

THE TEACHER AND THE LAW

TEACHERS nowadays are called upon to know, to do, and to be many things. Any suggestion therefore of additional obligations that should be assumed by the teacher is doubtless unwelcome. However, every recurring session of the General Assembly impresses upon me the fact that teachers do not sufficiently understand school law and do not resort, in a proper degree, to legal procedure in the improvement of many conditions of teaching. We leave too many of our problems to be determined by other people than those actively engaged in our profession. We do not always furnish good, intelligent professional sentiment to bring about those results that will accrue to the benefit not only of the teacher but of all those under his care. I wish to ask several questions, therefore, simply to bring to your attention the necessity of a teacher's understanding of school law.

Do you, as a teacher, know what you may legally do and what you may not legally do? To be more specific, do you know the provisions in the law governing the curriculum of the school you are teaching? Do you know of any special provisions in the law that require certain matters to be taught, which are not in specifically provided textbooks? Do you know the extent of control you may exercise over the conduct of your students, the legal manner in which school regulations may be met, and how the suspension of students may be undertaken?

Do you know the requirements of the compulsory attendance law and the recourse you have in securing assistance in the enforcement of this law?

Do you know the various health laws governing vaccination, quarantine, and the control of infectious or contagious diseases?

Do you know the laws governing taxation that provide the financial support for your

school? Are you capable of entering into a community discussion and intelligently advising the patrons of your school in regard to a taxation program that will provide adequate financial support for your school?

Are you acquainted with the law governing school libraries? Do you know how they may be secured with only a portion of the expense coming from the individual schoolroom?

Do you know the laws governing the appointment, dismissal, compensation, and certification of teachers? Do you know the provisions of the teachers' pension or retirement law and do you know what has become of the investment which you have made through the provisions of this law?

The last question to be asked, however, is one that has given me much concern since I began to teach and that question is this—Does the teacher have a legal contract governing his services? Is there a proper element of mutuality of obligation between the two contracting parties? Personally, it is my belief that it is high time for teachers in Virginia to undertake, through the proper legal channels, to secure a more equitable contract than the one which now exists in Virginia between school boards and individual teachers.

These and many other matters, however, which seriously concern our professional future may not be undertaken until teachers throughout the entire state thoroughly acquaint themselves with the provisions of the laws that govern teachers and teaching.

SAMUEL P. DUKE

ANOTHER PLEA FOR EQUALITY

It's not the school, said the little boy to his mother. It's the principle of the thing.

The foundation of fortunes is not laid in the blue skies of booms, but in the hardpan of depression.—ROGER W. BABSON.