

CHAPTER VI

ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND SUPERVISION OF THE PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The general plan of the organization of the Plains Public Schools was discussed in the previous chapter; consequently the writer will not discuss it further at this point.

The Board of Education

The men who comprise the board of education of the Plains Public Schools are, and have been, men of the highest morals and ethical character. They are the outstanding men of the community and have been elected because of their interest in the school and in the advancement of better educational practices. Howard Jones feels that the American school board member is a highly qualified person. He has this to say:

There are more than 350,000 school board members in the United States. For the most part, they are highly qualified people in terms of: (1) belief in education as a major instrument for the maintenance and betterment of society; (2) belief in the potentialities inherent in each child, youth, adult, and in the need for providing educational opportunity commensurate with the abilities of each individual; (3) acceptance in the community as a community leader; (4) desire to improve the local educational program;

and (5) high integrity and dedication to serving in the public interest.¹

The members of the board of education of the Plains Schools have been chosen because of the qualities mentioned in the previous citation.

The board is composed of three officials; namely, director, treasurer, and clerk. One member is elected each year. The term of office is three years which keeps a majority of the experienced members on the board at all times. The members are elected at the annual meeting held in June. Candidates are nominated by the patrons of the district and voting is usually done by ballot. There are no required qualifications for school board members other than that they be residents of the district, men of good character, and have the interest of the school at heart. Board members are expected to give unselfishly of their time with no remuneration for their services other than seeing the school march forward to greater progress.

The work of the Plains board is similar to that of other small town organizations. The writer will try to set forth some of the workings of the group with some suggestions and comments for improvements. The statements which

¹ Howard R. Jones, "A Bill of Rights for School Board Members," The Education Digest, 18:28, February, 1953.

follow are not recorded with malicious intent, but instead with the interest of the school uppermost in mind. Most of the features commented upon are the result of misunderstanding on the part of the board and the lack of knowledge as to the best educational procedures. By most standards, however, the Plains board is above average. The ideal school board is one described in a recent magazine by Cecil D. Hardesty. He comments as follows:

The obligations of the board of education are as follows: (1) to select a competent professional man as superintendent; (2) to serve as a policy making body; (3) to deal always in an ethical, honest, straightforward, open, and above board manner with the superintendent, the staff, and the community; (4) to employ all personnel on recommendation of the superintendent; (5) to function as a board rather than individuals; (6) to keep superintendent informed of community reaction to the school program and assist in avoiding community dissention; (7) to support the superintendent; and (8) to remember that schools exist for the benefit of boys and girls.²

With these standards in mind the following statements are made. All criticisms are followed by recommendations for improvement.

One serious weakness of the board is their method of selecting personnel. In the past the superintendent has not always been called upon for his recommendations and as a result some teachers and custodians were employed by the

² Cecil D. Hardesty, "Some Obligations of the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent of Schools," The American School Board Journal, 124:35, April, 1952.

board that were inefficient. This is definitely not a good practice for the board to follow since it is the administrator who supervises the personnel. These actions lead the administrator to feel that he is only a "figure-head."

All school personnel should be hired by the board with specific recommendations from the superintendent. He is a highly qualified person with definite training in this field and should be recognized as such. A much more suitable personnel is in evidence when the superintendent's recommendations are followed.

Another serious weakness of the board is the method of conducting meetings. It is important that all official meetings be transacted with the official minutes of the meetings recorded by the secretary. In some meetings in the past this has not been done and as a result many duplications of actions have taken place and no one could be positive of just what did take place. It is very important that minutes be recorded and read at the following meeting.

Sometimes the superintendent has not been invited to all meetings. When this happens it only serves to breed discontent between the board and the administration because all professional administrators feel that when the school is involved they should be present. The writer suggests that the administrator be present at all meetings. The policies of the school would be of the best type if the

board would follow the professional advice of the superintendent. The control of the schools is not the business of either the board's or the superintendent's acting alone, but is a cooperative enterprise in which the board and the superintendent and the state work together harmoniously for the good of the pupils and the public they serve.³

The writer would like to make the following recommendations in regard to board meetings: (1) that the superintendent be present at all meetings in which the school is discussed; (2) that notice of the points of discussion be sent several days before the meeting is held; and (3) that accurate minutes be kept of the meetings so they can be read at the next meeting.

The Plains board has some very outstanding points. The boards in the past have selected competent, professional superintendents. The budget has been prepared with the help and advice of the superintendent. Supplies have been more than adequate for all departments. The board is to be commended for these things.

It is not the writer's intention to any way infer that the superintendent should have complete authority of the school. The administration of a school should have the

³ The Virginia Association of School Trustees, A Manual for Virginia School Boards (Richmond: State Printing Plant, 1948), p. 41.

