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FORESHADOWING THE SEVENTIES: TEACHER MILITANCY
AND THE NEA, 1900 - 1922

by

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I. Introduction

If the 1960's were known as the era of vigorous student militancy in most sectors of American education, the 1970's may well go down in history as the decade of the angry teacher. With the advent of collective organization among teachers in previously unorganized areas such as the southeast as well as the passage of public employee collective bargaining legislation in several states, teachers and their organizations are emerging as a powerful force in school affairs. Some perspective on this movement can be gained from a look at an earlier period in American education when teachers flirted with militant organization within the National Education Association.

Until recently, the NEA was known aptly as a "reluctant dragon,"¹ claiming to represent teachers but really defending an educational "status quo" which basically kept teachers in their place, subordinate to their administrative superiors. Given this reality, it is surprising to discover a militant teacher movement within the NEA in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

This essay concentrates on that group of militant teachers and their campaign, with a group of dissident administrators, to wrest control of the NEA from an "old guard" leadership that seldom considered practical classroom concerns. The goals of the teacher militants will be closely examined, as well as the specific organizations they set up alongside of and within the NEA to achieve their goals. The interactions between teachers and their administration allies will be closely considered in order to show both the similarities and differences in their programs. The teachers' victory over the NEA establishment soon turned into defeat as admin-

istrators moved to thwart their former allies. This defeat will be analyzed, particularly as it related to the teacher unionization movement then taking place outside of the NEA. Finally, these events within the NEA will be summarized and discussed in terms of forces simultaneously at work in other sectors of American reform.

II. Teachers and Their Program

The late 19th century domination of the NEA by Nicholas Murray Butler, William Torry Harris, and a few of their high status colleagues was not conducive to consideration of educational matters from the point of view of the classroom teacher. Thus, a major goal of teachers in the first two decades of the twentieth century was to get the NEA to listen and respond to their pleas for adequate salaries and other improvements in their working conditions. Related to this goal was the attempt of teachers to use NEA meetings, the only occasion on which teachers from different localities could communicate in person with each other, as a platform for formalizing teacher contacts into a national teacher organization, at least loosely affiliated with the NEA. This organizational activity was not meant as a threat, but rather as a prod to the NEA, to get that body to respond to teachers whom it had long neglected.

The NEA-related activities of teachers began in 1899 when a group led by Chicago Teachers' Federation activists Margaret Haley and Catherine Goggin founded the National Federation of Grade Teachers. The membership of this body in 1902 was made up of teachers from urban and industrial areas in the East and Midwest: 65 members came from Chicago and 25 from New York City; the largest other single group of 11 came from St. Paul, Minnesota; and the great preponderance of the remaining members came from Massachusetts, Ohio, and Wisconsin. These areas provided the bulk of the membership for the national teacher association as well as the setting for the development of most of the local teachers associations which were also forming. Margaret Haley of Chicago was elected president of the now renamed National Teachers

Federation in 1902, and the group indicated its intent to exercise an influence on educational leaders by setting its annual meeting to coincide with the NEA's.²

The Federation's program was outlined in its early documents. The purpose was rather broadly stated: "To secure such conditions for teachers that they may give their best efforts to the cause of education." This wording was clarified in a resolution adopted by the Federation at its 1902 meeting.

WHEREAS, Demands are continually made on teachers for a higher scholastic and professional attainment; cost of living is steadily increasing with stationary or decreasing salaries, insecure tenure of office, no provision for old age, and conditions generally under which teachers work such that further progress in education demands immediate betterment of these conditions; therefore

RESOLVED, That it is the sense of the Mass Meeting of teachers held under the auspices of the National Federation of Teachers that the time has come to bring the facts as to these conditions to public attention and to this end that the subjects of Teachers' Salaries, Tenure of Office, and Pensions should be placed on the general program next year

The hard-headed emphasis on salaries and other economic benefits that pervaded the program of the NTF also was manifested in the organization's structure. Active membership in the Federation was restricted to classroom teachers. Catherine Goggin explained the reasons for this policy. Organizations which included both supervisors and teachers were unsatisfactory "owing to the difference in point of view and, consequently, in order to secure any of the ends necessary to promoting the welfare of the teaching force it was necessary to create an organization for teachers only."³

The Federation quickly sought a hearing for its resolution on improving teachers' salaries and other economic benefits by sending a copy to the NEA. The New York delegation to the NTF reinforced the teachers' request by sending a letter to the NEA Executive Committee which sought a \$3000 appropriation for a study of teacher working conditions throughout the country. The official NEA reaction to these measures was ambivalent. The NEA Committee on Resolutions endorsed the teachers' concerns but cautioned that teachers should not allow "commercialism or

self-seeking to shape their actions, or ... intemperance ... mark their utterances." Having thus warned the teachers, the NEA listened to their request and approved the establishment of a Committee on Teacher Salaries which would investigate the situation.⁴

Teachers now had an institutionalized foothold in the NEA and the appointment of Catherine Goggin to the committee on salaries, along with that of William McAndrew who had recently addressed the NTF in support of higher salaries, gave them further grounds for optimism. That optimism was soon tempered by the lukewarm performance of the committee. Goggin reported that the committee's work was weakened by the refusal of the NEA management to respond meaningfully to teacher concerns. Since the "old guard" controlled a majority of the committee, it frustrated the desire of the teacher-oriented minority for forceful action. Goggin tried to get the committee to close its report with a recommendation,

but the majority disagreed with me, consequently the report of a volume of statistics, valuable no doubt, but failing in the highest point which so important a committee's report should contain, viz., some recommendation as to how salaries can be made better, real⁵ pensions secured, and the position of a teacher made permanent.

Margaret Haley shared both Goggin's lack of confidence in the NEA leadership and her disappointment with the committee on salaries. In 1901, Haley accused old guard mainstay William T. Harris of pontificating about the glories of American schooling while teachers were being woefully mistreated. She also objected to the NEA's failure to vigorously publicize the work of its salary committee, thereby depriving classroom teachers of data that might be of some use to them.⁶

Despite their reservations, teachers could take comfort in the fact that the publication of the committee report on salaries was an unprecedented event in the NEA's history. Having achieved this milestone, teachers would wait six years for the next published indication of NEA interest in their working conditions. In 1911, with a pro-teacher woman in the NEA presidency, teachers successfully arranged for another committee of the NEA which was appointed

to investigate compensation, present and deferred, that is salary and pension of the teachers throughout the United States with a view of determining whether teachers salaries have increased to keep pace with the increase [sic] in the cost of living and increased professional demands made upon teachers.

The committee worked on its investigation through the next two years and published its report in 1913. Included as members were Haley of Chicago and Grace Strachan, district superintendent in New York who had gained fame as leader of that city's movement for equal pay for women teachers. Both Haley and Strachan spoke favorably of the committee's work at the 1912 NEA convention. Haley stressed the primary importance of teachers' living and working conditions and expressed her wishes that the contents of the report be of direct use to teachers: "I believe our first duty is not the expounding of theories, but the finding of better conditions for the people who are trying to improve the conditions under which our teachers work."⁷

When the report of this committee was finally published in 1913, it contained little of the material Haley wished to see incorporated in it. The general picture it described was accurate as to the teachers' situation--low salaried teachers who had received little salary increase in the past few years had seen food prices and other items in their cost of living increase by fifty percent since 1896--but Haley refused to sign the report because it contained little specific information useful to teachers. She explained to the chairman of the committee what was missing in the report: actual salary data from a wide range of cities so that

in any city where teachers were struggling to get the board of education to give them better salaries they would be able to know at once in what cities of about the same size better salaries were being paid; that was one of the things boards of education wanted to know whenever teachers ask for an increase in salary--what do cities of the same size in other parts of the United States pay?

Instead of this information, the report contained data on salaries in only four cities; and that data was inaccurate, drawn from responses to a questionnaire rather than from the actual salary records. Haley wanted the NEA leaders to know that she refused to sign the salary report because of the committee's failure to seriously

address the concerns of the group who had originated the idea of a commission on salaries, the grade teachers.⁸

While this second salary committee was working on its report, teachers were busily engaged in establishing two successor organizations to the National Federation of Teachers, which had been defunct since 1905. In 1912, Minneapolis and St. Paul teachers sent a letter to other local teacher groups proposing a new national federation of grade teachers. Since this federation was to be discussed at the 1912 NEA convention in Chicago, the cooperation of Haly, Goggin, and their Chicago Teachers' Federation members was sought by the Minnesotans. The Chicagoans responded vigorously and plans were made for the initial meeting of the new group. The specifics which Minnesota's teachers proposed for consideration were related to those that teachers had already been pursuing: smaller class size, better pay, more control of school affairs for teachers, and more practical pedagogy. The new group was officially established at the 1912 NEA convention, taking for its name the League of Teachers' Associations. The stated object of the organization was "to bring associations of teachers into relations of mutual assistance and cooperation, to improve the social and economic status of teachers and to promote the best interests of education." Like its predecessor, the NTF, the new League limited membership to teachers, arguing for the elimination of administrator members because they "would intimidate grade teachers." President Grace Baldwin of Minneapolis notified teachers throughout the country of the formation of the League and urged them to join the group to help free the teacher,

first, by making her economically secure; second, by lightening her work; third, by relieving her of the kind of supervision which tends to make her labor rather to please those in authority, than for the best interest of her pupils.⁹

Baldwin noted in her letter to teachers another important event that had taken place at the 1912 NEA meeting. This was the initiation of a Department of Classroom Teachers within the NEA, with several League members as active participants. The

prime mover in establishing the new NEA department was Margaret Haley. She had delegated League work to other members of her Chicago teacher group and concentrated her own effort on obtaining institutionalization of a teacher voice within the NEA. This task was not easy; she applied for a charter to the Executive Committee, but was told that the interests of teachers were already being cared for in the existing Department of Elementary Education. Haley responded that that department was dominated by supervisors and administrators and dealt with issues which concerned them and not teachers. The new department would represent teachers and their concerns; it would be unlike any other department in the NEA. It took Haley another year to get full approval for her new department, but she was finally successful.¹⁰

Thus by 1912, teachers had managed to establish a second official NEA committee on salaries and two new organizations to serve their interests, one a loose affiliate and the other an integral part of the NEA, all in pursuit of their quest for better working conditions. These efforts would continue for the next few years and seek further benefits for teachers. The Department of Classroom Teachers indicated its intent to serve the teacher movement by initiating a series of discussions on the issue of teacher councils, formally organized groups of teachers who were to advise superintendents on school policies. The councils served teacher interests by providing an antidote to the close and constant supervision which was then being advocated by many school administrators.¹¹

The coming of the world war brought a new urgency to teacher complaints about their working conditions. Teachers who were on a fixed salary were confronted with a cost of living increase of 40% between 1915 and 1917. This caused an even greater emphasis on salaries in teacher groups, since other material issues such as tenure and pensions had little relevance in an era when many teachers were leaving the schools for better paying jobs elsewhere. The only way to halt this exodus was to make teaching more financially attractive. The need for higher salaries was now more acute than ever.¹²

The salary committee took note of the teachers' desperate circumstances and proposed effective organizations of teachers at local, state, and national levels as a solution. Good leaders were needed who could interpret teacher needs to other organizations which could help the cause: labor groups, chambers of commerce, women's clubs, and political parties. The committee noted the rise of the teacher union movement as a valid attempt to deal with the teachers' economic crisis. It advised the NEA to study the unions, 24 locals and the national American Federation of Teachers, and be prepared to cooperate with them, perhaps by providing statistical data. As a final warning, the committee added that if the NEA could not solve the salary crisis with its methods, the unions would dominate, as indeed they should. An indication that the NEA did not immediately respond to the teachers' needs is the further growth of the AFT: 101 new union locals were formed in 1919 and an additional 42 in 1920.¹³ This rise of unionism as an alternative to the NEA in meeting the needs of teachers was noted by the NEA leadership. The NEA would meet the challenge of unionization by streamlining its own organizational structure in an effort to drastically increase membership and provide a powerful national voice for educator's concerns. Before considering this organizational alteration in detail, it is helpful to first describe the new leadership which would institute this change and the teachers' role in helping that leadership assume control of the NEA.

III. Teachers and NEA Internal Politics

The first successful challenge to the old guard leadership of the NEA was mounted at the 1897 Milwaukee convention. S.Y. Gillan, a Milwaukeean who edited the Western Journal of Education, led a fight to alter the selection of the nominating committee from the then current method of presidential appointment to that of election by state membership caucuses. Margaret Haley was not actively involved in Gillan's 1897 activities, but she knew of them and was in favor of his reform. The new method of selecting the nominating committee was approved by the membership and remained in effect until 1903. In that year, the old guard, led by Nicholas

Murray Butler, attempted to return to the old procedure of presidential control of nominations. Haley joined Gillan in defending member involvement in nominations and both decried the Butler proposal as undemocratic centralization which effectively deprived the membership of their recently won rights. Women teachers, who were over 90% of the membership and paid their proportionate share of the dues, deserved the right to participate in the nomination process. Haley's forceful speech in support of member involvement did not endear her to the NEA leadership which itself had earlier earned her wrath by refusing to cooperate in finding a meeting room for the National Federation of Teachers. Gillan and Haley spoke with emotion, and Haley's raising of the women's issue intensified the heated situation. Another speaker who favored maintaining member election of the Nominating Committee, Carroll Pearce, attempted to defuse the situation by de-emphasizing the man-woman issue and concentrating on the democratic justice of membership participation. He was evidently successful since butler's motion was defeated and the members' role in choosing the nominating committee was both reaffirmed and strengthened.¹⁴

Haley's participation in NEA structural reform was closely related to the teacher goal of economic improvement. She tied the two together in urging an Idaho teacher to get a large Idaho delegation to the NEA conventions held in the west. Attendance by teachers at NEA meetings was crucial to the teachers' cause because it meant large numbers of votes.

I believe the N.E.A. should be made the medium for expressing the most urgent needs in education in the United States. I have no doubt in my mind that the most urgent need is better conditions for teachers and that in securing these better conditions teachers are going to realize that connection between the education and the economic problem and that they will become a powerful factor in the solution of that problem.

Haley continued her pursuit of teacher welfare in the NEA for the next several years. In 1904, she spoke at the convention on the topic of "Why Teachers Should Organize." In this speech she again emphasized the material problems of teachers

and showed how their solution was intimately related to more professional concerns. She also continued to cooperate with S.Y. Gillan in opposing the undemocratic actions of the NEA hierarchy. Haley and Gillan both tried to block the adoption of a new charter for the NEA at the 1905 convention. They objected that the new charter sought to take power from the members by giving special status and financial powers to two groups controlled by the old NEA leadership, the National Council of Education and the Board of Trustees. Haley feared that financial control by the Board of Trustees would cut off funding for measures sought by teachers, like the 1905 salary commission report. William T. Harris, noted leader of the NEA old guard, gave his view of opponents of the new charter when he testified that it was intended to prevent "mob rule" of the association. The mob was composed of teachers who wished to turn the attention of the NEA away from discussions of theoretical educational issues towards their own job crises. This time, however, Haley and Gillan failed and the new charter was approved by the association and later by Congress.¹⁵

The next venture into NEA affairs by Haley and other opponents of the old guard was to be much more successful. This was the 1910 campaign to elect Chicago school superintendent Ella Flagg Young as the first woman president of the NEA. The early efforts in Young's behalf were led by Chicago's elementary principals with support from the Chicago teachers. In April, Margaret Haley received a letter from Katherine Blake, an officer in the Interborough Association of Woman Teachers of New York City, offering that group's help in the Young campaign. Haley, busy with a local school crisis which threatened Mrs. Young's superintendency, ignored the letter. Two months later, shortly before the convention where the election would take place, a flurry of letters from Haley and the Chicago principals was sent to Blake and Miss Grace Strachan, leader of the New York teacher group, apologizing for the delay and urging their cooperation in the Young campaign. What finally galvanized the Chicagoans into recognizing the offer of the New Yorkers was the rumor that

Miss Strachan might seek the presidency for herself. Blake and Strachan discounted the rumor and agreed to support Mrs. Young, though they were miffed at the Chicagoans' slowness to acknowledge their offer to help. Other important Young supporters were Laura Plummer and A.E. Winship, both residents of Boston, the 1910 convention city.¹⁶

Haley worked vigorously but behind the scenes for Young's candidacy. She had Winship reserve a hotel room for her under the assumed name of Kate Tehan, fearing that visible efforts by her for Young might lose some votes. Young was not the candidate of the majority of the nominating committee, but her name was submitted as a minority report by committee member Katherine Blake. Both Blake and Strachan spoke from the floor for the Young candidacy, Strachan remarking that 14,000 members of her New York woman teacher group supported Mrs. Young. Strachan also brushed off as inconsequential the old guard charges that the women were resorting to political methods in Young's behalf. Despite the charges, which echoed Harris' concern about mob rule, the women had the votes: Ella Flagg Young was elected by an almost two-to-one majority. One Boston paper acknowledged the Young election as a victory of the "insurgents" in the NEA over the "old guard." It gave a major portion of credit for the victory to Margaret Haley of Chicago, "who organized the teachers and impressed upon them their real strength." Thus, despite remaining behind the scenes, Haley received the lion's share of the credit for the Young election.¹⁷

The insurgents won still another victory over the old guard at the 1910 convention when Nicholas Murray Butler unsuccessfully sought removal of Haley's ally Carroll Pearse from the NEA Board of Trustees on technical grounds. Butler was thwarted when Pearse resigned his position and was then quickly re-elected to it by membership vote from the floor. Pearse and Young then represented the insurgency on the NEA Board and battled with Butler and NEA secretary Irwin Shepard over several matters for the next full year. After much infighting, the insurgents emerged

as clear victors. Pearse was elected as Young's successor at the 1911 San Francisco convention with firm support from the Chicago and New York teachers in attendance. The New Yorkers were rewarded with the election of Katherine Blake to the job of treasurer, though it required the same procedure of minority report and floor vote that had elected Young one year earlier. Blake, president Young, and president-elect Pearse gave the insurgents a majority on the Board of Trustees and put them in undisputed control of association affairs.¹⁸

The 1912 convention brought further victories to the insurgents but also saw a split develop between the two leading teacher elements in the reform movement, the New York group and the Chicagoans. The convention took place in Chicago and Haley intended to use the heavy vote of the Chicago teachers to win by-law changes which would ensure the voting power of the members of the association. With the preponderance of votes coming from Chicago's teachers and with Pearse in the chair to make crucial parliamentary rulings, the victory of Haley was assured. Grace Strachan, however, came to the convention with a different goal. She was determined to win the presidency and she expected help from the Chicago teachers whom she had helped two years earlier. This help did not materialize and both Strachan and Katherine Blake claimed on the floor of the convention that they had been double-crossed.¹⁹

Haley offered several explanations for her failure to support the Strachan candidacy. She stressed that her major goal was by-law changes and she did not wish to alienate any members who would support these changes by an endorsement of Strachan's controversial candidacy. Haley had to have other reasons for not supporting Strachan, however, since the large block of Chicago votes alone could have won the presidency, just as it achieved victory on the by-laws. Haley indicated these other reasons when she remarked that Strachan and the New Yorkers were more interested in the spoils of the presidency than in democratic reform which would enfranchise teachers. According to Haley, Strachan intended to use the NEA pres-

idency as a stepping stone to the New York City superintendency. To achieve these objectives, Strachan would resort to any means available. Haley was perturbed at Strachan's threat to use political pressure from the New York mayor's office to the Chicago mayor's office in an attempt to force the Chicago teachers to support her candidacy.²⁰

Strachan, a school administrator with ambitions for higher educational office, felt that women teachers' needs would be best fulfilled by her own election to the top position in the NEA. Haley, leader of a teacher organization which barred administrator members, felt that teacher interests were best served directly, not through the mediation of a friendly leader. Of course, Haley's own role as a full-time leader of an independent teacher organization would be threatened if administrators successfully represented teachers. Strachan appealed to women teachers with strongly feminist arguments, both in her own campaign and in her speeches for Mrs. Young. A woman at the top of the organization was a major objective. Haley, on the other hand, was more interested in securing the rights of the ordinary women teachers. Strachan's drive was typical of a more middle class feminism which sought leadership as its major objective while Haley reflected a more populist-oriented feminism which linked the sex issue with more tangible objectives such as organizational reform.²¹

Still another factor active in the split was the association of Strachan's candidacy with the recently deposed old guard. Strachan refused to repudiate old guard support, thereby increasing the fears that she was more interested in the perquisites of the presidency than in reform of the NEA. A final wedge that separated the two women was the regional factor that had operated in the NEA for many years. The old guard was predominantly eastern and Strachan, coming from that section, was suspect to midwesterners such as Haley, Pearse, and Gillan.²² Given the reality of all these differences, it is not surprising that the alliance

between the New York and Chicago teachers was short-lived.

The defeat of Strachan's candidacy, the victory on the by-laws, and the establishment of both the League of Teacher Associations and the Department of Classroom Teachers all testify to the emergence of Margaret Haley as a powerful voice for the cause of teachers in the NEA. One commentator went so far as to suggest that there was now a new machine in charge of NEA affairs, and that it was located in Chicago.²³ This view overestimated Haley's influence on NEA affairs. No matter how much power she might command on the convention floor, she was in no position to sustain those gains by carrying that influence into the executive bodies of the association. Even if she were disposed to try and penetrate the association hierarchy, she would have great difficulty. As leader of a local teachers' federation, her first allegiance necessarily was to the Chicago issues which most immediately affected her members.

The chief individual beneficiary of the insurgent victories of 1910 and 1912 was Carroll G. Pearse. He and his close associate, J.W. Crabtree, would gain effective control of NEA executive bodies over the next few years. They would continually court Haley in order to make sure that her influence at conventions would not be exercised in opposition to their own plans. Pearse aided Haley in her own battle with old guard elements on the 1911 salary committee, and Crabtree sought her cooperation in choosing presidential candidates and in heading off Grace Strachan's 1915 attempt for the NEA presidency. This defeat further embittered Strachan toward the NEA and she resigned from the Association. Haley also dropped out of NEA affairs for a few years, as she was forced to fight a bitter battle with the Chicago school board over the union affiliation of her organization.²⁴

IV. The Demise of the Classroom Teachers' Influence

Left in full control of the NEA by the defeat of the old guard and the withdrawal of Strachan and Haley from association affairs, Pearse and Crabtree moved to consolidate their control and to increase the power and influence of the NEA.

Their initial step in these efforts was the appointment in 1915 of a committee to study the reorganization of the association. Haley seemingly had little to fear from this committee, since it was chaired by William B. Owen, successor to Ella Flagg Young as head of the Chicago Normal School and friend of the Chicago teachers. By the time the committee completed its work, however, that friendship would be sorely tested. Owen's committee would come up with a plan which would drastically curtail the development of an independent teacher voice within the NEA.²⁵

The rationale for the reorganization committee's action was spelled out in a newspaper report of its appointment. The NEA in 1915 was large and unwieldy, an organization in which "membership is purely accidental." A reorganization plan was needed to systematically structure the teaching profession in an association "really national in extent." The NEA leadership was set on increasing membership to 250,000 and a group of that size would have to be intelligently organized or it would be chaotic. The model which the NEA sought to follow was that of the American Medical Association with teachers, like doctors, affiliated with their national organization through a state association. A federation of state education associations had existed alongside the NEA since 1911, and re-organization would blend the state associations with the national organization, making membership in one a condition for membership in the other. Reorganization would increase control over education by educational professionals and it would decrease the influence of textbook companies and other outsiders in the NEA and in the schools.²⁶ The goals of reorganization were not ones that teachers could take issue with, and so they did not object to the idea at first.

Pearse and Crabtree wanted reorganization as one of a number of changes which were intended to make the NEA into a powerful organization in state capitols and in Washington. The prerequisite for this changeover was a greatly increased membership. In 1917, the business office of the association was moved to Washington and

Crabtree was appointed its first full-time secretary. The coming of World War I provided him with a golden opportunity to increase the membership and power of the NEA by linking it to the war effort. In conformity with these objectives, a Commission on the National Emergency was appointed to institute and publicize the war work of the schools. This commission became a forum for other ideas to increase the role of education at the national level, including proposals for federal aid to education and the creation of a separate Department of Education at the federal level. Crabtree soon acquired an assistant, a field secretary, whose job would be to devote more attention to the association's multipronged national program. One of the duties of the field secretary "would be devoting his time and energies to questions pertaining to better salaries for teachers and increase support for the schools." Teachers would have to join in great numbers and the NEA leadership was going to great lengths to encourage teacher memberships. Crabtree told organized teachers of the NEA's cooperation with the AFT on the matter of obtaining federal aid. He also advocated teacher participation in school administration, a movement which had originated in the Department of Classroom Teachers shortly after its establishment but had been largely ignored by the administrators who controlled the NEA. In his autobiography, Crabtree mentioned teacher participation as one of the most effective means of enticing teachers to join the NEA. Crabtree's wide-ranging approaches to increasing membership worked exceptionally well, the total number of members growing from 8,000 in 1917 to over 50,000 in 1920.²⁷

This massive increase in membership spurred the reorganization committee to present a specific plan for alteration of the national meeting. Prior to reorganization, business at the NEA conventions was conducted on a town meeting basis with each member present having a vote. The large number of prospective attendees who were expected because of membership increases would mean chaotic, confused conventions unless some method of streamlining the convention were developed. The Owen committee put forth its plan in 1917. The reorganized NEA would conduct its business

in a representative, not a mass member format. Delegates would be elected to attend the national convention by each state association which would be officially affiliated with the NEA. Members who were not elected delegates could attend the convention, but could not vote on the business of the convention.²⁸

The activist teachers who made up the League of Teacher Associations were not concerned with an efficient, orderly national meeting, but rather with maintaining the power that teachers wielded under the old system where the teachers of the convention city turned out in force and controlled the vote on association business. Changing to a delegate format would dilute this power, as the reality of reorganization in the Illinois State Teachers' Association demonstrated. Under that reorganization, of a total of 167 voting delegates at the last convention, 135 were county and city superintendents, college presidents and professors, or elementary and high school principals. Only 14 of the 167 voting delegates were elementary teachers. Reorganization had clearly disfranchised teachers in Illinois and, if enacted, would have a similar effect in the NEA. Reorganization was threatening the organizational power teachers had achieved with the election of Ella Flagg Young in 1910 and the change in association by-laws in 1912.²⁹

Objections by local teachers, aided by Margaret Haley, were successful in delaying adoption of reorganization at the 1918 and 1919 NEA conventions. In 1920, however, the NEA reorganization movement, spearheaded by Crabtree and Pearse, would turn the tables on the teachers. The meeting was scheduled for Salt Lake City, a place where teachers listened to their administrative superiors, not their activist peers from far off places. Utah conservatism, heavily dosed with Mormonism, gave the reorganizers a group of teachers who would utilize the town meeting vote to abolish the town meeting format. Reorganization was carried, despite the objections of Margaret Haley. Teacher fear of administrator dominance was intensified by one other provision of reorganization: the naming of state superintendents and NEA state officers as ex officio delegates to future conventions, ensuring about

50 administrator delegates over and above those who would be elected by their state associations. Yet the reorganization was not totally insensitive to teacher concerns; responding to city teachers who wished to have their organizations directly affiliated with the NEA, not indirectly through an intermediary state association, the reorganization plan contained provision for such local affiliation. Also, an attempt was made to placate Haley. A tenure resolution which she supported was quickly passed by the convention after she was asked to present it.³⁰

Despite their defeat on reorganization, Haley and her teacher allies, most notably Ethel Gardner of the Milwaukee Teachers' Association, chose to stay with the new NEA. Several factors influenced this choice: the NEA management wanted to retain the teachers and its conciliatory actions at the 1920 convention reflected this intent; Haley had no alternative available to her since her own Chicago teacher organization had been forbidden to affiliate with labor by the Chicago Board of Education; and the union alternative was becoming less viable as post-war, hysterical "red scares" and industrial employer open shop drives stifled union activity throughout the country. Both the Chicago and Milwaukee teacher associations officially affiliated with the NEA under the new organizational structure in 1921. They sought to reinvigorate the teacher voice in the NEA through the medium of the Department of Classroom Teachers. However, they would also be thwarted in this effort. In 1922, a dispute over the presidential election in the department saw William Owen, by now president-elect of the NEA, intervene to ensure the election of a candidate loyal to the NEA leadership and the defeat of Ethel Gardner.³¹ Thus, by 1922, the promising victories of teachers in the NEA--the recognition of their salary concerns, the election of Ella Flagg Young, and the change in by-laws--had been effectively neutralized. The teacher voice as an independent voice had been quelled in the NEA. It would remain so for almost fifty years.

V. Teachers and their Allies: A Political-Historical Analysis

The myriad actors and factors operative in NEA affairs during the early twentieth century presents the student of NEA reform and the teacher role in that reform with an always complex and sometimes baffling situation. Yet close analysis of that complexity leads to the uncovering of a pattern in NEA reform that is analogous to the situation in other areas of American reform in the Progressive political reform that can be applied to NEA developments. According to Thelen, political progressivism in its early stages (1890s and 1900s) utilized a multi-class coalition of citizens united to stop the economic and political outrages perpetrated against the people at large by trusts and other large corporations. The coalition of insurgents in the NEA (who also were sometimes known as progressives) against the autocratic old guard management indicates that NEA internal politics was beset with issues similar to those operative in American political life at large.³²

For Thelen, the year 1910 marked the beginning of the second stage of reform political development when the coalition of reformers broke up into sub-groups, each of which pursued, not the common popular interest, but its own aggrandizement. The 1910 victory of Ella Flagg Young was a high water mark in NEA reform, but the subsequent splits among the insurgents, first between Haley and Strachan in 1912 and later between Haley and Pearse in 1920, indicates further similarity between NEA and political reformers. Closer consideration of the ways in which the interests of Haley and Pearse blended and then diverged reveals the ideological and material factors which first joined and later divided these NEA reformers.

As long as the old guard was in power, the insurgents were unified by their common goal of ousting the autocrats and by the democratic sentiments which undergirded this goal. Once the insurgents gained power, however, each sub-group in the coalition was provided with an opportunity to advocate its particular interests. With Haley and Pearse, these interests had enough in common to keep their coalition

in operation until after World War I. Haley's objectives, as already discussed the amelioration of the salaries and working conditions of classroom teachers, particularly at the elementary level--over-lapped with a good portion of Pearse's personal and institutional agenda. Pearse and his closest ally, Crabtree, were both midwesterners of common background and education, the former having been educated at Coane College and the latter at the Peru Nebraska State Normal School. Each worked his way up from rural teaching through higher teaching and administrative posts to normal school presidencies, Crabtree at River Falls and Pearse at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.³³

Elementary teachers could find much in common with these men and the institutions they headed. The commonalities would be reinforced by the differences that both teachers and normal school faculties felt between themselves and the university professors and presidents who made up the bulk of both the old guard and a new elite of professors of education which arose within the NEA after 1910. The struggle between university education departments and normal schools over who would train the teachers needed to staff the rapidly expanding high schools gave elementary teachers an additional opportunity to link their own status with that of the teacher training institutions. When a movement was started to establish junior high schools, both elementary teachers and normal school educators could conceive it as a downward threat by the new university elite against the democratic institutions of common school and normal school. Crabtree highlighted this common concern when he wrote to Haley in 1914 to notify her of the stand taken by the normal school department of the NEA affirming normal school rights in elementary and high school teacher training. That department also took another stand which was sure to please Haley: it attacked Rockefeller and Carnegie sponsored initiatives to meddle in common school affairs. Haley's antipathy to the large foundations was fueled by both her progressive political sentiments and by the local battle the Chicago Teachers Federation had fought in the 1890s against the recommendations of a school study commission headed by the president of Rockefeller's University of Chicago.³⁴

Normal school educators and elementary teachers also shared an antipathy to the highfalutin, pseudo-scientific and theoretical discourse of both the old guard and the new educational aristocrats. Pearse and Haley emphasized the practical in pedagogy, not the esoteric. Pearse's journal, founded in 1916 as a medium for practicing administrators, criticized the elaborate methods of the university-based, foundation-funded school surveyors who painstakingly gathered mountains of data which resulted in findings either useless or already known to practicing educators. Pearse's plan for the NEA was to build on the links between various practitioners and thereby create a large group of educators, not educational theoreticians. Thus, he needed classroom teachers for his organization and he took several steps to win over teachers, despite the vocal opposition of some to reorganization. In 1919, while the reorganization battle was in full pitch, the NEA appointed a Denver classroom teacher who was a former president of the League of Teacher Associations as a full-time staff member. This move was an obvious gesture at courting teachers, since the Denver teacher had earlier that year made a no-nonsense speech on teacher needs to the Department of Superintendence of the NEA. Pearse also made frequent and favorable comments on teachers' salary needs in his journal and, as already mentioned, the movement for higher salaries received a good deal of attention from Crabtree's NEA staff.³⁵

Despite the ideological and material commonalities of normal school educators and teachers, and despite Pearse's shrewd exploitation of these commonalities, the alliance between the Haley and Pearse wings of the NEA insurgents broke apart on reorganization. The reason for the break was relatively simple: Haley desired an independent teacher voice in the NEA and such a voice was possible under the old town meeting format. Pearse's plan was geared towards modernizing the organization, not preserving teachers' independence. If the NEA reorganization were coupled with the strong nationalization measures also advocated by Pearse (federal aid, depart-

mental status for education, and a national university), the association would emerge as a power to be reckoned with on the national scene. Balky teachers could not stand in the way of these plans and so Pearse pursued reorganization, despite teacher opposition. Haley, beset with local problems throughout this period, was not particularly interested in the spoils of nationalization. She wished to preserve the NEA as it stood, or at least preserve the teacher voice within it. The split between Pearse and Haley involved an issue of prime importance, as indicated by the compromises both made on the reorganization issue. Haley cooperated with old guard elements who opposed Pearse on reorganization as they had opposed him on many other matters, and Pearse received support from some of the university educationists who were threatening the normal schools.³⁶

What Pearse shared with the educationists was a commitment to hierarchical organization and administrator dominance, in the schools as well as in the NEA. Pearse's administrative background and his journal linked him with practicing administrators while the university educationists' major task of training school administrators firmly anchored them to the interests of their students. Teacher independence was not a primary concern for any administrator, either in the NEA or in local school contexts. The linking of the NEA reorganization to unionism, by both Haley and the Pearse group of administrators, indicates the primacy of the teacher independence issue for both camps. Haley described reorganization as a vicious anti-teacher scheme proposed by those who opposed unionism. Pearse himself was never mentioned by Haley as an anti-unionist, and his mild and cautious pronouncements on teacher unionism can be contrasted with those of some of his administrator-allies. In 1917, before the reorganization battle had heated up, Pearse's journal carried advice to superintendents concerned about unionism: the best thing for a superintendent to do was not to battle the union, but to understand the forces that created it and move to satisfy teacher needs so that formation of a union would be unnecessary. Two years later, Pearse commented editorially on the Philadelphia teachers' consideration of whether or not to organize by advocating

organization, but not affiliation with labor. This of course would mean affiliation with the modernized NEA. These pronouncements, though anti-teacher union, were measured and mild and never contained attacks on the labor movement itself. The existence of more vigorous anti-unionism among administrators is not difficult to document. Pearse's journal in the early 1920s contained a ringing attack on unionism as "Bolshevism" by a Texas educational editor. Pearse himself would never go that far in his public statements. Direct attacks were contrary to his philosophy of unity for all educators within the NEA. Even though Haley opposed Pearse on reorganization, she seemed to disassociate him from his more rabid colleagues. In later years, she would refer to him strictly in terms of the 1910 and 1912 alliance between insurgents and ignore altogether the reorganization battle.³⁷

Yet, had Haley known of Pearse's treatment of the independent union movement among his own faculty at the Milwaukee Normal School, she might not have felt so kindly to him. In response to his faculty's organizing an AFT local in 1919, Pearse arranged for the retrenchment of the union president. Pearse still chose not to battle publicly with the union, but the nature of his response indicates that privately he shared much in common with more vigorous anti-union administrators. The union president wrote to the AFT office describing Pearse "as an enemy to the (union) movement "whose activities needed to be exposed so that "the teaching profession would become acquainted with his insides as well as his outsides."³⁸

Pearse's Milwaukee actions indicate that, despite his caution and his frequent attempts to conciliate teachers, in the final analysis, again according to his faculty union president, he was typical of the emerging educational "executive which all teachers should come to clearly recognize as their natural enemy."³⁹ The reorganization scheme in the NEA was ultimately a reassertion of the executive power that the insurgents had seen as evil when exercised by the old guard. Pearse in Milwaukee, like educational administrators throughout the country, was applying the same centralization scheme to the public schools. An independent teacher

voice was opposed by most superintendents in local school situations and the NEA reorganization scheme effectively removed an independent teacher voice at the national level. Professional school administrators, educated at colleges and universities, were emerging as the major power in American education. The defeat of teacher power in the NEA was one case among many in this period where teachers were defeated by the new educational executives. The consequences of reorganization was a large, administrator-dominated NEA which retained this character until the early 1970s.

NOTES

1. The reference to the NEA as a "reluctant dragon" is from Peter Janssen's article, "NEA: The Reluctant Dragon," Saturday Review, (June 17, 1967) pp. 56-7, 72-3. For a complete history of the NEA in the early 20th Century, see Ralph D. Schmid, "A Study of the Organizational Structure of the National Education Association, 1884-1921," unpublished dissertation, Washington University, 1963.
2. "Constitution of the National Federation of Teachers," and "Minutes of the National Teachers' Federation," (July, 1902); Box 37, Chicago Teachers Federation, Chicago Historical Society - hereafter cited as CTF collection.
3. National Teachers' Federation Resolution, (July 9, 1903), Box 38, CTF collection; Journal of Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association, vol. 42, (1903), pp. 28-9 - hereafter cited as NEA Proceedings; and Catherine Goggin to Miss Cynthia Leet (December 8, 1905) and Goggin to J. Speed Carroll (May 5, 1905), Box 38, CTF collection.
4. New York Members of the National Education Association to the Executive Committee, National Education Association (July 6, 1903), Box 37, CTF collection; NEA Proceedings, vol. 42, (1903), p. 30; and "Minutes of the Committee on Salaries, Tenure, and Pensions," (December 11, 1903), Box 37, CTF collection.
5. "Minutes of Committee on Salaries ...," and Goggin to Leet (December 8, 1905).
6. Margaret Haley, autobiographical manuscripts (Seattle, 1912), pp. 64-71, 99, Box 32, CTF collection. Haley's autobiography was written in four separate installments in 1911, 1912, 1934, and 1935; reference to a particular installment will be indicated by the year in which it was written.
7. Margaret A. Haley to Livy S. Richard, Box 41, CTF collection and NEA Proceedings, vol. 50, (1912), pp. 31-2.
8. Report of a committee of the National Education Association on Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living (Ann Arbor: National Education Association, 1913), pp. xi, 16; Haley to James Ferguson (February 11, 1913) and Haley to Joseph Swain (February 13, 1913), Box 41, CTF collection.
9. Joint Committee from the St. Paul Grade Teachers' Federation and the Minneapolis Grade Teachers' Association to Grade Teachers (March 11, 1912); Goggin to Grace Baldwin (March 13, 1912); Baldwin to Ida L. Fursman (April 28, 1912); "Constitution and By Laws of the League of Teachers' Associations," (July 1912); and "September Communication to Members of the League of Teachers' Associations," Box 41, CTF collection.
10. Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 212-14.
11. National Education Association Committee on Salaries, Tenure, and Pensions, "The Tangible Rewards of Teaching," Bulletin #16, United States Bureau of Education (1914); "Salaries of Teachers and School Officers," Bulletin #31, United States Bureau of Education (1951); and "State Pensions for Public School Teachers," Bulletin #14, United States Bureau of Education (1916). On teachers' council, see my unpublished paper "Teachers Councils: An Alternative to Professional School Administration During the Progressive Era, 1895-1920," American Ed. Research Association (1977).

12. Committee on Teachers' Salaries, Tenure, and the Cost of Living, Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living (Washington: National Education Association, 1918), pp. 9-20.
13. Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living, (1918), and James E. Clarke, "The American Federation of Teachers: Origins and History from 1870 to 1952," unpublished dissertation, Cornell University, (1966), p. 140.
14. Haley, "Autobiography," (1935), p. 278, Box 34, CTF collection; Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 80-1; NEA Proceedings, Vol. 42, (1903), pp. 25-9; and Haley to Irwin Shepard (June 4, 1903), Shepard to Haley (June 6, 1903), and Edward R. Warren to Haley (June 10, 1903), Box 37, CTF collection.
15. Haley to John Crowley (July 31, 1903), Box 37, CTF collection; NEA Proceedings, Vol. 43, (1904), pp. 145-52; Haley to Gillan (May 5, 1904) and Gillan to Haley (May 11, 1904), Box 38, CTF collection; Haley Autobiography (1911), pp. 99-104, Box 43, CTF collection; and Haley to Gillan (June 28, 1905) and Gillan to Haley (June 18, 1905), (October 8, 1905), and (February 6, 1906), Box 39, CTF collection.
16. Robert L. Reid, "The Professionalization of Public School Teachers: The Chicago Experience, 1895-1920," unpublished dissertation, Northwestern (1968), p. 228. Katherine Blake to Haley (April 19, 1910), Blake to Miss Reid [a Chicago principal] (April 19, 1910), Haley to Grace Strachan (June 21, 1910), and Blake to Haley (June 21, 1910); Goggin to Elizabeth Allen (May 4, 1910) and Goggin to William McAndrew (June 22, 1910), [both Goggin letters were inquiries about Strachan mounting a campaign for NEA president], CTF collection, Box 40.
17. Haley to Frances S. Potter (May 12, 1910), Haley to A.E. Winship (June 18, 1910), telegram to Miss Kate Tehan (June 30, 1910), CTF collection, Box 40; NEA Proceedings, vol. 48, (1910), pp. 32-5; and "Mrs. Young Wins: Men Outwitted," Boston Post (July 8, 1910), clipping in CTF files, Box 40, CTF collection.
18. Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 185-91. Boxes 40 and 41 of the CTF collection are full of clippings and correspondence regarding the fight between Young and NEA secretary Shepard. Included are letters to Haley from Gillan, Pearse, Strachan, and Winship as well as her replies.
19. Haley to Miss Cunningham and Miss Rood (June 22, 1912), Box 41, CTF collection; "The Convention Day by Day," Journal of Education, Vol. 76, (July 26, 1917), pp. 117-20; "The Chicago Meeting of the N.E.A.," Western Teacher, Vol. 21, (September, 1912), pp. 1-3; and NEA Proceedings, Vol. 50, (1912), pp. 34-5, 37-42.
20. Haley, Autobiography, (1934), pp. 282-91, Box 34, CTF collection.
21. I have addressed the limits of Haley's feminism in "Teacher Unionism and Suffragist Politics: The Case of Margaret Haley," unpublished paper, History of Education Society, (October, 1976). For a discussion of several versions of the woman suffrage movement, see Aileen Kraditor, Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920 (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

22. NEA Proceedings, Vol. 50, (1912), p. 40 and Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 191-93, 203-04.
23. Journal of Education, Vol. 76, (July 25, 1912), p. 115.
24. Pearse to Haley (February 15, 1913), (March 26, 1913), (December 11, 1914), Crabtree to Haley (July 21, 1914), (September 28, 1914), Box 41 & 42, CTF collection and "Miss Strachan Resigns," New York Times (August 22, 1915), p. 13.
25. Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," p. 162 and Haley, Autobiography, (1934), p. 292, Box 34, CTF collection.
26. Chicago Tribune, (August 25, 1915); Reid, "Professionalization of Public School Teachers," p. 234; and Journal of Education, Vol. 73, (January 5, 1911), p. 16.
27. J.W. Crabtree, What Counted Most (Lincoln: University Publishing Co., 1935), pp. 141-47; Crabtree to Active Members (October 1, 1918) and Crabtree to Frances Harden (February 6, 1919), Box 47, CTF collection; Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 303-05; and Edgar E. Wesley, N.E.A.: The First Hundred Years (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 397.
28. American School, Vol. 3, (August, 1917) p. 241.
29. League of Teachers' Associations to Affiliated Clubs, (May 27, 1918), Box 44, CTF collection.
30. Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 237, 244-47; Frederick S. Buchanan, "Unpacking the N.E.A.: The Role of Utah's Teachers at the 1920 Convention," Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. 41, (Spring, 1973), pp. 150-61; Journal of Education, Vol. 92, (August 19, 1920), pp. 118-20; and American School, Vol. 5, (June, 1919), pp. 164-65 and Vol. 6, (July-August, 1920), pp. 201-02.
31. The CTF charter of affiliation with the NEA (December 1, 1921), is in Box 49, CTF collection. Box 48 contains letters from the Milwaukee Teachers' Association to the CTF explaining problems with the Milwaukeeans' affiliation. Box 49 contains several affidavits, including one by Margaret Haley, relating to the 1922 officer election in the Department of Classroom Teachers. For a rendering of this dispute from the side of the NEA loyalists, see Sarah H. Fahey, "History of the Department of Classroom Teachers," Fourth Yearbook of the Department of Classroom Teachers (Washington: Department of Classroom Teachers, 1929), p. 177.
32. David Thelen, Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit (Boston: Little Brown, 1976), pp. v-vi.
33. J.W. Crabtree, What Counted Most, p. 7 and Louis W. Mears, The Life and Times of a Midwest Educator, Carroll Gardner Pearse (Lincoln: State Journal Printing Company, 1944), Chapters 1, 3.

34. American School, Vol. 2, (May, 1916), pp. 140-42 and (December, 1916), p. 364 and Vol. 3, (February, 1917), pp. 35-7; Journal of Education, Vol. 83, (March 9, 1916), p. 256; and Crabtree to Haley (July 21, 1914), Box 42, CTF collection.
35. American School, Vol. 2, (December, 1916), pp. 356-57; Vol. 3, (January, 1917), pp. 6-7; Vol. 5, (December, 1919), p. 356; and Vol. 6, (January, 1920), pp. 3, 5-7, 17.
36. Schmid, "Organizational Structure of the NEA," pp. 237, 248, and 253.
37. Reid, "Professionalization of Public School Teachers," p. 256; American School, Vol. 3, (March, 1917), p. 92 and Vol. 8, (February, 1922), p. 44; and Haley, "Autobiography," (1935), p. 99, Box 34, CTF collection.
38. Pearse to L.T. Gould (July 30, 1919) and (August 10, 1919) and Gould to Freeland G. Stecker (September 4, 1919), Series 6, Box 13, American Federation of Teachers Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.
39. Gould to Stecker (September 4, 1919), Series 6, Box 13, AFT collection.