

ANNUAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE: PRESENTER AND TOPIC INDEX: 1923-1940

James G. McCullagh, Genevieve K. Byrne, & Vanessa Wunderlich

The National League of Compulsory Education Officials, beginning with its 13th annual convention in 1923 and ending with the 30th annual convention in 1940, published annual proceedings of each convention. This article includes both a topic and presenter index and a summary of the 1935 and 1941 annual conventions, based on newspaper articles, for which no annual proceedings are available. These indexes will be of interest to those seeking a better understanding of the early pioneering work of the National League and its significant role in the professional development of the school attendance official.

The International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention formally began on June 2, 1911, as the National League of Compulsory Education Officials and held its first annual convention in Chicago (McCullagh, 2002). Except for the World War II years, the League held annual conventions throughout the United States and in Canada. Beginning with the 13th annual convention in 1923 and ending with the 30th annual conference, the League published proceedings of each convention, with the possible exception of 1935. The 31st conference in October 1941 was held in Knoxville, Tennessee, but proceedings are not available. A summary of addresses by speakers, as reported in the local newspaper, for the years 1935 and 1941, are presented in the text of this paper.

The League secretary, George Whitman, remarked on the occasion of the League's first publication of its proceedings on the importance of the annual meetings and the publication of its proceedings:

Its annual meetings have served as a clearing house for plans and programs of Attendance Departments throughout the United States and with the ever-increasing number of school systems represented in its meetings each year it is felt that much is being accomplished

throughout America for a better understanding of the problems of school delinquency and child accounting. . . . No one directing the work in any city in the country can afford not to be a member, now that the proceedings are being published and each one can have before him for reference the valuable discussions of many of our problems by those most capable of speaking about them (1923, p. 2).

The index includes both a presenter and topic index. The topic index is also arranged by number from 1 to 456. Each entry includes the title, presenter, year of the proceedings, and page numbers. The presenter index includes the number and the presenter's past and present leadership positions with the National League of Compulsory Education Officials or, effective in 1936, the National League to Promote School Attendance, and his or her title and organizational affiliation.

A few presenters, speakers, or keynoters who were presidents and honorary life presidents of the League were featured speakers who gave addresses and also chaired committees. The most important was William L. Bodine, the co-founder of the League in 1911, first president from 1911 to 1916, honorary life president, and the long-time chairman of the Committee on Nominations. The presidents of the League from 1911 through 1941 were as follows:

1911-1916: William L. Bodine	1928-1929: Edward T. Howe
1916-1919: Charles A. MacCall	1929-1930: Dr. Frank M. Phillips
1919-1921: Henry J. Gideon	1930-1931: Raymond C. Keople
1921-1923: Arthur F. Lederle	1931-1932: George L. Harding
1923- 26 Aug 1925 (died): James R. Cannon	1932-1933: Eugene J. Sheridan
26 August 1925-1926: John A. Parker (Acting)	1933-1934: Ralph E. Dugdale
1926-1927: Samuel M. Allen	1934-1935: John B. Quinn
1927-1928: Charles Acorn	1935-1938: Martin Morrison Hihn

1938-1941: Dr. Charles L Mosher

The League's Honorary Life Presidents through 1941 included William L. Bodine, Dr. Henry J. Gideon, Martin M. Hihn, Judge Arthur F. Lederle, Charles A. MacCall, John A. Parker, H.R. Pestalozzi, and Eugene J. Sheridan; all but H.R. Pestalozzi, who was the other League co-founder and first vice-president, served as presidents. The Constitution and By-Laws adopted in 1925 stated: "The term of the Honorary Life Presidents is for life—the highest honor of the League and requires no annual re-election" (p. 6).

Convention Themes

Beginning with the 1931 convention, a conference theme was adopted. Most conferences included a general theme through the 1941 convention:

1931: The Child in His Relationship with the Home, the School, and the Community

1932: The Attendance Department as the Conserver of Child Welfare

1933: Juvenile Welfare- the Big Question of the Little Citizen

1934: There was apparently no specific convention theme. Perhaps the theme was reflected by Mr. Bodine's address- the first at the opening meeting- "the Crusade for the Conservation of Public Welfare."

1935: Not known

1936: Techniques and Trends in School Attendance and Pupil Adjustment Service

1937: Education, Attendance, and Co-operative Social Work, Conserve Future Good Citizenship of the Pupil Personnel and Community Welfare

1938: Sociological Aspects of School Attendance Service. Objectives and Methods – Educational, Social, Ethical, Philanthropic

1939: The Changing Concept of Attendance Service as an Important Factor in Pupil Adjustment – in school, at home, and in the community

1940: Contributions of School Attendance Workers to the Education of Children – Directly, and in cooperation with Schools and Teachers, Parents, and Families, Health, Welfare and Recreation Groups, Religious and Civic Organizations, Employers

1941: Vital Contributions of Attendance Service to the Success of the Modern School

Annual Convention-1935: The 25th anniversary convention, attended by “more than 200 officials of the league” was held in Toronto from November 11th to the 13th. It began with a welcome from the Mayor of Toronto, the Chair of the Board of Education, and the Superintendent of the Toronto schools (“Says Thousands,” 1935, p.2). League President John B. Quinn’s theme, “Thousands of Pupils Being Raised for Prison,” remarked:

Too often children forced to leave school under 16 years of age without sufficient preparation for life’s duties, become liabilities in the form of idlers, wasters or criminals. Herein lies the challenge to society. Shall the nation consider its purpose accomplished by allowing this dangerous group of untrained and partly disciplined youths to pursue their course as a social menace or seek, by counter-influences of further education and supervised recreation to fit them for good citizenship? (“Says Thousands,” 1935, p. 2)

The article, in summarizing President Quinn’s remarks, stated:

The speaker maintained that where working children, forced to attend school, were deprived of earnings which their families needed, some form of compensation should be provided. He claimed the jurisdiction of juvenile courts should be extended over minors and that all minors who had been charged with delinquency should be compelled to attend school. (“Says Thousands,” 1935, p. 2; “Would Compel,” 1935, p. 3)

The executive secretary of the Child Welfare Council, Miss Margaret Gould, sounded the alarm for the more than forty percent of the children who “are found on their arrival at school [in Toronto] to have one or more [physical defects].” The community, she commented, is “the missing link in our public health service. . . . It is the responsibility of the community to provide treatment clinics, hospitals, convalescent care, open air classes and other facilities for the eradication of these defects.” Miss Gould offered numerous illustrations of how much more is spent “on curing and patching up the neglected” than on “prevention [which] is cheaper than cure” (“Reports Third,” 1935, p. 36).

Judge R. S. Hosking, of Toronto Juvenile and Family Court, noted that “every criminologist knows that the vast majority of habitual criminals began as truants from school.” He stressed the important of helping the child “to adjust himself that in school discipline, in regular habits of attendance, punctuality, and industry, he develops a freedom, a balance, a poise in life. In short, he becomes an asset, rather than a liability” (“Says Truancy,” 1935, p. 36).

Martin M. Hihn, to address the problem of an increasing juvenile delinquency, “advanced the view that home conditions of the delinquent child must come in for more careful investigation with the health of the parents, financial standing and their general outlook on life taken into consideration” (“See Increase,” 1935, p. 1). Ralph Dugdale cautioned pupil personnel workers not to criticize “the seeming neglect on the part of community agencies” (“See Increase,” 1935, p. 1). The superintendent of the Toronto schools, Dr. C. C. Goldring, addressed the participants at the League’s annual dinner. He stressed the “necessity of proper treatment for children who are below par physically” to stem the failure of over 8,000 students who were not promoted in the Toronto schools “as a result of ill health” in the past year (“Poor Health,” 1935, p. 7). Dr. Goldring also stressed that those parents who believe that a basic education is sufficient “must be convinced that school education is now a far greater necessity for successful living than it was a generation ago.” He then touched on the subject of “economic insecurity.” Based on statistical data pertaining to the United States, he stated that “over 40 percent of the population earns either nothing or only sufficient to subsist” (“Poor Health,” 1935, p. 7). Henry J. Gideon, at the annual dinner, outlined the functions of the League and its outlook for the future. Earlier, at the closing session held in the afternoon, officers of the League were elected (“Education League,” 1935, p. 1)

Annual Convention- 1941: The three-day convention, held in Knoxville, Tennessee, with a registration of about 300 school officials, began on October 20 in the morning and concluded with an evening session featuring addresses by Major Frank L. Beales, an assistant superintendent of schools in Chicago, and Dr. Charles L. Mosher, who address was on the “Evolution of Attendance Service” (Robinson, 1941, p. 7; Rogers, 1941, p. 3). Prior to Dr. Mosher’s address, a staff writer of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* reported an interview with him. Salient selected remarks include the following:

Attendance officers today are concerned with diagnosing and solving the problems which “interfere with the child’s right to have American education and training. . . . The schools today have many special workers, health nurses, and others, many agencies in the community are concerned with child welfare. The attendance worker is the liaison man who finds out what is needed to aid the child and follow through. It is a pathetic thing to men that in so many cases a very little intelligent advice and direction have meant so much.” (Robinson, 1941, p. 7)

Topics on the second day of the convention included “Folk Music in Modern Education” and a talk by the supervisor of the “home and school visitor service of Philadelphia senior high schools” (Robinson, 1941, p. 7). Another speaker, the “legal advisor of the Los Angeles Board of Education’s attendance department,” shared with the conference attendees how he “makes it possible for juvenile movie star – such as Shirley Temple . . . – to work rather than attend public school” with the expectation that they will be tutored “by a teacher approved by the Board of Education” (Rogers, 1941, p. 3.)

A professor of sociology, whose address was “one of the outstanding early convention speeches,” remarked, as reported in the *News-Sentinel*, that the

outmoded rural attendance officer who goes about “warnin” parents to put their “kids” in school solves few of the problems that should be the real aims of attendance workers. . . . He cited actual want of food, clothing, and proper home atmosphere, and he gave some ways in which attendance officers can be a help in those cases, acting as more of a welfare worker rather than a ‘truant officer.’ (“F. W. Spalding,” 1941, p. 14)

Dr. Cole also expressed concern that too many attendance officer positions are “filled solely because of their political connections of previous experience as a constable or deputy sheriff” instead of “good, substantial teachers” (“F. W. Spalding,” 1941, p. 14).

An afternoon trip to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park and an evening social hour concluded the conventions second day. The last day featured the election of officers, additional speakers, and an evening banquet, which included the installation of officers, (Robinson, 1941; Rogers, 1941). Among the many remarks by the Knoxville school child guidance director, one of the last convention speakers, the *News-Sentinel* quoted Curtis Gentry’s address relating to the use of force to deal with a child.

I know you feel sometimes that a boy ought to be paddled. But in my 20 years of teaching I have never seen a case so conquered. Instead of school increasing the misery of the child from a broken home, we should make school so attractive that he will run to it every morning as the finest place under the sun – where he meets playmates and feels the love of a sympathetic teacher. (“Rochester Gets,” 1941, p. 8)

Conclusion

This presenter and topic index of the National League’s Annual Proceedings for the years 1923 to 1940 will be of interest to those who wish to better understand the early pioneering work of the National League of Compulsory Education Officials and its significant role in the development of the school attendance officials. This index of the League’s Annual Proceedings is also intended to complement the *Author Index of the Journal of the International Association of Pupil Personnel Workers*, which was published from 1956 to 1992 (McCullagh & O’Regan, 2002/2003, 2003).

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Shambach, J. Y.: 48, 99, 195, 199 [Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Public Employees Retirement Fund; Director of Department of Public Instruction, Harrisburg; Director of State Child Accounting, Harrisburg, PA]

Sharp, F. T.: 438 [General Secretary of the Big Brother Movement, Toronto, Canada]

Sheridan, E. J.: 22, 28, 70, 117, 133, 228, 298, 299, 301, 325, 341, 356, 361, 371, 374, 375, 401, 409, 430 [President of the League; Chairs of the Committees on Credentials, Publicity and Promotion, Time and Place of Next Convention, and the Executive Committee; Director of Attendance, Newark, NJ; Board of Education]

Smalley, R.: 88 [Associate Professor, School of Applied Social Science, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA]

Smith, L. M.: 221 [Chief Medical Examiner, Board of Education, Pittsburgh, PA]

Smith, M. W.: 110 [School Attendance and Community Relations, State Department of Education, Montgomery, AL]

Southard, R. L.: 50 [Director of Attendance, Woodmere-Hewlett Public Schools]

Sperry, E. B.: 121, 159, 452 [Chief Attendance Officer, Jersey City, NJ]

Stewart, W. J.: 292 [Mayor of Toronto, Toronto, Canada]

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Stoudt, H.: 168 [Duluth, MN]

Stright, K.: 16, 91, 211, 344, 444 [Chair of the Committee on Resolutions; Director of Attendance & Census; Director of Child Welfare, Gary, IN]

Stullken, E. H.: 8 [Principal of Montefiore Special School for Boys, Chicago, IL]

Swearingen, J. E.: 68 [Visiting Teacher, Columbia, SC]

Sylvester, C. W.: 196 [Director, Division of Vocational Education, Baltimore, MD]

Tamblyn, W. J.: 209 [Principal, Junior Vocational School, Toronto, Canada]

Thomas, J. F.: 143 [Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Detroit, MI]

Thompson, P. E.: 233 [Attendance Officer, South-Western High School, Detroit, MI]

Tullos, F.: 69, 157 [Chief Attendance Officer, Dade, FL]

Upham, N. C.: 35, 109, 125, 342, 391 [Chair of the Committee on Resolutions; Chief Attendance Officer, Fitchburg, MA]

Walker, E. H.: 100 [President, Alabama School for Attendance Workers, Tuscaloosa, AL]

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Whitman, G. E.: 44, 172, 227, 255 [League secretary, Director of Attendance, Chief of Bureau of Attendance and Placement, Cleveland, OH]
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Wiens, D. J.: 112 [Chief, Bureau of Attendance, Cleveland, OH]
Wignall, A. B.: 54, 337, 338, 368 [Director of Organization and Legislation, Chair of the Committees on Legislation and Publicity and Promotion; Chief Attendance Officer, Joliet, IL]
Wilkinson, G. C.: 402 [First Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Washington, DC]
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Wolfrum, A.: 208 [Chicago, IL]
Wood, H.: 423 [President, Optimists International, Springfield, IL]
Wright, G. H.: 23 [Assistant County Superintendent of Schools, Urbana, IL]
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

James G. McCullagh, Ed.D., M.S.S.W, J.D., is professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Northern Iowa. In 2002, he was presented with the Outstanding Person Award by the IAPPW. Genevieve K. Byrne is a senior majoring in Social Work, and Vanessa Wunderlich was an advanced standing MSW student who recently was awarded the Master of Social Work degree from the University of Northern Iowa.