

**THE SUPERINTENDENT
AND
SUPERINTENDENCE**

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The Superintendent and Superintendence by C. P. Cary

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C. P. CARY

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PREPARED AND ISSUED BY

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MADISON, WIS.

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I. INTRODUCTION.

It is a conviction of mine that the superintendents and principals of this state might in many cases, if not in most, secure much better results than they are now doing in the direction of administration and supervision. This conviction has been forced upon me mainly through observation, through reports of inspectors, and through statements made by teachers who have applied for countersignature of diplomas. It has often happened that teachers who were refused countersignature were amazed to learn that their work had not been wholly satisfactory. Many have told me that in the course of their first year's experience they had never had a single word of suggestion or criticism,—never the slightest assistance of any kind. It is safe to assume that in some cases at least these statements were much exaggerated if not utterly untrue, but assuming this to be the case such a body of testimony no doubt has significance when taken in the large, if not in every individual instance. If I may judge by

my own early experiences and by such observation as I have had opportunity to make, I feel confident in saying that many young principals and superintendents feel abashed in the presence of experienced teachers and awed by the assertiveness of some of those who have had but little experience. Furthermore, if teachers discover that the principal is a bit timid and uncertain, they often manipulate the situation to suit their own conveniences and wishes. School boards often say that their principals or superintendents do not know the rudiments of business administration as applied to schools. This no doubt is often an expression of annoyance due to actual effectiveness on the part of the superintendent or principal in bringing about needed but unwelcome changes. Nevertheless, I think there is often ground for such statements. Lest I be misunderstood, however, I wish to say emphatically that it is not my belief that the superintendents and principals of Wisconsin are less efficient than superintendents or principals elsewhere or that they are not upon the whole a capable and conscientious body of men and women.

Passing on from these preliminary remarks, I shall take the liberty of making such suggestions in brief as occur to me.

II. THE SUPERINTENDENT.

"The superintendent has been compared to a foreman—he multiplies his value by directing others. The modern city superintendent is more than an overseer; he is a captain of industry. He does not merely follow the direction of employers. He makes regulations for himself, and often for his employers as well as his subordinates. He not only supplies the demand of the market, but he moulds public opinion to create demand."

"The superintendent derives his power from the board, but he must be to a large extent independent of the board. The superintendent's duties do not end with the board, the teachers or the schools. His learning and experience, as well as his professional opportunity for social service, impose upon him the duty of a share in the social leadership of his city, and entitle him to the privileges of the highest social and intellectual life. If he accepts anything less than this he belittles his office and discredits his calling." These

somewhat lengthy quotations are taken from one of the Columbia University Studies.*

It is not to be inferred from the last quotation that the superintendent should be a society leader, or even a "society man." But he should be at home in society and should be welcome in the best, if not the most exclusive, society in his city. The superintendent even in a small city needs to be a well-trained, gifted, broad-gauge man. The Committee of Fifteen would have him possess the following six qualifications:

1. Good moral character.
2. Good physique.
3. Common sense.
4. Administrative ability.
5. Experience in school work.
6. Liberal (and proficient) education.

Perhaps the above includes the following, but I should like to add for the sake of emphasis, that the superintendent should have a *judicial mind*, and he should be *fearless* and *incorruptible*.

And if I might add one more qualification and still have him a little lower than the angels, I would say he should be so permeated with enthusiasm that those who associate with him must be warmed by it, and so filled with optimism, or at

* See Rollins, "School Administration in Municipal Government."

least meliorism, that the spirit is promptly caught by teachers, school board, and schools. The superintendent usually has a heavy load to lift, or drag, as you please to phrase it. The sunshine of his nature must thaw out the coldness and indifference of others. He must be strength to the weak, courage to the timid, and an inspiration to all. "He must show breadth, generosity and fairness." He has large responsibilities and should be granted unstinted authority. And as Superintendent Draper said when President of the University of Illinois, "He should be as secure in his position as the members of the supreme court of the state." He should only be secure, however, when he is efficient. If he is found to be cowardly, truckling, scheming, narrow-minded, or morally unsound, he should be dismissed.

No superintendent should infer from what has been said that he is to be an autocrat or assume a lordly attitude toward the school board, the teachers or anybody else. Certainly if he has the merits he should have he will be modest and not foolishly assertive. He will not volunteer too much at board meetings, will not take it as a personal thrust if a board member or the board as a whole fails to see things as he sees them or to adopt his recommendations. The board has rights, duties

and responsibilities. The members must do their own thinking, must determine how much weight to attach to the superintendent's arguments. The man who is not willing to have his board do this would like to reduce the members to figure-heads. The superintendent should counsel with his board upon all matters of importance and should be on terms of amity with every member. If by some unfortunate combination of circumstances strained relations come about between the superintendent and a member, the superintendent should so conduct himself as to convince the member that he is a broad-gauge gentleman, capable of differing from another without petty spite or discourtesy.

The superintendent should never allow himself to get into a wrangle with anybody. Tact will generally be sufficient to prevent wrangling, but sometimes it has to be supplemented by prompt decision.

To phrase the matter a bit differently, a superintendent should be a large-hearted, free-minded, self-confident citizen of the world. He should be able to appear at ease among the best citizens of the community in which he works; should be interested in things other men are interested in; should meet the doctor, the preacher, the lawyer,