east, the Oklahoma Territory teachers petitioned Congress to establish free public schools in Indian Territory.<sup>11</sup> This was authorized with the passage of the Curtis Act in June, 1898, and during Christmas week of that year in a meeting in South McAlester the Indian Territory Teachers' Association was formed. Like its counterpart to the west, this organization began to make recommendations for improved education in Indian Territory. An entire system had to be organized and financed. The work of the Dawes Commission was endorsed as a necessary step toward a base of taxable property, and the national Congress was asked to provide money in lieu of sections of land as had been provided in Oklahoma Territory.<sup>12</sup> The last meeting of the Indian Territory Teachers' Association was in Muskogee in 1906, where the group agreed to merge with the Oklahoma Teachers' Association, as the Twin Territories prepared to become one state.<sup>13</sup>

Later that year the two organizations became one at a meeting in Shawnee, where they wrote a new constitution and elected officers for the first year of statehood. They continued the name of Oklahoma Teachers' Association and agreed to keep the Oklahoma School Herald as their official publication.<sup>14</sup> Two years later the title Oklahoma Education Association was adopted and was retained until 1918, when a new

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<sup>10</sup>Neal, pp. 18-19.

<sup>11</sup>Davison, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-76.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 80.



constitution provided that the organized educators of Oklahoma would be called the Oklahoma Education Association.<sup>15</sup>

Constitutional changes were frequent in the early years of the Association. From its beginning the business of the organization was conducted at the annual convention, and officers were elected by the total membership in attendance. In 1909 a commission composed of one delegate per county was established to elect officers. This arrangement lasted four years, when mass voting in convention was restored.<sup>16</sup> Wartime restlessness and aggravated problems led to a series of proposals for change, resulting in the OEA Constitution of 1918. The new constitution, which remained essentially unchanged until 1945, provided that the Board of Directors, a small executive committee elected by the Business Assembly, would select the president, vice president, and treasurer.<sup>17</sup>

With the adoption of the constitution of 1918 the OEA began to take on the appearance of an emerging profession. The first executive secretary was employed, and permanent offices were established in Oklahoma City. A new journal, The Oklahoma Teacher, became the "house organ" and voice of the profession in Oklahoma with its first issue in September, 1919.<sup>18</sup>

The outward forms of professionalism were matched by an unprecedented effort at individual up-grading by thousands of teachers. Oklahomans became part of a national movement to "reading circles,"

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<sup>15</sup>Clyde M. Howell, "The History of Teachers' Associations in Oklahoma," (Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1936), pp. 35, 51.

<sup>16</sup>Davison, pp. 87, 91.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>18</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1919. Copies of the first volume are rare. An incomplete, unbound volume is in the OEA Headquarters.

summer institutes, and then regular summer sessions at the normal schools, a flood that by 1930 found over 250,000 teachers in summer school across the nation. One education historian described the phenomenon as "probably the greatest mass attempt ever known at professional self-improvement in service."<sup>19</sup> Much improvement was needed in Oklahoma. As late as 1914 the state superintendent reported that less than twenty-five percent of the teachers in the southeastern district had academic preparation equal to four years in high school. But in the same report he noted a growing sentiment that "teaching is a profession" and that the demand for summer school training was growing faster than it could be supplied.<sup>20</sup> This condition was to continue until the Great Depression, while teachers upgraded themselves individually and as an organization urged the rising of standards of certification.<sup>21</sup>

Certification was only one of a flow of legislative proposals that continued unabated as the OEA grew in numbers and influence. Soon after statehood the Association supported the establishment of three normal schools in eastern Oklahoma to balance those already located in the west. A few years later these and other state institutions were threatened with abolition or curtailment, as Governor Lee Cruce set a precedent to be followed by future governors of economizing at the expense of education. The OEA successfully opposed these measures, as well as repeated efforts to dispose of the school lands. Year after year the educators fought for higher tax levies, more adequate and stable finance, longer

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<sup>19</sup>Brubacher, p. 497.

<sup>20</sup>Joe C. Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma, 1898-1915," (Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1950), pp. 415-16.

<sup>21</sup>Brubacher, 495.

school terms, and consolidation of districts.<sup>22</sup>

Some successes were scored. Consolidation reduced the number of districts from the peak number of 5,880 in 1914 to 4,869 in 1930.<sup>23</sup> Expenditures per child approximately doubled from 1910 to 1930, while average salaries for teachers during the same period moved from \$366 per year to a pre-depression peak of \$1,096. The first state aid appropriation was made in 1919 in the amount of \$100,000.<sup>24</sup> Four years later, after recession had reduced or threatened school budgets across the state, the OEA successfully defended the state aid law before the Supreme Court.<sup>25</sup> Certification of teachers, which had been in the hands of the county superintendents, became a function of the State Board of Education in 1929.<sup>26</sup>

But there were discouraging losses. Teacher "pensions" continued to be an apparently unattainable dream. Increases in appropriations came so slowly as to seem like no increase at all as the demands upon available money grew. As part of the burst of energy and inspiration that had brought reorganization after the war, the OEA "went to the people" in 1920 with an initiative petition campaign to remove limitations on the local mill levy for schools and to enact a state-wide property tax. Sufficient signatures were obtained easily, but the measures

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<sup>22</sup>Neal, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup>Guy H. Lambert and Guy M. Rankin, A History Outline, Oklahoma State Department of Education for the Period 1900 to 1965, (Oklahoma City, State Department of Education, 1967), p. 23.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>25</sup>Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, September, 1923. Cited in Davison, p. 185.

<sup>26</sup>Davison, p. 244.

went down to defeat in the "normalcy" vote of that year.<sup>27</sup> Two years later a referendum measure with similar provisions was also voted down by the people.<sup>28</sup> Oklahoma school finances rested on a low plateau throughout the 1920's as the OEA struggled to push them upward. In 1929 expenditures for education turned downward, not to rise again for a full decade.<sup>29</sup>

During the twenties, with school financial progress substantially frustrated, the OEA contributed to three studies of school conditions, resulting in recommendations that would be debated for the next half century. The first came in the wake of the election defeat of 1920, when a five-man commission headed by State Superintendent John Vaughn was appointed to study the education needs of the state. This group reported in 1922, but the legislature of 1923 was too embroiled in its fight with Governor John C. Walton to take action on the commission's findings.<sup>30</sup> A second survey was conducted in 1925 by the State Department of Education.<sup>31</sup> The third study came in 1929, when the OEA contributed \$2,500 to the costs of a commission appointed by Governor William J. Holloway.<sup>32</sup>

The recommendations coming from these studies were similar to one

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<sup>27</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1919, p. 38; December, 1920, p. 12. This official journal of the OEA publishes both titled articles and untitled news reports. New items will be cited in this paper in the same form as used for citing similar items in newspapers.

<sup>28</sup>Davison, p. 179.

<sup>29</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup>Davison, p. 171.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

another, and repeated the programs long sought by leaders of the OEA. All three included proposals for reducing the number of school districts, equalizing property taxes across the state, providing increased state aid based upon minimum programs to be provided by aided schools, removal of limitations upon local levies, and non-partisan appointment of both state and county superintendents. Other goals to be found in the three studies included a plan to reduce the number of boards governing institutions of higher learning, a state income tax with schools getting first claim upon it, plans for strengthening the State Department of Education, a state salary schedule for teachers, a retirement system, free textbooks, compulsory attendance, transportation, and a single authority to certify teachers. In some form each study called for a "permanent plan" of school finance, the goal most sought after by educators in the years to come, and the goal most elusive.<sup>33</sup>

#### Depression Years

Hope for a "permanent plan" of school finance faded as the Great Depression descended upon Oklahoma. Expenditures for public schools reached \$33,574,956 in the school year of 1928-1929. This level was not to be reached again for fifteen years, when the 1943 school budget exceeded \$34,000,000. Per student expenditure, having already started declining in 1927, dropped from \$68.37 to a low of \$42.84 in 1933, and did not again reach its pre-depression level until 1941. Property valuation in the state, the old financial base of public education, was even slower to recover: From the 1929 total of \$1,851,602,103 it sank steadily for ten years to \$1,054,067,835 in 1939, and another fifteen

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 171, 239, 245.

years were to pass before it returned to the 1929 level.<sup>34</sup> Tax collections declined as owners could not pay taxes even on reduced assessments.<sup>35</sup>

Economy in government became the order of the day. And Oklahoma education bore the brunt of retrenchment. Governor William H. Murray sharply reduced the budgets for institutions of higher education, and though he favored free textbooks for poor children and looked for substitute sources of revenue, his efforts to relieve the property taxpayer had the effect of reducing appropriations for common schools.<sup>36</sup> At the county level, schools suffered greater losses from economizing than did other services, accounting for as much as ninety percent of the budget-cutting in some counties. The school share of the total tax dollar in the state fell from over forty percent in 1931 to ten percent in 1933.<sup>37</sup>

The largest item in school budgets was and is teachers' salaries. These had crept up grudgingly during the 1920's to an annual average in 1930, including administrators, of \$1,120, a pinnacle not to be seen again until the year of Pearl Harbor. The low came in 1933 when the average was \$784, falling below \$800 for the first time since 1919.<sup>38</sup> More meaningful is the average that year of \$85 per month for classroom teachers for school terms which sometimes fell short of nine months. Slow collection of taxes and delayed appropriations meant that pay

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<sup>34</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup>Davison, p. 248.

<sup>36</sup>Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma, A History of Five Centuries (Norman, Oklahoma, 1965), pp. 374-75; Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>37</sup>Davison, p. 253.

<sup>38</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

warrants were often uncashable, so that hard-pressed teachers were known to accept discounts on their checks up to as much as fifty percent.<sup>39</sup>

Federal emergency aid supplemented salaries in the early New Deal years, helped unemployed teachers, and enabled schools to complete terms on the verge of being cut short as funds were exhausted.<sup>40</sup>

As the Depression deepened, the OEA stepped up its efforts for financial support of schools. These initial efforts were often negative and defensive, opposing the governor's measures and trying to retain the accustomed revenue from property. By 1933 the Association was calling for a sales tax and other revenues to replace losses in the ad valorem tax. In 1934 the one-cent sales tax for the benefit of schools became law, and seventy-five percent of the state income tax was earmarked for the same purpose.<sup>41</sup> The following year, with a sympathetic governor in the statehouse, a long-standing OEA goal was met with the enactment of the first viable state aid law in the state's history. Based upon a minimum program to be met by receiving schools, an appropriation of over eight million dollars committed the state seriously to the business of school finance.<sup>42</sup>

These gains were offset in that same year of 1935 by the passage of homestead exemption, removing several million dollars worth of property from the tax rolls, and by county excise boards' action in reducing millage allocations to schools, citing the new state aid law as their

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<sup>39</sup>Davison, p. 252; The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1960, p. 24.

<sup>40</sup>Davison, p. 260.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 255, 258.

<sup>42</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 8.

justification.<sup>43</sup> To the OEA this meant that they must return to the legislature in 1937 for what had become and was to continue to be a biennial struggle for funds. With Ernest W. Marland in the governor's chair, these efforts were not completely unsuccessful, as the state appropriation went up each year of his administration. Governor Leon C. Phillips reversed this trend with his assault upon deficit spending, including opposition to state assistance to schools. Appropriations for this purpose declined each year he was in office and were only partially balanced by a slow upswing in property valuations which enabled higher tax collections at the local level.<sup>44</sup> The budget balancing amendment proposed by Phillips and adopted during his administration made it difficult to restore the losses in state aid for several years after his term, and after the Depression had yielded to the prosperity of war.

The struggles of the OEA during the Depression years brought some changes in the organization that were to be significant in later years. Membership was emphasized and continued to grow. With growth in numbers and with desperate effort to meet the financial crisis came a growing reputation for influence and power. Many teachers entered politics, some were elected to the legislature, and legislators heard more often from the organized profession.<sup>45</sup>

Two departments of the OEA merged, took shape, and began to exert leadership during the 1930's. The "Department of Superintendence" was formally established in May, 1931. This group had met informally through the years, but, goaded by the problems of the times, the

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<sup>43</sup>Davison, p. 277.

<sup>44</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup>Davison, p. 265.



superintendents decided to organize for more effective action. They had furnished the major leadership in the OEA, and by forming themselves into a more purposeful and cohesive group they were able to exert more complete influence over the parent organization. In 1938 they followed the lead of the National Education Association (NEA) department of administrators by changing their name to the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators.<sup>46</sup>

The Department of Classroom Teachers was organized in the school year of 1933-1934 under the leadership of a dynamic Muskogee teacher named Kate Frank. As president from 1934 to 1937, Miss Frank made the teachers' organization a vital force in the OEA. During her tenure they became a department in the OEA and began to share in the budget. The classroom teachers formed several local units and organized five district associations. A pattern of planning conferences became the basic meetings of the group, and the department won the right to conduct one general session of the OEA convention each year. It added its strength to the Association by supporting the general goals of the OEA. Of special importance was their growing pressure for a tenure law and a retirement system. An indication of the growing strength of the classroom teachers was the election of Miss Frank to the presidency of the OEA for the year 1937-1938, she being the second woman and the first classroom teacher to hold that office.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>G. T. Stubbs, A Brief History of the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators (Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1965), pp. 6, 14. This 26-page pamphlet was printed by the Central High School Press, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

<sup>47</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1957, p. 39.

## War Years

World War II with its great out-pouring of federal money brought an end to the Depression. But depression conditions lingered in Oklahoma schools at the same time that the teachers were being called upon for greater contributions to the nation. Teachers had traditionally been expected to render services to the community well beyond the duties provided for in their contracts. With the coming of war they became agents of the national government as they registered citizens for rationing, headed drives to sell bonds or collect scrap,<sup>48</sup> and generally answered the call of President Roosevelt "that every school house become a service center for the home front."<sup>49</sup> And as though additional war service were not enough, traditional peacetime expectations continued, such as the request from Governor Robert S. Kerr that teachers plant trees in support of his growing interest in conservation.<sup>50</sup>

Governor Kerr also joined the clamor that arose on all sides during the war for teachers to improve their instruction and to make it more relevant to "changing conditions."<sup>51</sup> At times the criticism became severe condemnation. Within a year after Pearl Harbor a leading Oklahoma educator was asking in The Oklahoma Teacher, "Can't We Do Better Than This?", referring to military training being hindered by inadequate preparation of students.<sup>52</sup> Such self-flagellation, somewhat

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<sup>48</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1942, p. 12; October, 1942, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1942, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1944, p. 37.

<sup>51</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1944, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup>John W. Morris, "Can't We Do Better Than This?", The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1942, p. 4.

characteristic of teachers, continued the following month in letters to the editor asking why we could not do as well as Japan in using our schools for purposes of war.<sup>53</sup> Whether from within or without, the war-born criticism of schools and teachers generally deplored inadequate curricula and lack of rigor in teaching.

The actual performance of teachers lent credence to their defense by another leader in Oklahoma education as he gave credit to schools and educators for their contributions to the improving military situation in 1943. President A. Linscheid of East Central State College, who was also a former president of the OEA, insisted that the schools had done well at preparing men for service, and that American education had not failed the nation in its critical need.<sup>54</sup> Curricula were adjusted to war-time demands; for example, aeronautics, health and physical education, and advanced mathematics were added or emphasized, and even instruction in filling out income tax returns became part of the high school program.<sup>55</sup>

School finance, salaries, and conditions of work did not keep pace with the dedicated performance of the teachers. Oklahoma reduced the higher education appropriation in 1943 by fifteen percent, being the only state in mid-war to make such a cut.<sup>56</sup> State aid to common schools declined through the Phillips administration, and though gaining, did not

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<sup>53</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1942, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup>A. Linscheid, "The War Proves Some Things About Education," The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1943, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup>The wartime issues of The Oklahoma Teacher are replete with articles and reports of programs, subject content, and methods adjusted to the needs of the national emergency. This is in keeping with the policy of the journal to devote a major portion of its space to instructional material.

<sup>56</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1943, p. 19.

regain the pre-war level until after the war. Salaries had by 1941 returned to the 1930 high, but advanced to an average in 1944-1945 of only \$1,506.<sup>57</sup> This was below the national average and even below the annual income for common labor in industry.<sup>58</sup> Still more discouraging was the slow rate of increase. Between 1938 and 1943 teacher salaries in the nation rose only seven percent, while factory workers gained fifty-three percent, and farm income went up seventy-nine percent.<sup>59</sup>

Both students and teachers left the classrooms of the state in answer to calls of military service, war work, or economic opportunity. Average daily attendance went down from a half a million in 1938-1939 to 383,000 in 1944-1945. With the minimum program of state aid based upon this factor, each decline in enrollment was followed by a decline in the number of teachers. From just under 21,000 teachers in 1939, the number went down to 16,931 in 1944-1945.<sup>60</sup> The first term after Pearl Harbor revealed a twenty-five percent turn-over in teaching personnel in the state, many having gone to military service or to industry.<sup>61</sup>

The exodus of teachers brought a shortage in many fields and an increase in the number of emergency certificates. The loss of men teachers was thought to have contributed to rising juvenile delinquency, and sports-minded citizens complained that the departure of coaches caused declining community interest in the schools.<sup>62</sup> County superintendents

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<sup>57</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1942, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1943, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>61</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1942, p. 12.

<sup>62</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1943, p. 20.

reported schools starting without teachers, and the superintendents themselves resigned in large numbers.<sup>63</sup> State Superintendent A. L. Crable reported in 1944 that 862 "war emergency" certificates had been granted that year to teachers with less than forty college hours of preparation. The procedure for procuring such a certificate was for the hiring superintendent simply to certify to the state superintendent that the teacher in question was the best he could find for the position. Over eighty percent of such substandard personnel were to be found in the rural schools, with a full seventy-six percent employed in one-room schools.<sup>64</sup> Dean N. Conger, of the College of Education at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, summarized the shortages in many other critical areas near the end of the war, and predicted on the basis of low enrollments in teacher education that the shortage would be of long duration. "The profession is and always has been a war casualty," he added.<sup>65</sup>

The OEA took note of the new challenge of war without yielding any of its depression-born demands. In the first meeting of the Business Assembly following the entry of the United States into the war, the governing board of the Association recognized and deliberated upon the problem of the growing shortage of qualified teachers. It called again for higher salaries to hold teachers and urged the State Department of Education to keep to a minimum the issuance of substandard certificates. Taking the position that education was vital to the war effort, the

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., September, 1944, p. 22.

<sup>64</sup>A. L. Crable, "Emergency Teachers Fill Wartime Need," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1944, p. 20.

<sup>65</sup>N. Conger, "Four Years From Now, What?", The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1944, p. 10.

Assembly expressed concern over general school finance during the war.<sup>66</sup>

This same business session asked Governor Phillips to place the teacher retirement amendment on the July, 1942, election ballot. Failing to get action in the legislature after unnumbered attempts, the OEA had circulated an initiative petition providing for a retirement system, a goal that had been sought since before statehood. The Association collected 170,000 signatures by February, 1942.<sup>67</sup> The governor acceded to the request, and the voters approved the measure by a vote of 257,740 to 151,451.<sup>68</sup> It remained for the legislature to vitalize the amendment and finance it.

This became a priority item in the legislative program of the OEA for 1943, along with the perennially foremost goal of a general increase in financial support of schools. The organization hoped to get a beginning salary for teachers of \$130 per month, or \$1,170 per year, and increases for maintenance and transportation. Influenced by classroom teachers, the Legislative Committee listed a tenure law as a goal to be sought "after retirement legislation is completed."<sup>69</sup>

Governor Kerr kept his campaign promises to teachers by asking the legislature to grant most of the teachers' requests.<sup>70</sup> With his help the OEA came through the legislative session with its most substantial

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<sup>66</sup>Minutes of the Business Assembly, OEA, February 12, 1942.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Basil R. Wilson, Directory and Manual of the State of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, State Election Board, 1967), p. 248. This volume, published biennially, contains the results of all initiative and referendum elections since statehood.

<sup>69</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1943, p. 16.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

gains since the Marland administration. State aid was stepped up, the automobile license tag tax was earmarked for schools, withholding tax on incomes was inaugurated assuring more of this revenue for education, and the retirement system was established with an initial appropriation provided for it.<sup>71</sup>

However, the OEA was not happy. The retirement law was a milestone, and within a year over ten thousand teachers would be enrolled in the system.<sup>72</sup> But salaries fell farther behind the growing prosperity of the country, and war-time difficulties plagued working conditions for teachers. The Oklahoma Teacher reduced the number of its pages to save paper and before the end of the paper shortage was printed on low quality material that aged rapidly.<sup>73</sup> Travel restrictions reduced meetings and conferences, and the 1943 state convention was cancelled. Membership in the NEA grew as teachers looked more and more to the federal government for "aid" to education.<sup>74</sup>

A permanent plan of finance at the state level continued to be the overriding legislative goal. Durant Superintendent G. T. Stubbs emerged in 1944 as the leading spokesman for sufficient and stable school finance. In preparation for a special session of the legislature he called upon teachers to make themselves heard, and to consider initiating constitutional amendments if necessary to solve the problem on a lasting

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<sup>71</sup>Elmer Petree, "Digest of Enactments in 1943," The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1943, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1944, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup>Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, October 2, 1943.

<sup>74</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1943, p. 18.

basis.<sup>75</sup> The OEA Legislative Committee asked the legislature to take steps to relieve immediate conditions and to assure improvements for the next school term.<sup>76</sup> The legislature failed to respond; again, its small appropriation was so little and so late that its action was considered by the teachers to be a rebuff.<sup>77</sup> To the growing displeasure of teachers the leaders of the OEA began to receive new accusations of less than honorable conduct in "lobbying" for the interests of education.<sup>78</sup>

Rebellion threatened the OEA from within, as had occurred during the First World War under similar circumstances. It took two forms, one being more strident demands for quicker and more substantial legislative gains, the other being new efforts to change the constitutional structure of the organization. A "prairie fire" of discontent swept southwestern counties of the state, where teachers threatened to leave the ranks of the OEA if the leadership did not produce immediate results.<sup>79</sup> More sober heads in that part of the state developed the "Washita County Plan," a bold proposal for strengthening the OEA and for pressing the state for more favorable action, and while insisting that they had no intent to "split" the Association, they had organized separately and started raising funds to implement their plan. To strengthen the state organization the group proposed increasing individual annual dues to four

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<sup>75</sup>G. T. Stubbs, "Public School Finance Plans: Proposal to the OASA," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1944, p. 9.

<sup>76</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1944, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1944, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 12, 1944, pp. 1, 10.

<sup>79</sup>Interview with G. T. Stubbs, October 11, 1968.



dollars and employing a full time public relations agent.<sup>80</sup>

Constitutional revision aroused increasing attention through the war years, with the leading questions being representation, dues, and distribution of money among departments and units.<sup>81</sup> The growing discontent and discussion led to a highly provocative article in The Oklahoma Teacher entitled "What is Wrong With Our Organization?" The author summed up the growing complaints: (1) The OEA is not an organization but a "loose" association. (2) It has no system for training members for participation in a professional organization. (3) Its conventions are directed toward instruction and do not point toward "elevation of the profession." (4) It is undemocratic. (5) It is not properly financed. (6) Its constitution is outmoded and needs rewriting.<sup>82</sup>

#### The Presidency of G. T. Stubbs

The president of the OEA for the 1944-1945 term was prepared to meet the challenge of both prongs of the "rebellion." G. T. Stubbs was elected by the Board of Directors in their last meeting in the spring of 1944. He had been strongly recommended to the Board and was formally nominated by Ferman Phillips, board member from the southeastern district, a rising voice in the organization and destined to become "Mr. OEA" in the post-war period.<sup>83</sup> Stubbs was well prepared for the position. An

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<sup>80</sup>Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, March 18, 1944.

<sup>81</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1943, p. 22.

<sup>82</sup>Jesse E. Burkett, "What is Wrong With Our Organization?", The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1944, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup>Letter from Ferman Phillips to D. Bruce Selby, April 3, 1944. D. Bruce Selby papers, 1211 West York, Enid, Oklahoma. Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, May 20, 1944.

administrator of long experience, possessed of a logical mind, habits of great effort, and qualities of leadership, he had made a thorough study of Oklahoma school finance and had a sound plan to present to the profession and the public.<sup>84</sup> His presidency propelled the OEA into the postwar period with momentum and promise. A new constitution was written and adopted, an initiative petition campaign was launched to bring basic improvements to the state's school system, and the "most liberal" program of legislation was written since the state aid law of 1935. Opposition both within and without the organization yielded to a new spirit of optimism that arose in 1945.

Most pressing was the legislative program. Stubbs had appointed a committee in July, and by September it was ready to report. The Business Assembly accepted the committee's recommendations presented in two parts. First, constitutional amendments would be sought by initiative petition to (1) permit local people to vote an additional five-mill levy for operation of their schools, (2) provide that the minimum measure of state aid to public schools would be forty-two dollars per pupil, (3) provide for free textbooks to be selected by teachers on a multiple-list plan, and (4) permit counties to levy one mill for purposes of constructing buildings for separate (Negro) schools. Second, legislation would be sought to (1) spell out in detail and implement a state aid program in the amount specified in the foregoing amendment, (2) finance fully the teacher retirement system, (3) provide a program of health and physical education, and (4) provide for implementation and administration of the

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<sup>84</sup>G. T. Stubbs, "Permanent Financing of Oklahoma Schools," The Oklahoma Teacher, May 1944, p. 8.

free textbook amendment.<sup>85</sup>

By November the petitions were ready for circulating. Stubbs set a goal of 300,000 signers, but was content to file 168,680 signatures, far more than required by law, with the secretary of state in January, 1945.<sup>86</sup> There was immediate opposition from the State Chamber of Commerce, a taxpayers' organization made up of large taxpayers mostly in banking and business who had resisted revenue measures for schools for several years.<sup>87</sup> It was apparent their intent was to thwart the teachers' efforts by litigation and delay. The OEA hired a lawyer to defend its interests, but not until December were the signatures ruled sufficient by the secretary of state. The State Chamber appealed to the Supreme Court, further delaying the measures until July 31, 1946.<sup>88</sup> The questions were finally placed on a ballot for the vote of the people in the general election of 1946, two full years after the campaign had begun.

There was also opposition in the legislative session of 1945, but out of it came the most satisfactory school legislation in a decade. Stubbs spoke widely around the state in defense of his plan. It was necessary to convince not only major interest groups and lay leaders, but also to instruct and inspire the membership of the teaching profession. He organized the State School Boards Association and aroused it

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<sup>85</sup>Minutes of the Business Assembly, OEA, September 16, 1944.

<sup>86</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1945, p. 22.

<sup>87</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1945, p. 4; Stubbs interview.

<sup>88</sup>Jesse E. Burkett, "Legislative Programs of the Oklahoma Education Association," (Unpublished M. Ed. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1958), p. 138. Hereinafter cited as Burkett, "Legislative Programs," to distinguish it from a dissertation by the same author also cited in this paper.

to action in behalf of the OEA programs.<sup>89</sup> The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers joined the battle.<sup>90</sup> The OEA Legislative Committee, streamlining itself into a steering committee, worked closely with legislative leaders, not only pressing for action, but supplying expert information necessary to draft sound bills. The annual convention, which some believed had the effect of demonstrating the strength of the organized teachers, had been a casualty of war, but Stubbs was aware of another way to apply pressure: He sent his steering committee home, and he returned to Durant where his local board had given him leave to devote full time to the struggle. The absence of the educators brought a cry from the legislature for help in writing school legislation. The OEA "lobbyists" returned to the capitol with renewed assurance that results would be forthcoming.<sup>91</sup>

The total state appropriation enacted was \$15,524,543, an increase of six million dollars over the previous year. Teacher salaries were raised, not to OEA expectations of \$1,500 per year, but to \$1,280, or \$142 per month for a new teacher with a bachelor's degree. Four annual increments were provided, enabling teachers to move up to \$1,680, and the average salary for Oklahoma teachers for the first time exceeded \$1,500 per year.<sup>92</sup> All phases of the school program were improved, including retirement, pupil-teacher ratio, textbooks, maintenance, and transportation. Stubbs was able in his final report to the members to

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<sup>89</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1944, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup>Davison, p. 212.

<sup>91</sup>Stubbs interview.

<sup>92</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1945, p. 20; Lambert and Rankin, p.

praise and thank the governor, the legislature, and the press for their generous treatment.<sup>93</sup>

At his first meeting with the Board of Directors, the same meeting that launched his fruitful legislative campaign, Stubbs was authorized to appoint a committee to revise the constitution. It was generally recognized that for the OEA to fight the battles for the profession it would have to have a broader base of participation by members and a firmer financial foundation. There was need to reapportion the Business Assembly and to democratize the election of officers, who had since 1918 been chosen by the dozen members of the Board of Directors. In authorizing the committee for revision the Board instructed it to prepare an amendment that would have the officers elected by the Business Assembly.<sup>94</sup> A committee of eighteen was appointed, two from each district, most of whom were, in the pattern of state leadership, superintendents of schools. George Hann, superintendent from Ardmore, was elected chairman, and the committee went to work at once to rewrite, not merely revise, the constitution of the OEA.<sup>95</sup>

In keeping with the requirements of the old constitution, the new one was published in The Oklahoma Teacher for January, 1945. It was accompanied by a summary and defense by Hann. The most basic change was the election of the president, vice president, and treasurer by direct vote of the membership, rather than having them chosen by the Board, as had been the practice, or by the Assembly, as the committee had been instructed. Nomination of officers would be by a new Board of Directors.

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<sup>93</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1945, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup>Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, July 15, 1944.

<sup>95</sup>Letter from George D. Hann to the author, September 6, 1968.

This group was to replace the Business Assembly, its delegates to be elected by local units in open election. Emphasis was to be placed upon the local units and their direct and proportionate representation upon the Board. An Executive Committee was created to replace the old Board of Directors. This group was to be made up of the elected officers and a member from each of the nine districts elected by and from the Board. The Executive Committee had authority to appoint the executive secretary, and the new constitution outlined the powers and duties of that official. To place the Association on a stronger financial footing, the new by-laws, adopted with the constitution, established a graduated scale of membership dues starting at \$2.50 and ranging upward to \$8.00 per year according to the member's salary.<sup>96</sup>

The procedure for adopting the new constitution required a vote of the Assembly followed by a vote of the members. As a result of war austerity the Assembly could not meet in early 1945; its vote, cast by mail, was eighty-six to four in favor of the document.<sup>97</sup> The membership voted in May, also by mail, casting 1,215 for and 312 against the charter. Thus, with 1,527 votes counted in a membership of 14,577, the OEA adopted its democratic constitution.<sup>98</sup>

New life was stirring in the OEA as the 1944-1945 school year came to an end. Problems still beset the organization. The gains of the year had been made with the lowest membership--14,577--and the smallest

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<sup>96</sup>George D. Hann, "Features of the New Constitution," The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1945, p. 6. This article is preceded by the complete text of the new constitution.

<sup>97</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1945, p. 23.

<sup>98</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1945, p. 6.

budget--\$26,500--recorded for many years.<sup>99</sup> The petitions still languished in the statehouse. The Association was saddened and disturbed by the critical illness of long-time Executive Secretary Clyde M. Howell. His absence from his post accentuated the need for additional personnel at the central office if the OEA was to face the future with new vigor. But the final report of President Stubbs was optimistic. It had been a productive year, and the good work should continue. Still fully responsible, he outlined work yet to be done: the campaign for the four amendments, a new tax levy for public schools, reorganization of school districts, a comprehensive study of the curriculum, and renewed efforts to recruit and qualify new teachers.<sup>100</sup> Like a relay racer passing the baton to his team mate, he never broke stride nor lost sight of the long-range purposes of his effort.

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<sup>99</sup>Minutes of the Board of Directors, OEA, May 5, 1945, cited in The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1945, p. 10, as "Executive Committee."

<sup>100</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1945, p. 19.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LEGISLATIVE FRONT, 1945-1947

As the Second World War came to an end in the summer of 1945, the OEA, looking to its own struggle to build a profession, recognized that significant strides in educational progress could not be made without a greatly increased and a secure financial base. With education legally a function of the state, the Association looked to the state to provide this need. Some thought the tide had turned with the favorable action of the legislature that spring, and now expected teachers to deliver an impressively improved product at once. Said President Stubbs, "We must remember that in the acceptance of this nice increase in school funds that we also must accept the responsibility to give Oklahoma the best schools the state has had."<sup>1</sup> A leader of the legislature spoke down to the teachers:

When the legislature made that record breaking appropriation the members assumed that school officials and teachers would justify their action with a broader and better school program. . . . School officials and teachers must give the state a new program of education equal to the better systems of the nation. . . . The legislature has furnished the tools--in money--with which to work. The legislature, as well as the state of Oklahoma, will watch with great anticipation the work of the Oklahoma schools during the next two years.<sup>2</sup>

These calls for superior performance were to teachers whose average

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from G. T. Stubbs to Oklahoma School Administrators, May 8, 1945. Selby papers.

<sup>2</sup>James C. Nance, Editorial, Sulphur Times Democrat, reprinted in The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1945, p. 9.



annual salary was \$1,815, a level ranking twenty-fifth among the states, after a "nice increase" to a beginning base for college graduates of \$1,275.<sup>3</sup> The Department of Classroom Teachers talked of tenure and professional improvement, but gave first priority to the OEA goals of adequate and permanent financing of schools.<sup>4</sup> There was growing commitment to professional goals, but the teachers rallied behind the leaders of the Association as they launched new efforts on the legislative front.

This was an old story for the OEA, and the biennial legislative agony would go on for a score of years without a final solution. But the immediate postwar years seemed crucial. Along with many other Americans, the OEA leadership expected an economic decline after the war. They felt that financial gains must be made at once and pushed as high as possible before the recession began. Memories of school losses in the 1930's were still vivid. Moreover, the leaders could not forget the recently threatened schism in the organization and felt compelled to get results quickly to prevent a break-up of the OEA.<sup>5</sup> They had not lost sight of the organized opposition which still held their proposed amendments at bay, nor did they expect the comparatively friendly glow of the 1945 legislative session and the general feeling of good will engendered by the return of peace to be more than temporary. The OEA was convinced it must strike quickly and in force.

In this atmosphere of crisis some gains were made, but with each step forward the educators were forced to wonder if progress was really

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<sup>3</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1946, p. 15; Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September 20, 1946, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with Joe Hurt, August 13, 1968; interview with G. T. Stubbs, October 11, 1968.

taking place. Education, by definition, was changing. And the economy, instead of falling back to an earlier level, raced ahead of the sluggish increases in school appropriations. Still, some lasting results came from the legislative struggle of the forties. The general program of legislative goals was formulated, building upon past programs, and laying foundations for future planning. The teaching profession became more militant and improved its methods of fighting for its goals. The nature of the opposition became more clear as counter-forces gathered strength to resist the OEA. Possibly most decisive in importance was the addition of a new staff member, recruited to lead the postwar battle, who remained at the helm of the Association for years to come. Ferman Phillips, a dynamic politician with extensive experience in both school administration and legislation, became the executive secretary of the OEA.

#### "Another Year of Action" Under O. W. Davison, 1945-1946

The first postwar president of the OEA, and the first to serve under the new constitution, was chosen under the old charter. Oscar W. Davison, superintendent of schools at Chandler, was selected by the Board of Directors on the basis of his record as a successful "school man," vice president of the OEA, and immediate past chairman of the Legislative Committee--an office that for a number of years would rank second only to the presidency in significance.<sup>6</sup>

His first message to the membership sounded the keynote of the new era. Under the heading "Another Year of Action," he wrote of the new strength of the OEA and of its old problems: "The Oklahoma Education Association is just coming into maturity. We are now a powerful and

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<sup>6</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1945, p. 10.

respected organization." The new constitution had brought strength and unity within; important allies, the old reliable Congress of Parents and Teachers and the new re-formed State School Boards Association, were working closely with the teachers. But the four initiative petitions, circulated almost a year before, were still pending in the office of the secretary of state, challenged and delayed by the State Chamber of Commerce. Warning against complacency due to increased state aid, Davison wrote, "the enemies of public education in Oklahoma are already at work attacking our program."<sup>7</sup>

An "enemy" seldom named but often implied during the Davison year in office was the news media. The problem was less the hostility of the press than a dearth of favorable publicity for the OEA. The Oklahoma Teacher was seldom read outside the membership. Through it the president urged members to tell the press and public of the schools' achievements, of OEA programs, and of its problems.<sup>8</sup> Through the year the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors discussed the possibility of an Association newspaper, finally giving it up as impractical.<sup>9</sup> With the petition fight still unsettled and with crucial legislative action approaching, the organization needed an effective public relations program. The last meeting of the old Board of Directors had acted upon this need by voting to employ a publicity director.<sup>10</sup>

Four days later Executive Secretary Clyde M. Howell suffered a heart attack. He was given a long leave of absence and was never again

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Board of Directors, February 4, 1946.

<sup>10</sup>Board of Directors, May 5, 1945.

able to serve the Association with full vigor. A member of the Executive Committee, B. C. Pippen, was made "acting secretary" to serve until the personnel crisis could be solved.<sup>11</sup> Much of President Davison's term was devoted to a search for someone to fill the vacancies on the staff. The idea of a publicity director gave way to the new need for a person to take charge of the central office. G. T. Stubbs rejected the position; he was on his way to a new post at the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College.<sup>12</sup> Professor M. L. Wardell, of the University of Oklahoma, could not accept the office at \$7,200 per year.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in August, the newly created post of "manager," paying \$6,000 per year for a three-year contract, was filled by Joe Hurt, a former teacher and school administrator who was currently selling textbooks. Hurt was highly respected in public school circles and was known to be an able man.<sup>14</sup> He entered upon his work with a burst of ideas and activity that portended great leadership in the future. But the state office of the OEA was not a haven of peace and security in the fall of 1945. The accumulation of problems of the Association pressed in upon the new manager. When Executive Secretary Howell returned to his duties the division of responsibility became ambiguous, and in the absence of a constitutional provision for a "manager" Hurt's future seemed uncertain. Offered his old job as a book salesman with an increase in pay, he resigned from the OEA in December.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Executive Committee, June 26, 1945.

<sup>12</sup>Executive Committee, July 11, 1945.

<sup>13</sup>Executive Committee, July 27, 1945.

<sup>14</sup>Stubbs interview.

<sup>15</sup>Executive Committee, December 14, 1945; January 10, 1946.

The Executive Committee met often in the year of 1945-1946 as it fought to advance its petitions, worked on a new legislative program, planned for the 1946 election of a governor and legislature, and continued the search for a manager. President Davison offered the post to E. E. Battles, his hardworking legislative chairman. Battles, superintendent of schools at Henryetta, "could not afford it."<sup>16</sup> He declined the offer a second time at the convention week meeting of the Committee in February. At this meeting several names were considered and a number of ballots taken as the list of prospects was narrowed. At last, by a small majority, the Committee agreed upon a manager. Ferman Phillips, superintendent of schools at Atoka, accepted the position for a three-year term at \$6,000 per year.<sup>17</sup>

Phillips came from a politically active family in Atoka County. While still a senior in college he entered the State House of Representatives in 1929 at the age of twenty-one. He served three terms in the House and was completing his second term in the Senate when the army called him in 1944. In the meantime, upon graduation from Southeastern State College in 1930 he had entered teaching. For twelve years prior to joining the OEA staff he was head of the public school system of Atoka. For many years he was on the OEA Board of Directors, and at the time he entered the army he was the Southeastern District representative on the Executive Committee. He held a master's degree in school administration from the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. Energetic and personable, at the age of thirty-eight, he seemed to the Executive Committee to combine the specific qualities needed in the OEA office at

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<sup>16</sup> Executive Committee, January 10, 1946.

<sup>17</sup> Executive Committee, February 14, 1946.

the time of his appointment.<sup>18</sup>

Some members of the Committee had misgivings about Phillip's political background, fearing his effect upon the "image" of the professional association. Also, there was concern about possible staff friction between the activist Phillips and the genial, restrained Howell. Although the OEA had been involved in politics and legislative pressure through the years, the executive secretary had operated in a low-key, non-political manner. Presidents and committees had been the aggressive contacts with the politicians. Howell had been expected to maintain the office, edit the journal, plan conventions, serve as a friendly catalyst, and run a dependable message center. He was now to continue this role as his health permitted. The new manager was to provide the field services that were growing in the organization, make speeches, work with groups outside the office, run errands, and perform the miscellaneous and unforeseeable duties that might arise from a crowded program headed by a sick man. To insure that Phillips met these expectations a committee led by G. T. Stubbs gave him careful instructions. He was to keep his political statements and methods subdued and in the spirit of an educational association, and was to be the "workhorse" of the organization; Executive Secretary Howell was to "do as he pleased."<sup>19</sup>

Phillips measured up to the expectations of his new role. Almost overnight he was the indispensable man at OEA Headquarters, filling speaking engagements for the president, unburdening the ailing secretary, enabling that official to perform his routine services with minimum

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<sup>18</sup>Interview with Ferman Phillips, November 8, 1968, hereinafter referred to as Phillips interview no. 2, to distinguish it from three other interviews with the executive secretary; Stubbs interview.

<sup>19</sup>Executive Committee, February 14, 1946; Stubbs interview; Phillips interview no. 2.

danger to his health, and taking the initiative in areas of his, Phillips's, special competence, political and legislative contacts. He performed a difficult feat of leadership and human relations by doing much of the work of his superior officer while adhering to the proprieties of his position as a lieutenant, acknowledging without reservation that Secretary Howell was the kind of person who made such a working arrangement possible. With virtually no friction the two men worked together for two years, at which time, because of Howell's continuing poor health, they mutually agreed to reverse positions, and Phillips became executive secretary.<sup>20</sup>

Much of Davison's "year of action" was devoted to reestablishment of the peacetime routine of the Association under the new constitution. The annual convention, which had been cancelled during the war, was restored as a high point in the professional year. The new "democratic" Board of Directors met three times, in the fall and spring and at the convention, and followed the pattern of its predecessor. Between Board meetings the Executive Committee met each month and in special sessions to wrestle with the problems requiring immediate action.<sup>21</sup> Membership rose above 15,000, and its promotion and accounting were part of the routine of each meeting. Budget matters were of continual concern. The old level of annual dues limited the first postwar budget to \$28,800. The new schedule enacted as part of the bylaws of the organization permitted the Board to approve the unprecedented figure of \$44,300 for

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<sup>20</sup>Executive Committee, February 11, 1948; Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>21</sup>See Chapter V for a more complete treatment of these two bodies, their structure, their functioning, and their activities during this period.

1946-1947.<sup>22</sup>

The new constitution was put into operation with much discussion and wonder as to the direction the Association was taking. Some administrators feared the classroom teachers would dominate the organization.<sup>23</sup> At the first meeting of the Board George Hann, who had chaired the committee which wrote the new document, pleaded with the directors to try it for a year before making further changes.<sup>24</sup> In spite of this request, an effort was made to alter the method of selecting the Executive Committee. The members of this group were elected by and from the Board of Directors for three-year terms, a procedure that made for an enduring and stable body, satisfactory to those who approved its actions, but frustrating to those who might want to change the Committee either in its membership or its behavior. The suggested change, one that would become a perennial proposal, was to have the Committee elected directly from the nine OEA districts. This amendment did not survive the first step of the amending process, approval of the Executive Committee itself.<sup>25</sup> The Committee's durability was demonstrated in its first year when two incumbents were reelected. Two newcomers were destined to serve until each became president, one after seven years, the other after seventeen.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Board of Directors, February 14, 1946.

<sup>23</sup>Letter from George Hann to author, September 6, 1968.

<sup>24</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1945.

<sup>25</sup>Executive Committee, March 20, 1946. While the Executive Committee could not kill an amendment, its recommendation against one almost assured defeat by the Board of Directors. The Board rarely opposed or failed to pass a recommendation by the Executive Committee.

<sup>26</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1945.



Direct election of officers, president, vice president, and treasurer, met with more general approval than did the indirect selection of the Executive Committee, though the small number of votes cast in annual elections indicated limited interest. Rarely did more than a third of the teachers bother to register a choice. Three candidates for each office were nominated by the Board of Directors. In the fall of 1945 the Board pondered the question of voting procedure, finally deciding to send postcard ballots to members. A total of 5,330 ballots were returned from a membership of 15,523. Elected president for the year 1946-1947 was E. E. "Ed" Battles, Henryetta superintendent and current chairman of the Legislative Committee.<sup>27</sup>

The election of Battles underscored the high priority leaders and members were giving to legislative problems. The new president-elect had worked overtime as chairman of the Legislative Committee, and as president he continued to hold his chairmanship, not appointing a replacement. In addition to the overriding problem of salaries and finance the Committee had given special study to district reorganization, teacher tenure, transportation and buses, attendance, the county superintendent, and liaison with the Parent-Teacher Association and School Boards Association.<sup>28</sup> At a meeting of the Committee in March a program was adopted providing for (1) a permanent and dependable plan of financial support of schools, (2) consolidation of districts for both administration and taxation, (3) higher standards for certification of teachers, (4) an attendance law, (5) strengthening the teacher retirement system, (6) "improvement" in the offices of county and state superintendents,

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<sup>27</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1946, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1946, p. 18.

including both higher salaries and nonpartisan appointment, (7) "better security" and tenure for teachers, and (8) building of modern and adequate school plants.<sup>29</sup>

The Committee rested its program upon a statement of general principles: (1) Freedom and education go hand in hand. (2) Education is an investment in people. (3) There must be equality of opportunity for education and equality of responsibility for its support. (4) A heavy responsibility rests upon professional educators so to "organize, administer, and conduct the educational program as to render the most efficient services to the youth of the state and to society as to justify adequate financial support."<sup>30</sup> Thus accepting responsibility to render professional services, the OEA asked the people and their representatives to measure up to the requirements of the times.

President Davison, who had opened his year with a call to action, conceded in his final message that there had been more discussion than deeds. This was to be the nature of the OEA performance in "non-legislative" years. Answering his own question as to how progress comes about in education, he described his term as a period of "studying, working, and conferring together." After a year of plodding perseverance he looked to the future, as OEA leaders were prone to do, with optimism, stating, "I predict a great year for the OEA under the leadership of Ed Battles."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1946, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

## The Better Schools Amendments Campaign of 1946

President Battles led the OEA in its most strenuous year of legislative action prior to the 1960's. He came to his high office by the familiar route of the Executive Committee and the Legislative Committee. Superintendent of schools at Henryetta for eleven years and destined to remain in that post another twenty, he was highly regarded by fellow administrators, who elected him to preside over their State Association in 1943-1944. He was active for a number of years in the Business Assembly of the OEA where he played a leading role in rewriting the constitution, and on the Executive Committee where he gained recognition for his leadership in legislative matters.<sup>32</sup> Under President Stubbs he had served on the Legislative Committee and became chairman of that group under President Davison. With a reputation for attention to detail and a determination to win, he had prepared well for his presidential year, which was to be one of the most bitter in OEA history.<sup>33</sup>

The duty fell to Battles to see through to fruition the initiative petition drive started by G. T. Stubbs in 1944. For campaign purposes the four measures, designed to establish a solid financial base for state schools and to bring about other reforms, were called the Better Schools Amendments.<sup>34</sup> They had been delayed for almost two years by the State Chamber of Commerce, which had challenged them first in the office of the secretary of state and then in the Supreme Court.<sup>35</sup> Even after a

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<sup>32</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1945, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup>Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>34</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Supra, Chap. I.

favorable ruling by the Court, a request for a rehearing prolonged the frustration to September 10, 1946.<sup>36</sup>

The OEA had fought for its program through every phase of the litigation. An attorney, Frantz C. Conrad, was engaged as soon as opposition appeared, and through 1945 and 1946 the leaders relied upon him to defend the case and keep them informed of its status. The State Chamber checked the petitions against voter registration lists, hired handwriting experts to search out and eliminate fraudulent signatures, and challenged thousands of names on minor technicalities. Conrad described the action as "the most thorough and detailed attack that has ever been leveled against any initiative petition filed in the State of Oklahoma."<sup>37</sup> The attackers changed tactics with the Supreme Court's ruling in September. When it appeared that the petitions would be placed on the general election ballot in November where the "silent vote" would operate against them, there was no further effort to delay them. The aim of the opposition now became that of insuring their defeat at the polls.<sup>38</sup>

President Battles did not wait for the measures to clear the Court. In August he met with his Legislative Committee and allies from the Congress of Parents and Teachers and the School Boards Association and prepared to take the offensive. The group began forming a statewide organization at this meeting and made detailed plans for a campaign which they hoped would be for a special election but which might be for the general election. Battles appointed a chairman for each OEA district

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<sup>36</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup>Letter from Frantz C. Conrad to Executive and Administrative Officers of the Oklahoma Education Association, May 7, 1946, attached to the Minutes of the Executive Committee, May 9, 1946.

<sup>38</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1946, p. 7.

and made him responsible for victory in his area. Each county was to have a chairman working under the district leader, and ultimately each school district and precinct was to be organized to deliver a favorable vote. The president would serve as state chairman, with Phillips and Howell working out of the central office helping districts and local units organize and conduct their parts of the campaign. A finance committee was set up, and plans were made for collecting funds.<sup>39</sup> The committee set a goal of \$20,000 for the campaign; Battles committed \$5,000 from the OEA budget, an action quickly approved by the Executive Committee. A major cost of this highly professional effort was a publicity expert hired early in September.<sup>40</sup> Additional expertise was provided by the veteran campaigner, the new manager, Ferman Phillips.<sup>41</sup>

An effort less than expert invited defeat, for the forces working against the petitions were formidable. Governor Robert S. Kerr denied the OEA's request for a special election because of his opposition to the free textbook measure as written.<sup>42</sup> This meant that if the questions were not to be delayed for another indefinite period they would have to go on the general election ballot in November. There they would require a majority of the total votes cast including votes other than those cast for or against the questions. Only four times in state history had proposed amendments survived this rule which made a vote not cast a vote of

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<sup>39</sup>Letter from E. E. Battles to School People of Oklahoma, August 28, 1946. Selby papers.

<sup>40</sup>Letter from E. E. Battles to Executive Committee, September 2, 1946. Selby papers.

<sup>41</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1946, p. 11; December, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 5, 1945, p. 2.

"silent" opposition.<sup>43</sup> A major concern in the campaign was the grim challenge of this "silent vote."<sup>44</sup>

Unexpected opposition arose from the Negro teachers of the state, voiced through their segregated organization, the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers.<sup>45</sup> They objected to the proposal for a one-mill levy to build schools for Negroes; a more liberal building levy had already been adopted--a legislative referendum measure, supported by the OEA-- at the July, 1946, primary election.<sup>46</sup> The Negroes also opposed the five-mill local levy increase, because it was worded in a manner that would repeal the existing one-mill building levy. President Battles proposed that the OEA support an unrestricted one-mill levy for Negro schools in the next legislature in exchange for Negro support of the Better Schools Amendments.<sup>47</sup> F. D. Moon, executive secretary of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers, influenced his organization to accept this offer to the extent that formal opposition was withdrawn.<sup>48</sup>

The press ranged from noncommittal to hostile toward the amendments. The Oklahoma Press Association was critical of the OEA's purchasing advertising space directly from newspapers, saying certain papers were being unfairly left out.<sup>49</sup> The "Observer" column in the Daily

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<sup>43</sup>Wilson, pp. 229-50.

<sup>44</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1946, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 15, 1946, p. 10A.

<sup>46</sup>Executive Committee, May 9, 1946; Wilson, p. 250.

<sup>47</sup>Letter from E. E. Battles to Members of the Executive and Legislative Committees, September 6, 1946. Selby papers.

<sup>48</sup>Interview with F. D. Moon, October 17, 1968.

<sup>49</sup>Burkett, "Legislative Programs," p. 151.

Oklahoman suggested that the OEA was not serious about the petitions, that they were meant to show strength to impress the legislature, and that the people had forgotten the questions after the "generous appropriations" of the 1945 session.<sup>50</sup> This largest newspaper in the state editorialized in September and October against the textbook amendment and the "freezing" of funds as provided by the state aid question.<sup>51</sup> A series of four articles, ostensibly intended to be an objective analysis of the amendments, tended to produce a negative effect by suggesting many opponents without naming them, and quoting them at great length.<sup>52</sup>

The most sustained opposition came from the State Chamber of Commerce, the same group of tax resisting business leaders who had kept the petitions off the ballot for nearly two years.<sup>53</sup> The leader of its campaign was John M. Ashton, an authority on school finance whose Doctor of Philosophy dissertation was entitled "The Functional Costs of Government in Oklahoma Compared with the Costs of Education."<sup>54</sup> Ashton predicted terrible consequences if the amendments passed, such as repeal of homestead exemption and sharp increase in local taxes.<sup>55</sup> He prepared and circulated 800,000 copies of a pamphlet assailing the "Bitter" Schools

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<sup>50</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 2, 1945, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 3, 1946, p. 14; October 30, 1946, p. 6; October 31, 1946, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 16, 1946, p. 12; September 17, 1946, p. 4; September 18, 1946, p. 22; September 19, 1946, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1946, p. 28; Stubbs interview.

<sup>54</sup>John M. Ashton, "The Functional Costs of Government in Oklahoma Compared with the Costs of Education," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1933).

<sup>55</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 27, 1946, p. 20A.

Amendments and quoting former Governor William H. Murray's expressed opposition to the questions.<sup>56</sup>

The OEA met these and all other attacks with the most effective organized effort in its history. The campaign organization saturated the state with publicity and activity directed toward the election. From the central office President Battles called upon each member to consider himself on "the committee to help sell and pass these amendments."<sup>57</sup> All over the state counties and local units reported rallies and promotional efforts.<sup>58</sup> The finance committee collected \$23,730, mostly contributions from teachers, while spending \$24,000.<sup>59</sup> Election day was cold and rainy, further threatening the campaign.

But the voters turned out and approved the Better Schools Amendments by an average majority of fifty-three percent. The proposal to permit a local levy of fifteen mills to replace the existing one for ten mills received 271,331 votes for it, 175,257 against. The one-mill levy for separate school buildings received 267,549 for, 169,971 against. State aid sufficient to provide a minimum expenditure of \$42 per child carried by 264,058 to 174,378. And a system of free textbooks was approved, 261,807 to 167,563. The total vote in the general election, on a ballot headed by the governor's race which saw Roy J. Turner the victor, was 494,599. For the amendment questions to carry they had to have a majority of this amount, or 247,300.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Burkett, "Legislative Programs," p. 150.

<sup>57</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1946, p. 28.

<sup>59</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1947, p. 36.

<sup>60</sup>Wilson, pp. 250-51; The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1946, p. 4; Phillips interview no. 2.



President Battles thanked the people for their vote of confidence. He congratulated and thanked the teachers and gave credit for the victory to "unity of purposes" and to good organization. He then generalized on the OEA:

This seems to be a good opportunity to call to the attention of the teachers of Oklahoma that a state organization like the Oklahoma Education Association is necessary to the welfare of education. It is well to have our individual organizations, but it would be impractical to try to promote such a gigantic campaign as we have just finished and to prepare and submit recommendations to the legislature and the people without a strong central organization. The Oklahoma Education Association has rendered an invaluable service to the children of this state through the years by its comprehensive studies, by exerting influence on the school people to improve methods, and by its work with the legislature and the people. I wish you would pause for a few minutes and think of the weak position in which we would be were we not to have a healthy and vital statewide teachers organization.<sup>61</sup>

#### The Legislative Session of 1947

Statements of pride and appreciation were soon lost in the realization by the OEA leadership that the election successes were not only limited but threatened with cancellation. The victorious amendments remained to be implemented by the legislature. At the same time, inflation dictated that a new high in appropriations for schools must be gained from the lawmakers. Long before the election it had been noted that the money goals of the petitions computed in 1944 had been reduced in real value to an absurd low.<sup>62</sup> Phillips produced statistics showing a growing teacher shortage and a financial crisis threatening the current school term.<sup>63</sup> The Board of Directors, in their first meeting after the

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<sup>61</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup>Battles to School People, August 28, 1946.

<sup>63</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 6, 1946, p. 2.

election, voted down a motion for a victory celebration and turned soberly to the next task, the coming session of the legislature.<sup>64</sup>

A basic program of legislative goals had been put together by Battles in the closing days of the previous school year.<sup>65</sup> After further study certain issues emerged as priority items to be given special recommendation to the legislature. Salaries and finance remained at the top, with a "cost of living" increase for teachers becoming an emergency demand. The pay of county superintendents received special attention, reflecting both the need and the potential influence of this group. School district reorganization occupied a sub-committee through the year, and the basic OEA approach to this difficult problem took shape.<sup>66</sup> The new textbook amendment required vitalization. In December Battles and Phillips, each accompanied by a legislator, travelled separately through several states studying textbook laws and reorganization plans.<sup>67</sup> By the time the legislature convened in January, the OEA had rounded out its goals and had written priority measures into bills ready for introduction.<sup>68</sup>

The OEA had taken great interest in the selection of the Twenty-First Legislature which took office in 1947. Battles, Phillips, and others had repeatedly urged officers and members to concern themselves

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<sup>64</sup>Board of Directors, November 22, 1946.

<sup>65</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1946, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup>Board of Directors, November 22, 1946.

<sup>67</sup>Letter from E. E. Battles to Executive Committee, December 21, 1946. Selby papers.

<sup>68</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1947, p. 1; Executive Committee, January 17, 1947.

with the election of lawmakers friendly to the Association.<sup>69</sup> Among these "friends of education" were several teachers and former teachers: Senator Raymond Gary, former county superintendent of Marshall County, headed the strategic Appropriations Committee. Harold Toaz, superintendent of schools at Limestone Gap, and immediate past vice president of the OEA, was chairman of the House Committee on Common Schools. From Red Oak, Superintendent E. T. Dunlap was serving his first of three terms in the House of Representatives.<sup>70</sup> These and several other school men constituted a group the OEA looked to for the success of its program. More often alone, but sometimes in combination with the OEA leadership, this group had come to be called, particularly by its opponents, the "school bloc," even though it sometimes split its vote, as it was to do in the 1947 session.

The Association had also worked at electing a "friendly" governor. The Executive Committee, or its representative, interviewed each candidate before the primary election.<sup>71</sup> After the nomination of Democrat Roy J. Turner, a tacit understanding developed between him and the OEA: he endorsed the Better Schools Amendments; the teachers supported his candidacy--without formal endorsement, in keeping with Association policy.<sup>72</sup> A letter from Turner to Battles was full of promise for the teachers:

I have carefully examined the recommendations of the Oklahoma Education Association for financing and improving the schools of this state, which were prepared recently by its Legislative Committee, and I find them fair and reasonable and to the best

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<sup>69</sup>Board of Directors, February 14, 1946; May 10, 1946.

<sup>70</sup>Wilson, pp. 92-93, 112-15.

<sup>71</sup>Executive Committee, May 9, 1946.

<sup>72</sup>Phillips interview no. 2.

of my judgment desirable for the State of Oklahoma. I endorse this program and if elected Governor of Oklahoma I shall use such influence and power as I have to secure its enactment into law.<sup>73</sup>

On major education issues the 1947 session of the legislature became essentially a conflict between the "school bloc" and the governor. Most OEA leaders and many members were of the opinion that Governor Turner departed from his pre-election endorsement of the Association's goals.<sup>74</sup> Turner insisted that he had kept his promises to the teachers, and that it was not he who was at fault, but rather the "purported leaders" of "this minority pressure group," who had changed their position on their own program. Before the struggle was over, the methods used by the two sides became further points of contention.<sup>75</sup>

The principal points of difference were (1) the amount of the state aid appropriation, the OEA asking for \$8,000,000 more than the governor was willing to approve, and (2) the extent and method of school district consolidation, with the governor demanding more sweeping reorganization than the OEA could support.<sup>76</sup> The governor considered the two bills as one, urging that more money be provided at the local level, arguing that much of this could be accomplished by consolidating districts. The OEA had developed a moderate consolidation plan, but rural and small-school elements, long opposed to compulsory reorganization, weakened the Association's position by resisting all such measures, including the OEA

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<sup>73</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1946, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup>Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>75</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 20, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

bill as well as a bill offered as a possible compromise.<sup>77</sup> Similar dis-  
 sension within the ranks, again from rural areas, brought the defeat of  
 the county superintendent salary increase.<sup>78</sup> In the battle over higher-  
 priority goals, the continuing contract bill, a step toward tenure for  
 teachers, was lost, and but for a last-minute effort by President Bat-  
 tles, who had made it one of his own priority objectives, the textbook  
 vitalization would have been defeated.<sup>79</sup>

The storm broke over the OEA's state aid bill priced at \$26,500,000.  
 The main component of this bill was a provision for a base annual salary  
 of \$1,500 for beginning teachers with bachelor's degrees.<sup>80</sup> It passed  
 the House of Representatives in February, but an administration spokes-  
 man declared that the governor would not approve more than \$18,000,000.<sup>81</sup>  
 In early March the Senate complied with the governor's wishes and  
 authorized the lesser amount. The Senate then set up a special committee  
 to rewrite the measure to fit available funds, and at the same time to  
 consider district consolidation and textbooks. With Raymond Gary as  
 chairman, this committee contained more "administration" men than "school  
 bloc" men.<sup>82</sup> The governor had clearly defeated the OEA and was now ad-  
 vancing his own program.

The OEA fought back with all the methods it had developed through

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<sup>77</sup>E. E. Battles, "Preparing, Promoting, and Enacting School Legis-  
 lation in Oklahoma," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Leland Stanford  
 University, Palo Alto, California, 1949), p. 283.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>80</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 20, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 6, 1947, p. 1.

the years. It had chosen Oklahoma City over Tulsa as the site for the 1947 convention to bring the thousands of members to the capital while the legislature was in session.<sup>83</sup> The Legislative Committee had reduced itself to a steering committee to work directly and constantly with the lawmakers.<sup>84</sup> Through The Oklahoma Teacher and special bulletins the central office informed the membership of progress and problems. At times of crucial debate or voting in the legislature, officials and members called on their representatives and observed from the galleries.<sup>85</sup> President Battles continued to lead every phase of the action. But Phillips, starting his second year as manager, was becoming the recognized spokesman for the Association and consequently the target of the opposition.<sup>86</sup>

With a showdown approaching in the Senate, the Executive Committee met to reinforce the Legislative and Steering Committees. It decided to call the Board of Directors into special meeting to consider such steps as a protest "holiday" or a convention of all the members.<sup>87</sup> Phillips commented that "several thousand teachers can be very expressive," but denied rumors of a strike, explaining, "We are a professional organization."<sup>88</sup> Before the Board could be assembled, and presumably before the

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<sup>83</sup>Letter from E. E. Battles to the Executive Committee, August 23, 1946. Selby papers.

<sup>84</sup>Board of Directors, February 13, 1947.

<sup>85</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 20, 1947, p. 1; March 17, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 21, 1947, p. 16.

<sup>87</sup>Executive Committee, March 17, 1947.

<sup>88</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 18, 1947, p. 1.

galleries could be filled with interested teachers, the Senate passed the measures which had been prepared by its special committee, providing for the governor's limit on state aid, his extensive reorganization of districts, and abandonment of the OEA's textbook bill.<sup>89</sup> The Board decided not to call a "holiday." It recessed instead to permit individual directors to procure pledges from their representatives to the effect that no vote would be taken on certain administration measures until the OEA school finance bill was passed. Then, with "enough" pledges in hand, the Board sought a conference with the governor.<sup>90</sup>

The governor not only refused to receive the OEA Board, but delivered a strong verbal attack upon the organization. He denounced the leaders, their "unconscionable demands upon the legislature," and their disregard of the "overall welfare of the state." The OEA, he said, was interested only in appropriations, not reorganization.<sup>91</sup> The Daily Oklahoman joined the attack with a series of editorials opposing the OEA position, charging teachers with "mobbing the legislature," and praising Turner for his courage in standing up against this "pressure group" with its "paid executive secretary" and "expert lobbyists."<sup>92</sup>

The OEA Board continued the fight by normal communication with the legislature and governor.<sup>93</sup> Phillips advised the directors to talk to their "people back home" and get them to speak to or write to their

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<sup>89</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 19, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup>Board of Directors, March 19, 1947.

<sup>91</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 20, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 21, 1947, p. 16; March 23, 1947, p. 2D; March 24, 1947, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup>Board of Directors, March 19, 1947.

representatives. Battles defended the OEA's methods and explained the differences with the governor on reorganization. He called the governor's approach essentially a tax base plan, not a merger of districts as administrative units. Further, the OEA insisted--and would adhere to this position most of the next twenty years--that the residents of the districts must be consulted and involved in the process of reorganization.<sup>94</sup>

In conference committee the administration yielded slightly to the OEA pressure against compulsory consolidation.<sup>95</sup> This made no essential difference in the outcome; the governor won his major goals, as the legislature gave final approval to his state aid appropriation and his reorganization plan. The Daily Oklahoman reported that the "teacher bloc" had been "routed."<sup>96</sup>

As the session approached adjournment President Battles renewed the effort to vitalize the textbook amendment, which had been voted down twice in the Senate. After winning the two-year fight to get the amendment approved by the people, the OEA was determined that it not be lost through legislative default. On May 21, 1947 the textbook bill, the last of the priority goals of the Association, was signed by the governor. Like the other measures, it fell short of complete success, only \$500,000 being appropriated to make the new law operative, enough to organize the program but not enough to buy books.<sup>97</sup> The program was due to remain underfinanced for two decades.

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<sup>94</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 20, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 10, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 22, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup>Battles, p. 274.



The 1947 session was a harbinger of sessions to come. The essential goals and priorities of the OEA would remain the same, and the basic conflict between the Association and the governor could continue. The methods of the organization would remain unchanged except in degree of perfection and intensity of application. Much of the personnel who led the 1947 battle would continue to lead in years to come. Phillips, particularly, exhibited a style of leadership that would be seen repeatedly for the next twenty years.

Measured against the goals established before the session, the results of the OEA effort in 1947 were not notable. Nonetheless, President Battles observed that all had not been lost: Average teachers' salaries were raised \$300 per year, a reorganization bill had been passed, and the textbook amendment had been vitalized. In his valedictory to the Board of Directors, he listed his legislative program as one of three worthy accomplishments of his presidency, the other two being the adoption of the Better Schools Amendments, and the maintenance within the OEA of democratic processes. The Board gave Battles a vote of thanks. His service on the legislative front was ending.<sup>98</sup>

Phillips, sounding like a man who had "just begun to fight," admonished the directors to think ahead toward the next legislature. Friendly legislators should be noted, he said, and those not friendly. Also, recognizing the growing importance of the national front, he reminded his colleagues to write their congressmen and press for federal assistance for education.<sup>99</sup>

With the firm performance of Governor Turner in mind, Phillips

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<sup>98</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1947.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

probably thought about future governors, unaware that two of them sat in the Twenty-First Legislature. Both had sided with the governor against the OEA on major bills. One was Senator Raymond Gary from Madill, the other Representative Henry Bellmon from Noble County.

## CHAPTER III

### PROFESSIONALISM AND POLITICS, 1945-1949

While struggling on the legislative front to promote the security and the welfare of its members and the "educational interests of all the people," the OEA did not lose sight of its professional sector.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the preparation for and culmination of the legislative session of 1949 underscored the inseparability of professionalism and political action in gaining public educational goals. Organizing and financing education could not be divorced from government, and favorable and effective influence upon the government could not be provided by a weak and divided organization. Oklahoma teachers showed their recognition of this dual responsibility by continuing the legislative effort, while at the same time pressing for higher standards of teaching competence and for professional solidarity. Each effort had a salutary effect upon the other, and to the extent that one failed the other suffered.

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<sup>1</sup>The term professionalism as used in this chapter and throughout this paper, unless otherwise indicated, is based upon the general definition of a profession as a "calling in which one professes to have acquired some special knowledge used by way either of instructing, guiding, or advising others or of serving them in some art." Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Unabridged. More specifically, this paper uses the term profession as defined by the NEA, which lists the following criteria: A profession (1) is based upon a body of specialized knowledge, (2) seeks competence in its membership, (3) serves the needs of its members, (4) has ethical standards, (5) influences public policy in its field, and (6) has group solidarity. NEA, Educational Policies Commission, Professional Organizations in American Education, (Washington, D. C., 1957), p. 9. Chapter VII presents a more complete treatment of OEA's aspirations toward professionalism and a brief evaluation of its status.

## Continuity and Change in the Political Pattern

By 1947 the OEA approach to school legislation had become an established and predictable routine consisting essentially of three steps: formulating the program, assisting the election of "friends" to the legislature and governorship, and influencing these officials to enact into law as much of the program as possible. Throughout the process there was a constant effort to maintain communication among all persons and groups concerned, lawmakers, public, and educators. The pattern was never-ending, because each set of goals was built upon those of the past, and the membership of each group changed slowly.

The detailed work of preparing a legislative program was delegated to the Legislative Committee. The president appointed this group with the advice and approval of the Executive Committee. Members were chosen from each of the nine districts, from major departments and interests within the Association, and from allied organizations, including the Congress of Parents and Teachers, the School Boards Association, the State Department of Education, and the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers. The Committee in the 1940's contained a preponderance of administrators, with county superintendents the most over-represented group in proportion to their numbers and the Department of Classroom Teachers, the largest of the OEA departments, most under-represented.<sup>2</sup> The president and executive secretary were ex-officio members, and several members of the Executive Committee were usually included.

The Committee prepared a list of goals varying in different years from fewer than a dozen to over fifty. These were submitted to the

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<sup>2</sup>Burkett, "Legislative Programs," p. 30.

Executive Committee, who usually reviewed them line by line, making corrections and suggesting additions. The same procedure was followed by the Board of Directors, whose voice was final in approval of the program. Because the Board met regularly three times per year, it had several opportunities to hear reports from the Legislative Committee and, therefore, to study and to revise before the final version was recommended to the legislature. The program was published in The Oklahoma Teacher at least once per year, usually more often, in whole or in part, to inform the membership and to invite their reactions. Theoretically, through their representatives on the Board of Directors, the members had a voice in approving or disapproving the work of the Committee.

With the goals agreed upon, the Association faced the problem of priorities. The total program usually offered something for every interest within the profession, but agreement was seldom unanimous as to which proposals to promote before others. This difficulty divided and weakened the OEA and made it vulnerable to charges from the opposition. In the 1940's the most serious conflicts arose over district reorganization and sources of taxes. In 1947, however, there was general agreement among all departments that higher salaries was the goal of first priority to be sought from the legislature.<sup>3</sup>

The leadership never forgot, and tried to see that the members did not forget, that a legislative program was an exercise in futility if it could not be enacted into law. The ideal legislature was one whose members were committed before their election to the passage of the OEA goals. Toward this end the organization worked. Candidates were

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<sup>3</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1947, p. 6; Board of Directors, February 12, 1948.

interviewed and their positions published in The Oklahoma Teacher. Members were admonished to know their representatives and their records and to return to the capital only "friends of education." Teachers were reminded to register, to vote, and to be active politically. With the encouragement of the OEA many teachers ran for seats in the legislature. In 1948 three teachers were candidates for the Senate in the general election, and ten were seeking seats in the House of Representatives.<sup>4</sup> Gubernatorial candidates received similar attention. They were interviewed and invited to make their views on education known to the OEA membership. A major prize of the Association's political activity was endorsement of its legislative goals by a prospective governor.

With goals prepared and the election past, the OEA moved into its third phase of the political cycle, working directly with the legislature and the governor to get its program translated into action. The Legislative Committee reduced itself to a small group called the Steering Committee. In direct daily contact with the lawmakers, this group drafted bills, spoke at hearings, talked to individual legislators, observed the progress of the Association's measures, and reported back to the president and Executive Committee. Reports of progress went out to the membership in The Oklahoma Teacher and in special bulletins. In February each year the entire membership met in convention at Oklahoma City, where, although engaged primarily in professional meetings, they demonstrated the numerical strength of the Association.<sup>5</sup> If serious problems arose the president might call the Board of Directors into

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<sup>4</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1948, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Executive Committee, September 29, 1945.

special session, and additional teachers might be invited to hold a mass meeting at the capital. An ultimate form of pressure would be to call a special convention--which would require a "professional holiday"--of the entire membership.

Between session the OEA kept its goals and expectations constantly before the legislature and the public. The Oklahoma Teacher supplied information to members and asked them to pass it on to their publics and their representatives. Meetings and proceedings of boards and committees and timely statements of leaders were reported in the press. Indirect pressure was brought to bear upon the legislature by frequent mention of the possibility of circulating petitions and repeated calls for federal aid to schools. Both were devices for keeping school problems before the public, as well as being statements of action that might be taken or of goals to be ultimately achieved.

This would be the basic pattern of political activity by the OEA for years to come. But changes were taking place in the late forties. The 1947 Legislature essentially completed a program started in 1944 to meet the double emergency of a rift in the Association and a financial crisis in the schools. This program, launched by President Stubbs, was pressed with unusual energy by him and his successors, not only because of the growing distress of teachers, but also because of fear of a coming depression. By 1947 the immediate reality of inflation had replaced the fear of recession as a goad to strenuous effort.<sup>6</sup> The changing conditions suggested that the legislative program should be approached more on a long-term basis than as a race with impending disaster.

Better planning based upon sound research was recognized as an

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<sup>6</sup>Board of Directors, November 15, 1947.

imperative need in the political pattern after 1947. This was not a sudden discovery; the three past presidents had worked overtime studying school problems and formulating plans based upon reliable information. The new manager had travelled and read extensively in search of information that might facilitate the writing of bills on such subjects as textbooks and district reorganization. These experiences emphasized both the possibilities and the need for permanent staff help in research. An increased budget, which had made possible some limited research activity, further encouraged the idea of a more professional approach to legislative planning. The legislature itself was asking for more expert assistance from the "education lobby," and with two new interim committees created to study school problems between sessions, its demand for professional knowledge was about to exceed the ability of the OEA to supply.<sup>7</sup>

Another change in the OEA approach to planning was the involvement of greater numbers of the membership in the process. It had been thought at the time of its adoption that the 1945 constitution, providing for direct election of board members from local units, would result in adequate communication between teachers and officers, but the formulation of legislative goals continued to rest with the state leadership without a sufficient flow of ideas from below.<sup>8</sup> A questionnaire circulated in the fall of 1947 was an attempt to bridge this gap.<sup>9</sup> The following year the first of a long series of statewide "leadership workshops" was held

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<sup>7</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1947.

<sup>8</sup>Burkett, "Legislative Programs," p. 32.

<sup>9</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1947, p. 6.



at Okmulgee. This annual conference, followed by local "one-day workshops," enabled members to participate more directly in the determination of goals.<sup>10</sup>

Improved intra-Association communication was one of several indications of growing professionalism among educators in Oklahoma, a professionalism valuable in itself, but also indispensable to political effectiveness. A measure of the salience of this factor was the alacrity with which critics attacked incompetence among teachers, and the persistence of opponents in exploiting weaknesses within the ranks of the profession. OEA members improved their political position by upgrading themselves; they demanded higher standards of preparation and certification and conducted numerous programs to improve the quality of instruction. Along with salaries and financial benefits they worked for more security for teachers and for better professional relations. Both leaders and members exhorted one another toward greater unity. They then expected their professional growth to be recognized and rewarded.

#### Professional Growth, 1945-1949

The OEA recognized the responsibility of a profession for the control of standards for entry into and retention within its membership. During the Second World War the Business Assembly had repeatedly objected to the lowering of requirements for certification, but since this function belonged to the State Board of Education the Association could do little more than protest.<sup>11</sup> At the end of the war the Board of Directors

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<sup>10</sup>Executive Committee, September 19, 1948.

<sup>11</sup>Minutes of the Business Assembly, February 12, 1942; March 13, 1943; February 17, 1944.

adopted a resolution of thanks to the wartime emergency teachers for their services, then immediately resolved that all emergency certificates should be abolished.<sup>12</sup> This became a continuing demand of the Association. A special committee was appointed to keep in touch with the State Board's policies on certification.<sup>13</sup>

The Department of Classroom Teachers joined the parent organization in its insistence upon higher standards of training and certification. Its new constitution, rewritten to conform with the OEA constitution, included the goal of high professional qualifications for teaching.<sup>14</sup> At their spring planning conference in 1946 the classroom teachers emphasized standards and expressed fear that teachers might present an image of incompetence.<sup>15</sup> The problem was discussed regularly at regional meetings and in the NEA Department of Classroom Teachers. In the national organization the Committee on Evaluation of Teaching recommended higher professional standards and the elimination of incompetent teachers.<sup>16</sup>

The OEA was assisted and guided by the NEA. The national association, reacting to the wartime lowering of standards which permitted one teacher in six in the nation to work with a substandard certificate, formed a new commission in 1946 to counter the problem.<sup>17</sup> This was the

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<sup>12</sup>Board of Directors, February 14, 1946.

<sup>13</sup>Executive Committee, July 12, 1946.

<sup>14</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1946, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1946, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1948, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>T. M. Stinett, Executive Secretary, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, The Teacher and Professional Organizations, (3rd ed., Washington, D. C., 1956), p. 17.

National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (NCTEPS, or more often TEPS), whose charge was "to carry forward for the profession a continuing program of improvement of standards for the selection, preparation, certification, and in-service growth of teachers, as well as standards for institutions which prepare teachers."<sup>18</sup> At the call of the OEA a conference of educators, meeting in Oklahoma City in February, 1947, formed the Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Education and Certification. This body was to study the problem of standards in Oklahoma and make reports to the profession and recommendations to the State Board of Education.<sup>19</sup> The OEA provided it with office space and paid half the salary of an executive secretary employed to serve the Commission.<sup>20</sup>

The Commission took action without delay, recommending that no more emergency certificates be issued, that no certificate be granted to a teacher with less than sixty college hours, and that those with fewer than sixty hours not be recertified unless they gained eight additional hours per year applicable to a permanent credential.<sup>21</sup> The State Board of Education accepted these recommendations.<sup>22</sup> A new trend was thus established, reversing a situation that had permitted the licensing of teachers with hardly more than high school education, and which two years after the end of the war saw 1,800 Oklahoma teachers still practicing

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1947, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Executive Committee, November 14, 1947; May 10, 1949.

<sup>21</sup> The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1947, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Executive Committee, April 11, 1947.

with substandard credentials.<sup>23</sup> The OEA praised the State Board for its action, and State Superintendent Oliver Hodge, in turn, asked for continued support from the Association.<sup>24</sup>

The Oklahoma Teacher contributed to the movement for professional standards by reporting news of current progress and by publishing articles pertinent to the discussion that developed. Guy Curry, the executive secretary of the new Commission on Teacher Education, wrote about the financing of teacher training institutions in Oklahoma and in the nation, asking why these schools and programs should not receive as much "respect and expenditure" as is given to other professions. Citing NEA reports of financial lag in schools and colleges of education, he reminded Oklahoma educators of their responsibility to seek improvement in this situation.<sup>25</sup> Professor John Paul Jones, of Northeastern State College, questioned what the content of teacher preparation should be.<sup>26</sup> Arnold E. Joyal, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Oklahoma, thought the first step in raising standards should be more stringent qualifications for administrators. He observed that "any certificated teacher whom a school board will employ may obtain a position as school superintendent in Oklahoma," and expressed the opinion that substandard credentials were more prevalent in this area than in the classroom.<sup>27</sup>

By 1949 the OEA was raising the level of its demands for teacher

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<sup>23</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1947, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1947.

<sup>25</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1948, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1949, p. 22.

<sup>27</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1947, p. 8.

preparation. At a regional meeting of the NEA TEPS Commission national leaders cited low standards as a cause of teachers leaving the state and prospective teachers not entering the profession. T. M. Stinett, executive secretary of the Commission, said, "Qualified people are not attracted to positions anyone can enter."<sup>28</sup> The conference asked that the baccalaureate degree be the minimum requirement for certification. The OEA accepted this goal as its own.<sup>29</sup> By 1949 eighty-five percent of Oklahoma teachers met this criterion, the number having risen eleven percent in two years.<sup>30</sup>

Tentative steps were taken by the Association to punish violations of the certification law. In 1947 five rural schools in Woodward County employed teachers who had no valid certificates.<sup>31</sup> The following year it was brought to the OEA's attention that the Pottawatomie County superintendent was not legally certified. The Executive Committee investigated both infractions and lodged protests with the State Board of Education. It also asked the governor and attorney general to take steps to enforce the law. The organized profession was not yet legally capable of policing itself. It could only seek redress through official agencies.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the 1940's the Association was deeply involved in the broad range of activities called "improvement of instruction." Although

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<sup>28</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 26, 1947, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1949.

<sup>30</sup>State Board of Education, Oliver Hodge, Superintendent, Thirty-First Biennial Report of the State Department of Education of Oklahoma, 1966 (Oklahoma City, 1966), p. 42.

<sup>31</sup>Executive Committee, November 14, 1947.

<sup>32</sup>Executive Committee, June 11, 1949.

specified curricular content and method were recognized to be primarily within the province of the State Department of Education, teacher training institutions, and local school systems, the OEA undertook to supplement these agencies by such means as making appropriate recommendations, sponsoring special conferences, and forming subject-matter sections within the organization. The Oklahoma Teacher devoted much of its space to instructional articles and features, and the annual state conventions were given almost completely to the cause of better teaching.

During the early postwar years the OEA participated in the great nationwide expansion in the use of audio-visual materials and methods. A news item in The Oklahoma Teacher reported that a large share of the state aid grant of 1945 was going into this new field. The same issue reported a number of instructional improvement conferences around the state, promoted by the OEA and forerunners of a type that became commonplace in the 1950's, devoted to training in the use of projectors and other devices.<sup>33</sup> A new section on audio-visual education was formally organized under the state Association, and by its second year it had grown large enough to have difficulty finding an adequate meeting hall at the state convention.<sup>34</sup> This group inaugurated the "OEA Audio-Visual Aids Utilization Project," a program to acquaint teachers with the new media, and introduced a feature in the journal called "Look--Listen--Learn," to report continuing developments in the field.<sup>35</sup> This was followed by a film review service, "What About Films?" by W. R. Fulton of the University of Oklahoma, and by a series of informative articles. In

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<sup>33</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1948, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1947, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1947, p. 19.

1948 the OEA Subcommittee on Audio-Visual Education helped conduct thirty-three "workshops" on the utilization, care and maintenance of films.<sup>36</sup>

The Oklahoma Teacher published many articles on teaching methods and the practical experiences of schools and teachers in the state. Some typical examples were "Let's Have More Panel Discussions,"<sup>37</sup> "So You're Bringing Your Class to the Capitol,"<sup>38</sup> a discussion of how to conduct a field trip, and "Teaching Shakespeare Off the Record."<sup>39</sup> Supporting an OEA objective of improving rural education was a report on a country school, "Hillsdale Shows Progressive Spirit."<sup>40</sup> "Enid's School of Tomorrow" described a modern high school building and program.<sup>41</sup> A small school experience in developing its library was told in "Caddo High School Library."<sup>42</sup>

Articles and reports from various interests and disciplines were regular offerings of the journal. English instructors were among the most prolific contributors. The first issue after the war contained an

<sup>36</sup>J. Win Payne, "Oklahoma Goes to the Movies," The Oklahoma Teacher, December 12, 1948, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup>Derwood Clay, "Let's Have More Panel Discussions," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1949, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup>Earl Cross, "So You're Bringing Your Class to the Capitol," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1949, p. 33.

<sup>39</sup>Paul M. Harris, "Teaching Shakespeare Off the Record," The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1949, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup>Blanche Evans, "Hillsdale Shows Progressive Spirit," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1948, p. 24.

<sup>41</sup>Ruth Scott, "Enid's School of Tomorrow," The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1948, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup>Zuleika Pace, "Caddo High School Library," The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1945, p. 31.

article by B. L. Kinkade, professor of English at Northeastern State College, entitled "The Importance to Americans of Plato's Teachings."<sup>43</sup> In October that year came an article on the relationship of patriotism and American literature,<sup>44</sup> followed in November by "The English Language, Logical and Psychological," by Harry E. Smith of the University of Oklahoma.<sup>45</sup> The Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English, a section of the OEA, was given a regular page each month devoted to the activities of the Council and to articles by its members.

Although other subject areas did not have a monthly page, they contributed articles related to their fields. The Oklahoma Council of Teachers of Mathematics reorganized in 1947 and began to appear frequently in the journal.<sup>46</sup> Science instructors made several contributions, including James G. Harlow's "The House of Atom," about an active high school club in Ponca City.<sup>47</sup> In the fall of 1948 Harlow wrote for The Oklahoma Teacher "A New Frontier in Education," in which he spelled out the challenges of science, the need for identifying and training scientists, and the implications for education.<sup>48</sup> Written nine years before the Russians launched the Space Age, his plea for upgrading education,

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<sup>43</sup>B. L. Kinkade, "The Importance to Americans of Plato's Teachings," The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1945, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup>Margaret H. Willson, "The Growth of Patriotism in American Literature," The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1945, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup>Harry E. Smith, "The English Language, Logical and Psychological," The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1945, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1947, p. 22.

<sup>47</sup>James G. Harlow, "The House of Atom," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1948, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup>James G. Harlow, "A New Frontier in Education," The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1948, p. 18.



particularly in the fields of science, had the sound and validity of the "post-sputnik" era, when these views were finally being accepted grudgingly by the public, though not without the charge that education had been lacking in vision.

The annual OEA convention was another activity devoted to the improvement of instruction. When the Executive Committee decided at its first postwar meeting to resume the annual event, it emphasized the legislative outcomes expected of this periodic show of strength.<sup>49</sup> However, a perusal of the programs of the convention in 1946 and of those that followed reveals that the gatherings were essentially collections of instructional conferences. A journal article entitled "What Good is a Convention?" answered its title question with the summary statement, "The serious business of learning to teach better was uppermost."<sup>50</sup>

Well-known national and world figures spoke at the general sessions of the conventions: In 1946 Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas spoke on "Peace Through Education."<sup>51</sup> In 1948 Ezequiel Padilla, United Nations delegate from Mexico, delivered an address entitled "Permanent Peace and Its Dangers."<sup>52</sup> National leaders of education were regular speakers at these general meetings, and state and Association officials, particularly Oliver Hodge and Ferman Phillips, presented timely messages. Governor Turner addressed all four conventions during his term in office.

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<sup>49</sup>Executive Committee, September 29, 1945.

<sup>50</sup>"What Good is a Convention?," The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1946, p. 28.

<sup>51</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1948, p. 8.

Following the general sessions the teachers separated into special interest and subject-matter groups. In 1945 the Oklahoma Council for the Social Studies heard Korea-born Younghill Kang, Professor from New York University, speak on "The Present Political Situation in the Far East." Science teachers devoted their sectional meeting to "Atomic Energy and Its Control." The French section heard a discussion of "Present Trends in Aural-Oral Methods."<sup>53</sup> High school English teachers discussed "English for Today and Tomorrow," and college English instructors heard an address on "World Understanding Through Literature."<sup>54</sup>

Some typical topics at subsequent conventions were "Professionalization of School Administration," "Art is a Common Language," "Higher Education and the Public," "Utilization of AV Aids," "The Use of Symbolic Logic in Elementary Mathematics," "The Place of Science in Education," and "UNESCO," the last delivered to the Social Science Section by the president of this world organization.<sup>55</sup> In 1949 the program included "Air Age Education," "Realism in Business Education," "Mark Twain as a Literary Artist," "Some Aspects of Teaching Calculus," "Goethe and European Literature," and "How Can Colleges Train Science Teachers to Meet the Current Demand?"<sup>56</sup>

Suppliers of school books, equipment, and materials exhibited their wares at the conventions, and teachers found viewing these a valuable part of their in-service education. Along with the new books,

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<sup>53</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1946, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>55</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1948, p. 8ff.

<sup>56</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1949, p. 33ff.

projectors, furniture, and other educational hardware were booths manned by personnel from colleges and universities, publicizing their offerings and giving public school teachers a renewed contact with these institutions. As teachers milled through the exhibits, moved from meeting to meeting, and rested, shopped, or amused themselves, they found visiting and renewing acquaintances with other teachers a profitable aspect of their conventions.

Rising standards and instructional improvement engendered professional pride and reinforced the never-ending efforts of leaders to increase membership and to maintain unity. Membership rose above 16,000 in 1946-1947, apparently stimulated by the Better Schools campaign, receded to 15,589 in 1947-1948, but resumed its upward swing the following year and never again turned downward.<sup>57</sup> Current membership was reported at almost every regular meeting of the Executive Committee and of the Board, and its promotion was a continuing topic of discussion. Presidential messages urged teachers to enroll, and The Oklahoma Teacher ran many articles encouraging membership.<sup>58</sup> NEA membership was also cultivated and rose slowly through the forties from 4,151 in 1945 to 5,846 in the school year of 1948-1949.<sup>59</sup>

Much attention was given during this period to the strengthening of

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<sup>57</sup>Board of Directors. Membership was reported by the executive secretary at regular Board meetings. Slight variations are found in other records and reports of the OEA, due to different dates of reporting or different methods of totalling various types of membership, such as life members, associate members, students, etc. Totals given here, and to be reported elsewhere in this paper, unless otherwise specified, will be of current active members, including life and retired members, as reported to the Board of Directors.

<sup>58</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1947, p. 36; "Why Should I Join the OEA?" The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1948, p. 15. These are examples of frequent articles and items promoting membership.

<sup>59</sup>Board of Directors. NEA membership was reported in the same manner as OEA membership. See footnote 57.

local organizations as the basic units of the State Association. The 1945 constitution had emphasized the local unit, and presidents and other officials continually exhorted teachers to become active in their home schools. The Oklahoma Teacher editorialized on the subject and undertook to encourage progress by reporting activities of the locals.<sup>60</sup> In September, 1947, a series of leadership conferences was held to instruct unit officers and to make them aware of the benefits of strong local organizations.<sup>61</sup> The journal published a "Score Card for a Local Association" to guide and to inspire grass-roots activity.<sup>62</sup>

A similar effort was directed toward the nine districts of the state. The principal activity of the district was to conduct an autumn convention, similar to the state meeting in that its major objectives were the exchange of information and the improvement of instruction. Some disenchantment with conventions led certain district officers shortly after the war to suggest abolishing the district gatherings; by a five to four vote the Executive Committee rejected this proposal.<sup>63</sup> The district organizations continued to be active and to add strength to the State Association. They gained stature in 1948 as they answered the call of Phillips to help finance research and publicity for the election campaign of that year and the legislative session following. In a meeting in January, 1948, the district presidents agreed to raise \$15,000 of the \$20,000 needed for these purposes.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1946, p. 28; December, 1947, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1947, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1948, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup>Executive Committee, November 21, 1946.

<sup>64</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1948, p. 20.

Phillips was able to sell his research plan and its financing to the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors as the teachers met in convention in Tulsa in February, 1948. This show of imagination and initiative was evidence of another step the Association had taken toward professionalization, the employment of an executive capable of devoting "all his time to furthering the interests of the Association," as the constitution defined the duties of the executive secretary. Phillips was still designated manager, but at this same meeting in Tulsa the Executive Committee promoted him to the post of executive secretary, effective July 1, 1948.<sup>65</sup> The action was taken at the request of Clyde M. Howell, who had held the position since 1923. Howell was given a new title of associate secretary. In this position he continued to serve the OEA for another five years.

"This Year of Planning and Preparation," 1947-1948

The Journal of the National Education Association reported that "Educational history has been written by the state and territorial legislatures in 1947."<sup>66</sup> It reported the results of the Oklahoma session along with that of other states, then stated, "But workers in local and state associations will not rest on their laurels. They know, like Alice in Wonderland, that they have to run fast in order to stay where they are."<sup>67</sup>

OEA leaders did not need to be reminded of the economic crisis.

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<sup>65</sup>Executive Committee, February 11, 1948.

<sup>66</sup>The Journal of the National Education Association, September, 1947, p. 454. Hereinafter cited as NEA Journal.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 457.

Full financing of many schools in Oklahoma was not assured until the last month of the fiscal year 1946-1947 when the final state-aid payment was made and teachers' pay warrants were delivered by mail.<sup>68</sup> So precarious were prospects for the following year that assurance of funds for a full term was worthy of front page attention by the press.<sup>69</sup> Phillips reported in September, 1947, that teachers were leaving their positions in large numbers either for other vocations or for other states offering higher salaries.<sup>70</sup> By November he had found the crisis even greater as several rural schools had been unable to open because they had no teachers, and many remained in operation only by employing emergency certified instructors.<sup>71</sup> Oklahoma City continued a trend of losing teachers that had accelerated steadily since 1943. Officials called it the highest loss of any "comparable city" in the nation and noted that shortages existed in every teaching level and field.<sup>72</sup> A survey of state colleges revealed that few students were entering teacher education programs, and OEA President D. D. Kirkland concluded that "more persons are quitting the teaching profession than are entering it."<sup>73</sup>

The OEA faced into the crisis by resuming its cycle of activity to stimulate the public and the legislature to provide for the schools.

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<sup>68</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 26, 1947, p. 6. Due to Oklahoma's segregated system of financing separate schools at this time, Negro teachers received only ninety percent of their scheduled salaries in 1947, even though the legal salary scales were equal to those of white teachers.

<sup>69</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 24, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1947, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1947, p. 9.

<sup>72</sup>Daily Oklahoman, August 5, 1947, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1948, p. 13.

The first step was to get the Association to agree upon a program it could support and that it could sell to the lawmakers. Phillips described the 1947-1948 term as "this year of planning and preparation."<sup>74</sup> President Kirkland announced the theme of the Association in this non-legislative year to be "Working, Planning, Growing."<sup>75</sup> The messages of both leaders contained routine exhortation to unity and effort, but activities already under way presaged new heights of involvement for the membership.

The new president provided comparatively quiet but steady and straight-forward leadership. D. D. Kirkland was superintendent of schools at McAlester, where he had served since 1941 after twenty years at a succession of administrative positions. A graduate of Northwestern State College at Alva, with a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma, he had held many offices in the OEA from the local to the state level. These included the presidency of the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators, membership on the Board of Directors, and service on the Legislative Committee. He had been president of the Board of Trustees of the Teacher Retirement System. As nominee for the highest office in the OEA he had been described as one who actively encouraged a local classroom teachers association, a recommendation of growing importance in the late forties.<sup>76</sup> The president's statements and speeches during the year undertook to define the problems of the educators and to arouse them to a greater unity and action.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1947, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>76</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1947, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1948, p. 13.

A greater sense of sound and motion came from Manager Phillips. He emerged in 1947 as both the symbolic and actual leader of the OEA, as his actions and utterances tended to become those of the Association. A measure of his status was the growing attention given him in the press, where he was early regarded as the spokesman for the organization, and the mounting criticism of him as the most prominent target among the organized educators. As he travelled about the state, speaking, organizing locals, and representing the teachers to the public, the elected officers, including presidents, were glad to have this vigorous and continuous staff leadership.

In September, 1947, Phillips inaugurated a column in The Oklahoma Teacher, "As We View It," which became an important line of communication to the membership. Through it each month he provided information, defined problems and suggested courses of action. In his first issue he described the teacher shortage and exodus from the state and blamed both on low salaries and an under-financed retirement system.<sup>78</sup> In October he emphasized organization, particularly at the local and district levels, as necessary for strength in fighting the teachers' problems.<sup>79</sup> In February he explained two committees of the legislature that had been set up to study school problems between sessions.<sup>80</sup>

With the arrival of a new election year his columns turned to the political front. In almost every issue he had spoken of the need for federal aid to education; in March he devoted a whole page to this question and to statements of support by members of the Oklahoma delegation

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<sup>78</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1947, p. 12.

<sup>79</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1947, p. 10.

<sup>80</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1948, p. 42.



to Congress.<sup>81</sup> He came back to this theme in April as he urged members to support "Those public officials who work for us." His main effort in this column was to remind teachers of the coming primary election, in which they should work to elect "friends of education."<sup>82</sup> Adroitly combining good causes and practical politics in the last issue of the year, Phillips announced the OEA's endorsement of three amendments to be voted upon in the coming election, an additional mill levy for Negro schools, a constitutional board of regents for higher education, and a salary increase for legislators.<sup>83</sup>

The preparation of proposed legislation to be presented to the 1949 session involved an unusual number of special committees, made up of legislators, laymen, and educators. The OEA participated in all of these groups with much overlapping and interlocking of membership, and lawmakers and laymen looked to the Association for information and guidance. On the day that Governor Turner was angrily denouncing the OEA for its "unconscionable" demands upon the state, a meeting of the Joint Council on Education was under way in Oklahoma City, quietly seeking ways to avoid the "biennial school crisis." This body committed to long-term planning and to liaison among groups interested in school problems, was composed of delegates from the OEA, the Congress of Parents and Teachers, the School Boards Association, the State Board of Education, and a number of civic organizations.<sup>84</sup>

In the closing days of the 1947 session the legislature established

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<sup>81</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1948, p. 14.

<sup>82</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1948, p. 20.

<sup>83</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1948, p. 8.

<sup>84</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 30, 1947, p. 20.

two committees to study school problems in preparation for 1949. The first of these was an "Interim Committee on School Finance" whose purpose was to find a "permanent solution" to the never-ending puzzle. It consisted of twenty persons, five appointed by each, the governor, the president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, and the president of the OEA.<sup>85</sup> The OEA members included Phillips and State Superintendent Oliver Hodge.<sup>86</sup> The second group was a "Subcommittee on Education" appointed by the Legislative Council, a new organization created to conduct studies between sessions. This subcommittee was headed by Representative E. T. Dunlap, and its vice-chairman was Senator Raymond Gary. It defined as its objectives the re-writing of the school code and the study of all the major areas of current educational concern, including certification standards, school accreditation, school finance, tenure, retirement, curriculum, buildings, textbooks, vocational education, and school district reorganization.<sup>87</sup> The OEA appointed a parallel "Planning Committee" to study, conduct research, and make recommendations to the legislators.<sup>88</sup> Separate from all of these, though with some duplication of membership, was the regular Legislative Committee of the OEA headed by Garland Godfrey, superintendent of schools at Pryor.

All of these groups turned to the organized profession for information and leadership in further research. The OEA had long recognized the need for a research department headed by an expert but was hindered

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<sup>85</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1947.

<sup>86</sup>Executive Committee, June 12, 1947.

<sup>87</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1948, p. 42.

<sup>88</sup>Executive Committee, June 12, 1947.

by its limited budget.<sup>89</sup> It appointed a committee in the fall of 1947 to make a new attempt to solve the problem.<sup>90</sup> The Interim Committee was the first to ask for help. Then the Subcommittee on Education made a formal request for assistance on its extensive project. In a bold move to meet these requests, Phillips in early 1948 came up with a plan to finance both research and publicity for the coming election year. The State Association would provide \$5,000, while district organizations would raise another \$15,000, mainly by assessment of teachers.<sup>91</sup> This plan was approved by the Executive Committee in February, and in March a research director was engaged. Professor Ross Pugmire, of the University of Oklahoma, agreed to head a Research Department of the OEA for eight months, beginning April 1, 1948, with the understanding he was to employ his assistants, make a complete study of Oklahoma schools, and provide information and recommendations to the legislative and professional groups in need of this service.<sup>92</sup>

While availing itself for the first time of an expert research staff, the OEA intensified its normal efforts to involve the membership in planning and preparation for the next legislative cycle. At the same time, it undertook several new approaches toward this end. Phillips called a series of conferences in September, 1947, designed to stimulate better organization and activity at the local unit level.<sup>93</sup> The Planning Committee sent a questionnaire to a thousand teachers asking them to

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<sup>89</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1945.

<sup>90</sup>Executive Committee, November 14, 1947.

<sup>91</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April 4, 1948, p. 20.

<sup>92</sup>Executive Committee, March 20, 1948.

<sup>93</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1947, p. 10.

indicate the problems they considered most important for study in the coming year. Four hundred responses indicated that the chief concerns of the teachers, in order, were salaries, general revenue, federal aid, buildings, and reform in ad valorem tax assessments.<sup>94</sup>

In the fall of 1948 the organization held its first "OEA-NEA State-wide Leadership Workshop" at the Okmulgee Branch of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. The NEA provided consultants and paid half the cost of the gathering. It was designed to give local, district, and state officers information and inspiration that might lead to more effective effort at every level of the Association. Subjects for discussion were local organization, state organization, the National Association, public relations, teacher welfare, and the OEA legislative program. President David E. Temple assured participants and other members that there was "never . . . a more significant meeting . . . ."<sup>95</sup> It brought a new dimension to intra-Association communication, and was accepted at once as an annual event essential to the strength of the OEA.

#### The Legislative Session of 1949

The OEA president for the year 1948-1949 was David E. Temple, principal of Irving Elementary School in Tulsa. A graduate of Austin College in Sherman, Texas, with a master's degree from the University of Chicago, President Temple had served in the Tulsa school system since

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<sup>94</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1947, p. 6. Additional topics in the order of preference were retirement, certification, recruitment, improvement of rural schools, the state department of education, public relations, a placement service in the OEA office, in-service training, strengthening the office of county superintendent, secondary education, continuing contracts, certification of administrators, and higher education.

<sup>95</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1948, p. 13.

1929 as high school teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He had been president of the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association and vice president of the National Department of Classroom Teachers. His election as one closely identified with the classroom teachers was in significant accord with the growing strength of this majority segment of the Association. Like so many OEA leaders, he had served in the state legislature, representing Tulsa County in the House of Representatives from 1939 to 1943. Long an active member of the Legislative Committee, he was appointed in 1947 as one of the five OEA members of the legislature's Interim Committee on School Finance.<sup>96</sup>

President Temple's September message to the membership reviewed the course currently followed by the Association: Local efforts were under way to elect favorable legislators; through the leadership workshop and other means the Association was developing a legislative program and organizing to press it through the legislative; and the organization was cooperating with the Interim Committee in a series of hearings being held around the state. He noted the NEA battle for federal aid and urged Oklahoma teachers to make a larger contribution to this effort.<sup>97</sup>

Executive Secretary Phillips renewed his "As We View It" campaign by reporting the unabated flow of teachers from the state and the number of unfilled positions late in August.<sup>98</sup> The OEA assessment of the teacher shortage was confirmed by figures from the State Department of Education.<sup>99</sup> Using information from the new Research Department, Phillips

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<sup>96</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1947, p. 20.

<sup>97</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1948, p. 15.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>99</sup>Daily Oklahoman, August 31, 1948, p. 5.

devoted his November column to a defense of the automobile license tag tax, which was earmarked for schools but was being looked upon hungrily by the Highway Department. To clinch his argument that this dedicated revenue was in danger, he reviewed the array of taxes formerly devoted to schools which had been diverted to other uses, a list that amounted to \$40,000,000 worth in 1947-1948.<sup>100</sup> In January he reaffirmed the OEA's support of a stronger State Department of Education and asked for higher salaries for county superintendents.<sup>101</sup> In February he reviewed the newly adopted legislative program in full.

The principal goals recommended by the Legislative Committee provided that (1) the state superintendent should be appointed by an elected state board, (2) county superintendents should be appointed by a county committee selected by district school boards, (3) the high school transportation area should become the basic school district for both taxation and administration, though parents and patrons were to have a voice in the process, (4) the base salary for college graduate teachers begin at \$2,400 per year, with all teachers receiving a minimum increase of \$500, and (5) basic aid and federal aid should not be charged against the equalization aid to which a school was entitled. Further recommendations were for (6) an increase in funds for maintenance and transportation, (7) state aid for local school building construction, (8) a pupil-teacher ratio of twenty-five to one, (9) retention of the automobile tag tax, (10) funding of the Teacher Retirement System, with minimum retirement pay of \$100 per month, (11) funding of the free textbook program, (12) strengthening the authority of the State Board of Education in the

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<sup>100</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1948, p. 14.

<sup>101</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1949, p. 7.

certification of teachers, (13) continuing contracts for teachers, and (14) state funds for audio-visual education and for special education of handicapped children.<sup>102</sup>

The Legislative Committee had based its program to a great extent upon the findings of Pugmire's research, with the result that its goals were almost identical with those of the Legislative Council's Subcommittee, which had relied upon the same material. The two groups disagreed in only three areas: The OEA wanted higher salaries, higher retirement pay and heavier state funding of the retirement system, and greater authority for the state superintendent.<sup>103</sup>

The Committee's program was approved by the Board of Directors with a minimum of discussion.<sup>104</sup> But there had been stormy disagreement within the Committee and decisions by votes so narrow as to leave the future of some proposals in doubt. Wealthy school districts, speaking through J. Win Payne, superintendent at Ponca City, demanded and received a provision for basic aid that would insure a \$500 pay raise for all teachers, not only those in state-aided districts. T. E. Allen, county superintendent of Osage County, speaking for many rural schools and rural officials, took issue with the district reorganization proposal and the plan to appoint county superintendents. The reorganization goal was approved by a very small majority.<sup>105</sup>

Because the conclusions of the committees of the legislature and of the OEA were essentially the same, the OEA goals remained goals and were

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<sup>102</sup>Board of Directors, February 18, 1949.

<sup>103</sup>Daily Oklahoman, December 31, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup>Board of Directors, February 18, 1949.

<sup>105</sup>Daily Oklahoman, December 31, 1948, p. 1.

not framed into bills by the Legislative Committee.<sup>106</sup> This work was left up to legislators, who in each house introduced an "omnibus" school bill containing virtually all the goals of the OEA. In addition, the school bill contained a complete codification of Oklahoma school laws, the task having been carried out by the OEA Research Department under the supervision of E. T. Dunlap's Subcommittee. Never had such thorough preparation gone into the writing of school legislation in Oklahoma, and the OEA had been in the forefront at every step.<sup>107</sup>

There was much evidence that OEA relations with the legislature and governor were more conciliatory than in the previous session. Legislative leaders were supporting most of the Association's program, and the governor had outlined goals that coincided closely with those of the teachers.<sup>108</sup> But there had been disquieting statements from high places. Senator James C. Nance, president pro tempore in the 1947 session and a key committee chairman in the coming term, severely condemned the OEA as a "special interest group" that should be ignored in the next legislature. He singled out Phillips for his efforts to influence the 1948 election, predicting that lawmakers would no longer look to him as the official spokesman for the teachers. Using what had become a standard method of attacking the Association, aimed at exploiting internal tensions, Nance denounced the leaders, while conceding that many teachers

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<sup>106</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 8, 1949, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup>Ross Pugmire, Oklahoma's Children and Their Schools, An Opportunity and an Obligation: A Report and an Interpretation of a Study of Financial and Organizational Problems of the Public School System of Oklahoma. Mimeographed. (Oklahoma City, OEA, 1950), pp. vii-x. These pages from the preface of this 535-volume tell how the study was set up and utilized by the Subcommittee.

<sup>108</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1948, p. 17.



were sincerely trying to improve instruction and raise standards.<sup>109</sup> Speaking to teachers at the Okmulgee workshop, he opposed the salary goal of \$2,400, stating that the base should be \$2,000 and that teachers should work twelve months per year.<sup>110</sup> Governor Turner, ambitious to build highways, proposed transferring the \$6,000,000 received from the automobile tag tax to the Highway Department and recommended that the legislature look elsewhere for revenue to replace this fund which was earmarked for schools.<sup>111</sup> The governor caused further anxiety to educators by suggesting that the legislature go slow on school appropriations until Congress had had time to act on federal aid.<sup>112</sup>

Sporadic opposition came from some previous opponents of schools. The State Chamber of Commerce struck its last blow in the closing days of 1947 when its manager apprised a tax forum of oil men of the threat to property interests by the "school bloc."<sup>113</sup> A new taxpayers' association, the Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council, absorbed much of the membership of the State Chamber and was soon finding fault with the school system.<sup>114</sup> It made its initial attack upon a most sensitive point, school district reorganization.<sup>115</sup>

The most serious threat to the pending legislation, and to the

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<sup>109</sup>Daily Oklahoman, August 27, 1948, p. 12.

<sup>110</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 21, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 17, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 28, 1948, p. 18A.

<sup>113</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1948, p. 57.

<sup>114</sup>Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>115</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 17, 1948, p. 1.

solidarity of the OEA, came from within the Association. Rural opposition to school consolidation was the focus of disagreement. County superintendents, also fearing loss of their elective positions, led mounting resistance to reorganization efforts. These officials had fought hard in the Legislative Committee to keep consolidation out of the OEA program.<sup>116</sup> Failing to gather enough support to defeat the measure in the Board meeting of February, 1949, they met at the earliest opportunity to consider further action. At this meeting they voiced their overwhelming opposition to the OEA measures on reorganization and on appointment of county superintendents. Further support of this position was registered by re-election of their president, T. E. Allen, who had been the most vociferous spokesman for the rural cause.<sup>117</sup>

Apparently stimulated by these county officials, a large group of rural board members, patrons, and teachers, numbering about 500, descended upon the statehouse demanding that the school bill be killed. E. T. Dunlap, who had expected "fifteen or twenty" people at a routine hearing he had called, undertook to explain the pending legislation and invited other key men, including Senator Nance, to join him. The visitors were disorderly, interrupting Dunlap's presentation with cries of "kill the bull," and refusing to listen to any other speakers. "We came to do the talking," announced the president of the board of education of Happy Valley School District in Lincoln County, and he told Senator Nance to sit down and listen. Seeming to become suddenly aware of their power, the group organized on the spot into an "Association for the Preservation of Rural Schools" and elected a slate of officers headed by the

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<sup>116</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 9, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 19, 1949, p. 1.

spokesman from Happy Valley. Following this stormy meeting in the Supreme Court Chamber, the only available room large enough to hold the gathering, they moved to the galleries of the two houses to continue their noisy agitation against the school bill.<sup>118</sup>

The Senate stampeded. On a motion by Senator Nance, and by a vote of thirty-six to two, the omnibus school bill was called out of committee and stricken from the calendar, an unprecedented action that normally could be interpreted as the death of the bill. Nance explained his action by pointing to the divisions within the ranks of the OEA. He accused Phillips of not supporting the bill and the organized teaching profession of "running out" on its own program. Admonishing school people to attain a united front, he asked the Senate to start over and write a new bill.<sup>119</sup>

The OEA rallied to save the work of two years that had gone into the writing of the omnibus bill. Phillips spoke to local meetings of teachers in defense of the program and announced a reversal of strategy on the part of the Association. Instead of "sitting this one out," as the organization thought was possible at an earlier date, and as the teachers always preferred, it sent out a call for a mass meeting of members at the state capitol to demonstrate the OEA's solidarity in favor its program.<sup>120</sup> The "largest lobby crowd in eighteen years," responded to the call, flooding the capitol building and overflowing the galleries of the House of Representatives as that body began to consider its version of

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<sup>118</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 3, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 8, 1949, p. 6.

the bill.<sup>121</sup> Included in the estimated 3,000 demonstrators was Mrs. Boyd Clark, president of the OEA Department of Rural Teachers, who declared that she, and most of the 4,000 members of her department, supported the reorganization measure as written by the Dunlap committee.<sup>122</sup>

Dunlap had hoped to save the school bill in the House.<sup>123</sup> But both in his committee and on the floor amendments were adopted that diluted the reorganization proposition beyond recognition. The House aimed a special blow at the OEA by adding an amendment forbidding schools to require teachers to join any organization.<sup>124</sup> On March 15, 1949, on a motion by Richard Smith of Cherokee County, the county with the state's largest number of dependent schools, the reorganization plan was removed from the bill.<sup>125</sup> On the following day the omnibus measure, heavily amended, passed the House and was sent to the Senate, where leaders of that body promised to rewrite it.<sup>126</sup>

The program finally enacted was a mixture of partial successes and serious failures for the OEA. Many felt that the most important result of the two-year effort was the codification of all the school laws of the state. The rest of the OEA program was within the code itself. State aid was increased to provide a base salary for teachers of \$2,000, \$400 less than the teachers had asked. To qualify for the assistance teachers were required to earn a minimum of seventy college hours instead

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<sup>121</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 10, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>123</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 3, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 10, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>125</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 16, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>126</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 17, 1949, p. 2.

of the former sixty. Appropriations were increased for basic aid, maintenance, and transportation. Meager, and therefore unsatisfactory, increases were given to the funding of retirement and of textbooks. Some encouragement was given the comparatively new programs of audio-visual services and special education. No money was provided by the state for school buildings, and the constitutional limitation on local bonded indebtedness insured that no quick relief was in sight for school construction. County superintendents continued to be elected, but the office was upgraded as to certification requirements and salaries. There was no change in the method of selecting the state superintendent. The proposal for continuing contracts for teachers was again lost among higher priorities. School district reorganization was not only defeated, but had so severely strained the structure of the OEA that it would be many years before the Association could unite in support of a progressive measure in this area.<sup>127</sup>

Phillips had been accused of not giving his full support to the school bill in its greatest crisis, the fight over reorganization. While there is no record of his making consolidation his aim of first priority, there is ample evidence of his unstinting efforts in support of the program as a whole. His major purpose was to maintain unity within the organization, and at a later date he commented on how difficult that was when the Association was pressing for legislation against rural schools in a rurally oriented legislature.<sup>128</sup> Trying to rally the Association and to defend it at the height of the controversy, he opened an address to a legislative hearing with these words:

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<sup>127</sup>Pugmire, pp. 13-25.

<sup>128</sup>Phillips interview, no. 2.

In the outset, I would like very much to impress on your group that as I make these specific recommendations, I do so as a representative of the Oklahoma Education Association, which organization represents more than 16,000 voluntary members made up of Oklahoma teachers. This association expresses itself and defines its policies and programs through its selected representatives, known to us as a Board of Directors. This board is selected by the teachers themselves, and every teacher in Oklahoma belonging to the Oklahoma Education Association has the opportunity and privilege of participating in the selection of this board.

He then proceeded to defend the program agreed upon by the majority of the Board.<sup>129</sup>

As the legislative session drew to a close Phillips was already at work on the next cycle. In his monthly column he praised and thanked leaders of the legislature and of the Association, summarizing their accomplishments and publishing their pictures. He stated his expectation that the school program would pass, but if not, he said, "be not discouraged: We can express ourselves at the polls." Noting that most legislators were favorable to the OEA, he advised that his office could furnish information on those who were not friendly.<sup>130</sup>

At the spring meeting of the Board of Directors he proposed a new committee on educational finance to prepare a "permanent program" from earmarked funds. He urged that this committee consider submitting initiative petitions to the people. The committee was appointed before the Board adjourned.<sup>131</sup> The 1949 session of the legislature had not yet closed, but the OEA was preparing for the 1950's.

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<sup>129</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1949, p. 16.

<sup>130</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1949, p. 14.

<sup>131</sup>Board of Directors, May 11, 1949.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AND CHANGE

To pursue their rising professional aspirations and to fight their political battles, the organized teachers of Oklahoma sought the strength of numbers and of unity. They handily attained the former by more than doubling their enrollment between 1945 and 1965, but this very success contributed to the difficulty of maintaining the latter at a high level. The OEA was large and diverse. As teachers joined the organization they also became members of its various divisions and departments, and of its local units and districts. Their activities within these component groups advanced the goals of the profession, but their narrower identities sometimes conflicted with one another and with loyalty to the statewide organization. Further, the membership was changing in many ways: it was growing first older and then younger, it was gaining a higher percentage of men, it was becoming less rural, and it was integrating racially. It was increasing its level of education and was consciously striving to become more professional. These diversities and changes simultaneously enriched and endangered the Association. The dedication of a sufficient number of educators to its basic purposes was the cement that kept the OEA from coming apart.

#### Growth and Promotion of Membership

The OEA grew in membership from 14,577 in 1944-1945 to 33,868 twenty years later. Table I shows that this growth was steady and

TABLE I<sup>1</sup>

## MEMBERSHIP IN THE OEA AND THE NEA FROM 1944-1945 TO 1964-1965

<u>Year</u>	<u>OEA</u>	<u>NEA</u>
1944-1945	14,577	4,151
1945-1946	15,533	3,423
1946-1947	16,268	4,581
1947-1948	15,589	5,799
1948-1949	15,881	5,846
1949-1950	16,649	6,767
1950-1951	16,852	7,052
1951-1952	17,194	7,956
1952-1953	17,851	8,948
1953-1954	18,453	10,510
1954-1955	18,998	11,749
1955-1956	20,280	12,552
1956-1957	21,722	13,464
1957-1958	23,804	12,262
1958-1959	24,541	12,906
1959-1960	25,708	13,518
1960-1961	26,497	14,390
1961-1962	27,511	15,461
1962-1963	28,179	15,995
1963-1964	32,474	16,624
1964-1965	33,868	17,262

TABLE II<sup>2</sup>

## MEMBERSHIP OF ALL TYPES IN OEA FROM 1957-1958 TO 1964-1965

<u>Year</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Associate</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Life</u>	<u>Total</u>
1957-1958	21,957	323	1,438	86	23,804
1958-1959	22,499	326	1,624	92	24,541
1959-1960	23,476	285	1,818	129	25,708
1960-1961	24,155	145	2,121	76	26,497
1961-1962	24,873	392	2,166	80	27,511
1962-1963	25,272	501	2,333	73	28,179
1963-1964	27,469	2,274	2,614	117	32,474
1964-1965	27,699	2,754	3,349	66	33,868

<sup>1</sup>OEA membership from the minutes of the Board of Directors. NEA membership from NEA, NEA Handbook, Washington, D. C., 1947 to 1967. Published annually.

<sup>2</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 29.



consistent, failing to advance only in the year 1947-1948. As shown in Table II, the totals for the late fifties and early sixties include many non-teachers. Using the number of active teachers as a basis for comparison, it is found that this basic membership approximately doubled during the two decades following World War II. No reliable breakdown of enrollment is available for the 1940's, but, there being no student and few associate members at that time, the totals in Table I for this period are mostly of active members.<sup>3</sup> Membership of Oklahoma teachers in the NEA more than quadrupled between 1945 and 1965, failing to register an annual gain only twice, first in 1946 and then in 1958, a year in which the dues were raised from five to ten dollars.<sup>4</sup>

The OEA Constitution of 1945 and all of its revisions through 1965 provided for two types of membership, active and associate. "Any person engaged in educational work in Oklahoma" was eligible for active membership in 1945 upon payment of the established membership fees.<sup>5</sup> This was later extended to include persons "legally retired under the Oklahoma Retired Teachers" System."<sup>6</sup> While retired teachers were not voting members of local units, they had a voice on the Board of Directors through their Department of Retired Teachers formed in 1952.<sup>7</sup> In 1957 the Executive Committee interpreted the constitution to grant active status

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<sup>3</sup>OEA record keeping and record preservation improved with the expansion of the staff and the construction of a permanent headquarters building in 1950.

<sup>4</sup>Board of Directors, August 16, 1957.

<sup>5</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1945, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>OEA, "Know Your Oklahoma Education Association," Oklahoma City, 1964, p. 5. (A mimeographed handbook in the files of the Association.)

<sup>7</sup>Executive Committee, June 26, 1952.

to school nurses.<sup>8</sup> Growing sentiment for professional disciplining of membership led the Association to adopt an amendment in 1962 providing for expulsion of members. This extreme action could be taken by a vote of two-thirds of the Executive Committee in cases of violation of "recognized professional standards," advocacy of or membership in an organization advocating forcible overthrow of the government, or conviction of a felony. A member so removed could be reinstated by the same process.<sup>9</sup>

Life membership was granted a limited number of members both as an honor and as an opportunity to reduce the total dues paid. To be eligible the applicant was required to have completed ten continuous years of membership in the OEA and to show evidence of professional growth, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee. His fee was ten times the annual dues he would have been required to pay for active membership at the time of his application.<sup>10</sup> Throughout most of the period under study this normally amounted to a hundred dollars and could be paid in small installments. In 1955 retired teachers were permitted to purchase life membership for ten dollars.<sup>11</sup> Money collected as life fees was placed in a fund for the construction and maintenance of the OEA headquarters building.

Associate membership was available to anyone "interested in education," subject to rules and regulations of the Executive Committee and upon payment of a fee provided in the by-laws. Associate members enjoyed the benefits and privileges of the Association but could not vote

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<sup>8</sup>Executive Committee, March 1, 1957.

<sup>9</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1962, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup>OEA Handbook, 1964, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Executive Committee, October 26, 1955.

or hold office. In the 1940's some active teachers, particularly college instructors, who at the time had no representation on the Board but wanted the benefits of membership, applied for associate status. The Executive Committee ruled on two occasions that no person eligible for active membership could hold any other type.<sup>12</sup> Associate membership soared in 1963 as non-teaching school personnel took advantage of a superior medical and hospital insurance plan available only to members. The Executive Committee at that time decided that any school employee not eligible for active membership could become an associate member.<sup>13</sup>

In 1950 the OEA assumed the sponsorship of the Future Teachers of American chapters on college campuses and extended associate status to students upon payment of an annual fee of one dollar.<sup>14</sup> The prospective teachers changed their name to Student Education Association (SEA) to distinguish themselves from the Future teachers, as the high school clubs were called. Every senior college in the state had an SEA chapter, and student membership in OEA rose rapidly to over three thousand members by 1965. A major purpose of the OEA's sponsorship of student organizations, in addition to the development of professional attitudes among students preparing to enter the teaching profession, was to enlarge current membership and to promote future enrollments.

Most teachers joined the state association without hesitation. Beginning teachers had usually been instructed as part of their college preparation as to the values of membership in professional organizations.

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<sup>12</sup>Executive Committee, November 16, 1945; October 12, 1949.

<sup>13</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1963.

<sup>14</sup>Executive Committee, November 12, 1950.

Upon arrival at their new schools they found that most instructors were members and that newcomers were expected to join. Teachers took pride in both individual membership and one hundred percent enrollment within their units. Many, if not most, Oklahoma teachers accepted the conviction that a strong association was a criterion of professionalism and that membership in and support of the organization was an important measure of individual commitment to the profession. Those of less lofty motivation were aware of benefits that accrued to members, such as receipt of the monthly journal, fellowship and inspiration of meetings and conventions, welfare activities, and salary and other material gains that could be won only by united action.

Leaders of the Association tried not to let teachers forget these benefits as they kept membership promotion high on their schedule of activities. They felt that numbers gave political strength to the organization, and there could be no denying that annual membership dues, graduated on the basis of rising salaries, provided automatic growth of the treasury as enrollment increased. While most teachers readily paid their annual dues, thus renewing their membership, some had to be reminded or persuaded. No presidential message was complete without its call for increased membership. Setting of goals and frequent reporting of the number enrolled was a regular feature of meetings of the Board and of the Executive Committee. A membership committee was always at work and issued periodic recommendations, such as these presented to the Board in 1946:

1. Teacher education institution should be urged to teach about professional organizations.
2. Boards of Regents and college administrators should be urged to press for enrollments.
3. Accrediting agencies should be asked to encourage membership of faculties as a condition for accreditation.
4. Legislation should be considered to require

membership in the state association as a condition for certification. 5. The Association should use a combined membership form providing for enrollment on three levels, national, state, and local.<sup>15</sup>

The last proposal was adopted by the Executive Committee as one of several methods to stimulate membership and to make it easier to attain. An enrollment card combining membership in the NEA and the OEA added convenience to those members already committed to both organizations, and promotion of either organization tended to increase acceptance of the other. The two associations took a further joint step when the OEA agreed to collect NEA dues, using an improved unified application form, in return for fifteen percent of the fees paid the national organization by Oklahoma teachers.<sup>16</sup> The NEA conducted a separate campaign for membership, speaking through its state director, who was also a member of the OEA Executive Committee, through The Oklahoma Teacher, and through its own journal. By permitting local units to affiliate directly with it, the national association both broadened its organizational base and encouraged teachers to become its members.

Through its constitution and bylaws the OEA provided further incentives to join the organization. Districts and local units were refunded fifty cents per member for dues paid to the state association; the seven departments received twenty-five cents per member. Officers and leaders of these groups urged teachers to pay their fees, thus becoming not only state members but members of the component organizations. Another type of pressure came from the provision that before one could serve as an officer in a district, local unit, department, or division

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<sup>15</sup>Board of Directors, February 14, 1946.

<sup>16</sup>Executive Committee, February 24, 1961.

he must be a member of the OEA. This requirement was pointed primarily toward leaders of subject-matter or special-interest groups who might not otherwise be interested in the state organization.

The Oklahoma Teacher and other publications played a part in membership promotion. The journal itself was a major reward for membership, but in addition to its intrinsic worth it fulfilled the role of an official organ for the Association, presenting membership news and reports, serving as the medium for officers' messages and exhortations, and publishing specific articles on the advantages of being a part of the OEA.<sup>17</sup> Newsletters and bulletins supplemented the regular publication. From time to time an Association handbook was printed to serve as a guide to members and officers and as a stimulus for membership. The 1964 issue offered these reasons for joining the OEA:

Among the privileges of membership are: 1. To vote at local and district meetings. 2. Eligibility to hold office in local, district, and state association. 3. To attend meetings of the local, district, and state association. 4. To receive The Oklahoma Teacher and other OEA publications. 5. To vote for members of the Board of Directors. 6. To vote for officers of the OEA. 7. To receive the benefits of the various services of the OEA. 8. To appeal to the State Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities through any recognized units, department, or the Executive Committee.<sup>18</sup>

At the local district and college campus level additional forces were at work encouraging membership. For many years administrators attached blank checks to contract forms to encourage teachers to pay their annual dues without delay. This practice had ceased by 1950,<sup>19</sup> but

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<sup>17</sup>"Why Should I Join the OEA?," The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1948, p. 15. Articles of this nature appeared frequently in the early 1950's.

<sup>18</sup>OEA Handbook, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 12, 1950, p. 1A.

superintendents and principals continued to ask for full enrollment of their faculties and usually received compliance. With the formation of higher education units in the 1950's some presidents of smaller colleges followed the same procedure, prodded by the constitutional requirement that to be represented on the Board of Directors institutions with fewer than one hundred staff members must enroll every eligible person. Upon the advice of their superintendents many school boards adopted a policy of requiring Association membership as a condition for employment. After this practice was outlawed by the legislature in 1949 administrators continued to use their recommending authority as a lever to persuade teachers to join the OEA and NEA. In the public schools there was little objection and virtually no resistance to these practices, most teachers agreeing with their administrators as to the value of belonging to the associations. Membership in the OEA continued to grow, whether the leadership came from the teachers or from their "bosses."

#### Changing Characteristics of the Membership

Between 1945 and 1965 the average age of Oklahoma teachers increased to a high of slightly over forty-four in 1957 and then began a slow decline. The median age of teachers peaked at forty-four in 1960.<sup>20</sup> These levels were above the national averages, a fact that caused growing concern among both leaders and members of the OEA. The Pugmire Report in 1950 stated that Oklahoma teachers were becoming "increasingly "elderly,"<sup>21</sup> and ten years later Phillips, using statistics from the Research

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<sup>20</sup>Records of the Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System, State Capitol, Oklahoma City. These figures are from an age study conducted by Standifer Keas, executive secretary of the System, 1968.

<sup>21</sup>Pugmire, p. 115.

Department of the OEA, reported that 15,000 of the 21,500 public school teachers in the state in 1960 were beyond the age of forty.<sup>22</sup> Governor Henry Bellmon's Advisory Committee, appointed in 1963, complained of the inadequacy of information available on Oklahoma teachers, but was able to conclude that half the male teachers and over seventy percent of the women were over forty.<sup>23</sup>

These figures contrast sharply with those of the 1930's. In 1932 the average Oklahoma teacher was 29.2 years of age. In 1952 the average was 41.3.<sup>24</sup> The war years and the following period of prosperity saw a decreasing number of young people entering the profession, with the result that in Oklahoma and across the nation the average age of teachers moved up. Competitive salaries and improved conditions apparently attracted more young teachers in the late fifties and early sixties. The downturn in average age came earlier at the national level than in Oklahoma. As of 1965 the state average was 42.2 compared to the national average of 38.7. Nationally the average female teacher was still over forty at 40.5, while men averaged thirty-five years of age, suggesting that comparable age differences existed between men and women in Oklahoma.<sup>25</sup>

An increasing number of men became teachers in Oklahoma during the

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<sup>22</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1961, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup>W. C. McClurkin, Oklahoma Public Schools, A Survey Report to the Oklahoma Governor's Advisory Committee on Common School Education, Prepared for the Advisory Committee appointed by Governor Henry Bellmon, J. Win Payne, Chairman (Nashville, Tennessee; George Peabody College for Teachers, 1964), p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Executive Committee, September 26, 1958.

<sup>25</sup>NEA Research Division, NEA Research Report, 1967 R-4, The American Public-School Teacher, 1965-66 (Washington, D. C.: NEA, 1967), p. 37.



postwar period, following and then moving ahead of a nationwide trend. From a low of 11.2 in the year 1945-1946 the percentage of men in public schools of the state rose to 31.9 for the term of 1963-1964. The greatest change came in the high schools, where men teachers constituted a majority by 1963. In the elementary grades women continued to hold over ninety percent of the positions. Superintendents and non-teaching high school principals, numbering altogether fewer than a thousand, were without exception male. Seventy-five percent of the classroom teachers were female.<sup>26</sup>

The entry of more men into the ranks of the teachers both reflected and foretold some important changes in the profession and its organizations. The view that teaching was "women's work" was fading, as suggested by a journal article entitled "Are Teachers 'She's'?",<sup>27</sup> The material status of teachers was improving, and there was growing vigor in continuing efforts for further gain. The preponderance of women in the classroom had kept salary schedules too low for most men to accept; with an increasing number of men in the ranks the demands for higher salaries could be expected to become stronger and more persistent. Finally, the newcomers, not only male but also young, would begin to challenge the old leadership at every level, from local school districts to the state association. A study in 1963 revealed that high school men teachers differed more strongly with the goals and the leadership of the OEA than

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<sup>26</sup>U. S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1949, Seventieth Edition (Washington, D. C., 1949), p. 117; McClurkin, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1946, p. 15.

did any other group in the Association.<sup>28</sup>

The educational preparation of teachers increased steadily into the middle sixties. In the first postwar year 4,118 Oklahoma teachers had no college degree and 245 had no college hours. Approximately seventy percent held a bachelor's or higher degree.<sup>29</sup> Five years after the war the percentage of degree teachers had increased to 84.5. In 1955 it had reached 97.6, and by 1957 Oklahoma led the nation with 99.6 percent of her teachers holding college degrees. This high level of preparation and either first or second place among the states was maintained through 1965.<sup>30</sup> Thirty-seven percent of the teachers held master's degrees, with a greater percentage of men than women reaching this higher level.<sup>31</sup>

Most of these degrees were earned in Oklahoma colleges. The Governor's Committee estimated that ninety-eight percent of Oklahoma's teachers were graduates of home state institutions. It further noted that a high percentage of teachers were native to the communities in which they taught.<sup>32</sup> The NEA committee investigating state schools in 1965

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<sup>28</sup>Jack E. Miller, "A Study of the Attitudes of Oklahoma Public School Elementary and Secondary Classroom Teachers and Public School District Superintendents Toward the Oklahoma Education Association," (Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1964).

<sup>29</sup>State Board of Education of Oklahoma, A. L. Crable, President, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction, The Twenty-First Biennial Report of the State Department of Education of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, 1946), p. 16.

<sup>30</sup>State Board of Education of Oklahoma, Oliver Hodge, President, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction, The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report of the State Department of Education of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, 1958), p. 148; The Thirty-First Biennial Report, 1966, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup>NEA, Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Oklahoma: A State-wide Study of Conditions Detrimental to an Effective Public Educational Program (Washington, D. C., NEA, 1965), p. 15. Hereinafter cited as NEA Investigation).

<sup>32</sup>McClurkin, p. 8.

reported that only one in ten new teachers came from out of the state, and included this lack of variety in background and experience as part of the subminimal condition of Oklahoma's public school system for which sanctions were invoked.<sup>33</sup>

This same committee found that approximately half the prospective teachers trained in Oklahoma were leaving the state each year, many for their first positions, others after a year or two of experience. Sixty percent of the teachers of the state in 1964 had under two or over fifteen years of experience, indicating extensive loss to Oklahoma of younger instructors, many after the first year or two of teaching.<sup>34</sup> From the inception of the Teachers' Retirement System in 1943 to the end of 1965 approximately seven times as many teachers withdrew from the system as retired. Of the 42,393 who withdrew, 16,233 indicated they were leaving to teach in other states.<sup>35</sup> Such a heavy outward flow of teachers provoked a nagging question as to the comparative quality of those who moved away and those who did not. OEA expressions of fear that many of the best teachers were leaving the state invited critics to ask if those who remained were not inferior.

The heavy drop-out from teaching and the large number of potential instructors who did not enter the classroom continued to underscore the comparative ease with which the field could be entered. During the decade before 1965, of the college students graduating in the United States

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<sup>33</sup>NEA Investigation, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>35</sup>Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System, Standifer Keas, Executive Secretary, Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Trustees, 1965-1966 (Oklahoma City, 1966), pp. 20, 23.

each year with eligibility to teach twenty-six percent did not do so.<sup>36</sup> During the twenty-two years of operation of the Teachers' Retirement System in Oklahoma an annual average of 738 members withdrew from the system for purposes other than teaching. Out of the total of 24,681 such withdrawals 9,777 were for entry into other paying occupations, and 8,711 were for "domestic duties." Other reasons for leaving the classroom were illness, entry into the armed services, and 2,282 "other reasons" not explained.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of the many withdrawals the average experience of teachers in the state and in the nation increased until the 1960's, at which time there was evidence of a declining average. NEA reports showed the national peak was reached in 1960, when the average experience was 13.4 years. Five years later it was down to 11.8, probably due to an expansion in the number of positions and their being filled by young teachers.<sup>38</sup> The Governor's Committee placed the Oklahoma average in 1964 at fourteen years, stating that forty-nine percent of the state's teachers had served over fifteen years.<sup>39</sup> This was a rise from an average experience of 5.3 years in the 1930's.<sup>40</sup>

A group so heavily native could be presumed to reflect its home state background. Numerous studies have shown that teachers tend to emerge from the lower middle class, their fathers being most frequently

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<sup>36</sup>NEA Research Division, NEA Research Report, 1965 R10, Teacher Supply and Demand (Washington, D. C., NEA, 1965), p. 23.

<sup>37</sup>Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System, 1966, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup>NEA Research Division, NEA Research Bulletin, Vol. 44, No. 2, May, 1966, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup>McClurkin, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1954, p. 20.

farmers, skilled workers, small businessmen, and professionals.<sup>41</sup> An NEA analysis of teachers practicing in 1955 revealed that the occupations of their parents coincided with the occupational distribution of the general population as of 1910, the nearest census year to the average birthdate of the teachers.<sup>42</sup> No similar study of Oklahoma teachers has been made. But applying the conclusions of these broader investigations, one can generalize that the teachers of Oklahoma have come mostly from farms and small towns of the state.

A more recent NEA report points out the effect of the movement of population from rural to urban communities: more of the older teachers, including a higher percentage of women, were products of the farm, while the younger teachers, with a growing percentage of men, were the offspring of non-farm families.<sup>43</sup> Though Oklahoma lagged behind the nation in its shift of population to the cities, being classified by the Census Bureau as only fifty-one percent urban in 1950, the change in teacher background from rural to urban was taking place in the postwar years. Within the OEA the Department of Rural Teachers declined in membership between 1955 and 1965 from over nine percent of the Association's enrollment to less than four percent, while the more urban-based Department of Classroom Teachers grew from seventy-five percent to eighty-five

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<sup>41</sup>Wilbur B. Brookover, A Sociology of Education (New York, 1955), p. 70. This is one of the more thorough of several general surveys of the sociology of education.

<sup>42</sup>NEA Research Division, NEA Research Bulletin, Vol. 35, No. 1, February, 1957, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup>NEA Research Division, NEA Research Monograph 1963-M2, The American Public-School Teacher, 1960-61 (Washington, D. C., NEA, 1963), p. 15.

percent.<sup>44</sup> As Oklahoma teachers became less rural in background the OEA could be expected to reflect the change.

#### Negro Teachers Join the OEA

In 1955 the OEA became racially integrated by opening its doors to approximately 1,600 Negro teachers who had until this time belonged to the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers (OANT). The Executive Committee made the decision by constitutional interpretation, observing that the basic charter of the Association did not exclude any person because of race.<sup>45</sup> Some Negroes joined the Association that autumn, but most waited until October, 1956, at which time the Negro organization, founded in 1893 when Oklahoma Territory first segregated its schools, formally disbanded.<sup>46</sup>

These actions ended an era which had seen a long record of close cooperation between the two groups. The OANT had patterned itself after the white organization and conducted activities parallel to those of the OEA. The two associations held their conventions and workshops at the same times and shared programs and speakers. This was a fortunate arrangement for the small and poorly financed Negro organization, but there were times when the benefits flowed the other way, such as the occasion of the "lending" by the OANT to the OEA of George Washington

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<sup>44</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1956, p. 24; December, 1965, p. 47. This membership information was computed from OEA reports of departmental refunds published on these pages. These are the only consistent sources of information on membership of OEA departments.

<sup>45</sup>Executive Committee, August 16, 1955.

<sup>46</sup>Evelyn Richardson Strong, "Historical Development of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers: A Study in Social Change," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1961), p. 219.

Carver as a convention speaker. The two groups also worked closely together and supported each other in the promotion of legislation.<sup>47</sup> Beginning in 1945 a Negro representative was included each year on the OEA Legislative Committee.<sup>48</sup>

While cooperation was close and relations were harmonious, the OEA never gave serious official consideration to ending segregation within the profession until the United States Supreme Court made its historic decision in 1954. Manager Hoe Hurt in the fall of 1945 had recommended admission of Negroes to the Association, but his proposal was based upon budgetary needs, which could be helped by the dues paid by Negro members, and the Executive Committee chose to find other means of increasing revenue.<sup>49</sup> A few individual Negroes tested the possibility of OEA membership but were quietly discouraged. From time to time the leadership of the two groups, or committees appointed for the purpose, met to discuss common problems and to talk about the possibility--always in the future--of desegregation.<sup>50</sup> In 1951, with the NEA pressing for clarification of the status of Negro teachers in Oklahoma, Farris E. Willingham, later president and associate secretary of the OEA, moved in the Executive Committee that Negroes be admitted; the motion was tabled "until after the legislature adjourns."<sup>51</sup> This was not the last time political considerations would cloud the question of teacher integration in the

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<sup>47</sup>Moon interview.

<sup>48</sup>Stubbs interview.

<sup>49</sup>Executive Committee, September 29, 1945.

<sup>50</sup>Executive Committee, November 4, 1949.

<sup>51</sup>Executive Committee, March 16, 1951.

OEA. As late as 1955, the year the merger was authorized, while the Association fought for passage of a second "Better Schools Amendment," Phillips reassured the membership and the public that the measure would not end segregation either of schools or of teachers.<sup>52</sup>

As Negro teachers considered membership in the OEA they asked for assurance that they would be received as equals. Their executive secretary, F. D. Moon, appeared before the Executive Committee with four questions: Would Negro teachers be accepted by local units? If not, would the OEA arrange for Negro representation on the Board of Directors? Would there be problems related to hotels, restaurants, and other accommodations at conventions and meetings? And will Negro teachers be appointed proportionally to committees and commissions?<sup>53</sup> A survey of local units and districts revealed that Negroes would be accepted at these levels.<sup>54</sup> This was the extent to which the Association would reassure its new members. In a friendly letter to "Professor Moon," Phillips promised only acceptance of the Negroes as members. As to representation he noted that "nothing in our organization structure prevents them from serving when elected by their co-workers." Nondiscrimination in public accommodations was not mentioned.<sup>55</sup>

Having done all they could to achieve full-fledged membership, and cognizant that they could not gain further assurances from the OEA, the Negroes quietly merged into the Association, virtually completing the

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<sup>52</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1955, p. 11.

<sup>53</sup>Executive Committee, January 13, 1956.

<sup>54</sup>Executive Committee, February 10, 1956.

<sup>55</sup>Letter from Ferman Phillips to F. D. Moon, quoted in Strong, p. 218.



change by 1958.<sup>56</sup> In that year Floyd Alexander, principal of Truman Elementary School in Oklahoma City, became the first Negro elected to the Board of Directors.<sup>57</sup> As of 1965 only a token number of Negro teachers were serving on the boards and committees of the OEA.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to equal representation and fair treatment within the Association the Negroes had looked to the organization for help in another problem stemming from desegregation. Over three hundred Negro teachers lost their positions in the first year of integration in Oklahoma, and over five hundred had been displaced within the first five years.<sup>59</sup> The OANT, foreseeing this possibility, had advanced the proposal in 1954 that in the process of change school money should "follow the child" on a per capita basis and that teachers should be employed on the basis of training, experience, seniority, and racial proportion of students.<sup>60</sup> Moon and other Negro spokesmen pressed these issues persistently but received little response from school administrators and none from the OEA.

A similar effort at the national level likewise fell upon unresponsive ears. Professor Myron Lieberman, of the University of Oklahoma, introduced a resolution before the NEA condemning the employment or dismissal of teachers on a racial basis as unethical and unprofessional. Moon reported that there was "much interest, considerable support, but

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<sup>56</sup>Strong, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup>Oklahoma City Times, March 25, 1958, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup>Moon interview.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Strong, p. 198.

no action" on the proposal.<sup>61</sup> Neither the NEA nor the OEA was prepared in the late fifties to protect the new members who were losing their positions for racial reasons. As for the OEA, it was making only a feeble beginning in the general professional area of defense of members from unfair dismissals.

#### Divisions and Departments

As teachers became members of the OEA they also became members of specialized groups called divisions and departments. "Division" was the term agreed upon, after much interchanging with "section" and "department," for subject-matter, grade level, and other functional categories of educators. All the major subject areas had their divisions and subdivisions. For example, English instructors separated into elementary, secondary, and college groups, and also met as the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of the National Council. The Oklahoma Council for the Social Studies formed a similar division and corresponding subdivisions. Vocational teachers met as the Oklahoma Vocational Association, then divided into special areas, such as distributive education, home economics, industrial arts, etc.

Some other divisions were adult education, the Association for Childhood Education, audio-visual education, college deans, college teachers of education, county superintendents, deans of men, guidance, Indian Service, junior college, librarians, school nurses, and supervision and curriculum. All of these were functioning as of 1950, and most continued into the sixties. Some additions in the 1950's included deputy county superintendents, Future Teachers of America, Oklahoma

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-24. Lieberman attended the NEA convention as a delegate of the OANT, which was recognized by the NEA.

History, driver education, Russian--hurriedly formed after "sputnik" and then disbanded--student council sponsors, and the Personnel and Guidance Association. Most of these divisions were active only when they met at district and state conventions, where, in fact, they provided a major share of the activity.<sup>62</sup>

There were seven constitutional departments in the OEA: superintendents, secondary principals, elementary principals, classroom teachers, college teachers, rural teachers, and retired teachers. The constitution gave each department a delegate on the Board of Directors and provided for a part of their budgets by refunding from the OEA treasury twenty-five cents per member each year. The last department to be authorized was the organization for retired teachers in 1952.<sup>63</sup>

The fastest growing department in the postwar period, based upon its percentage of increase, was the Department of College Teachers, established in 1947.<sup>64</sup> In 1950 it numbered 562 members from colleges and universities, or approximately 23.5 percent of those eligible.<sup>65</sup> By 1965 the percentage had grown to fifty-five.<sup>66</sup> This expansion contributed substantially to the total enrollment of the OEA, but possibly of greater consequence was the infusion of ideas and leadership that accompanied the professors.

The OEA wanted both membership and leadership from higher education.

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<sup>62</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1950, p. 24. This is an example of an annual report of the OEA divisions and their officers.

<sup>63</sup>Executive Committee, June 10, 1952.

<sup>64</sup>Executive Committee, February 12, 1947.

<sup>65</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1950, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 30.

A 1947 amendment to the constitution made college personnel members of county units, thus giving them a vote at the local level on delegates to the Board of Directors.<sup>67</sup> Hardly a meeting of the Board or of the Executive Committee passed thereafter without discussion of the question of college membership. The Oklahoma Teacher, in reporting enrollment news, singled out higher education totals to emphasize its growth or its need to grow. Phillips conferred with college instructors and administrators exploring for avenues of mutual assistance, particularly those which might come from increased membership in the Association. He complained that "In many instances, members of college teaching staffs have seemed reluctant to classify themselves as teachers . . . . If higher education is to achieve its rightful place in Oklahoma . . . and have full support of elementary and secondary teachers, . . ." then college teachers "must of necessity interest themselves in the problems of all teachers."<sup>68</sup> With the governor at odds with higher education, and with a crucial legislative session approaching, the executive secretary and the Executive Committee made a special effort in 1953 to bring about greater involvement of college and university personnel within the OEA.<sup>69</sup>

This effort, augmenting that of college people themselves, led to a constitutional amendment providing for local units to represent institutions of higher learning. Adopted in 1954, it provided that each campus could elect a director for each hundred members and another one for each additional 150 members. Colleges with fewer than a hundred faculty members could form a unit and elect a director provided they maintained

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<sup>67</sup>Board of Directors, February 13, 1947.

<sup>68</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1952, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup>Executive Committee, January 16, 1953.

one hundred percent membership in the OEA. Those colleges with over one hundred staff members were required, as were all other units, to have eighty percent membership.<sup>70</sup> Inasmuch as city units were required to have 150 teachers on the faculty, and most county units had more than this number, the colleges of the state were thus given proportionally advantageous representation on the Board.

Units were formed on most campuses before the end of 1954, and membership increased rapidly. Many of the four-year colleges had reached one hundred percent enrollment the year before; since most of them employed fewer than one hundred staff members they were required to continue their full membership in order to be represented on the Board. Their normal school tradition and their continued concentration upon teacher education helped the state colleges to bridge the gap between higher education and the common schools. The two universities, on the other hand, with their more scholarly traditions, their graduate schools, and their emphasis upon research, found it more difficult to identify with the other constituents of the OEA, with the result that they were low in membership in the Association and slow to organize units. Oklahoma State University took this step in 1957 with a unit membership of 209.<sup>71</sup> The University of Oklahoma chapter, with 146 members, completed the list of higher education units when it was organized in 1958.<sup>72</sup>

The Department of College Teachers grew increasingly active in the 1950's. Its fall conference had become a well attended and significant annual event. College professors, long the chief contributors to the

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<sup>70</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1964.

<sup>71</sup>Board of Directors, March 15, 1958.

<sup>72</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1958, p. 10.

OEA convention programs and to The Oklahoma Teacher, continued their leadership in these areas. In 1959 the group adopted a new constitution which changed its name to the Oklahoma Association of College Teachers. Drafted by a committee headed by the indefatigable G. T. Stubbs, it listed its five major purposes as: cooperation and fellowship among college teachers, quality education at the college level, improvement of the status and welfare of college teachers, improvement of the professional characteristics of college teaching, and the sponsorship of meetings and conferences of members to study and plan for cooperative efforts.<sup>73</sup>

Most elective and appointive leadership of the OEA was exercised by public school administrators, with superintendents occupying a dominant position. The superintendents' department was the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators (OASA). Comprising less than three percent of the total OEA membership, and declining in numbers as districts were consolidated, the OASA included administrators from schools ranging in size from those with as few as six teachers to the Oklahoma City system with over 2,500 instructors. As of 1953 only 171 out of the 676 superintendents in the state were full time administrators, the remaining 505 heading schools so small that they had to give a portion of their time to teaching and to other duties.<sup>74</sup> County superintendents were eligible and tended to be active members. In spite of this preponderance of rural and small school administrators, the leadership of the OASA came from the larger systems. An inspection of the list of presidents since 1945 indicates that the leaders were mostly from schools just under the

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<sup>73</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1959, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1953, p. 48.

size of the two metropolitan districts, including Enid, Muskogee, Stillwater, Bartlesville, and Midwest City.<sup>75</sup> Several OASA leaders became presidents of the OEA, and one, J. Win Payne of Ponca City, was elected president of the American Association of School Administrators in 1964.

The superintendents met regularly three times per year, the first meeting in the early fall at the University of Oklahoma, the second at the annual OEA convention, and the third in June in Stillwater. The summer meeting, considered the most important and usually lasting three days, was for many years held at Camp Redlands on Lake Carl Blackwell. In 1959 the administrators yielded to progress by voting to meet in the air-conditioned Student Union Building at Oklahoma State University. These regular meetings were devoted to current problems of education: In the fall of 1957 the basic topic for consideration was "Emerging Problems in American Education," with emphasis upon those being aggravated by the sputnik reaction.<sup>76</sup> Speeches and discussions in 1960 included "What Shall We Teach?," "Personnel Administration," and "The Educational Policies Commission," a new long-term planning group in the OEA.<sup>77</sup> The agenda for the summer meeting in 1961 included discussions of programmed learning, teaching machines, extra-curricular activities and contests, the North Central Association program of upgrading member schools, certification, and the new provisions of the National Defense Education Act.<sup>78</sup>

The OASA was seriously interested in raising the standards of

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<sup>75</sup>Stubbs, pp. 22-25.

<sup>76</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1957, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1960, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1961, p. 47.

preparation and certification of administrators. It created the Oklahoma Cooperative Program in Educational Administration to take advantage of a Kellogg Foundation grant for the improvement of school administration. In the early 1950's the superintendents assisted colleges, the State Department of Education, and the Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Education and Certification in improving the programs of education and licensing of administrators. By 1960 the OASA was requiring new members to have earned thirty-two hours beyond the master's degree to be accepted into the Association. In 1955 the administrators became a participating unit of the Oklahoma Curriculum Improvement Commission, which had been inaugurated by the Secondary School Principals' Association.<sup>79</sup>

The superintendents accepted conscientiously their responsibilities as leaders of the OEA. In their home districts they were constantly confronted with the critical challenge of staffing their schools with competent teachers. This pressure led them to make a prodigious effort to raise salaries and to improve the conditions of work for teachers. They sometimes expressed the desire to be free of their fund-seeking role, and complained of the pressure that grew as they were squeezed between teachers' demands and public resistance to these demands.<sup>80</sup> However, they recognized that both tradition and school law placed them in this position. The dominant role of superintendents in the OEA can be interpreted only within this rationale. As teachers grew professionally most administrators were glad to share responsibility with those ready to assume it. Just as the more professional administrators were

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<sup>79</sup>Stubbs, p. 17.

<sup>80</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1950, p. 10; November, 1950, p. 14.



becoming increasingly democratic in their local districts, the leadership of the OEA was becoming more democratic and broad-based during the two postwar decades.

The Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Principals (OASSP) included the heads of junior and senior high schools of the state, numbering about six hundred members. Like the superintendents, they represented schools of all sizes, with the leadership being exercised by the approximately 125 who were full time administrators.<sup>81</sup> The principals were oriented toward instruction, as evidenced by some of their meeting agenda in the early sixties: "Characteristics of a Desirable Junior High School," "Team Teaching in High School," and "Effective Guidance Services."<sup>82</sup> They frequently met with the superintendents, especially in the fall at Norman, when morning sessions could be balanced by a football game in the afternoon. Because they were responsible for athletic programs in their high schools, most principals proceeded directly from their departmental meeting at the state convention to the State Athletic Association session, where they joined the coaches--if, indeed, they were not coaches themselves--to work out the trying problems of interscholastic sports.

The Department of Elementary School Administrators consisted of approximately eight hundred members, of whom about 120 were non-teaching principals. These full time administrators from the larger schools were the pacemakers of the organization.<sup>83</sup> Depressed in 1949 by low

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<sup>81</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1953, p. 48.

<sup>82</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1962, p. 43.

<sup>83</sup>Interview with Virgil Downing, past president of the OEA Department of Elementary Principals, Weatherford, Oklahoma, September 3, 1968. Downing presented the small-school viewpoint, which included resentment toward the large-school domination of the Department.

membership, poor attendance, and "professional inaction," the elementary principals launched two programs which aroused and sustained interest into the 1960's: First, they started a yearbook called "Better Elementary Schools for Oklahoma Children," devoted to articles on the improvement of instruction. And, second, they decided to use the workshop format for their annual meeting.<sup>84</sup> As was the case with all educators, their meetings reflected the problems of current concern. In a 1955 gathering they discussed desegregation, purposes and functions of elementary schools, the principal's role in planning buildings and facilities, and recruitment, training, and certification of elementary administrators.<sup>85</sup> Unlike other administrators, and more like disgruntled classroom teachers, to whom they were close, the principals in this same meeting questioned whether they were receiving a fair share of attention in developing "policies, regulations, and legislation."<sup>86</sup>

The Department of Rural Teachers declined steadily in numbers as the population shifted toward the cities and teachers chose to identify with the growing Department of Classroom Teachers. At the time of their annual enrollment in the OEA members were permitted to choose among the six active departments as to which would receive the refund from the state organization. This was, in effect, the teacher's enrollment within a department. Rural teachers were for the most part also classroom teachers: their choice was increasingly between their identity with the

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<sup>84</sup>OEA Department of Elementary School Principals, First Yearbook, 1949: Better Elementary Schools for Oklahoma Children (Oklahoma City, 1949), p. 5.

<sup>85</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1955, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup>Membership reports in minutes of the Board of Directors and reports of refunds to districts and units published annually in The Oklahoma Teacher.

rural community on the one hand, and, on the other, with the teaching profession, whose leadership was slowly shifting toward the classroom department.

The rural teachers' group had never been as strong numerically as the actual number of country school positions would indicate. Refusal to join the OEA was highest among rural teachers, particularly those of the eastern districts of the state.<sup>87</sup> Further weakening them in influence within the state association was the fact that the level of educational preparation for rural teachers was less than that of other departments. The preponderance of emergency certificates during the war had been granted to rural teachers, and it was in these areas that the substandard credential persisted longest.

Still, the rural orientation of the state, with its many counties and its unreapportioned legislature, and the rural background of OEA members and leaders, made for a greater voice for rural teachers within the Association than their numbers or their professional qualifications could justify. Adding their support to county superintendents and small school administrators, they were able to influence OEA action both internally and in the field of political activity.

Most members of the OEA were classroom teachers in the public schools. The Department of Classroom Teachers was by far the largest of the departments, with 18,626 members in 1965 accounting for about eighty-five percent of the active membership of the Association. It had grown from 10,995 in 1955, at which time it made up about seventy-five percent of the OEA total.<sup>88</sup> This growth had come from the general

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<sup>87</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1950, p. 32.

<sup>88</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1956, p. 24; December, 1965, p. 47. See n. 44.

increase in the number of teachers in the state, a shift in departmental affiliation by rural teachers, and a growing feeling of professional identity among members of the Department.

The Department was fully organized only at the state level. District organizations were weak and sporadic in their activities, except for the two metropolitan systems and the Northeastern District, led by Kate Frank, the founder of the state Department, and later by Gladys Nunn, another outstanding Muskogee teacher. Local units were for the most part nonexistent. Oklahoma City and Tulsa had consistently strong and active associations throughout the postwar period. A few counties and some of the larger school systems were able to organize associations; others found themselves overlapping or duplicating the local OEA units. In a few instances they were openly opposed by superintendents. More often the teachers themselves felt no need for an additional organization with its burden of activities and meetings.<sup>89</sup> At the state level the Department elected a president and other officers and conducted its routine business through an Executive Board. The most productive work of the organization was conducted at two annual planning conferences in the fall and in the spring. Official policy was voted upon in a mass meeting of the Department at the annual convention of the OEA. The limitations of this procedure were recognized and corrected by the establishment of a representative Business Assembly in 1959.<sup>90</sup> This streamlining of the Department inaugurated a period of greater and more effective activity in the 1960's.

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<sup>89</sup>Letter from Dion Wood to author, September 9, 1968; letter from Floyd Focht to author, October 29, 1968.

<sup>90</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1958, p. 22.

Throughout the twenty year postwar period the classroom teachers' organization gave full support to the goals and programs of the OEA. As time passed they became increasingly aware of their potential strength as expressed by one of their spokesmen in 1957 who said, "The Department of Classroom Teachers is the OEA."<sup>91</sup> The teachers not only supported Association goals, but contributed to their formulation and adoption. As the only department with a regular monthly page in The Oklahoma Teacher, they used this space to keep their members and the OEA leaders informed of their position on questions of both immediate and long range concern.

The Department's basic objectives for the fifties and sixties were stated at the annual convention in 1949. They included the OEA goals of "professional salaries," lighter teaching loads, improved retirement, and financial support of these programs, including assistance from the federal government. In addition, or with greater emphasis, the teachers asked for a strong tenure law, procedures for fair dismissals, sick leave, and tax exemptions for retirement pay and for expenses of professional training. Within the professional organization they called for a stronger effort to formulate and to enforce a code of ethics, and the establishment of a professional relations "board" to protect teachers from unfair practices.<sup>92</sup> Other positions taken in the following years included opposition to merit rating for salary purposes, opposition to teacher aides as substitutes for certified personnel, higher standards for preparation and entry into the profession, and increased welfare

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<sup>91</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1957, p. 23.

<sup>92</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1949, p. 30.

benefits.

A major goal of the classroom teachers was to involve their members more fully in the development and execution of policy, both in their local schools and in their professional organizations. Among the objectives and purposes stated in their constitutions, along with general professional improvement of the individual teacher, were the encouragement of active participation in school management and the achievement of democracy "in the classroom and in all professional and personnel relations."<sup>93</sup> To implement these ideals the Department published frequent calls for teachers to be placed on committees and commissions of the OEA and for proportional representation of all departments on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.<sup>94</sup> In 1950 it urged that the OEA president be elected in alternate years from the ranks of the classroom teachers. Beginning with Inez Gingerich in 1951, the Association complied with this request to the extent that it elected a woman, usually a classroom teacher, to its highest office every other year.<sup>95</sup>

While the goals of proportional representation and involvement were not fully reached by 1965, the Department of Classroom Teachers had made significant progress toward their attainment, without declaring war upon other departments of the Association. A survey of attitudes of teachers in 1963 revealed that a substantial majority supported the OEA, its goals, and its leaders.<sup>96</sup> While some interpreted portions of this same

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<sup>93</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1958, p. 14.

<sup>94</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1950, p. 28; October, 1958, p. 21; May, 1960, p. 30. This problem of representation is dealt with more fully in Chapter V.

<sup>95</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1950, p. 28.

<sup>96</sup>Miller, pp. 65-145.

study to mean that the teachers were ready for drastic organizational changes,<sup>97</sup> there was little evidence in the actual behavior of teachers and their leaders to suggest that such was the case. One of the most active leaders and brilliant spokesmen of the Oklahoma Classroom Teachers saluted the school administrators in 1964 and pronounced the two departments firm allies.<sup>98</sup>

Much of the best leadership of the OEA was provided by the classroom teachers. Great teachers such as Floyd Focht, Edna Donley, and Gladys Nunn were paragons of professionalism, defining and clarifying the ideals of the profession and at the same time organizing and leading in the practical steps that had to be taken to realize these ideals. In this role they were one with such other leaders of the profession as Garland Godfrey, Farris Willingham, and J. Win Payne, outstanding administrators and presidents of the OEA.

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<sup>97</sup>Glenn R. Snider, "The OEA: What Lies Ahead?," The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1965, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup>Gladys Nunn, "A Salute to the School Superintendent and the AASA," The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1964, p. 18.

## CHAPTER V

### ORGANIZATION FOR ACTION

The framers of the 1945 OEA Constitution credited it with providing an "organization for action," as the Association prepared for its post-war struggles. They also emphasized that it was a more democratic instrument, providing for direct election of state officers and more active role for local units.<sup>1</sup> Adopted in June, 1945, by a vote of 1,215 to 312, about ten percent of the membership who bothered to return their mail ballots, the new plan of government remained essentially unchanged for the next twenty years.<sup>2</sup>

But not completely so. Amendments were proposed almost every year, and several were adopted. Two times, in 1951 and in 1952, the Association voted for complete revisions of the document, each containing significant changes and refinements, but not altering the basic organization approved in 1945. The amending process was simple: twenty-five signatures were enough to submit a proposal to the Executive Committee, which in turn was required to present it, with or without approval, to the Board of Directors. The proposed change was printed in The Oklahoma Teacher for the membership to examine before the Board was permitted to act. If the Board approved the measure, it was again published in the

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<sup>1</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1945.

<sup>2</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1945, p. 7.



journal, accompanied by a ballot form to be cut out, marked, and returned by individual members. No proposal passed by the Board between 1945 and 1965 was ever rejected by the voters.<sup>3</sup>

Voting on amendments was unbelievably light; never again did it approach the ten percent cast for the 1945 document. The 1962 revision was adopted by a vote of 166 to nothing--166 votes out of a membership of 25,272.<sup>4</sup> The 1954 amendment authorizing college and university units passed by a vote of eighty-nine to four.<sup>5</sup> The lowest vote recorded was that in 1965 of forty-eight to two--fifty ballots returned from a membership of over 30,000--to liberalize the required membership of college units.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever such minuscule balloting indicated, whether great apathy among members, a discouraging system of voting, or acceptance of the action of elected representatives in matters of constitutional content, there was never a lack of criticism and discussion of the OEA machinery at every level and phase of its operation. Members and leaders constantly exhorted and pressed local units to become more active. There was continuous concern for the problems of the districts, and much tinkering with their boundaries. The methods of nominating and electing officers were frequently questioned. And the membership and selection of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee never ceased to be a

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with Marvin Easley, March 26, 1969. Easley served as chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Revision several years and was on the OEA Executive Committee from 1954 through 1964.

<sup>4</sup>Executive Committee, October 24, 1962.

<sup>5</sup>Executive Committee, October 2, 1954.

<sup>6</sup>Executive Committee, January 8, 1965.

source of controversy, usually minor, but increasingly heated, as the OEA problems mounted in the sixties. The "organization for action," while grappling with its external obstacles and adversaries, sometimes found itself torn by conflict within.

The OEA affiliated with and was guided and supported by the NEA. And it even sent delegates from time to time to the World Council of Organizations of the Teaching Profession.<sup>7</sup> Thus, from the local school building to the world setting, the Oklahoma teachers were organized, on paper at least, to take action in behalf of education.

#### Local Units and Districts

The basic unit of the OEA was the local association, which by the 1950's might have been one of three types, county, city, or college. In 1945 there were eighty-three local units, one in each of the seventy-seven counties and six in the larger cities. By 1965 in addition to the county units there were fifteen city associations and sixteen higher education chapters, making a total of 108. All-inclusive of certified or professional personnel, they ranged in membership from forty in Cimarron County to over 2,500 in Oklahoma City. The local units were comparatively loose organizations, being scattered among towns and communities within counties, buildings and sites within cities, and the many divisions to be found in institutions of higher learning.<sup>8</sup>

The principal activity of the local association was its periodic

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<sup>7</sup>Executive Committee, March 2, 1956.

<sup>8</sup>Quantitative comparisons in this paragraph, and similar compilations throughout this chapter, when not otherwise specifically documented, were compiled by the author from the minutes of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

meeting, varying in frequency among units, from one perfunctory annual session to elect officers, to as many as six well-planned and pertinent programs enjoyed by a few of the most active groups. A bylaws amendment in 1962 required at least two meetings per year, though by this date most units were observing the long recommended minimum of four.<sup>9</sup> The most popular type of gathering was the dinner meeting, which combined social contacts and entertainment with the more serious--and often dull--business of the association. Presidents and program committees undertook to present a variety of programs, usually distributing the emphasis among a few basic themes: instructional improvement, professional growth, support and strengthening of the professional organizations, the legislative program of the OEA, and teacher welfare and security. Standard programs included addresses by educators, typically college professors, superintendents, or officials from the State Department of Education on new trends and challenges, speeches by Ferman Phillips or some other OEA staff member on the state of the organized profession in Oklahoma, and appearances by legislators, to speak, to be questioned, or both. A portion of each meeting was given to the unit's business, but this was normally limited to routine reports and election of officers, leaving much of the activity to be conducted by elected leaders, an executive committee, and special committees.

Most of the business of the local units was related to or directed by the state association. To a great extent the units served as lines of communication between the OEA and its members and as agencies for implementing Association policy and programs. They promoted membership

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<sup>9</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1962, p. 30; Phillips interview no. 2.

and collected dues, presented and encouraging compliance with the code of ethics handed down by NEA and OEA, and screened candidates, publicized legislative programs, and sought to influence legislators. It was not unusual for local units to be used as collecting agencies for good causes initiated or embraced by the OEA or its leaders: For example, Phillips solicited the local units for funds--a dollar per teacher--to help the ailing Senator Clem Hamilton, who had long led the school bloc in the legislature;<sup>10</sup> Kate Frank called upon the units for contributions to the OEA residence for retired teachers; and a routine request was in behalf of the DuShane Fund for the defense of mistreated teachers. Communicating upward, the local units, through workshops and through elected officers and representatives, informed the state leadership of the needs and wishes of teachers, and provided feed-back to the actions and pronouncements of OEA officials.

So important was this relationship to the staff and elected leaders of the OEA that they gave much time and effort to strengthening local units and to improving the vertical communication within the Association. The adoption of the 1945 Constitution was accompanied by much emphasis upon improved local organization and greater activity at this level.<sup>11</sup> Almost every presidential message and secretarial report thereafter included its call for more effective local effort. The Oklahoma Teacher was eager to report unit news and achievement, and from time to time published a "Score Card for Local Associations," a check-list to be used

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<sup>10</sup>Executive Committee, October 24, 1962.

<sup>11</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1945, p. 8.

to evaluate performance and to stimulate progress.<sup>12</sup> A series of conferences and clinics, starting in the 1940's, added to the efforts of state and local workshops to instruct and inspire unit leaders and to generate local energy.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of these exertions, a special committee appointed to study the problem reported to the Board in 1958 that many local units still showed numerous weaknesses: They were careless in selection of officers, exhibited little evidence of planning, and had few, if any, functioning committees. Meetings were irregular and infrequent, and many units were operating without written constitutions or bylaws.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of this report and subsequent discussions, the OEA amended its bylaws to force more effective performance by lagging units. Adopted as part of a general revision of the constitution in 1962, the new rules required units to meet several conditions before they were eligible to receive their annual refunds from the state association: They were to file with the OEA a copy of the unit constitution and bylaws. They were to hold at least two meetings per year, though four continued to be the recommended number. Nominating committees were to be used in naming officers, and the time of elections was fixed between March 1 and June 30. An annual report of activities, including assurance that all required conditions had been met, was to be filed with the OEA.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1948, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1947, p. 10; Board of Directors, March 3, 1946; Executive Committee, January 13, 1961.

<sup>14</sup>Board of Directors, August 14, 1958.

<sup>15</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1962, p. 17.

Communication within the sprawling state association never ceased to be a problem. Although the local unit was expected to convey OEA information to its members and in turn to make its voices heard in state affairs, there were neverending complaints that the channels were not open.<sup>16</sup> The state leadership workshops, inaugurated in the late forties, contributed to some improvement of the situation, and the ensuing one-day workshops became direct vehicles for exchange of information and instruction.<sup>17</sup> In 1959 the Association called unit presidents into a special conference to receive general instruction on their responsibilities and special information on the legislative situation and what they might do about it.<sup>18</sup> This meeting became an annual event, apparently considered by both state and local officials to be a valuable avenue of communication.

The OEA districts occupied a position between the local units and the state association, but not in a direct line of responsibility. Until 1960 there were nine of these geographical divisions, six coinciding closely with and bearing the names of the four-year state colleges, the other three being the Northern, Panhandle, and Oklahoma City Districts.<sup>19</sup> Their boundaries were inherited from an earlier period when transportation was slow, and they varied in membership from fewer than 400 in the Panhandle to over 3,500 in the Northeast District, which included Tulsa.

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<sup>16</sup>Executive Committee, February 17, 1950; Board of Directors, March 25, 1961.

<sup>17</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1950, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup>Board of Directors, August 20, 1959.

<sup>19</sup>Executive Committee, February 12, 1947. The Panhandle District was not named specifically in the amendment. The special provision applied to districts whose units were "over 200 miles from the state capital."

Two amendments to the constitution made special provisions for these two extremes. The first, in 1947, permitted the Panhandle District to continue to exist with less than the constitutional minimum of 600 teachers as long as it maintained one hundred percent membership in the OEA. The other, adopted in 1951, gave an additional member on the Executive Committee to districts with more than 3,500 teachers, the Northeast District being the only one meeting this condition.<sup>20</sup>

The OEA Constitution gave the Executive Committee authority to determine district boundaries, and through the postwar years this body received frequent requests for changes. Until 1960 the Committee limited itself to minor adjustments resulting from petitions of local units to move from one district to another. The growth and shifting of population within the state caused inequalities in the size of districts and confronted some with the problem of adequate facilities for conventions.<sup>21</sup> Upon the request in 1959 by several units to be permitted to form a new South Central District, the Executive Committee decided to make a complete study of the state map with a view toward equalization and meeting some of the growing number of complaints about existing conditions.<sup>22</sup> The resulting new map added three districts, South Central, Eastern, and Tulsa City District. The twelve new areas were nearly equal in membership, each containing approximately 2,000 teachers, with the exception

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<sup>20</sup>Executive Committee, January 20, 1951.

<sup>21</sup>An example of the convention site problem was that of the Northern District, which petitioned to "join Payne County" in order to gain the facilities of Oklahoma State University. The 1960 realignment of districts brought this county into the Northern District, and the problem was finally solved when the Oklahoma State University Unit also transferred into that district. Executive Committee, February 26, 1960.

<sup>22</sup>Executive Committee, August 11, 1959.

of the Panhandle, which remained at about 400, and the Northwest District, with slightly over the minimum of 600. Although the Executive Committee had the authority to establish the new alignment, it first submitted the proposed map to the Board of Directors for its approval, and waited for teachers to discuss it in their workshops. With the Board's directive to proceed, the Executive Committee declared the new district boundaries in effect in February, 1960.<sup>23</sup>

The districts were organized much like the state association. Each was governed by a board of directors chosen by the local units, and an executive committee made up of the president and other officers elected at large during the annual district convention. Several districts chose executive secretaries--unpaid, except for expenses--to give continuity to organizations that tended to be inactive during much of the year. The districts were devoted to the purposes of the OEA in that they undertook to "promote the welfare of teachers and the educational interests of all people of the state" and of their districts. Most of their work paralleled or supplemented the program of the state association. They held conventions, established committees, studied and discussed problems, and passed resolutions. During campaign years they exhibited interest in candidates, and their legislative committees provided additional weight to the state committee. Like the local units, they were sometimes called upon to help with special projects such as drives for funds.<sup>24</sup> An important function of the districts in carrying out the OEA program was to provide the geographical base for distribution of members of the state legislative committee, and to make recommendations as to the members of

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<sup>23</sup>Executive Committee, February 26, 1960.

<sup>24</sup>Executive Committee, February 11, 1948.



that group to be appointed from the district.<sup>25</sup>

The high point of the district year was the annual convention, held each autumn until 1949, at which time the OEA pre-empted the fall date and the districts began meeting in March. These gatherings followed the form of the state convention, with teachers meeting in general sessions, then separating into subject-matter and special interest groups. They were similar in content, given mainly to professional and instructional improvement, with rarely a note of political concern. Professors from the state universities and colleges were the most sought-after speakers and leaders of groups. Programs were shared and dates coordinated among districts through annual meetings of district presidents.<sup>26</sup>

The only source of revenue for district activities was a refund from the OEA of fifty cents per member. Each year district officers, faced with the problem of financing a convention and with other expenses, requested that the annual refund be increased. This repeatedly rejected by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors on the grounds that some districts did not need the money, that the OEA with its growing program could not afford to reduce its revenue, and that if districts were thus favored local units and departments would also expect increased allowances.<sup>27</sup> However, after a year of study by a committee of district presidents, and upon their recommendation, the Board in 1952 voted a supplemental refund to districts. They were to receive up to \$2,500, according to their membership, and upon condition that ninety percent of

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<sup>25</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1950, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1951, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1951.

their teachers were enrolled in the OEA.<sup>28</sup> The Board continued this formula as it voted each year thereafter to supplement the incomes of the districts. This action typified the relationship between the state leaders and the component organizations. The former were ever aware that OEA policy could not be carried out without support at every level of the pyramid.

#### The Board of Directors and the Executive Committee

The policy-making body of the OEA was the Board of Directors. It consisted of at least one director from each local unit or one for each 150 members or major fraction of that number. From the eighty-three units in 1945 there were 112 directors.<sup>29</sup> Twenty years later 108 units were electing 201 representatives.<sup>30</sup> Ninety delegates attended the first Board meeting under the new constitution for an attendance of about eighty percent. Average attendance during the following twenty years was about seventy-five percent, with the high mark of eighty-five being reached in the spring of 1955, following a low of sixty-eight the previous August.

The Board developed a pattern of meeting three times per year. Until 1948 there had been only two sessions per year, one in November, the other during the state convention in February. Starting in 1948 a third meeting of the Board took place during the annual leadership workshop, which became permanently scheduled for the month of August. When the OEA convention was shifted to autumn in 1949, the Board also changed to

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<sup>28</sup>Board of Directors, March 6, 1954.

<sup>29</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1945.

<sup>30</sup>Board of Directors, November 13, 1965.

that date and set its spring meeting for March. After the OEA Building was completed, late in 1950, providing the Association with its own facilities, the fall meeting date of the Board was separated from that of the convention, with November becoming the regular time.

Until it was able to gather for the first time in its own "Board Room" in the OEA Building in January, 1951, the group met in a variety of settings. The Huckins Hotel in Oklahoma City was a traditional and highly favored meeting place. During conventions the Board often met in the Municipal Auditorium, or, when in Tulsa, the Hotel Tulsa. At summer workshops it met in rooms provided by the host institution, the perennial choice becoming the ballroom of the Student Union at Oklahoma State University. By 1964 the Board had outgrown its space in the OEA Building and was forced to look elsewhere for its November meeting. Symbolically, inasmuch as the OEA had just sustained a severe defeat of its initiative petition measures at the polls, the site chosen was the bombproof auditorium underneath the state capitol office buildings.<sup>31</sup>

All levels, interests, and departments of the OEA were represented on the Board of Directors, but administrators consistently outnumbered other classifications. Public school superintendents, who represented their schools to the public in their home districts, tended as a matter of course to represent their faculties in the state organization, holding about two-thirds of the directorships in 1945.<sup>32</sup> By 1962 this number had declined to less than half,<sup>33</sup> and in 1965 there were only fifty-one superintendents on the Board out of a total of 201 directors, or

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<sup>31</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1964.

<sup>32</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1945, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup>Miller, p. 5.

approximately twenty-five percent.<sup>34</sup> The slow decline in the number of administrators was balanced by a rising representation of classroom teachers, college professors, and other groups. Higher education units were directly represented, usually by non-administrative personnel, following their formation by a constitutional amendment in 1954. This same measure gave representation to the seven OEA departments, only one of which included the superintendents. At the same time, city units were given greater representation, and their new directors were usually classroom teachers.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the twenty-year period there was a slow but steady departure from the traditional viewpoint that superintendents could not only represent the local units more ably than could teachers but could more properly leave their schools--having no classes to meet--to attend meetings.

All major problems of the Association were subject to consideration and action of the Board. The constitution stated that the main duty of the body was "to conduct, manage, and control the affairs of the Oklahoma Education Association and to adopt rules and regulations not inconsistent with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Association." Other duties included approving the budget, filling vacancies among officers of the Association, nominating candidates for the OEA offices, and prescribing procedure for elections.<sup>36</sup> The Board also had important amendatory powers. By two-thirds vote it could change the by-laws, and by a

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<sup>34</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1965, p. 22; Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma Educational Directory, 1965-66 (Oklahoma City, 1965). The list of directors in the journal was checked against the list of superintendents in the directory.

<sup>35</sup>Executive Committee, October 2, 1954.

<sup>36</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1945, p. 10.

simple majority it approved constitutional amendments before they were submitted to the vote of the membership.

To carry out these duties the Board developed an order of procedure that was followed year after year with little change. It always opened its sessions with prayer, and after 1951, when women began to serve in alternate years as president, bringing with them their classroom practices, the pledge of allegiance to the flag. This was followed by the credentials report, roll call, and approval of the minutes of the last meeting as printed in an agenda booklet prepared for each director. If the president made any remarks he was likely to do so at this point in the meeting. Then came reports of committees and commissions, each followed by appropriate responses from the Board, normally simple acceptance, but sometimes lengthy discussion and decisive action. The executive secretary then gave his report and recommendations, including formal proposals from the Executive Committee. This official had the responsibility of preparing the agenda for the meeting, with the result that from beginning to end of the process his influence upon the Board was appreciable.

Board meetings tended to be short and perfunctory. The usual time for convening was ten o'clock in the morning, and rarely could the directors stay in session beyond noon.<sup>37</sup> Some notable exceptions were during difficult legislative struggles or when there were closely divided opinion on portions of the legislative program, at which times the group might proceed through the lunch hour or return for an afternoon session. Much of the business was of a routine and repetitive nature that could

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<sup>37</sup>One OEA president interviewed told the author, with considerable disgust, that many directors were afraid they would miss the beginning of the Saturday afternoon football game.

be disposed of without long deliberation. Virtually all detailed work was done by committees, and the Executive Committee gave lengthy attention to major problems coming before the Board and submitted them in the form of solid proposals. More often than not the Board approved these recommendations with a minimum of debate or delay. The demeanor of the meetings was quiet and businesslike. Debate was normally unlimited, but as the Board grew in numbers and the problems of the OEA became more critical, presiding officers began to impose time limits upon individual speeches, and to take extraordinary measures to insure that all members had an opportunity to be recognized.

By contrast, the Executive Committee met frequently and deliberated at greater length. Constitutionally charged with carrying out the policies of the Board, administering the budget, and engaging and supervising the staff, the Committee found it necessary to meet almost every month. It normally scheduled eight to ten monthly meetings per year, but rarely completed a term without the need for a special session or two. Most meetings were in the evening, usually beginning at seven o'clock and lasting two to four hours. Until 1951 the favorite meeting place was the Huckins Hotel; after that date the Committee had its own room in the OEA Building.

The Executive Committee in 1945 consisted of the president, vice president, immediate past president, and one member from each of the nine OEA districts. In 1951 the newly created office of president-elect was added to the Committee, while the immediate past president was dropped.<sup>38</sup> The latter official was restored by a 1957 amendment, which

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<sup>38</sup>Board of Directors, March 17, 1951.

also added the state's representative on the NEA Board of Directors.<sup>39</sup> The Northeastern District gained a representative in 1951 on the basis of its membership of over 3,500. In 1960 the Executive Committee enlarged itself by realigning the OEA districts, setting up twelve to replace the previous nine.<sup>40</sup> Thus, by 1965, the Committee consisted of seventeen members, including the president, president-elect, vice president, past president, NEA director, and twelve district representatives.

The district representatives were selected from among directors who were already members of the Board. Each committeeman was nominated by a fellow director from his district, and then elected by the entire Board. This was a departure from the direct election method that had been used under the previous constitution, and led to a prompt but unsuccessful attempt to restore the old system by amendment in 1946.<sup>41</sup> The defenders of the new method argued that the Executive Committee should be a creature of the Board, somewhat in the nature of the British cabinet which is responsible to the House of Commons, rather than a separately-elected body similar to an upper house of a bicameral legislature. It was expected that the OEA could act more decisively and effectively by avoiding conflict of authority that might come from an executive body selected on a separate basis from its policy-making board.<sup>42</sup>

Whatever the intent of the framers of the 1945 Constitution, the

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<sup>39</sup>Board of Directors, November 9, 1957.

<sup>40</sup>Executive Committee, February 27, 1960.

<sup>41</sup>Executive Committee, March 20, 1946.

<sup>42</sup>Interview with Gilbert Robinson, January 27, 1969. Robinson served eighteen years on the Executive Committee and was OEA president in 1962-1963.

Executive Committee did become a strong and effective group. Much of its power came from its continuity and stability. Each committeeman was elected for a term of three years and might be re-elected without limitation. Between 1945 and 1965 the average tenure was 9.4 years, counting the years a member might be passing through the presidency. Not counting presidential terms, the average tenure was 8.3 years--almost three terms. Marvin McKee, president of Panhandle Agricultural and Mechanical College, and committeeman from the Panhandle District, was elected in 1945 and remained on the Committee throughout the twenty-year period. Gilbert Robinson, an Oklahoma City administrator, served eighteen years including three years before, during, and following his term as president. Others who served the equivalent of three terms or more were George Hamm, of Ardmore, seventeen years; Ernest Hunter, of Gage, thirteen years; William D. Carr, of Cushing, twelve years; Mrs. Floy Cobb, of Tulsa, twelve years; Garland Godfrey, who served as president and as NEA director, twelve years; Marvin Easley, of Erick, eleven years; and Charles Mason, of Tulsa, eleven years. These nine committeemen served a total of 125 years, over half the time served by the entire Committee during the two decades.<sup>43</sup>

The most important power of the Executive Committee was to select the executive secretary. Upon his recommendation, the Committee employed all other staff members, outlined their duties, and fixed their salaries. Although the Board voted the final approval of the budget, the Executive Committee supervised its preparation and administration, and were routinely given authority by the Board to make item transfers within the budget. Other constitutional duties included bonding the

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<sup>43</sup>Executive Committee records throughout the period, 1945-1965.



treasurer, creating and approving district boundaries, incurring indebtedness with the authorization of the Board, and approving reports of certain committees.<sup>44</sup> As it executed the policies of the Association, the Committee acquired property, built buildings, approved committee appointments, directed the work of committees, did long-range planning, helped prepare the agenda for the Board, directed studies of the constitution, conducted elections, served as "watchdog" over educational interests of the state, and dealt directly with the legislature.

The procedures of the Executive Committee were similar to those of the Board of Directors. Meetings began with an invocation, and--when the ladies presided--a salute to the flag, followed by roll call and approval of the minutes as printed. Next, the Committee examined the list of checks written during the month, and with rare questioning of an item approved the entire list. The executive secretary explained expenditures when he deemed it necessary or when asked. He then gave his report on finances and membership, the latter being tantamount to a report of income. This was usually followed by recommendations by the secretary for transfers of items in the budget, which were normally approved by the Committee without hesitation. With these financial matters out of the way, the Committee proceeded to hear committee reports and to act upon them. The meeting normally closed with further recommendations from the executive secretary. Like most boards working with an executive, the Committee tended to follow the lead of the secretary. But, also like other boards, particularly the school boards with which most of the committeemen dealt in their home schools, the Committee sometimes haggled over small items, particularly those with which they

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<sup>44</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1945, p. 5.

were unfamiliar, while giving little attention to more significant ones. In the area of salaries they could be as niggardly with the OEA staff as their own governing boards were with them.

An overwhelming majority of the Executive Committeemen were public school superintendents, and nearly all others were administrators in some capacity. Only two classroom teachers were elected from districts before 1965, Floyd Focht of Ponca City, who served two terms starting in 1947, and Gladys Nunn of Muskogee, elected in 1964.<sup>45</sup>

The preponderance of administrators on the Board and Executive Committee was a source of discontent to some teachers, and throughout the period there were sporadic efforts to revise the constitution to reduce the imbalance. A 1946 proposal would have returned the selection of Executive Committee members to the districts.<sup>46</sup> In 1956 the Department of Classroom Teachers offered a series of resolutions to the Executive Committee, including a recommendation that more "effective representation of classroom teachers" be provided on the Board of Directors. The Committee advised the teachers as to the formal procedure for introducing amendments, but no proper proposal was ever offered.<sup>47</sup> In 1964 the classroom teachers organization submitted amendments requiring the nomination of two candidates, one of whom was to be a classroom teacher, for every office at every level of the OEA. They further proposed that the Executive Committee be elected by the district membership and its tenure be limited to two three-year terms. These amendments were rejected by

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<sup>45</sup>Both had served as president of the Department of Classroom Teachers. Mrs. Nunn was elected president-elect of OEA in 1966.

<sup>46</sup>Executive Committee, March 20, 1946.

<sup>47</sup>Executive Committee, June 7, 1956. Marvin Easley said this was a frequent occurrence.

the Board of Directors.<sup>48</sup>

Efforts to change the governing bodies of the OEA continued in the 1960's. Following its defeat of the classroom teacher proposals in 1962, the Board set up a committee representing all departments of the Association to continue studying the problem of representation. An amendment introduced in 1964 to limit the Executive Committee to two terms was approved by the Committee itself but defeated by the Board.<sup>49</sup> A new effort to change the structure of representation was launched late in 1964, following the OEA defeat at the polls. Through 1965 the Association continued to grapple with the problem, but reached no conclusion.<sup>50</sup>

Those who would have changed the representation within the OEA were impelled by varying motives. Some simply wanted to get rid of Ferman Phillips, the executive secretary, who could be retained or removed only by the Executive Committee. Others felt that public school superintendents had too long dominated the organization at every level. Many could not accept the principle that all educators were members of one profession, and that different classifications, as defined by the OEA departments, should not be represented proportionally.

Regardless of the motivation for change, the overt attempts to bring it about were isolated and weak. They ran head-on into the satisfaction which the majority of OEA members felt with the status quo. Most

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<sup>48</sup>Board of Directors, March 17, 1962.

<sup>49</sup>Board of Directors, March 14, 1964.

<sup>50</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1965.

teachers approved the work of the OEA, its programs, and its leaders.<sup>51</sup> Many who were discontented with their situation saw their problems primarily outside the Association rather than within. On the specific question of representation of different interests on the governing groups, most teachers as late as 1962 thought they were represented "about right."<sup>52</sup> Apparently the preponderance of administrators in positions of leadership was by agreement rather than as a result of imperious domination.

#### Committees and Commissions

As is true in any large organization, most of the work of the OEA governing bodies was performed by committees. The 1945 Constitution provided for committees on amendments, resolutions, legislation, budget, research, programs, necrology, auditing, and credentials.<sup>53</sup> The 1951 revision added a committee to plan the state convention. In 1962 all provisions for specific committees were dropped from the constitution, leaving their establishment to the discretion of the Board and the Executive Committee.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the period the Association leaders had set up and appointed committees as needed, whether they were called for in the constitution or not. As of 1965 some of the more active committees were those responsible for membership, public relations, NEA legislative contacts, liaison with the Parent-Teachers and School Boards Associations, future teachers, Student Education Association, and

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<sup>51</sup>Miller, pp. 164-65.

<sup>52</sup>Miller, p. 116.

<sup>53</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1944, p. 39.

<sup>54</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1962, p. 30.

editorial policy of The Oklahoma Teacher.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the standing committees, several important groups were appointed on an ad hoc basis. These special committees often dealt with the most difficult problems of the OEA, and their establishment marked some of the more important events and movements within the Association. Each of the initiative petition efforts, in 1945 and in 1964, had its campaign committee. A committee set up in 1945 explored the possibility of acquiring a permanent headquarters for the OEA and continued to function until the OEA Building was completed in 1950. Other special committees studied school district reorganization, sought a permanent plan for school finance, conducted special fund drives, planned OEA's role in the White House Conference on Education, supervised the building of a retirement home for teachers, and led the sanctions fight for educational improvement in 1965.

Committees dealing with problems considered most crucial to the advancement and protection of the professional status of teachers tended to evolve into stronger organizations called commissions. Commission members were appointed for terms of three years, staggered to insure a continuing body, and were not eligible for reappointment. Committee appointments, on the other hand, were for one year at a time, with no limitation upon the number of terms.<sup>56</sup>

One of the first commissions to be established was the one on professional relations, which grew out of an earlier committee on fair dismissal practices. Created in 1949, it was later renamed the Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, and, as the title suggests,

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<sup>55</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 26.

concerned itself with matters of ethical and professional conduct and assisted members who felt they had been dealt with unfairly in such matters as contracts, dismissals, and assignments. In 1954 an ethics committee was elevated to the status of a commission and continued in its role of encouraging the study and adoption of a code of ethics. In 1965 the OEA secured legislation setting up the Professional Practices Commission, which concerned itself with teacher contract obligations, admissions to and continuance in the profession, and ethical performance of members of the profession. Though appointed by the State Board of Education, the twelve members of this statutory group were nominated by the OEA and were considered by the Association to be one of its commissions.<sup>57</sup>

The OEA Welfare Commission was created in 1953 after the Board of Directors instructed the Executive Committee to make a study of salary protection insurance. By 1957 this new group had completed its study and gained the adoption of the first of a series of insurance programs.<sup>58</sup> By 1965 it had developed plans for life insurance, hospitalization, and medical care, and was studying several other areas of insurance. Under its auspices the OEA Credit Union was established, providing members with a place to deposit money for investment or savings and to procure personal loans.<sup>59</sup>

The youngest of the OEA commissions was the Educational Policies Commission, which was founded in 1960. Its responsibility was to

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<sup>57</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule I, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1957, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 23.

develop statements of purposes and policies of education and particularly to study long-term goals and programs. In 1961 it released its first report, A Statement of Educational Policies. This was followed in 1962 and 1965 with further statements of OEA goals for the years ahead.<sup>60</sup>

Members of committees and commissions were appointed by the president with the approval of the Executive Committee, and because of the difficulty and the importance of the task, with the advice of the Committee and anyone else who could help. Because of his knowledge of OEA affairs and of able and available people, the executive secretary played a strong part in determining the make-up of committees. An effort was made to distribute appointments equitably among districts and departments, though, as was true at every level of OEA activity, administrators furnished most of the members and chairmen of committees.<sup>61</sup>

Considerable recognition accrued to those who served on committees and commissions, particularly to chairmen of these groups. The OEA presidents, almost without exception, emerged from positions of leadership on committees, with the Legislative Committee being the most prevalent source. Some chairmen served long enough or well enough to become experts within certain areas, looked to by the members and other leaders to continue in their specialties or to move up to greater responsibilities. Among leaders in teacher welfare were J. Frank Malone, Aude Thomas, and Dud Giezentanner. Strong heads of the Ethics Commission were Marvin Self and Floyd Focht. The Commission on Professional Rights

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<sup>60</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule I, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup>Phillips interview no. 2; Robinson interview; interview with Edna Donley, January 28, 1969; interview with Farris E. Willingham, January 28, 1969. Donley and Willingham were presidents of OEA who later joined the staff. These and other former presidents, through letters and interviews, revealed a striking uniformity of procedure.

and Responsibilities was led with distinction by O. W. Jones, Glenn Snider, and Edwin E. Vineyard. From its inception in 1960 the chairman of the Educational Policies Commission was E. C. Hall. Constitutional revision was chaired for many years by Marvin Easley, who also served a term as chairman of the Legislative Committee. Two outstanding past presidents who were found continuously at the head of committees during the postwar period were Kate Frank and G. T. Stubbs.

#### Officers of the OEA

The elected officers of the OEA, provided by the 1945 Constitution, were president, vice president, and treasurer. Beginning in 1951 the president was elected a year in advance as president-elect, and the office of treasurer became appointive. Before 1945 these officers had been chosen by the Board of Directors, the predecessor of the Executive Committee.<sup>62</sup> After this date they were elected by the entire Association from a list of three nominees named by the Board of Directors.

Much attention was given from the start to the process of nomination. With the help of the Executive Committee, the president appointed a nominating committee, normally including several past presidents of OEA and representatives from all the districts of the state. The committee made an effort to distribute candidates among the districts so that no area was too long denied the opportunity to provide a president or vice president. As time went by, similar attention was given to sharing of offices among departments and positions, with administrators being less frequently chosen and classroom teachers receiving increasing

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<sup>62</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1944, p. 39.



consideration.<sup>63</sup> After 1950 the leaders of the OEA abided by a tacit understanding that women would alternate each year with men in the two highest offices.<sup>64</sup>

One of the first items of business of the new Board of Directors in 1945 was to establish procedures for voting. In an attempt to insure a secret vote, the earliest ballots, sent by mail to members, were returned to the election committee in sealed envelopes. Later a reversible postcard ballot was deemed adequate. The ballots were counted by a committee appointed, one each, by the candidates.<sup>65</sup> The number of ballots returned each year numbered approximately one-third of the membership of the Association. In the first popular election, conducted in 1945-1946, 5,330 votes were cast from a membership of 15,533, a return of about thirty-five percent.<sup>66</sup> Twice in the postwar period the percentage rose to thirty-seven, in 1949 and 1951, but more often it remained in the vicinity of thirty. The twentieth postwar election for president, in 1964, saw a return of 8,788 ballots out of an active membership of 27,699, a vote of just under thirty-two percent.<sup>67</sup>

Nine of the first twenty presidents elected by popular vote were public school superintendents, four of these being elected in the first five years of the period. Two were secondary principals, two were elementary supervisors, one was a dean of girls, though teaching half time,

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<sup>63</sup>Interviews with Willingham, Donley, and Robinson.

<sup>64</sup>Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>65</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1947.

<sup>66</sup>Board of Directors, February 14, 1946.

<sup>67</sup>Executive Committee, May 23, 1964. Other results cited are from the Executive Committee for the appropriate dates.

and one was a personnel director of a city system. Five were classroom teachers, all five elected in alternating years beginning in 1957.

As for geographical distribution, all OEA districts provided a president except the Panhandle and South Central, the latter having been formed only in 1960. One came from the small Northwest District, one from the newly created Tulsa District, which furnished four presidents. Over half the presidents came from large schools, two from Oklahoma City, three from Tulsa, and seven from other systems employing over a hundred teachers. The remaining eight came from schools with staffs of between fifty and one hundred. No rural teachers or administrators were elected to the highest office.

All the OEA presidents of this period were assiduous in their pursuit of greater competence and responsibility as educators. Only two held less than master's degrees, and one of these gained hers after her term in the presidency. Only one of the presidents, Raymond Knight of Tulsa, had earned his doctorate at the time he was in the office, but five others completed requirements for this degree at later dates. Nearly all received promotions in the years following their tenure as president, twelve of them advancing to larger school systems or to posts in higher education. Two, Farris E. Willingham and Edna Donley, became members of the OEA staff.

Another characteristic common to the twenty postwar presidents was their extraordinary activity in the OEA and other professional organizations. All had held positions of responsibility in the organization, in most cases working up to assignments at the state level. Without exception, they had served on OEA committees and commissions, approximately half having been on the Legislative Committee, one of the most traveled avenues of advancement. Over half had been presidents of local units or

of classroom teacher associations, and seven had been district presidents. One had presided over the state Department of Classroom Teachers, and five had headed the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators. Ten had served varying terms on the OEA Board of Directors, and seven were members of the Executive Committee. Three had been OEA vice presidents, and three had held high positions in the NEA.<sup>68</sup>

The vice presidents of the Association had qualifications and backgrounds much like those of the presidents, and were distributed among the districts and departments in a similar manner. Classroom teachers were more in evidence at this level, with seven holding the office, and higher education provided two, Anna Coyner, professor from Central State College, and Bruce Carter, president of Northeastern Agricultural and Mechanical College. One vice president, Inez Ellis, served two conservative terms, the only such case recorded for this office. No vice president succeeded to the presidency upon vacation of that office, and only one, Mary Sue Silk, holding the lower position was later elected to the higher.

While reelection was the rare exception in the two top offices, it was a virtually inviolable rule for the treasurer. John G. Mitchell was elected to this position in 1919 and was reelected twenty-seven times, his final term being 1946-1947. He was followed by A. LeRoy Taylor, who continued to be elected until 1951, when the office became appointive.<sup>69</sup>

The constitution stated that the OEA officers "shall perform the

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<sup>68</sup>Biographical information on the OEA presidents was compiled by the author from the OEA records and from The Oklahoma Teacher.

<sup>69</sup>Executive Committee, February 12, 1947. Taylor was thereafter appointed each year by the Executive Committee, and was still treasurer in 1969.

usual duties of such officers." In addition, the president was charged with the responsibilities of presiding at all meetings of the Board and Executive Committee, signing contracts, countersigning checks, calling special meetings, and appointing committees and commissions. The vice president had two constitutional assignments, chairing the credentials committee, and taking the place of the president in the latter's absence or vacation of office. The treasurer received and disbursed funds under the direction of the Executive Committee.

The president's actual role went far beyond the letter of the constitution. He was expected to lead the organized teaching profession during his tenure in office. This involved planning, coordinating, informing and inspiring, and supervising the execution of programs. He sounded the keynote of the OEA in convention addresses and in his written messages in The Oklahoma Teacher, and continued through the year to be voice of the Association by delivering many--at least weekly--speeches. He consulted with and spoke to the members of the profession, but he also gave much time to interpreting the OEA to the public. His major challenge was that of appealing to the disparate groups within the Association, and achieving and maintaining enough unity to move the whole forward in the service of its parts.

#### National Affiliation

The OEA was formally affiliated with the NEA and worked closely with the national organization throughout the postwar years. Oklahoma teachers joined the NEA in growing numbers, increasing their membership from 4,151 in 1945, or approximately twenty-four percent of those eligible,

to 17,262 in 1965, a little over seventy-one percent.<sup>70</sup> They attended the national conventions in large numbers and participated actively in all NEA activities. The OEA nominated a state director to serve on the NEA Board of Directors, and this official became also a member of the state Executive Committee. Directors during the postwar period were Edna Chamberlain, Max Chambers, David Temple, and Garland Godfrey. Oklahomans on the NEA Executive Committee were Kate Frank, Inez Gingerich, and Gladys Nunn. OEA leaders were deeply interested in federal support of education and provided several strong members of the NEA Legislative Committee, including George Hann, Farris E. Willingham, and Juanita Kidd. With the NEA centennial approaching in the middle fifties, the OEA contributed generously to the fund for a national headquarters in Washington.<sup>71</sup>

The OEA and Oklahoma teachers received many benefits from their NEA relationship. The annual dues, which moved up from five to fifteen dollars during the period, brought the NEA Journal each month, and made the member eligible for a growing number of benefits, such as insurance policies. The NEA Research Department, sending out regular reports and bulletins, provided the state associations with information useful in developing their programs. Statements of goals, formulated and published by the NEA, such as the Victory Action Program in 1945 and the Centennial Action Program in the 1950's, were adopted by and gave valuable guidelines to the OEA. The Oklahoma Association accepted the NEA Code of Ethics and promoted it as its own. The series of leadership workshops started in 1948 and continuing into the sixties was partly financed and

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<sup>70</sup>Supra, Chapter IV, Table 1.

<sup>71</sup>Board of Directors, November 6, 1954.

led by the NEA. For every type of occasion and professional activity in the state, the NEA provided speakers or consultants when requested.

As the NEA moved forward in the areas of security and defense of teachers, it offered both leadership and service to teachers of Oklahoma. The postwar period opened with the NEA Commission for the Defense of Democracy assisting Kate Frank of Muskogee in her fight for reinstatement after dismissal for political reasons.<sup>72</sup> As the twenty-year period closed the national organization was supporting the OEA in its effort to bring educational improvement by applying sanctions, and was adding the weight of its own sanctions.

Intensification of the conflict at the national level over educational goals and programs in the 1960's, and the resulting changes in NEA responses to the challenges, presaged important new experiences for the OEA. NEA Director Garland Godfrey reported in 1961 a great wave of "rising wrath" among teachers across the nation in the wake of the latest defeat of federal aid for education, and noted that in many areas teachers were turning for help to unions and collective bargaining.<sup>73</sup> So rapidly did this movement develop that only one year later the NEA was pressing for "professional negotiations" as an alternative to unionization.<sup>74</sup> By 1963 Godfrey was distributing copies of an NEA booklet entitled Guidelines for Professional Negotiations, and reassuring OEA leaders that this was a procedure to be followed "only as a last

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<sup>72</sup>NEA Journal, March, 1945, p. 72.

<sup>73</sup>Executive Committee, October 25, 1961.

<sup>74</sup>Executive Committee, October 24, 1962.

resort."<sup>75</sup> NEA militancy continued to increase through 1965, and the state Association, facing its own frustrations at home, with much "rising wrath" among its members, looked to the leadership and assistance of the national organization.

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<sup>75</sup> Executive Committee, October 23, 1963.

## CHAPTER VI

### HEADQUARTERS AND STAFF

In its first meeting under the new constitution in 1945 the OEA Board of Directors greeted a new staff member, Manager Joe Hurt, and authorized the Executive Committee to promote the purchase of a building to house the Association's central office.<sup>1</sup> These were the first steps in a program of expansion which saw the staff grow in twenty years from four persons to twenty-one and the central office move from three small rented rooms in an Oklahoma City office building to the Association's own headquarters, spacious enough to pay for itself by collecting rent from others. Total assets of the OEA grew from \$20,555 in 1945 to \$773,692 in 1965.<sup>2</sup> The Association budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1945 totalled \$28,800. Twenty years later it was \$345,000.<sup>3</sup>

These figures were a partial measure of the OEA's increased services to teachers and the willingness of teachers to pay for these benefits. Most of the growth was in increased scope and intensity of previously established activities: legislative contacts, research, publicity, field service, conventions, and publications. But new services were being added, particularly in the areas of welfare, professional

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<sup>1</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1945.

<sup>2</sup>OEA Audit Reports on file in the OEA office. Mrs. Florine Houghline, financial secretary of the OEA, assisted the author with this information.

<sup>3</sup>Board of Directors.



relations, and instructional improvement. Teachers supported this growth with increased membership and higher dues, the latter graduated on the basis of income to provide greater revenue as salaries went up.

### The Executive Secretary

Performing a leading role in every activity of the OEA, and held responsible for their success or failure, was the chief executive officer of the Association, the executive secretary. Clyde M. Howell held this position from 1923 to 1948, a quarter of a century, during which time his character came to determine to a great extent the nature of the office. In 1948 he stepped down to make way for Ferman Phillips, who had already demonstrated a new style of leadership as manager for two years. By 1965 Phillips had indelibly stamped the Association with his own image, and it appeared that he, also, might complete a quarter of a century in his post.<sup>4</sup>

The OEA Constitution defined the office of executive secretary with such flexibility that it might become as ~~strong~~ as the occupant could make it. That it wielded no greater power was due largely to inherent limitations within the organization, including size and diversity and ranging from inertia of some members to active opposition of others, and to external hostility, much of it basically against schools and teachers but focused upon their more visible leaders. The executive secretary was charged by the constitution with devoting "all of his time to furthering the interests of the Association," and performing "such other

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<sup>4</sup>This estimate is based upon the fact that, in spite of the OEA's worst set-back, in the election of 1964, Phillips was immediately given a new three-year contract, along with high praise, by the Executive Committee, and a strong vote of confidence by the Board. Executive Committee, November 13, 1964; Board of Directors, November 14, 1964.

duties as the Board of Directors may direct." Other responsibilities included preparing proceedings for "all regular meetings," assisting districts in preparation of their programs, and advertising all meetings. He was to be editor-in-chief of all publications. And he was to keep an "exact roll" of the membership and be solely responsible for membership certificates.<sup>5</sup> His election by the Executive Committee for a term up to three years provided him with security of tenure that added to his strength.

Clyde Howell led the OEA through some of its most difficult years, a period of depression and war, when conditions for progress were at their worst. Some dissatisfaction arose against him in the middle forties,<sup>6</sup> but he was able to point to achievements made in spite of great adversity: professional standards had been raised, school funds in local banks had been made secure, state aid had come to replace losses of local revenue, and, his greatest satisfaction, teacher retirement had been established, by petition effort of the OEA in 1943.<sup>7</sup>

Howell was popular among teachers and generally well-liked by those outside the profession. While not completely unsuccessful in his legislative relations, his approach to this aspect of his responsibility was that of low pressure. He preferred the less controversial chores of planning conventions and editing The Oklahoma Teacher. As associate secretary, a position created for him in 1948 and left largely to him to define, he continued these familiar activities until his death in

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<sup>5</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1945, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Stubbs interview; interview with O. W. Jones, Tahlequah, October 20, 1968; Supra, Chapter I.

<sup>7</sup>Roxie J. Adams, "After Life's Fitful Fever," The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1952, p. 24.

October, 1952. He had been in poor health since an initial heart attack in 1945, but throughout his final seven years he continued to make a significant contribution, not only through his official duties, but by being a warm friend and counselor to many teachers who had long known him as the leader of the OEA.<sup>8</sup>

Ferman Phillips took charge of the OEA at a time when legislative battles were looming and his political prowess and lawmaking experience was in great demand. Along with his practical knowledge and skills he brought a new militance to the organization which aroused enthusiasm and activated the membership as it had seldom been stirred before. Membership increased, convention attendance went up, and local activity began to grow. While progress is hard to measure and credit for it difficult to assign, most OEA members had a new sense of forward motion, and thought the executive secretary was the prime mover.

Much of this effect was contrived by Phillips himself, partly for his self-advancement, but at the same time as a technique of leadership. A skilled orator, he spoke to his constituents, the teachers, in a style frequently described as Bryanesque. He was often quoted as he made state and local news with his many appearances. It was not unusual for him to travel over three thousand miles a month to speaking engagements, and he normally spoke over one hundred times per year.<sup>9</sup> No convention, meeting, or workshop was complete without its rousing message from "Mr. OEA," a message varying little through the years, praising his listeners for their good work, calling for new exertions in the face of new

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1959, p. 20.

problems, warning against ever-lurking "enemies of education," offering plaudits for friendly legislators while suggesting retirement for others, and finally reminding everyone of the real beneficiaries of their efforts, the "boys and girls" of Oklahoma. Only slightly less skilled with the written word, he communicated forcefully with the membership through the pages of the journal and a periodic newsletter.

Beyond the influence of his speeches and writing, Phillips inspired the OEA by other qualities of his character. He was an extremely hard worker, putting in full days at his office, then driving to speaking engagements all over the state at least once per week, and appearing in his office before eight o'clock the next morning. He proved to be an able administrator, managing a growing budget with a dollar's worth of gain for every dollar spent, and recruiting and organizing a staff that provided increasing services to the membership. Friendly and accessible to all teachers, he worked harmoniously with the Executive Committee and the Board, providing leadership in both ideas and execution as he followed the constitutional mandate to carry out the policies of the directors.

Although sometimes overly combative and suspicious, his behavior left never a question as to his courage in the defense of the OEA and its interests. He was an alert and menacing watchdog when schools were threatened, as they often were, with loss of established revenue.<sup>10</sup> He vehemently countered the charges of communism against schools and teachers during the McCarthy threat of the early fifties.<sup>11</sup> While fully

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<sup>10</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1952, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1952, p. 21; December, 1954, p. 9.

cognizant that the editors could always have the final word in a conflict, and, therefore, cautious and correct in his relations with the press, he did not hesitate to challenge what he thought was an erroneous or unfair report or to return the fire of editorials that attacked the OEA.<sup>12</sup> As for attacks upon himself, he rarely made public reply.<sup>13</sup>

He could, though rarely did, turn his ire upon teachers. Like a father concerned that his children behave well, he sometimes chided teachers for minor delinquencies which might jeopardize their progress. He often reminded them that legislators and congressmen should be thanked for their efforts on behalf of education. On at least one occasion he scolded those who discourteously walked out of the auditorium during convention speeches.<sup>14</sup> He was particularly severe with administrators who failed to communicate with their faculties, and once accused the superintendents of "undemocratic administration which turned teachers away from the OEA program."<sup>15</sup>

Phillips perceived his role as lobbyist and political leader to be paramount over his other duties.<sup>16</sup> His background had prepared him well,

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<sup>12</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1961, p. 9; Executive Committee, January 13, 1961.

<sup>13</sup>In the library of the OEA Building in Oklahoma City is a large collection of newspaper clippings devoted largely to attacks upon the executive secretary. He took delight in showing them to visitors as though they were battle scars. Although Phillips laughed them off, the author could not help but detect evidences of pain suffered by this man who has been severely punished for his efforts. Beneath his pachydermatous exterior he could be hurt.

<sup>14</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Phillips, address to the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators, Oklahoma State University, June, 1962. The author was there and felt the lash.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with Ferman Phillips, April 23, 1969. Hereinafter cited as Phillips interview no. 3.

and in his role he felt he could best "further the interests" of the Association. He was highly conscious of and concerned about the political ramifications of everything the OEA did. The next election, the next legislative session, and the next Congress were always on his mind. He was the main adviser to the OEA Legislative Committee as its program was formulated, and the leader of the Steering Committee as it battled to get the program enacted. Both in preparation for the legislative combat and in the thick of the struggle, he never forgot that he could not move without his "army," the Association, whose unity in support of its own programs was the basic force at his disposal. With this in mind, he cultivated all groups in the OEA, sought to bridge differences, and strived for a consensus that would permit action.

A product of rural Oklahoma, an organization Democrat, and a veteran of the legislature, he was familiar with the terrain over which he operated, and was realistically aware, for the short term, at least, of the political climate that prevailed. He knew, for example, that legislators were elected from counties, where the courthouse organization was vital to winning elections; therefore, the county superintendents were politically significant beyond their numerical strength. Further, until the legislature was reapportioned, rural interests could outvote the urban, and even reapportionment did not immediately urbanize the legislature, as Oklahomans clung to the influences of their rustic past, particularly their rural schools.<sup>17</sup>

Phillips's active dedication to the Democratic Party comfortably coincided with his OEA responsibility of seeking support for education from Democratic legislatures and governors. He supported candidates

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<sup>17</sup>Phillips interviews no. 2 and no. 3.

favorable to the OEA and NEA programs and was outspoken against those in opposition. That the latter were often Republican made his unabashed Democracy more conspicuous. At the congressional level one of his most persistent targets was Representative Page Belcher of Enid.<sup>18</sup> And even the Republican president was not immune. He railed at Eisenhower's White House Conference on Education as "a political expedient designed to keep the Federal Government from meeting some of the pressing problems of education . . . ,"<sup>19</sup> but urged the "friends of education" to participate--and thereby influence the outcome--and Phillips himself attended as a delegate.<sup>20</sup> The election of a Republican governor in 1962 confronted him and the OEA with the serious question as to whether the executive secretary could best serve the Association, in the long run, as one too narrowly identified with one of the major parties.

Between political campaigns, and even during them, Phillips fulfilled his duties as chief administrative officer of the Association. Like most politicians, he was aware that public leaders are seldom remembered or appreciated solely as administrators, their constituents looking instead for policies and programs and exciting performances with which they can identify. He could have easily become mired in the problems of OEA Headquarters, because, as in the schools it sought to serve, the demands upon the Association grew more rapidly than they could be financed or manned. Still, he won acclaim among the elected leaders of

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<sup>18</sup>Phillips, address to OEA Leadership Workshop, Oklahoma State University, August, 1962. This is but one of many references heard on various occasions of this type during the sixties.

<sup>19</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1955, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1955, p. 12.

OEA for his ability to organize and to operate the central office. His most important contributions as an administrator were his part in acquiring the OEA Building and his employment and leadership of the headquarters staff.<sup>21</sup>

The Executive Committee renewed Phillip's three-year contract almost every year, always no later than the second year, never waiting until the end of his term. At consistent intervals the Committee increased his salary and benefits, with the result that his income compared favorably with those of public school administrators and the state superintendent, the principal guidelines followed in establishing his pay. From an initial annual salary of \$6,000 in 1946 he was promoted to \$15,000 in 1965 plus a \$3,000 sheltered annuity which brought his total remuneration close to the national average for state executive secretaries. In addition, he was provided with an automobile with all its business expenses paid, and with a \$1,200 expense allowance.<sup>22</sup>

The generosity of the Executive Committee and the alacrity with which it offered him a new contract were dulled to some extent in 1965 by its expressed concern for the "image of OEA" and the executive's contribution to it. In the wake of the Association's election defeat the previous year adverse criticism of the organization, and particularly of Phillips, arose to new heights both without and within the OEA. Taking note of this fact, the Committee soberly discussed the secretary's role

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<sup>21</sup>Interview with William D. Carr, Stillwater, May 3, 1969; interviews with other OEA presidents, who without exception praise the secretary's administrative ability.

<sup>22</sup>Executive Committee, February 1, 1963; August 12, 1965. Other data in this paragraph are from the records of the Executive Committee and from an interview with Ferman Phillips, June 20, 1968, hereinafter cited as Phillips interview no. 1.



in public relations. Though it was ultimately conceded that he should continue to be responsible for all news releases from the central office, he was urged to delegate more of the public relations duties to other members of the staff. That the question was discussed at all was evidence that some of the magic had gone from the leadership of Ferman Phillips.<sup>23</sup>

#### The Staff: Research, Public Relations, and Field Service

In June, 1945, the headquarters staff of the OEA consisted of four persons, the executive secretary, the editor of The Oklahoma Teacher, an assistant secretary, and a stenographer. The first three positions were filled respectively by Clyde M. Howell, Roxie Adams, and Lula Whitenack. The total annual payroll was \$11,160.<sup>24</sup> Twenty years later there were twenty-one employees at the central office, eleven classified as staff members, eight secretaries, and two custodians. Total annual salaries in the year ending June 30, 1965, were \$129,600.<sup>25</sup>

The first position added was that of manager, which was replaced in 1948 by an associate secretary. Other new posts included director of research, director of public relations, director of field services, field associate, director of professional services, and operator of the press. The duties of the assistant secretary were divided between two persons, one a financial secretary who served as bookkeeper and membership clerk, the other an administrative secretary who kept the minutes of the Board and of the Executive Committee, and the records of the

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<sup>23</sup>Executive Committee, August 12, 1965.

<sup>24</sup>Board of Directors, June 25, 1945.

<sup>25</sup>Executive Committee, March 5, 1965.

major committees and commissions, and acted as personal secretary of the chief executive. The one stenographer of 1945 was replaced by 1965 by a pool of eight stenographic and clerical workers.

Although there was wide recognition of the need for more personnel to man the expanding OEA program, additions to the staff came haltingly, each following a period of discussion and temporary arrangements, with established members carrying extra burdens until new help was provided. The need for research and publicity was discussed in 1945, but until 1949 only short-term help was employed, except for the contributions in these fields by Phillips and Howell. Phillips resorted to temporary expedients, not only to meet immediate needs, but to open the door, as it were, to more lasting solutions. It was in this manner and for this purpose that he financed the Pugmire study in 1948,<sup>26</sup> a temporary effort pointing toward a permanent research department. Later in 1948 he asked for and was given authority to employ a "field" man to serve through the legislative session;<sup>27</sup> this arrangement led to a permanent system of field service. A similar proposal to employ a temporary public relations man did not bear fruit, but the effort reminded the policy makers that such a need existed.<sup>28</sup>

The first permanent addition to the staff since the creation of the manager's position was Marshall Gregory, who became director of research in November, 1949.<sup>29</sup> The Board had formally authorized a research

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<sup>26</sup>Board of Directors, February 12, 1948.

<sup>27</sup>Executive Committee, November 12, 1948.

<sup>28</sup>Executive Committee, January 7, 1949.

<sup>29</sup>Executive Committee, November 4, 1949.

department in February, 1948, and had provided for its funding in the budget for the following year.<sup>30</sup> Phillips and the Executive Committee moved slowly in implementing this program, because they had become seriously involved in the acquisition of a headquarters building and were uncertain about immediate demands upon available resources.<sup>31</sup> Less than a month after the secretary expressed doubt that the position should be filled a superior prospect was discovered and his services secured.

Marshall Gregory soon established a reputation as one of the most valuable men ever to serve the OEA, as well as the cause of education in Oklahoma. A native of the state, he received degrees at Central State College and the University of Oklahoma, and pursued further graduate work at the University of Chicago and at Columbia University. His study at Columbia was financed by a Rockefeller Foundation grant and led to a period of service in the research department of that philanthropic organization. After teaching six years he spent sixteen years in the Oklahoma State Department of Education, first as Director of Finance and later as Director of Research, while acting throughout this period as secretary of the State Board of Education.<sup>32</sup>

Gregory's original responsibility to the OEA was to compile information that could be used by the Association to formulate and advance its programs, particularly its legislative goals. He prepared and kept up-to-date a legislative handbook which became a basic reference for state lawmakers and governors during the fifties. Phillips and other officials credited him with the major role in preparing and substantiating the

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<sup>30</sup>Board of Directors, February 12, 1948; May 8, 1948.

<sup>31</sup>Executive Committee, October 12, 1949.

<sup>32</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1954, p. 15.

principal educational legislation of the period.<sup>33</sup> In the middle fifties he gave much time to preliminary investigations of unfair dismissal cases for the Professional Relations Commission.<sup>34</sup> As consultant to the Welfare Commission he developed and put into operation the Association's programs of salary protection and life insurance. His last important contribution was the organization and operation of the OEA Credit Union.<sup>35</sup>

Gregory gave only three-fourths of his time to the OEA, reserving his remaining hours to his private practice as an accountant.<sup>36</sup> He did not enjoy public contacts; for this reason, and because of his value as a researcher, he was spared the pressure required of most OEA staff members of lobbying in the legislature.<sup>37</sup> He died February 25, 1961. So highly regarded and revered was he by his colleagues that the OEA awards given annually to the news media were renamed the Marshall Gregory Awards.<sup>38</sup>

Following Gregory's death OEA research languished, as it was divided among various staff members or assigned for short periods to personnel already loaded with other duties. Farris E. Willingham served officially as director of research from 1961 to 1963. He had been director of field service for six years and, next to Phillips, the leading

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<sup>33</sup>Interview with A. L. Bondurant, Oklahoma City, April 18, 1969; Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Executive Committee, April 20, 1956.

<sup>35</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup>Bondurant interview

<sup>37</sup>Phillips interview no. 3.

<sup>38</sup>Executive Committee, September 22, 1961.

legislative contact. Although given a new title, he continued to follow a heavy schedule of travel, speaking, and lobbying. Clark White replaced Willingham in field service in 1961, but, because of his legal background, he performed a share of the research work, particularly bill drafting. In 1963 Willingham was promoted to associate secretary and White became director of research, in which position he continued to make frequent field trips and to work with the legislature. He also took responsibility for the rapidly growing credit union.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the OEA research department faced the severe challenges of the 1960's in a state of discontinuity and distraction.

The most difficult staff position to fill was director of public relations. The Board formally provided for the position in 1948,<sup>40</sup> but it remained unfilled much of the time or was combined with other responsibilities. For only one three-year period, from 1957 to 1960, was the post occupied by one person free of other assignments. Beginning in 1961 the managing editor of the journal assumed the public relations responsibilities. At other times during the postwar period this work was performed--to the extent that it was done at all--by the executive secretary, the associate secretary, or by teachers on the Public Relations Committee.<sup>41</sup>

Dewey Neal, who became director in March, 1957, conducted the most concentrated and sustained public relations program the OEA was to

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<sup>39</sup>Executive Committee, August 17, 1961; May 10, 1963; interview with Clark White, Oklahoma City, April 23, 1969.

<sup>40</sup>Board of Directors, May 8, 1948. Public relations was approved as an item in the budget. There was no other formal motion on this matter.

<sup>41</sup>Interview with W. C. Burris, Weatherford, September 24, 1968. Burris was chairman of the Public Relations Committee for four years.

experience. A twenty-six-year veteran of the Oklahoma Publishing Company, he was engaged with the expectation that he might become a solid link with E. K. Gaylord, the editor-publisher of the Oklahoma City newspapers. This strategem by the executive did not gain its intended result,<sup>42</sup> but Neal did bring valuable expertise and experience to the OEA. During his first year he inaugurated a series of radio and television programs, the latter presented on the state educational channel, and arranged the production of a motion picture depicting Oklahoma school needs.<sup>43</sup> In 1958 he produced a public relations handbook for local units, wrote a monthly journal column, called "Chalk Talk," reporting successful experiences in this field by teachers and schools, and distributed OEA and NEA films on current school problems.<sup>44</sup> He provided several articles for The Oklahoma Teacher and spoke often to local units and other groups. In 1959 he introduced the Association to the statewide use of billboard publicity, displaying OEA posters on space donated by outdoor advertising companies.<sup>45</sup> Neal resigned in 1960 to set up his own public relations firm, but his successors continued all the activities he had started.<sup>46</sup>

Truman Wester became public relations director in July, 1960, but the position was secondary to another assignment he was employed to fulfill. His primary responsibility was to cultivate higher education

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<sup>42</sup>Bondurant interview.

<sup>43</sup>Executive Committee, June 6, 1957.

<sup>44</sup>Board of Directors, August 14, 1958.

<sup>45</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1959. Advertisers donated this billboard space when it was not otherwise being used, preferring clean paper--including OEA publicity--to worn-out displays.

<sup>46</sup>Letter from Dewey Neal to author, September 10, 1968.

activity and interest in the OEA.<sup>47</sup> He had been a professor and later registrar at Central State College, and after one year with the Association he moved on to another college administration position in Texas. The vacancy he left in OEA-higher education relations remained unfilled through 1965.<sup>48</sup>

His public relations duties were assigned to Kathleen Ryan, who had been managing editor of The Oklahoma Teacher for two years. She held both positions until February, 1964, when Marvin Leyerle, a newsman from Cushing, was appointed public relations director.<sup>49</sup> Leyerle also took over the editorship after Miss Ryan--by this time Mrs. Kathleen Ryan Rogers--resigned at the end of the school year.<sup>50</sup> With the OEA in crisis at the end of 1964, Phillips was searching desperately for a full-time public relations man.<sup>51</sup> He engaged him in the person of Tom Massey, a Holdenville editor and publisher, at an annual salary of \$10,000. This was \$2,000 above a base salary set a short time before by the Executive Committee and was second only to that of the executive secretary.<sup>52</sup>

Members of the staff spent much time away from the central office, out in the field serving the membership in many capacities. The most

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<sup>47</sup>Executive Committee, June 30, 1960.

<sup>48</sup>Phillips interview no. 2. William D. Carr accepted the position in August, 1969, thus being the first occupant of the post since Truman Wester.

<sup>49</sup>Executive Committee, February 7, 1964.

<sup>50</sup>Executive Committee, April 7, 1964.

<sup>51</sup>Executive Committee, December 4, 1964.

<sup>52</sup>Executive Committee, March 5, 1965. This is indicative of the basic problem in filling this position. Two years earlier Phillips had gone above the staff schedule in a vain attempt to hire Francis Thetford, a well-known Oklahoma journalist, for \$9,500. Executive Committee, June 19, 1963.

frequent call was for speaking appearances before local units, classroom teachers' associations, schoolmasters' clubs, and other groups, including some outside the profession. They organized, assisted, and served as consultants to workshops and special conferences. With the emphasis upon the local units in the postwar period, they helped organize these groups and get their programs under way. Prior to and during legislative sessions the tempo stepped up, as the staff explained the Association's program, heard the reaction of members, and reported progress and problems. As the OEA became more involved in professional relations causes, field service came to include investigations of irregularities.

Every staff member was expected to take part in field service, unless explicitly excused for some overriding reason, such as ill health.<sup>53</sup> Until 1951, Phillips carried almost the entire load, assisted by only temporary help during sessions of the legislature.<sup>54</sup> In that year the first permanent director of field services was employed, and, but for a brief interval, the office was never thereafter vacant. In 1963 a second man was added and given the title of field associate. Thus, by 1965 there were two full-time men in the field, with the remaining personnel, including the indefatigable Phillips, continuing to share the responsibility.

Henry Cooper was the first OEA field service director, resigning the vice presidency of the Association to take the new position in November, 1951, and serving until July 1, 1954.<sup>55</sup> He followed the

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<sup>53</sup>Phillips interview no. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Executive Committee, February 16, 1949.

<sup>55</sup>Executive Committee, November 17, 1951; The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1954, p. 43.



footsteps of Phillips, coming from Atoka County, serving as superintendent of schools in Atoka, and even occupying his leader's old seats in the legislature, first in the House of Representatives from 1939 to 1943, and then the Senate from 1951 to 1954, the latter overlapping his tenure with the OEA.<sup>56</sup> He spent most of his time while on the staff assisting with the one-day workshops which had become a major activity of the Association, organizing local units, and making speeches. For a short time he contributed a column, "Howdy Folks," to The Oklahoma Teacher, and, conforming with the pattern of developing staff assignments by accretion, he became state director of the Future Teachers of America.<sup>57</sup>

The next director of field service was Farris E. Willingham, whose contribution to the OEA in the following ten years was second only to that of the executive secretary. He served in the field position from July, 1955, to July, 1961, as director of research the following two years, and as associate secretary beginning in May, 1963.<sup>58</sup>

A graduate of East Central State College, where he majored in history and minored in English, he earned a Master of Education degree at the University of Oklahoma, and did further graduate work at the University of Colorado. After four years as teacher, coach, and principal, he became superintendent of schools at Tecumseh, where he remained thirty years until he joined the OEA staff. He had held most elective positions in the OEA, local unit president, district president, director on the state Board, member of the Executive Committee, and finally Association

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<sup>56</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1954, p. 23.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Executive Committee, April 15, 1955; August 17, 1961; May 10, 1963.

president, occupying this office at the time of his appointment to the staff.<sup>59</sup>

Before coming to the central office, Willingham had long been one of OEA's most active legislative contacts at both the state and national level.<sup>60</sup> In 1954 he was a leading supporter of Raymond Gary for governor, and was appointed chairman of the inaugural parade. This close relationship made his year as president one of the most placid and profitable in OEA history, as the governor gave unstinting support to the legislative program, including the "Better Schools Amendment" submitted by referendum to the voters. The office of field service director remained vacant throughout Willingham's term as president, but he fulfilled many of its duties--without cost to the OEA--as he covered the state to help elect a friendly governor and then to promote the passage of the Association's program.<sup>61</sup>

On the staff he fell in step with the strenuous pace that characterized OEA Headquarters. A routine report to the Board of Directors suggested the basic nature of the field service routine. In a six-weeks period ending March 14, 1958, he filled twenty-nine engagements to speak or to participate in meetings, traveling almost 5,000 miles to points as widespread as the Panhandle on the northwest perimeter and Idabel in the southeastern corner of the state. Groups visited included local units, districts, departments, school faculties, parent-teacher associations,

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<sup>59</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1954, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup>Phillips interview no. 1; Willingham interview. Willingham related an interesting experience as a congressional lobbyist: As he testified before a sub-committee on education in 1949, he sat across a table from two fledgling representatives, John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, each serving his first term in Congress.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

classroom teacher organizations, and the State Association of School Administrators. Purposes of the meetings or topics discussed included proposed OEA goals, public relations, unit organization, conventions, the OEA Constitution, ethics, and teacher education.<sup>62</sup> Willingham was made chiefly responsible for the planning, coordination, and reporting of the one-day workshops during this period,<sup>63</sup> and he continued to be a most diligent lobbyist. During the legislative session of 1961, shortly after the death of Marshall Gregory, he suffered a heart attack, forcing him to curtail his activities for much of the following year.<sup>64</sup>

Field service was then taken over by Clark White, a lawyer, legislator, and school administrator from Durant.<sup>65</sup> White performed additional duties in the area of research until 1963, when he became director of that department.<sup>66</sup> Bill Gillham, a teacher from Okmulgee and past vice president of the OEA, was appointed to take his place as field service director.<sup>67</sup> In the meantime, in 1962, the Executive Committee had approved a recommendation by Phillips that an additional man be situated in Tulsa to serve more directly that part of the state. Russell Conway, past president of the Tulsa Classroom Teachers' Association, was chosen

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<sup>62</sup>Board of Directors, March 15, 1958. During this same period, Phillips made twenty-eight appearances, and three other staff members made nineteen.

<sup>63</sup>Board of Directors, November 9, 1957, and subsequent meetings of the Board and of the Executive Committee.

<sup>64</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>65</sup>Executive Committee, September 20, 1963.

<sup>66</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1963.

<sup>67</sup>Executive Committee, April 20, 1962.

for the new position with the title of field associate.<sup>68</sup> For one year, quartered in an office provided by the Tulsa school system, he served the Tulsa District and the Northeastern and Eastern Districts. The following year he moved to the central office to join Gillham in providing services for the entire state.<sup>69</sup>

#### The Staff: The Associate Secretary and Others

The office of associate secretary was created in 1948 to provide a place for Clyde Howell, who was no longer physically able to continue as executive secretary. Instructed by the Executive Committee to "do as he pleases," he followed a routine, familiar to him, which established the basic pattern to be pursued by his successors. His long experience with the OEA enabled him to supervise the general operation of the central headquarters and to counsel with members who called, wrote, or visited the office. His special interest and competence was in planning and conducting the annual convention.

When Howell died the new man chosen to be "second in command" was A. L. Bondurant, who held the position from March, 1953 to May, 1963.<sup>70</sup> A native of southern Oklahoma, he held degrees from Southeastern State Teachers College and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, and completed course work for a doctorate at Colorado State University. He was a teacher or administrator for eighteen years in schools of Carter County, served briefly as principal at Madill and one year as superintendent of schools at Tishomingo. Following service in the Navy during

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<sup>68</sup>Executive Committee, April 20, 1962.

<sup>69</sup>Interview with Russell Conway, Oklahoma City, April 23, 1969.

<sup>70</sup>Executive Committee, March 9, 1953; May 10, 1963.

World War II he taught one summer in the College of Education at the University of Oklahoma, worked one year for the Veteran's Administration, then served seven years, from 1946 to 1953, as a junior high school principal in Muskogee.<sup>71</sup>

Bondurant performed all the duties of the OEA staff except lobbying; a good administrator, an arduous worker, and loyal aide, he entered the office of associate secretary with the understanding that he would be spared direct legislative responsibilities.<sup>72</sup> He took charge of the office operation, directing the personnel and supervising the flow of business. With much interest and energy he assumed the planning of the state conventions and coordinated the district meetings. He led the staff in developing agenda for the statewide leadership workshops and one-day workshops. And he carried a generous share of the field service, appearing away from the office on an average of once a week.<sup>73</sup>

As the OEA expanded its services, new duties tended to fall upon the associate secretary until sufficient personnel could be recruited to assume them. Bondurant was particularly challenged by the growing responsibility of the Association for policing of professional relations. As a consultant to the Professional Relations Commission, later called the Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, he conducted preliminary investigations and assisted with formal hearings by the Commission. He was also a consultant of the Welfare Commission and helped develop and administer the insurance program, the credit union, and,

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<sup>71</sup>Bondurant interview.

<sup>72</sup>Bondurant interview; Phillips interview no. 2.

<sup>73</sup>Bondurant interview.

from 1957 to 1961, a teacher placement service.<sup>74</sup> As the OEA became more active in welfare and professional relations, teachers tended to call the central office with growing frequency, seeking advice and assistance. The associate secretary found himself dealing with a growing number of such calls. A special service to teachers, developed by Bondurant on his own initiative, was a series of summer tours, some in conjunction with the NEA conventions, but others extending to Europe, Hawaii, and the Orient.<sup>75</sup>

Bondurant resigned in 1963 to take a position with the Federal Aviation Administration. He was replaced by Farris Willingham, now largely recovered from his heart attack, and ready to undertake greater responsibilities. Willingham continued all the activities of his predecessor plus his normal schedule of legislative relations.

A new position added to the staff in 1960 was director of professional services, and its first appointee was Edna Donley of Alva.<sup>76</sup> Several responsibilities assigned to others of the staff were brought together under this new office. Miss Donley took charge of the student programs, Future Teachers of America and the Student Education Association, and became consultant to the Oklahoma Association of Student Teaching. In this area she contributed a regular feature to The Oklahoma Teacher entitled "Student Education News."<sup>77</sup> She was appointed the OEA member of the state Commission on Teacher Education and Professional

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<sup>74</sup>Board of Directors, August 16, 1957; Bondurant interview.

<sup>75</sup>Bondurant interview.

<sup>76</sup>Executive Committee, June 3, 1960.

<sup>77</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1960, p. 20.

Standards (TEPS), and became a regular adviser and assistant to local TEPS committees. She was also named the Association representative on the Oklahoma Curriculum Improvement Commission and served on its planning committee. From the public relations department she took the responsibility of the teacher-of-the-year program. When Truman Wester resigned as college consultant she accepted this new assignment, working closely with the OEA Association for Higher Education. In addition to these specific duties transferred from other staff members, she assumed her share of the field service, particularly that which involved speaking to students and classroom teachers.<sup>78</sup>

Professional services included two new activities inaugurated in 1960, its opening year, with Miss Donley taking the lead in both. One was the long-range planning and goal-setting of the Educational Policies Commission, of which she became staff consultant and secretary. She was the principal author of its reports which were printed in booklet form each year.<sup>79</sup> The other was a series of instructional conferences which she planned and supervised at frequent intervals beginning in the fall of 1960. These were small regional gatherings of teachers in subject-matter areas, who met for a day to exchange ideas and to discuss common problems. Such meetings had been requested by members and grew increasingly popular in the early sixties.<sup>80</sup>

Miss Donley came to the OEA staff well-prepared for these challenging responsibilities. She had taught thirty years, all but two in Alva

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<sup>78</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule IV, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule I, p. 6; Board of Directors, November 18, 1961.

<sup>80</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule IV, p. 5; The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1961, p. 19.

High School, had supervised student teachers at Northwestern State College, and taught summer classes at that institution. She received her bachelor's degree from Northwestern State, her Master of Science (in education) at the University of Colorado, and had studied further at Oklahoma State University and the Universities of Oklahoma, Colorado, and California. In the OEA she had held local offices, served as Northwest District president, and been on numerous committees. In the year 1957-1958 she was president of the Association. A crowning honor of her career was her selection as National Teacher of the Year in 1958-1959.<sup>81</sup>

The active editorship of The Oklahoma Teacher passed through six hands between 1945 and 1965.<sup>82</sup> Because the constitution made the executive secretary responsible for all OEA publications, this official was normally designated as editor. The only exception was the period when Clyde Howell as associate secretary was permitted to continue as editor until his death. Roxie Adams carried the title of assistant editor until her retirement in 1948, but her successors were called managing editors. Sally Burke held the position from 1958 to 1952. In her final year she was given an assistant who was called associate editor; this position was later designated, in turn, advertising manager and editorial assistant. In 1953 Kathryn Yowell became managing editor and served until 1958. Maurine Paul served during the year 1958-1959. From 1959 to 1963 Kathleen Ryan filled the post, followed in 1963 by Marvin Leyerle.<sup>83</sup> The last two gave part of their time to the public relations department. All

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<sup>81</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule IV, p. 5; The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1957, p. 16.

<sup>82</sup>The journal and its editors will be dealt with more fully in Chapter VIII.

<sup>83</sup>From Tables of Contents of The Oklahoma Teacher, 1945 to 1965.



of the editors, in their capacities as salesmen of advertising, were responsible for the exhibits at the state conventions.<sup>84</sup>

Important technical personnel were added to the staff as its special needs increased. The Association contracted with an outside company to print the journal. But the activities of the organization generated a flood of other printed materials, newsletters, bulletins, reports, etc., not to mention all of the OEA's stationery and office forms, which justified the purchase of a press and the employment of a full-time printer. This person also operated a mail-addressing machine which was capable of rapidly dispatching the journal and other materials to the vast membership. The individual printing plates used in this device, one for each member, were kept current--and even categorized, e. g., Board of Directors, unit presidents, classroom teachers, etc.--by a mailing clerk. By 1965 the total printing and mailing operation required additional part-time help of a third person.<sup>85</sup>

Members of the secretarial pool, like the professional staff, were given individual assignments, but could join together as required for special projects. The administrative secretary interviewed and recommended these persons and coordinated their work. Because the OEA Headquarters was to a great extent a communication center, a central switchboard was established to handle the steady flow of calls coming in from all over the state. The switchboard operator served also as receptionist and, in the style of the staff which permitted never an idle moment,

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<sup>84</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule IV, p. 10; interview with Sally Burke, Oklahoma City, January 27, 1969.

<sup>85</sup>Interview with Floyd Edens, Oklahoma City, June 10, 1968. Edens conducted the author on a tour of the press room, explaining the operation and demonstrating the use of the equipment.

performed other typing and clerical chores. Each staff member had his own secretary who sometimes, after years of performing the same duties, became expert in a special area. Preparation for the convention, the annual workshop, Board meetings, and other events required that individuals shift from their routine duties to the peculiar needs of the occasion.<sup>86</sup>

The OEA staff, like the teachers it served, was overworked and underpaid. The difficulty of filling some positions or keeping them occupied testifies to this condition. Ironically, the responsibility essentially rested upon the members of the Association, who, though fighting for their own higher pay against a public unwilling to meet their demands, were unaware of staff needs or averse to permitting headquarters personnel to rise above the teacher in the field. Staff members were prone to blame the executive secretary for their distress.<sup>87</sup> But that official was limited by the elected representatives of the membership, the Executive Committee, which could propose a salary schedule, and the Board of Directors, who must approve the budget. To defend their recommendations the Executive Committee cited national averages in state associations and pointed to comparable positions in the State Department of Education.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, there was never a groundswell for increasing appropriations for the central office, and suggestions that membership

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<sup>86</sup>Interview with Mrs. Laucylle Hines, administrative secretary of the OEA, Oklahoma City, June 10, 1968.

<sup>87</sup>This position was expressed moderately by three staff members, two being no longer with the OEA. No useful purpose would be served by revealing their names.

<sup>88</sup>Executive Committee, February 1, 1963; Phillips interview no. 2; Carr interview. Carr was chairman of the committee to study staff salaries during the 1960's.

dues be raised were met by unyielding resistance.

"The House That Teachers Built"

One of the most significant advances the OEA made in the postwar period was the acquisition of a headquarters building in 1950. It gave educators tangible symbol of their organization as well as a practical facility for conducting their collective business. It provided housing for the growing staff and its many activities, and from the time of the first meeting of the Board of Directors in its own "Board Room," January 20, 1951, hardly a day passed without a meeting of some sort by the many committees and groups in the OEA in the variety of conference rooms the building afforded. A glow of pride permeated the Association as it took possession of "The House That Teachers Built."<sup>89</sup>

A central headquarters had been an OEA dream for many years. The Executive Committee discussed the possibility in its first postwar meeting in September, 1945.<sup>90</sup> The Board of Directors, in its own first meeting a few weeks later, authorized the Committee to proceed to "promote the purchase of a building." Each successive president thereafter appointed, or reappointed, a committee to carry out this directive, but no progress could be made until a financial base was provided. Until the increase of membership dues in 1958 the only money available was in a building fund, totalling only \$6,000 in 1947, accumulated from life membership fees and from donations, and with the Association assessing members in 1948 to finance a research and publicity campaign,

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<sup>89</sup>"The House That Teachers Built," The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1955, p. 16.

<sup>90</sup>Executive Committee, September 29, 1945.

contributions to other causes were discouraged.<sup>91</sup>

With a higher income assured as a result of increased dues, the Executive Committee began to search in earnest for a building and asked the Board for specific authority to incur indebtedness for the purchase.<sup>92</sup> Its most serious negotiation was for an historic mansion, the Fisher Ames home, near downtown Oklahoma City,<sup>93</sup> but this effort was thwarted by the City Zoning Commission.<sup>94</sup> President William D. Carr, who took office July 1, 1949, recommended that, instead of trying to remodel an old structure, a site be purchased near the state capitol and a new building be erected there. Through the efforts of the president, executive secretary, and Associate Secretary Howell, all of whom contributed to locating the site, gaining a zoning permit, and completing the transaction, a lot only two blocks from the capitol was purchased for \$10,000.<sup>95</sup>

The planning, financing, and construction of the OEA Building was carried out largely under the joint supervision of President Carr and Secretary Phillips, with the approval of the Executive Committee at each phase of the development.<sup>96</sup> They engaged the architectural firm of Costen, Frankfurt, and Short, who were interested not only in their normal fee but also in renting space in the new structure. Carr, who was

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<sup>91</sup>Executive Committee, February 11, 1948.

<sup>92</sup>Executive Committee, November 12, 1948.

<sup>93</sup>Executive Committee, January 7, 1949.

<sup>94</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1959.

<sup>95</sup>Executive Committee, October 12, 1949.

<sup>96</sup>Phillips interview no. 1; Carr interview; Executive Committee minutes throughout the year.

on the board of the North American Insurance Company, procured a loan from that company of \$120,000 for twenty years at four percent interest. North American was interested in future insurance business from schools and teachers, and its representative stated to the Executive Committee that the company "would not look with favor upon insurance contracts with other companies." At the same meeting bids for construction were opened, and a contract was granted to the Charles M. Dunning Construction Company for \$149,429.<sup>97</sup>

Carr and Phillips secured a construction loan from the Liberty National Bank of Oklahoma City in the amount of \$120,000 at four percent. The First National Bank, where the OEA had for several years kept its account, had asked five percent. Liberty National required that the North American commitment be assigned to them as security and that the OEA account be transferred to their bank. The Executive Committee approved these arrangements, and, voting its full confidence in their two leaders, authorized Carr to continue supervision of construction until it was completed, even though his term as president was soon ending, and gave him and Phillips authority to make minor adjustments without consulting the full Committee.<sup>98</sup>

The OEA Building was completed and accepted January 1, 1951. The next few years saw Phillips's business genius rise to its peak as he managed to pay off the twenty-year debt in less than five years. At the end of the fiscal year in June, 1951, he recommended that the existing

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<sup>97</sup> Executive Committee, April 30, 1950.

<sup>98</sup> Executive Committee, May 22, 1950. The construction loan was required to pay the contractor immediately. The long-term loan from North American repaid the bank, leaving the OEA obligated for only the latter.

surplus of \$28,000 be applied to the loan.<sup>99</sup> An audit report in August revealed that an additional \$10,000 could be paid.<sup>100</sup> This process was repeated with regularity until the final payment in August, 1955.<sup>101</sup> The speedy liquidation of the obligation saved the OEA \$38,070 in interest.<sup>102</sup>

Several factors contributed to this fiscal feat: Membership dues had been raised, providing for an expanding budget, and Phillips held down other costs by concentrating on building payments. He and other leaders successfully campaigned for greater membership, adding to the revenue. Journal advertising and convention exhibits were increased.<sup>103</sup> And the building itself provided an annual rental of \$8,000.<sup>104</sup> Although opposed by President Carr and a committee set up to plan the furnishing of the new center, Phillips postponed or kept down these costs by moving old furniture from the downtown office, and by procuring items at cost, or less, from the state penitentiary.<sup>105</sup>

The building was expanded by nearly 10,000 square feet at a cost of \$160,000 in 1959. At the same time the old structure was remodeled and

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<sup>99</sup>Executive Committee, June 1, 1951.

<sup>100</sup>Executive Committee, August 20, 1951.

<sup>101</sup>Executive Committee, August 16, 1955.

<sup>102</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1955, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup>Phillips interview no. 3.

<sup>104</sup>Board of Directors, January 20, 1951.

<sup>105</sup>Carr interview; Phillips interviews no. 1 and no. 3. Phillips's own desk at OEA Headquarters is the only large item of prison-made furniture remaining in use. It is a beautiful and strong piece of furniture.

redecorated.<sup>106</sup> This time no loan was necessary, the construction payments coming from the annual budget surplus.<sup>107</sup> The extension of the building had been encouraged by the architects, who on the one hand helped plan it and promised to continue renting the upper floor, and on the other threatened to move out if additional space were not provided.<sup>108</sup> By this time Phillips was ready to purchase new furniture, without hesitation for the entire building.<sup>109</sup>

In 1964 the Association purchased the twenty-one unit Madison Apartments, which adjoined OEA Headquarters, for \$139,401.<sup>110</sup> It was agreed among the leadership that such a move was necessary to protect the original property, to provide for future expansion being urged both from within the Association and by its renters, and to make way for parking space already in acutely short supply. In the meantime, until these developments took place, the apartments paid the Association a monthly profit of \$250.<sup>111</sup>

The OEA in 1965 was worth over three-fourths of a million dollars. Its assets in 1945 had totalled \$20,555. Ten years later in 1955 they were up to \$267,398, by 1960 to \$491,442, and as of June 30, 1965, were worth \$773,692. Most of this was in real estate, but other large items

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<sup>106</sup> Executive Committee, August 11, 1959.

<sup>107</sup> Executive Committee, March 25, 1960.

<sup>108</sup> Executive Committee, April 29, 1960.

<sup>109</sup> Executive Committee, February 24, 1961.

<sup>110</sup> Executive Committee, February 7, 1964.

<sup>111</sup> Executive Committee, November 12, 1965.

were furniture and equipment and a fleet of six automobiles.<sup>112</sup>

While not included in the OEA's assets, the Association was the parent organization of two corporations which became big businesses in the 1960's, the Kate Frank Manor, a retirement home for teachers, and the OEA Credit Union. The ninety-six apartment manor was built in Muskogee in 1963-1964 at a cost of approximately \$1,250,000.<sup>113</sup> It was organized and operated under the Oklahoma Residence Corporation, whose governing board was the OEA Board of Directors, though the corporation and its assets were separate from the Association.<sup>114</sup> The Credit Union was valued at \$50,000 in 1961, its first full year of operation. Its assets doubled each year through 1964, and at the end of June, 1965, amounted to \$645,000. This agency was also incorporated apart from the OEA.<sup>115</sup>

The growth of physical assets and staff of the OEA had been based upon a steadily increasing budget. The budget for the year 1944-45 was \$28,800. In 1949-1950 it was \$130,000; in 1954-55, \$165,000; in 1959-1960, \$255,000; and for the fiscal year 1964-1965 it was \$345,000. The principal income was from membership dues, which grew from approximately \$28,000 in 1945 to over \$200,000 in 1965.<sup>116</sup> Membership fees had been increased from two dollars per year in 1945 to a graduated system that found most members paying ten dollars per year in 1965.

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<sup>112</sup>OEA Audit reports in OEA office.

<sup>113</sup>Board of Directors, November 10, 1962; The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1963, p. 25.

<sup>114</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 33.

<sup>115</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 32; White interview. The credit union later purchased property adjacent to the OEA.

<sup>116</sup>Board of Directors. Each year's budget is part of the minutes.



The OEA headquarters and staff had grown rapidly in the twenty postwar years, but both were still inadequate to the needs of 1965. The Board had outgrown its meeting room, and the staff was looking longingly at the needed space upstairs, rented by an architectural firm. At no time during the period had there been sufficient manpower to meet the demands upon the staff, and niggardly salaries continued to discourage those on the job. Out of the crisis year of 1964-1965 came much discussion of further needs and solid proposals to expand the budget to meet them. These questions, including higher dues for members, were being debated by the directors in their last meeting of 1965.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>Board of Directors, November 13, 1965.

## CHAPTER VII

### GOALS AND PLANNING

Throughout the postwar period the members of the OEA spent much time studying and discussing their constitutionally stated purpose of promoting the educational interests of the people and the welfare of teachers. They sought to improve their competence and to establish conditions for rendering superior service. They were inspired and guided by a dream of full professional status in the future, while they grappled with the tactics of reaching more limited objectives that were steps toward the higher goal. The prevailing philosophy of education, indeed, their professional code of ethics, dictated that they strive to serve all the children of all the people. How this was to be accomplished was the subject of endless discussion among educators, of a continuing dialog between leaders and members of the Association, of deliberation at numerous conferences and workshops, of convention programs, and of journal articles.

Oklahoma teachers were not alone in this quest for direction, as the whole nation debated the purposes and processes of education. Nor did the problems become simpler as changing conditions raised new questions and complicated old ones. The schools were expected to meet the challenges of a new era of international involvement, of technological revolution, of population explosion, and of unprecedented social change. Industry, business, and government looked to the schools to provide an increasing flow of trained manpower, and parents expected schools to

prepare their sons and daughters to share more fully in the growing prosperity. The educational system approached a position of monopoly over the avenues of both social and individual progress, as students attended school in greater numbers, remained longer, and expected more of their education than ever before. The great expectations of education, combined with the inability of schools to meet these demands in the quantity, quality, and promptitude desired, generated a noisy debate among the American people, constructive to the extent that contending elements sought improvement of the situation, but sometimes deleterious as some sought to name scapegoats or to shift or postpone responsibility.

In this stormy atmosphere the teachers of Oklahoma undertook to agree upon their long-range goals while fighting more immediate battles. The two efforts seemed unrelated at times, and the stresses of the latter often led detractors to charge educators with lack of vision. But, just as teachers habitually accepted students as they found them without being blind to the potential of each, they struggled with general conditions in education as they existed without losing sight of the ideal which might some day be attained.

#### An Emerging Profession

Leaders of the OEA spoke frequently of the need to advance teaching to the level of an accepted profession. Phillips, writing in 1955 in support of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), said the teachers of America are "desperately trying to make a profession of teaching."<sup>1</sup> President Gladys McDonald, in her first message to the membership in 1953, described teaching as a "maturing

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<sup>1</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1955, p. 15.

profession."<sup>2</sup> The theme of the 1952 OEA-NEA Leadership Workshop had been "The Emerging Profession," and President Clarence L. Davis observed that the OEA was moving beyond its "adolescence," though was not yet mature.<sup>3</sup> Nearly all thoughtful leaders conceded this lack of maturity while espousing professionalism as an ideal.

Measured against the classic concept of professionalism, the teaching occupation in Oklahoma, and across the nation, had far to go.<sup>4</sup> It certainly could not be compared with the great "learned professions" of medicine and law, or those based upon long-established intellectual disciplines. Indeed, there was much conjecture among social scientists as to whether a vocation whose "client" was "society" could ever be looked upon as more than a marginal profession.<sup>5</sup> Still, teaching bore many characteristics of more pretigious callings, and teachers exhibited a quality of professionalism when they consistently aspired to self-improvement. While numerous forces kept the status of teaching low, many individual teachers and schools rose to a level of competent service comparable to the performance of other vocations claiming professional standing. Convinced that the chief handicap to professional growth was limited financial returns, teachers looked to their

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<sup>2</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1953, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1952, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Talcott Parsons, "Professions," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, (1968), XII, 536-46. Parsons lists the "core criteria" of a profession as (1) formal technical training accompanied by a mode of validating adequacy of training and competence of its practioners, (2) mastery of the field, which is intellectual in nature, and of skill in its use, and (3) institutional means of making certain that such competence is put to socially responsible use. He recognizes as a profession only that teaching involved along with research in the "pure" intellectual disciplines.

<sup>5</sup>Blanche Geer, "Teaching," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, (1968), XV, 560-65.

associations to help them gain the requisite resources. They also looked to the leaders of their organizations to help them define the goals they sought.

The literature of education is replete with definitions of professionalism and authoritative estimates of progress toward this status. T. M. Stinnett, as executive secretary of the National Council for Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS), listed the characteristics of a profession as (1) involving activities essentially intellectual, (2) commanding a body of specialized knowledge, (3) requiring extended professional preparation, (4) demanding continuous in-service growth, (5) affording a life career and permanent membership, (6) establishing its own standards, (7) exalting service above personal gain, and (8) maintaining a strong, closely knit professional organization.<sup>6</sup> The NEA Educational Policies Commission named six criteria of professionalism: A profession (1) is based upon a body of specialized knowledge, (2) seeks competence in its membership, (3) serves the needs of its members, (4) has ethical standards, (5) influences public policy in its field, and (6) has group solidarity.<sup>7</sup>

Both of these sources agreed that the education profession did not measure up to all of the listed criteria, but exemplified most of them without being opposed to any of them. Stinnett estimated that the status of teaching in 1955 compared with that of the medical profession in 1910, but was making progress slowly. He noted that a public profession cannot advance as rapidly as a private one, because it must have public

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<sup>6</sup>T. M. Stinnett, The Teacher and Professional Organizations, 3d ed. (Washington, D. C., 1956), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>NEA, Educational Policies Commission, Professional Organizations in American Education (Washington, D. C., 1957), p. 9.

sanction for the realization of each step forward.<sup>8</sup> James M. Hughes, expanding upon this limitation a decade later, gave it as an imperative reason for professional solidarity in a cohesive organization.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, Theodore Martin, in his Building a Teaching Profession, expressed doubt that "we have yet a fully developed teaching profession," and went on to say, "I feel that the primary purpose of a local, state, or national teachers' association is to build teaching into a fully developed, universally recognized profession."<sup>10</sup>

The OEA reflected clearly the plight of a public profession, as it concentrated most assiduously upon organizational unity and the influencing of public policy. The achievement of other professional qualities was largely dependent upon success in these two areas. Through NCATE and TEPS the Association pressed for higher standards of teacher education and certification. Through its commissions on ethics and professional relations it improved the behavior of teachers and provided a measure of security for its members. It offered a growing array of material benefits developed by its Welfare Commission, but only through legislation could it gain financial remuneration commensurate with professional services. As long as the public was willing to accept sub-standard teachers and poor schools, progress toward professionalism was often purchased at a sacrifice too great for even the most dedicated. This penalty suffered by teachers impelled them to rally and demand conditions for the higher quality service they were able to provide and

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<sup>8</sup>Stinett, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>James M. Hughes, Education in America, 2d ed. (New York, 1965), p. 82.

<sup>10</sup>Theodore D. Martin, Building a Teaching Profession: A Century of Progress, 1857-1957 (Middletown, N. Y., 1957), p. vi.

salaries they felt they had earned.

Statements by leaders of the profession periodically reminded OEA members of the goals of professionalism and spelled out the steps to be taken to move toward these goals. These pronouncements, depending upon the position of the spokesman, ranged from appeals to lofty idealism, to concrete suggestions as to what to do next. Journal articles by teachers and professors and resolutions by the classroom teachers' organization tended to be general and long range, and concerned with those goals dealing with improvement of instruction or of instructors.<sup>11</sup> The words of Executive Secretary Phillips, on the other hand, were more often than not calls for specific and immediate action in the areas of group solidarity and public policy. The messages of the presidents, published regularly in The Oklahoma Teacher, usually struck a balance between these positions and probably came closer to reflecting the thinking of the membership which elected them.

The first four postwar presidents were preoccupied with their legislative struggles and the passage of the Better Schools Amendments, with the result that the burden of their messages was for unity in the face of adversity.<sup>12</sup> William D. Carr (1949-1950), serving in a non-legislative year, emphasized the purposes of the Association to seek improvement of teacher welfare and of services, and wrote, "We must stay united, work together, and grow professionally."<sup>13</sup> Garland Godfrey (1950-1951), though facing an election and a legislative session, chose

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<sup>11</sup>Journal articles and contributors will be discussed in Chapter VIII. Goals of the classroom teachers were dealt with in Chapter V.

<sup>12</sup>Supra, Chapters II, III.

<sup>13</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1949, p. 13.

to concentrate upon nonpolitical aspects of the coming year. Stating that the "purpose of a professional organization is to upgrade the profession," he discussed the role of the currently scheduled workshops in pursuit of that purpose. To be considered were: a code of ethics, teacher education, certification, continuing contracts, retirement, and unified dues as a means of strengthening and unifying the profession.<sup>14</sup>

Inez Gingerich (1951-1952) stressed the improvement of services and participation in the organization as a mark of being "truly professional." She praised the workshops as a means of involving teachers in the processes of developing policy.<sup>15</sup> She was the first of a series of women presidents who were to serve in alternate years thereafter. Their terms fell between legislative sessions, with the result that the women's messages were consistently less political than those of the men. Clarence L. Davis (1952-1953) was an exception to this generalization, as he devoted his statement to improvement of teacher preparation and to strengthening the "emerging profession" through organization.<sup>16</sup> Gladys McDonald (1953-1954) suggested that to become a mature profession "we must set our standards higher." Noting that it was a non-legislative year, she asked that the opportunity be used for long-range planning, with the involvement of every teacher.<sup>17</sup>

The first message of Farris E. Willingham (1954-1955) was bluntly practical, as he defined the current situation and demanded action. He eschewed theory and described the condition of schools in Oklahoma:

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<sup>14</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1950, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1951, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1952, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1953, p. 17.



increased enrollments, teacher shortage, antiquated buildings, and low salaries. His charge to the Association: stick together and fight.<sup>18</sup> The following year Mrs. Floy Cobb (1955-1956) spoke gently as she reviewed the accomplishments of the OEA through the years and praised the staff and other leaders for their good work.<sup>19</sup> J. Win Payne (1956-1957) returned to the legislative struggle as his major concern, spelling out with quantitative exactness the financial situation in Oklahoma education and decrying the political climate that persistently promised "no new taxes." He called upon the profession to improve itself, to improve the school curricula, and to lead the public. He said, "Lay citizens are not well enough informed to demand reforms in education." This was a task for "educational leadership of the highest caliber."<sup>20</sup> Payne, with a national reputation as an educational statesman, had completed a thorough study of Oklahoma school finance,<sup>21</sup> and presented his own legislative program to the Association, boldly asking for teacher salaries substantially higher than those being requested by the OEA.<sup>22</sup>

Edna Donley (1957-1958), herself the personification of professionalism,<sup>23</sup> devoted her annual message to the need for professional growth. She made the expected appeal to unity, but she defined the unity she wanted as "that professional spirit that binds our members

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<sup>18</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1954, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1955, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1956, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup>Payne's doctoral dissertation at the University of California at Berkeley was a continuation of his study of Oklahoma school finance.

<sup>22</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1956, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>Miss Donley was later elected National Teacher of the Year.

together." She reviewed the characteristics of a professional organization, emphasizing its control over the competence and the conduct of its members.<sup>24</sup> As president she made unity her major effort, as she encouraged broad participation and undertook to bring various groups of the OEA together.<sup>25</sup> Rector Johnson (1958-1959) reacted to the spasms engendered by Sputnik with what he called a "message of faith." Praising Oklahoma teachers for their unequalled record of acquiring degrees, he thought they should welcome the new public interest in schools and the reappraisals being made of education. He cautioned against over-emphasis of science in the curriculum, but said teachers should lead the efforts to improve the offerings of the schools.<sup>26</sup> Continuing the response to the advent of the Space Age, Estelle Faulconer (1959-1960) entitled her message, "Quality Education is a Must," and summarized the accelerating movements toward improved teaching, with emphasis upon the responsibility of the instructor for his own preparation.<sup>27</sup>

George M. Roberts (1960-1961) led the OEA into the 1960's with a soothing essay on "happiness as the key to successful teaching."<sup>28</sup> Descygne Shubert (1961-1962) picked up the theme of better education under the title "Teaching for Tomorrow."<sup>29</sup> On the eve of the election of Governor Henry Bellmon, President Gilbert Robinson (1962-1963)

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<sup>24</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1957, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Donley interview.

<sup>26</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1958, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1959, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1960, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1961, p. 6.

declared that Oklahoma schools were "facing the most trying period regarding state finance that we have known since Depression days." Again, he asked for unity and a major effort to "get our message across to the public."<sup>30</sup> A year later, after the governor had vetoed the OEA-sponsored state aid bill, Juanita Kidd (1963-1964) cited the NEA theme for the year, "A Great Profession--Ours by Choice," told the teachers that good work could be accomplished only by people dedicated to "big goals," and repeated the annual call for professional solidarity.<sup>31</sup> By the fall of 1964 the OEA had returned to the crisis atmosphere of the 1940's, and the immediate battle to pass school legislation at the polls was the central concern of the Association. The message of President Raymond W. Knight (1964-1965), while reviewing the accomplishments of the organization since 1889, and hoping the seventy-fifth anniversary of the OEA would be a "year of vision," was devoted primarily to getting out the vote and winning the election.<sup>32</sup>

These messages of the presidents sounded the keynote for professional progress and at the same time revealed the disparity between aspiration and actuality. The leaders of the profession could envision what should be. Their challenge, and therefore a test of their own professionalism, was to help the members of the teaching ranks to move toward the status of a fully recognized profession. By the middle sixties the teachers of Oklahoma showed evidence of a growing commitment to this ideal, though aware of their collective limitations.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1962, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1963, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1964, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup>Miller, pp. 125, 134.

## The OEA Workshops

One of the most important factors contributing to growing professional commitment was the participation of Oklahoma teachers in a series of annual conferences, or workshops, designed to involve all OEA members in the processes of formulating policies and planning the program of the Association. The adopted term "workshop" denoted that the participants played an active role in the proceedings, rather than being merely recipients of pronouncements from the leaders. Two types of workshops developed, one for the elected leaders, who convened from all over the state at the beginning of the school year, the other for members, who met locally in what became known familiarly as "one-day workshops."

Broader involvement of the membership had been a growing concern of officers for some time before the inauguration of the workshop movement in 1948. It was once thought that the annual convention, augmented by district meetings, was an adequate vehicle for vertical communication within the Association. The 1945 Constitution had been expected to improve the situation, as all members were given a voice in the selection of the Board of Directors, and theoretically could make their contributions through these representatives. The OEA field service provided by the staff was considered a vital line of communication between the ranks and headquarters. Special meetings were sometimes called to deal with limited projects, such as petition campaigns. And in 1947 the Board circulated a questionnaire in an effort to gauge the thinking of the members.<sup>34</sup>

The first OEA-NEA Leadership Workshop met in September, 1948, at

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<sup>34</sup>Board of Directors, November 15, 1947.

the Okmulgee branch of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. The NEA provided speakers and consultants and agreed to pay half the cost of the event up to \$2,500. With this opportunity, which came too late in the year to be submitted to the Board, the Executive Committee transferred items within the budget, which had been substantially increased by higher dues, and proceeded to call the meeting.<sup>35</sup> In subsequent years the Association scheduled the affair for August, enabling teachers to attend without neglecting their classes--either as instructors or as summer students--and providing newly-elected leaders with timely orientation for the coming year. With the NEA continuing to pay half the cost, the OEA made the workshop a regular budget item, starting at \$5,000 for 1949, adjusting to actual expenditures of about \$3,000 in 1950, then moving up consistently to \$7,000 in 1961, where it remained through 1965.<sup>36</sup>

The only housing readily available for this type of meeting in 1948 was some war-surplus military buildings at the Okmulgee campus. More inviting and centrally accessible quarters were procured at other institutions in later years: Oklahoma Baptist University at Shawnee in 1949, Central State College at Edmond in 1950, Tulsa University in 1951 and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater in 1952. This last site became the perennial favorite, and, with the exception of two years, one at the Oklahoma College for Women at Chickasha and one at the University of Oklahoma at Norman, it hosted the workshop every year through 1965.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Executive Committee, September 19, 1948.

<sup>36</sup>Board of Directors.

<sup>37</sup>Executive Committee.

The first statewide workshop established a pattern of attendance and procedure that was followed, almost without deviation, in ensuing years. Specific invitations were sent to those leaders for whom the program was primarily designed, members of the Board of Directors, local unit officers, and county superintendents. A general invitation was extended to the membership, though without fanfare or publicity, as it was intended that the gathering be kept at a manageable size. Approximately 500 people attended the first meeting; this number stayed fairly constant through the years, the main participants normally remaining through the entire three-day schedule, while others typically dropped in for a day or a portion of a day. Attendance by the leaders was encouraged by providing them with low-cost lodging, in conveniently located dormitories, and paying most of their other expenses--in cash, at the close of the final day.<sup>38</sup>

The daily schedule of the conference included general sessions, small-group discussions, and generous intervals for informal exchanges and visitation. Main speakers at the general meetings included NEA staff members, who also served as consultants, OEA staff and officers, other educators from around the state and nation, and political leaders, particularly legislators. Approximately half the time was spent in small groups of about twenty members, assigned at random to provide a heterogeneous mixture as to position and home community. In these "buzz sessions" the delegates discussed questions of their choice from the agenda and recorded their conclusions and recommendations. These

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<sup>38</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1948, p. 13; September, 1949, p. 16; and other reports published annually in the journal. Also, the author attended, as an official "expense-authorized" participant or as an interested observer, all the workshops from 1957 through 1964.

discussions tended to carry over into unnumbered private conversations, as delegates engaged in the workshop activity many of them valued most, meeting informally with other educators, both old acquaintances and new.

Agenda for the workshops normally included, in about equal portions, three broad categories of topics: improving instruction, strengthening the professional organizations, and the legislative program. The 1948 meeting was typical. It dealt with strengthening local organizations, public relations, teacher welfare, teacher selection (standards and preparation), and the 1949 legislative goals.<sup>39</sup> The 1949 workshop included professional organizations at three levels, local, state and national, professional growth, a code of ethics, and legislation.<sup>40</sup> Special problems that arose within the Association from time to time tended to become agenda items: In 1954 the workshop discussed written personnel policies.<sup>41</sup> In 1957 the location of the state convention aroused special attention.<sup>42</sup> The 1960 agenda included the teacher retirement residence then being considered, along with such standard topics as teacher welfare, curriculum improvement, and legislation.<sup>43</sup> The Executive Committee geared the 1964 workshop to the initiative petition election scheduled for November.<sup>44</sup>

The OEA used the workshop reports to assess the thinking of the

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<sup>39</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1948, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1949, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1954, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup>Executive Committee, October 23, 1957.

<sup>43</sup>Executive Committee, June 3, 1960.

<sup>44</sup>Executive Committee, May 23, 1964.

membership and to plan future programs, particularly legislative proposals. The first two meetings were not fully reported in The Oklahoma Teacher, suggesting that the leadership viewed them as experimental exercises that might not last. In 1950, however, the journal included a complete summary of the workshop findings for that year. This became a regular practice, providing another link in the intra-associational communication.<sup>45</sup>

With the leadership workshop established, the Association organized one-day meetings for the autumn of 1950. They had been discussed for two years, and an experimental meeting had been conducted in Wagoner County under the close supervision of Phillips.<sup>46</sup> Plans approved by the Board, now meeting regularly at the statewide workshop in August, provided for thirty-seven meetings around the state during September and October. Counties and city systems were grouped to provide gatherings of about 500 in each workshop. Local superintendents served as directors, providing facilities and engaging discussion leaders. The OEA officers and staff prepared and printed agenda, delivered introductory speeches, and served as consultants. The pattern of the state meeting was followed, with an opening session at 9:00 o'clock, small-group discussions before and after the lunch hour, and a second general assembly which ended at about the regular school-closing hour of 4:00 o'clock.<sup>47</sup> These meetings of 1950 became the model to be followed for years to come.

Attendance was good and interest high at the initial one-day

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<sup>45</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1950, p. 8, and in subsequent issues through 1965.

<sup>46</sup>Phillips interview no. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Board of Directors, August 20, 1950.



workshops. Although participants received no reimbursement, contrary to the case at the state level, the new school code of 1949 had provided that public school teachers could count five days of professional meetings, including the local workshop, as part of the minimum number of school days for which they were paid.<sup>48</sup> Some teachers suggested that the meetings be scheduled later in the year to avoid interfering with the opening of school, but the Executive Committee directed in 1951 that they follow immediately the state leadership workshop, causing them to take place during the last week of August.<sup>49</sup> This established a pattern adhered to with few exceptions for fifteen years, as teachers came to expect the one-day workshop as part of the pre-enrollment period. Only in 1955 were the meetings not held, when the Board elected that year to call them only during legislative years.<sup>50</sup> The governing body reversed itself two years later.<sup>51</sup> As part of the campaign to pass its petition measures in 1964, the Association organized "schools of instruction" to take the place of the workshops that year.<sup>52</sup> The era of the one-day workshop was apparently ending in 1965 when the Board decided to leave them to local units to convene as each saw fit.<sup>53</sup>

The agenda for the one-day workshops, like those for the state meeting, provided for discussion of instructional improvement,

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<sup>48</sup>State Board of Education, School Laws of Oklahoma, 1968 (Oklahoma City, 1968), p. 18.

<sup>49</sup>Executive Committee, January 19, 1951.

<sup>50</sup>Board of Directors, March 10, 1955.

<sup>51</sup>Board of Directors, March 2, 1957.

<sup>52</sup>Board of Directors, March 14, 1964.

<sup>53</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1965. A. L. Bondurant said, "We talked about the same things for twenty years and just got tired."

professional growth, and the legislative program. Two-way communication occurred as the state leadership presented its program to the teachers, and the discussants in turn registered their own reactions and initiated new proposals. Reports of discussion groups were compiled and analyzed and used by such groups as the Legislative Committee. Published in The Oklahoma Teacher, they informed teachers of the viewpoints of others and provided the basis for further study and discussion. Most teachers agreed that the workshops were valuable and that they dealt with the truly important issues facing the profession.<sup>54</sup> Many OEA leaders during the period considered the workshop development to be the most significant accomplishment of the Association.<sup>55</sup>

#### The Educational Policies Commission

OEA leaders often expressed the need for more effective long-range planning, something more concrete than the classical textbook goals of education and the ideals of professionalism, but pointing beyond the next year's legislative objectives. Several presidents of the 1940's had voiced this need, and at least one serious committee effort was made during this period.<sup>56</sup> A questionnaire circulated by this committee revealed that the teachers at that time were more interested in immediate problems than in long-term solutions.<sup>57</sup> A second planning committee

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<sup>54</sup>Miller, pp. 139, 145. This study found teachers approved the workshops by eighty percent in 1963.

<sup>55</sup>Interviews with several officers and members of the staff of OEA. All thought the workshops were important; several ranked them at the top of the list of OEA achievements.

<sup>56</sup>Board of Directors, November 15, 1947.

<sup>57</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1947, p. 6.

emerged from the suggestion by Research Director Pugmire that the Association needed to do more long-range planning based upon research, but it also failed to get beyond the current demands for legislative action.<sup>58</sup>

In the absence of its own effective planning agency, the OEA relied upon the NEA for comprehensive statements of objectives. As the war ended in 1945 the state Association was supporting the "Program of Action for the United Teaching Profession" adopted by the national organization in July that year.<sup>59</sup> Although this was called a five-year plan, it was replaced the following year by the "Victory Action Program," which was adopted by the OEA as its own program.<sup>60</sup> The first six of its twenty-one points dealt with strengthening professional organizations at every level and increasing their membership. Four items then called for upgrading of teachers. Next came calls for professional welfare and security, including salaries, retirement, tenure, sabbatical and sick leave, and reasonable class size and teaching load. The next two goals were for improved public relations and "efficient units of administration." The list closed with four general statements in favor of equal educational opportunity, adequate and equalized financing, "safe, healthful, and wholesome" communities, and "an effective United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization."<sup>61</sup>

Five years later the NEA, approaching its one hundredth anniversary, adopted a "Centennial Action Program," which was accepted by the OEA

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<sup>58</sup>Board of Directors, May 8, 1948.

<sup>59</sup>NEA Journal, November, 1945, p. 161.

<sup>60</sup>Executive Committee, November 11, 1946.

<sup>61</sup>NEA Journal, September, 1946, p. 304.

Board in November, 1951.<sup>62</sup> Its twenty goals included all of the previous program and added a few new ones. It asked for a Future Teachers chapter in every college. To the list of professional organizations to be supported and strengthened it added the World Council of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP). It called for more able local school boards, stronger state departments of education, and a more effective agency for education in the national government. Finally, it demanded greatly increased federal aid to education.<sup>63</sup> With the 1957 anniversary past, the national association adopted a new set of "Guiding Principles" in 1958. Repeating much from the earlier statements, its main addition was a greater emphasis upon teachers' rights.<sup>64</sup>

The OEA finally provided for its own long-range planning group with the establishment of the Educational Policies Committee in 1961. During the previous year Phillips had expressed the need for such a body,<sup>65</sup> and in January, 1961, the Executive Committee acted upon his proposal.<sup>66</sup> Under the chairmanship of Professor E. C. Hall, Dean of the Graduate School at Central State College, the new committee went to work without delay and was ready to deliver its first report to the Board of Directors in March. Hall said the committee would "formulate goals for all facets and all levels of education in Oklahoma," and would develop guidelines "to give a sense of direction" to public education in the state. It

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<sup>62</sup>Board of Directors, November 17, 1951.

<sup>63</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1951, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1958, p. 21.

<sup>65</sup>Executive Committee, September 23, 1960.

<sup>66</sup>Executive Committee, January 13, 1961.

mentioned several areas already under study.<sup>67</sup>

In 1962 the Board of Directors promoted the committee to the status of a commission.<sup>68</sup> Its responsibilities were to develop definite statements of purposes of education and to do long-term planning of goals and programs "based upon clear needs of education in the future." Its reports, when approved by the Board of Directors, were to become the official guidelines for all committees and commissions of the Association. As of 1965 the Educational Policies Commission consisted of twelve members, five from higher education, three public school classroom teachers, three public school administrators, and one curriculum director. Ex-officio, nonvoting consultants were the OEA president, president-elect, and executive secretary, and the state superintendent.<sup>69</sup> Edna Donley, OEA director of professional services, was the staff secretary and, in that capacity, wrote its reports.<sup>70</sup>

The Commission completed three reports by 1965. Each was incorporated into the minutes of the Board of Directors, published in The Oklahoma Teacher, and printed in pamphlet form for distribution to units, officers, and interested members. The first report, entitled "A Statement of Educational Policies," was approved by the Board in November, 1961. It was a general statement, described in its introduction as "an effort to bring into focus a program of education which it believes would lead to excellence." It undertook to state the purposes of

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<sup>67</sup>Board of Directors, March 25, 1961.

<sup>68</sup>Board of Directors, March 2, 1963.

<sup>69</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 23.

<sup>70</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1965; Donley interview; Phillips interview no. 3.

education and to outline the basic content of the school program. Declaring the need for improvement of teaching, it gave its most detailed treatment to professional development, discussing selection, education, and certification of teachers, teacher welfare, tenure, security, and discipline. The report dealt briefly with the organization, administration, and financing of education. It closed with an appeal to the profession to accept its role in the promotion of education, as individuals and as an association.<sup>71</sup>

The Commission's second report, "OEA Goals for the Sixties Through Professional Solidarity," was adopted in November, 1962. It listed ten specific goals, estimated the progress toward each, and suggested steps for their implementation. The Board approved all by a unanimous vote except Goal II, which passed by a majority. The goals, as listed in the report's table of contents, were:

Goal I. That all teacher training institutions in Oklahoma be accredited by NCATE.

Goal II. That five years of preparation for Oklahoma teachers be required; six years for administrators.

Goal III. That there be established and maintained programs for continued in-service growth for all members of the teaching profession.

Goal IV. That there be established a strong line of communication that will inform all segments of the public of the program of education in Oklahoma.

Goal V. That every local unit of the OEA shall be an active professional unit with 100% membership at the local, state, and national level.

Goal VI. That all members of the profession shall maintain professional and ethical conduct.

Goal VII. That there shall be established administrative units of sufficient size to insure an adequate education program for all Oklahoma youth.

Goal VIII. That there be established and maintained a financial pattern for Oklahoma schools that will insure quality education equal to that offered by the best systems in the nation.

Goal IX. That the state superintendent shall be appointed by

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<sup>71</sup>Board of Directors, November 18, 1961.

and responsible to an elective nonpartisan state board of education.

Goal X. That there shall be established adequate educational opportunity beyond the high school in both quantity and quality for all Oklahoma citizens.<sup>72</sup>

On March 7, 1965, the OEA voted to penalize the state for failure to provide adequate financing of schools. Before invoking these sanctions the Board approved the third statement to come from the Educational Policies Commission. Entitled "Crises of Education in the Sixties," it tersely reviewed the often-stated conditions the OEA had sought in the past and justified the action currently being taken by the Association. Reminding that "our chief concern is the child," it warned that "professional solidarity and understanding are imperative." Stating that education is an investment, the report deplored poor school financing and low salaries, saying, "For too long, teachers in Oklahoma have subsidized education."

Then the Commission introduced two new goals, never before sought officially by the OEA, though advanced by the NEA since 1962:<sup>73</sup> "professional negotiations," or the cooperative development of policy affecting all conditions under which teachers work, and "professional sanctions," penalties to be applied when negotiations have failed. The report closed with a summary statement:

We believe professional negotiations provide an ethical way to solve educational problems. When professional negotiations fail, we believe the imposition of professional sanctions is appropriate. We believe these instruments can be used effectively only through professional autonomy and professional solidarity.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Board of Directors, November 10, 1962.

<sup>73</sup>Supra, Chapter V.

<sup>74</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1965.

Hall, in presenting the report, observed that the profession moves forward in time of crisis. In this crisis of public policy in 1965, the OEA undertook to predicate its actions upon a strong reavowal of its dedication to professionalism.



## CHAPTER VIII

### PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Although the OEA was an active political pressure group, and to many presented an image of being limited to this seemingly selfish role, it spent far more time and energy in activities characteristic of a professional association. At every level--membership, leadership, staff--its programs were primarily directed toward improving the services of teachers to their students, and the Association to its teachers. To most members relations with the OEA meant reading The Oklahoma Teacher, attending meetings, workshops, and conventions, receiving a growing number of material benefits, and belonging to an organization dedicated to improving the profession.

#### Improvement of Instruction

The OEA undertook to improve the quality of teaching by following primarily four approaches. Through TEPS it pressed for higher standards of entrance into the profession. It conducted special conferences for in-service instruction of teachers in specific subject areas. Through its conventions it brought the subject-matter divisions together to discuss problems and improvements in their respective fields. And The Oklahoma Teacher devoted much of its content to articles and features aimed at improving instruction.

After the NEA established its Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS) in 1946, Oklahoma was the first state in

the nation to follow its example.<sup>1</sup> The Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Education and Certification was established in 1947<sup>2</sup>--later changing its name to TEPS to conform with the national organization--and immediately became the principal advisory body in this field to the State Board of Education. The latter, under state law, had exclusive authority in all matters pertaining to standards of qualification and certification of public school teachers,<sup>3</sup> but delegated this authority extensively to the TEPS Commission.<sup>4</sup> From its founding through 1965 no major recommendation made by TEPS was rejected by the State Board.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the area of teacher preparation and certification the professional advisory group virtually dictated the actions of the state agency. With legally sanctioned professional autonomy in this area a major goal of the OEA, a condition existed approaching de facto control of entry into the profession.

The TEPS Commission consisted of twenty-five members representing a cross section of educational leadership in the state. Nine of its members were from public schools, seven from colleges and universities. Others included the state superintendent of public instruction, the State Department of Education's director of teacher education, the chancellor of the State Regents for Higher Education, the OEA executive secretary, a representative from the Congress of Parents and Teachers,

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Harold Massey, Weatherford, June 13, 1969. Massey, Dean of the Graduate School at Southwestern State College, was a long-term member of TEPS and in 1969 chairman-elect of the organization.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, Chapter II.

<sup>3</sup>School Laws of Oklahoma, 1952, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>State Board of Education, Twenty-Sixth Report, 1956, p. 143.

<sup>5</sup>Massey interview.

and one from the School Boards Association. Three members came from the Oklahoma Council on Teacher Education, a body of about one hundred educators chosen to advise TEPS. The Commission was self-perpetuating in that it selected its own replacements. Appointments were for three years, and membership was distributed among institutions and sections of the state.<sup>6</sup>

The OEA gave unstinting support to TEPS, and the Commission reported its plans and progress regularly to the OEA Board. Most of its members were also OEA members--in fact, leaders of the Association in varying capacities--with the natural consequence that TEPS goals reflected those of the OEA. Association personnel attended regional and national meetings of the NEA TEPS and of NCATE and served as members of these councils.<sup>7</sup> The Oklahoma Teacher reported the activities of the Oklahoma Commission, editorialized in support of its purposes, and published articles related to the general goal of raising standards.

The results of the movement for professional standards in Oklahoma were impressive. Within its first year the State Board of Education abolished the "war emergency" certificates and established a sixty-hour minimum for temporary certificates.<sup>8</sup> In 1950 the Board discontinued the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.; State Department of Education, Teacher Education and Professional Standards Movement in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, 1963). This is an unpagged bulletin outlining the history, purposes, and progress of TEPS.

<sup>7</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1951, p. 39; September, 1952, p. 34; and subsequent issues reporting attendance and activities of these meetings. Ferman Phillips served a three-year term on NCATE. The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1956, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Supra, Chapter III.

issuance of life certificates, all future licensing being made subject to periodic review.<sup>9</sup> Beginning in 1956 the bachelor's degree became a requirement for a provisional (three-year nonrenewable) or a standard (five-year, renewable) certificate.<sup>10</sup> Qualifications for administrators and guidance counselors were similarly increased.

In 1957 State Superintendent Oliver Hodge announced that every teacher in Oklahoma had a degree, making the state the first in the nation to reach this level.<sup>11</sup> From that year through 1962 Oklahoma ranked first in the nation in the percentage of teachers holding the baccalaureate degree, and retained at least second place through 1965. In 1947, the year TEPS was established in Oklahoma, 73.56 percent of the state's teachers held degrees; in 1965 the percentage had reached 99.63. Thirty-seven percent of public school teachers in the state had master's degrees. Ninety-four percent were graduates of schools accredited by NCATE.<sup>12</sup>

If the teachers of Oklahoma could point with pride to these statistics, they could foresee even greater accomplishments in the goals being pursued by the Commission in 1965. The main one was to have every teacher complete a five-year preparation program for a standard certificate. Administrators and other specialized personnel were to be

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<sup>9</sup>State Board of Education, Twenty-Fourth Report, 1952, p. 163.

<sup>10</sup>State Board of Education, Twenty-Sixth Report, 1956, p. 143.

<sup>11</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1958, p. 28. Without reducing Oklahoma's rank in this area, the superintendent's own report that year revealed a slight exaggeration in this announcement. Fifty-five non-degree teachers taught in state schools not receiving state aid. State Board of Education, Twenty-Seventh Report, 1958, p. 148. This situation continued in certain affluent rural districts into the middle sixties.

<sup>12</sup>State Board of Education, Thirty-First Report, 1966, pp. 38-42.

similarly upgraded. NCATE schools were to provide this training, and the standards for teacher training institutions were being raised by NCATE. Finally, TEPS joined other leaders in seeking professional autonomy in all matters requiring professional expertise.<sup>13</sup>

Greater opportunity for in-service growth of teachers was a goal sought sporadically by the OEA through the forties and fifties. This characteristic service of professional organizations was frequently requested by Oklahoma teachers in their workshops and meetings. In 1945, just after the end of the war, the Association had encouraged local and county conferences called for the purpose of instructional improvement.<sup>14</sup> Recognition of a demand for this type of activity prompted the leaders to include instructional problems in the agendas of the workshops instituted in 1948. The Russian Sputnik of 1957 caused a new effort nationwide to raise the quality of education; within a year the OEA had joined the NEA in sponsoring a "Southwestern Regional Conference on Instruction" in Oklahoma City, with the theme "Focus on Quality Teaching."<sup>15</sup>

In 1960 the Association moved directly into the in-service improvement of teachers and teaching with the initiation of a series of instructional conferences. Edna Donley, OEA Director of Professional Services, organized and conducted five meetings in 1960-1961, three in English, two in science.<sup>16</sup> They proved so popular that requests for the following year exceeded the ability of the staff to respond. It was

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<sup>13</sup>TEPS Bulletin; Massey interview.

<sup>14</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1945, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup>Board of Directors, November 22, 1958.

<sup>16</sup>Executive Committee, January 13, 1961.

decided to concentrate upon English, with the help of the state Council of Teachers of English. Eleven conferences were held during 1961-1962 with 1,697 teachers participating.<sup>17</sup> In subsequent years the instructional conferences continued to be a major activity of the OEA, with Miss Donley planning and supervising them.<sup>18</sup>

In 1962 the Association established the Committee on Instruction, with the responsibility of advising with the staff on the instructional conferences.<sup>19</sup> Its duties soon grew to encompass all OEA programs related to instruction, and there was consideration of promoting it to the status of a commission.<sup>20</sup>

#### The OEA Convention

The most spectacular activity of the OEA, and to many members the highest of the school year, was the annual convention. This huge gathering, which brought together most of the state's educators each autumn, served several purposes. To most participants it provided both inspiration and information, as they met in general sessions to hear outstanding speakers and joined colleagues in smaller meetings to learn about new developments in their special fields. To some, particularly officers and staff, it was a demonstration of professional strength and unity, designed to inspire the membership, to impress the public, and to influence political leaders. It provided an opportunity for the Board to meet,

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<sup>17</sup>Board of Directors, March 17, 1962.

<sup>18</sup>Donley interview.

<sup>19</sup>Executive Committee, March 16, 1962.

<sup>20</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule I, p. 7. In 1967 it became the Commission on Instruction.

for committees to get together to attend to business, and for departments to hold what for some was their most important meeting of the year. Finally, in varying degrees, it was to most teachers a social and recreational occasion, a break in the year's occupation, when one could go to the city, renew friendships, and be entertained.

To the leadership and the staff the planning and preparation of the convention was one of the most demanding assignments of the year. Clyde M. Howell supervised the affair for over thirty years, until his death in 1952. Following his precedent, the associate secretary took primary responsibility for arrangements, assisted by a Convention Committee and other members of the staff. They engaged speakers and entertainment for general sessions, assisted departments and divisions with their programs, and allocated funds and supervised expenditures authorized in the budget. Because of the necessity of scheduling speakers and meeting places well in advance--sometimes as much as three years--the process of planning went on throughout the year.<sup>21</sup>

Money expended upon the convention came from two sources, an amount authorized in the budget, and income from fees paid by exhibitors. The budget allowance in 1946, for the first convention after the war, was \$3,000. Throughout the 1950's the amount remained fixed at \$8,000, and in the 1960's stood at \$9,000.<sup>22</sup> This allocation at the disposal of the Convention Committee was limited to the costs of speakers, entertainers, and expenses incidental to their procurement. Normally these expenditures did not exceed the budget authorization, but on certain occasions

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<sup>21</sup>Bondurant interview.

<sup>22</sup>Board of Directors.

the entertainment engaged was of such high price that admission fees were required to avoid a deficit. The most expensive example of this departure was the appearance of Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians in 1956 and again in 1958, each time at a cost of \$8,000, equal to the entire budget allowance.<sup>23</sup>

Income from exhibits was kept separate from other monies, and was used to defray costs of physical arrangements for the convention, such as auditorium rental, decorations, and police service. This operation produced a profit and was anticipated each year, along with journal advertising, as an important source of income for the Association. During the 1950's it averaged about \$12,000 per year; during the 1960's, \$16,000; and in 1964 it was \$21,000.<sup>24</sup> Because many of the exhibitors were also major advertisers in the journal, the managing editor took charge of this phase of the convention.

The time and place for the convention were nagging problems for the Association, complicated by rivalry between Oklahoma City and Tulsa for the honor--and the benefits--of hosting the event. For thirty years prior to 1949 the teachers had met during February, a date thought to have been chosen for its possible effect upon the legislature and perpetuated for that reason. During those years Oklahoma City had been the meeting site twenty-one times, Tulsa had served six times, one convention had been divided between the two cities, and during the war two had been called off.<sup>25</sup> The first two postwar conventions were held in Oklahoma City. The third, meeting in Tulsa, was virtually cancelled by bad

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<sup>23</sup>Board of Directors, November 10, 1956; November 22, 1958.

<sup>24</sup>Board of Directors.

<sup>25</sup>Neal, The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1960, p. 34.



weather, its attendance of less than 4,000 being the lowest since 1913. This near-disaster hastened the decision of the Board to change the annual date to autumn.<sup>26</sup> It also contributed to the ensuing year-by-year choice of the capital city as the site for the convention; not until 1964 did the teachers convene again in Tulsa.

Each year Tulsa invited the OEA to meet there, the invitation being voiced by the city's chamber of commerce, by its school administration, which was represented on the Executive Committee, or by the Tulsa District, supported by the Northeastern and Eastern Districts. Just as often, the Association declined, usually citing as the chief obstacle the absence of an adequate auditorium, exhibit space, and lodging for participants.<sup>27</sup> Another compelling reason was the loss of revenue from exhibits and journal advertising that would result from leaving Oklahoma City.<sup>28</sup> In 1956 the Northeastern District, including Tulsa at that time, proposed that the convention be split between the two major cities or be moved out of Oklahoma City.<sup>29</sup> The Executive Committee referred the question to the one-day workshops, out of which came a strong vote of approval of the course the OEA had been following. By a ratio of four to one, the members rejected the divided convention, and by two to one expressed their preference for Oklahoma City, though a weak majority was willing to meet in alternate years at Tulsa.<sup>30</sup> In 1964, upon completion of Tulsa's Civic Center, the Executive Committee consented to hold the

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<sup>26</sup>Board of Directors, May 8, 1948.

<sup>27</sup>Executive Committee, November 4, 1949; November 13, 1953.

<sup>28</sup>Executive Committee, April 19, 1957; September 20, 1963.

<sup>29</sup>Executive Committee, November 9, 1956.

<sup>30</sup>Executive Committee, October 23, 1957.

convention in that city.<sup>31</sup> As of 1965 the site question remained unsettled. The convention returned to the capital city in 1965, and the Executive Committee voted to keep it there for 1966 and 1967. This led the committeeman from Tulsa, a leader of that city's classroom teachers, who now dominated the District, to demand a study of the future of the convention, with particular reference to the possibility of sharing the event more equitably with his city.<sup>32</sup>

Though the time, place, and programs were the main concerns of the convention planners, they were challenged by other problems: Attendance on Friday conflicted with the traditional night for schools to play football. The Board of Directors recommended--to no avail--that games be postponed or eliminated on the last night of the convention.<sup>33</sup> Outstanding entertainment programs were offered on Friday nights, not only as a treat for deserving teachers but to encourage attendance. Another problem was housing in the early postwar years, when both transportation and hotel space were in short supply. An effort by OEA to centralize room assignments led to embarrassment when teachers failed to honor their reservations; hotels thereafter insisted upon dealing directly with individual customers.<sup>34</sup> Auditorium space was often cramped. The largest available facility was the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium, and it frequently overflowed at general meetings. To meet this problem major entertainment was scheduled for two performances, visitors were limited

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<sup>31</sup>Executive Committee, September 20, 1963.

<sup>32</sup>Executive Committee, March 5, 1965; October 27, 1965; November 12, 1965.

<sup>33</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1953.

<sup>34</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1951, p. 36.

at general sessions by the requirement that the OEA membership card be presented for admission, and public address systems were installed in extra rooms to accommodate excess crowds.<sup>35</sup>

The general program of the convention varied little through the years. Meeting on Thursday and Friday, it included three general assemblies interspersed by meetings of departments and divisions. There was ample time between sessions for teachers to register, view exhibits, and visit. One general session was conducted by the Department of Classroom Teachers, and until 1960 included its annual business meeting. Beginning in 1959 the Friday evening assembly was devoted primarily to entertainment.

The Executive Committee made a special effort starting in 1949 to bring higher quality programs to the general sessions.<sup>36</sup> Madame Rajan Nehru of India was engaged for the fall session, but at the last minute had to withdraw, to be replaced by author John Flynn.<sup>37</sup> Governor Ernest Gruening of Alaska spoke in 1951. One of the most popular speakers of the fifties was psychologist Murray Banks, who entertained and inspired teachers in 1952 with an address on "How to Live With Yourself," and returned to repeat the performance in 1959. General Carlos Romulo, Philippine Envoy to the United States, appeared in 1956. Three university professors were among favorites of the period: Walter Heller, from Minnesota; Max Lerner, from Brandeis; and John Hope Franklin, historian

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<sup>35</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1956, p. 36; Bondurant interview.

<sup>36</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1949.

<sup>37</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1949, p. 35. Unless otherwise indicated, further convention information in this and subsequent paragraphs is taken from programs published each year in the journal.

from Brooklyn College, a native-born Oklahoman. Other notable speakers were Perle Mesta, Herbert Philbrick, Hodding Carter, and Tennyson Guyer--the "Will Rogers of Ohio."

The programs usually included NEA officials and other prominent educators. The most outstanding of these was Sir Ronald Gould of Great Britain, president of the WCOTP, who spoke brilliantly to the convention in 1963. Two NEA executive secretaries appeared during this period, Willard Givens and his successor William G. Carr. Also, two United States Commissioners of Education spoke to the teachers, Earl J. McGrath in 1952 and Francis Keppel in 1963. Waurine Walker, NEA president, from Texas, was one of the main speakers in 1954. Philip Hickey, superintendent of schools in St. Louis, and president of the American Association of School Administrators, spoke in 1957. And T. M. Stinnett, executive secretary of the NEA TEPS Commission, was on the program in 1956.

Phil Spitalny's Orchestra, performing at the 1949 convention, was but the first of a series of outstanding entertainment groups engaged to close out the last day of the convention. This was followed by Sigmund Romberg's Concert Orchestra in 1950, Victor Borge, pianist-humorist, in 1951, and the United States Marine Band in 1952. The Oklahoma Publishing Company arranged for Hedda Hopper to speak in the Municipal Auditorium as an added attraction for teachers--and a conservative, as well as gossip, voice--in that same year. In 1955 the Tulsa Central High School presented "Green Grow the Lilacs." Other entertainment of the period included Herb Shriner in 1960 and Sam Levenson in 1961.

Political leaders of Oklahoma appeared regularly at general sessions of the conventions. The OEA always invited the governor to address the teachers, and the chief executive responded ten times to the twenty opportunities extended in the postwar years. Governor Roy J.

Turner appeared every year of his administration, but his successor, Johnston Murray, spoke only once, in 1951. Raymond Gary, who had appeared on previous programs as a legislative leader, spoke to the convention each year he was in office. But J. Howard Edmondson declined further invitations after his first-year appearance in 1959. Henry Bellmon spoke as a candidate in 1962, along with his opponent William Atkinson, but as governor he never appeared before a regular convention.<sup>38</sup> Other elective officials appearing at general sessions included state legislators and Senators Robert S. Kerr and Mike Monroney.

Departments and divisions met between general sessions, and special programs and panel discussions were arranged to give a wide choice of individual participation. Administrators met on Thursday, enabling them to attend subject-matter meetings on Friday, as many liked to do. College teachers changed their departmental meeting to an entirely separate date, so that they could meet with other groups according to their interests. Because many of the professors provided programs or leadership in various divisions, they had found it difficult to hold their own meeting during the convention. Most divisional groups met on Friday, permitting those who could not arrive earlier to attend.

School law provided that public school teachers be paid for professional meetings up to five per year, including the two days at the state convention. Schools in the state normally closed for two full days, giving teachers time to travel to the convention site, make personal arrangements, register, browse through the exhibits, and attend

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<sup>38</sup>Governor Bellmon did address the state teachers in two separate meetings in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, December 5, 1964, following the defeat of the OEA petition questions in November. The Governor called the meetings himself to solicit support of the teachers for his program for schools and highways. Executive Committee, December 4, 1964.

the first general session on Thursday night. Some waited until Friday morning, starting their convention attendance with the second general session, then taking in the divisional meetings at lunch and in the afternoon. In the absence of required registration or enforcement of attendance there was no way of determining how many failed to attend or did not remain for the entire convention. Because of the inconvenience of registering, it was thought by the leadership that attendance was higher than the official count indicated.<sup>39</sup>

Registration records showed that an average of about seventy-five percent of the membership attended each year.<sup>40</sup> Prior to 1949 attendance had been less than fifty percent, falling to about twenty-five percent at the snowed-out meeting in Tulsa in 1948. Attendance at the two conventions of 1949 were convincing evidence of the advantage of meeting in the autumn: In February 7,214 names were registered, or about forty-five percent of the membership; in November 12,793 signed in, making approximately seventy-seven percent attendance. The peak year as to percentage was 1950, when eighty percent attended; the lowest year, after the fall date was chosen, was 1964, at Tulsa, when only sixty-three percent attended. However, the presence of 17,394 at that meeting was a numerical record; but the following year, at Oklahoma City, 19,621 teachers registered attendance, approximately seventy percent of the active membership.

Nineteen hundred and sixty-five had been a year of trouble for the OEA, but in spite of this fact, or possibly because of difficulties, attendance continued high at the annual convention. It was apparently

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<sup>39</sup>Phillips interview no. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Board of Directors.

still the highlight of the year for many members.

### The Oklahoma Teacher

The activity of the OEA which impinged upon every member most directly and continuously was the publication of its monthly journal. The constitution stated--without a change of wording in all its revisions from 1919 to 1965--that "the official organ of the Oklahoma Education Association shall be The Oklahoma Teacher." This clause provided the basis for the publication as a house organ, announcing, reporting, and commenting upon the activities of the Association. But it also functioned as a professional journal in that it contained articles and features contributing to professional growth. Published nine months of the year, from September through May, it was the Association's most pervasive contact with the membership.

The constitution made the executive secretary editor-in-chief of all publications issued by the OEA. However, while that official assumed responsibility for the content of the journal, a managing editor did the actual work of assembling and editing it. Clyde Howell gave more personal attention to this task than did his successor, and after stepping down to the position of associate secretary devoted even more time to the journal and continued to bear the title of editor. Ferman Phillips, while not shirking his constitutional responsibility, afforded his assistants a large measure of freedom in selecting material and managing the production of the magazine. Oriented toward political action, he contributed an editorial called "As We View It" on a semi-regular basis, tending to let the effort lag when it bore little relationship to an immediate situation. He took more direct responsibility for the production of the OEA Newsletter, which, as the name aptly

indicated, provided members with current reports between issues of the journal.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to his normal editorial duties the managing editor concerned himself with the business aspects of the publication, both income and costs. Income under his control was from advertising, which he sold with the help of an assistant. He supervised all expenditures related to preparation of the journal, including the taking of bids each year for its printing.<sup>42</sup> The annual budget provided a fixed appropriation for The Oklahoma Teacher and included plans for the sale of advertising to pay over half of this amount, though the cost of production increased more rapidly from 1945 to 1965 than did income from advertising. The 1945 budget allowed \$13,000 for printing the journal, and anticipated the sale of \$13,000 worth of advertising. The expected cost of the journal in 1950 was \$21,000; in 1960, \$34,000; and in 1965, \$50,000. Anticipated revenue from advertising moved up by 1950 to \$16,000; in 1960, \$19,000; and in 1965, \$20,000.<sup>43</sup>

In 1961 and 1962 the journal cost more than the budget provided. The Executive Committee transferred funds from other items to take care of the immediate deficit and discussed omitting district convention programs from the February issue the following year to reduce costs.<sup>44</sup> Apparently they were not required to take this step, the problem being

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<sup>41</sup>Phillips interview no. 2; interview with Marvin Leyerle, OEA Building, August 10, 1968; letter from Kathryn Baker to author, January 5, 1969.

<sup>42</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule IV, p. 10. The Oklahoma Teacher was the only OEA publication not printed on the Association's own press.

<sup>43</sup>Board of Directors.

<sup>44</sup>Executive Committee, April 28, 1961; March 16, 1962.



solved instead by the simple remedy of increasing the budget allowance for the journal. The Committee had already raised advertising rates repeatedly in an effort to keep up with rising costs.<sup>45</sup>

The whole area of advertising policy posed new problems in the 1960's. It was discovered that advertisement of insurance, small loans, and teaching vacancies sometimes competed with OEA programs, in violation of a long-standing rule against such competition.<sup>46</sup> To refuse this business would cause loss of revenue. Moreover, some of the advertising came from a national organization of teachers' magazine to which The Oklahoma Teacher belonged, and whose benefits would be lost if its material were omitted.<sup>47</sup> After two years of discussion--during which time the managing editor lived uneasily with the dilemma--the Committee made a decision: It reaffirmed an earlier policy opposing advertisements of liquor or tobacco, those promoting political candidates, or those in competition with the OEA. It permitted continued affiliation with the national organization, but directed that a statement in the journal advise readers that acceptance of advertising did not constitute endorsement by the OEA. Finally, the Committee provided for the appointment of an "Editorial Policy Board" to "review and evaluate The Oklahoma Teacher periodically."<sup>48</sup>

As of 1965 this group had not functioned.<sup>49</sup> The managing editor followed the patterns of his predecessors, relying heavily upon past

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<sup>45</sup>Executive Committee, April 20, 1956; April 29, 1960.

<sup>46</sup>Executive Committee, October 26, 1961; January 4, 1963.

<sup>47</sup>Executive Committee, April 5, 1963.

<sup>48</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1963.

<sup>49</sup>Leyerle interview.

publications as his model, and upon past policy as his guide. Since most of the content of the journal was noncontroversial, he could select material freely without fear of interference from the officers or staff and without need for seeking their advice. As a member of the staff in daily contact with the executive secretary and other leaders, he saw himself as part of the team, and knew, without asking, the boundaries beyond which the interests of the Association would not be served.<sup>50</sup>

The general format of the journal changed little through the years, though the emphasis shifted slowly from reports of organizational activities to professional articles. There was never a shortage of available material; each editor selected the contents to provide the balance he thought appropriate. Roxie Adams, who pioneered the development of the journal, serving from 1923 to 1948, sought to divide it equally among three general categories: association activities, contributions from members, and reports from departments.<sup>51</sup> Her successor, Sally Burke, saw five needs to be met by the magazine:

. . . timely professional information (feature articles by state or national experts); 'points-with-pride' articles (large or small features of local schools or communities); reports on organization activities; information on areas of interest (audio-visual, books, etc.); miscellaneous information (calendars of events, etc.); interest-provoking art as a lead-in to the contents (cover).<sup>52</sup>

Kathryn Yowell Baker, who served from 1952 to 1958, followed these examples, but used an increasing number of articles submitted by Oklahoma teachers. She was careful to distribute these among levels and interests

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<sup>50</sup>Burke interview; Leyerle interview; Baker to author.

<sup>51</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1946, p. 16.

<sup>52</sup>Sally Burke, draft of article for EdPress, journal of the Educational Press Association, enclosed with letter to the author, December, 3, 1968.

and among geographical sections of the state. This course was influenced by the wishes of teachers, expressed in the one-day workshops, and by the encouragement of members of the Executive Committee.<sup>53</sup>

In 1959 Maurine Paul, who served only one year, summarized the policies of her predecessors and presented them to the Executive Committee as guidelines for future editors. Approved by the Committee as "suggested policies," they were accepted and followed by Kathleen Ryan from 1959 to 1963 and by her successor Marvin Leyerle. Content was to be selected according to its value to the reader as "(1) a member of the OEA, (2) a member of the profession, (3) a person, (4) a teacher in his special field." Articles by Oklahoma writers were to be used insofar as possible, with consideration given to balance among areas and interests. Regular assignment of space to particular departments was to be discouraged, with the exception of the Department of Classroom Teachers, who were to continue their monthly page. Also, the State Department of Education would receive preferred treatment. "Outstanding articles from other publications" might occasionally be reprinted.<sup>54</sup>

Probably the most outstanding such reprint was an article by Walter Lippmann in 1955.<sup>55</sup> Other well-known contributors from outside Oklahoma included John W. Studebaker, from the board of Scholastic Magazine; Edgar L. Morphet, University of California; Edgar Dale, Ohio State University; Harl Douglas, University of Colorado; and Edgar Fuller,

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<sup>53</sup>Baker to author.

<sup>54</sup>Executive Committee, October 21, 1959; Leyerle interview.

<sup>55</sup>Walter Lippmann, "Schools in Trouble," The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1955, p. 18. Reprinted with permission of New York Herald Tribune. In the case of other contributors to the journal, listed in this and subsequent paragraphs, citation of the article will not be given.

executive secretary of the Association of Chief State School Officers.

The most consistent source of articles was provided by the faculties of the state colleges and universities, particularly departments and colleges of education. Probably the most prolific contributor was Glenn Snider of the University of Oklahoma, who supplied at least one article a year beginning in 1959. Others from that institution were John F. Bender, Ellsworth Collings, James Harlow, Jesse Burkett, and H. H. Bliss. Professors from Oklahoma State University who wrote two or more articles were Helmer Sorenson, Richard Jungers, J. Paschal Twyman, Larry Hayes, and Robert Sweitzer. Less frequent contributors from that university were Robert Kamm, Robert MacVicar, H. G. Thuesen, Thaine McCormick, and Richard M. Caldwell. Edwin Vineyard contributed several articles while teaching at Panhandle College, Southwestern State, and Oklahoma State. Harold Massey, of Panhandle and later Southwestern State, supplied a number of articles. Among writers from other state colleges were E. C. Hall from Central State, Harrell Garrison, Edwin Fite, and T. M. Pearson from Northeastern State, E. E. Helman and Stanley Thomas from East Central State, and Gladys Bellamy from Southwestern State.

At the request of members, most articles in the journal were of a "practical" nature, dealing with current school questions and often reporting experiences of teachers or schools in dealing with common problems. In addition to articles, many brief "filler" items were submitted by members. Some public school teachers and administrators who contributed useful or interesting articles were Floyd Focht, Doris Conway, George Hann, Ruth Martin, Vernon Isom, and Carl Oliver.

The circulation of The Oklahoma Teacher exceeded the membership of the OEA by several hundred, reaching 35,000 in 1965. A survey of the

membership in 1963 indicated that the teachers read the journal thoroughly, and generally felt that it served them well.<sup>56</sup> Many thought that it was the most valuable benefit of their membership.

### Ethics and Professional Relations

During the postwar years the OEA took rudimentary, though substantial, steps in the promotion of ethical behavior of members and their protection from unfair practices. The effort was led by the Commission on Professional Ethics, raised from committee status in 1954, and the Commission on Professional Relations, created in 1949.

A planning committee in 1948 recommended to the Executive Committee that ethics be one of six priority items to be given special study by the Association.<sup>57</sup> The following year a rejuvenated Ethics Committee, chaired by Floyd Focht, recommended that the OEA accept the NEA Code of Ethics and establish machinery for its enforcement. The Board of Directors adopted the Code and directed the Committee to continue its study of how to encourage teachers to adhere to it.<sup>58</sup> These actions established the pattern that would be followed by the OEA through 1965: acceptance of the NEA Code and reliance upon the Ethics Committee to effectuate it.

The Ethics Commission superseded the Committee in 1954. Consisting of one member from each district, it was to meet at least once annually and was charged with promoting "understanding, acceptance, and application of the Code of Ethics," and its continuous study with a view

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<sup>56</sup>Board of Directors, March 2, 1963; Leyerle interview.

<sup>57</sup>Executive Committee, February 11, 1948.

<sup>58</sup>Board of Directors, November 5, 1949.

toward keeping it up-to-date.<sup>59</sup> Through the years it printed and distributed copies of the Code, prepared study guides for local units and teacher education institutions, and helped groups with programs of instruction. It assisted local units to organize ethics committees and encouraged them to refer questions to the Commission for interpretation. Serious violations were to be investigated and, if disciplinary action were called for, to be referred to the Commission on Professional Relations.<sup>60</sup> As of 1965, no such referral had ever been made.<sup>61</sup>

The NEA Code was revised in 1953 and 1963, each time after a period of study by affiliated associations and units across the nation.<sup>62</sup> With the help of the OEA workshops, the Ethics Commission contributed to this preparation. Upon their approval by the national association, they were adopted by the OEA.<sup>63</sup> The basic content of both versions was a spelling out of the proper relationships expected of teachers with students, parents, communities, boards of education, and other educators. In general, they reflected the highest ideals of the profession as these evolved during the period.<sup>64</sup>

Although the Ethics Commission did not amend the national Code once it was adopted by the state organization, the group did at times express its viewpoint on questions disturbing the Association. In 1959 it made

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<sup>59</sup>Board of Directors, March 6, 1954.

<sup>60</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>62</sup>NEA Journal, March, 1961, p. 70; April, 1963, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup>Board of Directors, March 10, 1953; November 16, 1963.

<sup>64</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1953, p. 34; October, 1963, p. 40. The full text of the Code of Ethics is given in each of these references.

suggestions concerning sick leave policy and pay for substitutes for teachers attending professional meetings.<sup>65</sup> In 1962 it took a stand against strikes by teachers and recommended that the Code of Ethics be made part of the individual teachers' contract. At the same time, it refused to make a statement on the loyalty oath required of state teachers.<sup>66</sup>

The Commission on Professional Relations was created in 1949 upon the recommendation of an older Committee on Fair Dismissal Practices. Its purpose was to investigate and report findings in cases referred to it concerning unethical practice, unfair dismissal, non-reemployment, and demotion. It had no power to apply penalties against offenders, but could report and publicize its findings and make recommendations to pertinent authorities. Aggrieved individuals were not to apply directly to the Commission; referrals could be made only by OEA districts, local units, classroom teacher associations and local units of other departments, teacher clubs, and the Executive Committee of the OEA. The Commission consisted of nine teachers appointed by the president, including three classroom teachers and one each from the ranks of superintendents, secondary principals, elementary principals, college teachers, rural teachers, and county superintendents.<sup>67</sup> In 1957 three members were added, the president and executive secretary, who had been meeting unofficially with the group, and the NEA director.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Board of Directors, August 20, 1959.

<sup>66</sup>Board of Directors, March 17, 1962.

<sup>67</sup>Board of Directors, November 5, 1949.

<sup>68</sup>Board of Directors, November 9, 1957.

Few cases came to the Commission in the early fifties, giving it time to study its responsibilities and develop procedures. In practice, the first step in an investigation was a quiet and informal hearing conducted by a member of the OEA staff. He reported to the chairman, who, if the facts warranted, called together a "screening committee" including himself, the OEA president, and the staff consultant, to study the case further. If the screening committee decided a full hearing was justified, the entire Commission came together, either at the school involved or at OEA headquarters, and conducted the investigation in a manner similar to a court trial. At every step of the process, an effort was made to solve the problem by mediation, and all persons involved were counselled with a view toward arriving at amicable solutions and avoiding similar controversies in the future. Full reports of the cases were presented to the Executive Committee, who made the final disposition of the case, usually directing that the results be printed and made available to interested persons.<sup>69</sup>

Considering ways to prevent problems in professional relations, the Commission recommended that the OEA assist schools to develop written policies in this area. From this suggestion came the establishment of a Committee on Personnel Policies in 1953.<sup>70</sup> Consisting of ten members representing all interests of the OEA, and with Kate Frank the chairman, this group worked diligently for two years to produce a comprehensive handbook entitled "Good Personnel Policies." Areas covered were: employment, assignment, salary, leaves, tenure, contractual obligations,

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<sup>69</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 21; Willingham interview.

<sup>70</sup>Executive Committee, October 28, 1953.



opportunities for professional growth, professional organizations, personnel benefits, community relationships, retirement, and evaluation of teaching.<sup>71</sup> The Executive Committee ordered 5,000 copies printed at once, and because of heavy demand, it was reprinted several times in following years.<sup>72</sup>

The Professional Relations Commission worked quietly through the early fifties, with little publicity and apparently few teachers being aware of its existence. Its first case, reported by the Garvin County Schoolmasters, involved the non-reemployment of ten teachers at Lindsay in 1951.<sup>73</sup> The Commission investigated quietly, found the case could be settled amicably, condemned no one, and so reported to the Executive Committee, which ordered that copies of the report be made available to officers, Board members, and other members upon request.<sup>74</sup> The first complete investigation made by the full Commission was of a non-reemployment incident in Custer City, referred by the Custer County Classroom Teachers Association. The Commission found the chief culprit to be an overactive board of education, which, at a time of community unrest related to district consolidation and a new school building, summarily dismissed several teachers on trivial grounds. In a comprehensive report, the Commission condemned the board and recommended steps to prevent recurrence of the problem. Again, the only action taken by the Executive Committee was to distribute the report among OEA officers and

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<sup>71</sup>Board of Directors, November 19, 1955.

<sup>72</sup>Executive Committee, January 13, 1956; Bondurant interview.

<sup>73</sup>Executive Committee, June 1, 1951.

<sup>74</sup>Executive Committee, September 7, 1951.

Board members.<sup>75</sup>

One of the most significant cases handled by the Commission came in 1957, when six elementary teachers in Midwest City were dismissed on "insufficient grounds." This was the first such situation to receive widespread newspaper publicity, to occur in a large school system, and to result in the condemnation of administrators.<sup>76</sup> The Commission's report reprimanded the teachers for not cooperating with their principals, but concluded that their behavior did not justify their dismissal. The report placed the burden of wrongdoing upon the principals, the superintendent, and the board of education.<sup>77</sup>

The concern aroused by the Midwest City case led to a reorganization and strengthening of the Professional Relations Commission. The most important improvement was to permit individuals to appeal directly to the Commission if they were denied this service by their local organization. The Commission was enlarged to include the three top OEA officers, and the procedures that had been developed through practice were formalized.<sup>78</sup> A recommendation that reports be given more extensive publicity was not accepted; however, the Midwest City report apparently increased the awareness among teachers of the Commission and its activities, and resulted in greater distribution of information in later

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<sup>75</sup>Executive Committee, November 5, 1954.

<sup>76</sup>Eugene F. Cates, "What Provisions Have Been Made by Professional Teachers' Organizations for Protecting and Disciplining its Members?," (unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1958), p. 76. A full report of the Midwest City case was not to be found in the records of the OEA.

<sup>77</sup>Executive Committee, November 8, 1957; Oklahoma City Times, December 6, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup>Board of Directors, November 9, 1957.

cases.<sup>79</sup>

The Commission dealt with about one case per year warranting full investigation. Other situations reported were disposed of by the staff or screening committee. Most incidents involved small schools, inept superintendents, and irresponsible boards. Some of these were Morris, Wellston, Daugherty, Kansas, Dibble, and Centrahoma.<sup>80</sup> In 1960 the Commission investigated a larger system, Chickasha, in an extraordinary joint effect with the NEA Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom. The national organization came into the case because it involved a teacher dismissed while working on a project sponsored by the NEA Department of Classroom Teachers. The teacher, who had been previously rated by her principal as a superior instructor, and who had been honored by her colleagues with election to the presidency of the local classroom teachers' association, was the only Oklahoma teacher selected to take part in a special study conference at Washington, D. C., on "Conditions of Work for Quality Teaching." Back in her home school, she continued serving the national group by conducting a local study on the utilization of teachers' time. When the principal failed to respond to one of her suggested improvements, she dispatched a memorandum directly to other teachers, including remarks uncomplimentary to the principal. Angered by this action and "because of strained relations at this school, the official refused to recommend her retention upon the faculty. She appealed to the state Department of Classroom Teachers, who asked for an investigation by both the OEA and NEA. The final report, adopted in identical form by both organizations, condemned all parties concerned, but ruled that the

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<sup>79</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>80</sup>Board of Directors.

teacher should not have been discharged.<sup>81</sup>

In 1963 the OEA changed the name of its investigating group to the Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities. This was to conform with the NEA, which had adopted this title for its new Commission formed by combining the old Commission on Defense with the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom.<sup>82</sup> Under its new name the state Commission continued to follow essentially its established routine; its chief staff assistant observed that it remained more active in the area of rights than of responsibilities.<sup>83</sup> However, in 1965 it was tentatively probing new terrain as it undertook to interpret situations arising under the sanctions imposed by the Association that year.<sup>84</sup>

In that same year the legislature created the Professional Practices Commission, taking a step toward an OEA goal of authority to take stronger action against offenders. The statutory Commission was to consist of twelve members appointed by the State Board of Education from nominees of the OEA, including nine classroom teachers and three administrators.<sup>85</sup> Its initial responsibility was to develop criteria of professional practices in areas including--but not limited to--contractual obligations, admission to and continuance in professional service, and ethical performance of members of the profession. In administering these criteria, the Commission was given authority to hold hearings, verbally reprimand

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<sup>81</sup>Board of Directors, November 19, 1960. The Chickasha report was also widely distributed in a booklet printed by the NEA.

<sup>82</sup>NEA Journal, May, 1961, p. 3.

<sup>83</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>84</sup>Executive Committee, March 26, 1965.

<sup>85</sup>Executive Committee, October 27, 1965.

and warn violators, and recommend suspension or revocation of certificates. It could subpoena records and witnesses and place them under oath.<sup>86</sup> Because its work paralleled and complemented the activities of the OEA Commission, the staff consultant assisted both groups, serving each in identical capacities.<sup>87</sup> As 1965 came to a close both agencies were looking into a dismissal case in Grady County.<sup>88</sup>

#### The Welfare Commission

Out of the OEA workshops of the early 1950's came a ground swell from the membership in favor of increased auxiliary benefits from the Association. An increased budget and the completion of the OEA Building gave the organization a new sense of collective economic strength which stimulated the development of an extensive and growing program of teacher welfare. A Welfare Commission, created in 1953, inaugurated a teacher placement service, an insurance program, and a credit union, and assisted in the planning and construction of a home for retired teachers.

The establishment of the Welfare Commission came after three special committees had been appointed in as many years to study the possibilities of a credit union, a recreational site on Tenkiller Lake, and a salary insurance plan.<sup>89</sup> The Commission, consisting of five members, later increased to seven, was asked to consider insurance, recreation, cooperative purchasing, personal loans, sick leave policies, and "other problems

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<sup>86</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 25.

<sup>87</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>88</sup>Board of Directors, November 13, 1965.

<sup>89</sup>Executive Committee, January 19, 1951; April 11, 1952; Board of Directors, August 19, 1953.

pertaining to welfare needs."<sup>90</sup> Under the chairmanship of J. Frank Malone, principal of Northeast High School in Oklahoma City, the group decided to concentrate on one project at a time, choosing as its first one a teacher placement service.<sup>91</sup>

In 1954 the Board accepted the Commission's proposal and launched the OEA's "Employment Information Service."<sup>92</sup> Associate Secretary L. A. Bondurant assumed the responsibility of its operation, continuing until 1961, when the Oklahoma Employment Agency added teacher placement to its program.<sup>93</sup> For various reasons the OEA placement service was not fully satisfactory: State colleges and universities were performing a similar function on a larger scale, though limited to their own graduates. The OEA staff was too small to provide adequate service. And, finally, teachers and employing schools failed to notify the OEA of changes in their status, causing excessive errors, uncertainty, and inefficiency.<sup>94</sup>

In 1957 the Welfare Commission developed the first series of insurance plans for OEA members at low-cost group rates. It was a time-loss policy, providing for payment of a portion of the teacher's salary during absence due to illness. It was approved by the Board and contracted to the lowest bidder, North American Accident Insurance Company, in time to provide protection in September.<sup>95</sup> In 1961 a \$2,500 life insurance policy was provided for teachers at a premium of ten dollars per

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<sup>90</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1953.

<sup>91</sup>Board of Directors, August 8, 1954.

<sup>92</sup>Board of Directors, November 6, 1954.

<sup>93</sup>Executive Committee, April 28, 1961.

<sup>94</sup>Bondurant interview.

<sup>95</sup>Board of Directors, August 16, 1957.

year, the best bid coming from the American Fidelity Assurance Company.<sup>96</sup>

Two years later the Executive Committee accepted the proposal of the Oklahoma Blue Cross-Blue Shield Plans for medical and hospital insurance, and members were able to enroll in this program in September, 1963.<sup>97</sup>

In its first year 13,127 teachers participated in the plan; during the same year, 1963-1964, 14,237 members were in the salary protection program, and 15,900 were covered by OEA life insurance.<sup>98</sup>

Throughout the 1950's OEA leaders discussed the prospects of a credit union, and after completion of the salary insurance project the Welfare Commission began seriously to plan for one.<sup>99</sup> In 1960 the Board instructed the Executive Committee to proceed with its organization.<sup>100</sup> The Welfare Commission executed this directive by securing a charter from the State Banking Commission, serving temporarily as the union's governing board, then holding an organizational meeting of members of the new agency to elect their own board of directors. Once organized, the OEA Credit Union governed itself through a seven-member board elected annually by the members.<sup>101</sup>

After a year of slow growth the Credit Union expanded at a rapid rate. Marshall Gregory, OEA Research Director, took charge of the operation during its first three years. Members were apprised of its

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<sup>96</sup>Board of Directors, August 17, 1961.

<sup>97</sup>Executive Committee, February 1, 1963.

<sup>98</sup>Board of Directors, November 16, 1963.

<sup>99</sup>Board of Directors, August 16, 1957.

<sup>100</sup>Board of Directors, March 26, 1960.

<sup>101</sup>Executive Committee, June 3, 1960.

opportunities through The Oklahoma Teacher, which included an enrollment coupon with its advertisement.<sup>102</sup> In both 1961 and 1962 the OEA deposited \$25,000 from its building depreciation fund in the Credit Union, to assist the agency with operating capital.<sup>103</sup> The Union doubled its assets each year through 1964, and by 1965 was worth \$645,000. At the end of that year the Welfare Commission reported its continued unabated growth, beyond all expectations.<sup>104</sup>

In 1964 the Kate Frank Manor, a home for retired teachers, was completed and opened for occupancy in Muskogee. Although the Welfare Commission assisted in the early stages of the project, the planning and completion of the Manor were largely the work of the lady whose name it bears and the Residence Committee on which she served throughout the development, much of the time as chairman. The first official consideration of a retirement home was in 1958, when the Executive Committee appointed a committee to study the proposal.<sup>105</sup> This committee visited similar homes in other states, surveyed the membership as to its preferences, considered possible sites around the state, and inquired into methods of financing.

Several communities exhibited interest in acquiring the Manor, among them being Norman, Stillwater, Tahlequah, Shawnee, Chickasha, Pawnee, Cushing, Ardmore, Muskogee, and Oklahoma City; for a time the committee considered building at two sites.<sup>106</sup> By mid-1960 five cities had

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<sup>102</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1960, p. 18.

<sup>103</sup>Executive Committee, February 24, 1961; August 8, 1962.

<sup>104</sup>Board of Directors, November 13, 1965; White interview.

<sup>105</sup>Executive Committee, January 24, 1958; March 14, 1958.

<sup>106</sup>Executive Committee, January 8, 1960.



offered to donate land for the project, including Shawnee, Norman, Stillwater, Edmond, and Muskogee.<sup>107</sup> By this time the committee was convinced it could gain financial backing for only one site. It chose Muskogee, which had provided a four-acre tract adjacent to its new municipal hospital and a growing shopping center.<sup>108</sup>

The Manor was constructed for \$1,250,000. Basic financing of the project was a loan of \$1,077,000 from the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency, a branch of the Federal Housing Administration.<sup>109</sup> To borrow money and to construct and to operate the facility, the Oklahoma Residence Corporation was formed; its charter provided that the OEA Board of Directors constituted the Corporation and was empowered to elect a board of five trustees to conduct the business of the residence.<sup>110</sup> Approximately twenty percent of the cost had to be raised by the OEA. Much of this came from contributions of members, after the Association amended its Articles of Incorporation to permit it to receive such gifts.<sup>111</sup> Before the completion of construction in 1964 the OEA loaned \$25,000 to the Residence Corporation to help with minor features that had been left out of the original contract to reduce costs.<sup>112</sup> Behind in its payments in 1965, the Manor was negotiating for new assistance, which was promised by the federal agency as soon as the residence

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<sup>107</sup>Executive Committee, June 3, 1960.

<sup>108</sup>Executive Committee, October 26, 1960.

<sup>109</sup>Board of Directors, November 10, 1962.

<sup>110</sup>Executive Committee, April 28, 1961.

<sup>111</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1959; Executive Secretary, February 7, 1964.

<sup>112</sup>Board of Directors, March 14, 1964.

achieved ninety-five percent occupancy.<sup>113</sup> This last financial hurdle was apparently surmounted, as the Corporation reported the Manor's ninety-six apartments filled in the autumn in 1965, and a long list of applicants waiting for a vacancy.<sup>114</sup>

In 1965 the Welfare Commission was studying several new areas of activity. Along with the Residence Corporation, it was considering a second Manor, with possible locations including Oklahoma City, Norman, and Stillwater.<sup>115</sup> Since 1963 it had been considering tax-sheltered annuities and the extension of the medical insurance to retired teachers.<sup>116</sup> Other types of insurance being studied were dental policies and automobile coverage. It was also looking into an automobile purchasing plan.<sup>117</sup> Auxiliary services had become big business in the OEA, and were still growing.

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<sup>113</sup>Board of Directors, May 11, 1965.

<sup>114</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1965, p. 45.

<sup>115</sup>Phillips interview no. 1.

<sup>116</sup>Executive Committee, June 19, 1963.

<sup>117</sup>OEA Report to NCSEA, Schedule III, p. 32.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LEGISLATIVE STRUGGLE, 1950-1958

Following its immediate postwar exertions, the OEA entered a fifteen-year period of political activity characterized by the continuity of its goals and the grimness of their pursuit. The organization made consistent but slow gains, measured most clearly by increased expenditures for education, including higher salaries for teachers.<sup>1</sup> It rarely won a clear-cut victory, though in 1955, with the help of a friendly governor, it carried by a margin of three to one an election for basic reforms in school financing. But it suffered its worst defeat, possibly in all its history, after a two-year confrontation with a governor whose popularity seemed to be enhanced by his opposition to the organized educators, when the Association's program was voted down at the polls in 1964, the seventy-fifth anniversary year of the OEA.

This defeat and the angry reaction that followed climaxed a long conflict between the OEA and those who questioned its program, its methods, and its leadership. The central thrust of the OEA legislative program was for more money. Its leaders argued that demands upon education had grown and promised to continue to expand explosively. Increased services, they said, called for greater appropriations. Particularly, they demanded "professional salaries" for teachers, who were making a prodigious effort toward professional improvement, and who were

<sup>1</sup> Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

leaving the state in large numbers to take positions where pay scales were more worthy of their preparation. Opponents objected to increased expenditures and higher taxes, challenged the quality of schools and teachers, and condemned the OEA for playing politics and applying pressure. They accused the leaders of tolerating low standards and of resisting reforms. Many asked why teachers insisted upon a uniform salary scale, particularly if it included weak teachers, instead of searching for means of rewarding superior teachers with higher pay.<sup>2</sup> Some questioned the right or the propriety of the Association to speak for teachers, and went to great lengths to encourage divisions among members and between members and leaders. These detractors were sometimes abetted by certain members who were too ready to condemn the leadership for attempting too much, for accomplishing too little, or for failing to involve enough of the rank and file in the struggle.

Actually, the members had an almost unlimited opportunity to contribute to the process, in their local units, in workshops, and through public contacts and political activity. However, the brunt of the conflict was borne by a "Gideon's band" of activities, comprised mostly of the elected officers and the Legislative Committee. They led in formulating the program, presenting it to the legislature, and, with or without the help of the governor, getting it translated into law. They absorbed the blows of political opposition, including a merciless press,

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<sup>2</sup>The standard OEA rejoinder to proposals of merit pay increases was that the Association's salary goals were for minimum salaries and that local districts could reward their teachers further to whatever extent and on the basis they chose. In practice the state minimum became a fixed scale, more often than not a maximum salary level. Public pressure brought "merit" pay to certain preferred personnel, such as coaches and band directors. The state classroom teachers consistently opposed merit rating of teachers for salary purposes. Supra, Chapter IV.

and too often suffered the ingratitude of teachers, who were prone to interpret as a betrayal any failure to achieve all goals in their entirety.<sup>3</sup> In the forefront of the action was Ferman Phillips, who perceived the legislative struggle as his chief reason for being.

Phillips considered his most effective years, and those of the OEA, measured by economic gains with public accord, to have coincided with the administrations of Governors Johnston Murray and Raymond Gary.<sup>4</sup> Although Murray was committed to holding down expenditures and to permitting no new taxes and was opposed to the OEA legislative program, he was unable to keep the legislature from passing and financing bills approximating the goals of the educators. Gary, who was openly supported by the OEA in his campaign, made school financing his objective of first priority and gave his friendly support to the Association in most of its endeavors.

#### The Legislative Committee

The biennial sessions of the Oklahoma legislature dictated the OEA's political schedule. During the summer months following the lawmakers' adjournment the Association selected a new Legislative Committee to serve through the next Legislature. Thus, no time was lost between sessions, and the Committee was given two full years to develop a program and prepare for its enactment. Consisting of forty to fifty members appointed by the president with the approval of the Executive Committee, the group was usually ready to hold its first meeting in August,

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<sup>3</sup>Willingham interview; interview with other OEA presidents.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Ferman Phillips, Oklahoma City, July 8, 1969. Hereinafter referred to as Phillips interview no. 4.

during or prior to the Leadership Workshop.

Because of the crucial responsibility of the Legislative Committee, the president gave its selection his most careful attention, and relied heavily upon the advice and recommendations of several lay people. As in no other committee, ability to get results was the basic criterion for service. The committeeman was expected to have knowledge of the OEA program and of the legislative process, to have demonstrated effectiveness in influencing legislation, or to possess a strategic political advantage, such as close and friendly acquaintance with legislators or, better still, membership in the legislature. The executive secretary, past presidents, the Committee chairman, and former members of the Committee were able to assist the president in selecting people with such qualifications. A small central group, nominated by the OEA district presidents and appointed by the state president, represented the districts and became the Steering Committee when the legislature convened. Each department of the OEA provided at least one representative, as did important allied groups, particularly the Congress of Parents and Teachers, the School Boards Association, the Bookmen's Association, and the State Department of Education. Educators who were in the legislature were considered prize participants. Finally, the president chose several members representing no particular interest or area, but who were considered peculiarly qualified to serve. Elected officers, the executive secretary, and the state superintendent were ex officio members.<sup>5</sup>

The successive chairmen of the Legislative Committee were among the

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<sup>5</sup>Interviews with several OEA presidents.

most able members of the OEA.<sup>6</sup> Each was a public school superintendent at the time of his appointment. Of the nine who served during the post-war period, six became presidents of the Association. E. E. Battles, appointed in 1945, continued as his own legislative chairman after his accession to the presidency in 1946.<sup>7</sup> Garland Godfrey, appointed in 1947 while superintendent at Pryor, became president in 1950. Succeeding chairmen were: J. Win Payne of Ponca City, selected in 1949; William D. Carr, Cushing, 1951; George Roberts, Bartlesville, 1953; Jesse W. Martin, Nowata, 1955; J. Win Payne, chosen for a second term in 1957; Paul Taylor, El Reno, 1959; Walter Fields, Hinton, 1961; and Rector Johnson, Broken Bow, 1963. All of these men served as members of the Committee both before and after their chairmanships. Five of them, Battles, Godfrey, Payne, Carr, and Roberts, were later elected president, and one, Rector Johnson, became chairman after his presidential term. All were avid students of school law and administration; five of them, Battles, Godfrey, Payne, Carr, and Martin, subsequently wrote doctoral dissertations on aspects of school legislation.

Prominent members of the Legislative Committee included other OEA presidents, who served either before or after their presidencies: G. T. Stubbs, D. D. Kirkland, D. E. Temple, Inez Gingerich, Clarence Davis, Farris E. Willingham, and Floy Cobb. Three long-term committeemen also spent several years on the OEA Executive Committee: Ernest Hunter, Dion C. Wood, and Charles C. Mason. Rural teachers and county superintendents were always represented, two of their more enduring advocates being,

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<sup>6</sup>Board of Directors. Names of chairmen and members of the Legislative Committee in this and the following paragraph are taken from lists attached to the minutes of the Board.

<sup>7</sup>Supra, Chapter II.

respectively, A. H. Bartow of Payne County and T. E. Allen, long the county superintendent of Osage County. Through several terms F. D. Moon represented Negro teachers, both before and after integration of the teachers' associations in 1955. Standard practice called for the appointment of three members each from the School Boards Association and Congress of Parents and Teachers. Most prominent in the former were J. O. Bumpas, Roy Spears, and J. G. Stratton; in the latter, Mrs. O. W. Jones, Mrs. Trimble Latting, and Mrs. S. S. Motofsky. Legislators who were also members of the OEA and automatically assigned to the Legislative Committee included Senators Clem Hamilton, Jess Fronterhouse, Henry Cooper, Bryon Dacus, and LeRoy McClendon; and Representatives E. T. Dunlap, George Nigh, Bill Shipley, Virgil Medlock, Marion Diel, Lonnie Abbott, and Floyd Focht.

A most valuable member of the Committee was the state superintendent of public instruction, who after 1946 was Oliver Hodge. This official brought to the Committee the prestige of his office and the resources of the State Department of Education which he headed. Hodge was a loyal supporter of the OEA and its program. He rendered a unique service as an officer in the executive branch of state government, in which capacity he was a reliable contact, usually influential, with the governor.<sup>8</sup> Governor Henry Bellmon, refusing to consult with Phillips, expressed readiness to accept the state superintendent as an advisor on educational matters.<sup>9</sup> Hodge did not undertake to present a program to the

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<sup>8</sup>Phillips interview no. 4; Willingham interview; Bondurant interview.

<sup>9</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 28, 1962, p. 1.



legislature.<sup>10</sup> He did make recommendations for improvements in his biennial reports to the governor. These suggestions virtually duplicated the goals of the OEA.<sup>11</sup>

The duties of the Legislative Committee were essentially threefold: to prepare a legislative program, to help elect a favorable legislature and governor, and to steer the program through the lawmaking process to final enactment. To accomplish the first of three, the Committee met in full session at least three times per year. It delegated study assignments to subcommittees who met as often as necessary to complete their tasks. Several sources contributed to the list of goals to be considered, the most logical starting point being previous programs, particularly the last one. Changing conditions and legislative action suggested additions or deletions. The OEA Research Department supplied the Committee with current material and frequently with solid proposals. Reports from workshops, compiled and summarized by the staff, supplied viewpoints of the membership and trends in their thinking. The Committee developed a set of goals and presented it to the Board of Directors at the spring meeting of the non-legislative year. Approved by the Board, the goals were studied and criticized at the Leadership Workshop in August and in one-day workshops in the fall. By the time the legislature convened in January, the Committee had usually decided upon the goals to be given

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<sup>10</sup>Critics of the OEA sometimes accused it of usurping this function. An often-repeated response was that the failure of the state superintendent and the State Department of Education to initiate legislative proposals forced the OEA to fill this vacuum of leadership.

<sup>11</sup>State Board of Education, Biennial Reports. Hodge firmly disagreed with the OEA goal of an appointed state superintendent, arguing "let the people choose." Board of Directors, November 14, 1950.

priority and drafted them into bills.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime the Committee concerned itself with the election of the governor and legislature. It took direct responsibility for the chief executive, interviewing candidates before the primaries, then taking a second look at the nominees of the major parties prior to the general election. The OEA program was presented to the aspirants, and they were invited to respond. Their reactions were printed in the OEA publications for the guidance of members. The Association adhered to a policy of not endorsing specific candidates. Local units, with the help of members of the Legislative Committee, conducted similar hearings for legislative candidates. Their efforts were augmented by the OEA staff, which maintained a store of information on legislators, particularly how they voted on school measures. Phillips specialized in this type of information, which he supplied to the Legislative Committee, to local units, and, when he felt the situation warranted, to the entire membership.

Finally, with the legislature sitting in the capitol, the Committee turned the task of working directly with the lawmakers over to a small group called the Steering Committee. This committee consisted of twelve to fifteen members, including the chairman, the OEA president, and a representative from each district. The executive secretary advised and assisted them and, along with other staff members, carried out much of the actual work decided upon by the group. The Committee met at least weekly, more often when critical action in the legislature was pending. They decided the priority of bills, devised strategy for advancing them, and undertook to influence individual lawmakers in behalf of the OEA

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<sup>12</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1952, p. 15; interviews with presidents and staff members.

program. They continued this process until the end of the session, normally around the first of June, at which time the newly elected president of the Association started another two-year cycle by appointing the next Legislative Committee.

### Legislative Goals

The OEA program of proposed legislation reflected the current status of education in the state and indicated significant trends. For its first half-century the Association's legislative effort had been in the vanguard of the state's educational development, its successes constituting educational progress, its failures representing retardation. Just as its past proposals had tended to precede actual achievement by a number of years, the goals of the 1950's and 1960's sometimes showed more promise than progress.<sup>13</sup> Although the program was rewritten every two years, its basic content remained fairly constant, changing only as old problems intensified, or as new conditions, both outside and within the organization, demanded new departures or emphasis.

The sixteen-point program of 1950 evolved from the studies of the late forties and became the basic pattern to be followed for over a decade. Prepared by the Legislative Committee under the chairmanship of J. Win Payne, it was adopted by the Board of Directors in February, 1950.<sup>14</sup> The sixteen goals provided for (in this order, though the sequence had no relation to priority): (1) the retention of the automobile license

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<sup>13</sup>Burkett, "Legislative Programs." Burkett found the lag between proposal and enactment of school legislation to be from one to forty years, with the average being between four and five years.

<sup>14</sup>Board of Directors, February 18, 1950; The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1950, p. 62. Subsequent programs cited in this section are taken from the minutes of the Board of Directors and from The Oklahoma Teacher.

tag tax; (2) a permanent plan of school financing based upon dedicated revenue from specific sources; (3) funds to construct school buildings, or a method of raising such funds; (4) adequate appropriations for the State Department of Education; (5) kindergartens in public schools as part of the state program; (6) a base salary for beginning teachers of \$2,400 with fifteen annual increments of \$100; (7) increased basic aid, not to be charged against the receiving school's equalization aid;<sup>15</sup> (8) sufficient funds for maintenance and transportation; (9) "adequate financial support for institutions of higher learning," (10) teacher retirement pay of \$100 per month from a Retirement System actuarially solvent, financed by dedicated revenue from a specific source; (11) continuing contracts and orderly dismissals; (12) an elected State Board of Education which would appoint the state superintendent of public instruction; (13) school district reorganization based upon study of all factors, with parents and patrons having a voice in the process; (14) a maximum number of pupils per teacher of twenty-five; (15) necessary funds to take advantage of federal reimbursed vocational programs; and (16) federal aid for public schools without federal control.

Financial problems were the most persistent ones faced by the OEA, and teachers' salaries were the highest-priority goal. This was the major item in the state equalization aid program, with the consequence that the biennial quest for funds inevitably focused, in the minds of the public as well as the teachers, upon this apparently selfish goal. In 1954 the Association raised its desired base from \$2,400 to \$3,000,

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<sup>15</sup>Basic aid was paid to all schools, regardless of need, on the basis of a fixed amount per pupil. Equalization aid was granted to schools too poor to pay with local funds for a "minimum program" defined and required by the state aid law.

and in 1962 to \$4,600. After Governor Bellmon vetoed the salary bill in 1963, the 1964 goal was set at seventy-five percent of the national average. This proposal, submitted by initiative petition to the people, was defeated. In 1965, although a base of \$4,800 was included in the adopted goals, the wording of the proposed bill was changed to provide that state aid would be computed on the basis of the number of pupils in a school rather than the number of teachers at a specific pay scale. It was hoped that such a formula, while producing the same results as the older one, would be more palatable to the public.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most acute problems following the Second World War was the shortage of school buildings, construction having been postponed because of depression and war. The state constitution restricted local districts by limiting the amount of money they could raise and how they could spend it. The OEA asked for liberalization of a five-mill building fund levy, which could be voted locally, to permit the fund's use in remodeling and repairing buildings and in purchasing furniture and equipment. It also requested that a limitation on bonded indebtedness to five percent of the district's valuation be increased to ten percent. Both of these proposals remained in the program until their approval by a referendum vote of the people in 1955.

Other financial goals appeared regularly on the OEA program. The Association continually asked for increased appropriations for maintenance, transportation, and general operation of schools. Basic aid remained on the program, though beginning in 1954 it was requested under the title of operational funds, \$12 per child being asked that year, the amount growing to \$20 per pupil in the 1960's. Requests for funding the

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<sup>16</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1965.

free textbook program enacted in 1946 continued until 1965, when for the first time the legislature responded fully to the need.<sup>17</sup> After 1957, when the legislature began the practice of postponing a portion of the appropriation for schools, anticipating increased available revenue later in the biennium, a regular goal of the OEA was a supplemental appropriation to complete the current school year.

The Association clung tenaciously to all revenues dedicated to school purposes, particularly the automobile tag tax, but avoided proposals for other specific sources of income. This refusal to initiate tax measures stemmed not only from the general risk of arousing opposition, but also from the experience of having previous revenues enacted for schools later diverted to other uses.<sup>18</sup> Though constantly challenged by opponents to find the money to pay for growing demands upon the treasury, Association spokesmen took the position that it was their special responsibility to define the needs of schools, while it was the responsibility of the legislature to raise the revenue. Beginning in 1956 the organization began to ask for "justifiable new revenues" and promised to support measures providing them. A consistent goal was the equalization of the ad valorem tax on property. Four times in the post-war period, 1946, 1955, 1964, and 1965, the OEA advanced and supported measures increasing the amount of tax money the local districts could levy upon themselves, failing to get its proposal passed only in 1964.

The most divisive legislative question faced by the OEA and, because it remained unresolved, the most vulnerable point at which critics and adversaries could direct their attacks, was the problem of school

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<sup>17</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 9.

district reorganization. Following the "Happy Valley Rebellion" of 1949,<sup>19</sup> the Association was reluctant to press for rapid or compulsory consolidation; its stated goal from 1950 to 1964 was moderate, insisting that any steps taken toward combining districts involve and have the consent of the people directly concerned. In 1954 the idea of a state commission to take the lead in the matter was included in the program, but the following year the Legislative Committee restored the more conservative statement. In 1957 Garland Godfrey completed the most thorough study of the question ever made to that date and presented his conclusions to the Committee.<sup>20</sup> The Committee, chaired by J. Win Payne, adopted the Godfrey proposal, which called for compulsory reorganization under a state commission which would insure compliance with the plan within a definite period of time. But the Board of Directors, yielding to strong opposition from rural teachers and small-school superintendents, rejected the plan.<sup>21</sup> For another six years the Association stuck to its limited goal. In 1964 it returned to the effort of 1949 to make the high school transportation area the basic administrative unit for public schools, this measure being one of four later rejected by the voters that year. In 1965 the OEA restored its "safe" goal on reorganization which had endured almost without change for sixteen years.

A similar controversy arose over the office of county superintendent and was related to the fact that, regardless of the OEA position on the subject, the number of school districts in the state was dwindling

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<sup>19</sup>Supra, Chapter III.

<sup>20</sup>Garland Godfrey, "Creating Appropriate School Districts," (Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1957).

<sup>21</sup>Board of Directors, March 15, 1958.

fast. In 1956 the Association adopted the goal of extending the duties of the office, in spite of the great decline in rural schools under its supervision. Since 1947, the year the legislature forced reduction of the number of districts from 4,450 to 2,664, over a thousand more had disappeared, bringing the count down to 1,643.<sup>22</sup> The goal remained alive until 1964, even though another 500 rural schools merged out of existence by that time. In 1964 the Legislative Committee proposed that the county superintendent cease to be elected, that instead he be appointed by the State Board of Education, and that his duties be prescribed by that body. This measure was designed to balance the school consolidation question being prepared for initiative petition. County superintendents rallied against the plan and persuaded the Board of Directors to adopt a substitute proposal going back to the 1956 proposal.<sup>23</sup> The substituted question proved to be the weakest of the petition package submitted to the voters, receiving fewest signatures and the smallest vote. In 1965 the role of the county superintendent was omitted from the legislative program.

Several goals applied to teacher welfare and security. Improved retirement provisions remained second only to salaries throughout the period, the basic goals in this area being actuarial soundness of the system and increased retirement pay. With the extension of social security to teachers, to become effective upon a majority vote of district faculties, the OEA adopted a goal of compulsory elections, to assure every teacher in the state an opportunity to receive this benefit. The objective of a teacher-pupil ratio of one to twenty-five remained

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<sup>22</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup>Board of Directors, March 14, 1964.



constant through 1965. A sick leave goal was added to the program in 1954, being expanded from time to time until in 1964 it called for nine days' annual leave cumulative to sixty. The Association talked about tenure and moved a step toward it with a goal calling for continuing contracts and orderly dismissals. The referendum amendment voted in 1955 provided for continuing contracts, and the goal of tenure was no longer included in the program. However, growing appreciation of the Professional Relations Commissions' work in the area of fair dismissals led to the 1964 goal calling for a legal professional practices commission, a goal that was translated into law within a year.

After briefly embracing some specific curricular goals immediately following the war, the Association consistently opposed all legislative determination of instructional subject matter, but it did call for state assistance in several special areas of the educational program. The 1950 goals asked that kindergartens be included in the minimum program. The 1952 funds for special education for handicapped children were requested. Adult education became a goal in 1956. And in 1964 expansion of vocational offerings was included in the program. All of these proposals, once adopted, remained part of the program through 1965.

Several other goals, all adopted in 1950, were renewed by each successive Legislative Committee. A statement in favor of federal aid appeared in every program, as did financing of the State Department of Education. One of the most progressive proposals, which never approached fruition, was the establishment of an elective State Board of Education, which in turn would appoint the state superintendent. Sufficient funds for higher education remained a perennial goal.

The failure of the OEA to give colleges and universities a higher priority in its legislative effort aggravated a basic division within

the Association, and was a weakness constantly exploited by those who opposed the organization. As though to counter this imbalance, the OEA included other goals from time to time in support of higher education. In 1960 it called for a college building bond issue, after having assisted previous such programs without formally including them in its legislative program, and in 1964 it adopted a goal providing for a permanent fund for capital improvements at institutions of higher learning. Beginning in 1960 the Association asked for legislation guaranteeing an opportunity for college education to all students graduating from Oklahoma high schools. And with the advent of "anticipatory" financing of state programs in the middle 1950's a regular goal became that of a supplemental appropriation for higher education.

The OEA legislative program was a mixture of immediate goals and long-term aspirations, and reflected the basic motivations and comparative strength of elements comprising the Association. Formulated by a committee dominated by public school administrators, it was weighted overwhelmingly toward the pressing financial needs of public schools. The approval of the Board of Directors, the favorable responses of teachers at workshops, and the general absence of strong opposition within the organization, all combined to indicate that a majority of the membership accepted these priorities. Other goals were directed toward special groups in the Association, not only because of the merits of the goals, but to encourage the support of these groups for the basic program. Such compromises contributed to a united effort, but invited attack from forces resisting the pressure of the OEA.

#### Allies and Adversaries

The OEA struggle to achieve its legislative goals was assisted by

what Association leaders were wont to call "friends of education" and obstructed by so-called "enemies." While some people were truly warm toward education and teachers, many "friends" were simply those whose interests coincided with the goals of the Association; by the same token, while there was occasional evidence of hostility, the "enemies" for the most part were individuals and groups whose positions, usually financial, were threatened by the changes sought by the educators. How to deal with these conflicting forces was a preoccupation of the OEA leadership.

The staunchest allies were those directly and immediately concerned with schools. The largest and most friendly of this type was the Congress of Parents and Teachers, made up of Parent-Teacher Associations found in almost every school system in the state.<sup>24</sup> Motivated by the desire for the best for their children currently in school, this group consistently worked closely with the OEA in developing its program and promoting its passage into law. They were particularly diligent in support of state questions submitted to voters, assisting in the elections of 1946, 1955, and 1964. Their numbers and their proximity to the local school scene made P-TA members useful agents of public relations for the schools.

The Oklahoma State School Boards Association, whose members were also stimulated by their immediate responsibilities, aligned themselves closely with the OEA. Reorganized in 1944 in a meeting called by OEA President G. T. Stubbs, the group relied heavily upon the guidance of

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<sup>24</sup>Jesse E. Burkett, "The Oklahoma Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1922-1957," (Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1958). Hereinafter referred to as Burkett, P-TA, to distinguish it from Burkett, "Legislative Programs," also cited in this paper. Burkett's treatment, including discussion of OEA-P-TA relations, substantiates this paragraph.

their executive officers, the superintendents.<sup>25</sup> They not only supported the OEA but reflected its weaknesses, particularly the rural-urban cleavage that embarrassed the Association so frequently.<sup>26</sup> Other allies engaged in educational activities were the State Department of Education and, until associational integration in 1955, the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers.

Several groups supported the OEA because they profited financially from their business with schools. The Oklahoma Bookmen's Association, consisting of representatives of textbook publishers, rated a seat on the Legislative Committee. Dealers in school supplies and equipment not only cultivated the good will of administrators but encouraged increased school budgets. Architects, contractors, and salesmen of furniture and equipment contributed heavily to the referendum campaign of 1955, devoted largely to increasing building funds.<sup>27</sup> In the late 1950's the Outdoor Advertisers Association found their need to keep their billboards covered with clean paper--hence, their willingness to contribute space to a worthy cause--coincided with the OEA's expanded public relations program.<sup>28</sup>

The principal opponents of OEA legislation were the larger taxpayers of the state. These businesses, owners of extensive property, and associations of taxpayers were reinforced by the traditional public opposition to tax increases. The most active organization of taxpayers

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<sup>25</sup>Albert M. Harris, "The Oklahoma State School Boards Association," (Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1955), p. 30.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>27</sup>Executive Committee, April 15, 1955.

<sup>28</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1959.

was the Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council. Founded in 1948 to replace the discredited State Chamber of Commerce,<sup>29</sup> this group disapproved all major efforts of the OEA to improve school financing, whether at the local, state, or national level.<sup>30</sup> The Retail Merchants Association opposed every form of tax upon business, a position that kept them at odds with the OEA requests for state funds.<sup>31</sup> Railroads and utilities provided some of the strongest opposition to legislation permitting increased levies on property.<sup>32</sup> The growing automobile tag revenue attracted the attention of groups desiring to transfer it, as a "road-users tax," away from schools to highways and city streets. The United Transport Association attempted to carry out such a move in 1950,<sup>33</sup> and the Oklahoma Municipal League circulated petitions to effect the change in 1960.<sup>34</sup> The Taxpayers Research Institute, solicitous about the effect of taxes upon industry, opposed the "Better Schools Amendment" of 1955.<sup>35</sup> The moderate efforts of the OEA toward school consolidation met persistent opposition from farm organizations, not only because rural people feared the loss of their local schools, but

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<sup>29</sup>Supra, Chapter III.

<sup>30</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 17, 1948, p. 1; December 1, 1955, p. 16; Board of Directors, December 11, 1964. These references provide examples of the nature of this group's charges against Oklahoma schools.

<sup>31</sup>Gilbert Hill, "Members of the Third House," Oklahoma's Orbit, Magazine of the Sunday Oklahoman, January 1, 1961, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>Tulsa World, March 11, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1950, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup>Board of Directors, August 18, 1960. The League dropped its effort in the face of a strong protest by the OEA.

<sup>35</sup>Oklahoma City Times, March 30, 1955, p. 1.

because reorganization invariably increased the tax load upon farm property.<sup>36</sup>

The general tenor of the Oklahoma press in the postwar period was unfriendly toward the OEA. It tended to view the organization, or at least its leaders, as a group apart from teachers and local schools. Newspapers did an adequate job, by the standards of modern journalism,<sup>37</sup> of reporting school news, and editors were uniformly cordial toward their hometown school personnel, both teachers and administrators. But they presented news of the organized profession, particularly its symbolic leader Ferman Phillips, more often than not with a negative bias. The state's largest newspapers in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, setting the tone followed by most smaller publications, consistently opposed OEA legislative goals, especially those calling for more money. Standard editorial practice was to emphasize and decry the Association's demands for greater appropriations, while challenging the group to take a stronger position on reforms, and to exploit divisions within the ranks of educators.<sup>38</sup>

The OEA leadership gave much of its time to public relations, cultivating its "friends" and countering or placating its opponents. The Oklahoma Teacher and the OEA Newsletter kept teachers apprised of both facets of the problem. Though hampered by a limited budget and, therefore, inadequate staff, the Association developed a public relations

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<sup>36</sup>Hill, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup>Criteria of what makes news, according to a basic college text in journalism, strongly suggest that the best work of schools and educators, and possibly education associations, is seldom newsworthy, being predictable and free of conflict or disaster. Juliann Hariss and Stanley Johnson, The Complete Reporter, A General Text in Journalistic Writing and Editing, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965).

<sup>38</sup>The generalizations of this paragraph are based upon a wide sampling of newspapers to be found in the State Historical Society Library, Oklahoma City. Many will be cited in subsequent pages.

department in the 1940's.<sup>39</sup> Internal unity was not the least concern of this effort. Such was the nature of the OEA's "legislative struggle" outside the halls of the capitol.

#### The Johnston Murray Administration

In the legislative sessions of 1951 and 1953 the OEA continued its pursuit of its major goal, increased state aid devoted mainly to teachers' salaries. Governor Johnston Murray, repeatedly vowing his sympathy with the teachers' needs, opposed increased state appropriations, insisting instead that the money be raised at the local level through ad valorem tax reform and further consolidation of schools.

Murray had campaigned on the promise of economy in government and no new taxes. He indicated favorable intentions toward the problems of education, praising the efforts of the OEA and inviting its advice, though never specifically endorsing the Association's program.<sup>40</sup> His inaugural address repeated his campaign theme and cited the Korean War as a new imperative against increased expenditures, unless perhaps for civil defense.<sup>41</sup> To the legislature he spelled out what economy in government would mean to schools: Because of the "tragic and unfortunate existence of a national emergency," institutions of higher education would have to confine themselves to maintaining current programs without any increase in appropriations; common schools might fare better in the apportioning of available funds, though requests of school leaders would have to be reduced stringently. He said he would honor the Democratic

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<sup>39</sup>Supra, Chapter, VI.

<sup>40</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1950, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 9, 1951, p. 5.

Platform position on education which promised a "minimum wage" for teachers of \$2,400, but he reaffirmed his stand against new taxes.<sup>42</sup>

The press, led by the metropolitan dailies, praised the governor's stance and cautioned that its greatest threat came from the "school bloc," which the editors said had become the state's most effective pressure group. The Daily Oklahoman, juxtaposing its editorial in the same issue with the governor's inaugural address, as though warning the chief executive and the public, credited the OEA with great political strength, and said "state funds gravitate toward the degree of power possessed by any given pressure bloc."<sup>43</sup>

This editorial alarm possibly stemmed from observing the preparation of the OEA prior to the 1951 session. Since 1949, under the presidencies of William D. Carr and Garland Godfrey and the Legislative Committee chairmanship of J. Win Payne, the Association had been developing a legislative program that due to last, in essence, for fifteen years. Remembering the "Better Schools Amendments" of 1946, and apprehensive over slow progress due to continued strong resistance in the legislature, the leaders were seriously contemplating submitting their more nearly fundamental goals to a vote of the people. Such a step would be initiated by petition unless the legislature took the responsibility of referring the measures to the voters.<sup>44</sup>

Five questions were being considered in 1951. Three of them were part of a long-sought "permanent plan" for school financing: One would

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<sup>42</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 10, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 9, 1951, p. 20.

<sup>44</sup>Board of Directors, May 11, 1949; November 14, 1950; January 20, 1951.



remove the limitation upon the millage the local district could levy upon property. Another would raise the maximum permissible bonded indebtedness of a district from five to ten percent, thus permitting new construction. And a third would dedicate a fixed share of the state's revenue for common schools. Other measures would provide for continuing contracts for teachers and an elected State Board of Education. As the legislature convened, the Board of Directors noted that the Korean War endangered these questions, as well as the entire OEA program.<sup>45</sup>

War, the demands of teachers, and the coolness of the governor, all contributed to the decision of the Steering Committee to concentrate upon the common school bill with its provision for higher education.<sup>46</sup> This bill, introduced by its main author Representative E. T. Dunlap, approximated the salary goal of the OEA, providing for an annual salary of \$2,400 for a beginning teacher with a bachelor's degree and ten yearly increments of seventy-five dollars each. Non-degree teachers would start at \$1,900, and those with master's degrees would receive \$2,600.<sup>47</sup> These amounts represented an increase of \$400 per year. Other items in the bill provided increases in basic aid, maintenance, and transportation.

Governor Murray immediately expressed his displeasure with the bill which would unbalance his budget by \$12,000,000 and require the raising of new revenue.<sup>48</sup> The Daily Oklahoman observed that a vote for the bill

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<sup>45</sup>Board of Directors, January 20, 1951.

<sup>46</sup>Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>47</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1951, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 25, 1951, p. 1.

would be merely an "expression of sentiment" in view of the limited treasury and, condemning the OEA for asking for a pay increase at a time when the federal government was freezing wages and salaries, urged defeat of the measure.<sup>49</sup> In spite of this recommendation and the governor's opposition, the House of Representatives approved the school bill overwhelmingly.<sup>50</sup> The OEA made a concerted effort to get the Senate to do the same, but the upper house, acceding to the wishes of the governor, returned the House bill to committee to allow time to find a solution to the impasse.<sup>51</sup>

The governor now launched an all-out campaign to equalize property assessments across the state at a level that would provide sufficient funds for schools without an increase in state taxes. When the OEA leadership refused to bear the brunt of the governor's program by making it a priority goal of the Association,<sup>52</sup> Murray appealed directly to the teachers of the state in a form letter entitled "The Real Teacher Salary Problem." Noting that assessed valuations in the state were lower than they were in 1930, he declared that correction of this situation would "solve your salary problem where it should be solved--at home! And it will be solved on a permanent basis." He pointedly disagreed with "higher echelons of Oklahoma education" who were insisting the salary problem must be solved at the state level.<sup>53</sup> Phillips replied that "any

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<sup>49</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 2, 1951, p. 1; February 3, 1951, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 8, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 20, 1951; Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>52</sup>Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>53</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1951, p. 11.

reasonable workable plan of ad valorem tax assessment submitted by the chief executive . . . will . . . have the support of all echelons of education in Oklahoma."<sup>54</sup>

The governor won a weak tax reform measure, but the hero of the session as regarded common school financing was the chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Raymond Gary. Taking the lead in a search for revenue, he pushed through the Senate a tax on beer, which promised enough income to pay for a large portion of the school appropriation.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately signed by the "no-new-tax" governor, the beer tax was the key to passage of the common school bill. Reported as a "victory for the school bloc," the conference committee version of the Dunlap bill provided for a \$300 raise for teachers--not the \$400 asked--and increased funds for other aspects of school operation.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the session the OEA followed the normal strategy of keeping unrelenting pressure upon the lawmakers. At the most crucial point in the struggle the Board of Directors insisted that there be no compromise.<sup>57</sup> Such a resolution always carried with it a tacit signal to the Steering Committee to do what it must to get all the program passed that was possible.<sup>58</sup> Near the end of the session Phillips recounting both achievements and difficulties of the Twenty-Third Legislature, condemned the governor for his unwillingness to compromise.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 22, 1951, p. 1; May 15, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 9, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup>Board of Directors, March 17, 1951.

<sup>58</sup>Willingham interview; Phillips interviews; interviews with several OEA presidents.

<sup>59</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1951, p. 11.

Conflict between Murray and the OEA smouldered throughout the interval between legislatures. At the state convention in 1951 the governor struck hard at the Association's position on school consolidation, charging that there were "too many chiefs and not enough Indians" among educators, and blaming the "chiefs" for most of the ills suffered by teachers.<sup>60</sup> In 1952 the OEA adopted a new set of legislative goals, a second sixteen-point program prepared by the Legislative Committee headed by William D. Carr, repeating most of the previous program and including substantial new increases in state expenditures for schools.<sup>61</sup> The governor responded with a statement that he hoped to keep school appropriations at the same level as that of the past biennium. Phillips quickly replied that that would not be adequate.<sup>62</sup>

On the same day the Board of Directors took one of several steps the OEA leadership considered useful in gaining political strength for the coming election and legislative session. It endorsed Senator Robert S. Kerr for president, thus continuing its support of federal aid to education and those who consistently voted for it, and also carrying the favor of Democratic candidates for the legislature who hoped to win in the wake of the popular senator.<sup>63</sup> Later, The Oklahoma Teacher published the educational planks from the platforms of the two major parties, again showing, without comment, which party agreed with the OEA goal of federal

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<sup>60</sup> Daily Oklahoman, October 18, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Board of Directors, January 26, 1952.

<sup>62</sup> Tulsa World, March 23, 1952, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Board of Directors, March 22, 1952.

aid.<sup>64</sup> The journal had already published an article urging teachers to participate more fully in politics, at least to vote and to support candidates friendly to education.<sup>65</sup> Phillips devoted his pre-election columns to the need for a cooperative legislature.<sup>66</sup>

To rally the Association on the eve of the 1953 legislative session, the leaders not only exhorted the members to greater unity but took special steps to improve relations with two important elements, the county superintendents and the college teachers. The Executive Committee voted to help with the costs of the administrators' state meeting and decided to meet with them to discuss ways of strengthening the county office. During the same session, the Committee considered ways to assist higher educators with their problems and arranged to meet with college administrators to explore the matter further.<sup>67</sup> The OEA needed the professors, and, with an unfriendly governor in office, the college teachers seemed more than usually amenable to closer ties with the Association. The 1951 appropriation for higher institutions, being two million dollars higher than the governor's budget planned to allow, possibly enhanced the plausibility of the OEA goal in support of higher education. The Daily Oklahoman, performing what had become a biennial ritual, attacked the move toward greater unity by warning that common schools would get the lion's share of new appropriations "to the detriment of higher

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<sup>64</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1952, p. 22.

<sup>65</sup>Al Jennings, "Politicians and You," The Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1951, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1952, p. 24; October, 1952, p. 21.

<sup>67</sup>Executive Committee, January 16, 1953.

education."<sup>68</sup>

With the legislature chosen, The Oklahoma Teacher pictured its leaders prominently and praised them for their past record and future promise.<sup>69</sup> They were an imposing array of friends of the OEA, including Senate Education Chairman Bryan Dacus, superintendent of schools at Gotebo, Clem Hamilton, superintendent at Panama, LeRoy McClendon, superintendent at Haworth, and Henry Cooper, former superintendent at Atoka and currently field service director of the OEA. Speaker of the House of Representatives was James C. Nance, a dedicated opponent of ad valorem taxes and, therefore, an ally of the OEA in the latter's drive for state funds.<sup>70</sup> The president pro tempore of the Senate was Raymond Gary, widely regarded as the most able man in the legislature. He had consistently supported the OEA in the past, and as the session opened he contributed an article to The Oklahoma Teacher praising the Association and predicting success for its program.<sup>71</sup>

The OEA program submitted to the legislature was virtually the same as the one sought in 1951. Request items selected from the sixteen-point program included three constitutional amendments, to be initiated by legislative referendum, raising the building bond limit for districts, providing for continuing contracts for teachers, and changing the method of choosing the State Board of Education. The program still called for retention of the automobile tag tax and equalization of the ad valorem

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<sup>68</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 4, 1953, p. 20.

<sup>69</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>70</sup>Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>71</sup>Raymond Gary, "A Senator Views the Outlook for Oklahoma Education," The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1953, p. 15.

tax. Again the highest priority went to the common schools bill, providing for lighter teaching loads, increased retirement payments, and higher salaries. The base salary asked was \$2,400, to be augmented by fifteen annual increments of \$100.<sup>72</sup>

The school bill went through the legislature in record time, being presented to the governor before the end of February. With E. T. Dunlap gone from the House of Representatives, where for many years he had chaired the education committee, the legislative leaders decided to advance the Senate version of the bill. Upon its passage through the upper house, without a dissenting vote, the governor declared the \$63,500,000 measure was "out of kilter" with his budget and asked the Representatives to trim it down.<sup>73</sup> Realizing he was about to lose his fight in the House, he made a stronger plea against the bill, renewing his demand that schools seek more money at the local level, and charging again that administrative costs--"too many chiefs"--were at the root of the teacher salary problem.<sup>74</sup> In noisy defiance of the governor, with many members harshly criticizing the chief executive, the House passed the Senate bill without change, and without a negative vote.<sup>75</sup> Never before had a major common schools bill passed both houses unanimously.<sup>76</sup>

Murray appealed to the public to support his position, stating that he would wait their response before acting upon the school bill. In

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<sup>72</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>73</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 21, 1953, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 24, 1953, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 26, 1953, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup>Carr interview. Carr was at this time chairman of the Legislative Committee.

answer to a newsman's inquiry, Phillips said he had not asked teachers to write, but "they might do so."<sup>77</sup> An avalanche of mail descended upon the governor, most of it from teachers, students, and members of the P-TA, overwhelmingly in favor of the legislation. In a radio address Murray angrily said he was speaking to all the people except teachers: "I am not listening to teachers any more, because they have been subjected to pressure by the superintendents." Phillips replied that no pressure was needed to get teachers to favor an OEA bill. C. E. Grady, Oklahoma County superintendent, went further, stating that, to the contrary, "the teachers are taking the lead and pushing the superintendents."<sup>78</sup>

The governor permitted the bill to become law without his signature. In a message to the House of Representatives explaining his action, he said he had received over 10,000 letters, and was convinced the "people as a whole are confused." He blamed the confusion upon the "highly organized administrative groups" who had for years "enriched themselves at the expense of the Oklahoma taxpayers." He charged that on the day the school bill was passed by the House that superintendents and teachers had closed their schools to come to the capital to "pressure" the legislature. Enumerating other alleged wrongdoings, summarized as "lawlessness, misrepresentation, and intimidation," he urged the lawmakers to investigate and take steps to correct a situation that "threatens the very foundations of the morals of our future generations."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 28, 1953, p. 6.

<sup>78</sup>Henryetta Free Lance, March 1, 1953.

<sup>79</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1953, p. 19.



The OEA Board of Directors adopted a resolution asking for a complete investigation of the governor's charges. Stating that it represented 18,000 teachers--"both chiefs and Indians"--the Board demanded "that the governor either prove or retract his charges."<sup>80</sup> A committee appointed by Speaker Nance found the OEA and school personnel in general not guilty of any act "of a reprehensible nature." The committee's report said that there had been "no more pressure brought to bear on this legislature than any of the previous ones."<sup>81</sup>

The common schools bill of 1953 brought basic teacher salaries up to \$2,400 per year, a gain of \$400 during the Murray Administration. It set the minimum retirement pay at \$100 per month, thus reaching a portion of a major goal of the Association.<sup>82</sup> Other appropriations, including those for higher education, were raised moderately. Taxes earmarked for schools remained so dedicated. But other goals of the OEA were still to be attained, the most pressing of these being the basic financial proposals dependent upon constitutional amendment. The political and economic climate of the Murray years had proved unfavorable for their initiation.<sup>83</sup>

#### The Raymond Gary Administration

The OEA made its greatest financial gains of the postwar period in the legislative sessions of 1955 and 1957, during the governorship of Raymond Gary. Average annual salaries for public school teachers

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<sup>80</sup>Board of Directors, March 10, 1953.

<sup>81</sup>Executive Committee, May 1, 1953.

<sup>82</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 26, 1953, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup>Phillips interview no. 4.

increased \$1,076, from \$3,570 in 1954-1955, the last year of the Murray Administration, to \$4,646 in 1958-1959, the last school year of Gary's term.<sup>84</sup> During this period Oklahoma reached an OEA goal of the 1940's calling for a four-year minimum preparation for all teachers, and became the leading state in the nation in the number of teachers with degrees.<sup>85</sup> These achievements and the good will of the governor led many educators at that time and later to think of the "Gary years" as the best they had experienced. Phillips epitomized the view of OEA officialdom in 1955 when he described as "something of a novelty" the situation of working with a friendly governor, and in the middle 1960's he looked back upon the Gary Administration as the most favorable for the Association.<sup>86</sup>

Much of the OEA's success under Governor Gary was due to its careful preparation prior to his inauguration and the convening of the Twenty-Fifth Legislature in 1955. The Legislative Committee appointed in 1953, headed by George Roberts of Bartlesville, developed a new set of goals and approved introducing certain measures by initiative petition.<sup>87</sup> By the end of 1954 the Committee had prepared and the Board had accepted four specific constitutional amendments to be submitted to the legislature or to be placed on petitions for early circulation. Similar to those considered in 1951, the four measures would have liberalized local building funds, raised the limit on bonded indebtedness, given school boards more freedom in voting local taxes, and permitted the

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<sup>84</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup>Supra, Chapter VIII.

<sup>86</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1955, p. 6; Phillips interview no.

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<sup>87</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, March, 1954, pp. 31-33.

people to vote a five-mill "emergency" levy in each district. In addition to these provisions for local revenue, the standard goals requiring increased state appropriations remained on the legislative program.<sup>88</sup>

The Committee introduced a significant new goal in February, 1954, when, in anticipation of a United States Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation, it proposed to end the separate financing of minority schools. The four-mill levy voted by local districts for Negro schools would be voted county-wide throughout the state for the benefit of all schools.<sup>89</sup> This goal was approved by the Board of Directors but was not to be inserted into the OEA program until segregation was declared unconstitutional in Oklahoma.<sup>90</sup> Approximately \$8,000,000 per year was involved in the separate levy, and its "recapture" became one of the first concerns of Governor Gary when he took office.<sup>91</sup>

Not only did the Association have a program ready in 1955. It had contributed to the election of the legislature, helping return several "school bloc" stalwarts to the statehouse. More important, it had helped elect the governor. Although it followed its policy of not formally endorsing a candidate, never had the preference of the OEA been so clear. Through the OEA Newsletter Phillips revealed to the membership that William O. Coe, Gary's run-off primary opponent, had not only refused to meet with the Legislative Committee to discuss school problems, but had made hostile statements against the organization and its program.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Board of Directors, December 18, 1954.

<sup>89</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 3, 1954, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup>Board of Directors, March 6, 1954.

<sup>91</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 6, 1955, p. B2.

<sup>92</sup>Mid Morning News, July 22, 1954; Phillips interview no. 4.

Farris E. Willingham, the OEA president, campaigned openly for the senator, and let it be known to teachers that the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, while not taking formal action, supported the candidate.<sup>93</sup> With the blessings of the Executive Committee, the staff provided the president a car to facilitate his "field work" during the campaign.<sup>94</sup> After the election, Willingham continued to work closely with the governor, serving on the Inaugural Committee and as marshal of the inaugural parade.<sup>95</sup>

With the president so active, Phillips worked more quietly than usual. With the governor and legislature more favorable to the OEA than any previous ones had been, he was comparatively free from the normal necessities of politics and could concentrate more on preparation and enactment of a program.<sup>96</sup> He did not publish his "As We View It" column until the legislative session was under way. Willingham, on the other hand, was contributing more to the journal than had most presidents. His September message was the most militant in several years as he spelled out the school problems and demanded action.<sup>97</sup> In November he made a bold new proposal to raise money for schools by taxing the trucking industry.<sup>98</sup>

Governor Gary made school financing his first order of business and

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<sup>93</sup>Ada Evening News, July 22, 1954; Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>94</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>95</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1955, p. 4; Willingham interview.

<sup>96</sup>Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>97</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1954, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup>Farris E. Willingham, "A Mill a Mile for a Million," The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1954, p. 3.

decided early to submit the problem to a vote of the people.<sup>99</sup> Working closely with education committees in the legislature and with the OEA Legislative Committee, he gradually made the OEA program of amendments his own. He was most anxious to retain the revenue of the four-mill levy for separate schools. But he was reluctant to go on record for raises in other local levies, favoring instead an increase in property valuations.<sup>100</sup> Oklahoma City and Tulsa wanted permission to vote ten mills, but key members of the legislature said they could approve no more than five. After cautiously waiting for consensus to develop, Gary agreed to the smaller amount.<sup>101</sup> A committee of five senators, five representatives, and several OEA leaders prepared the final draft of the governor's proposal.<sup>102</sup> It passed both houses and was signed by the governor on March 10. As a single question, which the OEA had already dubbed the "Better Schools Amendment," the measure was presented to the people for a vote on April 5.<sup>103</sup>

The Better Schools Amendment packaged several goals of the OEA, including priority items sought for many years.<sup>104</sup> It freed the local five-mill building fund levy from its restriction to new construction, permitting its use for remodeling, repairs, and furniture. It raised the debt limitation on school districts from five percent of the assessed valuation to ten percent, thus permitting schools to expand their

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<sup>99</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 22, 1955, p. 16.

<sup>100</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 25, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 1, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 25, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 10, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup>Board of Directors, March 10, 1955.

building programs. For operation of schools, it permitted districts to vote a five-mill "emergency" levy, over and beyond the existing five mills automatically appropriated each year by the county and the fifteen that might be authorized by the school board. The new levy was limited to the amount necessary to bring the per-student cost of education in the district to \$250, which was approximately the state average at that time.<sup>105</sup> The money raised by the five mills was not to be charged against the district's state aid, assuring the local voters that the entire amount would be expended locally. The long-standing four-mill levy for Negro schools, voted permissively in districts maintaining separate facilities, was replaced by a county-wise levy of the same amount, to be applied mandatorily statewide. This levy would be charged against state aid, thus having the effect of shifting a portion of school financing from the state to the local level in those districts which had previously not levied the separate tax. The Amendment further provided for the issuance of \$15,000,000 worth of bonds for "institutions of higher education and other institutions," the debt to be retired by a tax on cigarettes already in effect to pay for a previous bond issue. And, finally, the measure provided that school districts might enter into one-year contracts with teachers prior to the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1. This opened the way for a continuing contract law, sought by teachers as a step toward greater security in their positions.

The campaign for approval of the Better Schools Amendment began the day it was signed by the governor. The OEA Board of Directors approved it that day by a unanimous roll call vote and authorized the president

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<sup>105</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

to appoint a campaign committee.<sup>106</sup> In addition to officials of the OEA, this committee included M. A. Nash, chancellor to the Regents for Higher Education, J. G. Stratton, president of the State School Boards Association, Mrs. Fred Scott, president of the Congress of Parents and Teachers, F. D. Moon, representing Negro teachers, and Oliver Hodge, state superintendent.<sup>107</sup> Willingham and Phillips set the pace for a whirlwind speaking campaign, and OEA units all over the state conducted mass meetings to acquaint citizens with the provisions of the proposal. Contributions poured in from "friends of education," particularly from building contractors and dealers in school supplies and equipment, to such an extent that one dollar in four donated was not needed and was returned to the contributors.<sup>108</sup> Always sensitive to the sources of opposition, Phillips assured the voters that the amendment would not establish a state property tax, that it made no change in the homestead exemption law, and that it did not end racial segregation.<sup>109</sup>

Governor Gary went on television the night after he signed the proposal, spoke to the OEA Central District convention the next day, and went on to make over thirty speeches for the amendment in the twenty-six day campaign.<sup>110</sup> Many lawmakers worked for the measures, as the legislature virtually marked time until the crucial school finance situation could be clarified. The Daily Oklahoman observed that the governor was

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<sup>106</sup>Board of Directors, March 10, 1955.

<sup>107</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1955, p. 10.

<sup>108</sup>Executive Committee, April 15, 1955.

<sup>109</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1955, p. 11.

<sup>110</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 3, 1955, p. 1.

staking his prestige on the outcome of the voting.<sup>111</sup>

Very little open or organized opposition developed. Apparently railroads, utilities, and other large taxpayers provided the most significant resistance.<sup>112</sup> The Taxpayers Research Institute called the measure "complicated beyond the comprehension of the general public," and warned that it would discourage industry.<sup>113</sup> Northwestern counties objected to extending the separate school levy into their area where few Negroes lived. The Enid Daily Eagle added to this argument the complaint that the amendment was "just too complicated."<sup>114</sup> This objection appeared in many papers, including the Daily Oklahoman, which, though ultimately grudgingly accepting the proposal, subjected it and the method of its formulation to a barrage of negative criticism.<sup>115</sup> In a blatantly misleading statement about the OEA, the big daily said the Association was less enthusiastic about the proposal than it would have been for its own program.<sup>116</sup>

The Better Schools Amendment passed by a vote of 231,097 to 73,021 in a heavier turnout of voters than was expected. Only seven counties voted against the measure, all three of those in the Panhandle, three others in the northwest, and one, Love County, in the south.<sup>117</sup> Governor

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<sup>111</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 6, 1955, p. B2.

<sup>112</sup>Tulsa World, March 11, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup>Oklahoma City Times, March 30, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup>Clinton Daily News, February 22, 1955.

<sup>115</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 11, 1955, p. 10; March 21, 1955, p. 18; March 31, 1955, p. 18; April 3, 1955, p. 18.

<sup>116</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 6, 1955, p. B2.

<sup>117</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 6, 1955, p. 1.



Gary was "jubilant" and asked the legislature to take speedy action to vitalize the amendment and close out the session, school legislation being the key to his total program.<sup>118</sup> Phillips thought the election showed that the people of Oklahoma really were interested in schools and would put up the money, and he boasted that "school people and their friends" can exert a lot of influence. He praised the governor and thanked him for "throwing himself so wholeheartedly into a program advanced by school people."<sup>119</sup>

But the relationship between the OEA and the chief executive had now changed. The Association needed the governor to help complete the enactment of its program, but the governor no longer needed the Association. In fact, the two were soon in disagreement, as the Steering Committee resumed its priority effort for state aid, calling for a \$600 raise in salaries.<sup>120</sup> Gary opposed the increase on the grounds that the people had just provided a means of raising the necessary new funds at the local level. In complete control of the legislature--and, as a current wit observed, having had more legislative experience than even Phillips--he by-passed the House Education Committee, where the OEA bill was being considered, and arranged to have his common schools bill reported out of the Revenue Committee and approved without amendment.<sup>121</sup> When the OEA was able to get a more favorable measure through the Senate, the governor again insisted that his budget limit of \$61,000,000 for

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<sup>118</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 7, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1955, p. 10.

<sup>120</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 8, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 14, 1955, p. 1.

common schools was not to be exceeded.<sup>122</sup> The governor won, with the final passage of the House version of his bill, providing no increase in base salaries.<sup>123</sup>

During the interval between the legislative sessions of 1955 and 1957, the OEA followed its established cycle of activity. It appointed a new Legislative Committee with Jesse W. Martin of Nowata as its chairman, and methodically updated its goals. Because the leadership felt that the legislature was essentially favorable, the state political effort took the form of trying to re-elect the friendly lawmakers. Communications with the governor remained open and for the most part cordial.<sup>124</sup>

The new legislative program continued most of the previous goals and introduced two new ones.<sup>125</sup> The salary aim continued to be \$3,000 and fifteen \$100 increments. The extension of social security to teachers raised new questions about teacher retirement. After much discussion in meetings and workshops through 1955, the Board adopted the Legislative Committee's proposal to keep both programs. Permissive retirement at age sixty after thirty years of service was also proposed, accompanying the previous goal of gaining state funds to make the retirement system actuarially secure. A retreat on district reorganization brought the Association back to its former weak position. Reflecting rural strength on the Committee and the Board, a new goal was introduced to extend the responsibilities of the county superintendent. Another new goal was a

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<sup>122</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 27, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>123</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 25, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup>Willingham interview.

<sup>125</sup>Board of Directors, November 19, 1955.

state financed program of adult education.

J. Win Payne, OEA president for 1956-1957, undertook to strengthen the Association's position by making additional stronger proposals of his own. For many years superintendent of schools at Ponca City, and nationally reputed as an educational leader, Payne had served on the Legislative Committee for ten years and had been its chairman when the basic program of the 1950's was formulated. His method was to base his proposals upon research and to use logical presentation of facts to lead teachers and legislators toward his position. In his September message he reviewed the school situation as he saw it, including not only the need for greater financial outlays for schools, but also the need for improved curricula, district reorganization to improve instructional programs, and greater leadership from educators.<sup>126</sup> The president then presented his own goals for 1956-1957. Similar to the adopted program of the Association, his would go farther in the areas of local levies, reorganization, equalizing taxes, free textbooks, and teacher retirement. He asked for starting salaries of \$3,600, \$600 above the OEA goal, and \$1,200 above the existing base.<sup>127</sup>

Governor Gary was not prepared to meet the Payne proposal, but in his opening address to the legislature he offered to meet the OEA goal within two years, with a \$300 raise the first year, another \$300 the second. He would leave the annual increments at twelve until every teacher had reached the minimum of \$3,000 per year. He also recommended moderate increases in other areas of common school operation, and an

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<sup>126</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1956, p. 11.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

appropriation increase of \$2,000,000 for higher education.<sup>128</sup> The Daily Oklahoman noted that the governor was still on friendly terms with the legislature and would probably get what he asked. Phillips commented on the friendly spirit of the governor even though his proposals did not measure up to the wishes of the OEA.<sup>129</sup>

The House of Representatives voted the full OEA request in spite of Gary's instructions, but the Senate, including "bloc" leaders McClendon and Hamilton, yielded to the governor's wishes and referred the House bill to committee, thus at least decelerating its progress.<sup>130</sup> Upon the advice of the Steering Committee, the Board of Directors met to consider the situation. In a closely divided vote, sixty-four to sixty-one, the Board authorized the Steering Committee to proceed to get the "best possible program" enacted. The show of some distrust of the Committee apparently grew out of fear of a compromise that would permit a measure of district reorganization. The deliberations revealed that a few leaders thought Gary would move closer to the OEA goal if some minor consolidation contributed to financing it. By voice vote, the Board reaffirmed its opposition to involuntary reorganization. While the Board recessed, the Steering Committee met with the governor and legislative leaders, but gained no concession from the chief executive. The Board adjourned, unable to agree upon any new instructions for the Committee.<sup>131</sup>

At the regular meeting of the Board in March President Payne

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<sup>128</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 9, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1957, p. 13.

<sup>130</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 27, 1957, p. 1; February 6, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>131</sup>Board of Directors, February 11, 1957.

reported that the Steering Committee was functioning well and promised that there would be no compromise on any goal.<sup>132</sup> Apparently influenced by the OEA effort, the Senate approved its version of the bill, which would raise teachers' pay immediately by \$400, the other \$200 coming later. Gary said the bill was "too rich" and could be accepted only if consolidation were enacted. He repeated this condition to OEA leaders the next day and discussed with them the details of his proposal.<sup>133</sup>

Although the legislators voted their "sentiments" against the consolidation plan, the governor's common schools bill passed both houses in early April, basically unaltered from his January outline. It granted one concession to the OEA, that of authorizing fifteen increments in the second year of the biennium. Base pay the first year would be \$2,700, the second year \$3,000. To gain the concession on increments, the OEA accepted the governor's reorganization plan, with Payne, who favored consolidation in spite of the vote of the Board, leading in the bargaining. The governor's plan consisted of raising the minimum enrollment of schools receiving state aid, elementary schools being increased from thirteen to fifteen, high schools from twenty-five to forty. Districts smaller than this were left free to operate if they could do so without state assistance.<sup>134</sup> Teacher retirement was placed on a sounder basis with the assignment of seventy-eight percent of the natural gas tax to the system.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Board of Directors, March 2, 1957.

<sup>133</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 5, 1957, p. 1; March 6, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>134</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 2, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1957, p. 21.

The Gary years had been comparatively productive for the OEA, but by the end of the 1957 session there were foreboding signs of reaction against the organization. The tensions of the legislative struggle virtually ended communication between the Association and the governor by the time he left office. The clamor of teachers against their continued low salaries led Gary to invite those who were unhappy with his efforts to leave the state, as many continued to do. Possibly more portentous for the OEA was the rise of press opposition during the 1957 session, either reflecting or leading public opinion. The balance between approval and disapproval which had been temporarily tilted in favor of the OEA was apparently moving in the other direction.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Willingham interview; Phillips interview no. 4.

## CHAPTER X

### THE LEGISLATIVE STRUGGLE, 1958-1964

The OEA struggle intensified after 1957, as educators nationwide were whipsawed between forces demanding revolutionary improvements in education and those stubbornly resisting acceleration of change. Many factors contributed to growing discontent with slow progress, but it was the Russian sputnik that alarmed the nation into a frenzy of activity, beset as much with recrimination as with reform. Old conflicts which had smoldered now burst into flame as a new sense of urgency heated the processes of development. National concern brought new demands for a greater federal effort in education, while the traditional opponents of school financing insisted that traditional sources continue to bear the burden. Federal aid, thwarted during the Eisenhower Administration except for emergency programs in the name of defense, became a major issue in a presidential election for the first time, in 1960, when John F. Kennedy took a strong campaign position for it. The defeat of federal aid in 1961 and 1962, following the new expectation that at last it might become a reality, led to bitter reaction among teachers across the land.<sup>1</sup> Young teachers, particularly "angry young men," having entered the profession as an economic step upward from humble backgrounds, or as a sincere effort to serve society, or, typically, for both of these reasons,

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<sup>1</sup>John M. Lumley, "Education Thwarted in the Eighty-Seventh Congress," NEA Journal, November, 1962, p. 26; Executive Committee, October 25, 1961; October 24, 1962.

were shocked at the measure of public indifference to either aspiration.<sup>2</sup>

Oklahoma teachers were part of the national ferment. As a group they were becoming younger, gaining in the ratio of men to women, investing more than ever in their preparation as they added steadily to the number of higher degrees they held.<sup>3</sup> But they lagged behind teachers in other states in the amount of return on their investments, and in the early 1960's they began to fall farther behind at an increasing rate. On a scale assigning the national average salary the base figure of 100, Oklahoma declined from 90.9 in 1950 to 90.0 in 1960. By 1962 the state had dropped to 88.8, by 1964 to 85.5, and in the school term of 1964-1965 stood at 82.2.<sup>4</sup> During the twenty postwar years the average annual increase in Oklahoma teacher salaries was \$204. Between 1959 and 1963 it dropped to \$150. The gain in 1963-1964 was \$45, and in 1964-1965 only \$10.<sup>5</sup> The average salary in 1964-1965 of \$5,312 ranked thirty-third among the states, down from twenty-fourth in 1954-1955, and included many beginning teachers drawing a minimum of \$3,800. Most teachers felt that the salary situation was the most basic and urgent of their problems, a viewpoint that kept the salary goals of the OEA in the position of number-one priority.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Sam M. Lambert, "Angry Young Men in Education," NEA Journal, February, 1963, p. 17; Lambert, "More About the Angry Young Men," NEA Journal, May, 1963, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, Chapter IV.

<sup>4</sup>NEA, Research Report 1966-R7: Economic Status of Teachers in 1965-1966, Washington, D. C., 1967.

<sup>5</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Bob Harvey, "Teacher Salaries--Oklahoma's and Others!," The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1964, p. 14.



The OEA's quest for funds after 1957 continued to meet traditional opposition, but the effort was further complicated by changes in Oklahoma's party politics. The Democratic Party, to whose regular organization the Association had looked for years for support of its program, fell apart under the stress of energetic leadership by a reform governor, J. Howard Edmondson. It then lost the governorship to the state's first Republican chief executive, Henry Bellmon. The OEA needed a friendly governor to shift the close balance of forces in the legislature. Edmondson was favorable to increased funds for education, but his reform measures made first call upon his energies and then contributed to his loss of the control of the legislature. Bellmon, openly antagonistic toward the OEA leadership because of its affinity for Democrats, vetoed the Association's salary bill, and, when the teachers took their program to the voters by initiative petition, he led the public in a vote of repudiation.

The Association was weakened at this time of trouble by internal divisions, the more extreme among rebellious elements threatening to "rule or ruin" the organization. The most serious challenges came from rural and small school members who objected to compulsory consolidation of districts, and from urban teachers who demanded a greater voice in the governing boards and committees, blaming the failures of the Association upon small-school administrator domination. Elected and appointed leaders found themselves battling negative forces both within and without the organization.

#### The J. Howard Edmondson Administration

President Edna Donley launched an auspicious legislative cycle in 1957 when she appointed J. Win Payne chairman of the Legislative

Committee. Payne had held this position from 1949 to 1951, had served continuously on the Committee since that time, and as immediate past president of the Association was probably the most able person in the state for the post. With the help of Payne and Phillips, Miss Donley assembled what she thought was a superior committee, insisting upon two or more nominations from each district to assure her a wider choice in the selections.<sup>7</sup>

With his characteristic audacity, Payne attacked two of the most persistent problems of the Association, financing and district reorganization, proposing plans that he hoped would approach final solutions. To put an end to the biennial battle for state funds, he proposed that a fixed percentage of state revenue be dedicated to schools. A subcommittee arrived at the figures of ten to twelve percent of total state revenue to be guaranteed for higher education, and a fraction for common schools great enough to bring Oklahoma's per-student cost of education to seventy-eight percent of the national average.<sup>8</sup>

A subcommittee on reorganization recommended a plan developed by Garland Godfrey, who had made an extensive study of the problem including an examination of successful programs in other states. Essentially, Godfrey's proposal called for a state commission to supervise district reorganization. Each county would also have a commission to study the local situation and, with the help and consent of the people affected, to develop a plan of consolidation meeting minimum criteria set by the state. If a county could not arrive at a decision within a specified period of time, the state commission would perform the task. New

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<sup>7</sup>Donley interview.

<sup>8</sup>Board of Directors, January 25, 1958.

districts would be of such size as to insure optimum programs of instruction and, because of economies effected, to contribute to the state financial plan. Both proposals, finance and reorganization, would be submitted to the people by initiative petition.<sup>9</sup>

Speaking for the goals around the state, Payne expressed belief that the new interest in education aroused by the advent of the Space Age would contribute to the passage of the measures. He also pointed out the opposition, anti-tax and anti-reorganization groups, some, he regretfully observed, being members of the OEA.<sup>10</sup> The Daily Oklahoman led the state press in opposing the finance plan, with frequent editorials and news items with slanted headlines.<sup>11</sup>

A lethal attack upon Payne's proposals came from representatives of small schools, led by W. L. Findly, superintendent of the Big Four District in Kingfisher County. Findly called upon the rural teachers and administrators to organize to make their voices heard in the OEA, warning, "We must or we die." Stating that many of "our people" would quit the Association if they were not recognized, he demanded that the reorganization plan be dropped. He also attacked the salary goals of the OEA, arguing that they could not be met under the existing tax structure of the state without extensive consolidation.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 300 representatives of the small schools met and agreed upon a program to present to the Association. Findly insisted this action was not a

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid; interview with Garland Godfrey, Edmond, July 2, 1969.

<sup>10</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 5, 1958, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup>Daily Oklahoman, December 22, 1957, p. 2D; February 2, 1958, p. 1D; February 13, 1958, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 12, 1958, p. 1.

rebellion, but rather a search for a "sensible solution" to a difficult problem, the crux of the solution being to leave the little schools alone and to wait for the local citizens to initiate change.<sup>13</sup>

The rural group presented seven goals to the OEA Board at the March, 1958, meeting. The most important one was that there be no expansion of the existing OEA policy on reorganization and that there be no sponsorship of compulsory consolidation. A second proposal echoed the standard demand of OEA's principal detractors that any provision for state aid or salary increase be accompanied by a supporting revenue plan. The group demanded that the OEA "support no plan denying the local community the right to maintain its own school if said community is willing to pay the cost." Two other goals, designed to benefit small schools, were to reduce the minimum program qualifications for state aid to small schools and to liberalize the rules on isolation and transportation (permitting tiny districts to exist because of terrain limitations). A final proposal was to raise the minimum per capita cost requirement for the emergency levy to \$700, a level approximating the high costs prevailing in the small schools. The Board adopted this proposal but referred the other six to the Legislative Committee.<sup>14</sup>

Under the influence of the rural rebellion the Board emasculated the program presented by Payne's Committee. On a motion of T. E. Allen, Osage County Superintendent and perennial champion of rural schools, the group removed the Godfrey plan of reorganization from its goals. To forestall possible future departures from the established policy of the Association, it adopted a second motion that any plan of reorganization

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<sup>13</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 8, 1958, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Board of Directors, March 15, 1958.

be brought before the Board for approval. The Board accepted, in principal, the goal of a fixed percentage of revenue to be dedicated to schools, but "out of deference to recession fears" postponed submitting the plan to the people.<sup>15</sup> Much opposition had arisen against the plan, but it was the obvious disarray within the Association that influenced the decision of leaders not to press the issue at that time.<sup>16</sup>

The legislative program remaining was almost a copy of previous programs, with appropriation goals increased and only minor proposals added. The base salary for 1959-1960 was to be \$3,400 and for the following year \$3,600. Retirement pay and other financial goals were higher. The program called for new state assistance to testing and guidance programs, educational television, and the Curriculum Improvement Commission. It asked that the interest on the state school fund be raised from three to four percent and be thereafter kept competitive with other leading agencies. Local districts were to be allowed a greater reserve fund for delinquent taxes, nonchargeable against state aid, a proposal that would have the effect of increasing local revenue. The Legislative Committee assigned top priority to salaries, operational fund, textbooks, and a new method of counting students for purposes of apportioning funds, average daily membership taking the place of average daily attendance. An omnibus bill given high priority dealt with gifted children, kindergarten, adult education, sick leave, the emergency levy, interest on the state school fund, reserve for delinquent taxes, and extending the duties of the county superintendent.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Interviews with Willingham, Donley, and Godfrey.

<sup>17</sup>Board of Directors, November 22, 1958.

The differences of opinion within the OEA over its legislative program were matched by the Association's indecision concerning gubernatorial candidates. A choice did not emerge in 1958 as it had for Gary in 1954. The Legislative Committee consulted with the aspirants and published its findings in a newsletter. In keeping with long-standing policy, the report stated no preference, but sentiment among OEA leaders favored W. P. Bill Atkinson of Midwest City, who was also the favorite of Governor Gary.<sup>18</sup> The candidate who promised most for schools, including willingness to forego the ever-popular "no-new-tax" rule in order to finance his promises, was J. Howard Edmondson of Tulsa.<sup>19</sup> Having won the Democratic nomination, virtually assuring his election in November, Edmondson continued to pledge generous support of education. In a speech to the Tulsa County Schoolmasters he vowed he would fight for the OEA "package" in the legislature, and if unsuccessful there he would go with the educators to the people, "giving them a fair choice."<sup>20</sup> His overwhelming victory in both the primary and general elections would suggest that a proportionately high number of teachers voted for him.

In his inaugural address Governor Edmondson asserted that he would carry out his campaign promises. The following day he spelled out his program, giving priority to several reform measures, with a vote on repeal of prohibition being his first point of action. All finance measures were to wait until repeal and the resulting new taxes on alcoholic beverages were acted upon. He promised greater emphasis upon education,

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<sup>18</sup>Willingham interview; Phillips interview no. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Tulsa Tribune, April 22, 1958, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Tulsa Tribune, September 12, 1958, p. 11.

less upon roads.<sup>21</sup>

Payne and the Steering Committee honored the governor's request to delay pressing for major appropriations until after the repeal election set for April 8.<sup>22</sup> But they worked diligently to pass other measures and methodically laid the groundwork for the fight for funds that was sure to come later in the session. At the request of the Committee, each OEA unit sent a delegate to a pre-session orientation meeting at the expense of the Association. Payne's instructions stated that the designated person should be the "best qualified on legislation" the unit had.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the session each unit kept two representatives in Oklahoma City every day the legislature was there.<sup>24</sup> In February, with the OEA bills introduced in both houses, the Association urged teachers to write the governor and the legislature; by mid-March the governor's office reported being swamped with pro-OEA mail.<sup>25</sup> The Steering Committee kept pressure upon the bills not requiring large appropriations, while Willingham and Phillips kept close touch with the state aid bills in the committees of the two houses.<sup>26</sup>

The OEA strategy was complicated by a feud that developed early between the chief executive and the Senate. In spite of Payne's pledge, the Senate passed its bill in February, the measure being managed by

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<sup>21</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 13, 1959, p. 1; January 14, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1959.

<sup>23</sup>Executive Committee, January 9, 1959.

<sup>24</sup>Executive Committee, April 17, 1959.

<sup>25</sup>Executive Committee, February 6, 1959.

<sup>26</sup>Oklahoma City Times, February 11, 1959, p. 1; Willingham interview.

Clem Hamilton, chairman of the Senate Education Committee.<sup>27</sup> Earlier the House had eschewed its normal practice of "voting its record" on school legislation, having been advised that the Senate was in a mood to rush the House's version to the governor to embarrass him.<sup>28</sup> Although the Senate reconsidered its February action, it passed an even larger state aid measure in March. The governor warned that it called for too much money and reminded the OEA of their mutual understanding to wait.<sup>29</sup>

After the election repealing prohibition, the OEA pressed for quick action on its major goals, stressing the House version of the state aid bill.<sup>30</sup> The governor presented his program still loaded with reform recommendations but offering schools a moderate increase in funds. He would raise the base salary to \$3,100, an increase of \$100, but provide a minimum of \$3,400.<sup>31</sup> The House immediately passed the OEA bill providing a base of \$3,400 the first year of the biennium, increasing to \$3,600 the second year. The governor denounced the move, demanded that the House disclose where it expected to find money to pay the increase, and condemned the OEA Steering Committee for refusing to present a revenue plan.<sup>32</sup> His disagreement with the OEA was only another in a growing number of conflicts engaging him as a result of his ambitious reform program. The Tulsa World observed that he was on the "offensive"

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<sup>27</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 25, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 22, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 24, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 9, 1959, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 14, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 16, 1959, p. 1. J. Win Payne had previously told the governor that the Association would support any tax that he, the governor, proposed. Board of Directors, March 7, 1959.



against county commissioners for control of state road money and on the "defensive" against the school bloc which threatened to unbalance his budget.<sup>33</sup>

The House action led Edmondson to take the offensive against the OEA. He presented each member of the legislature a list of all Oklahoma teachers and their individual salaries, his purpose being to show that the educators were not faring so badly as they would have people believe. The Oklahoma City Times described the "exposure" as a "most lethal weapon."<sup>34</sup> The Daily Oklahoman, caught up in the spirit of the affair, published the entire list of 20,858 teachers in its Sunday edition, "as a public service." Phillips pointed out that the list failed to show comparisons with other states, two-thirds of which paid higher salaries than did Oklahoma.<sup>35</sup> Other papers across the state reprinted the salary list, or local portions of it, and editorialized against the OEA.<sup>36</sup>

The battle ended with a compromise in mid-May. Two key leaders of the legislature, Representative J. D. McCarty and Senator Clem Hamilton, met with the Steering Committee and worked out a program agreeable to the two houses.<sup>37</sup> The OEA Board had earlier authorized the Steering Committee to make the final decision as to the best program

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<sup>33</sup>Tulsa World, April 19, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Oklahoma City Times, April 20, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 26, 1959, pp. 1F-8F.

<sup>36</sup>Seminole Producer, April 26, 1959; Tonkawa News, April 30, 1959; Capitol Hill Beaver, April 30, 1959; Tulsa World, May 3, 1959, p. 18; Henryetta Free-Lance, May 10, 1959.

<sup>37</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 1, 1959, p. 1.

attainable.<sup>38</sup> The plan was then presented to the governor, who, with minor adjustments, accepted it.<sup>39</sup> The measure finally written in conference committee passed the two houses on May 15 and was sent to the chief executive. It provided for the first year of the biennium the amount asked by Edmondson, a base salary of \$3,100, a minimum of \$3,400. But it called for a rising base for each of the next three years, \$3,200 in 1960, \$3,400 in 1961, and \$3,600 in 1962. Thus, while accepting the governor's limitation for one year, the OEA had won commitment for future years to the goal it originally sought.<sup>40</sup>

Funding this 1959 legislation became the major effort of the OEA in the 1961 session. The new program, written under the chairmanship of Paul Taylor of El Reno, contained few innovations. Its most significant addition was support for a new bond issue for institutions of higher education. It expanded the financial goals of the Association, following the trend of the national economy and the pattern of growing educational investment throughout the country. Its general salary objective was to bring Oklahoma to the national average. Its immediate goal was to finance the program already enacted.<sup>41</sup> In presenting the new set of goals to the membership, Taylor acknowledged their limitations in the light of growing needs in education. At the same time he touched the heart of the problem of formulating and passing a legislative program when he warned that "petty politics, penny pinching, and pitting program against program . . . play . . . into the province of every enemy of our

<sup>38</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1959.

<sup>39</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 6, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 15, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Board of Directors, March 26, 1960.

institutions." He called for bold leadership by the OEA and by political officials of the state.<sup>42</sup>

If the tone of Taylor's appeal was both wistful and defensive, it emanated not only from the divisions that weakened the OEA but from a political climate in Oklahoma stormier than it had been since the early days of the Depression. Edmondson's reforms divided the Democratic Party, the young governor leading an urban-oriented element amenable to change, opposed by an "Old Guard" whose basic strength lay in rural areas and in the rural predisposition of much of the state's population. He lost the leadership of the party, and, following a few initial successes for his progressive program, he lost control of the legislature. Opposition to the governor grew even stronger when he endorsed the candidacy of John F. Kennedy for president.<sup>43</sup> The "Old Guard" organized the Twenty-Eighth Legislature, completely spruning the help or guidance of the chief executive.

The OEA found its situation anomalous. Many of its members liked Edmondson because of his reform program and because of his expressed friendship toward the cause of education. Further, the Association had consistently supported federal aid to education, stepping up the effort after 1959 to speed its enactment. His support of Kennedy, who favored federal aid while his opponent did not, more firmly aligned the governor on the side of the OEA. But the more immediately pressing goals of the Association were to be attained through the legislature. Through the years its programs had been enacted not only by the legislature, but by

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<sup>42</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1960, p. 16.

<sup>43</sup>Gibson, pp. 422-23.

a legislature dominated by the regular Democratic Party, its leadership now called the "Old Guard" and in opposition to the governor.

With the OEA thus somewhat disoriented, new opponents appeared against the organization and old opposition intensified. The state highway director asked the Legislative Council to prohibit diversion of "road-user" taxes to uses other than highways, his request including the automobile license tax earmarked for schools; Phillips quickly reminded the lawmakers that retention of this revenue was a priority goal of the OEA.<sup>44</sup> The Municipal League also petitioned for a share of the tag tax, to be used for city streets, dropping its drive only in the face of OEA objection.<sup>45</sup> With the 1960 election approaching, the Republican Party, showing new strength in the state, took issue with the OEA's encouragement of Democrats. Henry Bellmon, the party's aggressive state chairman, struck the first blow of what was to become a vendetta between him and the OEA leadership, by asking the Association to use its addressograph and huge mailing list to mail out Republican campaign literature "as you have done for Senator Kerr." Phillips replied that the Association helps those candidates who have an interest in education, including "some Republicans in the past."<sup>46</sup> Congressman Page Belcher also objected to the OEA's assistance to his Democratic rival.<sup>47</sup> The Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council and the Oklahoma Retail Merchants' Association redoubled their efforts in opposition to new taxes, attacking the OEA drive for funds and proposing laws contradictory to OEA

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<sup>44</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 15, 1960, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup>Board of Directors, November 19, 1960.

<sup>46</sup>Tulsa Tribune, October 26, 1960, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup>Miami Daily News-Record, November 3, 1960.

goals.<sup>48</sup> Finally, the election campaign and the legislative session stimulated new attacks from much of the press.<sup>49</sup>

One such attack brought an explosive response from Phillips, who rarely talked back to the press except to correct what he considered erroneous reporting. An editorial, headlined "It Takes Guts," extolled the courage of a state senator who had suggested that the appropriation for schools be reduced in the coming session. Appearing in The Oklahoma Teacher and quoted by several papers across the state, Phillips's reply, repeating the offensive heading, shamed editors who "slur teachers" and who deny the need of schools for money. He praised the courage of legislators and others who "stand up for teachers and children." He then presented his standard review of the financial problems of schools and the goals of the OEA; but his angry outburst revealed the mood of frustration that permeated the Association, reaching even the normally imperturbable executive secretary.<sup>50</sup>

The Association followed its usual routine in preparing for the legislative session, giving special attention to the lawmakers. Phillips had regularly written his monthly column in the journal throughout the year, thus signifying his concern for the political situation. He and Willingham also stepped up their speaking schedules. Unable to engage the governor for the event, the leadership arranged for the legislative leaders, Speaker J. D. McCarty and President Pro Tempore Everett Collins,

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<sup>48</sup> Tulsa Tribune, March 3, 1961, p. 14; Daily Oklahoman, March 5, 1961, p. 4A.

<sup>49</sup> Tulsa World, October 7, 1960, p. 24, February 23, 1961, p. 16; Poteau Sun, October 9, 1960; Sapulpa Daily Herald, October 30, 1960; Oklahoma City Times, November 2, 1960, p. 24; Ada Evening News, February 23, 1961.

<sup>50</sup> The Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1961, p. 9.

to speak to the teachers at the state convention.<sup>51</sup> The Legislative Committee further cultivated the lawmakers with a dinner and entertainment. The Oklahoma Teacher recognized key members of the legislature early in the session.<sup>52</sup>

The 1961 session of the legislature was the longest in state history, lasting through July 29. Its prolongation was due to the absence of leadership by the governor and the difficulty of financing state services. The OEA, whose major concern was its final appropriations, found it not only the longest but one of the most difficult sessions it had faced. Many senators objected to financing the school code as written and denounced the OEA for expecting that it be done.<sup>53</sup> The Board of Directors devoted much of its March meeting to surveying the Senate obstruction, each director reporting how "his senator" would vote.<sup>54</sup> Chairman Taylor reported in February that there was strong opposition in both houses, but insisted the Association must adhere to its minimum goal of funding the existing program. He urged teachers to keep a steady flow--"not an avalanche"--of letters going to the legislators.<sup>55</sup> Phillips advised anxious teachers to proceed to sign new contracts based on the law as written, predicting that the legislature would ultimately appropriate the money.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1960, p. 37.

<sup>52</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1961, pp. 7, 9.

<sup>53</sup>Oklahoma City Times, January 9, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Board of Directors, March 25, 1961.

<sup>55</sup>Executive Committee, February 24, 1961.

<sup>56</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1961, p. 7.

The Senate was first to pass the school bill under the floor management of Clem Hamilton. Providing for financing the existing code at a cost of \$104,000,000, it passed despite the objection of the Senate leadership and of the governor. The opposition expected to write the final measure in conference committee, at which time the program would be reduced to correspond with available revenue, but Senator Hamilton insisted that it remain unchanged and that new funds be found to pay for it.<sup>57</sup> The House of Representatives passed an identical bill late in April. House Education Chairman Bill Shipley and Speaker J. D. McCarty expressed confidence the measure could be financed.<sup>58</sup> Like the Senate version, the House bill provided no appropriation.

The rest of the session was devoted largely to a search for money. In May the two houses agreed upon a cigarette tax increase and a payroll withholding system for collecting the state income tax.<sup>59</sup> In June the House introduced, and precipitately dropped, a proposal for a one-cent sales tax increase recommended by the governor. Senate leaders, opposing both the governor and the lower house on the sales tax, and apparently in no hurry to adjourn, suggested that the legislature wait for Congress to act on federal aid.<sup>60</sup> In July the governor demanded that the problem be settled, threatening to veto bills out of line with his budget and noting that the common schools measure was the most seriously over-extended. Legislative leaders and the chief executive, in

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<sup>57</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 6, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup>Daily Oklahoman, April 26, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 23, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 27, 1961, p. 1.

conference on July 5, arrived at a solution to the financial crisis, deciding to rely heavily upon deficit financing.<sup>61</sup>

With the lawmakers and the governor ready to compromise, the OEA Steering Committee yielded slightly from its long-held rigid position, aware it had arrived at the best solution available. It agreed to forego an increased appropriation for special education and for the operational fund, reducing the total school program to \$99,000,000.<sup>62</sup> The final appropriation for common schools was \$88,000,000, the remaining \$11,000,000 to be provided by supplemental appropriation in 1963.<sup>63</sup>

Legislative Chairman Paul Taylor described his two-year tour as "hectic" and the long legislative session as frustrating. Reporting for his Committee, he wrote, "we have done the best we could, although . . . our best was not good enough for Oklahoma's children. During the entire session we were on the defensive. Negative pressures were amazingly strong. Somehow, we have failed to convince enough of our people back home of the values in the objectives we seek." After thanking all who had participated in the legislative effort, he returned to a theme that haunted the leadership and the thoughtful members of the Association, saying, "The front in each community must be strengthened. We must be better prepared next time to answer the challenge of the opposition."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Daily Oklahoman, July 6, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup>Daily Oklahoman, July 14, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup>Daily Oklahoman, July 25, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Paul R. Taylor, "The Long, Long Legislative Session," The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1961, p. 10.



## The Henry Bellmon Administration Through the 1963 Session

The Association pursued its normal cycle of preparation for the 1963 session, but the negative forces encountered by Taylor continued to grow, as they had since 1957. Phillips sounded the keynote for the new round of action when he advised teachers at the fall workshops to ask candidates for governor who promise "no tax increase" to explain how they plan to improve state services.<sup>65</sup> The Legislative Committee, under Walter Fields of Hinton, completed the outline of its new program in record time, getting it approved by the Board in November, 1961, less than four months after adjournment of the previous legislature. The difficulties of the Edmondson term prompted the leaders to decide the new goals early to facilitate concentration upon the approaching elections.<sup>66</sup> Again the planners risked no bold new departures, but focused upon the financial problem, which was becoming acute in view of the state's increasing lag behind the educational expenditures of other states. They asked that the present code be fully funded at a cost of \$106,000,000 for the biennium. And they called for a new level of salaries, starting in 1963 at \$4,400 and rising the following year to \$4,600.<sup>67</sup>

Opposition continued to grow as new evidence of a worsening political climate appeared. The state Congress of Parents and Teachers reversed its previous stand by voting down a resolution to seek and support

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<sup>65</sup>Sapulpa Daily Herald, October 8, 1961.

<sup>66</sup>Interview with Walter Fields, Oklahoma City, July 8, 1969.

<sup>67</sup>Board of Directors, November 18, 1961.

federal aid to schools.<sup>68</sup> Phillips expressed his displeasure with the action, citing a long record of cooperation and suggesting that the Congress had been "infiltrated by people who do not seem to have education as their primary aim."<sup>69</sup> The attorney general struck a blow at the "school bloc" in the legislature when he ruled that lawmakers could not receive teaching pay from state funds. The opinion affected nine representatives and two senators.<sup>70</sup> It had a greater psychological than monetary effect inasmuch as there was sufficient local revenue to pay the salary of any teacher in the legislature, a fact that Phillips was quick to point out as he assured the Association that these valuable members were free to continue their dual roles.<sup>71</sup> Editorial criticism was unrelenting, mostly against greater state aid and failure to reorganize districts. The latter led the Oklahoma City Times to suggest that urban teachers take strong counteraction against the rural pressures in the OEA.<sup>72</sup>

This appeal to one element of the OEA to oppose another recognized a rift in the organization that was due to become more serious. Some unrest was appearing among classroom teachers in the larger schools of the state, the only systems with established classroom teacher associations. This followed a trend more apparent in the NEA, as it registered militant disapproval of the defeat of federal aid in 1961 and advocated

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<sup>68</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 21, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 23, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 9, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup>Executive Committee, November 17, 1961.

<sup>72</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 8, 1961, p. 9; Oklahoma City Times, December 6, 1961, p. 20.

a resort to "professional negotiations" and "professional sanctions" in 1962.<sup>73</sup> Following the pattern of the labor movement and recognizing the potential preponderance of strength among urban teachers, the national association began to reorganize city units, even installing local executive secretaries, by-passing the state associations.<sup>74</sup> Oklahoma teachers did not immediately follow the lead of the national organization, but they did attempt to amend the OEA constitution to give classroom teachers better representation. Failing this in 1962, their resentment toward the leadership began to rise.<sup>75</sup> Rural strength on the Board of Directors, against which the urban discontent was directed, continued strong in 1962. It not only defeated the classroom teachers' amendments, but again discouraged change in the Association's district reorganization policy and won passage of a stronger goal to increase the duties of the county superintendent.<sup>76</sup> During the session, rural interests further threatened the unity of the Association when they vociferously opposed limitations on school activities imposed by the North Central Association, an accrediting organization to which most of the larger schools of the state belonged.<sup>77</sup>

The Association began its consideration of the next governorship

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<sup>73</sup> Executive Committee, October 25, 1961; The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1962, p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Godfrey interview.

<sup>75</sup> Board of Directors, March 17, 1962; Stillwater Daily News-Press, April 13, 1962.

<sup>76</sup> Board of Directors, March 17, 1962.

<sup>77</sup> Executive Committee, April 5, 1963.

many months before the primary election of 1962. A dearth of favorable prospects led Phillips to venture that he might have to seek the office himself in order to have a friend of education in the race.<sup>78</sup> Although he had some encouragement from educators and from friends in his native southeastern Oklahoma, Phillips issued the statement less as a test of his own personal possibilities than as a dramatic notification to serious contenders that they must deal with the OEA in the coming contest. The Legislative Committee invited all primary candidates to appear before it in March.<sup>79</sup> All the leading Democrats accepted, and their statements were published in The Oklahoma Teacher.<sup>80</sup> The most likely Republican candidate, State Chairman Henry Bellmon, did not respond. Although the Association did not officially indicate a choice among the aspirants, W. P. Bill Atkinson's endorsement of the OEA program, supported by his advocacy of a sales tax increase, seemed most convincing to a large number of teachers. Former governor Gary's reminder of his good record apparently did not offset his known opposition to new state taxes and his insistence upon local financing of schools.<sup>81</sup>

With the primaries over, the Legislative Committee invited the two nominees, Atkinson and Bellmon, to meet with them, to prepare a statement for the OEA Newsletter, and to speak before the teachers at the fall conventions. Preference for Atkinson was even more pronounced than before, not only because of his favorable program but also because the chances

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<sup>78</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 27, 1961.

<sup>79</sup>Daily Oklahoman, March 11, 1962, p. 17A.

<sup>80</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, April, 1962, p. 24.

<sup>81</sup>Phillips interview no. 4; interviews with Willingham and Fields.

of a Republican being elected governor seemed remote. While the Association treated the Republican candidate correctly, there was a distinct coolness between them. Bellmon's observation to the Committee that as president of the school board at Billings he had found teachers did not seem to be too unhappy and that many considered themselves adequately paid offended some of the members. He, in turn, felt dissatisfied with the line of questioning directed toward him by the Committee.<sup>82</sup> At the state convention Atkinson received warm and repeated applause from the teachers, while Bellmon's reception was no more than polite. The newsletter statements of the two candidates repeated their essential positions as defined consistently throughout the campaign: Atkinson specifically approved the goals of the OEA, promised to help achieve them, and named the source of revenue that would contribute to this end. Bellmon wrote in generalities, decried the lack of opportunity for Oklahoma youth because of fifty-five years of one-party rule, promised that the OEA goals were his goals "so far as possible," and said they would be achieved without raising taxes.<sup>83</sup>

Bellmon's pre-election coolness toward the OEA gave way to open animosity after his election to the state's highest office. He announced that he would not consult with Phillips on educational matters, because the OEA leadership had turned the Association into "a political action force for Atkinson."<sup>84</sup> Distinguishing between the organization

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<sup>82</sup>Interviews with Willingham and Fields.

<sup>83</sup>OEA Newsletter, September 20, 1962. The file of this publication is very incomplete, the issue cited here being one of a small number available at OEA Headquarters.

<sup>84</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 28, 1962, p. 1.

and its members, the governor said, "I feel friendly toward common schools," and would be "as generous as the budget allows" to meet their needs, but as for the OEA, its leaders had "prostituted" it by making it a political arm of the Democratic Party.<sup>85</sup> Phillips hotly denied the charge of partisanship against the OEA. As for consultation by the governor, he observed that Bellmon's policy was not unusual. "No governor ever called me in to help write a program," he said, "but it does help if they are friendly." He said that the OEA had a program and would continue to work for it; he hoped the legislature would listen to him.<sup>86</sup> Similar exchanges between Phillips and the chief executive occurred throughout Bellmon's administration.

The expected conflict on school legislation materialized as soon as the governor presented his program to the Twenty-Ninth Legislature. Assuring the lawmakers that they were "more free than ever" from the pressure groups, all of whom "went down to defeat last year," he introduced a plan to finance the school code and even to provide teachers a slight raise in pay. The key to his plan was to take a major portion of the federal money currently going to districts serving large numbers of federal employees, mainly in military installations, and to distribute it among other schools. He would make seventy-five percent of this federal "impact" money chargeable against state aid, thus denying approximately \$10,000,000 to the affected schools and gaining this amount for general appropriation to common schools. Bellmon would also procure additional funds by reducing the local district reserve for delinquent

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<sup>85</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 30, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 29, 1962, p. 1.

taxes back to its previous level of five percent of assessments, having the effect of decreasing a school's state aid by this amount. The Democratic legislature expressed doubt that the governor's program could be enacted, and J. D. McCarty, who had by this time emerged as the strongest leader in the legislature, immediately announced his opposition to the plan for common schools.<sup>87</sup>

The OEA leadership reacted vigorously against the governor's program, particularly his impact money transfer and his failure to meet OEA's salary expectations. Phillips called for defeat of the governor's plan and again denied charges that the Association was a partisan force.<sup>88</sup> Willingham condemned the governor and defended the OEA program.<sup>89</sup> President Gilbert Robinson, attempting to close a breach caused by excessive attacks upon Phillips, spoke more frequently than had most presidents, selling the OEA program, defending the executive secretary, and rallying the membership.<sup>90</sup> J. Win Payne, a Republican, avoided criticism of the governor, but stoutly defended the OEA program, which he had done so much to develop.<sup>91</sup> The Oklahoma Teacher presented the governor's budget, showing what his school measures would cost each county.<sup>92</sup> Phillips's newsletter quoted heavily from Bellmon's campaign

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<sup>87</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 16, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup>Stillwater News-Press, January 18, 1963; Lawton Morning Press, January 19, 1963.

<sup>89</sup>Norman Transcript, January 20, 1963.

<sup>90</sup>Robinson interview; Oklahoma City Times, January 22, 1963; Seminole Producer, February 1, 1963; Cushing Daily News, February 12, 1963.

<sup>91</sup>Oklahoma City Times, January 22, 1963, p. 14.

<sup>92</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, February, 1963, p. 6.

statements assuring that money was available for meeting the OEA goals, and questioned whether the governor was adhering to his promise.<sup>93</sup>

Bellmon used a speaking engagement with the Oklahoma Press Association as an opportunity to strike his next blow at the OEA. Calling Phillips a "high-paid lobbyist" who "insinuated I am a liar," he accuses the executive secretary and the OEA of using unethical, if not illegal, methods of influencing legislation, specifically charging that teachers were leaving their classrooms to lobby, paying substitutes with state money, and that children were copying OEA-inspired letters from blackboards to send to their governor and legislature. He urged the editors to look into these matters and "take the hide off" those who were guilty.<sup>94</sup>

The press had been "taking the hide off" for some time. While no local editor reported examples of the wrongdoings alleged by the governor, many found fault with the teachers' organization and its chief staff officer. The Enid Morning News, which had consistently supported Bellmon and frequently criticized the OEA, called the newsletter report a "sneak attack" upon the governor and said Phillips was doing more harm for teachers than good.<sup>95</sup> The Guymon Daily Herald, denouncing Phillips and the newsletter, accused the OEA of "using the teachers' own money to tell them what to think."<sup>96</sup> The Henryetta Daily Free-Lance questioned the image of Phillips as the "champion of teachers" and moved from this

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<sup>93</sup>Daily Oklahoman, January 22, 1963, p. 22.

<sup>94</sup>Oklahoma City Times, January 26, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup>Enid Morning News, January 20, 1963; January 22, 1963.

<sup>96</sup>Guymon Daily Herald, January 22, 1963.



to the question of the image of Oklahoma teachers themselves.<sup>97</sup>

The OEA Board officially denied the governor's charges after a survey of administrators brought the responses that no person had been found who "even knew" of such practices.<sup>98</sup> However, the Association was not inactive in its efforts to prepare the way for its legislative program. Local units, especially in the city systems, had been more active than usual in trying to elect a favorable legislature.<sup>99</sup> The Executive Committee contributed to a fund to promote a salary increase for legislatures, and the Board cultivated political allies by endorsing a bill to increase the term of certain county officials from two to four years.<sup>100</sup> When "bloc" leader Clem Hamilton became seriously ill, the Association collected contributions from members to assist the senator who had done so much for the organization.<sup>101</sup> And the annual banquet for the lawmakers took place as usual, with local leaders escorting their representatives and local units paying for their tickets.<sup>102</sup>

The Legislative Committee organized an elaborate plan to provide communication with the local units. It asked each unit to select a "contact person" to meet periodically with the Committee and to report back to the home schools. Also, the staff planned to circulate frequent bulletins on legislative progress to "key people" of the Association.

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<sup>97</sup>Henryetta Daily Free-Lance, March 24, 1963.

<sup>98</sup>Board of Directors, March 2, 1963.

<sup>99</sup>Fields interview.

<sup>100</sup>Executive Committee, May 11, 1962; Board of Directors, March 2, 1963.

<sup>101</sup>Executive Committee, October 24, 1962.

<sup>102</sup>Executive Committee, January 4, 1963.

Phillips reported these plans proceeding well in February and March.<sup>103</sup> The Steering Committee remained in almost continuous session as it led what was recognized as the OEA's most critical legislative battle in the postwar years.<sup>104</sup>

The OEA common schools bill was introduced in both houses on January 31.<sup>105</sup> The processes of legislation moved unusually slow as the Democratic lawmakers dealt with the state's first Republican governor. Bellmon won the admiration of most of the people and even his legislative adversaries, as he worked patiently and methodically to preserve as much of his program as possible. His main concern was to hold the line on taxes, and the rural-oriented, conservative legislature sympathized with this basic goal.<sup>106</sup> The lawmakers were not averse, however, to forcing the governor to take action that might embarrass him and which shifted responsibility away from the legislature. It was somewhat in this spirit that the school bill was passed by the House of Representatives and presented to the chief executive on the last day of April. The Senate version had been chosen for passage, because it was designed to provide the least risk of veto. It called for a mere \$200 raise in the base pay for the first year, bringing salaries up to \$3,800, but an additional \$800 the second year, which would reach the Association's formal goal.<sup>107</sup> The measure did not provide for the necessary appropriation. The Steering

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<sup>103</sup>Executive Committee, February 1, 1963; Board of Directors, March 2, 1963.

<sup>104</sup>Board of Directors, March 2, 1963; Executive Committee, May 10, 1963; Fields interview.

<sup>105</sup>Daily Oklahoman, February 1, 1963.

<sup>106</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 2, 1963, p. 16A.

<sup>107</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 1, 1963, p. 1.

Committee and the authors of the bill hoped that the small increase the first year would be acceptable to the governor, and they expected that the larger raise the second year could be partly financed in the next session by a supplemental appropriation.

Many lawmakers predicted a veto of the measure, and its opponents in the House had argued that it should be held for consideration in conference committee. Knowing that a veto would be in keeping with the governor's previous position, and apparently preparing the OEA's defense in case of this contingency, Phillips stated that partisan politics was hindering the school program, that Bellmon was opposing the OEA because "he thinks we supported the wrong candidate."<sup>108</sup> The governor did veto the school bill on May 6, the first veto of a major OEA measure in the postwar period. Bellmon cited the necessity of keeping the division of state funds on a more equitable basis. Pointing to many other state employees more seriously underpaid, he declared there was no crisis in teachers' salaries and that when the available funds were divided schools would share fairly. Phillips bitterly charged the governor with lack of interest in educational progress and said the veto stemmed from Bellmon's "determination to hurt teachers and children because some teachers saw fit not to vote for him."<sup>109</sup>

The Legislative Committee called upon OEA members to contact their senators at once and to urge friends to do the same in an effort to persuade the lawmakers to override the veto. In the Executive Committee where this call originated the leaders of the Association discussed at some length the sanctions recently invoked by the Utah Education

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<sup>108</sup>Holdenville Daily News, May 1, 1963.

<sup>109</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 7, 1963, p. 1.

Association, obviously curious about another state's approach to dealing with an adamant governor.<sup>110</sup> A wave of press approval of the governor's action swept the state, and the chief executive expressed confidence his veto would stand.<sup>111</sup> Eight days after the veto, twelve Democrats joined the Senate's six Republicans to sustain the governor.<sup>112</sup>

Financing the common schools now became the chief obstacle to closing the 1963 session. While trying to salvage the Association's program, the staff and the Steering Committee spent a great deal of time opposing an unusual number of unfavorable bills.<sup>113</sup> The governor approved a textbook appropriation in spite of his earlier stand against free textbooks.<sup>114</sup> A week later a conference committee agreed upon a formula for dividing the revenue among major services and approved a common school appropriation acceptable to the chief executive. The measure simply funded the school code already in effect. Higher education also stood virtually still.<sup>115</sup> The Daily Oklahoman approvingly described the session as "status quo." The paper's political observer, Otis Sullivant, praising Bellmon's "good image," described the governor's veto of the "teacher salary bill" as popular, "although it will result in unrelenting opposition by leaders of the OEA."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Executive Committee, May 10, 1963.

<sup>111</sup>Oklahoma City Times, May 8, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 15, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup>Stillwater News-Press, June 9, 1963.

<sup>114</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 6, 1963, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 16, 1963, p. 16A.

<sup>116</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 16, 1963, p. 18A.

OEA opposition was, indeed, unrelenting, as leaders prepared for the next two-year cycle. Oklahoma teachers faced the most drastic deceleration of salary gains since World War II. Previous bienniums had seen an average increase of over \$400; but the 1963-1965 period would show a gain of only \$55, \$45 the first year and \$10 the second.<sup>117</sup> The Oklahoma Association of School Administrators, in their annual summer meeting at Stillwater, heard various leaders predict extremely difficult times ahead if important changes were not made. Phillips concentrated on the attitude of the legislature. J. Win Payne emphasized improving the image of educators by raising requirements for entering the profession. Oliver Hodge noted the press criticism that had been mounting "since sputnik," and talked about professional leadership and public relations.<sup>118</sup>

Phillips attacked Bellmon again in the OEA Newsletter, this time heading his comments with a question, "The Big Lie?" Again he used the governor's campaign statements to indicate, less subtly than before, that Bellmon's performance did not measure up to his promises to teachers. He advised teachers that they would be informed as to how individual legislators voted, saying, "Now is the time to get ready for 1965."<sup>119</sup> Juanita Kidd, the president elect, did not wait for her term to start before she began to appoint the next Legislative Committee, announcing that she wanted them all to be present at the August Workshop. With the approval of the Executive Committee, she appointed former

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<sup>117</sup>Lambert and Rankin, p. 26.

<sup>118</sup>Stillwater News-Press, June 9, 1963.

<sup>119</sup>Oklahoma City Times, June 20, 1963, p. 1.

president Rector Johnson to serve as chairman. Less than a week after the Twenty-Ninth Legislature adjourned, the OEA was organizing for the next battle.<sup>120</sup>

#### The Petition Campaign of 1964

The OEA's perennial threat to go to the people by way of initiative petitions became a reality in 1964. At the Leadership Workshop in August, 1963, the Legislative Committee asked that the question of petitions be placed on the agenda of the one-day workshops.<sup>121</sup> The governor's veto crystallized teacher opinion in support of stronger action than that of the routine legislative cycle. Press criticism of the OEA reminded members of the bleakness of their prospects for better conditions, and the NEA kept them informed of radical steps being taken by teachers in other states.<sup>122</sup> The continued hostility of the political climate was revealed when the attorney general rendered a new and stronger opinion against teachers serving in the legislature.<sup>123</sup> Under these conditions, sentiment for a petition campaign gathered force throughout 1963.

The feeling found nourishment in the expressions of discontent and desire for change enunciated by the highest leadership and the lowest ranks in the Association. President Juanita Kidd, noting that change was inevitable, hoped that it would be "directed," in order that it be

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<sup>120</sup>Executive Committee, June 19, 1963.

<sup>121</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1963, p. 30.

<sup>122</sup>Executive Committee, October 23, 1963.

<sup>123</sup>Oklahoma City Times, October 18, 1963, p. 1.

change for the better.<sup>124</sup> When the Oklahoma City Times accused the OEA of working only for material interests of its members, Phillips defended the Association with a review of its nonpolitical activities and the professional achievements of its teachers, including their rise to first rank in the nation in formal preparation for service. He suggested that an unailing formula for not helping schools was to prohibit legislators from teaching, to attack the OEA, and to divide teachers among themselves.<sup>125</sup> Local units across the state discussed their difficulties and passed resolutions for action. Units from Sapulpa and Creek County jointly registered the strongest protest of the year, circulating their demands among teachers at the convention, calling for a special session of the legislature to substantially increase salaries, and urging teachers to limit or withhold their services if such action were not taken by September, 1964.<sup>126</sup> The one-day workshops revealed widespread support of the OEA legislative goals and approval of seeking them through petitions.<sup>127</sup>

The Legislative Committee was determined to strengthen its program, whether it ultimately appeared on petitions or not. Chairman Rector Johnson organized subcommittees to study major areas and appointed some of the Association's most able men to head them. He assigned J. Win Payne to the group studying the minimum program and finance; G. T. Stubbs to retirement; Francis Tuttle, superintendent of schools at Muskogee, to district reorganization; J. W. Martin, president of

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<sup>124</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1963, p. 7.

<sup>125</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1963, p. 7.

<sup>126</sup>Oklahoma City Times, October 25, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup>Board of Directors, November 16, 1963.

Northwestern State College, to higher education; and Melvin Self, professor of education at East Central State College, to professional status, an area being given new emphasis because of classroom teacher interest.<sup>128</sup>

The full Committee met in January and adopted goals based upon the work of the subcommittees. The goals considered most important and thought most likely to be placed on petitions had to do with finance, minimum program, and district reorganization. With little discussion or dissent, the Committee accepted a proposal to replace the five-mill emergency levy with a fifteen-mill "local support" levy. The suggested minimum program, while being approved by the group, aroused some opposition. It provided for more adequate financing of common schools in the areas of operation, maintenance, transportation, special education, vocational education, and capital improvements. It would reduce the teaching load by omitting non-instructional personnel from the computation of the teacher-pupil ratio. Teacher salaries would begin at seventy-five percent of the national average for beginning teachers and increase three percent per year for fifteen years, with further raises in the base for each fifteen-hour addition of college preparation. Controversy arose over a provision in the minimum program that county superintendents be appointed and their duties assigned by the State Board of Education. Even stronger objections arose over the proposed reorganization plan, with certain rural members predicting a split in the Association if the goal were adopted. In spite of this threat, the Committee adopted the recommendation that the high school transportation area be made the basic common school district. With this phase of its

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<sup>128</sup>Executive Committee, October 23, 1963.



work completed, the Committee called a series of meetings around the state to acquaint the membership with the new program before it was presented to the Board of Directors.<sup>129</sup>

On the eve of the Board meeting the Legislative Committee submitted its final version of the legislative program to the Executive Committee. The planners had written the three major goals, local levy, minimum program, and district reorganization, into petition form. The Executive Committee recommended that the Board approve the entire program as written. It refused to make a recommendation on a substitute proposal offered by the county superintendents concerning the future of their office. This proposal would continue the election of the superintendent and would extend his duties to several new areas, such as the preparation of budgets for all county schools and the coordination of testing programs and other common tasks of the schools.<sup>130</sup>

The Board of Directors adopted most of the proposed program in a six-hour session remarkable not only for its length but also for its mixture of progress and reaction.<sup>131</sup> Before it considered legislation it defeated three constitutional amendments relating to the Executive Committee, one of which would have made the Committee elective by popular vote in the districts.<sup>132</sup> The Board heard routine reports, approved a \$345,000 budget, and authorized the loan of \$25,000 to the Oklahoma Residence Corporation which was building Kate Frank Manor. The Board

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<sup>129</sup>Executive Committee, February 7, 1964; Oklahoma City Times, January 17, 1964, p. 12.

<sup>130</sup>Executive Committee, March 13, 1964.

<sup>131</sup>Board of Directors, March 14, 1964.

<sup>132</sup>Supra, Chapter V.

then examined the nineteen goals of the legislative program, item by item, and some line by line, as was customary for the body. Only one serious challenge arose, when T. E. Allen moved that "all reference to school district organization be deleted" from the program. In the debate that followed, Allen and A. H. Bartow defended the motion; J. Win Payne and Professor Glenn Snider of the University of Oklahoma spoke strongly for reorganization. The motion failed by a voice vote. The Board then adopted all nineteen goals with little further discussion and no change.

The Board next considered the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the Association resort to the initiative petition method of enacting its priority goals. Phillips strongly admonished caution, reminding the group of the difficulties and dangers of such a procedure. He was not opposed to the plan, having mentioned its possibilities repeatedly through the years, but he was aware that failure would almost certainly result from less than wholehearted effort. As the principal executive officer of the Association, he was not interested in leading the organization to defeat. A motion by Payne that the OEA proceed with the circulation of petitions carried, first by a voice vote, then by roll call, 141 to 26.

The Board chose four measures to present to the public, three essentially as prepared by the Legislative Committee and one the work of the organized county superintendents. The local support proposal met easy approval with little discussion. When the minimum program measure was presented, a representative of the county superintendents moved that their proposal concerning the county office replace the plan under consideration, stating that his colleagues had approved the change by a vote of sixty-four to four. In spite of a heated defense of its work by

members of the Legislative Committee and a warning by Snider that the Association was about to go on record in support of "an office that is indefensible," the motion carried by a vote of ninety-four to thirty-seven. Thus the county superintendent question became the fourth of the group of petitions. This show of rural strength threatened the reorganization goal, and in the debate over this measure its opponents again raised the alarm that the Association would be divided, and added that if the measure were placed on a petition it would defeat the other proposals. A. J. Evans, principal of Del City High School, former president of the state association of administrators, and long an advocate of a broader administrative base for schools, spoke strongly in favor of the proposal and moved its adoption. His motion carried.

The Board met in special session a week later to review the four petitions as written by an attorney and an editing committee. T. E. Allen, the untiring protagonist for county superintendents, apparently fearing their substitute measure might not be strong enough to stand alone, attempted to have it restored to the minimum program petition where the Legislative Committee had placed its original proposal. Failing this, he tried to change the reorganization plan, making the county instead of the transportation area the basic administrative unit for schools, again meeting disapproval from the Board. On the other hand, a motion to abandon the county superintendent question also failed. The four petitions as finally approved, and in the order they were presented throughout the campaign, provided: (1) a permissive local support levy of up to fifteen mills to replace the five-mill emergency levy; (2) an increase in the minimum program of state aid, its major provision setting beginning teacher salaries at seventy-five percent of the national average and increasing them three percent per year for fifteen years; (3)

for the established high school transportation area to become the basic school district for taxing and administrative purposes; and (4) the extension of the duties of the county superintendent to include several areas of finance and coordination of schools in his county. By a vote of 122 to 20, the Board gave its final approval to the measures and turned to plans for winning their adoption by the public.<sup>133</sup>

The Board directed the Executive Committee and the staff to proceed with arrangements to circulate the petitions and with preparation for a campaign to get them passed at the polls. It approved a campaign organization called "Oklahomans for Better Education," headed by a general committee whose leading members had already been named. The committee's chairman was Past President Gilbert Robinson; other key members were President Elect Raymond Knight, newly elected President Elect--not to be installed until July 1--Mary Sue Silk, R. E. Carleton, D. D. Creech, J. Win Payne, Charles Holleyman, G. T. Stubbs, Flossie Beckett of the classroom teachers' department, Trimble Latting of the Congress of Parents and Teachers, and Bill Lott of the School Boards Association. Chairmen of subcommittees were Oscar Rose, general finance; OEA Vice President Don Davis, organization finance; Clyde Boyd, publicity; and President Juanita Kidd, who headed a speakers' bureau.<sup>134</sup>

On April 2 the petitions were prefiled with the secretary of state, and by April 16 they were in the hands of teachers and their friends all over the state, ready for the official opening of the campaign for signatures on that date.<sup>135</sup> Schools had received enough blanks to supply

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<sup>133</sup>Board of Directors, March 27, 1964.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Executive Committee, April 17, 1964.

each teacher with a copy of each question on a sheet that would hold twenty names. Instructions accompanied the supplies, and The Oklahoma Teacher provided further suggestions for conducting the drive.<sup>136</sup> The local levy petition required 107,000 signatures, because it called for a constitutional amendment; the other three, being statutory in nature, required only 56,000. OEA Headquarters received reports of over a thousand signers the first day.<sup>137</sup> By May 6 members had turned in enough names to meet the legal requirement, but the campaign announced it would continue the drive through May 20.<sup>138</sup> It hoped to gain such an overwhelming number of signers that a challenge of their validity would be obviously futile. Phillips recommended that the goal be 300,000 signatures on each question. The final count met this objective and set an all-time record for initiative petitions: The local levy proposal received 313,382 signatures; minimum program, 313,242; district reorganization, 302,616; and the county superintendent measure, 300,729.<sup>139</sup> The OEA staff, after working night and day to inspect and organize the returns, delivered them, in forty-four large cartons totalling over a ton in weight, to the secretary of state May 28, 1964.<sup>140</sup>

The legal protest period passed without a challenge to the petitions, and the Association turned to the campaign for approval at the polls. President Knight asked the governor for an early special

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<sup>136</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, May, 1964, p. 7.

<sup>137</sup>Executive Committee, April 17, 1964.

<sup>138</sup>Oklahoma City Times, May 7, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>139</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1964, p. 9.

<sup>140</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 29, 1964, p. 24.

election, hoping to avoid the "silent vote" which would operate at the general election.<sup>141</sup> The law required that state questions receive a number of votes equal to the majority cast for the highest office on the ballot, with the result that a voter's failure to mark a choice on the questions counted as a vote against them. This negative factor was expected to be large in 1964, with the presidency to be decided and an exciting senatorial race promising to bring out a heavy vote. Bellmon expressed concern for the "silent vote" but recoiled at the cost of a special election.<sup>142</sup> After several weeks' delay, he chose to permit the questions to take the normal legal course of appearing on the general election ballot.<sup>143</sup> When the governor later called a special primary election for September 29 to choose nominees for the court-reapportioned legislature, Knight requested that the OEA measures be voted upon at that time. Because five senatorial and thirteen representative seats were unaffected by the court decision, the election was not completely statewide; this being the case, the OEA leader offered to have the Association pay the cost of submitting its questions in those counties and districts not choosing legislators. The governor did not see fit to accept this proposal.<sup>144</sup> The situation looked threatening, but Phillips and other leaders recalled that the OEA had defeated the "silent vote" in 1946; encouraged by that previous success and by the unprecedented number of signatures collected in the spring, they thought they might do

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<sup>141</sup>Executive Committee, June 17, 1964.

<sup>142</sup>Daily Oklahoman, June 17, 1964, p. 12; June 19, 1964, p. 17.

<sup>143</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 29, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>144</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1964, p. 6; Oklahoma City Times, August 4, 1964, p. 6; August 13, 1964, p. 1.

it again.

Strong statements by various leaders of the Association indicated how seriously the organization viewed its problem. Phillips, using the political vernacular as he appraised the situation in July, said the educators must "run scared," fighting for the petitions "as though we think they aren't going to pass."<sup>145</sup> He emphasized informing the people of the contents of the measures and convincing them to vote. At the August workshop W. D. Carr explained the difficulty stemming from the technical nature of the questions: He said, "Nobody, of course, is opposed to better schools. But the trouble with schools are so complicated and overwhelming, and there is so much sweaty work to be done, it is hard to move beyond the hand-wringing stage." President Knight complained that Oklahoma education had been "sinking into a morass of neglect for several years," a trend that must be stopped.<sup>146</sup> In September he warned of extreme consequences if the election were lost, stating that a vote against the measures would be a vote for the state to move backward.<sup>147</sup> A member of the Executive Committee, R. E. Carleton of Pauls Valley, expressed the mood of many teachers when he wrote in October, "On November 3 there will be a crucifixion in our state--of either the children of the state or the forces of ignorance and greed."<sup>148</sup>

The grim mood of the Association was matched by the thoroughness of its campaign. The Executive Committee employed the public relations

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<sup>145</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 27, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>146</sup>Board of Directors, August 14, 1964.

<sup>147</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1964, p. 6.

<sup>148</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1964, p. 14.

firm of Ackerman Associates to provide publicity "subject to OEA control." Upon the recommendation of the campaign committee the Board of Directors authorized the borrowing of \$125,000 and the use of the surplus in the treasury for campaign purposes. The general finance committee planned for the major funding to come from members, suggesting that each teacher contribute five dollars. Phillips reported in August that the districts and departments were already organizing, raising money, and planning for action in September.<sup>149</sup> The Leadership Workshop concentrated upon the campaign effort, and "schools of instruction" to rally and to inform local teachers took the place of the one-day workshops. The October issue of The Oklahoma Teacher gave instructions on how to register and how to get out the vote, and again emphasized the necessity of overcoming the "silent vote." At the state convention in Tulsa, less than two weeks before the election, Phillips reported intensive effort by local units all over the state. He had met with the Council of College Presidents and received an affirmation of their support of the four measures. Contributions were mounting, including \$15,000 from the NEA.<sup>150</sup>

Opposition came from expected sources: patrons of rural schools, taxpayer groups, a large segment of the press, and Governor Bellmon. The earliest blow from the rural areas came from a member of the Association, the president of the rural teachers department of the Northeast District. Through July and August he clamored alternately against a special election being sought by the leadership and against Phillips, whose resignation he demanded, while the press headlined the protest as

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<sup>149</sup>Board of Directors, August 14, 1964.

<sup>150</sup>Executive Committee, October 21, 1964.



though it were a major schism.<sup>151</sup> He was opposed to the consolidation proposal, as was a group called "Oklahomans for Preservation of Local Education" which organized in Kay County and spread across the state.<sup>152</sup> The Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council concentrated on the high cost of the proposed minimum program.<sup>153</sup> In October an organization called the "Taxpayers Educational Committee" began to oppose all four measures, though most of its support was revealed to be from rural areas opposing district reorganization.<sup>154</sup> The press generally emphasized the financial costs of the measures and criticized the OEA for not including a plan to raise the money. The Daily Oklahoman, on the day before the election, expressed approval of the local levy and of district consolidation and strong opposition to the other two questions.<sup>155</sup> Less than a week earlier, Governor Bellmon took a similar position.<sup>156</sup> While many teachers found it difficult or impossible to campaign enthusiastically the the county superintendent question, most of them felt that the minimum program proposal, with its favorable salary schedule, was the one measure that must pass. Opposition to this question could not be balanced by support of the lesser goals.

In an election that saw almost a million voters go to the polls in Oklahoma, the OEA questions met decisive defeat. The number of votes

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<sup>151</sup>Oklahoma City Times, June 29, 1964, p. 9; Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1964, p. 4. This story and related reports were repeated widely in other newspapers.

<sup>152</sup>Daily Oklahoman, August 23, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>153</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 30, 1964, p. 26.

<sup>154</sup>Oklahoma City Times, October 7, 1964, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 2, 1964, p. 6.

<sup>156</sup>Tulsa Tribune, October 27, 1964, p. 1.

necessary for their enactment was 474,666. The local support levy received 417,638 "yes" votes to 405,612 "no" votes, being the only one of the four receiving a favorable majority. The minimum program vote was 362,468 to 461,717; district reorganization, 403,865 to 418,070, and the county superintendent question, 307,173 to 497,198.<sup>157</sup>

The people of Oklahoma soon discovered that the teachers were not prepared to accept the election returns as final. They did not consider their effort an ordinary political contest in which the loser congratulates the winner and pledges his support of the results. Most faculties reacted in stunned silence at first, but soon began to speak angrily of ways to reverse the decision. The Midwest City teachers were first to move, meeting two days after the election and setting the following Monday as a "professional holiday" to discuss what to do next.<sup>158</sup> President Knight spoke for the Association, saying, "This is a drastic situation. We've got to correct it somehow. I think the electorate made a big mistake . . . When you kill the spirit of a teacher, you have really damaged the educational program. . . . Right now we are at an all time low in morale."<sup>159</sup> The Executive Committee recommended a deadline of March 1, 1965, for the state to meet the Association's legislative goals. The Board of Directors reaffirmed its priority goals and accepted the Committee's recommendation that March 1 be the date for the Association to consider its next step if its demands were not met.<sup>160</sup> The Daily

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<sup>157</sup>Wilson, pp. 264-65.

<sup>158</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 6, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup>Oklahoma City Times, November 6, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>160</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1964.

Oklahoman complained that the teachers were acting as though they had won rather than lost the election.<sup>161</sup> The immediate post-election behavior of the teachers, both officially and unofficially, served notice that they had just begun to fight.

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<sup>161</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 7, 1964, p. 6.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE YEAR 1965: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-Five was called "The Year of Education" across the United States, largely because of the forward surge of the federal government in legislation and appropriations for schools. Oklahoma's largest newspaper adopted the appellation when it entitled an editorial "1965, The Year of Education in Oklahoma." This publication, the Daily Oklahoman, stated that education had been the most talked about subject in 1965, that it had provoked the greatest amount of bitterness, but that with the end of the year the "school financial picture looks brighter than it has in years." Although it had long led the state press in criticism of the OEA and opposition to its program, the Oklahoman gave credit to the Association for stimulating action that brought about improved conditions.<sup>1</sup>

For the OEA 1965 was a year of conflict more severe than any it had previously encountered. Defeated at the polls in 1964 and pilloried by the press, the Association made new demands, set a new deadline for their fulfillment, and threatened punitive action if the demands were not met. As the year progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the OEA would not yield. When the deadline passed without satisfactory action having been taken, the Association formally condemned the state for its

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<sup>1</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 24, 1964, p. 20.

inadequate support of schools and advised teachers elsewhere not to take positions in Oklahoma. When the people voted down a tax measure designed to relieve the financial plight, the organization called upon the NEA to apply similar sanctions. With their demands only partially met in the legislature, the OEA refused the lawmakers' request that the pressure be removed. Not until the public in a referendum election approved an increased local tax levy sufficient to meet the original demands of the teachers did the OEA end its siege.

The Association's struggle was characterized by both continuity and change in the goals and methods of the organization. Financial support continued to hold its position of first priority, but the Association added new demands pointing toward professional status, the most significant being a statutory professional practices commission. As for methods of realizing its goals, the organization followed its pattern of trying to influence the legislature, a pattern based ultimately upon the public's supposed desire for better schools. But it took a new direction when, for the first time in its history, it applied genuine pressure upon the people and their elected officials by invoking sanctions against the state.

True to the experience of the OEA, its victories won by the sanctions battle of 1965 were not unalloyed and came at a possibly exorbitant cost. The salary demands of teachers were largely met, though they did not reach the general increase of \$1,000 per year that had been asked. A perhaps more significant portent was the shifting of emphasis from state financial sources to the local property tax with its dual limitations of inadequacy and inequity. The battle had brought a new level of vituperation against teachers and their organization, which raised the question of future relations between the profession and the

public. Detractors accused the Association of seriously damaging the "image" of the state, and many observers thought the "image" of the teachers had been irreparably impaired. The question remained unsettled as to whether the profession were stronger in its increased independence, shown by its apparent ability to force results in spite of opposition from elements--e. g., taxpayer groups and the press--accustomed to exercising greater control over schools, or weaker in its possible loss of good will.

The OEA leadership continued strong, and unity within the Association was maintained in the face of adversity. But expressions of discontent and subsurface divisions presaged serious schisms or painful shifts of power. The long period of leadership by administrators was apparently ending, as superintendents provided only one-fourth of the membership of the 1965 Board of Directors, and classroom teachers for the first time held over half the seats.<sup>2</sup> The Executive Committee also changed rapidly, half the members being replaced within a year, with most of the new committeemen being classroom teachers.<sup>3</sup> Various groups called for constitutional revision to give teachers greater representation, but they were rapidly gaining representation by exercising the authority they had long possessed under the 1945 document.

The conflict of 1965 contained all the ingredients of the OEA history since 1945. The struggle was essentially the same, though raised to new intensity. Oklahoma teachers fought for the recognition and the rewards of the professionals they were endeavoring to be. Opposing them

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<sup>2</sup>The Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1965, p. 22; Supra, Chapter V.

<sup>3</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1964; November 13, 1965.

on the outside were forces reluctant to pay the price of a modern educational system, or, recognizing the need for improvement, hopeful of shifting the burden to someone else. Within, the teachers struggled against their own divisions and diversities, though through their quest for security and self-improvement they continued to find more common ground than differences.

### The Resort to Professional Sanctions

From November 5, 1964, the date of the general election which brought defeat to the four petitions, to September 18, 1965, when the Board of Directors removed the sanctions it had imposed against the state, the OEA fought for its program with unrelenting tenacity and an unwonted ferocity. The angry nature of the campaign was fed by a public mood, reflected by state officials and the press, ranging from apathy to antagonism; the persistence of the effort combined the traditional determination of the established leadership and a new militance of the membership which demanded that the organization get results.

The new militance manifested itself throughout the struggle in various ways. The outburst that followed the election spread across the state, with one local unit after another demanding quick rectification of the situation. The main thrust of the protest was against the loss of the petition campaign and the continued inadequacy of school finances. But there were also complaints against the OEA leadership and demands that classroom teachers be granted a greater role in the organization. Most units endorsed the OEA program and pledged their continued support, but a few hinted at possible separation from the group if satisfactory action, both in legislation and OEA organization, were not taken within

a reasonable time.<sup>4</sup> Classroom teacher associations became more active during the year, and several new associations were formed.<sup>5</sup> The American Federation of Teachers made a strong effort to organize disgruntled teachers, but were able to enroll only six hundred in three locals by the fall of 1965.<sup>6</sup> On college and university campuses future teachers in the Student Education Association joined the protest, reminding Oklahomans that their negative vote in November had increased the number of new teachers planning to leave the state.<sup>7</sup> An "Association of Teachers' Wives" became active in the metropolitan areas, organizing demonstrations and boycotts against merchants who contributed to groups opposing the OEA.<sup>8</sup>

In a series of meetings immediately following the election, the OEA established its course for the following months and served notice that it would not deviate from it. The Executive Committee opened the campaign by declaring that in spite of the election returns the conditions the teachers had hoped to correct still existed, and that unless they were substantially improved by March 1, 1965, the Association would take stronger steps.<sup>9</sup> A week later the Committee asked Governor Bellmon to

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<sup>4</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 10, 1964, p. 1. Threats of separation were heard most often among teachers at Midwest City, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City.

<sup>5</sup>Letter from Flossie Beckett to author, December 4, 1968. Mrs. Beckett was president of the Department of Classroom Teachers from 1964 to 1966.

<sup>6</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 4, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 8, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Oklahoma City Times, January 19, 1965, p. 4; Daily Oklahoman, January 25, 1965, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>Executive Committee, November 6, 1964.



call a special session of the legislature to deal with the crisis. A suggestion of the stronger steps that might be taken was given when the group recommended that the NEA be asked to investigate conditions in Oklahoma "detrimental to education."<sup>10</sup> The Board of Directors approved the actions and recommendations of the Executive Committee. It readopted its legislative program written the previous year and chose three goals for priority treatment, salary, class size, and the local support levy. Noting that the levy had received a majority of votes cast on the measure in the recent election, the Board decided to seek to have it resubmitted to the people in a special election.<sup>11</sup>

Other actions taken by the Board in this post-election meeting revealed the intermingling of continuity and change within the organization. The body met in the auditorium of the underground--bombproof--section of the capitol complex, because the Board Room in OEA Headquarters was too small for the crowd of interested teachers and spectators. It accepted a report from the general committee for the petition campaign and voted thanks to that group for its efforts. The Board then gave a unanimous vote of confidence to Phillips, not once, but twice, the first time for his leadership in the recent campaign, the second for his many years of service to the Association. The group followed this with an expression of appreciation for the entire OEA staff. Having honored its stalwarts of the past, the Board next elected four new members to the Executive Committee, three of them classroom teachers, the first from that department since 1952.<sup>12</sup> Further indicating the new

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<sup>10</sup>Executive Committee, November 13, 1964.

<sup>11</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1964.

<sup>12</sup>Letter from Floyd Focht to author, October 14, 1968.

influence of the classroom teachers was the adoption of a resolution submitted by participants in the recent Midwest City "professional holiday." Twelve hundred teachers from seventy-nine districts had taken part in that meeting.<sup>13</sup> The resolution recommended, among other statements related to the election, that superintendents encourage the formation of classroom teacher associations and that the OEA begin a serious study of tenure.<sup>14</sup>

Governor Bellmon refused to call a special session of the legislature, stating that the lawmakers had shown no enthusiasm for it.<sup>15</sup> Instead, he asked the teachers to meet with him to hear his budget message, which he planned to present to the legislature and which he thought would go far toward solving the educators' problems.<sup>16</sup> He presented his program, which he called "Giant Stride," on December 5 in two meetings, the first in Tulsa attended by 3,200 teachers, the second at Oklahoma City with 3,500 present.<sup>17</sup> "Giant Stride" offered public school teachers a salary raise of \$800 in two years, college instructors an increase of \$600, and other state functions additional appropriations. The governor hoped to gain the revenue for these increases from several sources: revenue resulting from economic growth of the state, reorganization of school districts along the lines recently proposed by the OEA, abolition

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<sup>13</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 10, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Board of Directors, November 14, 1964.

<sup>15</sup>Oklahoma City Times, November 19, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>Daily Oklahoman, November 11, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Daily Oklahoman, December 6, 1964, p. 1. Many teachers refused to meet with the governor. Some urged that the OEA refuse his invitation, but the Board asked members to give him a courteous hearing, leaving the choice to attend or not to individual schools and members. Board of Directors, November 14, 1964.

of the office of county superintendent, making fifty percent of the federal impact area money chargeable against state aid, and new revenue from the general fund released by a \$500,000,000 highway bond issue. He said he would also submit the question of a ten-mill local support levy to the people.

The OEA Board rejected the governor's program, after hearing reports from local units, all of whom opposed "Giant Stride" and endorsed the Association's goals. Leaders noted that financing the plan rested upon public votes on several issues, any of which might fail to pass. The governor's salary proposal was less than the \$1,000 general increase teachers were asking. The OEA opposed the loss of impact aid and the abolition of the county superintendent's office. In addition to these objections to the content of the program, many teachers resented Bellmon's solicitation of their support of what seemed to be as much a highway program as an education program. Others, cognizant that the legislature would probably oppose the governor, saw superior strategy in appealing to the lawmaking branch of government rather than the executive.<sup>18</sup>

Repudiating the governor and looking toward the legislative session, the Board decided on its priority goals and how to present them to the lawmakers. It chose four measures to introduce the first week of the session: a salary bill setting the base at \$4,600, the minimum at \$4,800; a plan for reducing class sizes; an increased higher education appropriation; and resubmission of the fifteen-mill local support levy to the vote of the people. Other bills would be introduced at opportune times during the session. Phillips outlined a plan of operation that had

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<sup>18</sup>Board of Directors, December 11, 1964.

been developed by the Legislative Committee: Local units were to set up their own legislative committees; each unit would keep a "minute man" at the capitol full time, by rotating assignments if necessary, while OEA bills were in progress; and board members and unit presidents were to take responsibility to see that these plans were carried out. The OEA Newsletter would be published no less than bi-weekly to keep the membership informed.<sup>19</sup>

In the struggle that essentially pitted the OEA and its financial demands against the governor and his inflexible stand against new taxes, the contending forces seemed virtually stalemated as the legislative session began. Stalemate to the OEA was tantamount to defeat, because the organization had to change the status quo to achieve its goals. Opponents, to win, had merely to maintain existing conditions. Against the Association were the taxpayer groups led by the Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council.<sup>20</sup> A new force on the side of the educators was the NEA Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, which conducted an investigation of Oklahoma educational conditions during the second week of December and whose preliminary reports pointed toward validation of the OEA's complaints.<sup>21</sup> The press exhibited mixed feelings: Though generally opposed to the OEA and friendly toward Governor Bellmon, the leading papers could not bring themselves to support "Giant Stride," and the Daily Oklahoman took a stand against it.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Daily Oklahoman, December 10, 1964, p. 1; December 13, 1964, p. 1A.

<sup>22</sup>Daily Oklahoman, December 6, 1964, p. 28A.

legislature was likewise divided: A pre-session poll showed that the lawmakers would not vote for an increase in taxes and were reluctant to raise teachers' salaries beyond visible revenue, thus supporting the governor's position.<sup>23</sup> But they were cool toward "Giant Stride" from its inception and declared its demise within the first month of the session.<sup>24</sup>

The defeat of the governor's plan did not mean victory for the OEA. In early February the legislature truncated the OEA's program in the form of a "compromise" bill passed by the Senate. The measure would raise beginning teachers' salaries by \$1,000 in two \$500 installments, but this gain would be made possible by reducing the number of annual increments from fifteen to ten. Half the teachers in the state had over fifteen years of experience.<sup>25</sup> They and many other experienced teachers would receive no increase. Phillips, an alumnus of the Senate, scathingly denounced the upper house, calling their action "one of the worst defeats for education in Oklahoma."<sup>26</sup>

The time had apparently come to prepare in earnest for the March 1 deadline which was approaching without the favorable action the OEA demanded. Following previous instructions by the Executive Committee, Phillips mailed a questionnaire to all members asking what procedure they were willing to follow. The first question asked if sanctions should be applied. The second asked if teachers should withhold their

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<sup>23</sup>Board of Directors, December 11, 1964.

<sup>24</sup>Oklahoma City Times, February 3, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Supra, Chapter V.

<sup>26</sup>Oklahoma City Times, February 8, 1965, p. 1; February 9, 1965, p.

services the following fall and whether the individual member would comply if such a course were decided upon. The third question asked if the State Board of Education should discontinue issuance of temporary certificates in case sanctions were invoked. And the fourth asked the members if they would contact their legislators in a final effort to gain satisfactory results.<sup>27</sup> By March 6, the eve of the Board meeting called to consider new action by the OEA, approximately half the teachers had returned their questionnaires. Ninety-five percent of these respondents favored the imposition of sanctions, and a similar number indicated willingness to withhold services if called upon by the OEA Board and a majority vote of their local faculties.<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime, tension had grown, as the OEA moved inexorably toward its promised more stringent action, as the legislators lagged and the governor remained adamant, and as press criticism rose to a crescendo. To correct a longstanding weakness, the OEA employed a full-time public relations director, Thomas Massey.<sup>29</sup> In late February the NEA released its report of the investigation it had conducted at the OEA's request. Declaring that "subminimal conditions prevail in the majority" of Oklahoma school districts, the document generally supported the state association's position and made recommendations for remedial action closely paralleling the OEA's program.<sup>30</sup> The report also urged a more

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<sup>27</sup>Executive Committee, January 8, 1965; Daily Oklahoman, February 9, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1965.

<sup>29</sup>Executive Committee, March 5, 1965; Supra, Chapter VI.

<sup>30</sup>NEA Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Oklahoma: A State-Wide Study of Conditions Detrimental to an Effective Public Educational Program, NEA, 1965.

active role for classroom teachers in the OEA, a trend that was already growing rapidly in the urban areas of the state. The Midwest City Classroom Teachers Association pioneered a new area when they won a professional negotiations agreement during the first week of March.<sup>31</sup>

Governor Bellmon noted that much of the NEA report was similar to that of his own advisory committee and pointedly suggested that the legislature act on certain of its recommendations, such as school district reorganization.<sup>32</sup> As the March 1 deadline passed, and as teachers discussed possible punitive steps, the governor angrily condemned talk of drastic measures and warned that "cool heads" must prevail until he and the legislature had more time to solve school problems.<sup>33</sup> Since the OEA first set its March deadline back in November, the press had consistently opposed the pressure thus created. As the final date approached, the frequency and bellicosity of the anti-OEA editorials increased. The Tulsa Tribune rebuked Phillips and the Association for not accepting the Senate bill and questioned the morality of the OEA's methods.<sup>34</sup> The Oklahoma City Times echoed this view, and followed up with an attack upon the poor preparation of Oklahoma high school graduates, blaming the OEA for the deficiencies.<sup>35</sup> The Norman Transcript thought the OEA's drive for funds would rob higher education and mental health of adequate

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<sup>31</sup>Oklahoma City Times, March 3, 1965, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup>Tulsa Tribune, February 26, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Oklahoma City Times, March 1, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Tulsa Tribune, February 10, 1965, p. 48.

<sup>35</sup>Oklahoma City Times, February 10, 1965, p. 32; February 13, 1965, p. 16.

appropriations.<sup>36</sup> The Muskogee Daily Phoenix published the salaries of local teachers and accused them of "lack of maturity and responsibility" when they objected to this indignity so frequently visited upon state teachers.<sup>37</sup> The Enid Morning News concentrated upon Phillips, charging that he "had done more than any other to set back the cause of teachers in Oklahoma."<sup>38</sup> On March 1 the Tulsa World warned against sanctions, accusing the OEA of planning a "kick in the face" of state officials "at a time they are working on the problem."<sup>39</sup>

In its regular meeting, March 7, 1965, the OEA Board of Directors voted to impose limited sanctions against the state. Condemning the state for the "subminimal" conditions reported by the NEA, the Board forbade teachers from outside the state taking positions in Oklahoma. This penalty against the state would be kept in effect until the conditions requiring their imposition were improved. Before making this decision near the end of a six-hour session, the Board reviewed the work of the current legislature. Speaker J. D. McCarty defended the failure of the lawmakers to provide new taxes, pointing out that such an attempt would only be vetoed by the governor. He said that plans were under way to submit a sales tax proposal to the people. The Board checked the roll of the legislature, each director reporting the probable position of his representatives in his area, in an effort to ascertain how the lawmakers would vote on a sales tax bill. E. C. Hall presented the

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<sup>36</sup>Norman Transcript, February 21, 1965.

<sup>37</sup>Muskogee Daily Phoenix, February 24, 1965.

<sup>38</sup>Enid Morning News, February 24, 1965.

<sup>39</sup>Tulsa World, March 1, 1965, p. 6.



report of the Educational Policies Commission, a statement entitled "Crises of Education in the Sixties," which advocated professional negotiations and, when necessary, the resort to sanctions.<sup>40</sup> Garland Godfrey presented the NEA's report of its Oklahoma investigation, explained the methods of the investigating commission, and defended its work. Vice President Dan Davis then spoke for the special committee appointed to study the NEA report. This committee commended the NEA's effort and, using the report to justify its position, recommended that the Board invoke sanctions. The Board approved the recommendation by a vote of 103 to 67.<sup>41</sup>

The expected cries of outrage arose from the press and from public officials, but the legislature moved rapidly to seek a solution to the financial dilemma. It proposed a one-cent increase in the sales tax, the proposal in the form of a referendum question to be decided by the people in a special election set for April 27. The money would go into the general fund, but it was widely understood that the bulk of the new revenue would be appropriated for schools. While the OEA adhered to its policy of not initiating specific tax measures, it quietly supported the sales tax, and teachers looked upon the election as a new vote of public confidence in and support of their cause. Phillips noted that the principal opposition came from former Governor Gary, the Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council, and the Farm Bureau.<sup>42</sup> The sales tax question met defeat by a vote of 293,278 to 171,123.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Supra, Chapter VII.

<sup>41</sup>Board of Directors, March 7, 1965.

<sup>42</sup>Executive Committee, March 26, 1965.

<sup>43</sup>Wilson, p. 265.

Rebuffed again, the Association reacted quickly. On the day after the election the Executive Committee asked for a new referendum, this time on the local support levy. It called for a meeting of the Board of Directors on May 3. And it appointed an "ad hoc committee" to "summarize present developments and recommend a statement of action to be presented to the Board." With W. D. Carr as chairman, the committee consisted of Lester Reed, Frank Malone, Flossie Beckett, Dan Davis, Doyle Munger, Dee Mitchell, and Gladys Nunn.<sup>44</sup>

At the May 3 meeting, the principal recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee was that the NEA be asked to impose sanctions upon the State of Oklahoma on a nationwide basis. The Board adopted this position by a vote of 145 to 5. Other recommendations accepted by an overwhelming margin were: that higher education be excluded from the employment restrictions for one year, that an added sanction be brought against administrators who recommend unethical employment--that is, in violation of established sanctions, and that the OEA meet in a statewide convention May 11. The NEA Executive Secretary William D. Carr was a guest of the Board at its May 3 meeting. He explained how the NEA would assist the OEA, providing placement services for teachers who wanted to leave Oklahoma and helping those improperly dismissed. The Board discussed the possibility of teachers withholding their services in the fall, but a motion to this effect was killed by a 61-to-35 vote to adjourn.<sup>45</sup>

On May 11, 1965, Lyle Ashby, the deputy executive secretary of the NEA, announced that the NEA had imposed national sanctions upon Oklahoma. Speaking before approximately 8,000 teachers assembled in Oklahoma City,

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<sup>44</sup>Executive Committee, April 28, 1965.

<sup>45</sup>Board of Directors, May 3, 1965.

he reviewed the failure of the state to devote an adequate share of its "ample resources" to education, the futile effort of the OEA to improve the situation, and the refusal of the present governor to act, even on the recommendations of his own advisors. The national organization advised teachers across the land that subminimal conditions existed in Oklahoma and that they would be in violation of professional ethics if they took a position in the state. Following the general assembly, the Board of Directors formally received the NEA communication and discussed its ramifications. It decided that in the event the legislature took convincing remedial steps the Board would reconvene to consider what to do. A poll of teachers at the morning convention revealed 5,383 in favor of withholding services at the beginning of the next school term, 1,275 opposed. Though there was heated discussion of this contingency, the Board took no action toward such a measure.<sup>46</sup>

National sanctions provided trauma enough for the state. Governor Bellmon demanded immediate retraction of the NEA charges, objecting to "strong-arm" tactics at a time when he and the legislature were trying to find a solution. Calling the NEA report an "insult to Oklahoma teachers," he accused the organization of seeking credit for the salary raise that the legislature would surely bring about.<sup>47</sup> Newspapers referred to the sanctions as "blacklisting," and said the state had received a "black eye" that would take years to remove. Legislators, business leaders, and civic representatives reacted bitterly against the

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<sup>46</sup> Board of Directors, May 11, 1965.

<sup>47</sup> Daily Oklahoman, May 11, 1965, p. 1.

action of the teachers.<sup>48</sup>

Whether it approved of the OEA's methods or not, the legislature enacted over half the Association's program, passing the most forward-looking array of school legislation since the 1940's.<sup>49</sup> Through growth revenue and deficit appropriations it provided \$127,000,000 for common schools and \$83,750,000 for higher education, in addition to supplemental appropriations to complete the current year. With the encouragement of OEA leaders, the lawmakers devised a new formula for apportioning state aid to public schools, dividing the funds on a per-pupil basis instead of on the basis of a minimum number of teachers at a fixed salary. The per-pupil apportionment was to be determined by dividing the total amount of state aid in 1963-1964, the selected base year, by the number of students in average daily attendance in the state. State aid above this amount was to be provided according to an "incentive aid" plan. For each mill of the five-mill emergency levy a district voted, the state would provide five dollars per pupil in average daily attendance. Thus a school voting all five mills would receive twenty-five dollars per student. The new law required that fifteen dollars of this fund be spent on teachers' salaries. The net effect of the new approach as concerned salaries was an average increase of \$550 per year, with no teacher receiving less than a \$380 raise. To enable districts to gain more revenue, including money for further salary increases, the legislature referred to the vote of the people the question of an annual ten-mill

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<sup>48</sup>Daily Oklahoman, May 13, 1965, p. 1; Oklahoma City Times, May 13, 1965, p. 42; The Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1965, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup>Board of Directors, August 11, 1965. Unless otherwise indicated, all reference to these legislative achievements in this and subsequent paragraphs is based upon the source here cited.

local support levy, the proposed amendment to be decided upon at a special election September 14.

The legislature reduced the permissible retirement age to sixty-two and increased retirement payments. It fully financed the free textbook program for the first time since it was adopted as one of the Better Schools Amendments of 1946. In addition to the ten-mill levy question, the legislature submitted two other measures for special elections, one calling for a higher education building bond issue to be voted upon in December, the other providing for area vocational schools to be decided in 1966. In the area of professional welfare and security the lawmakers passed three important laws. One provided for mandatory sick leave, replacing the current permissive legislation. Another made social security coverage for teachers a requirement of all school boards, replacing a law that had left the question to the vote of individual faculties. These two measures satisfied goals that had been on the OEA program for several years. A third measure met a goal presented to the legislature for the first time in 1965, a statutory Professional Practices Commission. This new body was expected to give added strength to the OEA's growing effort to protect teachers from unfair practices.<sup>50</sup>

With this record established, the House of Representatives passed a resolution asking the OEA and the NEA to withdraw their sanctions and "allow the citizens of Oklahoma an opportunity to vote . . ." on the local support levy in September "without duress."<sup>51</sup> At the Leadership Workshop in August the Executive Committee recognized the achievements of the legislature by making three recommendations to the Board of

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<sup>50</sup>Supra, Chapter VIII.

<sup>51</sup>Executive Committee, July 9, 1965.

Directors: to remove that part of the sanctions program having to do with helping teachers leave the state, to remove the ban against out-of-state teachers' coming to Oklahoma to teach, and to take no further action on sanctions until later.<sup>52</sup> Meeting the same day, the Board approved the first and third of these proposals. The second, the ban against out-of-state teachers, was the heart of the sanctions effort, the provision that brought pain to the citizenry. On a standing vote, the Board approved the recommendation, 79 to 78. It then voted by roll call and defeated the proposal, 77 to 84. By this narrow margin, in a state of mild parliamentary confusion, the Board of Directors, now containing a majority of classroom teachers, voted to continue sanctions, notwithstanding the recommendation of the Executive Committee.<sup>53</sup>

The war of nerves continued, the next crisis being the September 14 election on the amendment to provide a ten-mill local support levy. Opinions varied as to the relationship between the continued sanctions and the outcome of the election. Before the August Board meeting, Phillips had predicted that sanctions would be lifted if the levy were approved. Steve Stahl, of the Oklahoma Public Expenditures Council, argued that removal of the sanctions would improve the chances of the question passing. Senator Clem Hamilton thought it made no difference.<sup>54</sup> The press vented its fury against the OEA, but generally supported the pending proposal. The Oklahoma City Times declared, "The public must be wiser than the teachers," and approved the levy in spite of the

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<sup>52</sup> Executive Committee, August 11, 1965.

<sup>53</sup> Board of Directors, August 11, 1965.

<sup>54</sup> Daily Oklahoman, July 11, 1965, p. 18.

"irresponsible" OEA.<sup>55</sup> The Daily Oklahoman struck at the NEA for "experimenting," for using sanctions against Oklahoma to bring pressure upon other states. But on the eve of the election the big daily came out solidly in favor of the tax measure.<sup>56</sup> The Tulsa Tribune summed up the viewpoint of the press in an editorial stating that "the state press is for the mill levy despite the teachers. . . . Angry as most state editors are at the OEA . . . they are mobilizing to win 'yes' votes for the election September 14."<sup>57</sup>

Governor Bellmon's first reaction to the extension of sanctions was a threat to withhold his support of the local support levy, saying he found it difficult and distasteful to campaign under duress.<sup>58</sup> In mid-August he asked the attorney general to seek a court order requiring the OEA and NEA to desist in their imposition of sanctions. In a related statement he asked if a state were powerless against "self-serving attacks" by "pseudo-official organizations" and if the state's authority had been abridged by a special interest group "not accountable to the voters." He compared sanctions to physical barriers across roads to deny their use, further stating, "This is government by intimidation . . . as opposed to government by law."<sup>59</sup> He also considered suing the education associations in the name of the state for damages up to \$20,000,000, but changed his mind when the attorney general insisted that the suit be

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<sup>55</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 13, 1965, p. 40.

<sup>56</sup>Daily Oklahoman, August 13, 1965, p. 28; September 12, 1965, p. 26.

<sup>57</sup>Tulsa Tribune, August 21, 1965, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 13, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 16, 1965, p. 1.

brought directly by the governor.<sup>60</sup> Five days before the election the governor urged passage of the tax measure.<sup>61</sup>

On September 14 the electorate approved the amendment establishing a ten-mill local support levy for schools by a vote of 125,779 to 59,535.<sup>62</sup> The heaviest support for the measure came from urban areas. The Executive Committee immediately recommended that all sanctions be removed.<sup>63</sup> Phillips expressed hope that the Board would follow the recommendation. He again blamed Bellmon for the need for sanctions, citing the governor's veto in 1963, his refusal to call a special election on the petitions in 1964, and his "continued obstinacy" in 1965.<sup>64</sup> Bellmon retorted that Phillips had been a major contributor to the sub-minimal conditions of Oklahoma schools and that the executive secretary should be removed from office. He insisted that "education has fared well in spite of Ferman Phillips and his crowd." Phillips, now jubilant in victory, defended his "crowd" of 25,000 teachers and predicted that he would still be in his position when the "lame duck" governor was out of office.<sup>65</sup>

On September 18 the Board voted unanimously to end all sanctions, but to take a new look at conditions the following spring. It gave a solid vote of confidence to Phillips and the staff and passed a

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<sup>60</sup>Oklahoma Journal, September 3, 1965.

<sup>61</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 9, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup>Wilson, p. 266.

<sup>63</sup>Executive Committee, September 15, 1965.

<sup>64</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 15, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 17, 1965, p. 1.



resolution condemning those "outside our organization who attempt to degrade or intimate our leaders or members." The resolution further stated that it was "preposterous" for a non-member to demand the removal of "a leader in whom faith, trust, and support has been bestowed."<sup>66</sup>

These parting volleys were largely submerged beneath expressions of relief by all major participants in the struggle. State Superintendent Hodge thought "we can get back to normal now." Past President Knight looked forward to "improving schools for the rest of the year."<sup>67</sup> Happy that the siege was over, he said sanctions had been used only as a last resort and emphasized that the OEA had never considered a strike. He reiterated the central motivation for the Association's course in the past year by saying, "We can afford improved education in this state and the children need it." He then promised that "the education profession will certainly do its best to justify the new trust the people of Oklahoma have placed in us . . ."<sup>68</sup> President Mary Sue Silk also stressed the OEA's preference for "professional approaches" to its problems, and said teachers were anxious to get on with the new methods and improvements that were developing in education. Noting the rising influence of classroom teachers during the year, she made the perennial presidential appeal to unity, insisting she intended to be president over all members of the OEA.<sup>69</sup>

Governor Bellmon made no comment on the Board's action until the NEA officially lifted its sanctions September 24, the final formal act

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<sup>66</sup>Board of Directors, September 18, 1965.

<sup>67</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 19, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup>Tulsa Tribune, September 25, 1965, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 19, 1965, p. 15.

of the conflict. He was glad to see sanctions go but thought they had done more harm than good. He said he had considered filing suit against the OEA and the NEA, but now, instead, he would make a special effort to correct the image of the state so seriously tarnished by the educators. Speaking for the legislature, Speaker McCarty denied that sanctions had influenced the lawmakers and repeated the widespread complaint that the action had given the state a bad image.<sup>70</sup> The Tulsa World deplored the bad image of Oklahoma that would "take years to erase," but urged all citizens to work to repair the damage and to avoid a repetition of the problem.<sup>71</sup> One month after the NEA removed its pressure, the Daily Oklahoman called 1965 the "Year of Education in Oklahoma," summing up the legislative achievements of the year and conceding that the OEA effort had forced the improvements.<sup>72</sup>

In the closing months of 1965 the OEA appeared to be returning to normal, but at the same time revealed in several respects that it would never be the same as it had been in 1964 and preceding years. The last meeting of the Executive Committee in 1965 saw no political or legislative problem on its agenda for the first time in over two years. Marvin Easley, a ten-year veteran of the Committee, was the new legislative chairman, but he had nothing to report. The body heard routine reports on the budget, again \$345,000, the same as the previous year; on membership, at 33,435 an all-time record; and on convention attendance, also a record at 19,621. It discussed Kate Frank Manor, now in full operation; staff salaries, still lagging; the credit union, its assets approaching

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<sup>70</sup>Daily Oklahoman, September 25, 1965, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup>Tulsa World, September 25, 1965, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup>Daily Oklahoman, October 24, 1965, p. 20.

\$750,000; and instructional conferences, being planned and conducted by Edna Donley. The Committee voted to send Phillips to his third convention of the World Council of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, this time in 1966 at Seoul, Korea.<sup>73</sup>

These or similar proceedings might have taken place at any time during the past decade. But change was evident in other meetings of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. At the same session that voted the end of sanctions, the Board established a new organization, the Political Action Committee of Educators (PACE).<sup>74</sup> The group was organized and led by the OEA Citizenship Committee which had been rejuvenated by the infusion of new members from the ranks of the classroom teachers. While political activity was not new to the OEA, the broad involvement and deeper commitment of the membership envisioned by the new organization promised a more vigorous and continuing program than had been conducted in the past by the Legislative Committee. By November PACE had enrolled 500 members.<sup>75</sup> The new Professional Practices Commission was functioning by October, with the OEA contributing to its expenses, even though it was a statutory body appointed by the State Board of Education, and Associate Secretary Willingham serving as its staff consultant.<sup>76</sup>

At its final meeting in 1965, the Board approved a new revision of the constitution to be presented to the members for their approval in

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<sup>73</sup>Executive Committee, November 12, 1965.

<sup>74</sup>Board of Directors, September 18, 1965.

<sup>75</sup>Board of Directors, November 13, 1965.

<sup>76</sup>Executive Committee, October 27, 1965.

1966. The new charter limited the terms of directors to three years and held Executive Committee members to two consecutive three-year terms. It required that at least two nominees be named for vacancies on the Executive Committee and that they be chosen by secret ballot. The obvious aim was to encourage the election of classroom teachers to these bodies. But the revolution in representation was already well under way. The election of four members of the Executive Committee at this same Board meeting brought the total changes in that group since November, 1964, to six, or half its elected membership. Five of the six new members were classroom teachers.<sup>77</sup> The Oklahoma Association of School Administrators, in its final meeting of 1965, took note of the shifting leadership and soberly discussed how the superintendents could "mend fences" with the OEA.<sup>78</sup>

The resort to sanctions was itself a basic change from prior procedure, and the precedent established would afterward be a threat to those who would oppose the OEA. Stated more positively by certain Association leaders, the sanction experience demonstrated new strength in the organized profession, strength that the Association hoped would assure continued progress in education in Oklahoma.

#### A Look Back and a Look Forward

The OEA struggle of 1965 revealed evidence that an era was ending and a new one beginning. The election defeat of 1964 seemed to signal the need for new departures in the Association, in its goals, its methods, and its organization. Actually, the changes had been

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<sup>77</sup>Board of Directors, November 13, 1965.

<sup>78</sup>Stubbs, p. 25.

approaching slowly through the years, but the crisis tipped the balance of forces such that the OEA began to move more rapidly in new directions. The new goals pointed toward greater professional autonomy, security, and welfare, without yielding on the earlier emphasis upon financial support. New methods included broader-based involvement of the membership, professional negotiations at the local level, and professional sanctions at all levels. Constitutional changes, both through amendment and through new applications of old provisions, promised more democratic representation of all members, with control by the classroom teachers, who constituted eighty percent of the membership, as the ultimate ideal.

The change was reminiscent of the critical events at the end of World War II, which set the course of the Association for the next two decades. Depression and war had produced a financial crisis in education in Oklahoma. Discontented members demanded that the public provide more money for schools and that the OEA provide more representative leadership. Out of the storm came a new constitution in 1945 and the Better Schools Amendments in 1946. The new plan of organization permitted the membership, for the first time, to vote directly for officers of the Association, a measure of democracy that made some administrators fear that classroom teachers would dominate the organization, but a forward step that was not to be reversed in the ensuing twenty years. The Better Schools Amendments, resisted bitterly by economic groups opposed to higher taxes, provided temporary improvement in the financial support of schools.

Unfortunately, inflation in the aftermath of World War II and the advent of the Cold War cancelled the economic gains made in 1946 and dictated that the OEA continue its strenuous pursuit of appropriations. For two decades, financial goals would head the list of legislative

objectives. However, other goals were sought and won, including higher standards for preparation and certification of teachers, codification of school laws, and massive reorganization of school districts.<sup>79</sup>

Being more spectacular and controversial, legislative efforts tended to overshadow other activities of the Association, even though most members spent far more time on the latter than the former. Teachers preferred to leave the difficulties and intricacies of formulating a program and working for its enactment to a few active leaders, who were mainly administrators. While these activists did not shrink from their responsibilities, they detested the necessity of the biennial agony of the legislative struggle, and dreamed of the time when their problems would be solved permanently. By 1965 administrators were still leading in this field, but with teachers more fully involved and their interests more accurately reflected by the legislative programs.

The legislative struggle called for political involvement and the cultivation of allied groups, with the limitations of both affecting the course followed by the OEA. Throughout most of the twenty-year period the legislature gave greater representation to rural areas of the state, because of population shifts to the cities unaccompanied by reapportionment. Further, both the legislative branch and the executive were dominated by the established Democratic Party, which tended to be rural and

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<sup>79</sup>In spite of charges to the contrary, the OEA consistently supported school district consolidation. It met strong resistance from affected districts, and was hampered by divisions within the Association, but the OEA-sponsored legislation of the 1940's established a procedure for reorganization that brought about the reduction of the number of districts from 4,450 in 1946 to 998 in 1965. Following the first major reduction in 1947, which saw 1,786 districts attached to others, consolidation proceeded at the rate of about 100 districts per year. Lambert and Rankin, p. 23.

conservative. Practicing the "art of the possible" under these conditions, the OEA offered moderate legislative proposals and settled for smaller successes than many of its members approved, though constantly charged by opponents with trying to move too fast. The Association used the Congress of Parents and Teachers and the School Boards Association to help promote its interests, accepting in so doing the further moderating effect of these two groups so close to the public. The political arena changed sharply in the late 1950's and early 1960's, when a reform movement split the Democrats, the Republicans won the governorship, and the United States Supreme Court ordered reapportionment of the legislature. The nature of the new challenge remained unsettled in 1965, but the new leadership of the organization was preparing to pursue the "art of the possible" in the mid-1960's, just as their predecessors had done in preceding decades.

The rank and file of the Association preferred to think of themselves as members of a professional organization rather than a political pressure group, and gave more time to nonpolitical activities of the organization. They aspired to be accepted as members of a profession, and certain individual teachers and schools approached this status, both in their competence and in their recognition by peers and public. However, the limitations of public control, the comparative ease of entry into the occupation, and the lack of proved competence of too many practitioners tended to reduce the vocation to the level of a semi-profession, or as some sociologists would say, a "would-be" profession. The Association fought to overcome this condition by pressing for higher standards of entry and retention in the profession and for legal control over these functions. It made a beginning in the protection of its members from unprofessional practices and adopted a code of ethics and

rudimentary machinery for its enforcement. In addition to financial benefits gained through legislation, the Association developed a welfare program that provided several fringe benefits to its members. Many teachers worked earnestly at self-improvement and found The Oklahoma Teacher, the conventions, and special instructional conferences significant contributors to this goal.

One of the most important activities of the OEA in the postwar period was the sponsoring of workshops, the Leadership Workshop at the state level, the one-day events at the unit level. Inaugurated in 1948, these meetings were normally divided three ways among legislative planning, professional improvement, and organizational strengthening. The one-day workshops were being replaced in 1965 by varied types of local meetings, but the statewide workshop was still strong and considered an essential link in each year's calendar of events.

The membership of the OEA went through some interesting and significant changes in the twenty-year period. It grew older and then younger. It included more females than males, but in the sixties the number and proportion of men was increasing. It moved with the population from the country to the cities, with a growing number having been born in urban areas. The most significant change in the membership combined these factors, as young men from non-farm backgrounds became more prevalent and both stimulated and led the changes taking place in the 1960's. The question remained unsettled as to whether they could provide a quality of leadership comparable to that of a previous generation of young men who led the Association in the 1940's as administrators. The OEA membership became darker in color as it took in the Negro teachers from the OANT. The Association could claim no credit for leading this development, which was brought about by the action of the United States Supreme



Court. Oklahoma teachers could take pride, however, in the rising level of educational preparation of its members, which ranked at or near the top of the list of states after 1957.

Total membership in the OEA more than doubled between 1945 and 1965, with active membership increasing from 14,577 to 27,699. Virtually all public school teachers and over half those in higher education were members in 1965. So large and all-inclusive an organization could not escape diversity and even cleavage. In addition to the seven departments, every subject matter area and interest had its own organization. The most obvious differences were between rural and urban teachers, common school and higher education personnel, and administrators and classroom teachers. The last named almost imperceptibly but inexorably rose to a position approaching domination by 1965.

Leadership in the OEA emerged at every level, much of it ordinary and some of it outstanding, though without proper acclaim. There were few heroes--and no devils--in the history of the Association. Several of its elected leaders at least approached heroic proportions in their services to their colleagues and the public. The presidents most often mentioned for superior leadership through the years were G. T. Stubbs, E. E. Battles, W. D. Carr, Garland Godfrey, Farris Willingham, and J. Win Payne.<sup>80</sup> Later presidents who made outstanding contributions, and who in 1965 still had many years of active service ahead of them, were Edna Donley, Gilbert Robinson, Juanita Kidd, and Raymond Knight. Among

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<sup>80</sup>These are the persons most often cited as outstanding leaders in the letters, interviews, records, and conversations of the author in the course of this study. Because they served earlier they would obviously receive more attention than later leaders. This is not necessarily to rank them above other able persons serving as their contemporaries or at a later date.

the more notable leaders of the classroom teachers were Effie Stanfield, Kate Frank, Floyd Focht, and Gladys Nunn. A common characteristic of all of these leaders was their long span of service, each serving in many capacities at several levels throughout their professional careers. Most of them made contributions at the local and national levels as well as in state leadership.

The nearest approach to unsung heroism in the Association was to be found in the OEA staff. From Executive Secretaries Howell and Phillips to unnamed clerks and stenographers, the headquarters personnel worked long hours at difficult tasks, with inequitable remuneration and with rarely an expression of appreciation from the membership. As the activities of the Association grew, the added load of responsibility fell upon the staff more rapidly than new personnel could be authorized and engaged, with the result that every member of the staff tended to be overworked. Moreover, the teachers, who themselves struggled for higher pay and manageable job definitions, seemed oblivious to the work load of their own employees. OEA members resisted the higher annual dues that could have relieved the situation as well as enabling further expansion of the services offered by the Association.

The name that became synonymous with the OEA was that of Ferman Phillips. He took the improvised position of "Manager" at a time when several other able men rejected it as too risky and too ill-paid. In a short time he became "Mr. OEA," ably organizing and leading the staff, inspiring and rallying the membership, which still suffered from the inroads of depression and war, and leading the legislative struggle as only a veteran of the legislature could. As years passed, his style of leadership inevitably accumulated opposition, and his friends in the legislature left the lawmaking arena, with the result that his name lost

some of its magic among younger teachers and legislators and his effectiveness as a lobbyist declined. Still he continued indispensable to the Association, as he advised boards, committees, and officers, and, having contributed to the making of policy, he worked tirelessly to carry out the policies of the organization. In 1965, after nearly twenty years of leadership of the Association, he continued to receive the acclaim of his colleagues, as friend and foe alike agreed that he had been a major contributor to the educational scene in Oklahoma.

Although Phillips was looked upon by the membership, the public, and even himself, as primarily a lobbyist, he made a major contribution to the Association as its chief administrator in a period of great expansion. He recruited and directed the staff, including two outstanding associate secretaries, A. L. Bondurant and Farris Willingham. He played a leading role in acquiring a site and constructing the building that came to house the OEA Headquarters. He administered a growing budget in a brilliant manner and built the assets of the Association from about \$20,000 in 1946 to over \$750,000 in 1965.

As the educators of Oklahoma approached the final third of the Twentieth Century, they took comfort from the fact that they were joined in an association that had served them well. They were acutely aware that the years ahead were even more fraught with challenge than those of the recent past. The two decades beginning in 1965 could be expected to be as stormy as the two that were coming to a close. Those teachers who had experienced the postwar struggle for better schools in Oklahoma could not imagine such an effort without a strong organization. Looking ahead, they foresaw a continuing and growing role for the OEA.

The Association had been a significant part of Oklahoma's postwar history, though the public looked upon it with less pride and comfort

than did its members. As education became the major growth industry in the state, and as more students attended school and remained in the classrooms longer, the new acceptance of the importance of education collided with traditional reluctance to pay for it or to honor its purveyors. Public interest in education was not matched by a public desire for a strong teaching profession. Indeed, professionalization of teaching threatened the accustomed control of teachers by the community. An exercise of independence by an individual teacher was often anathema to the public. The power exerted by their collective efforts could be appalling. In 1965, as Oklahomans looked to the future of education in the state, the record of the OEA since 1945 assured them that the organized profession would have to be reckoned with.

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- Letter, George Hann to Joe Hubbell, September 6, 1968.  
Provides information on the writing of the 1945 Constitution. Hann was chairman of the revision committee, and a long-term member of the Executive Committee.
- Letter, O. W. Jones to Joe Hubbell, September 12, 1968.  
Provides information on the period of the 1940's.
- Letter, Juanita Kidd to Joe Hubbell, September 13, 1968.  
Concentrates on her presidency, 1963-1964.
- Letter, Raymond W. Knight to Joe Hubbell, September 5, 1968.  
Brief observations on his presidency, 1964-1965.
- Letter, Dewey Neal to Joe Hubbell, September 10, 1968.  
Neal was OEA public relations director from 1956 to 1959.
- Letter, J. Win Payne to Joe Hubbell, September 12, 1969.  
A summary of major legislative efforts of the OEA, with some penetrating observations from the man who served most continuously and effectively on the Legislative Committee from 1945 to 1965.
- Letter, Ferman Phillips to D. Bruce Selby, April 3, 1944. Selby papers.
- Letter, D. Bruce Selby to Joe Hubbell, September 11, 1968.  
Relates events of the 1940's when Selby was on the Executive Committee.

Letter, Descygne Shubert to Joe Hubbell, September 19, 1968.  
Brief summary of her presidency, 1961-1962.

Letter, Mary Sue Silk to Joe Hubbell, September 13, 1968.  
Brief comments on her presidency, 1965-1966.

Letter, G. T. Stubbs to Oklahoma School Administrators, May 8, 1945.  
Selby papers.

Letter, Dion Wood to Joe Hubbell, September 9, 1968.  
Observations of a long-term member of the Executive Committee.

### Interviews

Bondurant, A. L., Oklahoma City, April 18, 1969.  
Associate Secretary, 1953-1963.

Burke, Sally, Oklahoma City, January 27, 1969.  
Managing editor of The Oklahoma Teacher, 1948-1953.

Burris, W. C., Weatherford, Oklahoma, September 24, 1968.  
Chairman of the Public Relations Committee, 1957-1959.

Carr, William D., Stillwater, Oklahoma, May 3, 1969.  
President, 1949-1950, and active leader throughout the postwar period.

Conway, Russell, Oklahoma City, April 23, 1969.  
Field Service representative, 1962-1965.

Donley, Edna, Oklahoma City, January 28, 1969.  
President, 1957-1958, and staff member beginning in 1960.

Downing, Virgil, Weatherford, Oklahoma, September 3, 1968.  
President of the Department of Elementary Principals, 1950-1951.

Easley, Marvin, Weatherford, Oklahoma, March 26, 1960.  
Long-term member of the Executive Committee, repeatedly chairman of the Constitutional Revision Committee, and active on Legislative Committee.

Edens, Floyd, Oklahoma City, June 10, 1968.  
Printer at OEA Headquarters.

Fields, Walter, Oklahoma City, July 8, 1969.  
Chairman of several OEA committees, particularly active on Legislative Committee.

Godfrey, Garland, Edmond, Oklahoma, July 2, 1969.  
President, 1950-1951; NEA Director, 1957-1966; and active on Legislative Committee throughout most of the period under study.

Hines, LauCylle, Oklahoma City, June 10, 1968.

Administrative secretary of OEA and personal secretary to Ferman Phillips.

Houghline, Florine, Oklahoma City, June 10, 1968.

Financial secretary of OEA, a position including responsibility for membership records.

Hurt, Joe, Oklahoma City, August 13, 1968.

Manager of OEA in 1945.

Jones, O. W., Tahlequah, Oklahoma, October 20, 1968.

A long-term member of the Board of Directors and chairman of many committees; particularly active on Professional Relations Commission.

Keas, Standifer, Oklahoma City, August 12, 1968.

Executive Committee of the Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System.

Leyerle, Marvin, Oklahoma City, August 10, 1968.

Managing editor of The Oklahoma Teacher beginning in 1964.

Massey, Harold, Weatherford, Oklahoma, June 13, 1969.

Long active as member of the Oklahoma TEPS Commission, and in 1969 chairman-elect of that organization. Currently Dean of the Graduate School at Southwestern State College, is highly informed on teacher education programs in the state.

Moon, F. D., Oklahoma City, October 17, 1968.

Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers and recognized leader of and spokesman for Negro educators in Oklahoma.

Phillips, Ferman, Oklahoma City; Interview No. 1, June 20, 1968; No. 2, November 8, 1968; No. 3, April 23, 1969; No. 4, July 8, 1969.

Robinson, Gilbert, Oklahoma City, January 27, 1969.

President, 1962-1963; Executive Committee, 1946-1964; chairman of the General Campaign Committee for the 1964 OEA initiative petition drive and election.

Stubbs, G. T., Stillwater, Oklahoma, October 11, 1968.

President, 1944-1945, and active leader throughout the postwar period.

White, Clark, Oklahoma City, April 23, 1969.

OEA staff, 1961-1965; currently director of the OEA Credit Union.

Willingham, Farris E., Oklahoma City, January 28, 1969.

President, 1954-1955; staff member since 1955; Associate Secretary, 1963-1969.

## Books and Articles

- Brookover, Wilbur B. A Sociology of Education. New York: American Book Company, 1955.  
A general survey.
- Brubacher, John S. A History of the Problems of Education, 2d ed. New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1966.  
A good survey of the problems arising in the postwar period.
- Corey, Arthur. "The Professional Standards Movement: How Teaching is Becoming a Profession," The Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 6 (September, 1955), pp. 224-32.  
Reviews the progress of improvement in teacher education and certification.
- Debo, Angie. Oklahoma, Footloose and Fancy-Free. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949.  
Her chapter on the state's educational system provides insight into the beliefs and values of Oklahomans as regards education.
- Geer, Blanche. "Teaching," The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Vol. 15, pp. 560-65.  
A sociological analysis of teaching emphasizing the limitations of the vocation as compared with the learned professions.
- Gibson, Arrell M. Oklahoma, A History of Five Centuries. Norman, Oklahoma: Harlow Publishing Company, 1965.  
A standard survey of Oklahoma history. It deals briefly with educational developments to 1965.
- Hansen, Kenneth H. Public Education in American Society. 2d ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.  
A survey of educational conditions in America in the postwar period.
- Harriss, Julian and Stanley Johnson. The Complete Reporter: A General Text in Journalistic Writing and Editing. 2d ed. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.  
A college text in journalism, including criteria for news; useful in evaluating press treatment of schools and OEA.
- Hughes, James M. Education in America. 2d ed. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965.  
A general text for beginning teachers.
- Kandel, I. L. The New Era in Education: A Comparative Study. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955.  
Includes an assessment of teacher status in the 1950's, its progress, and its prospects.
- Knight, Edgar W. Fifty Years of American Education, 1900-1950: A Historical Review and Critical Appraisal. New York: The Ronald Press

Company, 1952.

Its survey of rampant criticism of schools and teachers in the 1940's is one of the more useful features of this otherwise standard survey.

Kerber, August and Wilfred Smith (eds.). Educational Issues in a Changing Society. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964.

A collection of readings on current educational problems.

Krug, Edward A. Salient Dates in American Education, 1635-1964. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1966.

The five critical dates falling between 1945 and 1965 underscore the rapid changes challenging education in this period.

Lieberman, Myron. Education As a Profession. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956.

This study finds the NEA and its state affiliates seriously wanting in the attributes of professional organizations.

Martin, Theodore D. Building a Teaching Profession: A Century of Progress, 1857-1957. Middletown, New York: The Whitlock Press, Inc., 1957.

This former member of the NEA staff realistically points out the limitations of teaching as a profession but thinks progress toward this ideal is being made.

Scott, C. Winfield, Clyde M. Hill, and Hobert W. Burns (eds.). The Great Debate: Our Schools in Crisis. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959.

Readings on current problems with opposing viewpoints presented on each issue.

Stubbs, G. T. A Brief History of the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators. Stillwater, Oklahoma: Privately printed, 1965.

A 26-page booklet outlining the growth and activities of this major department of the OEA. Written at a time when the group was on the defensive, their leadership of the OEA being seriously challenged by disgruntled members.

Talcott, Parsons. "Professions," The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Vol. 12, pp. 536-46.

An erudite treatment that excludes teaching from the professions except in relation to certain disciplines at the graduate level.

Wesley, Edgar B. NEA: The First Hundred Years, The Building of the Teaching Profession. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.

History of the NEA, prepared for its centennial year.

#### Newspapers

Ada Evening News. Ada, Oklahoma, 1954, 1961, 1963, 1964.



Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 1951, 1954, 1959.

Capitol Hill Beacon. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1959.

Clinton Daily News. Clinton, Oklahoma, 1955, 1964.

Coalgate Record-Register. Coalgate, Oklahoma, 1951, 1957, 1959, 1965.

Cushing Daily News. Cushing, Oklahoma, 1961, 1963, 1964.

Daily Oklahoman. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1945-1965.

This largest daily paper in Oklahoma was a reliable and most-utilized source on activities of the legislature. Its editorial policy was consistently negative toward the OEA, and its views tended to be echoed by smaller papers of the state.

Enid Daily Eagle. Enid, Oklahoma, 1953, 1955, 1963, 1964.

Enid Morning News. Enid, Oklahoma, 1954, 1962, 1963, 1965.

Guymon Daily Herald. Guymon, Oklahoma, 1963, 1964.

Henryetta Free-Lance. Henryetta, Oklahoma, 1959, 1963.

Holdenville Daily News. Holdenville, Oklahoma, 1963, 1965.

Hugo Daily News. Hugo, Oklahoma, 1953.

Lawton Morning Press. Lawton, Oklahoma, 1951, 1963.

Miami Daily News-Record. Miami, Oklahoma, 1960.

McAlester Daily News-Capital. McAlester, Oklahoma, 1959, 1964.

Muskogee Daily Phoenix. Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1945-1955, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965.

Muskogee Times-Democrat. Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1961, 1963, 1964.

Norman Daily Transcript. Norman, Oklahoma, 1959, 1963, 1965.

Okmulgee Times. Okmulgee, Oklahoma, 1951.

Oklahoma City Times. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1945-1965.

Supplemented the Daily Oklahoman as a major source for this study.

Oklahoma Journal. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1964, 1965.

Generally friendly toward OEA. Provided the only editorial in the state that this author could find which supported the OEA and the NEA after the latter imposed sanctions in May, 1965.

Pawnee Chief. Pawnee, Oklahoma, 1951, 1961, 1963.

Poteau Sun. Poteau, Oklahoma, 1960.

Purcell Register. Purcell, Oklahoma, 1964.

Sapulpa Daily Herald. Sapulpa, Oklahoma, 1960, 1961, 1962.

Seminole Producer. Seminole, Oklahoma, 1951, 1957, 1959, 1963, 1965.

Shawnee News Star. Shawnee, Oklahoma, 1951, 1964.

Stillwater Daily News-Press. Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1958-1965.

Tonkawa News. Tonkawa, Oklahoma, 1957-1965.

Tulsa Tribune. Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1945-1965.

Consulted primarily for its editorial view, which tended to be less friendly toward the OEA than those of the Oklahoma City papers. Its news coverage of the OEA and of the legislature was less complete than that of the Oklahoma City dailies.

Tulsa World. Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1951-1955, 1957-1958, 1961-1965.

VITA 3

Joe Hubbell

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

THESIS: A HISTORY OF THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, 1945-1965

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal data: Born in Wagoner, Oklahoma, October 30, 1920, the son of Clarence G. and Nancy Ann Hubbell.

Education: Graduated from Okay High School, Okay, Oklahoma, in 1938. Received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education from Northeastern State College, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 1948, with a major in History; received the Master of Education degree from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, in 1953, with a major in Secondary Education; pursued additional graduate work at the University of Oklahoma and at Tulsa University; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 1970.

Professional experience: Teacher, Tahlequah High School, 1948-1955; Principal, Cabool High School, Cabool, Missouri, 1955-1957; Principal, Tonkawa High School, Tonkawa, Oklahoma, 1957-1961; Superintendent, Tonkawa Public Schools, 1961-1964; Graduate Assistant, Department of History, Oklahoma State University, 1964-1965; Instructor, Department of History, Oklahoma State University, Summer, 1965; Appointed Assistant Professor of History, Southwestern State College, Weatherford, Oklahoma, in 1965.