

THE LISTENING POST

What Should be Done About Federal Aid to Education?

THE ELECTIONS OVER, school people can further intensify their efforts to protect and to advance American education for all the children of all the people. This is as yet an unrealized goal of our democracy.

Since the school year 1940-41, our nation's schools have been going through a period of deepening crisis.¹ Thousands of teachers have left the profession to take higher paying jobs in industry, and to join the armed services.

Because of shortages of funds, a large number of teachers had to get along on substandard salaries. In 1943-44, there were 253,000 teachers being paid less than \$1200 a year, and 44,000 received less than \$600. Nearly all these teachers were employed in southern states and in rural areas where state and local school systems were unable to pay even reasonably adequate salaries.

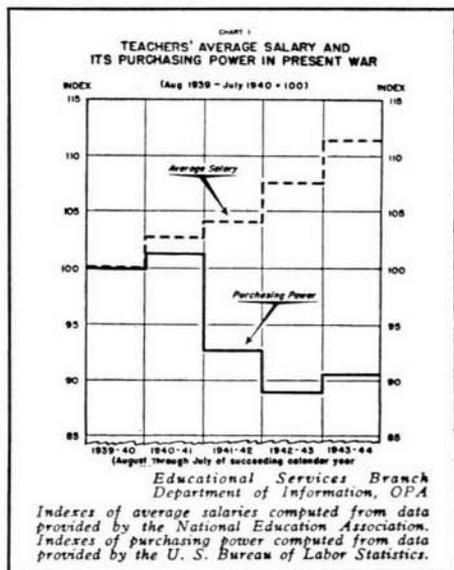
Teachers have found that their salaries have lagged seriously behind their cost of living. According to the NEA Research Division, the average annual salary of teachers, supervisors, and principals throughout the country has risen from \$1441 in 1939-40 to \$1625 (preliminary estimate) in 1943-44, an increase of 12.8 per cent. According to figures from the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics covering the months comparable to the school year, the cost of living (prices paid for necessities by middle-income families in large cities) has risen from an index of 100 for 1939-40 to 124 for 1943-44, a rise of 24 per cent.

Between 1939-40 and 1942-43, the lag of teachers' salaries behind price increases represented a hidden salary cut of 11 per cent. Due to increased salaries and price stabilization by 1943-44 this loss had been reduced to 9.5 per cent. Yet in 1943-44, this hidden salary cut averaged about \$162 (1943-44 dollars) per teacher below the 1939-40 level.

¹See "The Current Battle for the People's Schools" by Howard A. Dawson in *The Journal of the National Education Association*, October 1944, pp. 155-156.

Taken together, these facts and figures emphasize the need for school people, parents, and other public-spirited citizens to press for the immediate enactment of the federal-aid-to-education bill now before the Congress. This bill, Senate 637-House Resolution 2849, would provide a federal grant of \$300,000,000 a year to help equalize teachers' salaries and educational opportunities among all the states, under their own administration. We are now and rightly spending that much in a day and a half for our military effort to defeat the Fascist enemy. We can well afford to invest at least that much in the education of our children, the future of our America.

All this is more than reason enough why all citizens interested in schools should see, telephone, or write their Congressmen *now* to make the federal-aid-to-education bill a federal law. By thus upholding public education, we will not let our children down.
—DSCD Legislative Committee.



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