1974

John Easterly Coxe, Louisiana Educator.

Charles Ernest Weimer
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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JOHN EASTERY COXE, LOUISIANA EDUCATOR.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural
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JOHN EASTERLY COXE, LOUISIANA EDUCATOR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Education

by

Charles E. Weimer
B. A., Louisiana State University, 1938
M. Ed., Louisiana State University, 1947
August 1974
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A special debt of gratitude is owed to Mrs. Hazel Grimm Coxe, wife of the late John Easterly Coxe, for her untiring efforts in making this dissertation a true reflection of her husband's character and accomplishments.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate and record the life and educational contributions of John Easterly Coxe. The study was limited to Coxe as a person, and to selected contributions and experiences that helped characterize him as an educator.

John Easterly Coxe was born July 14, 1887, at Watson, Louisiana, the son of William P. and Margie Selina (Webb) Coxe. His early schooling was in or near Watson, in Livingston Parish, Louisiana. He attended Centenary College when it was located in Jackson, Louisiana, and later earned his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. In addition, he completed additional graduate study at Louisiana State University, the University of Chicago, and Ohio State University.

He served in a one-room school, and he served as an elementary and high-school teacher, a high school principal, and as superintendent of Livingston Parish for seven years. During his tenure in the State Department of Education, Coxe served as an elementary and high school supervisor of instruction for eighteen years, and as State Superintendent of Education for eight years.

In 1929, while a supervisor in the State Department of Education, Coxe married Hazel Grimm, a native of South Dakota, who had lived in Louisiana since 1924. At the time of their marriage, Miss Grimm was assistant state supervisor of Home Economics in the State Department of Education.
During his tenure as principal of Denham Springs High School, the school received accreditation by the State Board of Education of Louisiana. As superintendent of Livingston Parish, the system enjoyed growth.

The state superintendency of Coxe was affected by an ending economic depression and World War II. Nevertheless, much was accomplished. Among these items were: increasing state school funds, establishing a twelve-grade school system, providing an effective compulsory school attendance program, providing for popular election of members of the State Board of Education, reorganizing the State Department of Education, expanding vocational education programs, recognizing the need for the education of Negro children, and adjusting the state's public school system to war conditions.

There were critical issues vitally affecting Coxe's career. One arose in 1939 with differences expressed between Coxe and State Superintendent T. H. Harris. This eventually paved the way for Coxe to defeat Harris in 1940. Another issue existed between Coxe and Governor Sam H. Jones. His dismissal of Shelby M. Jackson, a member of his staff in the State Department of Education, was related to controversies with the State Board of Education and Senator Gilbert F. Hennigan over vocational education and vocational education funds. These differences led to several unpleasant confrontations. His final demise came with the state elections in 1948 when he was defeated by Jackson in the race for State Superintendent of Education.

John Easterly Coxe died on November 18, 1972, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at the age of eighty-five.
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CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

I. EARLY LIFE

John Easterly Coxe was born on a farm in Watson, Louisiana, a small settlement in Livingston Parish, on July 14, 1887. His parents, William Potts Coxe and Margie Selina Webb, were honest, hard-working people. Mrs. Margie Webb Coxe was originally from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They were married in the Live Oak Methodist Church, located about eight miles northeast of Denham Springs in Livingston Parish.¹

His grandfather, Benjamin Coxe, came to Louisiana before the War Between the States broke out, moved to Mississippi where he was married and finally settled in the western part of Alabama where he accumulated considerable property.² Five children were born to the union: William, father of the new superintendent of education, Richard, Madora, Rebecca, and Julia Coxe.

Several years later the family returned to Louisiana in covered wagons drawn by oxen and settled on the outskirts of Baton Rouge. Once again the family moved, this time to Watson's Settlement, in Livingston Parish (then St. Helena Parish) where John Easterly Coxe was born.³

¹John Easterly Coxe, personal interview at his home, February 15, 1967.
Besides John, the children of the elder Coxes were Benjamin, Robert, Silas, Richard, James, and Bertha Virginia. John was the sixth child of the family.

William Potts Coxe was known to his neighbors and close friends as a man who tended strictly to his own business. He had a high respect for the laws of his country and held a deep reverence for his Creator. He possessed what was called genuine "piney woods honesty." He was a tireless worker and urged his family to adhere to the principles of morality and temperance.

Margie Selina Coxe (John E. Coxe's mother) was the daughter of Robert Webb, a successful respected, religious planter, who lived five miles east of Watson's Settlement. Her father enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861 and served honorably during the entire war. Margie's sister Sallie and her two brothers, Allen and "Doc," were reared under strict Methodist philosophy, shunning all forms of evil, such as the use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages.

It is no wonder that in his later years Coxe took so much pride in his work with the Methodist Church in Baton Rouge where he conducted regular classes in religion.

The life style of John's brothers and sister varied. Bertha Virginia married a Curtis and lived on a farm north of Walker, Louisiana. Silas lived as a farmer on the old family homestead near Denham Springs.

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4 Morning Advocate, May 26, 1940, p. 9C.
5 Ibid.
James was a merchant at Walker. Benjamin moved to New Orleans where he was in business. Robert served as assessor of Livingston Parish, and Richard became an insurance executive. 7

The home of William and Margie Coxe was an old-fashioned one-story frame structure with two brick chimneys. There was a wide front porch and a long porch on the left side. It was on this side porch that young John Coxe used to recline during leisure hours and "pore over" certain books in which he was deeply interested. His interest in books was always intense, a habit in keeping with his one burning ambition to acquire a thorough and well-rounded education. 8

His elementary education was in or near Watson, all in one-room schools in Livingston Parish.

A story published in "Louisiana Schools," characterizes the young John E. Coxe. It cited a conversation between Miss Addie Underwood, the young teacher of the isolated one-room country school, known as the Cedar Grove School, and the young Coxe when John remained in the classroom on an assignment during a recess period. 9 An account of the incident follows:

"John," she broke the silence in a kindly, persuasive voice, "won't you let your arithmetic go until later and come out and play with the others? You can prepare this work either this afternoon or tonight. Everybody is having such a good time! I am sure you would, too, if you would only come on the outside and join us in the games."

7Morning Advocate. loc. cit.

8Ibid.

9The only record indicating Annie Underwood as a teacher was found on page 295 of the minutes of Livingston Parish School Board dated August 11, 1911, where she was certified as a first grade teacher in Plainview, Louisiana. Miss Addie Underwood later married and became Mrs. Addie U. Storey, and served as supervisor of the girls' dormitory at the Louisiana School for the Blind in Baton Rouge.
The boy, a thoughtful expression on his face, slowly laid down his slate pencil on his open arithmetic, and, looking straight up into his teacher's sympathetic blue eyes said: "Miss Addie, I like my books. I like to get up my school work on time. I don't want to leave my task unfinished. When the class meets this afternoon I want to be ready with my work. I don't care anything about playing while I have some work to get up. Please Miss Addie, if it's just the same to you, let me stay in here and work on my arithmetic."

There was a dead silence in the dark little room for the briefest second. Then, "John, since you see it that way, you may go on with your work," replied his teacher in a kindly voice. "But when the bell rings at 1:00 you must come outside and get in line with the others so we can take in." 9

Upon completion of his elementary education in 1904 Coxe attended the preparatory department of Centenary College, located in Jackson, Louisiana. In the fall of the same year, on the basis of successfully passing an entrance examination, he was admitted to Louisiana State University as a sub-freshman, where he remained until he received his Bachelor of Arts as a member of the first class that graduated in the Department of Education in 1909. 10 The records of Louisiana State University indicated that John E. Coxe received his Bachelor of Arts degree on May 26, 1909. 11

II. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

During the period from 1904 to 1909, while a student, Coxe taught in Livingston Parish. His teaching experiences are as follows:

1. Principal, Red Oak Elementary (one-room school): summer of 1904; term, 2 months; pay, $20 a month; board, $6 a month.


11Records of Registrar's Office, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
2. Principal, Cedar Grove Elementary (one-room school): summer of 1905; term, 3 months; pay, $25 a month; boarded at home.

3. Principal, Wagner Elementary (one-room school): summer of 1906; term, 3 months; pay $25 a month; board, $6 a month.

4. Principal, Quick Elementary (one-room school): summer of 1907; term, 3 months; pay, $30 a month; boarded at home.

5. Principal, Wagner Elementary (one-room school): summer of 1907; term, 3½ months; pay, $40 a month; board, $8 a month.

As noted, the salary received was meager. However, Coxe was able to save enough money to pay a good portion of his expenses at Louisiana State University. Work scholarships and loans provided the balance.

In 1907, a first grade certificate was issued to him on the basis of having successfully completed an examination prepared and administered by the parish superintendent. (See Appendixes A and B) It was not until 1910 that an examination, prepared by the State and administered by the parish, under the direction of the State Director of Certification in the State Department of Education, was provided.

In 1909 Coxe was appointed principal of Waterproof High School in Tensas Parish, where he remained for one year. He was named principal of Denham Springs High School, Livingston Parish, and remained there until 1912. During his tenure at Denham Springs the school received accreditation. This was initiated by a resolution of the Livingston Parish School Board on October 3, 1910, which stated:

Be it resolved: That the Denham Springs Public School is hereby made a State Approved High School, and the State Board of Education is

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12R. C. Childs, op. cit., p. 3.

13Minutes of Livingston Parish School Board, 1908, p. 264. (Examination shows Coxe scored 90+/100 average.)
requested to place this school upon its list of approved High Schools and to permit it to share in the high school apportionment.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition, the minutes revealed that Coxe as principal of Denham Springs received a salary of $100 per month.\textsuperscript{15}

From this position he moved to Clinton High School, East Feliciana Parish, where he remained for one year. In 1913 he was appointed superintendent of schools of Livingston Parish where he served until June, 1920.\textsuperscript{16}

V. J. Roux, who attended high school in French Settlement when Coxe was superintendent in Livingston Parish, commented as follows:

I remember him visiting Livingston Parish Schools in a horse-drawn vehicle. I remember him as being well-dressed and always well-groomed with a gentlemanly appearance. He was quiet, unassuming and sincere. He was highly professional. He had dignity.\textsuperscript{17}

The records of the Livingston Parish School Board containing Coxe's initial appointment as superintendent are not on file in the Board Office. However, the following was included in the Livingston Times:


Livingston Times was designated as the official journal of the Board, and salary fixed at $25.00 per year, and that the paper be required to publish minutes of each meeting in full.\textsuperscript{18}

In the same record book is found the following, again a copy of a page of the Livingston Times:

Proceedings of April 7, 1913.

\textsuperscript{14}Minutes of Livingston Parish School Board, October 3, 1901, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 1910 and 1911.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}V. J. Roux, personal interview, in Thibodaux, Louisiana, May 28, 1974.

\textsuperscript{18}Livingston Parish School Board Minutes, p. 51.
On motion of W. A. Rheams duly seconded, Mr. J. E. Coxe was unanimously elected Parish Superintendent for a term of four years, beginning July 1st, 1913.

Mr. Jones moved that Mr. Coxe's salary be fixed at $1,000 per year, but after some discussion it was moved by Mr. Rheams that the matter of fixing salary be deferred until the July meeting at which time the budget for next school term will be made.19

The minutes of later meetings did not indicate that action was taken on Coxe's salary. However, it was indicated that travel expenses were not given even though the superintendent was expected to control all the affairs of the school board.

The minutes also indicated usual growth in school population, school construction, and transportation. Bond issues to cover growth were successful. Records of the above during Coxe's administration were accurately maintained.20

Apparently there were some incidents of disagreement between Coxe and some board members. E. B. Robert, the Dean of the College of Education at Louisiana State University, who knew Coxe revealed the following:

When former State Superintendent John E. Coxe was Superintendent of Livingston Parish Schools, he had some contentious board members to deal with. On one occasion he had taken a board member 15 miles with him in a buggy to a board meeting.

Near the close of the meeting, that same board member arose and said, "I make a motion that we fire the Superintendent."

When pressed for his reason, he said, "I have it here somewhere wrote on a little piece of paper."

Digging into his pockets, he came up with a slip of paper. "Here it is," he said, "on-sufficiency. That's it. I move he should be fired for on-sufficiency."

19Ibid., p. 53. (Note: The words "and expenses" are lined out. The date of the newspaper is not shown).

The board voted to retain its Superintendent and the recalcitrant board member had to walk back home.21

On January 3, 1917, the board again expressed its confidence in Superintendent Coxe by re-electing him to office. The minutes of the board read as follows:

The election of a Parish Superintendent for the ensuing four-year term, beginning July 1, 1917, being in order, Mr. Easterly nominated Mr. Jno. E. Coxe, and the nomination seconded by Mr. Rheams. There being no further nominations, and upon motion by Mr. Rheams, seconded by Mr. Watts, Mr. Coxe was elected by acclamation.22

The minutes of July 7, 1919, of the Livingston Parish School Board showed a development of an all-important teacher salary schedule. It promoted the ideas of tenure and scholarship. The encouragement of scholarship was in keeping with Coxe's philosophy.

On May 14, 1920, the Livingston Parish School Board was called into special session "to receive the resignation of Superintendent Jno. E. Coxe, who had requested that said meeting be called." The resignation was accepted by the board, the board expressed "its regret in doing so."23 (See Appendix C)

During the period he was considering resigning as Superintendent of Livingston Parish, Coxe believed that he was going to the State Department of Education. Coxe stated that enough had been done to lead him to believe that T. H. Harris, who was State Superintendent of Education, would appoint him to some position of trust.24

The appointment as Assistant State Supervisor of Elementary Schools25 was made by Superintendent Harris on September 1, 1920.

22Minutes, op. cit., p. 34. 23Minutes, op. cit., p. 240.
24John E. Coxe, personal interview, August 20, 1968.
25Louisiana State Department of Education Annual Report, 1921.
CHAPTER II

JOHN E. COXE: MEMBER OF THE LOUISIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

I. STATE SUPERVISOR

The appointment to the State Department of Education was a significant milestone in Coxe's life. He served in this capacity from 1920 until January 16, 1939, under State Superintendent Thomas H. Harris.

On February 24, 1967, Coxe stated with pride that he had served under Superintendent Harris as Assistant State Supervisor of Elementary Schools from September 1, 1920, to June 30, 1926, as Assistant State Supervisor of High Schools from June 30, 1926, to September 1, 1935, and as Head State Supervisor of High Schools from September 1, 1935, to January 16, 1939.

During this tenure Coxe also taught six weeks in the summer of 1922 and nine weeks in the summer of 1938 in the School of Education of the Louisiana State University.26 The summers of 1924, 1925, 1926, and 1927 were spent in graduate study in the Department of History of the Louisiana State University.27

On June 11, 1928, Coxe was awarded the degree of Master of Arts by Louisiana State University.28 His thesis was written in the field of

26 R. C. Childs, op. cit., p. 4. 27 John E. Coxe, op. cit. 28 Records in Registrar's Office, Louisiana State University.
Louisiana history. The subject of his discourse was "The New Orleans Mafia Incident." This study was a decided contribution to the field of Louisiana history and ranks high as a piece of scholarly and documented historical research.  

A particular incident of significance involved the murder of David C. Hennessy, the popular thirty-two year old Superintendent of Police in New Orleans on October 15, 1890, and the complex series of events that followed. Included in the study were data concerned with the selection of an impartial jury, the lynching of eleven members of the Mafia by an enraged New Orleans populace, and the subsequent actions taken by Joseph A. Shakespeare, Mayor of New Orleans, Pasquale Corte, the Italian Counsel at New Orleans, Francis T. Nicholls, Governor of Louisiana, United States President Benjamin Harrison, the Italian government, the United States Congress, and the news media around the world.

This study was received by historians of Louisiana and the South, and it was printed in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly.

Mrs. Coxe indicated that a group from New York and Europe who was interested in information concerning the Mafia, contacted her husband after having read his thesis. The group requested an audience with Coxe to explore his knowledge of the Mafia. Mrs. Coxe stated that several persons visited with her husband in 1970, equipped with a television camera and other recording devices. "All of this took place on the lawn in front of our home. The visit lasted for several hours."

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29Morning Advocate, May 28, 1940, p. 9C.


31"The New Orleans Mafia Incident." The Louisiana Historical Quarterly (official organ of the Louisiana Historical Association), October, 1937.

On March 29, 1929, Coxe married Miss Hazel Grimm, a former resident of South Dakota, who had resided in Louisiana since 1924. They were married in Shreveport at the home of E. J. Waller. Gordon A. Webb, a member of the State Department of Education, stated that he knew Superintendent Coxe well and added "One of the best things to happen to Coxe was when he married Hazel Grimm."\(^{33}\)

From the union of John Easterly Coxe and Hazel Grimm Coxe there were no children. However, Mrs. Coxe's niece, Hazel Margaret Butcher, lived with the Coxes until her marriage and was referred to by Mr. Coxe as "my child."\(^{34}\)

What position did Mrs. Coxe take in reference to her own personal career when Coxe was elected State Superintendent in 1940? When questioned on this subject she stated: "My husband will need me now to help him lead a balanced life."\(^{35}\)

During his tenure as State High School Supervisor, Coxe pointed with pride to his leadership role in revising the *Louisiana High School Standards*. In the Foreward of Bulletin 337 of the Louisiana State Department of Education, Coxe stated, "...in this volume, there have been incorporated all recent modifications affecting the objectives of secondary education, the State - accreditation of high school, the State program of studies, the suggested curricula, the requirements for graduation, the standards for school plants and equipment, and certain general regulations governing the approved high-schools of the State."\(^{36}\) On several occasions


\(^{34}\)Mrs. Hazel Grimm Coxe, *op. cit.*

\(^{35}\)R. C. Childs, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

\(^{36}\)"Louisiana High-School Standards, Organization and Administration," State Department of Education of Louisiana, January 1, 1937.
Coxe singled out his interpretation of the Seven Cardinal Principles of Education which were included in Bulletin 337.

In response to a request by Mrs. Coxe, Lloyd V. Funchess commented as follows concerning Bulletin 337:

In the fall of 1945 I enrolled at Teachers College, Columbia University for a year of advanced study. Shortly afterward, I began to hear many references to the recently issued and quite famous Harvard Report. The Harvard Report resulted from a comprehensive study of the high schools throughout the country, and it contained some major recommendations for changes in such schools. I had not had the need for familiarizing myself with the Report and since it appeared to be of quite some significance in the educational world, I thought it behooved me to get a copy and read it. Much to my surprise and satisfaction, I found that the highly recommended program of studies as presented in the Report was in large measure, exactly the same as the high school program of studies outlined in the Louisiana State Department of Education's Bulletin 337, which had been produced by Mr. John E. Coxe, Supervisor of High Schools in the Department. At that time, the Louisiana high school program of studies had been in effect in Louisiana high schools for a number of years. I could not help being attracted to this set of circumstances, and it was with considerable pride that I pointed out this situation to some of my distinguished professors, and to fellow students who were involved in advanced studies. Mr. Coxe deserved much credit for paving the way for what still remains basic to the high school programs as they are being followed at the present time.37

II. TERMINATION OF TENURE AS STATE SUPERVISOR IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

On January 16, 1939, John E. Coxe was dismissed from the State Department of Education by Superintendent Harris. Mrs. Coxe reported that on that day Mr. Coxe came home and said that he was fired. He stated that Superintendent Harris said, "I don't have anything to say to you. You're out." Coxe added, "Mr. Harris fired me. He didn't give me any reason."38

37 Letter of Lloyd V. Funchess to Hazel Grimm Coxe, October 1, 1970.
Mrs. Coxe stated further that it was her husband's opinion that the reason for Harris's firing of Coxe was his stand on the philosophy of the Progressive Education Association. She stated, "Mr. Harris agreed with it, and Mr. Coxe was cautious of what it might lead to."  

A different version of the differences between Coxe and Harris was written by Minns Sledge Robertson in his book *Public Education in Louisiana*. He stated:

Harris transferred Barrow (Dr. C. L.) to the position of State High School Supervisor and designated him head of the entire supervisory staff in the State Department of Education. John E. Coxe, who had served in the high-school division since 1926 and as State Supervisor of High Schools after Charles F. Trudeau resigned from that position in 1934, was transferred to the position of Assistant State Supervisor of Negro schools. A short time later, Harris notified school officials throughout the state that he had appointed Barrow Assistant State Superintendent of Education, a position which had not existed prior to that time.

Coxe was very unhappy about this transfer; he resigned; and, in the election of 1940, he was a successful candidate for the office of State Superintendent of Public Education.

An article which appeared in the *New Orleans Item* on April 17, 1946, quoted Superintendent Coxe as follows:

I became tagged with the label of a conservative in education at a time when "progressive education" was in sway. I was a progressive all the time. Only I didn't go as far as some of them. I believe we should hold onto some of the older things. My position was in the middle road of progressivism. But my position and views were misrepresented to Mr. Harris.

In reference to curriculum and development and the controversy, Dr. E. B. Robert, Dean Emeritus of the College of Education, Louisiana

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40Minns S. Robertson, *Public Education in Louisiana After 1898*. Published by the Bureau of Educational Materials and Research, College of Education, Louisiana State University, 1952, p. 222.

41*New Orleans Item*, April 17, 1946, p. 2.
State University contrasted the three points of view prevalent at that time: conversative or traditional point of view, middle of the road point of view and the advanced or modern points of view. The conservatives, for example, believe that "Education is a preparation for later life." The advanced or modern point of view is that "Education is living here and now." The middle of the road believe that the curriculum is "To be established through an experimental program of education flexible enough to meet the needs and interests of children in various localities; to conserve the goal in the old; to incorporate the best in the new; and to encourage individual pupil and teacher initiative."\(^2\)

E. B. Robert, when questioned on Coxe's dismissal from the State Department of Education, prefaced his remarks by saying he voted for Mr. Harris in 1940 and for Mr. Coxe in 1944. In his explanation, he commented:

I do not know all the circumstances surrounding Mr. Harris's dismissal of Mr. Coxe from the State Department of Education. I do know that part of the picture was the five year program of curriculum development of which Superintendent Harris had designated Mr. A. M. Hopper, State Superintendent of Elementary Schools, as Director and Dean C. A. Ives of the Louisiana State University College of Education had designated me as co-director. Mr. Coxe did not agree with many of the things that were being done in this program and he let it be known that he did not agree. The best example of this is the speech that Mr. Coxe made before the curriculum study group in which he stated his beliefs and convictions very clearly. I do not recall exactly the status of Mr. Coxe with Mr. Harris at this time, but I do have the definite opinion that he had already been fired or was on his way out at this time.\(^3\)

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After his dismissal from the State Department of Education, Coxe attended Louisiana State University and Ohio State University. After completing preparations for the acquisition of a terminal degree at Ohio State University, he was approached by political friends to seek the office of State Superintendent of Education. Later the news media provided added encouragement, and finally, with the endorsement of Sam H. Jones, his campaign became very solid.\textsuperscript{44}

Mrs. Coxe related the events of the day when Coxe made the decision to run:

John E. had been approached by representatives of Ohio State University to return there to complete his work on his doctorate. Everything had been set. He left the house in the morning without saying very much. When he returned in the evening he said that he was going to run for State Superintendent of Education.\textsuperscript{45}

\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{Notes}
\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{44}The Daily Advertiser, Lafayette, Louisiana, September 14, 1940, p. 4.
\bibitem{45}Mrs. Hazel Grimm Coxe, personal interview, May 29, 1974.
\end{thebibliography}
CHAPTER III

JOHN E. COXE, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION: 1940 TO 1944

I. ELECTION TO OFFICE

Coxe's campaign for state superintendent was timely. There was an apparent clamor for a change in general governance in Louisiana. This was proved with the election of the Honorable Sam H. Jones.

What kind of a politician was Coxe? An expression by Robert Moncla who claimed to have known Coxe "very well" was: "He was a good school man. He was an average politician, not outgoing."\(^{46}\) Added to these comments was a statement by V. J. Roux: "He was reserved; not necessarily a hand-shaker. His planned program for people in education more nearly met with their desires. He appeared to some people to have a certain aloofness, due to his nature. As I knew him quite well, I do not agree with this. The state needed a superintendent with a new philosophy. Coxe offered this in this campaign."\(^{47}\) His sister-in-law, Nettie Milton Coxe (Mrs. Silas Coxe) of Watson, Louisiana, stated, "He was a real school man, very honest. He really wasn't a politician."\(^{48}\)


\(^{47}\)V. J. Roux, op. cit.

The campaign for Louisiana state leadership during 1939 was vigorous. The major alignments for State Superintendent of Education pitted Superintendent T. H. Harris, supported by the Leche-Maestri-Earl Long ticket, opposed by John E. Coxe, endorsed by Sam H. Jones.

Some bitterness was reflected in the campaign resulting from Coxe's dismissal by Superintendent Harris. The Harris camp was generally satisfied to depend on the past record of their tried and successful candidate and the limitations of the opponent. On the other hand, the Coxe forces relied on the clamor for change in governance of Louisiana and the age and the unpopular alliances of the opponent.

The Honorable Sam H. Jones expressed his position relative to the campaign in the following manner:

I supported John E. Coxe vigorously in 1940 when we succeeded in electing him. He did a creditable job until, in my opinion, we split on policy, and then I found it impossible to go along with him in his bid for reelection. (See Appendix D)

The letter contained not only direct information on former Governor Jones's endorsement of Coxe, but also a statement of an indicated controversy between the two. Concerning this difference R. B. Robert replied:

My explanation of the comment made by former Governor Sam Jones in his letter of February 15, 1974, to Mr. Weimer is that Mr. Coxe was a man of strong character and high principle and had made up his mind that he was going to be the State Superintendent of Public Education in fact as well as in name. Mr. Coxe's association with the Jones reform ticket was a marriage of convenience and not necessarily of love since the campaign of 1940 was fought largely on the subject of scandals during the Huey Long administration. Former State Superintendent of Education T. H. Harris did not break with the Long administration but cast his lot with Earl Long and others prominently identified with Huey P. Long. After Superintendent Coxe was elected,

Governor Jones undertook to run the office of State Superintendent of Education as well as the offices of other elected and appointed officials. Governor Jones invited Dr. W. B. Hatcher to be the Assistant Superintendent of Education without conferring with Superintendent Coxe on this subject. When Dr. Hatcher spoke to Mr. Coxe about the appointment and learned that Mr. Coxe knew nothing about the matter, he promptly withdrew his name from any consideration for a position in the State Department of Education. Later Governor Sam Jones succeeded in persuading Mr. Coxe to employ Dr. Joe Farrar in the State Department of Education, but Dr. Farrar was thoroughly loyal to Mr. Coxe and never resorted to political activity inspired by the Governor or anyone else. As a matter of fact, when Dr. Farrar became President of Louisiana Normal College, he announced to everyone that he was going to run that institution without reference to the political affiliation of anyone either in the Sam Jones or the Huey Long camp.\(^50\)

The platform of John E. Coxe contained those beliefs that he had emphasized again and again. From a cooperative point of view he stated his platform using "we" as contrasted with "I". For example, it was stated as follows:

> We do not propose only to depoliticize our schools and to shield them from grafters and spoilsmen; we propose a constructive platform of improvement and of progress, a platform looking toward a better service from the schools to the citizens of this state.

> We promise honesty, business management and professional direction; waste and graft will stop; schools and colleges will receive all the revenue that is due them. Trade schools will be developed; teacher tenure and retirement will remain as they are; teachers will be better paid; free textbooks and school supplies will continue; free lunches for the needy; school funding will be strengthened; and better teachers will be provided.\(^51\) (See Appendix E)

The election took place. In the second primary Coxe defeated Harris by over ten thousand votes.

Thomas H. Harris, appointed State Superintendent of Public Education in 1908 by Governor J. Y. Sanders, served for twenty years without the necessity of going before the electorate to face an opponent.\(^52\)

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\(^51\)Statement concerning platform of John E. Coxe (See Appendix E).

\(^52\)Minns, S. Robertson, Public Education in Louisiana After 1898. Published by the Bureau of Educational Materials and Research, College of Education, Louisiana State University, 1952, p. 222.
His opposition in the 1928, 1932, and 1936 elections was minor. However, along the way there was mounting unavoidable alienation among some of his professional and political admirers. And, as in the case when a public official remains in office over a long continuous period of time, some people develop a desire for a change, even though the incumbent's work was considered outstanding. The opposition generated from this, added to other considerations, led to Harris's defeat in 1940 and the election of John E. Coxe to the state superintendency.53

In his memoirs completed in 1941, Superintendent Harris referred to the election in terms of the following comments:

I had definitely decided not to offer for re-election in the 1940 elections, but wished to retire to private life...I should not have entered the race for election to another term...I was seventy, and I had been in office thirty-two years. It was time to stand on the side lines and watch the world go by. But my professional and political friends insisted that I stay with them a little longer, and finally, against my better judgment I entered the race.

There were four candidates for Governor and three for Superintendent of Education. Our ticket lacked ten or twelve thousand votes of election in the first primary, and we were defeated in the second by about that majority. Why? Because the votes of the defeated candidates in the first primary went to our opponents in the run-off.

There are no alibis - no statements of the issues - no estimate of the successful candidates - and decidedly, no regrets. I am delighted that I was defeated. I am happy to enter private life. I would not have it otherwise. I was really rewarded for my mistake of offering for re-election.54

Later Mr. Harris added:

I approach my seventy-second birthday in March of 1941, after nearly a year of watching from the side lines the passing of events in Louisiana and the rest of the world. And a sorry spectacle it is.

53Ibid.

In Louisiana there is political strife, hatred, and persecution; in the rest of the world, armies on the march, concentration camps, destruction, and death...\textsuperscript{55}

Then he added further:

...I have seen a great school system developed from nothing. I like to think that I, perhaps, contributed a little to its creation ...\textsuperscript{56}

In reading the memoirs of this State education leader, it was noted with interest the lack of mention of John E. Coxe, who served with Superintendent Harris from 1920 to 1939 and rose from Assistant State Elementary Supervisor to the lofty position of State Superintendent of Education.

II. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

What views and goals did the new superintendent represent for the State's public school system? Early in his tenure of office, Coxe stated:

I wish to preach to the people of Louisiana not a doctrine of ignoble ease but a doctrine of trial and effort, of success based on honesty and merit. We should bravely face the life of bitter struggle and effort, resolute to do our duty, well and manfully, resolute to yet to use practical methods.\textsuperscript{57}

It is my opinion that subject matter and attitude should be stressed equally. Mastery of subject matter is the key to improved teaching. Children should work hard. The habit of mastery is a very fine habit, it colors one's life. The child who has learned mastery of himself and his tasks has learned one of life's great lessons.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 191-192. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{56}Ibid., p. 193.

\textsuperscript{57}Morning Advocate, May 26, 1940, p. 9C.

Reorganization of the State Department of Education in both structure and personnel was one of Superintendent Coxe's first actions. This was effected at the opening of the 1940-41 school session.

The department was organized in terms of three major divisions as follows: (1) Administration and Finance, headed by John M. Foote, (2) Instruction and Supervision, under R. R. Ewerz, and (3) Higher Education, including colleges and special schools, under Joe Farrar. Under each divisions were specialist in the academic areas. In this session there were thirty-eight members in the State Department of Education. 59

Another significant development which occurred during Coxe's first term was concerned with changes in the procedure for establishing a state board for control of public education.

Early during Coxe's tenure, legislation was passed which provided for a popular vote election of all members of the State Board of Education, one from each of the eight congressional districts and one from each of the Public Service Commission districts. 60

In June 1944, the State Board of Education approved the establishment of the twelve-grade system for Louisiana. 61 Superintendent Coxe favored this movement, and he worked for the passage and implementation of this program. This was one of the planks in his platform.

Again in 1944 the Louisiana Legislature set up the first effective legislation for compulsory school attendance. This legislation required


61 Ninety-Fifth Annual Report, Louisiana State Department of Education, 1943-44.
all children within certain age limits to attend a public or private day school for 180 days each year.\textsuperscript{62}

The growth of the pupil population during Coxe's tenure from 1940 to 1948 was comparatively small. In the 1939-40 school session there were 298,455 white and 174,649 negro students in all schools, a total of 473,104.\textsuperscript{63} In the 1947-48 session there were 332,250 white and 190,351 negro for a total of 522,601, an over-all growth of 49,497 students.\textsuperscript{64}

When John E. Coxe took office in 1940 funds available to his office for the year amounted to $14,137,112.30, less than $16 per child. In 1947-48 the amount increased to $33,262,863.33 or $22.50 per child.\textsuperscript{65}

According to Coxe moderation in making funds available for education was displayed by lawmakers during the war years.

However, the State Department of Education was left alone and the only major contact made by the department with the legislature was when funds were needed to promote a sound program.\textsuperscript{66}

Salaries of teachers in public schools increased noticeably from the 1939-40 to the 1947-48 session. In 1939-40 white elementary teachers received an average of $936.64 per year; negro, $359.38. In 1947-48, white elementary teachers received $2378.94; negro, $1473.60. White high school teachers received $1265.59 and negro $617.14 in 1939-40. By 1947-48,
white high school teachers received $2727.27; negro, $1894.27. The general average for negro teachers was $377.06 in 1939-40 and $1536.03 in 1947-48. For white teachers the average in 1939-40 was $1044.89 and $2499.21 in 1947-48.67

Of major importance in the development of education in Louisiana during this period was the preparation of teachers. Louisiana improved the standards for certification during 1940 requiring a bachelor's degree for both elementary and secondary teachers. In 1940, fifty per cent of all teachers had four or more years of college. This increased to sixty-two per cent in 1948.68

According to a publication issued by Superintendent Coxe, a state program inaugurating an in-service program for white and negro teachers was instituted and a series of parish work conferences for white and negro teachers were conducted in seven parishes during the summer of 1944. For this purpose the State Board of Education granted the sum of $14,500.69

III. ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO WORLD WAR II

Prior to the United States entry into World War II, Louisiana joined the rest of the nation in giving special attention to the National Defense Program. The State Department of Education inaugurated a state-wide program for the special training of youth in vocational courses in state-supported trade schools. National youth administration schools

67 Ninety-First and Ninety-Ninth Annual Reports, Louisiana State Department of Education.

68 Ninety-First and Ninety-Ninth Annual Reports, Louisiana State Department of Education.

operated in nearly every parish. Members of the State Department of Education were assigned to these activities, and a separate section of clerical and auditor personnel was provided to meet the needs. These national defense activities were carried on in complete cooperation with the United States Office of Education, and all costs incident to these programs were paid from Federal funds.\textsuperscript{70}

In the 1942-43 school session, schools were engaged in an all-out effort to aid the war program. A "War Production Training Program," the readjustment of high-school curriculum, and the organization of the "High-School Victory Corps" constituted examples of programs that were developed.\textsuperscript{71}

Not all that transpired was positive for a sound State educational program. In the 1943-44 school session two problems were evident. School attendance was lowered because many boys and girls in the upper-age brackets left school to accept positions of responsibility which were usually filled by adults. The other problem centered around teacher shortages. Teaching staffs were increasingly depleted by withdrawal of teachers to accept responsibilities either in the armed forces or in positions in civilian war-production centers.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1942 a report by J. E. Lombard, Supervisor of Teacher Training and Certification, indicated that in the period just prior to the war 213 out of 850 mathematics teachers in the State lacked the minimum of

\textsuperscript{70} Ninety-First Annual Report, Louisiana State Department of Education (1939-40 session).

\textsuperscript{71} Ninety-Fourth Annual Report, Louisiana State Department of Education (1942-43 session).

\textsuperscript{72} Ninety-Fifth Annual Report, Louisiana State Department of Education (1943-44 session).
twelve semester hours of college training. He reported that the war effort had exhausted the surplus of three or four thousand in all fields, and that the state was seeking assistance of former teachers as Act 213 of 1932 had removed the legal right to issue emergency certificates.\textsuperscript{73}

In reference to Superintendent Coxe's stand on certification and requirements, J. W. Brouillette, who served in the State Department of Education as Director of Teacher Education and Certification stated:

During his administration as State Superintendent of Education, Mr. Coxe instructed the incumbent Director of Teacher Education and Certification to issue certificates only to those applicants who met the full requirements for certification as established by the State Board of Education. Superintendent Coxe yielded to no request made for particular cases recommended.\textsuperscript{74}

The only departure from full certification was the reinstatement of expired certificates for a year on the basis of the recommendations of the parish superintendent, giving the holder time to earn the credits that form part of the requirement for extension.\textsuperscript{75}

\section*{IV. ELECTION OF 1944}

The Honorable Jimmie H. Davis, former Governor of Louisiana, explained Coxe's strong position in his second race for State Superintendent of Education in the following statements: (See Appendix F)

I remember the late John E. Coxe well, having campaigned with him in 1943 when he was a candidate for State Superintendent of Education, and I was a candidate for Governor of Louisiana.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[73]Louisiana Education in Wartime, op. cit., p. 15.
\item[74]J. W. Brouillette, personal interview, June 3, 1974.
\item[75]Louisiana Education in Wartime, op. cit., p. 15.
\end{footnotes}
We were both successful in our races, and we served together from 1944 to 1948.

I remember him to be an honest, capable, and conscientious public servant. He was dedicated to the improvement of our system of public education in Louisiana. His background as an educator allowed him to make contributions to public education that helped lay the foundation for the system we have today.76

A Baton Rouge newspaper Louisiana Labor Leader released a statement which expressed the views of the media at this time concerning Coxe's bid for re-election:

Mr. Coxe has a clean record so far as we are able to ascertain. He has developed the rural schools and supported vocational training. During his administration the schools have been freed from debt.77

One of the strengths of Coxe's position as a candidate for re-election in 1944 was his success in securing dedicated funds for education. Superintendent Coxe repeated what he had stated earlier:

The greatest accomplishment of my administration was that of establishing and increasing the State school funds through Constitutional dedication of severance taxes and through specific appropriations to the State Public School Fund.78 (See Appendix C)

The 1943-44 State Democratic Primary took place on January 18, 1944. With five candidates running in the first primary, the results were as follows: John E. Coxe, 160,880; Lether E. Frazar, 174,205; W. H. Miller, 40,219; H. L. Campbell, 46,841; and L. P. Terrebonne, 24,655. In the run-off between Coxe and Frazar on February 29, 1944, the results were: Coxe, 237,709 and Frazar, 219,939.

77Louisiana Labor Leader, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, September 16, 1943, p. 3.
79The Times Picayune, March 8, 1944, p. 10.
An editorial comment published in "Louisiana Schools," in April 1944, contributed one significant evaluation of Coxe's first four year term as state superintendent of education:

In being re-elected to the office of State Superintendent of Public Education, Honorable John E. Coxe has received public commendation for the success of his public school administration during the past four years. More than this a vote of confidence is expressed in his ability and will continue an important role of public service worthy of the trust reposed in him.

We feel that no need exists for a special appeal to school people for support of an educational program under the leadership and direction of Superintendent Coxe. A sense of duty, knowledge of the values in cooperation and strength in unity, and consciousness of trust should supply the motive and create the desire to form a solid company for educational advancement in the State. Certainly the needs of education demand no less than this.80

During the 1943-44 school session there were many projects that had significance in the State's educational program. Included were the preparation of plans for the inauguration of the twelve-grade school program, the preparation for extending vocational education, a continued study of the plans for distribution of the equalization fund, and the invitation of plans for making organizational studies of the various school systems.81

81Ninety-Fifth Annual Report, Louisiana State Department of
In the early days of the 1944 Legislative Session, appropriations were made to increase salaries of school employees making it possible to retain these employees in the school system and compensate for the rising cost of living.  

The 1944-45 school session reported additional progress in the twelve-grade school program. During the year, the supervisory staff of the State Department of Education prepared courses of study for the seventh and eighth grades, as these grades were affected far more than any other grade level by the transition. Improvements were made in vocational educational courses offered even though there was a shortage of teachers in this important field.

Even with the full impact of World War II, the second term of Superintendent Coxe was initiated with several important movements. The change from the appointive membership of the three members of the State Board of Education from the three Public Service Commission districts was not adopted until November 5, 1946, and the election of these members did not occur until the congressional election of 1948.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

There were thirty-eight members assigned to the professional staff of the State Department of Education in 1940. Because of the reorganization of the Department, the increased demand on services required

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82 Ibid., p. 10.
84 Public Education in Louisiana, loc. cit., p. 9.
and the increased attention devoted to specialized academic fields, the professional staff increased to sixty-seven in 1944 and one hundred fifty in 1948.

Another program which received added emphasis during this period was compulsory attendance. Act 239 of the Louisiana Legislature of 1944 provided an effective compulsory law. This law required all children ages seven through fifteen inclusive to attend school for 180 days each year. In addition, the Act required Superintendent Coxe to provide for establishment and supervision of the program. Significant improvements in school attendance and in census resulted.

Superintendent Coxe's interest in higher education was exemplified early in his tenure, when in his reorganization of the Department, he included a Division of Higher Education. He stated:

For a long time it has been recognized that the State Superintendent of Education, because of his numerous administrative responsibilities, has not had the time and opportunity to give to colleges the close supervision which these vitally important institutions should have. The need has been recognized and remedied. Today we have in the Department of Education an officer who is titled the Director of Higher Education and Special Schools.

The Ninety-Ninth Annual Report of the State Department of Education (1947-48 session) showed four white colleges, two colleges for Negroes and four special schools. The building program for these ten institutions amounted to $4,482,050.00, appropriated in the 1947 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature. Of special interest was the opening of the

89 Ninety-First Annual Report, loc. cit., p. 16.
Southern University Law School in September, 1917, with an enrollment of eight Louisiana residents and first year students of law.90

The funds for education available to elementary and secondary schools increased from $14,137,112.30 in 1940 to $33,262,863.83 during Coxe's tenure.91 He had hoped that the Per Educable Distribution to local school systems would exceed $20 during his tenure.92 However, the amount per educable increased from $16 in 1940 to $22.50 in 1948, exceeding his original expectation.93

G. Byron Benton, Supervisor of Finance under four State Superintendents of Education in Louisiana including Mr. Coxe, summarized his evaluation of Superintendent Coxe in the following manner:

Superintendent Coxe was one of the better educators of his time. During his regime, he introduced many new programs into the school system and was very successful in securing from the Legislature the needed funds to properly finance these programs. He could present his case to the Legislature and could extend himself further because he was an elected official.

Superintendent Coxe was a wonderful research man and was a fine educator, not a politician. He prepared his program to present to the Legislature in such a manner that he was very successful in securing the needed funds to put the program into operation.94

In October, 1947, former Bulletin 337, Louisiana High School Standards, Organization and Administration was revised under the direction

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91Ninety-First and Ninety-Ninth Annual Reports, Louisiana State Department of Education.
of Superintendent Coxe so as "to conform to changes which have been effected in the program of studies and changes which were related to the inauguration of the twelve-year program."\textsuperscript{95} According to R. R. Ewerz, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, this "proved invaluable to school personnel---teachers and supervisors of instruction as well as administrators."\textsuperscript{96}

**ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO WORLD WAR II**

In a letter to Governor Davis and members of the Legislature and members of the State Board of Education prepared on January 15, 1947, Superintendent Coxe outlined the progress made in the state school program during the war years as follows:

1. Institution of the twelve-grade program.

2. Enactment of an effective compulsory attendance law, providing for the services of visiting teachers.

3. Revision of the public-school curriculum to strengthen and enrich many areas, notably the vocational courses.

4. Development of the school-community concept in health education, school lunches, and food processing centers.

5. Conducting organizational studies for a third of the parish school systems to effect economies and better operation.

6. Adoption of a postwar plan for raising certification standards of teachers and school administrators; institution of an in-service program of teacher education, with emphasis on parish-wide workshops.

7. Better financing of education (1939-40---1945-46), as indicated by: (a) stabilizing the state public school fund through constitutional dedication of the entire proceeds of the severance taxes and through statutory fixing of a minimum per educable distribution; (b) increasing state funds for operation of the public schools (exclusive of trade schools, special schools, and colleges) by

\textsuperscript{95}Louisiana High-School Standards, Organization, and Administration, Bulletin 633, Louisiana State Department of Education, 1947, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid., p. 71.
\$7,857,186.34; (c) raising the average annual salary for white teachers (including principals) 52.1 per cent and the average for Negro teachers 82.9 per cent; (d) voting a constitutional amendment authorizing parish school boards to increase constitutional taxes by as much as two mills, or to a total of five mills; (e) increasing state support for vocational education by \$520,000.97

Coxe continued his report and stated:

So it will be seen that the task before the school forces at the beginning of the 1945-46 session was clearly one of consolidating the gains already made and of advancing toward the new frontiers.98

He identified these educational frontiers as follows:

1. Provision of secondary education for all Louisiana youth—white and Negro.

2. Better planning of school-plant facilities on a statewide basis to secure maximum economy and efficiency, and to make a good high-school program of diversified courses available to all youth.

3. Better teaching by better-qualified, better-selected, and better-paid teachers.

To attain these objectives, to provide the kind of schools wanted by the people of Louisiana, to enable Louisiana to take its place in the front ranks of the nation's school system, the State Department of Education in conjunction with the Louisiana Teachers Association, Classroom Teachers Association, School Boards Association, and School Superintendents Association made a survey of the conditions, trends, needs of the public schools projected over a six-year period. On the basis of the facts revealed, a legislative program was sponsored by the above educational groups to increase state support of the public school by \$12,000,000 in 1946-47 and by \$14,000,000 in 1947-48.

In appraising the very definite progress that has been made and the need that yet exists, three facts emerge from the experiences of the schools' first postwar years:

1. The Louisiana school system is sound, strong, and progressive. It is going forward steadily on all fronts at a rate that justifies all efforts in its behalf.

2. The people of Louisiana are responsive to the needs of their schools and have given them excellent support. The State now spends 33.31 cents of every tax dollar on public education, thereby surpassed all other states in educational effort.


98 Ibid., p. 4.
3. It is increasingly apparent that the vast expenditures required for the complete development of the Louisiana educational program can only be secured through federal aid as a supplement of maximum state effort.

Despite the powerful opposition that will be marshaled against it, federal aid to education now has its best change of passage because: Selective Service rejections in World War II and nationwide publicity on the economic plight of teachers have aroused the public to an understanding that education is a national problem that transcends state lines and that only through provision of equal educational opportunities to youth in all sections of the country can a highly literate and intelligent citizenry be developed that will be capable of coping with the complex problems that lie ahead.

It is absolutely essential that all friends of education in Louisiana join forces with the schools in an all-out campaign to secure enactment by the Congress of this legislation that will mean so much to our state. The federal funds that would be appropriated to Louisiana added to the increased appropriation by the Legislation of 1946 would closely approximate the sum originally requested by Louisiana's school forces and would permit us to enter immediately upon the six-year program of improvements, some of which have had to be delayed because of inadequate funds.

I wish at this time, however, to point out that while the improvement made in teachers' salaries was indeed encouraging and the school forces deeply and sincerely appreciate the large increases in school appropriations that have been made by each session of the Legislature since 1940, teachers' salaries are still far from adequate. Louisiana has raised teachers' certification standards in an effort to obtain the highest calibre of instruction for its youth, but there exists the paradox that the State must still issue large numbers of emergency certificates (1,514 T-certificates in 1945-46) to unqualified persons to teach because the qualified teachers that formerly presided over those classrooms have taken better-paying jobs.99

II. THE COXE - JACKSON CONTROVERSY

Probably the most agonizing period of Coxe's second administration was the gradual erosion of his working relationship with the State Board of Education and the climax of his differences with personnel in the State

99Ibid., pp. 4-5.
Department of Education, notably Shelby M. Jackson, Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture.

The New Orleans Item, in commenting on the difficulties Coxe encountered in his superintendency stated:

Two 'misunderstandings' have thrown State Superintendent of Education John E. Coxe into critical battles vitally affecting his career. One in 1939 resulting in his resignation as chief state high school supervisor. The second was last year when his battles over the dismissal of S. M. Jackson provided the bitterest fight of the Davis administration. 100

The second "misunderstanding" concerning Jackson had far reaching implications, and included not only Coxe's differences with Jackson but also his relationship with the State Board of Education.

The stage for the Coxe - Jackson difficulties was provided when Coxe, as State Superintendent of Education, dismissed Shelby M. Jackson, Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture in the State Department of Education. The reasons for Jackson's dismissal were listed as being (1) disloyalty, (2) insubordination, (3) lack of cooperation, (4) lack of administrative ability, and (5) political activities. 101

An article which appeared in the July 18, 1945, issue of the Baton Rouge States Item emphasized the mounting controversy in the following manner:

Jackson had contended that the state superintendent of education had no authority to remove him without approval of the state board of education, since counsel of the board was sought when he was appointed in 1932. Coxe and Attorney General Fred LeBlanc claimed, however, that the superintendent had sole authority over education department personnel.

100 The New Orleans Item, April 17, 1946, p. 2.
101 The Morning Advocate, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, February 24, 1945, p. 2.
The controversy between Coxe and Jackson resulted in the federal government tying up nearly $250,000 of vocational education funds allotted to Louisiana.102

The controversy took on major proportions. An editorial on June 26, 1945, in the State Times summarizes to a great extent the issue:

A lot has been said and written in the controversy between Superintendent of Public Education John E. Coxe and the State Board of Education in an attempt to give the idea that obtaining of federal funds for vocational agriculture is at stake and that Mr. Coxe is trying to get his clutches on a lot of millions of school funds.

These are not the issues at all. The state has not lost any federal vocational agricultural funds, and we have no fear of losing any. The handling of school funds is placed by law in the State Board of Education and there it will remain.

All that is immediately involved in the controversy is the job of one man—-S. M. Jackson, dismissed by Mr. Coxe on the grounds of disloyalty. It is spurred on by a fight with Mr. Coxe and includes many of the persons who for one reason or another want to see Mr. Coxe discredited.

President Godchaux of the State Board of Education leads the fight on Mr. Coxe, charging him with "political motives," intimating that there is something off-color in politics.

The reason no funds will be lost is that Mr. Coxe and members of the State Board of Education are good politicians, and they know that to remain in politics they must not do what the people don't want them to do and the people don't want them to get into a row among themselves that will prevent the State getting the vocational agricultural funds. When necessity comes, an agreement will be reached and the available federal funds will continue to flow into the State.

As a matter of fact, there is little difference between the principles set forth by Mr. Coxe and President Godchaux as spokesman for the State Board of Education. Mr. Coxe contends he should not be forced to have a disloyal department head in his office. President Godchaux says the State Board does not want to force Mr. Coxe to have a "professional disloyal" employee, whatever that is. Mr. Godchaux indicts that the State Board approve the appointees of Mr. Coxe and Mr. Coxe in turn says he wants no employee not acceptable to the State Board. Neither Mr. Coxe nor the State Board should want an employee who cannot work with both of them.

Then what is the row about? It is about Mr. Jackson, who had built up around himself a large following throughout the State and who was fired by Mr. Coxe. The State Board has not agreed to the dismissal and Mr. Jackson has taken the case to court contesting the right of Mr. Coxe to dismiss him. The row is about Mr. Jackson, except as the political enemies and friends of Mr. Coxe inject themselves into it.

Further evidence of the growing controversy was expressed in an article which appeared in the February 24, 1945, issue of the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate. The article contained the following statement:

Jackson has the backing of the State Board, it is reported, and also the backing of former Governor Sam H. Jones. In fact it has been rumored here that Jackson has been promised support as a candidate for State Superintendent of Education in the 1948 election.

An example of further alienation of Coxe was expressed by Mrs. Elenore H. Meade of Gramercy, Louisiana, vice-president of the State Board of Education, in an address to the New Orleans Classroom Teachers Federation, in which she asked their support of "corrective laws." In reference to this Mrs. Meade said:

Capable and fine as our individual teachers may be, we demand an overall system of directors and supervisors who are alert on every phase of education and free from political or personal domination.

The present controversy between the state superintendent and the state board of education involves directly this very point. It seems indefensible that under the present interpretation of the Louisiana State school laws that a member of our supervisory force has no agency, to appeal to: no one to review his qualifications and that he is subject to one power only---the state superintendent of education.

No matter what the immediate outcome of the present controversy may be the fact remains that no educational system can advance as long as such a condition exists. This controversy is not one of personalities but it is a matter of principle with the entire board. The members have voted unanimously on this subject of the domination of the state department of education by the state superintendent of education, although we frequently disagree on other matters.

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103 Baton Rouge State Times, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, p. 4.


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Our laws covering this point need clarification and correction. I enlist your support for such corrective measures. In my opinion the appointment of state superintendent by the board rather than by general election is imperative to avoid such a situation as we have now.\textsuperscript{105}

Mrs. Meade continued her remarks by adding the following:

The board of education has no desire to run the schools or to dominate the state superintendent.

We believe that the position of the board, logically, and constitutionally, is that of a board of directors, with the state superintendent as manager, as in a business.

Without such a relationship the board is powerless to direct the policies relating to secondary education. Such a relationship must be established, sooner or later, either by constitutional amendment or by corrective legislation.

So long as the present situation continues to exist the thought and action of the state superintendent of education are necessarily directed toward strengthening his political fences, and this in an education system is tolerable.\textsuperscript{106}

Another position taken by Superintendent Coxe in relation to the State Board of Education was brought out early in his administration. In reply to a letter dated August 9, 1940, from James Domengeaux, a lawyer from Lafayette, Louisiana, Coxe stated that the majority of the Board felt that those supervisors who had been let out of office should be taken care of in State institutions. Coxe made the statement in response to Domengeaux's expressed displeasure of the policy of the State Board of Education in placing dismissed employees of the State Department of Education in various colleges throughout the State. Coxe agreed with Domengeaux but stated "until the State Board of Education realizes that these changes

\textsuperscript{105}The Morning Advocate, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, July 20, 1945, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., p. 5.
should be made, no progress along this line will be made.\textsuperscript{107} That Coxe and members of the State Board of Education maintained different positions on a number of issues was apparent. E. B. Robert, who was active in state educational activities, described the relationship of Superintendent Coxe with the State Board of Education during this hectic period. He stated:

The best evidence of Mr. Coxe's relation with and influence on the State Board of Education would be revealed in the policies adopted by the State Board of Education from 1940-1948 with some attention given to whether or not these policies were recommended by Mr. Coxe and his staff or were initiated by Board members or others.

There might be some indications of Mr. Coxe's relationship with the State Board of Education in the appointments to college presidencies and other positions under the State Board of Education from 1940-1948.

Did Mr. Coxe recommend Joe Farrar for President of Northwestern?
Did Mr. Coxe recommend Joe Gibson for President of Northwestern?
Caution: There has always been a tendency for Board members to select college presidents and get them appointed. Mr. Tom Harris was a profound politician in that he either succeeded in getting the State Board of Education to accept his nominees or he went very gladly along for the ride after the horse was out of the born. I remember very distinctly that he was opposed to A. A. Fredericks as President of Northwestern, but I do recall how eloquently he supported President Fredericks before the entire student body and faculty after Huey Long, O. K. Allen and others had fired President Tyson and elected Albert Fredericks.

It is entirely possible that the dominating personality of Superintendent T. H. Harris and his personal influence with individual Board members with whom he always consulted or led to his conclusions may have been in sharp contrast to the personality and mode of operation employed by Superintendent Coxe. I personally believe that Mr. Coxe was inclined to make a recommendation and let it rest on its merits rather than to indulge in courting all of the individual Board members. There is no doubt that Superintendent Harris had more influence with Board members than Mr. Coxe did. Whether for good or evil, "I'm not prepared to judge. In contrast to what Superintendent Coxe told Dr. Brouillette about writing certificates, I recall

\textsuperscript{107}Letters of James Domengeaux on August 9, 1940, and John E. Coxe on August 14, 1940, in a collection of papers in the Vocational Agriculture Department, Stubbs Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
a time when the State Board of Education adopted a policy that only three-year graduates of a teacher education program would be licensed and employed in the elementary schools. I recall a parish superintendent visiting my office when I was Director of Teacher Training at Northwestern State University and telling me that he and his District Attorney had just obtained from Superintendent Harris 26 certificates for persons who had never completed two years of college work. I do know that Mr. Harris always rewarded losing parish superintendents by having them appointed to positions in colleges under the State Board of Education. Whether or not Superintendent Coxe ever engaged in this practice, I am unable to say. I do believe, however, that if he approached the subject with the State Board of Education he would have let the matter rest on the basis of his professional opinion and would not have involved politics in the situation.

I am perfectly frank to confess that I do not personally know what relationships Superintendent Coxe had with the State Board of Education except that I do recall very clearly that in 1946, he, Mr. Joe Gibson and some of us on the professional committee on teacher education and professional standards persuaded the State Board of Education to adopt a program of Teacher Education. Teacher Certification and Accreditation of Colleges for Teacher Education was one of the outstanding programs in the United States at the time. I know that Superintendent Coxe made a determined effort to enforce these standards and that previous standards and present standards have been violated by former and present state superintendents of education. This particular abuse of the certification of teachers has been one of the disappointments of my life.108

Following his dismissal from office, Jackson appealed to the 19th District Court in Baton Rouge for reinstatement including salary. Meanwhile, the State Board of Education which claimed final authority in such personal matters, attempted to appoint Jackson as supervisor of all vocational education, responsible to only the Board.109

In a decision rendered on April 20, 1945, Judge Charles A. Holcomb ruled that a department superintendent without complete authority would be a "mere figurehead," and refused to issue a requested order to


Superintendent Coxe to pay the salary of Jackson.\textsuperscript{110}

In commenting further on the merits of the appeal by Jackson,

Judge Holcomb stated:

Act 100 of 1922 gives the superintendent of education authority to control his employees. If the superintendent has the power to control, it follows that he can appoint these employees and discharge them at will. Any other construction in my opinion would be contrary to the letter and spirit of the law.\textsuperscript{111}

Immediately following Judge Holcomb's 19th District Court session, Jackson appealed to the Louisiana State Supreme Court.

In a decision rendered in June, 1945, the Court refused to order Jackson reinstated and upheld the right of the State Superintendent of Education (Coxe) to discharge an employee (Jackson). The majority opinion, written by Associate Justice Archie T. Higgins, was concurred in by Chief Justice Charles O'Niel and by Justices Wayne G. Rogers and Amos L. Ponder. Dissenting were Justices John B. Fournet, J. B. Hamiter, and Frank W. Hawthorne.\textsuperscript{112}

The majority opinion of the Court stated:

It appears that this is the first time since the Legislature passed Act 100 of 1922 that the state superintendent of public education's authority to select, employ, or discharge those who serve under him, has been challenged.

In short, for a period of 23 years, the administrative interpretation of the statute has been the same as asserted by the respondent during his tenure in office of nearly six years. Therefore, under the directive of contemporaneous construction, this interpretation should be followed.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., p. 6. \textsuperscript{111}Ibid. \textsuperscript{112}New Orleans Times Picayune, June 30, 1945, p. 1. \textsuperscript{113}Ibid., p. 1.
As a result of this decision the State Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of the District Court.

Reacting to the Supreme Court Ruling, Superintendent Coxe said he was "deeply grateful" for the decision. "I sincerely hope that the decision will mark the beginning of an era of peace in our school system, and, as in the past, I promise my cooperation to that end."\textsuperscript{114}

The Jackson episode ended on Tuesday, July 17, 1945, when the Louisiana Supreme Court, by a 4-3 vote, denied a rehearing by Jackson for reinstatement as Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture in the State Department of Education.\textsuperscript{115}

The Jackson controversy apparently settled the case for the State Superintendent to control his office. Superintendent Coxe believed the public misunderstood his position. His contention was that the dispute was over his right to hire and fire personnel under him.\textsuperscript{116} But some members of the State Board of Education said the issue was one of vocational education vs. academic education. Eventually a resolution of the State Board was adopted recognizing Coxe's right in the law over personnel, but reasserting control of the Board over allocation of funds.\textsuperscript{117}

III. OTHER CONTROVERSIES

A serious incident occurred on June 25, 1946, when a Senate bill which provided for the handling of federal funds for vocational education was being discussed at a House Education Committee meeting. Senator

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., p. 1. \textsuperscript{115}The Times Picayune. July 18, 1945, p. 3. \textsuperscript{116}New Orleans Item, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 17, 1946, p. 2. \textsuperscript{117}Ibid.
Gilbert F. Hennigan of Fields, Louisiana, accused Coxe of "deliberate mis-representation" in connection with the bill. Coxe "pounded on the table with his fist and shouted: 'You lie! You lie when you say I misrepresented the bill.'"

In the Senate Session that day, Senator Hennigan was given a unanimous rising vote of confidence as he took the floor on personal privilege and recounted the episode. His explanation to his fellow senators of the day with Superintendent Coxe was reported in the following manner:

He (Hennigan) introduced a bill patterned after the 1918 law governing the handling of vocation education funds from the Federal Government under control of the State Board of Education.

Superintendent Coxe objected to the bill. He drafted an amended bill copying the Hennigan bill except for two sections. This bill he sent to the U. S. Office of Education to see if they would approve it.

Here was where the differences came in.

Senator Hennigan said that the Office of Education wished to amend one section of the bill submitted by Superintendent Coxe. They wired the senator a suggested amendment.

This amendment Senator Hennigan had placed in his bill in the Senate committee thinking it was designed to fit into his bill.

Then he discovered his bill differed from the copy Superintendent Coxe forwarded to Washington. There's where he maintained he was gyped. So on the Senate floor he had his original bill amended to have it adopted just as he introduced it.

The effect of the committee action had been to amend a bill not introduced.

This amendment which went in and of the bill would place control of the funds in the State Board with the Superintendent named as the officer to carry out its policies. It would also make employment of personnel in vocational education subject to control of the Board.

118 The Times Picayune, June 26, 1946, p. 1. 119 Ibid.
The amendment differs from the original in that Senator Hennigan's bill had language which might be construed to permit the setting up of an independent department of vocational education under the State Board.

Superintendent Coxe's position, as he stated it after the Senate session, was that he never represented the bill he forwarded to Washington as the actual Hennigan Bill.

He maintains a letter he sent with the bill he drafted made it clear the bill represented his ideas and were not those of Senator Hennigan.

He never made any effort whatever to mislead anyone in reference to this transaction. 121

Subsequently, Superintendent Coxe apologized to Senator Hennigan in the form of personal correspondence dated June 27, 1946. In his letter Coxe stated: (See Appendix G)

This is to offer my apology to you for the personal insult which took place on Tuesday, June 25, at the hearing before the House Committee on Education. It seemed inconceivable that you would say I had used sharp practice, dishonest methods, and had misrepresented the facts concerning Senate Bill 140 to Dr. Studebaker, United States Commissioner of Education. 122

An outcome of significant importance which emerged as a result of the controversies and outbursts which plagued the second four year term of Coxe was an increasing interest as to the method used in the State for selecting the Chief State School Officer. The attitude which prevailed in the State at this time with respect to this subject, was appropriately reported by one of the leading daily newspapers. An editorial which appeared in the New Orleans States on June 9, 1945, stated:

121 New Orleans Item, June 26, 1946, p. 2.
The bickering that has been whirling around the official head of John E. Coxe, State Superintendent of Education, is annoying to the public and detrimental to Louisiana's educational interests. Far from being calmed, it is if anything getting worse.

The issues involved up to date are Superintendent Coxe's right to hire and fire subordinates in his department, an allegation that he is politicalizing certain activities, and administrative policies that have caused the federal government to halt further funds for vocational education. Mr. Coxe has repeatedly been in conflict with the State Board of Education over these and other matters. The courts are still messing around with the civil service status, and rights of one of the subordinates Mr. Coxe had discharged, S. M. Jackson, former Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture.

With such a variety of rumpus the State Educational Department certainly cannot do its best work, and probably its efficiency has been impaired. This wrangling has revived the widespread demand that the Office of Superintendent of Education be made appointive instead of elective. This proposition, entailing a constitutional amendment, was defeated in 1944.

The State Parent-Teacher Association after a session in Baton Rouge, reports Governor Jimmie Davis as favoring an appointive superintendent. If so, the Governor should throw his political weight and official influence back of the proposal, so that it may be reviewed in 1946. The Governor is an ardent pursuer of political peace. His over-towering desire is a reign of amity and good will and happy unity in all state affairs. Sometimes it is necessary to fight for peace. We hope the Governor will see the desirability of fighting for peace in the State Department of Education—anything to end the bickering that, so far as we can make it out, has principally been over considerations that to high-minded public officials would have been trivialities.

We think that the best way to prevent a recurrent of such quarrelling, and to increase the efficiency of the State Department of Education, is to make the office appointive. Then the State Board of Education would be the real master of public education affairs and policies, could remain on good terms with the Superintendent or fire him, and could keep the whole Department underfield by the maneuverings of politics.

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123 New Orleans States, June 9, 1945, p. 4.
John E. Coxe, incumbent State Superintendent of Education in Louisiana, launched his bid for reelection by citing the State's recent advances achieved in the previous eight years. He listed the following achievements as being accomplished during his tenure as State Superintendent:

1. Better financing of public education. (The state funds for operation of the public schools, exclusive of trade schools, special schools, for 1946-47 have been increased $13,239,467.89 or 84.5 per cent over that of 1939-40.)

   The average annual salary budgeted for white teachers, including principals in 1946-47 is 110.9 per cent higher than in 1939-40, and the average for Negro teachers is 221.4 per cent higher than in 1939-40.

   (The salaries of teachers, transfer drivers, janitors, and other employees of the school board have been increased as additional money has been made available.)

2. Inauguration of the twelve-grade school system.

3. Enactment of an excellent compulsory attendance law, providing for the services of visiting teachers.

4. Revision of the public school curriculum to strengthen and enrich many areas, notably the vocational courses.

Throughout his campaign, Coxe emphasized goals which he felt should be achieved by the public schools in the State. His platform during the election of 1948 contained the following planks:

1. Constitutional dedication of revenues to guarantee the present State appropriation as a minimum: increased revenues to meet expanding needs.

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2. State-guaranteed minimum salary schedule providing a salary of at least $2,000.00 for beginning qualified teachers with annual increases up to a minimum of $3,600.00: increased salaries for all school employees.

3. Continued development of a strong, diversified and well-balanced program of vocational education to meet the needs of every community.

4. Improvement in physical fitness of youth through health and physical education program and a bigger and better school lunch program.

5. Expansion of Veteran's Educational and Training Program and provision of adequate housing facilities for veterans at State colleges.

6. Support and protection of all teacher-benefit laws.

7. Emphasis on improved teacher training and better instruction, emphasizing character and civic training.

8. Enrichment of the curriculum with music, art, industrial arts, and handicrafts.

9. Vigorous leadership: (a) to provide a good school house and adequate equipment for every child and safe school-bus transportation if he lives too far to walk; (b) to make a high school education available to every child. \(^{125}\)

Despite this ambitious program Coxe encountered considerable opposition in his bid for re-election. Typical of the serious obstacles he encountered was best illustrated by the *Lafayette Daily Advertiser* which published an advertisement which featured Shelby M. Jackson and former Governor Sam H. Jones. *The Morning Advocate* issue of February 24, 1949, printed a quote by Earl K. Long which stated, "I will not support John E. Coxe for re-election as State Superintendent. I will support the candidate the people believe will be the best man for the job." \(^{126}\)

\(^{125}\) *Shreveport Times*, January 18, 1948, p. 5.

\(^{126}\) *The Morning Advocate*, February 24, 1948, p. 8.
In the Democratic primary held on January 20, 1948, Jackson received 256,845 votes; Coxe, 204,673 and Miller, 98,912. Even though William H. Miller supported Mr. Coxe in the second primary, Jackson was victorious, ending Superintendent Coxe's tenure as State Superintendent of Education.

Perhaps an editorial which appeared in the Shreveport Times best summarizes the election of 1948. The article stated:

John E. Coxe now goes out as State Superintendent of Education and Shelby M. Jackson comes in. When Mr. Coxe finishes his present term, he will have had eight years in the state school post, much of them turbulent and with the turbulence, in our opinion, serving as an anchor on progress in the state public school system. We do not know what kind of state superintendent Mr. Jackson will make. But, a change was needed—was vital and essential, in fact, to the educational welfare of present and future generations of Louisiana children.

The Times did not endorse either Mr. Coxe or Mr. Jackson in the primaries now completed, just as we did not endorse either Sam Jones or Earl K. Long, or any other candidate for any post, state or local. Our attitude toward Mr. Jackson now is simply this:

We believe him to be earnest and sincere in his desire to remedy the evils of Mr. Coxe's administration of our school system and to do everything possible to place Louisiana's public schools, as a whole, on the high educational plane already being reached in some individual parishes and schools through individual effort and reached long ago in many states of the union.

Later the editor commented on the position taken in relation to the newly elected superintendent. It stated, "We will criticize constructively where we believe constructive criticism will help. We will condemn where we believe condemnation is justified. We will praise where we believe

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129 The Shreveport Times, February 27, 1948, p. 4.
The editorial continued by including the following statements concerning Superintendent Coxe:

As for Mr. Coxe, The Times wishes him well in the private life to which the people of Louisiana so emphatically have retired him. The Times supported Mr. Coxe in 1940, as a part of the Sam Jones ticket. In retrospect, we have no regrets for that endorsement despite Mr. Coxe's failure as an educational administrator and, in some instances, his complete departure from fine precepts of public education which he laid down in his platform in 1940 and which brought our support. Mr. Coxe's very failure, his many instances of obvious incompetency to fill his post, have served to spotlight public attention on weaknesses in the public school system and to arouse public indignation and militant public demand for improvement. That has been good and wholesome in its overall effect, even though the good has come through negative means.

When it came to campaigning for his office, Mr. Coxe stooped very low indeed. He seemed incapable of discussing education as such, and in behalf of Louisiana children. His method was virtrilioc personal attack, often false in its content, and he did not confine himself to his opponent. He tried to drag in, and to smear, prominent citizens whose only part in any educational matter has been to give their services, their ability, at times their money, in behalf of good education and without thought of reward except in self satisfaction for public service given.

And, finally, the editor makes an appraisal of the overall race Coxe made:

Earl Long turned him down. Sam Jones turned him down, the Kennon people turned him down. He might have been better far better off had he run as an independent. At least he would have gained far more public respect than he gained by chasing around frantically to every candidate for governor for support—a course which stamped him as a politician rather than an educator.

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130\textsuperscript{Tbid.}

131\textsuperscript{Tbid.}

132\textsuperscript{Tbid.}
CHAPTER V

JOHN EASTERLY COXE IN RETIREMENT

Following the election of 1948 in which Superintendent Coxe was defeated by Shelby M. Jackson, Coxe bowed out gracefully from educational pursuits. Knowing that the education philosophy of the new regime was to be different from his, Coxe, after his term ended, withdrew to his residence at 2030 Myrtle Avenue in Baton Rouge. He remained in retirement except for a short period of time when he worked for a relative in a lumber yard near the place of his birth in Livingston Parish. 133

In retirement Coxe resorted to his boyhood ways in Watson, reading and keeping abreast of things he enjoyed. He was a teacher in his Methodist Church in Baton Rouge, and the scripts he used in his teachings are still in use at the same church. 134

Coxe continued as a Board member of the Baton Rouge Savings and Loan since its organization on March 10, 1923. From July 16, 1954, until his death, he served as Vice-President of this association, without additional compensation. A resolution by the Board, upon Coxe's death stated in part, "He was the last of the founders of the Baton Rouge Savings and Loan Association." 135

133 John E. Coxe and Hazel Grimm Coxe, personal interview, February 12, 1970.


135 Resolution signed by Ben R. Miller, Sr., Chairman of the Board, and Clyde P. Didier, President, now in possession of Mrs. Hazel Grimm Coxe.
In interviews following his retirement, Superintendent Coxe offered a review of his own life. Included in his statements were the following highlights:

1. The confidence placed in him by the Livingston Parish School Board in hiring him in his early years and his certification as a teacher.

2. His attaining the Bachelor's Degree from Louisiana State University as a member of the first graduation class in the Department of Education in 1909.

3. His decision to pursue further education by attending the University of Chicago in 1921 and receiving a Master of Arts Degree from Louisiana State University in June, 1922.

4. His master's thesis receiving the wide acclaim and being printed in *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*.

5. His tenure as Superintendent of Schools in Livingston Parish from July 1, 1913, to June 30, 1920.

6. His appointment as Assistant State Supervisor of Elementary Schools in the Louisiana Department of Education in 1920.


8. His marriage to Hazel Grimm on March 29, 1929.

9. His dismissal as State Supervisor of High Schools by State Superintendent T. H. Harris.

10. His election as State Superintendent of Education in 1940 and 1944.

11. His selection for "Who's Who in America."

12. The expansion of the State Department of Education from 30 members in 1940 to 150 members in 1948.

13. The reorganization of the staff of the State Department of Education, including the establishment of the Division of Higher Education.

14. The coordination of college finances, including uniform budgetary control and publication of an annual report.

15. A large increase in college faculty salaries.
16. The revision and subsequent up-grading of the Louisiana teacher certification requirements.

17. The inauguration of the twelve-year program.

18. The passage of a modern school attendance law, and the inauguration of a State School Attendance Officer.

19. The constitutional dedication of funds for education.

20. The great strides made in Negro education and for Negro personnel.

21. His controversies with Shelby Jackson, some members of the State Board of Education and Senator Hennigan over problems concerning the power of the State Superintendent in the area of Vocational Education.

22. His defeat in the 1946 election.  

Perhaps, Superintendent Coxe expressed his beliefs and philosophy best in an address delivered at the Seventh Annual Educational Conference held at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge:

I now turn to a brief discussion of the philosophy and objectives of a long-range program of education, which in the future, will have for its fundamental purpose the training of our youth for successful and happy living in a democracy. At this time it is fitting and proper that we consider the basic elements that constitute a democracy both as a method of government and as a way of life. There are three basic elements, namely, respect for the individual, a willingness to share common interests and problems, and a belief that intelligence should be extended to all areas of life. These basic elements may be considered as the foundation of democracy, for each of them is essential for the maintenance of a democratic way of life. Therefore, it is imperative that every citizen of the State acquire an understanding and appreciation of these elements. Every school should be a democratic institution giving practical training experience in democratic processes.

In order to develop a strong Nation, we must provide in our schools an opportunity for the individual student to meet and solve problems that will be typical of the kinds of experiences which will confront him in his after-school days. The students must develop the attitudes

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and ideals of good citizens. Our schools must be operated on a democratic basis. Each school should be a little democracy. We must make it possible for the student to develop into a self-dependent, resourceful, and tolerant citizen. In fact, in school we must maintain such a scheme or organization and discipline as will enable the student to "practice the habits of the good citizen."

The student must acquire definite convictions as to what is right and what is wrong. It would not be amiss for the teacher, at the beginning of the school year, to ask the individuals in his class to answer the question: "What do I believe?" Then at the end of the course, the teacher's success could be measured by what the students could say they actually believed. The point I wish to emphasize is that students must be trained to do reflective thinking. They must acquire the ability and the habit of analyzing situations in a critical manner and of reaching judgments in a deliberate fashion. They would thus develop defenses against propaganda.

One of the blessings of living in a democracy is that the student discovers that different people have different ideas. In the totalitarian state, every youngster seems to have the same belief.

This brings me to my last point. In all of our efforts to train students to be good citizens we must not lose sight of the importance of developing in them a love and appreciation of a democratic form of government. They must learn that the greatest achievements of civilization have been wrought under democracies.

Ordinarily, we are urged to teach children how to think and not what to think. Thus we avoid indoctrination; however, it seems to me that in America we have about reached the point at which we should do some definite indoctrination in favor of democracy.137

John Easterly Coxe died in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on November 18, 1972, after a long and painful disabling illness.

One of the final published statements on John Easterly Coxe was found in an issue of the "LSU Alumni News," under the title "Deaths":

John Easterly Coxe, BA (Ed) '09, MA '28, November 18, 1972, in Baton Rouge. He was a former State Superintendent of Education for

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137*Education for the Defense and Preservation of the democratic Way of Life,* Seventh Annual Educational Conference, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, October 25-26. Published by the University, pp. 8-10.
the State of Louisiana, and served at one time on the executive committee of the National Association of Chief State School Officers. He is survived by his widow, the former Hazel Grimm, MS '31.\footnote{Louisiana State University Alumni News, October 1973, p. 32.}
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APPENDIXES
STATE OF LOUISIANA.

OFFICE OF THE

Parish Superintendent of Public Education.

Parish of Livingston

August 5th, 1908

The moral and intellectual qualifications of
Sr John E Lyce as a Teacher of Youth having
been established by testimonials and satisfactory examination
is hereby granted a Certificate of Grade valid for
five years, and Licensed to teach in the Public Schools
of this Parish.

Approved:

F M Kinse
President of Parish Board.

W F Underwood
Secretary.

Examination Committee
for Parish Board of School Directors.

Parish of Livingston
First Grade Certificate

Eaton Rouge, La., April 1, 1916

The moral and intellectual qualifications of

Mrs. I. Core,

as a teacher of Youth having been established by testimonials and a

moral record as herebelow set forth,

A Certificate of the First Grade

is hereby granted with License to teach in the Public Schools of the State

of Louisiana for a period of FIVE YEARS from date hereof.

[Signatures]

Chairman State Teachers Examining Committee.

[Signature]

State Department of Public Education.

Baccalaureate graduate of the Louisiana State University.
Springville, La., May 15, 1930.

The Livingston Parish School Board met on the above date in special session with the following members present: 1st ward, M. E. Wascom; 2nd ward, B. R. Wilkinson; 4th ward, K. Efferson; 7th ward, F. F. Miller; 8th ward, W. J. Whitehead; 9th ward, D. M. Watts; 10th ward, J. T. Shepherd—seven. Absent: 3rd ward, H. Brigman; 5th ward, B. E. Langdon; 6th ward, D. C. Pendarvis—three.

The Board was called to order by the President, Mr. J. T. Shepherd, who stated that the purpose of the meeting was to receive the resignation of Supt. Jno. E. Cox, who had requested that said meeting be called. Thereupon, the following was submitted:

"Denham Springs, La., April 21, 1930.

Members of the Livingston Parish School Board:

Gentlemen:

I herewith submit my resignation as Parish Superintendent of Schools, to be effective July 1, 1930.

I am unable to continue longer in a position not paying me a living salary.

Last July, after the successful conclusion of the special tax campaign which practically doubled our school revenues, you immediately proceeded to raise the salaries of the teachers and numerous transfer drivers, even to the extent of paying the high school principals a larger salary than to the parish superintendent, whose salary was allowed to remain unchanged. I had hoped that you would ultimately recognize the injustice of such an arrangement and that, at some later Board Meeting, you would correct it. However, you have allowed the year to slip by without mentioning the matter.

With the small salary allowed the superintendent, and absolutely no official travelling expenses, he has been unable to visit the schools and give them the kind of supervision needed. He has more than earned his little salary by looking faithfully after the clerical work of his office—in keeping the books of the Board, in writing checks to cover pay-rolls, answering letters, etc., and in that manner directing the school policies of the Parish as much as possible.
The school interests are bound to suffer if this situation is allowed to continue and the superintendent is unable to visit the schools. In view of this situation, I have reached the conclusion that the proper thing for me to do is to get out, in order that you may be free to select some one whom you may be willing to pay a living salary, and, at the same time, give him such allowances for travelling expenses as will enable him to give the schools the kind of supervision required for their successful operation.

In conclusion, I wish to assure you that I duly appreciate the many courtesies which you have shown me, and especially am I under obligations to your President, Mr. J. T. Shepherd, for the loyal cooperation he has given me in my fight for the upbuilding of Livingston's school system. A tremendous amount of good work has been done and, if it were not for the sake of brevity, I would remind you not only of the many excellent accomplishments of my administration but also of the vast number of things yet to be done before our school system will be thoroughly up-to-date. Do not forget that there yet remains to be done much more than has already been accomplished. You have made a fairly good start and I sincerely wish for you and the new superintendent all possible success.

Respectfully,

(Signed) Jno. E. Coxe.

On motion duly seconded and carried, the above resignation was accepted, the Board expressing its regret in doing so.

On motion duly seconded and carried, the following committee of the School Board was appointed for the purpose of receiving and considering applications for the position as Parish Superintendent made vacant by the resignation of Mr. Coxe: Messrs. Wascom, Wilkinson, Efferson, Langdon, Miller and Shepherd.

There being no further business to transact at this time, the Board closed in due order.

[Signatures]

President.

Secretary.

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February 25, 1974

Mr. Charles E. Weimer
Director, Student Teaching
Nicholls State University
417 Country Club Boulevard
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301

Dear Mr. Weimer:

I supported John E. Coxe vigorously in 1940 when we succeeded in electing him.

He did a creditable job until, in my opinion, we split on matters of policy and then I found it impossible to go along with him in his bid for reelection.

I am sorry I cannot give you a more flattering report.

With kindest regards and all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Sam H. Jones

SHJ/dbp
We do not propose only to depoliticize our schools and to shield them from grifters and speculators; we propose a constructive platform of improvement and of progress, a platform looking toward a better service from the schools to the citizens of this State.

Honesty, business management, and professional direction constitute the simple formula for the new order in Louisiana. We shall have one of the most efficient school systems in the country when these principles are applied. Waste and graft will stop. The schools and colleges will receive all the revenue that is due them.

Individual initiative will flourish throughout the State. Trade schools will be developed and individual courses designed to prepare children to meet the problems of everyday life will be offered.

We will support the Tenure and Retirement Laws as they now stand. Teachers and other school employees will be better paid, and they will work without the haunting fear of political persecution.

We will support free textbooks and school supplies, and will see that provision is made for children who really need free school lunches.

We will start a campaign for a rational Federal-Aid-to-Education Bill. We will work to have the full proceeds of the State Sevenera Taxe restored to our schools and constitutional provisions adopted to protect them against
school revenue. The school funds should be stabilised. The school officials of this State should know definitely each year the amount of money they may be counted upon for maintenance purposes. The annual guessing contest in which they now engage should be unnecessary.

So will conduct a comprehensive study of our entire State school system to find out what are the school needs of all communities and how they should be met. Among many of the improvements suggested by our progressive parents and teachers, the proposed 12-grade system will be considered for introduction as soon as possible. Curriculum problems, Guidance, and Transportation of pupils will be included in the study.

The State cannot progress unless the schools progress, and the schools cannot progress unless good teachers have free play for initiative, and compensation and promotion on their merits. If our schools fail to meet our social and economic needs, it is because they are politicalised.

Louisiana has a land of promise; its wonderful natural resources; its healthful climate; its fertile soil are guarantees of the future for those who are willing to work and to be good citizens. It is a land of opportunity for youth and security for age. Louisiana has the adventure of the frontier, the romance of an old culture. It was a great old State, and we love it. But, Louisiana cannot achieve her manifest destiny until we liberate and depoliticise the school system.
VOTE FOR
JOHN E. COXE
for
State Superintendent of Education

For The Following Reasons:

1. He will give the average school teacher a break. They have been stifled long enough.
2. He is scholarly and honest.
3. He is the only available man who can bring relief to the Educational System of Louisiana at this time.
4. He believes in "live and let live."
5. He will not vent his spleen on his fellow-man holding opposing views.

Why the People Should Vote Against T. H. Harris:

1. He has been superintendent 32 years, is 72 years old and will draw a pension of $4,000.00 per year if defeated.
2. His motives for running are as follows:
   a. To get control of the University and thereby extend his educational dictatorship.
   b. To turn his office over to his daughter, Mrs. Sadie Harris Jackson Baskin.
   c. To keep his family on their present payroll of more than $30,000.00 annually.
   d. To punish the school people who do not vote for him.
3. According to the Teachers Retirement Law (approved by T. H. Harris himself) every person over 70 coming under the law must be elected every two years by his employer. T. H. Harris violates both the spirit and the letter of this law. He directs that all others be retired before 70 (Dr. Stephens and others) but hangs on himself.
4. The recent disclosures of grafting at the State Colleges at Ruston and Natchitoches furnish ample proof that he (Harris) should have been retired before he reached 70.

(Paid for by Friends of John E. Coxe)
To the voters of Louisiana--

I hereby announce my candidacy for the office of state superintendent of public education.

Louisiana public schools and colleges have been under the absolute rule of Supt. T. H. Harris for 32 years. He will soon be 73 years old, three years beyond the legal retirement age. I believe I speak for a majority of the school people when I say that he should retire and live on his pension of $3,600 a year. I think it is execrable of him to demoralize our schools by trying to line them up behind the grafters and corruptionists who have been a party to the looting of our beloved state.

The state superintendent of education should be a moral and spiritual example to our youth, not a time-serving politician. Supt. Harris has turned our schools into implements of political power. He has perverted a sacred trust into a ruthless political dictatorship designed to aggrandize his political might.

One thing more remains to complete this dream of empire -- Louisiana State University. This comes to light in the September issue of LOUISIANA SCHOOLS, journal of the Louisiana Teachers Association and his personal mouthpiece. In referring to the recent grafting at L.S.U., LOUISIANA SCHOOLS recommends, editorially, that L.S.U. be placed under Supt. Harris' jurisdiction. I quote therefrom: "Now for the major change. It is simply this,
all the educational agencies of Louisiana ought to be placed under one head. There never was any reason for placing Louisiana State University under a separate board -- there is now every reason for combining all the state's education agencies into one great system.

He dictated this editorial before the state college scandals blew up in his face. If he survives them, we may expect further effort to force the State University into his school machine.

In view of the real building and equipment needs of our state colleges, it is a consummate outrage that two of them should lose more than $300,000 by theft and graft. Our poor people, our poorly paid teachers, and our poor taxpayers hope that future auditors' reports will disclose whatever additional losses have been sustained, and that punishment for the grafters will be swift.

The members of the state board of education were confidently relying upon the state superintendent as their executive officer to protect the public interest. If the state superintendent had provided adequate supervision of the state college building expenditures, the thievery would not have occurred, or, at least, it would have been promptly discovered. Had the state superintendent been free of political entanglement, the public interest might not have suffered, and the state board would have been
spared this scandal.

The careless manner in which the state superintendent allowed a contract to be illegally signed for $27,000 in excess of the amount of the original bid on Leche Hall at Ruston certainly discredits his management. Then, too, it is difficult to understand how the superintendent would allow the state law to be violated by permitting an expenditure of $66,895.57 for repairs and equipment at the State Normal College "without bid, contract, or even preliminary estimate."

Honesty, business and professional management, and depoliticization constitute the simple formula for the new order. We shall have one of the most effective school systems in the country when this formula is applied. Waste and graft will stop. The schools will receive all the revenue that is due them. Individual initiative will flourish throughout the state. Practical types of schools and new courses will be introduced. Teachers will be better paid and they will work without the haunting fear of political persecution.

I can visualize the dawn of a new day in Louisiana. I believe that the accursed dictatorship that has almost wrecked our state will be destroyed at the January election and that we shall have the opportunity to develop a state school system unsurpassed by any in the country.

In due time I shall issue a statement of my school program.
Finally, I submit a brief record of my training and school experience, which, I believe, will qualify me for the state superintendency in the opinion of the voters who want a conscientious, vigorous professional man for the position. I hold B. A. and M.A. university degrees. In addition, I have done a considerable amount of advanced work toward the Ph.D. degree. I have served as a one-room school teacher, as high-school principal, and as parish superintendent. I was a member of the state department of education for 18 years. During my tenure in this department, I received continual advancement. I was promoted from the lowest to the highest supervisory position. For twelve years I was in the high school division, and for the last four years I was the chief state supervisor of high schools.

John E. Coxe

Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
Mr. Charles E. Weimar  
Director of Student Teaching  
Nicholls University  
417 Country Club Boulevard  
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301  

Dear Mr. Weimar:

I remember the late John E. Coxe well, having campaigned with him in 1943 when he was a candidate for State Superintendent of Education and I was a candidate for Governor of Louisiana.

We were both successful in our races and we served together from 1944 until 1948.

I remember him to be an honest, capable and conscientious public servant. He was dedicated to the improvement of our system of public education in Louisiana. His background as an educator allowed him to make contributions to public education that helped lay the foundation for the system we have today.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to serve with him.

Sincerely,

JIMMIE H. DAVIS
To the Voters of Louisiana:

During my second term as State Superintendent of Education, I will continue to operate the State Department of Education in a friendly and co-operative manner, free of factionalism and dictation, with the view of uniting all groups for the advancement of the best interests of the school children of the state.

I will work unceasingly to accomplish the following objectives:

SCHOOL FINANCES

1. A minimum state aid of $22.50 per educable, plus the corresponding equalization fund and the amount required to reimburse the school boards for their contributions to the teacher retirement system.

During my first term we have succeeded in dedicating to the schools the entire proceeds of the state severance taxes; in raising the apportionment from $16 to $20 per educable, thus increasing the annual distribution more than $4,000,000, or 30%; and in raising by $328.05, or 28%, the average annual salary of white teachers (exclusive of superintendents and supervisors). Even though this reflects remarkable improvement, in order to retain the services of the best teachers we must continue our efforts to make their salaries comparable to salaries in other occupations requiring equivalent skill and training. Bus operators and other school employees have likewise received substantial increases in compensation, but these worthy employees also deserve still better pay to offset the increase in the cost of living.

INSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION

2. An adequate program of readjustment for returning war veterans and for industrial workers; the vocational rehabilitation of all disabled veterans and other handicapped persons; instruction for boys rejected by the armed forces because of illiteracy; provision at federal or state expense for the resumption of college training by those veterans whose courses were interrupted by the war,
and for the retraining of others for peacetime employment;

3. An after-war school construction and renovation program to give employment to thousands and to provide school plants second to none, preliminary planning for such a program to be done immediately in order that Louisiana may be ready to share in any federal funds available for employment of returning veterans;

4. Expansion of our present program of vocational education to provide the type of training needed in every parish, emphasizing the development of more community service centers in the rural sections for all-year training of children and adults in food production and preservation, and in the operation and repair of farm tools and machinery;

5. A change to the twelve-year school program as rapidly as the local school officials find it possible to do so;

6. Revision of the school attendance law to conform to the child labor laws, and to require attendance for the full term of all children who have not completed elementary schools, thus attacking adult illiteracy at its principal source;

7. Stronger and sounder instruction in the fundamental academic subjects—English, mathematics, science, history, and civics;

8. Well-planned courses in Louisiana's history, social and economic development, and in the conservation of the state's natural resources;

9. Increased emphasis on character and citizenship education;

10. Extension of the nutrition, health, and physical-fitness program;

11. Further development of our public-school music program and provision for similar instruction in art;

12. Improved advantages in the state's colleges and special schools for our young men and women in the post-war world; and

13. Continued support and protection of the tenure, retirement, sick-leave, and sabbatical-leave laws.

My long years of service as teacher, principal, parish superintendent, member of the State Department of Education, and as State Superintendent, have given me a grasp and an understanding of Louisiana's varied and extensive educational enterprises that will enable me to give our program the quality of leadership it deserves.
June 27, 1946

Honorable Gilbert F. Hennigan
State Senator
State Capitol
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Senator Hennigan:

This is to offer my apology to you for the personal insult which took place on Tuesday, June 25, at the hearing before the House Committee on Education. It seemed inconceivable that you would say I had used sharp practice, dishonest methods, and had misrepresented the facts concerning Senate Bill 140 to Dr. Studebaker, United States Commissioner of Education.

To verify my statement I am enclosing copies of the telegrams and letters which were exchanged between Dr. Studebaker and me. A reading of these communications will show that there was absolutely no misrepresentation.

On June 2 you introduced Senate Bill 140 in reference to vocational education, Section 5 of which reads as follows:

"Section 5. That the State Board of Education shall have full power to provide for the effective administration of vocational education by the appointment of a director, and for the supervision of the vocational education program in each of the several fields by employing supervisors who can assist the Director in the administration of the program, and guide local school administrators and teachers in the development of their respective local programs adapted to the needs of the communities."

I made several requests for an interview with you to discuss the bill's provisions and certain amendments which I intended to propose. However, you declined my requests. The attached letter to the Commissioner of Education shows that on June 13 I sent to him for his approval a proposed revision of the bill. I did not represent to the Commissioner this bill as being the original which you had introduced in the Senate, as you apparently believed. If you will read the attached letter of June 13 and the proposed bill accompanying this letter, you will find that in the opening paragraph I said:

"Herewith I am enclosing copy of Senate Bill 140, amended in accordance with what I conceive to be full compliance with all points specified in the amendment to the State Plan adopted by the State Board of Education on October 15, 1945, including paragraphs Nos. 2 and 3."

Note also Dr. Studebaker's telegram to me under date of June 18. His first sentence is:

"Re your letter of June 13 requesting our comment upon Senate Bill No. 140 as amended by you."

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These communications definitely show that the Commissioner understood that what I had sent him was a proposed revision of your bill and not the original bill itself. I merely wished to secure his comment on my proposed revision before offering it to the Senate Committee on Education. After Dr. Studebaker's telegram of June 18 was received, the Senate Committee on Education unanimously approved the amendments to Sections 4, 5, and 6 of your original bill. You will note that the wording of Section 5 is identical with that proposed in Dr. Studebaker's telegram to me. However, when Senate Bill 140 was up for final passage, you presented a floor amendment which replaced Sections 5 and 6, as approved by the Education Committee, and thus eliminated Dr. Studebaker's recommendation without having discussed this amendment with me or anyone from my office. Apparently the effect of this floor amendment is to restore, by implication, the force of the objectionable original Section 5.

There has never been any question as to the authority of the State Board of Education to control the expenditures of federal vocational funds or state school funds. Under present law the Board has full rights in this particular. The only change in our law that the United States Office of Education is now insisting upon is that the State Board of Education be given the right to approve personnel selected by the State Superintendent of Education to carry on the vocational program. If you will read the attached telegram, dated June 15, from Dr. Studebaker you will find definite proof of this statement.

If Senate Bill 140 is enacted in its present form, it might invite further controversy as to the administration of vocational education in Louisiana and work irreparable harm to our school system. I shall be happy if this entire matter may be settled once and for all by restoring to Senate Bill 140 the amendment approved by Commissioner Studebaker and passing the measure with this amendment in both Houses of the Legislature.

Senator Hennigan, I wish you to know that my opposition to Senate Bill 140 is not personal. As the constitutional chief school officer of this state, I have one great desire, and that is to protect and improve our Louisiana school system. Furthermore, I hope that you will believe I have at all times appreciated your personal friendship, and I sincerely hope that this issue will not be permitted to interrupt the cordial relationship which we have known in the past.

Will you not join me in a sincere effort to clear up the serious, but by no means irreconcilable, differences which have developed in relation to your Senate Bill 140?

Yours sincerely,

John E. Coxe
State Superintendent

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COPY

Baton Rouge, Louisiana
June 6, 1946

To Dr. John W. Studebaker
Commissioner of Education
U. S. Office of Education
Washington, D. C.

State Legislature in session. Would action providing for approval by State Board of my appointments of personnel meet all requirements of your office for continuation of Federal Vocational Funds to Louisiana. Please wire promptly.

John E. Cox, Executive Officer
State Board of Education

* * * * * *

Washington, D. C.
June 8, 1946

To John E. Cox
State Department of Education

Reurter June 6. Definite assurance cannot be given without opportunity to analyze legislation. All points in parts Roman 2 and 3 of amendment to State Plan adopted by State Board October 16, 1945 should be covered.

J. W. Studebaker

* * * * * *

Washington, D. C.
June 13, 1946

To John E. Cox
State Department of Education

Reurter of June 13 requesting our comment on Senate Bill No. 140 as amended by you. Apart from this bill your general law we believe places personnel action in the hands of the State Superintendent. All that is required for continuation of Federal Funds is that the State Board of Education shall have the power to express itself effectively in relation to its satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the supervisory personnel through whom the State Plan is executed. This would be accomplished if Section Five of the Bill were amended to read quote "That the State Board of Education shall have all necessary power to provide for the effective administration and supervision of Vocational Education through its right of approval of personnel employed in the State Department of Education who can direct, supervise, and assist in the administration of the program and guide local school administrators and teachers in the development of their respective local programs adapted to the needs of the communities" unquote.

J. W. Studebaker

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June 15, 1946

Dr. John W. Studebaker
U. S. Commissioner of Education
U. S. Office of Education
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Dr. Studebaker:

Herewith I am enclosing copy of Senate Bill 140, amended in accordance with what I conceive to be full compliance with all points specified in the amendment to the State Plan adopted by the State Board of Education on October 16, 1945, including paragraphs Nos. 2 and 3.

You will note on reading the enclosed bill that the purpose is to remove all points of conflict which arose over the question of authority of the State Superintendent to name the personnel in this office, with particular reference to the right of the Board to approve such personnel. The enclosed bill to our way of thinking definitely covers all points.

Inasmuch as this bill comes up for a hearing on Tuesday, June 18, will you not wire me immediately your approval, with assurance that, if the bill is adopted, there will be no question of the continuance of federal funds for vocational education to Louisiana.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN E. COXE

State Superintendent

JEC:esr

Enc.
SENATE BILL NO. 140

By Messrs. Hennigan, Guidry, Watson
Dolby, Gaianne, Calhoun, and Voorhies

AN ACT

To Provide for the acceptance of the benefits of an Act passed by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (approved February 25, 1917) entitled "An Act to provide for the promotion of vocational education; to provide for cooperation with the States in the promotion of such education in agriculture and the trades and industries; to provide for cooperation with the State in the preparation of teachers of vocational subjects; and to appropriate money and regulate its expenditure"; and to provide for the administration of same.

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Louisiana, That the State of Louisiana hereby accepts all of the provisions and the benefits of an Act passed by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, entitled, "An Act to provide for the promotion of vocational education; to provide for cooperation with the States in the promotion of such education in agriculture and the trades and industries; to provide for cooperation with the States in the preparation of teachers of vocational subjects; and to appropriate money and regulate its expenditure," approved February 25, 1917, and will observe and comply with all requirements of said Act.

Section 2. That the State Treasurer is hereby constituted and appointed the custodian of the moneys paid to the State of Louisiana for vocational education, under the provisions of said Act of Congress, and such moneys shall be paid out in the manner provided by such Act for the purposes therein specified.

Section 3. That the State Board of Education of the State of Louisiana, is hereby designated as the State Board for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of such Act, and is hereby authorized and directed to cooperate with the Federal Board for Vocational Education or the Agency designated by the Federal Government in the administration and enforcement of its provisions and to perform such official acts and exercise such powers as may be necessary to entitle the State to receive its benefits.

Section 4. That the State Board of Education shall have all necessary power to represent the State in any and all matters in reference to the expenditure, distribution and disbursement of funds received from the United States Government in said State and to appropriate and use said moneys in whatever way will in its discretion best serve the interests of the State and carry out the spirit and intent of said Act of Congress in conformity with its provisions.

Section 5. That the State Board of Education shall have all necessary power to provide for the effective administration and supervision of vocational education, through its approval of the appointment by its Executive Officer, the State Superintendent of Education, of personnel in the State Department of Education who can direct, supervise, and assist in the administration of the program and guide local school administrators and teachers in the development of their respective local programs adapted to the needs of the communities.
Section 6. That such Board is hereby authorized to make such expenditures for the salaries of personnel and for office and other expenses as in the judgment of the Board are necessary to the proper administration of this Act.

Section 7. That all laws and parts of laws in conflict with the provision of this Act, and especially Act 52 of the Legislature of Louisiana of 1918, be and the same are hereby repealed.
Amendments to Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the Original
Senate Bill 140 by Mr. Hennigan as Approved by the
Senate Committee on Education on June 18, 1946

Section 4. That the State Board of Education shall have all necessary
power to represent the State in any and all matters in reference to the ex-
penditure, distribution and disbursement of funds received from the United
States Government in said State and to appropriate and use said moneys in
whatever way will in its discretion best serve the interests of the State
and carry out the spirit and intent of said act of Congress in conformity
with its provisions.

Section 5. That the State Board of Education shall have all necessary
power to provide for the effective administration and supervision of voca-
tional education, through its right of approval of personnel employed in
the State Department of Education who can direct, supervise, and assist in
the administration of the program and guide local school administrators and
teachers in the development of their respective local programs adapted to
the needs of the communities.

Section 6. That such Board is hereby authorized to make such expen-
ditures for the salaries of personnel and for office and other expenses as
in the judgment of the Board are necessary to the proper administration
of this Act.

* * * * * * *

Floor Amendment to Senate Bill 140 by Mr. Hennigan
Adopted by the Senate Which Replaced the Above
Sections 5 and 6 of Senate Bill 140 as Amended by
the Senate Committee on Education

Section 5. That such board is hereby authorized to make such expen-
ditures for the actual expenses of the board and for the salaries of assistants
and for office and other expenses as in the judgment of the board are neces-
sary to the proper administration of this Act.
TESTIMONIES TO JOHN EASTERY COXE

His piney-woods rearing prevailed throughout his life. He was honest, sincere, determined in his work, and loyal. This view was expressed by many leading personalities in the State. Some of these testimonies of John Easterly Coxe were stated in the following manner:

In a formal statement concerning her late husband, Mrs. Coxe related her appraisal of his contributions:

The Louisiana educational system is better because of his serving in capacities he was in. The outstanding thing about John E. was his integrity and brilliant intellect. The other quality was human kindness. He was such a gentle person. There was never any question in the world about his honesty and absolute integrity. As a husband he was devotion personified. There was never a doubt about John E.'s devotion to me. I never saw him get angry, and I never heard him curse.139

Edward W. Stagg, writing for the Item Capitol Bureau, wrote as follows concerning Coxe's association with his employees:

A friendly appraisal of Coxe is that he is tolerant, democratic, and generous to his employees. He enjoys the usual personal loyalty in his department. As an administrator he is slow (too slow) to reach decisions.140

Gordon A. Webb, who served in the State Department of Education, stated:

Coxe was too reserved, and was hesitant to make a decision. Unless a person drew him out, he held back. In academics he was very strong. He was most cooperative; I could see him anytime I wanted to. I do not have any adverse criticism. His way of life was to be admired.141

140New Orleans Item, April 17, 1946, p. 2.
Nettie Milton Coxe, wife of John E. Coxe's brother Silas, said of John:

He was a very gentle gentleman. He was very kind and affectionate, a real school man, very honest, a very serious scholar. He had a dry wit.142

V. J. Roux, one who remembered him as a parish superintendent stated:

Coxe was a dedicated school man, a perfect gentleman with a purpose. He was sympathetic; he was interested in the people he knew; he had integrity. He appeared to some people to have a certain aloofness—due to his nature. I do not agree with this.143

G. Byron Benton reported as follows:

He was one of the better educators of his time. He was a gracious man.144

Sue Hefley who served with Superintendent Coxe wrote:

My association with Mr. Coxe was from 1940 to 1948 as a member of his Department of Education staff. He was a quiet man who gave the impression of great reserve and not enjoying particularly that part of his work which required contact with people. I feel with few exceptions he organized his staff effectively. He delegated responsibility appropriately—Mr. Ewerz was my superior, and I rarely approached Mr. Coxe on any matter. I respected Mr. Coxe. He had a scholarly nature; he wrote clearly and well and spoke in the same way, but perhaps without popular appeal. Mr. Coxe's somewhat distant manner and his lack of what is today in political circles called 'charisma' may explain his defeat as he contended for a third term. Possibly there were other prominent factors of which I was not aware; certainly his staff members must acknowledge their share of responsibility for defeat.145

143V. J. Roux, loc. cit.
144G. Byron Benton, loc. cit.
145Letter from Sue Hefley to the writer, April 2, 1970.
Robert O. Moncla, who was superintendent of schools in Lafourche Parish when Coxe was State Superintendent commented as follows:

He was quite cooperative, never hesitating in fulfilling a request that was in his power. In finances, he was quite cooperative. He was stern; he was an average politician—-not outgoing.146

Upon his retirement members of the staff of the State Department of Education wrote personal letters to Mr. Coxe. Excerpts from the letters follow:

J. E. Williams:

You have always been thoughtful, considerate, and helpful towards those associated with you in public education.

Lela A. Tomlinson:

You have done an excellent job, and you made it possible for everyone in the Department to move forward in his work and to have opportunities to participate in out-of-state meetings, thus gaining many excellent ideas and inspirations.

C. A. Ives:

I think you began your educational work about 1910 and the record shows you have had an important part in the educational progress since that time.

Dallas Kent:

You are one of Louisiana's truly great men...the record of your administration, I would say, is so much in so short a while.

Joe Farrar:

Despite the serious handicaps under which you have labored, handicaps which would have broken a weaker man, you have done a good job.

Joseph E. Gibson:

These seven years under your leadership included the turbulent war years. They were years of change and adjustment. But they were years of achievement in which all Louisiana citizens may take pride.

Normand H. Edwards:

Whether we agree or not, each respected the other's opinion, and benefit resulted from your wise counsel.147

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147Letters now in possession of Mrs. Hazel Grimm Coxe, 2030 Myrtle Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
VITA

Charles Ernest Weimer was born in Boutte, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, on July 13, 1917. He is the son of the late Frank Weimer and Lucy Guedry Weimer. He attended school in New Orleans and graduated from St. Charles High School in Thibodaux, Louisiana. His undergraduate degree was earned in English and mathematics at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1938. From the same university he earned a Masters of Education in secondary education with a minor in mathematics in 1947.

He taught at the Golden Meadow High School for three years before being drafted into the Army in 1941. While in service, he rose from the rank of private to the rank of major. In 1947 he was appointed Principal of St. James High School in St. James Parish and remained there until 1963 when he became Assistant Professor of Education at Nicholls State University. In 1968, he was named Director of Student Teaching and Professor of Education at Nicholls, the position he holds today.

Mr. Weimer is married to Mary Louise Claudet Weimer. They have four children, Charles, Jr., Chester, Catherine and James.

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EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: CHARLES E. WEIMER

Major Field: EDUCATION

Title of Thesis: JOHN EASTERY COXE, LOUISIANA EDUCATOR

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

July 22, 1974

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