

The Politics of Public School Reform In Pennsylvania, 1880-1911

IN MAY of 1911, Governor Tener signed into law the Pennsylvania School Code. First of its kind in the history of the Keystone State, the Code symbolized the coming of age of Pennsylvania public education. Editorial writers and victorious proponents of the measure hailed the Code as a lever for educational progress. More and more children would be brought under the compulsory attendance laws. The schools would assume more responsibility for the health and social welfare of the pupils. The schools would serve more directly to socialize American children and to Americanize immigrant children. The schools would further extend their kindergarten classes, special schools for "exceptional" children, manual training and vocational classes. Professional school personnel would gain more authority over curriculum, instruction, and administration at the expense of laymen on school boards. Ward school boards in cities would be stripped of power, and central school boards would achieve increased authority. Large elective city school boards would be reduced to small appointive boards. Curriculum would be standardized, and a State Board of Education would oversee the entire state school operation.¹

The question of control occupied center stage in the political process by which the School Code had emerged; the crucial issues related to the problem of who should run the schools. The traditional answer in agrarian America had been that the public schools should be controlled by voters in their local communities using the procedures of representative democracy. But the time-consuming and uncertain outcomes of older decentralized methods left much to be desired, according to the advocates of public school reform. Just as

¹ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *School Code of Pennsylvania and Other Laws* (Harrisburg, 1911). For a summary, see Louise G. and Matthew J. Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania* (Indiana, Pa., 1930), 255-259.

system and order were becoming more and more vital to the successful operation of industrial organizations, so they came to be seen as necessary guiding principles for mass public education in an industrial era. Lowered costs of production through efficient techniques, uniformity in product quality, and smoothly functioning chains of managerial command were the desired qualities for a modern system of public schooling. But before these goals could be achieved, new laws were necessary. Once passed, the laws could be the levers by which the new public schooling would be put into motion.² The purpose of this study is to describe the political process created by the groups and organizations who fought for a public school system appropriate to their vision of the needs of modern society. The story of their efforts constitutes an important chapter in the social history of Pennsylvania and illustrates the maturing of a type of pressure-group politics that remains the norm throughout most of the United States.

The story of public school politics is inseparable from the history of the impact of economic development on the society of the Keystone State in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Pennsylvania during this period was the leading producer of coal, coke, and steel; only New York ranked higher as an industrial leader, and this was the period when Pennsylvania made its greatest relative contribution to the nation's industrial productivity. Prior to the 1870s, Pennsylvania's most important industries had been cotton and woolen manufactures, with iron, leather, and lumber following behind. Even in 1900, the state was still the second leading producer of textiles, with the trade centered, as it always had been, in Philadelphia. But steel and coal now took the lead in Pennsylvania's economic life. The Allegheny County cities (Pittsburgh, McKeesport, Duquesne, Homestead), as well as Johnstown, New Castle, Bethlehem, Steelton, and Phoenixville, were the home of the bulk

² For an introduction to the recent historiography of the social functions of public schooling in this period, see David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, 1974); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York, 1976); and Carl F. Kaestle, "Conflict and Consensus Revisited: Notes Toward a Reinterpretation of American Educational History," *Harvard Educational Review*, XLVI (1976), 390-396.

of the mills that boosted the production of Pennsylvania steel from 49 per cent of the nation's output in 1880 to 55 per cent in 1905.³

The rise of steel brought with it a corresponding prominence of the state's bituminous and anthracite coal areas. By 1900, virtually all the production of pig iron depended upon the use of coke for fuel, and most of the coke came from the Connellsville coke region of Westmoreland and Fayette Counties. These counties, along with Washington, produced more than half of the state's bituminous coal, the output of which jumped from 2,690,786 in 1860 to 150,029,687 tons in 1920. In 1905, Pennsylvania produced 50 per cent of the nation's coal and 64 per cent of its coke, and the anthracite regions contributed their share to the state's leadership in coal production. The growth of output in hard coal was also spectacular, rising from 8,500,000 tons in 1860 to 98,826,084 tons in 1918, with Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Schuylkill counties contributing 80 per cent of the total output.⁴

The coal- and steel-producing regions generated the most dramatic growth of urbanization that occurred between 1880 and 1910. As in the nation as a whole, the small- and medium-sized cities grew faster than Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. While in 1880 there were 56 places in Pennsylvania with a population of 4,000 or more, by 1910 the number of places that counted at least 5,000 persons had grown to 147. The number of small cities had grown from 47 to 127, and whereas in 1880 the state contained only 7 medium-sized cities, the number had increased by 1910 to 17.⁵

Prospects of jobs in mines and mills lured native whites from farms to cities, but the swelling tide of European immigrants gave the steel districts and the mining regions a strikingly "foreign" character. Pennsylvania's proportion of the foreign-born had outstripped that of the nation as a whole as early as 1850, as table 1 indicates, and by 1910 the gap was wider than ever before.

³ Sylvester K. Stevens, *Pennsylvania: Titan of Industry* (New York, 1948), I, 295-326.

⁴ James M. Swank, *Progressive Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1908), 174; Wayland F. Dunaway, *A History of Pennsylvania* (New York, 1935), 706, 711.

⁵ Bernard A. Weisberger, *The New Industrial Society* (New York, 1969), 32-33; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States: 1880*, I, xxxi, 3; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910*, III, 529.

Table 1: Percentage of Foreign-Born Population of Pennsylvania and the United States, 1850-1910

Year	Pennsylvania	United States
1850	13.1	9.7
1860	14.8	13.2
1870	15.5	14.4
1880	13.7	13.3
1890	16.1	14.7
1900	15.6	13.6
1910	18.8	14.7

But if Pennsylvania's share was higher than that of the United States, its share of non-English-speaking foreign-born was even higher (see table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of Foreign-Born Whites ten-years old and over, unable to speak English

Year	Pennsylvania	United States
1890	15.6	15.0
1900	16.7	12.2
1910	33.6	22.8

The non-English-speaking immigrants who increasingly took over the unskilled and semiskilled jobs in the steel, coal, and textile industries after 1880 upset the traditional high ranking of the foreign-born population from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and Germany. By 1910, Italy, Poland, and Austria had sent the highest number of foreign-born residents, with Russians, Lithuanians, and Hungarians coming very close in numbers to those from the countries of the "old immigration."⁶

The "new immigrants" flocked to the twenty industrial counties of Pennsylvania to such an extent that by 1910 none of these counties contained less than 10 per cent, and nine contained more than 15 per cent. The mean percentage of the new immigrant

⁶ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920*, II, 36, 712, 1252; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census Abstract, 1920*, 48-49.

population of these counties soared from 2 per cent in 1890 to 15 per cent in 1910. Naturally the cities experienced the greatest impact of immigration during this period, even the eleven largest cities with 25,000 or more. Of these eleven cities, only Allentown, Lancaster, Altoona, and Williamsport saw less than a 1,000 per cent increase in new immigrant populations, whereas all but Allentown (105.7) had less than a 100 per cent increase in overall population.⁷

It is to these industrial cities and counties that we must look for the social sources of the school reform politics of the period 1880–1910. In population growth, increase in school attendance, as well as increase in “new immigrants,” the percentage increase of the industrial counties consistently outstripped that of the state’s agricultural counties.⁸ The movement for educational reform grew out of the experiences of school administrators and laymen in these areas who saw in public schooling a tool with which to control the social consequences triggered by industrial development. A careful reading of the yearly reports of the state’s school superintendents from the late 1870s to 1912 makes it possible to verify the impression that reform was primarily a product of urban and industrial settings. Superintendents from the rural areas who called for change also responded to the altered conditions that followed upon economic development, but their demands focused mainly upon measures to preserve their version of rural life from the consequences of depopulation caused by the lure of industry and the city. The political organizations created to lobby for reforms were urban institutions. True, the State Education Association became part of the reform

⁷ Based on calculations from the following decennial census reports: 1890, I, 117, 653–654, 670–677, 710–711; 1900, I, 779–780, 796–803; 1910, I, 117, 864–865; III, 572–585, 586–589. “New Immigrant” is defined narrowly here and in my other statistical calculations, and includes only those foreign-born listed as born in Austria, Russia, Hungary and Italy. If anything, my data underestimates the actual situation. The leading agricultural and industrial counties as defined here, based on Dunaway, *op. cit.*, are as follows: Industrial—Allegheny, Armstrong, Blair, Butler, Cambria, Carbon, Fayette, Indiana, Jefferson, Lackawanna, Lawrence, Luzerne, Mercer, Northampton, Northumberland, Philadelphia, Schuylkill, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland; Agricultural—Adams, Bedford, Berks, Bradford, Bucks, Butler, Chester, Crawford, Cumberland, Erie, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mercer, Montgomery, Susquehanna, Tioga, Washington, Westmoreland, York.

⁸ Based on calculations from the same sources cited in footnote 7, and from school statistics in the following: *Pennsylvania, 1890*, 364–367; *Pennsylvania, 1900*, 334–337; *Pennsylvania, 1910*, 548–549.

coalition, but the handful of men who fashioned the policy of that organization (it represented a scant 2.4 per cent of the state's educators) were representatives of urban and industrial areas.⁹

Some aspects of Pennsylvania's social transformation can only be recaptured by recounting the language of articulate observers, who expressed their dismay at what they saw taking place. Even a sympathetic observer of the anthracite regions summed up the impact of the changes he saw in disapproving and emotion-laden language. "Our towns and villages," wrote Peter Roberts in 1904, "are being depleted of the better class of citizens, and many of those who still remain prefer ease and amusement to struggle and responsibility." English-speaking workers had begun to leave, and the new arrivals "have lowered our standard of living, have bred discontent, and have brought elements that are utterly un-American in ideas and aspirations into our communities. These, by their adherence to their language and customs, remain unassimilated after years of residence in the United States." Roberts warned that unless "counteracting forces are set in motion," the result would be "a lower type of manhood and womanhood in these communities."¹⁰

Lest these sentiments seem extreme, it should be pointed out that similar remarks run like a connecting thread through the

⁹ A note on citations of school superintendents' reports: the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh superintendents' reports were addressed to their respective Boards of Education, whereas the county, borough, and city superintendents' reports were to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The latter were bound together and published each year by the Commonwealth. Because of the unwieldy citations necessary otherwise, I will cite reports as follows: the name of the city, borough or county, followed by the date of the year covered by the report. Thus, *Philadelphia, 1895*, means the report of the Philadelphia Superintendent for the year 1895. *Columbia, 1906*, means the report of the Columbia Superintendent for 1906 published in the report of the *Superintendents of Public Instruction* for that year. *Pennsylvania, 1906*, means the report of the State Superintendent for 1906. *Pennsylvania School Journal*, LVIII (1909-1910), 56. The numbers were 824 out of 33,339 teachers in the state. Although women reformers played a central role in the leadership of reform groups in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, the state-wide reform campaigns remained dominated by male administrators. I have used the term "schoolmen" throughout, in keeping with the language of the period. For the role of women, see my articles, "Teachers and Educational Reform During the Progressive Era: A Case Study of the Pittsburgh Teachers' Association," *History of Education Quarterly*, VII (1967), 220-233, and "Modernization in Philadelphia School Reform," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), XCIV (1970), 358-383.

¹⁰ Peter Roberts, *Anthracite Coal Communities* (New York, 1970), reprint edition of 1904 original, 344-345.

writings of Pennsylvania public school reformers during the period. The reformers, like Roberts, were groping for ways to come to terms with an interrelated set of changes during a generation that had also brought the most intensive industrial conflicts in the history of their state and nation. In the twenty-five years prior to 1905, Pennsylvania experienced 4,159 strikes; only New York ranked higher, and only Illinois came close to the record of the Keystone State with 3,624. The number of strikes per year dropped below 100 in only five of the twenty-five years; but in fourteen of the years during the period, workers carried out 150 strikes or more. After 1899, the number of strikes per year never dropped below 175. The iron and steel, the coal, and the textile industries were especially hard hit.¹¹

Pennsylvania experienced not only a relatively large number of industrial disputes, but also some of the most violent class conflicts in the history of the United States. The railroad strike of 1877, "the first large scale protest against the new economic conditions brought about by industrialization," brought death and destruction to Pittsburgh, and President Hayes almost declared Pennsylvania to be in a state of insurrection. Ten years later trouble in the anthracite regions required an investigation by a congressional committee. The Homestead strike of 1892, with its pitched battles between the company's private army and the strikers, earned world-wide notoriety. Scarcely a year had passed before the state plunged, along with the rest of the nation, into the second worst depression in American history. The first winter of the Depression of 1893 threw thousands out of work and onto the rolls of the unemployed. One survey of the jobless in Pennsylvania cities put the estimate at a conservative 50,000. The "great strike" in anthracite of 1900 ended only after two years of bitter conflict and required the mediation of a presidential commission.¹² The years 1909 and 1910 brought the Bethlehem and McKees Rocks steel strikes and the Philadelphia

¹¹ U. S. Bureau of Labor, *Sixteenth and Twenty-first Annual Report(s) of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1901, 100-103, 244-248; 1906, 350-367, 480-485.

¹² Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, *American Violence: A Documentary History* (New York, 1971), 133; C. C. Closson, Jr., "The Unemployed in American Cities," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, VIII (1894), 180-182, 501. See also Samuel Rezneck, "Unemployment, Unrest, and Relief in the United States During the Depression of 1893-1897," *Journal of Political Economy*, LXI (1953), 324-345.

transit strike. The McKees Rocks and Philadelphia battles called forth the active participation of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party of America. Commenting on the Philadelphia strike, a socialist writer gleefully announced that "The War of the classes is on."¹³

Economic conflict took on the character of ethnic conflict as more and more immigrants poured into Pennsylvania. As Rowland Berthoff put it in describing the anthracite region, to a large extent "social classes *were* ethnic groups," and his generalization could apply to other areas of the state as well.¹⁴ By 1913 more than 75 per cent of all employees in bituminous coal were foreign-born and 85 per cent of them were from southern and eastern Europe.¹⁵ The mills in Pittsburgh, Homestead, McKees Rocks, McKeesport and Johnstown, to name only a few, filled with Hungarians, Ukrainians, and other Slavic workers who carried out the heaviest, dirtiest, and lowest paying jobs. And in Philadelphia, "whole streets formerly occupied by Irish-American families have become populated by Italians."¹⁶ Throughout the state, Pennsylvanians noted the increase in what Berthoff has called the "ethnic chasms in society," and the school reformers especially concerned themselves with what they saw as the combined dangers of class and ethnic conflict. As early as 1889, just before Somerset County began to experience its growth in new immigrant population from 0.1 per cent in 1890 to 14.2 per cent in 1910, its superintendent of schools called for action. J. M. Berkey urged reforms that would bring to the schools "the laboring people, as a class," in order to rectify their "lack" of "mental and moral power." Superintendent D. M. Brungard of

¹³ New York *Call*, Mar. 8, 1910, quoted in Graham Adams, Jr., *Age of Industrial Violence, 1910-15* (New York, 1966), 186; see also, Herbert G. Gutman, "The Worker's Search for Power: Labor in the Gilded Age," in H. Wayne Morgan, ed., *The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal* (Syracuse, 1963); John N. Ingham, "A Strike in the Progressive Era: McKees Rocks, 1909," *PMHB*, XC (1966), 353-377.

¹⁴ Rowland Berthoff, "The Social Order of the Anthracite Region, 1825-1902," *PMHB*, LXXXIX (1965), 274.

¹⁵ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Commissioner of Labor and Industry, *First Annual Report, 1913*, Part I, 242-245.

¹⁶ Sylvester K. Stevens, *Pennsylvania: Birthplace of a Nation* (New York, 1964), 231; Joseph L. J. Kirilin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia From the Earliest Missionaries Down to the Present Time*, quoted in Joan Younger Dickinson, "Aspects of Italian Immigration to Philadelphia," *PMHB*, XC (1966), 445-465.

Clinton County, probably responding to recent labor troubles in the nearby anthracite region, expressed a position that school reformers would repeat again and again:¹⁷

We are a heterogeneous people in this country and the best, most powerful agency for Americanizing this mass of humanity is the public school.

If more time, money and energy were devoted to the proper training and education of the child, there would be less need of punishing and reforming the adult. When will people see their proper relation to the maintainment of more excellent schools, a better government and a proper security of the rights of the people?

When reformers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century demanded that the schools correct the social ills of industrialization, they gave voice to assumptions about the relationship between education and society that had already become integral to American culture. When reformers organized to put pressure on the legislature for new public school laws, they intended to change institutional practices in a fashion that had already brought substantial alterations to American schooling. Regardless of how novel the Pennsylvania reformers may have at times considered their ideas and activities, they often admitted their debt to predecessors of the early nineteenth century. From our perspective, Pennsylvania school reform must be seen as a chapter in a long history of American culture and politics in relation to what Robert Wiebe has called the social functions of education.¹⁸

Early nineteenth-century educational reform occurred wherever the disrupting social consequences of early industrialization seemed to require the substitution of formal schooling for older informal methods of social control and socialization. The majority culture of antebellum America, with its evangelical Protestant ethos, provided educational activists with a language that emphasized the desirability of individualistic perfection in a moral universe of action. But when we compare the perfectionist rhetoric with its humanitarian connotations to prescriptions for institutional change,

¹⁷ Same sources as footnote 7; *Somerset*, 1889, 94; *Clinton*, 1889, 30-31.

¹⁸ Robert H. Wiebe, "The Social Functions of Education," *American Quarterly*, XXI (1969), 147-164.

and place both in relation to political action, it becomes apparent that "educational reform" was intended to serve a conservative purpose in what appeared to be a dangerously rapid transformation of the social order. Class, ethnic, and religious conflict could hopefully be neutralized through universal public education, and "progress" (economic development) could be assured without the disruption of those who already possessed power, privilege, and prestige. Public education for social stability could serve as an alternative to direct political action for conservative purposes. As John L. Thomas has written in his analysis of the work of Horace Mann as "romantic reformer":

in Mann's theory as in the programs of other humanitarians the perfection of the individual through education guaranteed illimitable progress. The constantly expanding powers of the free individual ensured the steady improvement of society until the educative process finally achieved a harmonious, self-regulating community.¹⁹

Horace Mann was the best-known educational activist in antebellum America, but his conservative ideology and politics were shared by other schoolmen and laymen who worked to create new educational institutions and to impose new functions on existing institutions. The research of Michael Katz, Raymond Mohl, and Roderick Ryon into the movements for educational change in Massachusetts, New York City, and Pennsylvania has made it possible for us to extend Merle Curti's assessment made forty years ago about Horace Mann to other reformers.²⁰ While they were certainly sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged, they were also convinced that social disorder stemmed from deficiencies of individual members of disadvantaged classes in society. Poverty, crime, and disease, from the reformer's point of view, could not be attributed to structural characteristics of the capitalist political

¹⁹ John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865," *American Quarterly*, XVII (1965), 670.

²⁰ Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1968); Raymond A. Mohl, "Education as Social Control in New York City, 1784-1825," *New York History*, LI (1970), 219-237; Roderick N. Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania From 1818 to 1834," *Pennsylvania History*, XXXIV (1967), 240-249.

economy. Consequently social disorder was "a burden to taxpayers and a menace to their interests" and those involved in reform were "trying to tell the dominant class what must be done to make its position more advantageous and secure."²¹

Curti seemed reluctant to describe Mann's conservatism as deliberate, and he qualified his remarks by arguing that Mann's reluctance to attack the status quo was "unconsciously" designed to encourage the construction of bulwarks for its support. If he wrote today, Curti would have the benefit of the findings of historians Katz, Mohl, Ryon, and Cutler, among others. First, the activists for educational change were themselves members of the upper levels of society; Mohl suggests that those in New York City consciously saw themselves as "Moral Stewards" for the rest of society. Second, there is no longer any question but that educational change was intended by the activists involved as a deliberate attempt to protect what they perceived to be their interests: social harmony, class consensus, a labor force socialized according to the time consciousness of an industrial economy, an immigrant population acculturated according to what Milton Gordon has called "Anglo Conformity."²²

The public schools could only put into practice the values necessary for social order if the older tradition of local autonomy could be substantially diminished. Reformers therefore argued that state governments needed to install measures of centralization, closer supervision, and bureaucratization. Jonathan Messerli has demonstrated how Horace Mann intended his attempts to increase state control as a stimulus for encouragement and cooperation for local reform groups working for similar goals. Mann's overriding purpose was "to counteract the spread of irresponsible individualism and local apathy." Mann's successors proved as willing as he had been to use the state as a partner to encourage "responsible" groups, and they proved even more willing to use state powers of coercion.

²¹ Merle Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (Paterson, N. J., 1959), originally published 1935, 131-132.

²² Katz, Mohl, Ryon, *passim*; William W. Cutler, III, "Status, Values and the Education of the Poor: The Trustees of the New York Public School Society, 1805-1853," *American Quarterly*, XXIV (1972), 69-85; Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York, 1964), 88-114.

Pennsylvania's early nineteenth-century school reform followed the Massachusetts model. Roderick Ryon has shown that an "interlocking directorate had, by and large, ruled the special and public education movements" in the Keystone State in its "crusade to build character and elevate public morals" that culminated in the formative school law of 1834.²³ Eugene McCoy has shown that the school laws of 1854, 1857, and 1867, as well as the provisions of the state constitution of 1873, not only resulted in centralization and state control but were intended to have that effect.²⁴ By the late 1870s Pennsylvania school reformers had already successfully demonstrated their ability to translate their private values into public institutional practice through the medium of law. Their example, and the cultural and political tradition they had helped to create, provided a guide for their successors in the years to come.

The battles for compulsory attendance and child labor laws between the 1880s and about 1905 prepared the ground for the campaign for the 1911 School Code. During this twenty-year period, the public school reformers created the organizations and earned the legitimacy that gave them the support of the Pennsylvania Republican Party. As Walter Dean Burnham and others have demonstrated, the Democratic Party died as a viable opposition party after the depression of the nineties. Consequently, the reformers needed only to convince the Republican Party leaders that "school legislation should be under the general direction of educational experts" to assure their success.²⁵

The organized schoolmen, led by administrators rather than teachers, worked for reform through their state organization, the Pennsylvania State Education Association. The Association defined

²³ Jonathan Messerli, "Localism and State Control in Horace Mann's Reform of the Common Schools," *American Quarterly*, XVII (1965), 104-118; Ryon, 249.

²⁴ Eugene M. McCoy, "History and Development of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction to 1945" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1959), 50, 55, 56, 109-110, 118-126, 141-144.

²⁵ Dr. E. O. Lyte, remark during discussion at the State Teachers' Association, *Pennsylvania School Journal* (hereinafter *PSJ*), L (1901-1902), 84. See Walter Dean Burnham, "The Nature of Electoral Change: The Case of Pennsylvania," chapter 3 of his *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York, 1970), 34-70. The significance of compulsory education to American society and culture during the period has been analyzed by David B. Tyack in "Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory Schooling," *Harvard Educational Review*, XLVI (1976), 355-389.

its political role for the first time in the campaigns for compulsory attendance and child labor laws; by the time of the passage of the Code, Pennsylvania legislators looked to the Association as a reliable guide for action. The schoolmen depended upon their professionalism to back up their claim to expertise on matters of public school legislation. The lay reformers, however, presented themselves as "representative men and women" speaking on behalf of the public at large. Members of the upper levels of their communities, activists in the Philadelphia Public Education Association and the Philadelphia and Allegheny County Civic Clubs, brought to school politics both their dedication to public service and their desire to control the course of social change.

The politics of educational change in Pennsylvania should be seen, therefore, as a politics of groups struggling to gain legitimacy; support for school reform developed as a consequence of organized political pressure. Because the organized schoolmen backed reform, innovation rather than tradition carried the stamp of professional legitimacy, and the absence of organized opposition should not be surprising. Only the Democratic minority in the legislature, representing mainly the rural areas in the Commonwealth least affected by urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, consistently and unsuccessfully opposed educational change. In this, as Walter Dean Burnham has written, the Democratic Party was "to a very large degree the vehicle of colonial, periphery-oriented dissent against the industrial-metropole center. It was also the vehicle through which the myriad island communities surviving from the nineteenth century sought on occasion to ward off absorption into the larger society being brought into existence under the auspices of industrial capitalism."²⁶

The single most important organization of laymen was the Public Education Association of Philadelphia, and it began in the work of a committee of the Society for Organizing Charity formed in Philadelphia in 1880. The Public Education Association—hereinafter referred to as the PEA—aimed "to promote the efficiency and perfect the system of public education in Philadelphia" and intended "above

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53. See also, James D. Yoder, "Rural Pennsylvania Politics in a Decade of Discontent" (Ph.D. dissertation, Lehigh University, 1969).

all, to secure, as far as possible, universal education, by bringing under instruction that large class, numbering not less than twenty-two thousand children, who are now growing up in ignorance in this city."²⁷

Though chiefly interested in extending the child labor provisions of the state factory acts, the Pennsylvania Society to Protect Children From Cruelty also became an early supporter of a compulsory attendance law. The Society lobbied for such legislation in 1882 as it investigated the extent of child labor, and launched a campaign against employers who ignored the existing regulations. Convinced that the factory acts needed to be amended, the members of the Society canvassed the state as unofficial inspectors hoping to expose violators.²⁸

These organizations developed enough political expertise by 1887 to introduce a successful child labor act and an unsuccessful compulsory attendance act to the state legislature. The Society to Protect Children, though pleased with the 1887 law, continued to lobby both for state factory inspectors and for a compulsory education law that would complement the child labor act. The legislature of 1889 responded to this pressure by passing a factory inspection act and by resuming discussion on the question of compulsory attendance.²⁹ The compulsory attendance bill introduced in the 1889 House of Representatives would have required children from eight to fourteen to attend school sixteen weeks per year, but, like the 1887 bill, it was defeated. Two other compulsory education bills, one that would have applied only to Philadelphia children between seven and twelve and required truant officers, another that would have applied only to cities, boroughs, and townships, were introduced only to be defeated in committee or tabled.³⁰

²⁷ Public Education Association of Philadelphia (hereinafter PEA), *Annual Report, 1882*, 3; Lewis R. Harley, *A History of the Public Education Association of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1896), 14.

²⁸ Pennsylvania Society to Protect Children from Cruelty (hereinafter PSPC), *Annual Report, 1883*, 14; PSPC, *Annual Report, 1885*, 12; PSPC, *Annual Report, 1886*, 12.

²⁹ Pennsylvania, *Legislative Record, 1887*, 1041-1042, 1181-1182; Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1887), 287. See also, J. Lynn Barnard, *Factory Legislation in Pennsylvania: Its History and Administration* (Philadelphia, 1907); PSPC, *Annual Report, 1888*, 13; Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1889), 246.

³⁰ *Legislative Record, 1889*, 1198-1203, 1229-1232, 1262-1263.

The failure of these successive attempts disturbed the Society to Protect Children, and in 1890 they renewed their efforts for "some law . . . that would insist that every child in the Commonwealth be taught to read and write, and be fitted by education to become a reputable citizen." The editor of the *Pennsylvania School Journal* prominently displayed a discussion of compulsory attendance from the National Education Association meeting in Philadelphia. The State Teachers' Association agreed in 1890 for the first time to organize a committee on legislation "to use all honorable means to secure the desired legislation" favored by the Association.³¹

D. J. Waller, Superintendent of Public Instruction, decided to support a compulsory law, and the legislature took up a bill in the 1891 session to compel children between seven and twelve to attend school for the entire school session. Members of the Democratic Party spoke against the bill. German-born P. S. Weber, of rural Clearfield County, bridled at the claim that compulsory education would facilitate Americanization, increase literacy, and decrease crime. In a defense of cultural pluralism that proved relatively unique in the political battles to come, Weber argued that such a law would result instead in making children "mental machines." "True education," he argued, had to take into account the state's "varied classification of people, people of all nationalities and all classes" whose interests "are not homogeneous, but diversified."³²

Supporters of the bill ignored Representative Weber's arguments, and it passed second reading on March 12 with an amendment to provide free textbooks to poor children. On April 21, the bill was debated again; the textbook amendment was removed when Representative John R. Farr pointed out that such a bill was already under consideration, and that it would make the compulsory act unconstitutional. Representative Harvey W. Haines of the all-Democratic delegation from York County argued that the bill was not only impractical, but was also based on the pernicious assumption that the children of the state belonged to the state. Representative David E. Weaver, a Republican machinist from Allegheny

³¹ PSpC, *Annual Report*, 1890, 10; *PSJ*, XXXIX (1890-1891), 384.

³² *Legislative Record*, 1891, 802-803; *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), Jan. 29, 1891; *Smull's Legislative Handbook and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania*, 1891 (hereinafter *Smull's Handbook*), 696.

County who later voted in favor of the bill, read an article into the record to disprove the contention that compulsory education deterred crime. The final speeches were by Farr and Francis R. Coyne, the latter a Democrat, both from Lackawanna County. Farr, from a well-to-do Scranton family and editor and owner of the Scranton *Courier-Progress*, gave three reasons for supporting the bill: to decrease the rising rate of illiteracy; to hurry the "civilization of the hordes of pauper labor that are coming to this State"; and because "the only way we can assimilate the children of pauper labor is by getting them into our public schools." Coyne, born in England and a Democrat, nevertheless supported the bill; as a supervising principal in the Lackawanna County schools, he had become convinced of the need for socializing the children of immigrant miners moving into northeast Pennsylvania. Coyne urged passage of the bill, for "Such a law in a single generation would work a moral and intellectual reformation and regeneration of our criminal and pauper classes and save millions of money in the departments of police, charities and corrections and largely increase the wealth, influence and producing power of the State."³³

The bill passed easily, even though two-thirds of the Democratic members of the two houses, in a pattern that would persist, either voted against it or abstained. But Governor Robert E. Pattison vetoed the bill, arguing that it would prove unenforceable "and might work most serious evil to the very cause on behalf of which it is invoked."³⁴ Pattison's public explanation should be supplemented by the fact that he was the Democratic Party's only major state official between the Civil War and the New Deal. He had become governor only after a split in the Republican Party led voters to divide their ballots between three candidates. He would hardly want to alienate Democratic voters by endorsing a measure that their representatives had opposed by a two-to-one margin.

Governor Pattison's veto only increased the determination of the supporters of compulsory attendance legislation. Superintendent of Public Instruction Waller gave official endorsement to the measure

³³ *Legislative Record*, 1891, 805-812, 1730-1735; *Smull's Handbook*, 1891, 676, 678, 680, 696, 710.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 698-699, 707-710; *Legislative Record*, 1891, 1735, 2685; Pennsylvania, *Vetoed by the Governor*, 1891, 95.

in his annual report for 1891. "The dangerous disturbances arising from rapid immigration, and from the crowding of vast numbers of the disorderly and the illiterate into our cities," he wrote, "make it one of the most important duties resting upon our citizens to have a statute enacted . . . providing that every child in Pennsylvania between eight and sixteen years of age must be sent to school, or have instruction and training that shall be the equivalent of that given in the public schools." The city and borough superintendents adopted a resolution in favor of compulsory attendance as well as for a school census at their convention in January 1892, and the State Teachers' Association, meeting in July, backed up the superintendents with their own resolution. In his 1892 annual report Waller renewed his arguments for the law, and in January 1893 the city and borough superintendents resolved for the second year in favor of "a law compelling the attendance of that large class of children in this Commonwealth who, from whatever cause, are growing up in ignorance and becoming a menace to the peace and welfare of the State."³⁵

By the time Representative Farr called up the 1893 bill for second reading on March 22, Governor Pattison had proposed an alternative. He proposed to extend the school term and to distribute the state school funds to districts on the basis of the length of school term—the longer the term, the higher the appropriation. The editor of the *Pennsylvania School Journal* refused to retreat from his stand that "If the parent will not or cannot educate, the State must." Governor Pattison's proposal pleased none of the advocates of the bill in the legislature. Their opponents, using typical Democratic Party rhetoric of the period, tried to label the reformers as anti-democratic tools of state supremacy, claimed to represent the true sentiment of the public (including the State Grange), and filibustered during both the second and third readings of the bill. Representative P. M. Lytle, Republican from rural Huntingdon County, admitted that he would vote for the bill because his Republican constituency was in favor of it, but he personally saw it as "class legislation of the dirtiest, filthiest kind . . . my own judgement is that it is bad legislation." John R. Farr, floor manager

³⁵ *Pennsylvania Report*, 1891, in *PSJ*, XL (1891-1892), 131, 278, 291, 395, 397, 402.

for the bill as in 1891 once again reminded his colleagues that "Pennsylvania has more than its share of this low class of people that we are so anxious to keep away from this country." Quoting from the *North American Review* to show that the illiteracy rate was from two to six times higher among the newcomers from southern and eastern European countries, Farr concluded his argument. "These," he said, "are the countries in which there is no compulsory education, and those are the people who are coming to Pennsylvania. Now we want to keep them away from this country, but if they come we wish to insist that they must educate their children."³⁶

Passed by the House with a larger majority than the 1891 act had enjoyed, the bill went to the Senate a month later. George Ross, Doylestown Democrat, Princeton graduate, and an unsuccessful candidate for Congress, seized upon the measure as "paternalism in government run riot," but for every emotion-laden plea against the bill by the Democratic colleagues of Ross, the supporters responded in kind. Senator G. P. S. Gobin quoted from *Prisoners and Paupers*, by social reformer Henry M. Boies, to show that according to scientific investigation thousands of children could not be reached except through a compulsory attendance law. Senator William U. Brewer saw no reason to regret that the law "bears hardly on that class of people who do not recognize what their duty is to the State. They fail to send their children to our public schools; they in a certain sense have forfeited their rights as parents with respect to their children." The bill passed with a two-thirds majority on May 10, 1893. Governor Pattison's veto of this, the second compulsory education act passed by the legislature, came as no surprise. His own proposal had not been seriously considered as an alternative, and the Governor was "by no means convinced that it is in accordance with the more enlightened sentiment of this Commonwealth that a system of compulsory attendance should be established, nor has the experience of other Commonwealths justified the expectation that compulsory education brings 'healing on its wings' for the ills of the body politic."³⁷

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 403; *Legislative Record*, 1893, 1072-1073, 1299-1302.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2204, 2207; *Pennsylvania, Vetoes by the Governor*, 1893, 49.

Although the compulsory attendance movement stopped just short of success in 1893, the drive for child labor legislation had been successful. The new law increased the number of work places covered by the factory act of 1889, limited the work day for minors to twelve hours, fixed the minimum age at thirteen, and affected all firms except those employing less than five workers. The new act also increased the salaries of the factory inspector and his deputies, as well as the expense allowances for the department. The 1893 law was a compromise measure, for the Senate had passed a more stringent act with a ten-hour day and a minimum age of fourteen. Robert Watchorn, the factory inspector, had recommended the more rigorous measure, but the legislators had bowed to pressure from Philadelphia manufacturers who had testified before the House Committee considering the bill. Watchorn moved cautiously in exercising his authority, hoping to enforce the new laws with the cooperation of employers. He aimed to put the 1893 law into effect "without having caused a harsh shock to any branch of industry, and without doing injustice to any of the 5,000 children involved."³⁸

That the perspective of a factory inspector enforcing child labor laws would differ from that of members of reform groups advocating the laws in the first place became more clear as the new department of state government became more established. Whereas the inspector wanted primarily to create an effective strategy of enforcement, the reformers wanted to create more public sentiment for further legislation. But both groups expressed their satisfaction that, in the inspector's words, "The Department has passed the experimental stage, and the employer and the employee have learned to look to the factory inspector for information on all matters affecting the well-being of both on which they formerly were quite willing to remain uninformed or indifferent." Of course, the inspectors profited in their work to the extent that they could convince employers "that contented employees are more profitable." The child labor law advocates remained convinced, however, that a compulsory attendance law had to be passed to insure complete effectiveness. The deputy factory inspector in Philadelphia reminded his readers

³⁸ Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1893), 276-280; Pennsylvania, *Report of the Factory Inspector 1893*, 6, 7; see also, Barnard, 66.

of the need for such a law in his 1894 report, for "As it is at present when a boy or girl is sent out of the factory on account of not being old enough they run the street which is only making bad worse."³⁹

At this point, the compulsory attendance reformers faced a potentially dangerous internal difference of opinion that threatened to weaken their political effectiveness. The trouble began when Governor Pattison appointed a Democrat to the position of Superintendent of Public Instruction. A Kutztown Normal School professor named Nathan C. Schaeffer, the new superintendent held an opinion on compulsory attendance similar to the Governor's. After Superintendent Waller's unabashed advocacy of the bills, Schaeffer's attitude appeared decidedly negative, and in his report published in January 1894, he argued that although a compulsory law might reach some of the children "from foreign countries in countless numbers" it could not be an acceptable solution. He congratulated the legislature for passing the act making free textbooks for students obligatory for all school districts; this law, he felt, would bring to school most of the truant children. Schaeffer did not completely rule out a compulsory law for the future: "As our population increases, a compulsory law may ultimately become an absolute necessity; but, before an efficient and adequate statute can be framed and enforced, public sentiment must be prepared for it by a school census, showing how many children of the proper age are out of school, and what obstacles must be removed in order to secure their regular attendance." Support by the lay reformers for a successful law continued through 1894, but it did little to convince Superintendent Schaeffer to soften his opposition. His attitude carried the day with the Teachers' Association and the city and borough superintendents—both groups refused to take a public stand in favor of a law.⁴⁰

By the time Schaeffer's 1894 report, with another argument against a compulsory law, was published in the January 1895 issue of the *Pennsylvania School Journal*, the voters of the Keystone State had registered their discontent with the economic depression in the 1894 election. The election sounded the death knell of the

³⁹ *Report of the Factory Inspector, 1894*, 3, 4, 25.

⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania, Report, 1893*, in *PSJ*, XI.II (1893-1894), 283-284; *Pennsylvania, Report, 1894*, in *PSJ*, XI.III (1894-1895), 286, 288.

Democratic Party for decades to come, and it cost the minority party forty-eight members in the legislature, thereby cutting its total strength in the two houses from eighty-three to thirty-five members. Daniel H. Hastings was sent to the governor's office with an unprecedented majority of more than 200,000 votes. This electoral defeat for the Democratic Party presaged the victory of the 1895 compulsory attendance bill. On the final winning vote in the House, the entire Democratic delegation made a futile gesture and opposed the measure, but six weeks later the Senate passed the bill with only three opposing votes, all Democratic.⁴¹

The Compulsory Attendance Law of 1895 required children between eight and thirteen to attend school for at least sixteen weeks, but provided generous exceptions in case of mental or physical disability, in case the child lived more than two miles from a school, and in case the child was instructed in private or parochial schools. To refuse to comply with the act constituted a misdemeanor, but before parents could be arrested and convicted, they had to be warned in writing of their unlawful practice. Truant officers could be hired to enforce the law, but this was up to the local authorities. Finally, the school authorities had no control over the taking of the school census that would be required by the law.⁴²

Now that the compulsory attendance law had become a reality, the schoolmen, including even Superintendent Schaeffer, enlisted in its support. In 1896, the newly formed State Association of School Directors declared themselves not only in favor of the 1895 law, but also went on record supporting its "vigorous" extension. The organized educators and the lay school reformers once again presented a solid front to the legislature. In 1897, they succeeded in amending the act: children were required to begin attendance at the start of the school term unless a school board by special order decided otherwise; the annual term of required attendance was raised to 70 per cent of the school year; the upper age limit was extended to sixteen years unless a child was thirteen and regularly employed; the enumeration of children was made more systematic.

⁴¹ *Smull's Handbook*, 1895, 113a-114a, 901; *Smull's Handbook*, 1893, 821; *Legislative Record*, 1895, 1836.

⁴² Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1895), 72-74.

Both houses of the legislature provided a unanimous vote favoring the amendments.⁴³

The legislature also extended the child labor laws in 1897, partly as a result of the continued pressure by the voluntary associations, partly as a consequence of the recommendations of the new factory inspector, James Campbell. Following upon his suggestions, the 1897 child labor laws increased the number of firms covered by the provisions, limited minors and adult women to a twelve-hour day and a sixty-hour week, and prohibited the employment of children under sixteen who could not read and write English or could not produce a certificate from their teachers showing that they had met the requirements of the compulsory law.⁴⁴

By the turn of the century, illiterate children up to the age of sixteen could be removed from shops, factories, and stores, but they could not be forced to attend school if they were over thirteen. Boys of twelve were still legally working in the outer works of the mines, which attracted many dismissed by other establishments with the higher legal age for employment. The factory inspector, the schoolmen, and the reform associations continued their work to close the loopholes in the child labor and compulsory attendance laws. The Philadelphia PEA and the Philadelphia Civic Club worked in a quasi-public role with the Philadelphia Board of Public Education to enforce the laws, and they applauded the initiative taken by the Board and Superintendent Edward Brooks to establish a special compulsory attendance bureau. In 1898, the reformers also recommended further amendments to the compulsory acts after a systematic study of the experience of other states with compulsory education. The PEA actively cultivated unity with the State Teachers' Association by following its work closely and taking an active part in its deliberations. In July 1899, the chairman of the PEA compulsory education committee, Miss Dora Keen, socially prominent daughter of a Philadelphia surgeon, prepared a major paper for the Teachers' Association on "Truants and Incurables" that became

⁴³ For evidence of the new line, see *PSJ*, XLIV (1895-1896), 141, 163-166, 287, 350, 437-440. Superintendent Schaeffer's conversion was complete by the time he spoke on behalf of the 1895 law before the Philadelphia Civic Club in March 1896. See *ibid.*, 496-500; also *PSJ*, XLV (1896-1897), 402, 412-417, 429, 527-528; Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1897), 248-254; *Legislative Record*, 1897, 2615, 3271.

⁴⁴ *Report of the Factory Inspector*, 1896, 5-6; Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1897), 30-34, 149.

the subject of extensive and sympathetic debate. State Superintendent Schaeffer had become a firm advocate of further reform. Referring to the arguments still made by rural opponents of the laws, he could write in 1899 that "A quarter of a century ago similar sentiments were heard from the lips of prominent school officials and were applauded at educational meetings. Today very different views prevail." Superintendent James M. Coughlin of Wilkes-Barre, five years earlier a reluctant supporter of compulsory attendance, could by 1900 make speeches hoping to convince the convention of city and borough superintendents of the necessity to agitate for both more comprehensive compulsory acts and more thorough child labor laws.⁴⁵

After the more than ten years of constant agitation for these two reforms, an established relationship had developed between professional organization, reform association, and legislature. The lawmakers in Harrisburg increasingly looked to the State Teachers' Association, the City and Borough Superintendents Organization, and the School Directors Association for legislative recommendations on public school questions. Each of these groups had year-round legislative committees by 1900. Each of these groups regarded recommendations on pending legislation as an integral part of professional responsibility.

The strength of the coalition for educational change can be seen in both its successful backing of an even stronger compulsory attendance law in 1901, and in the passage of a complementary child labor law in 1905. The 1905 law was a significant departure from the earlier measures in several respects. The act covered all children except those working in farm or domestic labor, raised the minimum age to fourteen, prohibited night work for most occupations until the age of sixteen, required legal records instead of affidavits of age, and transferred power to issue employment certificates from aldermen and justices of the peace to school superintendents, principals, or factory inspectors.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Report of the Factory Inspector, 1899*, 5; PEA and Civic Club, *Compulsory Attendance* (Philadelphia, 1898), 36-37; *PSJ*, XLVIII (1899-1900), 70-77, 274, 372-373.

⁴⁶ Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1901), 322; see also, Barnard, *Factory Legislation*, 81-82; CCP, *Annual Report, 1902*, 3; Report of the Philadelphia Conference on Child Labor Legislation in *PSJ*, LII (1903-1904), 599; National Child Labor Committee, *Proceedings, 1906*, 127-132; Barnard, 86-105; Pennsylvania, *Laws* (1905), 352-361.

By 1905, the organized child labor reformers, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the organized school administrators and teachers, and the lay school reformers were operating as a coalition of political activists, with well-developed lines of communication, resources for political campaigns, and access to the legislature, as well as the support of the Republican Party organization. Most important, the members of the coalition were willing to fight for further educational reform as the legitimate representatives for the people of Pennsylvania, and they turned their energies to the passage of a comprehensive School Code.

The demand for establishment of a state commission to codify the mass of uncoordinated measures passed since the school laws of 1834 and 1854 had begun as early as 1877 with a suggestion by Superintendent of Public Instruction James P. Wickersham. Nothing had come of his suggestion when, four years later, the PEA of Philadelphia made compilation of the school laws of the state one of its initial concerns. But neither the state superintendents that served after Wickersham nor the PEA regarded codification as a matter of pressing importance during the 1880s and 1890s. The controversies over compulsory attendance and child labor absorbed the energies of the superintendents, and the PEA gave its chief efforts to the fight for reorganization of the Philadelphia schools.⁴⁷

Although there was no organized campaign to codify the school laws during the 1890s, the arguments of the Allegheny County superintendent during the 1893 City and Borough Superintendents' Convention presaged the campaign to come. Superintendent John Morrow argued that the Commonwealth had excellent school laws, but "it must be admitted that in many instances they lack that order, clearness, and system by which they should be characterized." Morrow had no criticism of the piecemeal fashion by which the workings of the democratic process had produced the maze of complicated legislation over a sixty-year period; school superintendents,

⁴⁷ *Pennsylvania, 1877*, v; PEA, *Annual Report, 1882*, 9. Various expressions of support can be found in the following: *Pennsylvania, 1882*, xii-xiii; *PSJ*, XXXV (1886), 95; *PSJ*, XXXVIII (1889), 119. For the politics of reorganization of the Philadelphia schools, see Issel, "Modernization in Philadelphia School Reform."

however, found themselves in a quandary as they attempted to supervise their schools when "nearly every section of the original law is burdened with supplementary acts, decisions, and explanations." "When one wishes to look up a point of law," he explained, "the desired information is found here and there, scattered over many pages, thus rendering our laws, while embodying the wisest provisions, highly unsatisfactory, equivocal, and misleading." Anchoring his argument in the pragmatic considerations facing the schoolman in his everyday role, Morrow went on to recommend "the appointment of a commission, by the proper authority to recast our school laws, discarding what is worthless, combining and restating closely related, but disjointed, sections that are now ambiguous and doubtful in meaning."⁴⁸

A similar concern with the practical problems of administering education under a diverse set of legal standards led Professor J. P. Welsh of the Bloomsburg Normal School to exclaim at a meeting of the School Directors' Association in February 1900, "Oh, let the day hasten that will bring to us our commission to revise the schools of the Commonwealth." Welsh was disturbed by his difficulty in setting entrance requirements to the Normal School given the fact that "Almost no two high schools have the same course of study." It was this lack of uniformity that had led the College and University Council of the state to recommend "a unification of our educational system; so that the chasm that now separates the public schools and the Normal schools from the colleges and universities, may be bridged over at an early day."⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the PEA, having failed three times to win a reorganization bill for Philadelphia, had been gathering empirical information about school administration throughout the nation, and its report, published in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* during 1900, was the scientific underpinning for its unsuccessful attempt that year to win a commission to codify the school laws of the Commonwealth. If a reorganization for Philadelphia could not be won, perhaps the city schools could be reorganized along with the schools of the entire state.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *PSJ*, XLI (1892-1893), 379.

⁴⁹ *PSJ*, XLVIII (1899-1900), 462.

⁵⁰ PEA, *A Generation of Progress in Our Public Schools* (Philadelphia, 1914), 20.

Democratic State Superintendent Nathan C. Schaeffer proved cautious on the question of codification. Responding to the pressure from the College and University Council in his report for 1900, he admitted that "Legislation is needed to empower the Superintendent of Public Instruction to endorse at his discretion the Normal School diplomas and permanent certificates issued in other States." But Schaeffer said nothing about the demand for coordination of high school and Normal School curricula, and he seemed unwilling to recommend the kind of codification sought by the PEA, codification that would extend to the entire Commonwealth the changes planned by the reformers for its largest city. "The day for radical changes," said Schaeffer, "has passed by. Our school laws could be harmonized and improved by skillful codification, but the school system itself would be harmed rather than benefited by legislation involving thorough-going changes in its policy or management."⁵¹

Schaeffer's lack of sympathy with a School Code linked to a radical reorganization of school administration, as in the PEA proposal, was not lost on the members of the legislature. The PEA bill was introduced on May 17, 1901, and would have established a seven-member commission "for the promotion of uniformity in the common school laws of Pennsylvania." Four of the commissioners were to be lawyers, three were required to be "conversant with and engaged in matters relating to the common schools. . . ." With the legislature paying their expenses, the members were to spend one year drawing up "a complete and uniform code of laws" for the schools of the Commonwealth, their Code to be passed on by the legislature as the basis for a new school system for Pennsylvania. Given the dissension between the schoolmen and the lay reformers, the proponents were unable to keep the legislature from postponing the bill indefinitely after passing it on second reading.⁵²

By January 1905, the PEA was close to its victory in the campaign for the Philadelphia reorganization. The organization's vice-president, Martin G. Brumbaugh, urged the legislature to pass a bill setting up a commission to "amend, revise, and collate" the public school laws of the state. Like Superintendent Schaeffer,

⁵¹ *Pennsylvania, Report, 1900*, in *PSJ*, XLIX (1900-1901), 312.

⁵² *Legislative Record, 1901*, 1754, 2572, 3643.

Brumbaugh had German ancestry, and both had been born into rural Pennsylvania families, though Brumbaugh's father was a minister and Schaeffer's a farmer. Both men were devoutly religious and became ministers, Schaeffer in the Reform Lutheran group, Brumbaugh in the Baptist Brethren. They both graduated from their local Normal Schools, Brumbaugh at Juniata, Schaeffer at Franklin and Marshall, where they subsequently taught and became administrators. But Schaeffer was thirteen years older than Brumbaugh, and, although he spent two years at German universities after receiving his A.M. from Franklin and Marshall, he did not take the doctorate degree. Upon his return to Pennsylvania, he spent the sixteen years prior to taking over the state superintendency as principal of the Keystone (later Kutztown) Normal School. Brumbaugh, on the other hand, became the County Superintendent of Huntingdon County before doing his graduate work at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, receiving his Ph.D. from the latter institution. He then served as Professor of Pedagogy in the University's first chair in that discipline. Brumbaugh was probably no more active than Schaeffer as a lecturer at teachers' institutes in Pennsylvania, but his experiences outside the Commonwealth probably induced him to give more sympathy to radical reform measures than Schaeffer. Whereas Schaeffer's administrative responsibilities until he became State Superintendent were exclusively connected with schools in the county of his birth, Brumbaugh, while still in his twenties, had spent six summers organizing a system of teachers' institutes in Louisiana. More important, as the first Commissioner of Education for Puerto Rico, Brumbaugh had been architect in the creation of the island's first American public school system. On his return from Puerto Rico in 1902, Brumbaugh resumed his professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and assumed leadership positions in the PEA (vice-president in 1903) and in the Pennsylvania and National Child Labor Committees.⁵³

⁵³ Salvatore M. Messina, "Martin Grove Brumbaugh, Educator" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965), 3, 33-34, 36 ff., 86-88, 94-97, 149-205; Charles D. Koch, *Nathan C. Schaeffer* (Harrisburg, 1951), 3-36, 99. Although Schaeffer was President of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, as well as of the organization itself, those offices had as their chief responsibility the organizing of the annual meetings and the preparation of the programs. The two men were friends. Schaeffer's book on

Brumbaugh, furthermore, did not have to consider, as did Schaeffer, either the mundane problems or the political implications of administering the school laws of the state; in his capacity of professor and reformer, Brumbaugh had no constituency of the kind that Schaeffer had to consider. In late January 1905, only days after he had agreed to become a member of the commission to submit a reorganization bill for Philadelphia, Brumbaugh persuaded Representative Charles A. Snyder to introduce a bill to establish a commission to prepare a bill to reorganize the schools of the entire state. Schaeffer had agreed to put his office behind the bill after Brumbaugh asked for his support, but legislators knew that the bill had not originated in the Department of Public Instruction. Some members expressed their reluctance to grant power to recommend legislation to an appointed commission. The leaders of the Republican organization had not been enlisted in support, and the bill was defeated in the House. To counter this defeat, the bill was introduced in the Senate almost immediately; this time the party leaders had been alerted to support the measure, and it passed on the same day as the Philadelphia reorganization bill. But the House Committee on Education, upon receiving the Senate bill, kept it in the committee and away from consideration on the floor.⁵⁴

One year after the failure of the second attempt at the creation of a code commission, Martin G. Brumbaugh became Superintendent of the Philadelphia public schools. Like four of the other new members of the reorganized Board of Public Education, Brumbaugh continued to be an active member of the PEA, and as superintendent he worked to complete its program of reorganization. Within the limitations of the 1905 law, Brumbaugh and the PEA could accomplish much of their program, but they still regarded the Board of Public Education inefficient because of its twenty-one members, and they continued to resent the necessity to depend upon

learning and education was published in the textbook series Brumbaugh edited for Lippincott, and Schaeffer filled Brumbaugh's chair of pedagogy at the University of Pennsylvania while the latter was in Puerto Rico. Brumbaugh, finally, was a Republican, whereas Schaeffer was a Democrat.

⁵⁴ *Legislative Record*, 1905, 2222-2224; *Senate Journal*, 1905, 1698; *House Journal*, 1905, 2131-2132.

city councils for the school budget. They regarded further state legislation as crucial to the complete success of their program, and they continued to lobby for a code commission bill for the next legislative session in 1907.⁵⁵

On February 4, 1907, Senator W. C. Miller introduced the measure into the legislature. The next day, McKeesport Superintendent, James B. Richey, President of the City and Borough Superintendents' Organization, opened the annual convention by announcing that "It is not necessary to prove that the schools of this state have outgrown our school laws. We simply confess it." Meeting in Harrisburg because of the "school legislation of importance under consideration in both Senate and House," the superintendents heard Richey devote his address to an analysis of some of the practical problems of administration that made codification necessary. More provision for teacher training, especially in the cities; election or appointment of boards of education at large, not according to ward representation; smaller boards of education, as well as statewide uniformity in the number of members on boards; unification of standards regarding, and further provision for, high schools; extension of child labor and compulsory attendance legislation—these were some of the problem areas that made codification of the school laws necessary.

Codification would not necessarily lead to autocratic centralization of authority by the state. Richey favored "wise central authority" that "seeks not to supplant local initiative and local control, but to develop, to strengthen and when necessary to supplement them." "What we need," he concluded, "is a complete codification of the laws of this state. The best that they contain should be retained, the laws should be made to harmonize, obscure laws simplified, useless laws omitted and new laws that will make it possible for those in charge of the educational interests of the state to bring into cooperative effectiveness all the forces which make for the intellectual and moral quickening of all the men and women and all the boys and girls of the state." If the commission thoroughly investigated schools throughout the United States and Europe, and then studied the empirical evidence available, they could carry out

⁵⁵ See Messina, 235-331, and chapters 4 and 5; PEA, *A Generation of Progress*, 25.

"an intelligent reorganization of the entire public school system, which shall result in placing it on a plane of the best in the world for simplicity, adaptation, and efficiency."⁵⁶

The convention endorsed Richey's argument for a code commission, and resolved in favor of the bill to that effect. One week later, the county superintendents held their annual meeting, also in Harrisburg; after several speakers urged the State Superintendent to develop a uniform course of study for the Commonwealth, the group resolved in favor of such a measure. One superintendent, arguing for such a basic standardized minimum curriculum, pointed out that "it is clear that the state should provide the course of study for its common schools, because it is practically impossible to secure the best results without the assistance of the state, and because the state is abundantly able to bear this slight expense for a thing so imperatively necessary to its educational welfare." He urged the schoolmen to rely on their professional experience as a guide to the necessity for overcoming traditional prejudices against granting to the state the responsibility for helping to determine local curriculum. It was no longer possible to "adhere to traditions which are still embraced because an uneducated public sentiment causes them still to be held in reverence."⁵⁷

Three weeks later, on March 18, the Senate passed the bill for a commission which would consider the question of a state minimum course of study, among the other problems of school law. Opposition to the bill, according to the pattern we have seen develop during the battles over child labor and compulsory attendance laws, came from the Democratic minority and a few Republicans from the non-industrialized rural areas of the state. The Philadelphia delegation unanimously supported the measure. One month later, the House also passed the bill; again the Philadelphia delegation was in favor, as were most of the members of the House; the few Democrats either voted against the measure or abstained.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *PSJ*, LV (1906-1907), 373-378, 416.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 494, 509.

⁵⁸ *Legislative Record*, 1907, 3163-3165; *Senate Journal*, 1907, 846; *Smull's Handbook*, 1907, 815-816, 825-828. According to Representative Oster from Bedford County, during debate Schaeffer was still "bitterly opposed" to codification and had agreed to support the bill for a commission only, again on the insistence of Brumbaugh. See *Legislative Record*, 1907, 3164.

Seven commissioners, appointed by Governor Stuart, would reduce all the school laws into one code. In the process they would remove all contradictions, discard superseded measures, and, most important, they would "prepare and submit such bills to the Legislature as they shall deem necessary to make the public schools of the Commonwealth more comprehensive, efficient and adapted to the needs of its citizens." Given the scope of authority granted the commission, the choice of commissioners would be particularly important in determining the shape of the new Code that was to be presented to the 1909 legislature for passage. Superintendent Schaeffer was required according to the bill to serve, and Governor Stuart appointed six other members: Martin G. Brumbaugh, Philadelphia superintendent; David B. Oliver, Pittsburgh manufacturer and municipal reform advocate, long-time President of the Allegheny City Board of Education; William Lauder, school director from Bedford County; John S. Rilling, Erie lawyer; James M. Coughlin, Wilkes-Barre superintendent; George M. Phillips, principal of the State Normal School in West Chester.⁵⁹

The details of the work of the commission to codify the school laws and of the legislative history of the School Code are of no great significance. To extend Sam Bass Warner's apt phrase about Philadelphia politics to school-reform politics, they had become "highly stylized" by 1907. With the Code under consideration during the 1909 session, the Democratic and rural-Republican opposition, with William "Farmer" Creasy, now head of the State Grange and minority floor leader, amended the measure so drastically that the Governor, with the support of the commission, vetoed the bill.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *PSJ*, LV (1906-1907), 554; *PSJ*, LVI (1907-1908), 185; PEA, *A Generation of Progress*, 25.

⁶⁰ The veto message was reprinted in *PSJ*, LVII (1908-1909), 545. See Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), 214. For a detailed, though uncritical, account of the details of the passage of the Code, see Charles R. Nash, *The History of Legislative and Administrative Changes Affecting the Philadelphia Public Schools, 1869-1921* (Philadelphia, 1943), 107-127. On the role of the Pittsburgh Teachers' Association in the campaign for the Code, see Issel, "Teachers and Educational Reform During the Progressive Era: A Case Study of the Pittsburgh Teachers' Association." I have also checked Warner's hypothesis about "stylized politics" as applied to the passage of the School Code by examining newspaper reporting on the measure during both the 1909 and 1911 sessions in papers from the major cities and boroughs of the state.

The Code was resubmitted during the 1911 legislative session. The Republican organization, having had time to smooth its way (in 1909, the Code was not completed until just before it was introduced, and the party leaders were unprepared), it quickly passed both Houses with bipartisan support. The political coalition that had been forged during the campaigns for compulsory attendance and child labor laws held together throughout the four-year drive for the passage of the School Code, the Philadelphia school-reform organizations, with one of their number on the commission, continuing as leaders of the coalition. With the success of the School Code, the school reformers could look forward to extending the imperatives of system and order to the public school classrooms of the second most populous state in the Union.

The passage of the Code was a tribute to the work of the reformers who, beginning in the 1880s, created both an ideology and a political coalition for change. No sharp division can be made, despite the dramatic nature of the Code, between the traditional and the modern in Pennsylvania public education. To attribute the innovations included in the School Code, or the earlier compulsory attendance and child labor laws, to the emergence of "the reform spirit" of "the Progressive Era" would be to lose sight of the long struggle for reform documented in these pages. Steady pressure by school superintendents and political organizations, not sudden enthusiasm by "the people" or "the middle classes," made public school reform a reality in the Keystone State.

The perspective of the schoolmen was by and large a pragmatic one; reform meant increased ability to supervise the burgeoning public schools of the Commonwealth. But their pragmatism was informed by a vision of ideal administration based on their acceptance of rational planning and applied science, on their belief that modern life required efficient public schooling. To insure that the schools would succeed in teaching social efficiency and Americanization, educational policy decisions had to flow from experts at the top. Curriculum, to be most effective, had to be based on the new findings of educational psychology, and the operation of public education, from school district to classroom, had to conform to the standards of efficiency being created in the modern corporation.

To the members of the PEA and the Philadelphia and Allegheny

County Civic Clubs, the modern corporation provided a model for public schooling. The lay reformers had neither patience with the politics of the ward caucus nor nostalgia for the decentralized administration of most urban school districts. Like the schoolmen, they regarded concentration of authority over educational policy at the state level as inevitable and desirable, and they rejected the assumption that individual school districts could be persuaded that reform represented their best interests. The school reformers in the PEA and the Civic Clubs acted according to an ideal including rational planning, centralized management, bureaucratic organization, the management techniques of the large corporation, and the use of the scientific method. The school reformers were men, and the wives of men, whose daily lives intersected with the institutions of the new scientific-corporate society of the twentieth century. They were also members of the upper social and economic strata of their communities, and they assumed leadership roles in keeping with their sense of social responsibility for shaping a desirable future.

In the state legislature, where most school reform measures passed with generous majorities, opposition came from Democrats (and some Republicans) whose constituencies, rural and agricultural, were informed by a different vision of the nature of public school governance than the reformers, were jealous of their traditional local control of the schools, and, furthermore were unwilling to acquiesce in the demand for the increased taxes required by innovation. But the opposition, on the whole, was more noisy than effective.

Contrary to the political rhetoric of the school reformers, the leaders of the Republican Party organization did not oppose educational innovation. For the leaders of "the Organization" were anxious to break the independent power of city ward party organizations so as to better control the city-wide political contests, and the minor patronage held by the ward committees over the selection of school personnel benefited only the ward organizations, not the city organizations. To be sure, the state and city party organizations supported school reform for different reasons than the school reformers, but they supported it nonetheless. In this, as in many characteristics of the politics of public school reform in Pennsylvania, the parallels between the earlier period and the contemporary

scene are instructive. Elected political officials, expected to favor schools, more schools, and better schools, had little reason to seek direct involvement in school reform activity; only if their constituents actively opposed increased taxation in general (as in the case of the rural areas represented by the opposition) did legislators oppose reform; not surprisingly, they then argued that innovation was unnecessary. By the time of the passage of the School Code, there had developed a "clearly identifiable power structure in which the influence relationships are clearly established," whereas in the 1880s and 1890s school reform politics were acted out "in a political arena where power is fragmented, resulting in a high degree of uncertainty for the particular interests which are making claims."⁶¹ And as today, school reform in Pennsylvania between 1880 and 1911 was the product of the policy proposals of individuals and organized groups with a direct and tangible stake in the outcome, rather than the result of pressures from the unorganized public.

San Francisco State University

WILLIAM ISSEL

⁶¹ The quotations are taken from Nicholas A. Masters, Robert H. Salisbury, and Thomas H. Eliot, *State Politics and the Public Schools: An Exploratory Analysis* (New York, 1964), 262-280.