

*Tell this to
the Teachers in
Philly & Scranton!*

THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

PITTSBURGH, PA. 15213

**ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
BELLEFIELD AND FORBES AVENUES**

January 25, 1968

Dear Pittsburgh Teacher:

The Board of Education has taken note of the increased efforts by one or more teacher organizations to establish a relationship with the Board of Education that would follow the pattern of organized labor. This letter is written, following its approval by the Board of Public Education, to all teachers to state the position of the Board of Education on this subject, and to seek the judgments of teachers in developing a solution.

Since 1964 the faculty and the Board of Education have shared in the formulation of policy through the Professional Advisory Commission. This type of organization is, of course, rejected by those who would follow the collective bargaining tradition, even though the function, design and membership of PAC were created by the officers of all the professional organizations, and ratified by the Board in mutual good faith. Among the many accomplishments of the PAC and its affiliate, the Personnel Planning Committee, the typical teacher has gained \$1250 in salary increases in addition to the established annual increments during the past three years. The Board is dedicated to continuing the advancement of teacher welfare and the affirmative response to teacher counsel through the PAC and the PPC in the years ahead. We welcome improvements in the Professional Advisory Commission as strongly as we deplore the adversary relationship and the hostility which are implicit in the attempts to impose industrial unionism in the teaching profession.

The Board of Public Education wishes to make it unmistakably clear that we do not in any way question the importance and the desirability of the union movement in general. We have consistently supported this instrument of society over the years, and believe it to be a constructive element of the American economy. Our position, therefore, relates only to the relevance of labor practices in public education.

Under Pennsylvania law the Board of Education is prohibited from engaging in an exclusive bargaining agreement with any teacher organization. Apart from the law, this Board believes that the practices of industrial and craft unionism are incompatible with the welfare of teachers, and inconsistent with the sound administration of the schools. Our reasons are as follows:

1. Schools are a possession of the people.

There is no more profound principle in our free society than that which declares the schools to be a possession of the people. Whether elected or appointed, boards of education are the agents of the people in the ultimate formulation and declaration of public policy through education. For boards of education to delegate the formulation of public policy by negotiation is to abdicate their own responsibility.

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2. The Pittsburgh Board of Public Education is a legislative governmental body.

Like the Congress or the State Legislature, it acts for the people in the formulation of public policy. Within its jurisdiction its resolutions are in fact laws. Any organization of teachers elected by teachers to represent them for bargaining purposes is a private voluntary organization. For such an organization to demand a bargaining agreement with an arm of legislative government is to arrogate to itself equal or pre-eminent authority with the governmental body across the table. It is as though an association of postal employees were to sit in equal authority with the Congress, demanding controls over public policy affecting the postal service. To present demands in a hearing before appropriate legislative committees at any level of government is one thing, and should be responsibly accommodated. To enforce public policy by the strike threat against legally constituted government authority is to attack our entire democratic system.

3. Withholding of services from children is not comparable with the strike against the stockholder or the owner.

The ultimate resource possessed by the employee in the industrial and craft union context is the strike. The power of the bargainers for labor resides in the withholding of services. The strike therefore is against the stockholder or the owner. But in schools there are no dollar profits to be shared. The stockholders and owners are the people and their children. To strike against the schools (or with equal effect, to threaten strikes against the schools) is to strike against children and the people. A higher morality, quite different from economic pressure, becomes the issue: Shall the schools be maintained for children, or shall they be closed by the pickets? There is a serious question as to whether society can long endure the forced closing of schools, faced with the transcending mandate to serve children and teachers.

Therefore, the issue is one of fairness. The strike, notwithstanding its illegality, is not a fair or equitable instrument for the enforcement of employee demands in public schools, since it can be tolerated only for a period of time even under the most adamant board of education, without risking immediate damage to children. This would be a perversion of labor's goals, not to mention the goals of teachers and boards of education.

4. The goals of all partners are identical.

The theoreticians of the labor movement make it clear that collective bargaining derives necessarily from the differences in goals between employee and management. In education there are no differences in goals. Teachers, administrators, and boards of education have as their only goal the fulfillment of children through the schools. The adversary relationship is unnatural and inconsistent in education, even though natural and consistent with labor movement philosophy in conventional labor-management relations. By its nature, education is a cooperative process, resting heavily upon the sharing of many complex responsibilities. By injecting the unnatural adversary relationship,

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neither teacher nor administrator can be wholly effective. Where teachers should participate actively in policy formulation in cooperation with administrators and boards, the bargaining procedure would separate them. Agents for the teachers and agents for the schools would formulate policy, resulting in the dictation of policy by force as distinct from reason, even though technically ratified by boards.

Board members in Pittsburgh have considered themselves partners with teachers in discovering and advancing the best conditions for teaching and learning. This has been a team process. Under bargaining arrangements the team process would dissolve, removing the essential partners from communication with each other. Under these conditions the schools would become the possession of the shop stewards or other negotiators. The Board would cease to have a significant function.

5. Organizational strife is incompatible with a healthy school.

The constant presence of the membership drive among competing teacher organizations introduces an element of antagonism in school faculties that is incompatible with sound school practices. A good school rests heavily upon the voluntary sharing of responsibilities and professional services among its staff members. Cooperative planning, information sharing, and constructive professional counsel, not greatly different from the spirit implied among medical staff members in hospitals, are characteristic of good faculties. Yet teachers have reported deep, emotion-laden schisms within faculties in Pittsburgh for reason of clashing loyalties between professional organizations. Aggressive membership recruitment has resulted in open hostilities toward non-complying teachers to the point of social and professional isolation. Good teaching cannot prevail under this condition of stress.

However, in spite of our deep feelings on the subject of bargaining, we hold firmly to the belief that an even better design for the genuine involvement of teachers in all policy development can be created. Pittsburgh has been different from other big cities in many ways, as we have been different from others for four years with the PAC. We believe that with the help of teachers we can be different and better in this category. We believe that over time a further developed PAC or a similar instrument in a form agreeable to the faculty is the better design which can resolve our present stresses and give genuine voice to the teachers.

We earnestly invite your individual and organizational involvement in making this successful advisory body even more successful. As our Superintendent has said many times, we are dedicated to solving professional problems in a professional manner in an atmosphere of shared responsibility, mutual interest and dignity.

Sincerely,

Mary M. L. Aaron

Mrs. M. L. Aaron
President

Enclosure: PAC Brochure