

# **WILLIAM LESTER BODINE: THE HONORARY LIFE PRESIDENTIAL YEARS, 1917-1946**

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*The primary purpose of this article is to share with the reader the beliefs, on a variety of topics, of William Lester Bodine, co-founder, first president, and first Honorary Life President of the National League of Compulsory Education Officials. The convention's annual proceedings are the source for his reflections, ideas, aspirations, and goals. He was the League! He was the "founder" and its leader. At each annual convention, except in 1938, he addressed League delegates. This paper is organized by five major themes: National League, Attendance and Attendance Officers, Child Welfare, Girls and Women, and Law and Crime. The themes interrelate with one another. The overarching theme for Mr. Bodine was that education, "the brightest jewel in the crown of citizenship," should be available to all children and that all children attend and not be impeded from attending school and obtaining a necessary and vital education. A visionary leader in the first-half of the Twentieth Century, Association members in the Twenty-First Century will appreciate his memorable statements reflecting a continuing commitment to the welfare of children and youth, including increased emphasis on prevention of truancy and delinquency; equal opportunity for women; and, improved salaries and pensions for attendance officers.*

William Lester Bodine, co-founder, first president, and first Honorary Life President of the National League of Compulsory Education Officials (N.L.C.E.O.) was its visionary leader from its inception in 1911, until his retirement on 31 August 1946, as the Superintendent of the Bureau of Compulsory Education of the Chicago Board of Education (Bodine, 1946; McCullagh, 2005). The League, organized in 1911, with Hasso Rudolph Pestalozzi, in Chicago, has continued to transform and focus its identity through association name changes while maintaining the founders' mission (McCullagh, 2002). In 1936, the League was renamed the National League to Promote School Attendance (Bodine, 1940, p. 20; "John A. Parker," 1936), The International Association

of Pupil Personnel Workers in 1956 (“Out of,” 1961), and, in 2002, The International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention (“Message from,” 2002).

The primary purpose of this article is to share with the reader Mr. Bodine’s beliefs on a variety of topics. The convention’s annual proceedings are the source for his reflections, ideas, aspirations, and goals. He was the League! He was the “founder” and its leader. At each annual convention, except in 1938, he addressed League delegates. This paper is organized by five major themes: National League, Attendance and Attendance Officers, Child Welfare, Girls and Women, and Law and Crime. The themes interrelate with one another. The overarching theme for Mr. Bodine was that education, “the brightest jewel in the crown of citizenship,” should be available to all children and that all children attend and not be impeded from attending school and obtaining a necessary and vital education.

The League, beginning with its Thirteenth Annual Convention in 1923, published for the first time the proceedings of its convention. Proceedings were published annually through 1940, with the possible exception of 1935 (McCullagh, Byrne, & Wunderlich, 2003-2004). Beginning in 1941, the League published a News Letter 4 or 5 times yearly. These publications are a rich resource not only for an understanding of the topics and speakers chosen for each annual convention, but also for understanding decisions made at business meetings, the League’s development, and ultimately its history for more than two decades. The proceedings are important documents of the Association’s treasure trove.

Mr. Bodine and other Honorary Life Presidents were members of the League’s Executive Committee and were “ex-officio members of all Committees with power to

vote. . . . The term of the Honorary Life Presidents is for life—the highest honor of the League, and requires no annual re-election” (N.L.C.E.O., 1925, p. 6). In 1925, just Mr. Bodine and three ex-presidents served as Honorary Life Presidents. The Constitution and By-Laws of the League “adopted for the coming year, 1938-39” stated

The Honorary Life Presidents are members consisting of the Founder of the League and other former Presidents who have served two or more terms and who have by achievement for League Welfare entitled them to the highest honors within the gift of this organization. They are elected for life and are ex-officio members of all committees. (N.L.T.P.S.A., 1938, p. 121, 124)

As the first elected president on 2 June 1911, Bodine was reelected annually, serving until 11 October 1916, when he completed his fifth term as president, at the League’s sixth annual convention held in Newark, New Jersey (McCullagh, 2005). Subsequently chosen as the League’s first Honorary Life President, Mr. Bodine served as Chair of the Nominations Committee, which inevitably led to the election of future League leaders; Chair of the Committee on Past Presidents to consider a new name for the League in the 1930s; Chair of the Committee on Constitution and By-laws in 1925, and again in 1937-1939; Chair, Committee on Arrangements for the Chicago convention in 1920, 1933, and 1937; and, eulogist for a number of League leaders, among other important leadership assignments. Mr. Bodine attended every annual conference beginning with the inaugural 1911 conference during which he “had the honor of presiding” through 1940, except one in 1938, “caused by his first serious illness in 25 years” (Bodine, 1940, p. 19).

## **NATIONAL LEAGUE**

This section will begin with provisions pertaining to the “Object” of the League as set forth in the 1925 Constitution and By-Laws of the National League of Compulsory

Education Officials, followed by the 1938-39 Constitution and By-Laws of the National League to Promote School Attendance. Mr. Bodine, as previously stated, was the Chair of the Committee on Constitution and By-laws in 1925, and again in 1937-1939. Mr. Bodine's reflections on the founding of the League and his role in its organization and development is then discussed. Subsequently, numerous other topics are covered. Readers will recognize overlap among topics.

### **Objective of the National League**

At the Fifteenth Annual Convention, held in 1925, at Duluth, Minnesota, Mr. Bodine, Chair of the Committee on Constitution and By-Laws, submitted a revised draft to of the League's Constitution and By-Laws to the delegates. Subsequently, on motion by the Chair and then seconded, the document was unanimously adopted (N.L.C.E.O, 1925). The object of the League, as set forth in the 1925 Constitution, is as follows:

The object of this organization is to promote the education and school attendance of children: to expand the work of compulsory education throughout the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada, and to nationalize the spirit of co-operation between public officials engaged in service for the welfare, education, and protection of the children.

This organization shall be independent of all other organizations, and absolutely non-political and non-sectarian. Its object shall be at all times to promote the welfare of children of school age, and to reduce truancy and irregular attendance; to protect the interests of public departments of attendance, and cooperate with school authorities in the maintenance of the ideals of education, patriotism, character building, and good citizenship, and to maintain official co-operation in child accounting and legislation for the advancement of compulsory school attendance. (N.A.C.E.O., 1925, p. 3-4)

The object of the League, as set forth in the Constitution and By-Laws, which was adopted for the year 1938-39, subject to final ratification at the convention in 1939, is as follows:

The object of this organization is to promote the education, attendance, and social welfare of the children of the United States of America, and the Dominion of Canada; to encourage an active co-operation between the administrative personnel and workers in attendance, educational, and pupil adjustment departments in public service; to co-operate with private organizations or citizens interested in the intellectual, moral and protective welfare of the pupil personnel; to hold an Annual Conference at which programs will give opportunity for the presentation and discussion of topics pertaining to juvenile welfare, truancy, delinquency, problem cases, education, and under privileged children, and other social trends and techniques of service in modern education incidental to the promotion of attendance and welfare in school children.

This organization shall be absolutely non-political and non-sectarian and independent of all other organizations. We believe that in each state or city having attendance Departments or Bureaus or public or private organizations in attendance or social welfare work, local option should be respected in title and administrative privilege in official service in the enforcement of compulsory attendance laws or such methods of pupil adjustment as they may deem expedient for functional scope.

This organization believes in the value of co-operative interest in our work between Superintendents of Schools and their assistants, Attendance Departments Executives, Principals, Teachers, Parent-Teacher Organizations, and all public and private Social Agencies interested in Child Welfare. (N.L.T.P.S.A., 1938, p. 121)

### **Origination and Development of the League**

**1926:** I am proud of the fact that I am the founder of this organization and have lived to see that my work for your interests has not been in vain. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

The Twentieth Annual Convention, held in Rochester, New York, in 1930, was the occasion for Mr. Bodine (1930a), during the opening session, to speak on “Our Twentieth Anniversary.” It was a time to look back and reflect on the beginnings of the League, to remember the charter members, to recognize members who joined in those early years at the second and later conventions, to promote increased attendance at the annual conventions, to sadly recall members who have died, and to recognize that the

“Old Guard” will pass on, but also that that the newer members will continue on. Other remarks include the following:

**1930:** We have attained the objective of our Constitution. Our conventions have been instructive, harmonious, and of inestimable value to attendance work. We may be small in number, but large in importance. Quality is to be considered equal to **quantity** when **achievement** crowns the work of the faithful few. We **have** progressed. Our proceedings constitute the lamp of knowledge in problem cases. Its rays have illuminated twenty six states. We have improved the **personnel** of attendance workers, and raised their standard to the ideals of efficiency and intellectual merit, of artistic concept and cultural poise. The future beckons encouragement for greater appreciation of our individual and official worth, if **all** educators and the public realized that attendance workers are entitled to a parity with the teaching corps in salaries, courtesy, and importance to community welfare. (Bodine, 1930a, p. 17)

**1931:** Our League is twenty-one years old tonight. It is no longer the child of experimental fancies, strolling through the maze of a theoretical dreamland, but has become the adult of wisdom and vision, seasoned with experiences and sound logic in the solution of problem cases. (Bodine, 1931b, p. 9)

At the opening session of the twenty-fourth annual convention at St. Louis in 1934, which John B. Quinn called to order, Mr. Bodine shared memories of his boyhood days in St. Louis and his pleasure that the convention was being held in St. Louis. He added:

I organized this League in 1911, and we met at the Sherman House in Chicago. I had sent out invitations for the meeting. When I went to the hotel that morning, the first delegate was John Quinn of St. Louis. So he belongs to the Old Guard. (Bodine, 1934a, p. 9)

Our League during its twenty-four years of existence has been an instructive organization in promoting national co-operation of school officials in the maintenance of standards of attendance and development of efficient personnel for social service and juvenile betterment. (Bodine, 1934b, p. 12)

**1937:** The infant League, cradled in Chicago twenty-seven years ago, has grown up to the glorified maturity of Success, and the Hope Triumphant, in which I rejoice as the father who never lost faith in its inevitable destiny. As I envision 600 before me tonight, my hope and work has not been in vain. (Bodine, 1937a, p. 25)

**1940:** [M]y heart is filled with the joy of a father who has lived to see the infant League, cradled at the Hotel Sherman in Chicago, in 1911, to grow to a maturity glorified by a labor of love, and to achieve the natal honor of having thirty candles radiate the golden glow of Faith Triumphant on this anniversary birthday in 1940. (Bodine, 1940, p. 17)

### **League's Purpose**

**1924:** We are here for the conservation of childhood; to promote school attendance and suppress truancy; and to maintain the American ideal of **patriotism** and **progressive education**. (Bodine, 1924a, p. 9)

**1933:** Our organization has the laudable objective of public welfare, and constructive activities for the intellectual and moral conservation of the youth of the nation. (Bodine, 1933, p. 6)

**1940:** Our organization has always stood for the highest ideals of modern civilization—namely—to conserve the educational, social and moral welfare of the school children of the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada. (Bodine, 1940, p. 17)

### **Annual Conferences/Conventions**

**1928:** Our convention is not one of quantity but of quality, and practical knowledge. (Bodine, 1928b, p. 70)

**1931:** Our convention [in Toronto] is not a very large one but we are large in instructive value—in meeting every year and exchanging our ideas. Nearly everyone here represents a city or a state. Old man Depression has interfered with our attendance. (Bodine, 1931a, p. 9)

**1932:** The economic distress prevalent throughout this nation has materially decreased the attendance at this important and instructive conference, just as it has affected every educational and social service convention held during the year, but the League has survived 22 years and will continue to live. (Bodine, 1932, p. 4)

**1933:** We have survived the depression and met every year—thanks to a spirit of loyalty and sustained interest led by the great states of New Jersey, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Tennessee, and the Canadian cities of Toronto and Windsor. In this picture of the faithful, Chicago has stood every year as an outstanding figure of fidelity among the sisterhood of cities. This has been made possible by the co-operation of our Educational Department, Board of Education, and Bureau of Compulsory Education. (1933, p. 6)

**1940:** Our annual Conferences have survived the drab days of economic depression. We have silenced the cynical laugh of other groups who thought we would not last. (Bodine, 1940, p. 17)

### **Change of the Organization's Name**

In 1932, as the Depression continued, the League, at its Executive Committee Meeting at the Convention at Columbus—and mindful that delegates came from Canada—led Mr. Gideon to suggest that the organization's name be changed to the "International League of Compulsory Education Officials." It was moved by Mr. Bodine that "'change of name' be a special order of business at the next convention." It was moved and "carried that the Chair appoint a committee of the past presidents of the League, with the senior past president as chairman to consider the advisability of recommending change in the work of the League to broaden its scope" (Ryan, 1932, p. 55). It was not until 1936, at the Annual Convention when Mr. Bodine, Chair of the Committee of Past Presidents, that an extensive report was issued, entitled "Result on the Referendum on Change of Name." The report was adopted unanimously on October 15, 1936 (Bodine, 1936a, p. 9). In 1940, Mr. Bodine offered the following summary:

In 1932, the debatable question of a change of name was referred to a Committee of Past Presidents who studied the question for several years, harmonized divergent opinions, and recommended that the question be *settled definitely and for all time to come* by a referendum vote of all members including absentees. The present name of *National League To Promote School Attendance* was unanimously adopted in 1936 as a result of that referendum vote, announced at the Springfield, Massachusetts Conference in that year. (Bodine, 1940, p. 20)

### **Future of the National League**

**1927:** The membership of our League is less than 300 and average attendance of annual conventions seldom exceeds 125. Yet there are 921 attendance offices in 31 cities alone. There are between 2,800 and 3,000 more scattered throughout the states, towns, counties and provinces in the United States and Canada, who never have joined the League or attended our conventions—or displayed any symptoms of interest. They have reposed in a continuous dream of indifference for 17



years—evidently in an effort to equal the world’s sleeping record of 20 years established—in the gray mists of the past—by a citizen of New York state known as Mr. Rip Van Winkle. (Bodine, 1927, p. 18)

**1936:** For twenty-five years we have had a small group attendance at most of our annual conventions. With the exception of the large attendance at the Chicago, St. Louis, Rochester, and Newark conventions, the attendance elsewhere have annually averaged only about thirty-five delegates. The economic depression was a deterrent influence within recent years. Chicago, St. Louis, Baltimore, and Newark have kept the League alive. Our *greatest need is more members*, particularly in the East. (Bodine, 1936a, p. 9)

**1936:** Your speaker hopes to live to see this League increase its membership and that the *quantity* of the future will be up to the standard of *quality* of the present. Let us be optimistic that eventually all attendance workers will come to their own; that more Boards of Education and Superintendents of Schools will encourage the growth of this organization and pay expenses of delegates to our annual assemblages. (Bodine, 1936b, p. 45)

**1937:** This organization has survived the economic depression and held its annual assemblages during these drab days when many other organizations fell into the hands of the Mortician of Fate, to be embalmed as memories of the groups that failed. *No organization can endure without the revenue to meet functional expenses. Hence, renewed memberships, or new membership, are essential to maintain every organization for survival.* (Bodine, 1937a, p. 24)

**1940:** The future of our organization depends on greater interest in an increase in membership. . . . The League would never have had thirty candles on its birthday cake if it had not been for the needed periodic “blood transfusions” given to it by the Chicago, St. Louis, Washington, Toronto, and Pittsburgh conventions, and the impetus given by increased membership in the South and elsewhere by the marvelous productive energy of the late Martin M. Hihn. Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Missouri and Maryland for some years, have done their part it making it possible for us to keep out of the red. (Bodine, 1940, p. 19)

### **Remembering the Departed**

Mr. Bodine typically also remembered and paid tribute at annual conventions to those League members who had died since the last convention. In 1931, he eulogized Mrs. Edith L. Groves with these final words: “Yes, her work in the kingdom of childhood on earth was watched by the angels and they took her away to the Kingdom of

Childhood in Heaven when Heaven claims its own and there she is welcome as the Mother of Progressive Education in Canada—not only in Toronto” (Bodine, 1931a, p. 9).

Charles Augustus MacCall, the second president of the League, who served from 1916 to 1919, and Honorary Life President, was elegantly eulogized by Charles Alcorn, a Past President of the League (Alcorn, 1930, p. 37). Mr. Bodine, in his address, also fondly remembered “Charlie.” “Our Convention, without that Nature’s Nobleman—Chas. MacCall—seems queer and incomplete. Weird as the statement may seem, the face of my old pal—Charlie MacCall—Prince of Good Fellows, appears before me tonight, smiling thru the drab veil of the spirit world. He is here tonight—yes, here, consecrated in our hearts—**now and forevermore**” (Bodine, 1930a, p. 19).

In 1932, Bodine remembered “our late and beloved President, George L. Harding of Akron, Ohio, who has gone to that sacred land of sweet peace beyond the stars where angels breathe his name in reverence for the great work he did on earth, for the school children of Ohio, and America. He will be missed and mourned. George Harding is dead, but his work will live, and be glorified in our hearts, forever more” (Bodine, 1932, p. 4). In 1934, at the St. Louis convention, he eulogized the late Frederick J. Lane, Special Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools in Chicago (Bodine, 1934c, p. 96).

## **ATTENDANCE AND ATTENDANCE OFFICERS**

### **Compulsory School Attendance Laws**

**1925:** Enforcement of compulsory attendance laws against parents in every state will obviate overcrowding juvenile corrective institutions. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 13)

### **Attendance Departments**

**1923:** Most of the attendance departments of this country have become standardized, and are no longer the dumping ground for spavined politicians. (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

**1924:** Upon attendance departments rests the task and plain duty of enforcing compulsory education laws when moral suasion fails. (Bodine, 1924a, p. 8)

**1932:** The theme of our program is “The Attendance Department as the Conservator of Child Welfare.” That has been intensified in our official service, by the economic crisis of poverty and unemployment that confronted us last Winter, when the attendance officer became the active sympathetic humanitarian and social worker, in addition to other duties in the promotion of school attendance. It will be repeated this Winter and we will have to co-operate again with Relief organizations to rescue thousands of little brothers and sisters of the poor who lack shoes, clothing, and food. (Bodine, 1932, p. 4)

**1932:** Greater appropriation for – and less economy on attendance departments would obviate the mounting cost for custodial care of children in institutions, and minimize the population of penitentiaries in the future. (Bodine, 1932, p. 5)

**1933:** Thru the past three drab years of economic distress, when the universal prayer and pathetic appeal of indigent children has been “give us this day our daily bread,” the attendance departments have proved the value of human equation in a labor of love. Their effective efficiency in social service by active contact with public and private relief agencies has rescued the destitute; maintained the standards of attendance and done their part in glorifying the ideals of progressive sociology under handicapped conditions. (Bodine, 1933, p. 6)

**1933:** The expenditure on attendance departments is a judicious investment because an adequate staff of Truant Officers mean economy to taxpayers and school boards by diminishing future costs of custodial care of juvenile offenders in corrective institutions. . . . The Truant Officers reach the home and have an advantage over other social workers, because they are backed by a state compulsory education law under which negligent parents can be prosecuted. (Bodine, 1933, p. 9)

**1934:** The Compulsory Attendance Departments, through their field forces, constitute the essential and active contact between home and school. (Bodine, 1934b, p. 10)

**1934:** The Attendance Departments have proved that they are efficient units of utility, not only for the schools but for community welfare. During the drab days of economic depression, their humanitarian activities in helping indigent children, and aiding in the rehabilitation of homes, notably demonstrated that law enforcement officers have sympathetic hearts as well as artistic concepts of social service, and are capable of dual efficiency. (Bodine, 1934b, p. 12)

**1937:** The attendance department, with workers have the advantage of the practical, as well as artistic concept, as a unit of Specialized Service, will *always*

be a necessary branch of school service to make expedient the effective contact with parenthood and teacher for satisfactory maintenance of attendance standards, and to co-operate with the school in the scholastic and social needs of the student. (Bodine, 1937b, p. 115)

### **Attendance Officers/Truant Officers**

**1923:** Our work, like the work of the preacher, and the teacher, is a labor of love; we are the Samaritans of the schools with pitying hands of charity and correction—to redeem the nation's young. (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

**1925:** Eventually the truant officer (or attendance officer) must be the exclusive social worker at the schools to keep pace with progressive sociology, because truancy is the keystone of social science. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 13)

**1925:** Let us have more and better paid trained and true class room teachers and experienced attendance officers and fewer fads of experimental amateurs known as visiting teachers, who are often young and inexperienced and lacking in practical knowledge to become wizards of social economics. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 13)

**1926:** There is an unnecessary multiplicity of social workers at schools. The attendance officer should be the unified retention. In the dawn of the era we see the new personnel—the modern attendance worker with intelligent vision of social science, supplemented by experience, and efficient solution of problem cases. A **proven** success is better than an **experimental** fancy. This League is on record as indorsing attendance officers as the eventual exclusive social worker at school on all matters pertaining to attendance and child welfare. Any deviation from that pronouncement would be a retreat into the ever reaching, insatiable clutches of a great private social syndicate, with its propagandists—a group of dreamy women and lady—like men who are seeking to control child welfare from the cradle to the grave, and subordinate attendance division to scant recognition. (Bodine, 1926, p. 8-9)

**1928:** The attendance officer has a material advantage over all other social workers, because he, or she, has a state law to invoke as a last, but effective, resort when necessary. (Bodine, 1928a, p. 9)

**1933:** It is a ridiculous error on the part of some theorists that Truant Officers are “untrained.” Effective and efficient activity seasoned with years of experience qualifies their personnel for diagnostic ability, to maintain the standard of social service incidental to the promotion of attendance and correction of truancy. Annual reports verify the unimpeachable effect of constructive achievement. (Bodine, 1933, p. 9)

**1934:** The Truant Officer joins hands with the teacher and the mother, to form the precious trinity in child character building, to achieve the intellectual and moral uplift of the child. (Bodine, 1934b, p. 10)

**1934:** The Chicago Board of Education in 1933 abolished all its social workers in field service except the Truant Officers, and retained our officers as the survival of the fittest – capable of being equal to all emergencies in social as well as attendance work. This confidence was not misplaced. They have made “good.” (Bodine, 1934b, p. 13)

Mr. Bodine, at the 1936 convention in St. Louis, commended the new Chicago Superintendent of Schools, while also noting that the Superintendent increased the staff of attendance officers from 108 to 126. Mr. Bodine again remarked, as he did in 1934, that visiting teachers in Chicago were abolished. He continued:

**1936:** Our officers, after supplementing their civil service examinations with special training at Loyola and DePaul universities, have demonstrated the fact that they can efficiently meet all social service emergencies incidental to the promotion of attendance and pupil adjustment. They give full measure of activity between homes and schools as humanitarians, as social workers, and are law enforcement officers when necessary to maintain the standards of attendance and social welfare of the children in our schools. (Bodine, 1936b, p. 45)

**1937:** In the dawn of the new era the modern attendance worker has kept pace with the trend of the times, and productive achievement, by giving full measure of devotion to his, or her, duties as the essential link between home and school. (Bodine, 1937b, p. 115)

**1937:** Our officers are social workers in *fact*, if not in *name*. (Bodine, 1937b, p. 116)

**1937:** But I wish to stress the fact that the *attendance* representatives in school services *should never* be the *forgotten man* and the *forgotten woman* in receiving *proper recognition* and *deserved credit* for their *essential* cooperation and diligent fidelity for the *social* and *educational* welfare of the children of America, and the Dominion of Canada. (Bodine, 1937b, p. 117)

**1940:** We are not a group of *quantity*. But we are an important group of *quality*. (Bodine, 1940, p. 17)

**1940:** After 41 years continuous service as Superintendent of Compulsory Education in Chicago—where we have tried many experimental theories—I have been impressed with the fact that the attendance worker and probation officer

have an advantage over all other social workers because they have an effective reserve asset as law enforcement officers when social service technique and moral suasion fail, and juvenile offenders are taken into court as a last but generally effective resort in flagrant cases. (Bodine, 1940, p. 21)

### **Adequate Pensions**

In 1924, and again in 1936, Mr. Bodine chose the identical title—“Silver Threads in the Service”—to address the need for adequate pensions for attendance officials upon their retirement and his frustration that otherwise qualified men and women are discriminated by employers beginning at age 50 and forced to retire at age 65. At the 1927 convention, Mr. Bodine also addressed his concern of inadequate pensions for attendance officers (Bodine, 1927, p. 15). His remarks follow, including more extensive remarks from his 1936 address, which reflects his sense of urgency for action to be taken on behalf of attendance officers.

**1924:** [W]hen we grow old in the work after years of service, and find ourselves—like teachers—confronted with retirement and an inadequate pension that is so small that it looks like a half rate ticket to the poorhouse. (Bodine, 1924b, p. 94)

**1924:** Pension laws for teachers and attendance officers should be put on a livable basis. We save children, but that is all that we can save on the salaries that we get. (Bodine, 1924b, p. 94-95)

**1924:** Let *us* become interested in pension laws for every attendance officer. The world needs to be educated into giving men and women over sixty more generous and humane consideration when they retire after years of service in that labor of love—the welfare of the children in our schools. (Bodine, 1924b, p. 96)

**1927:** The survey shows that in comparatively few cities, provision is made for pensions to attendance officers when the hands of Father Time place the white crown of old age on their heads and retires them from service to live on the fading memories of a lovable profession—with a wage that was barely livable. (1927, p. 12)

**1927:** When an attendance officer—after years of saving children—has had no opportunity to save anything else on his or her small salary, and when fidelity to duty grows gray in the twilight of a life that has been devoted to a labor of love—

provision is made in some cities for a pension. But it is generally so meager that the check looks like a half-way ticket to the poor house. Better pension laws for attendance officers should be advocated and pushed by this League. (Bodine, 1927, p. 15)

**1936:** “Pensions” seems to have been the forgotten subject on our programs for years. Hence, my topic tonight will be “*Silver Threads in the Service.*” . . . . Many School Boards, with legislative enactment behind them, have compulsory retirement rules for teachers and principals, automatically at the age of 65. No matter if they are in sound mental and physical condition the mandate to “leave the service” must be followed. Teachers, throughout the country, have the consolation of pensions ranging up to \$125 per month in large cities. . . . But Attendance Officers are only provided for by pensions in a few cities. They have been *saving* children for years and that is *all* they can *save* on the small salaries they receive. Maybe they are laying up treasures in Heaven, but they are a long way from their bank account while living. (Bodine, 1936c, p. 73)

**1936:** Mr. Bodine concluded, after referring to selected cities and its pensions and retirement age requirements]: As every progressive community does not forget its teachers, so should the spirit of altruism prevail, and not make the Attendance Workers the Forgotten Man and Forgotten Woman, to sit in the twilight of life with only the pitying but cold hand of Charity to touch their bowed heads while unsympathetic tradition mocks them with the theory that “it isn’t what *you used to be* but what you are today.” (Bodine, 1936c, p. 74)

### **Salaries of Attendance Officers**

At the Seventeenth Annual Convention held in Cincinnati in 1927, Mr. Bodine reported on the results of a survey he had sent to the heads of attendance departments in the United States and Canada. Titled “Salaries and Standards—A National Survey,” survey questions pertained to salaries of attendance officers and heads, pensions, qualifications for appointment, maximum age for compulsory attendance, among other questions (Bodine, 1927, p. 13-20).

**1925:** Truant officers and teachers save children but that is all they save on the small salaries they receive. There is nothing so cheap as brains. Jack Dempsey makes more money in one hour than twenty college presidents do in a year. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 11)

**1926:** I repeat what I said at Springfield, Massachusetts [1923]—teachers and attendance officers save children, but it is all they can save on the rotten small salaries they receive. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

**1927:** It is a revelation—particularly on small salaries—in consideration of the responsibilities incidental to attendance and welfare work. Most of you, in giving a full measure of devotion to your vocation in life, may be “laying up treasures in Heaven,” but your bank accounts on earth in the competitive life of materialism are almost as invisible as the funds in spiritual Paradise. (Bodine, 1927, p. 12)

**1927:** After consideration of the facts and figures in this survey my logical deduction is as follows:

1. Average small salaries and humble position in life of attendance workers in some localities is due to **lack of appreciation** of the **importance of welfare work**; to the exaggerated ego of some educators who regard attendance officers as unworthy of **equitable** consideration in the **educational wage scale**. And many attendance officers bow too much—in meek and lowly submission—to the fitful fancies of a minority type of principals that can be candidly, but truthfully, classified as a cross between an “**automatic autocrat**” and a “**neurotic nagger**.” This type treats officers as menial adjuncts of the educational system.
2. Lack of general public interest in constructive agencies, and correction of truancy and delinquency among juveniles. . . . (Bodine, 1927, p. 18)

**1927:** May we also see the day when the salaries of attendance officers and teachers will be equally increased to such a deserved high standard, that the results in the uplift of children will justify a financial investment that will yield a national moral and educational gain and become the **greatest fundamental asset for ideal citizenship and community welfare**. (Bodine, 1927, p. 18)

## THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN

### Adult Education

Concerned about adult illiteracy and the right of illiterates to vote in elections and influence elections outcomes, Honorary Life President Bodine, in 1929, addressed the need for adult education in his speech entitled “The Big Question of the Little Citizen.”

**1929:** Does this [i.e., adult illiteracy] not indicate the necessity of national need of adult education for the sake of the Little Citizen as well as the big one, and the encouragement of Americanization classes, civic patriotism, night schools, and community centers? In seeking the higher education of the child we should not overlook the need of the lower education of the parent. Elimination of illiteracy would safeguard the interests of the children, socialize the home that produces



children; and by the uplift of uneducated parents, reduce the number of backward, subnormal and truant children, from whose ranks so many juvenile delinquents are garnered, the pathetic sequel of environment and heredity. (Bodine, 1929a, p. 14.

### **Boy Scouts**

**1929:** Organizations, such as the Boy Scouts are of inestimable value in the solution of the juvenile problem. In over 20,000 prosecutions in the Juvenile Court during the thirty years I have been Superintendent of Compulsory Education in Chicago only ten Boy Scouts were among the defendants. Chicago is now arranging to place a Boy Scouts troops in its public schools, and allow the use of its buildings for Scout meetings. These statistics should interest exponents of behavioristic philosophy. (Bodine, 1929a, p. 15)

### **Community Obligation**

**1939:** The community has a definite obligation to do its share in maintaining attendance standards by providing small parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, and other constructive opportunities for child welfare. (Bodine, 1939, p. 71)

### **Compulsory School Attendance Laws**

**1925:** Enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws against parents in every State will obviate overcrowding juvenile corrective institutions. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 13)

### **Economic Crisis: The Great Depresson**

Mr. Bodine, at the conference in Toronto in October 1931, addressed the delegates on “The Economic Crisis and its Effect on Children.” He set forth the dire impact that the Great Depression had on children as noted below:

The biggest problem of today is the effect the economic crisis of the world will have on the children. . . . Truancy is a product largely of poverty, and essays on science are not digestible when food does not exist. . . . Conditions, throughout a universe of unrest for the past two years have left a trail of poverty strewn with the broken hope and shattered ideals of social service; destroying much of our constructive work and inevitably increasing truancy, delinquency, and dependency among the children. It has now reached its climax in panic psychology, unemployment, and world wide economic depression. As a result, thousands of children go to school hungry. Mental retardation, and impaired

physical strength, lack of food, shoes, and clothing, create the depressive child. (Bodine, 1931b, p. 10)

It was also the occasion to call for attendance workers and others to “unite in relief work this winter under the banner of alert Humanitarianism to save Children of Fate from becoming Children of State” (Bodine, 1931b, p. 10). Bodine, after detailing the extent of unemployment in the United States and voluntary efforts being done to handle the emergency, set forth goals for attendance workers:

Our work should be to expand activity in the salvation of the destitute; to soften the enforcement of compulsory education law with pity and mercy for the poor; to help hungry children in school; to prosecute less, and relieve poverty more. Let our slogan be “Hard Times call for a Soft Heart.” We can, through the “Conference Plan” and intelligent vision of social service, accomplish much by moral suasion, and thus obviate necessity of court action. (Bodine, 1931b, p. 8)

While this paper is primarily focused on Mr. Bodine as the visionary leader of the National League, it also chronicles his remarkable ability to put his words into action as the Superintendent of Compulsory Education. Mrs. Lillian Batdorf, a member of the Chicago Department of Compulsory Education, detailed Mr. Bodine’s efforts to help children during the economic crisis when, in 1934, she spoke on “Social Services in the Schools.”

In the Fall of 1931 when the need for a Relief Division within the Bureau of Compulsory Education became urgent, Superintendent Wm. L. Bodine instituted such a division as part of the organization of the Bureau, and it has received his whole-hearted support as a necessity in the promotion of school attendance. Since that time, the Truant Officers and Headquarters Staff have been instrumental in obtaining clothing (as well as all forms of relief) for thousands of Chicago’s needy school children. . . . The Truant Officers, always bearing in mind Superintendent Wm L. Bodine’s admonition that – “Hard times calls for a soft heart,” have found more ways than one of assisting impoverished families. (Batdorf, 1934, p. 65)

Her address included numerous examples of how truant officers helped children and families. It also speaks to Bodine’s effective administration as Superintendent, Mrs.

Batdorf remarked, that the Board of Education recognized the “ability of Truant Officers as social service workers, for during the economy program when other branches of social service work in the schools were abolished, the Bureau of compulsory Education was permitted to remain intact” (Batdorf, 1934, p. 67).

Mrs. Batdorf also noted that Mr. Bodine originated the Conference Plan “some years ago.” “It is a humane, logical procedure in the handling of problem cases. Parents, pupil, Truant Officer, teacher and Principal meet to consider the case of the child. The plan acts as a balance wheel, checks hasty court action, and gives time for adjustments” (Batdorf, 1934, p. 68). Mr. Bodine, in 1931, remarked that “under the ‘Conference Plan’ we get at the fundamental cause of truancy. The school authorities then know what procedure to follow to adjust the case, if possible, and obviate court action. The personnel of truant officers, or attendance officers,--whichever you want to call them,-- has improved to attain that standardization necessary for diagnostic ability to cope with problem cases” (Bodine, 1931c, p. 46).

**1939:** Poverty has a definite relationship with truancy. In order to safeguard attendance levels, our Bureau of Compulsory Education has, for years, maintained a Relief Division for needy children. It co-operates with all public and private Social Agencies. (Bodine, 1939, p. 70)

**1939:** In fact, no group of workers in school service or pupil personnel work is more active in humanitarian, and constructive social work, than the officers and Headquarters Staff of the Chicago Bureau of Compulsory Education. They demonstrate that the Law Enforcement Officer can also successfully operate in a dual capacity as a Social Worker—going to Court only as a last resort in exceptional cases, if moral suasion fails. (Bodine, 1939, p. 70)

## **Education**

**1927:** Education is the brightest jewel in the crown of citizenship. It radiates the golden light of knowledge to ambitious youth to qualify for success in professional and vocational life. It safeguards the welfare of the republic and is essential to its survival. (Bodine, 1927b, p. 115)

**1932:** Education is the brightest jewel in the crown of citizenship—the greatest safeguard for society and republics future. (Bodine, 1932, p. 5)

## **Fathers**

**1926:** And in the enforcement of discipline among normal truants in the home, the corrective hand of the father now is better than the hand of the law in the future. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

**1926:** Fathers should take more interest in school attendance of their children and not make it all the mother's burden. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

**1936:** Blessed is the boy who can walk and *talk* with his father—if that father is worthy or respect for constructive, decent companionship and is inspirational to the ambition and scholastic progress of hopeful childhood. But many fathers have a negative attitude towards the great opportunity our public schools present for the academic and vocational training of their children. (Bodine, 1936b, p. 44)

## **Federal Department of Education**

**1929:** The national survey made by Federal authorities, shows that five million people in the United States, over the age of ten years, are unable to read or write in any language. Fifteen million others have not sufficient education to make intelligent use of newspapers. One million five hundred thousand boys and girls in our public schools each year fail to pass their grades. With these statistics showing illiteracy and mental retardation in this nation, is it not apparent that education should have a chair in the President's cabinet, to protect and promote the intellectual welfare of the nation; to combat illiteracy and promote education for the schools, and training of the Republic's future citizens. (Bodine, 1929a, p. 13)

## **Moral Education**

**1923:** Moral education should be expanded in our schools. This is God's country—yes, with God forgotten in many homes where many fathers are often truant from church and forget to pray except then there is an earthquake or a cyclone. The moral training of the child is neglected in such homes, and its whereabouts outside of school hours leads to delinquency. (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

**1925:** Laws cannot legislate morals into all human breasts, but moral education and cooperation between the home, the school, and the church would be a constructive factor in the lives of the children of today to safeguard good law-abiding citizens of the future. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 10)

## **Prevention**

**1927:** Some day, let us hope, there will be a general awakening of the public and every welfare worker, a glorious awakening in the dawn of the NEW ERA OF SOCIAL SCIENCE—when the Greater nation finally realizes that to prevent crime in the future it must begin with the correction of the juvenile offender. When taxpayers conclude that **prevention** is better than the **cost** of the **cure**; when school boards realize that an adequate staff of truant officers and attendance workers is judicious and effective economy, much cheaper than expanding corrective institutions. (Bodine, 1927, p. 18)

**1928:** In social service too much money is spent on the cure. And not enough on the fundamental work of prevention. Then general public has long been in a trance of shameful apathy. But sooner, or later, it will awaken to the fact that the workable theory of real economy in child conservation is to expend the agencies of prevention of delinquency; to have an adequate staff of truant officers; to raise their salaries to a decent livable wage. With fewer schools to an officer; more frequent visitation to homes and schools; correction of the child in the first lapse of attendance, truancy could often be prevented; and delinquency obviated in the incipient stage. Thus the number of potential adult criminals of the future could be reduced. (Bodine, 1928b, p. 68)

**1929:** “To *punish*” is the hysterical cry of the past. “To *prevent*” is the divine whisper of the present. (Bodine, 1929a, p. 12)

**1929:** More money spent on an adequate staff of truant officers, attendance workers, probation officers, child guidance, health clinics, psychopathic research and special divisions, would be judicious economy compared to the cost of juvenile corrective institutions of limited capacity which precipitates premature paroles back to the same negligent homes from which truants and delinquents came. If the paternalism of the home is regenerated to raise good citizens instead of bad ones, paternalism of the state could be obviated. If this scientific vision had been in vogue three decades ago, and more attention paid to the correction of wayward little citizens early in their lives; and if psychiatry had ascertained and corrected mental and physical defects, crime among adults would not be so prevalent today. There would not be so many overcrowded penitentiaries and prison revolts, with failure blazed in fire and blood behind drab walls, where the striped legs of the lockstep are supposed to sway the march of convicts to repentance and reform. (Bodine, 1929a, p. 12)

**1931:** The state, as a rule, builds its drab penitentiaries and reformatories but does not build parental schools for truants and younger incorrigibles. It pays heavily for the cure, but spends very little for the correction of youth in truancy—the cradle of crime. (Bodine, 1931c, p. 46)

## Physical and Mental Welfare of Children

**1923:** This League has always advocated for the physical welfare of pupils. We who hear the chant of blighted childhood, know that from the ranks of children who have visual, auditory and physical defects, who live in unsanitary environment, whose mentality is stunted, come the greatest number of truants and delinquents. The underfed child becomes the backward pupil and the subnormal cannot finish the sixth grade to qualify for a working certificate at the age of fourteen. (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

**1925:** We should correct physical, mental and moral defects in childhood, otherwise the juvenile offender becomes the inevitable adult criminal later in life. (Bodine, 1925, p. 10)

**1925:** Physical education and manual training tend to create a normal child who develops into a normal adult,—and the average normal adult physically and mentally fit to earn an honest living seldom becomes a criminal. (Bodine, 1925, p. 13)

## **Public Schools**

In addition to academic features, every school should have the utilitarian system with manual training, physical education, music, drawing, household arts, technique, playgrounds, the radio and visual education and every feature of progressive education that appeals to the youth living in the age of the modernist and scientific achievement. (Bodine, 1926, p. 8)

## **Pupil Attendance**

**1923:** Attendance is the keystone in the arch of education. If there was no attendance there would be no school. (Bodine, 1923, p. 6)

**1926:** Attendance is the foundation, the supreme fundamental of education. It is the “ace” of school welfare, but we have a “deuce” of a time making some educators believe it. (Bodine, 1926, p. 8)

**1926:** Among the destructive factors of attendance is the indifferent, intemperate, incompetent parent, and the insanitary home that creates an environment conducive to truancy and juvenile delinquency. (Bodine, 1926, p. 8)

**1932:** Attendance is the ace of school welfare. If there was no attendance the school would be an empty shell of architecture. (Bodine, 1932, p. 5)

## **Special Education**

Special divisions should be maintained to provide for the pathetic estate of handicapped children (Bodine, 1926, p. 8)

A psychiatrist of the defective boy of today is better than a policeman for the man of the future. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

### **Teachers**

**1926:** The popular personality of a teacher who understands children promotes attendance. She inculcates the lovable and loyal school spirit into the hearts of her pupils. But a neurotic, autocratic, and automatic teacher with a sour face and a mean disposition often creates truancy. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

### **Technology**

**1924:** The radio has been a factor in the reduction of juvenile delinquency. It keeps boys and girls off the street at night, and it is preserving the unit of the family circle. Some fathers have a better chance to get acquainted with their families in the evening; to share the comradeship of their sons. (Bodine, 1924a, p. 6)

### **“Too Much Home Study Work”**

**1934:** But there is now a growing menace to health and happiness in many of the public school systems of this nation – the menace of too much home study work. This supplemental task with frequent night study – after a day’s mental activity in the class room – is a creative factor in the increase of neurotic children. It is the archaic traditional method of horse and buggy days. It is enfeebling the pupil personnel with mental fatigue and physical strain for a growing child. It means visual impairment and more bespectacled, as well as nervous, children who go from books to bed. Physical development depends upon a full measure of sleep. The habit of some teachers in overloading children with too much home study – with its curtailment of time for recreation – will eventually lead to pupil resentment, hatred of school, and development of truancy, when health and happiness are gone. (Bodine, 1934b, p. 12)

### **Tragedies of Childhood**

**1923:** Mismatched individualism in marriage is responsible for many of the tragedies of childhood. Many a woman is a martyr to a matrimonial mistake and wears a ‘crown of thorns’ because her husband has a crown of ‘horns.’ (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

**1926:** [Y]our speaker, basing his theory on thirty-seven active years of experience in attendance and social service and an intensive contact with conditions, desires to stress the *practical*, the *logical*, and the *fundamental* cause of so many tragedies of childhood—namely, *fathers’ failures and mothers’ mistakes*. Let us concentrate more on the unimpeachable fact that back of the

problem child is the problem *parent*, and back of the problem parent is the problem *home* that needs regeneration. (Bodine, 1926b, p. 42)

**1928:** Truth points to the guilty parent, and the home as the environment that needs drastic attention. Theory puts too much responsibility and blame on the school, and not enough on fathers' failures and mothers' mistakes, and laxity of parental vigilance over children of the night, and conduct outside of school hours. Discipline is becoming as big a question as truancy, both in the home and the school. (Bodine, 1928b, p. 68)

**1928:** One good mother is the peer of any institution. But one good-for-nothing father can destroy her constructive influence. When both parents are indifferent, illiterate, or intemperate, and if the home is improvident and insanitary, the child become the inevitable hopeless product of environment—merely a pathetic little sequel of fate. (Bodine, 1928b, p. 68)

**1930:** After thirty one years experience as Superintendent of Compulsory Education in Chicago, directing a department that had had 32,000 prosecutions in courts, including the Juvenile, Municipal and Criminal courts, and after contacts with all sorts of humankind, I am positive in my belief that the majority of tragedies of childhood is due to indifferent, intemperate, illiterate, and improvident parent-hood, and to homes where divorce, or desertion, has blighted the lives of children. (Bodine, 1930b, p. 80)

**1933:** The problem child is the sequel of the problem parent, and back of it all is the problem home. If the infernalism of the paternalism of the home could be regenerated, paternalism of state would not be so frequently necessary. The indifferent, intemperate, and incompetent parent is Public Enemy No. 1 to childhood; to education; and to future citizenship. (Bodine, 1933, p. 5)

**1940:** We have found that many of the tragedies of childhood are due to mismated individualism in matrimony. (Bodine, 1940, p. 21)

## Juvenile Court

**1923:** The Juvenile Court is merely the superficial clearing house of fathers' failures and mothers' mistakes. There is too much tendency to prosecute children instead of the guilty parents that are slackers in peace. . . . (Bodine, 1923, p. 7)

**1936:** Some years ago—in 1919—at our Philadelphia convention, your speaker advocated a "*Family Court*"—an expansion in jurisdiction of our present Juvenile Courts—to make parents *ex-parte* defendants when their children were taken into court for delinquent offenses and put the *parents* as well as the *children* on probation. (Bodine, 1936b, p. 43)

## GIRLS & WOMEN



## Equality

**1924:** A woman can do anything a man can do except desert a child. (Bodine, 1924a, p. 8)

## Equal Pay, Livable Wages, “Peer of Mankind”

**1923:** God speed the day when dormant chivalry in the breasts of employers will awake and give woman a man’s pay if she can do a man’s work (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

**1924:** Many a **loveable** child is **losable** because a working mother’s wage is not **livable**. (Bodine, 1924a, p. 8)

**1928:** In the fore of the pace progressive American womanhood has achieved success, and glory, in occupational life so that the sex is no longer at the mercy of economic dependence on man. In the professions; in industrialism; in art; and in the marts of trade; in education; politics; and aviation, she has attained the reward of ambition and proved that she is a peer of mankind. (Bodine, 1928a, p. 10)

## Girls Worth Saving

**1924:** If our girls are trained now to be physically, mentally and morally fit for future motherhood, they will—in that future—give unto the world **patriots** instead of **boobs** and **Bolsheviks**. (Bodine, 1924a, p.7)

**1934:** We believe in striking at the fundamental causes of juvenile delinquency, and in co-operating in the combat against every destructive agency that make good boys bad and bad boys worse. And the Girl Welfare Division in our department believes that if boys are worth saving, the salvage of girls is of equal vital importance. (Bodine, 1934b)

**1939:** We have a Girl Welfare Division in our Department. It has long been my theory that if boys are worth saving, the girls are also entitled to salvation. The *problem girl*, particularly of teen age is becoming a serious and complex question. Back of the problem girl is the *problem home*, the taverns of today, evil associates and the indifference of some parents to their daughters’ whereabouts outside of school hours. (Bodine, 1939, p. 70-71)

## Mother

**1926:** The word “mother” is the most beautiful, the holiest, the sweetest word that ever came from human lips. One good mother is worth a dozen reform schools. (Bodine, 1926, p. 9)

## Social Pace

**1923:** The social pace among young women today is a menace to motherhood, and means the inevitable sequel of an increase among anemic and neurotic children in the future. The fast pace of the girl before marriage mans the slow child at school after marriage. (Bodine, 1923, p. 8)

## Teachers

**1932:** The teacher should not be the Forgotten Woman in her value to community welfare, in child conservation, and in the moral, intellectual, and the patriotic uplift of the nation's youth. On her depends the quality of future citizenship of her pupils. (Bodine, 1932, p. 5)

**1936:** At our Toronto convention, a Canadian delegate criticized "old maid teachers." This was an ungracious and undeserved challenge to chivalry, and to the rights of professional womanhood, to be free from economic dependence on man. We should *bless* and not *condemn* the "old maid teacher." She helps us in the conservation of childhood, because it often requires a "single" success to salvage the intellectual and moral interests of the children from a "double" failure of other people, in matrimony. (Bodine, 1936b, p. 44)

## Women Attendance Officers

**1928:** In school attendance work there has been a 65 per cent increase of women officers within ten years. In Chicago out of 121 truant officers, only 25 are men. (Bodine, 1928a, p. 10)

**1930:** When I [Bodine] first assumed my official duties in 1899, the cynical laugh of Boston—where the truant officers were all men—greeted me because Chicago was the first city in this nation to employ a majority of women in the field, on attendance work. There has been a great increase of women officers within the last ten years. In Chicago we have found it satisfactory and workable in efficiency, activity, and courageous devotion to duty. (Bodine, 1930b, p. 82)

## Women in the President's Cabinet

**1925:** The pictures of the President and his cabinet show recognition of war, money commerce, law, agriculture, etc, but where, Oh! Where, is *Education* and woman-hood sitting in the officials councils of the President of the United States? . . . . Our schools are the bulwark of modern civilization. May future pictures of the federal cabinet show a woman sitting there to represent the great people's estate—the schools of our beloved America. (Bodine, 1925b, p. 106)

**1928:** In politics the woman's vote is increasing as a factor in results. The woman's voice of this nation will decide who will be the next President of the

United States. And whoever he may be, and whoever may be elected to the U. S. Senate and Congress, I hope the winners will have the chivalry, and the decency to provide for a woman member of the President's cabinet with a portfolio as **Secretary of Education**. (Bodine, 1928a, p. 10-11)

## LAW AND CRIME

### More Crime and Easy Access to Weapons

**1925:** President Schober of the Vienna police force is authority for the statement that "Americans carry more revolvers than all the armed people of Europe, Asia, and Africa combined." He believes this one fact alone causes more crime than all other theories. It is too easy to get a pistol now-a-days. Mail order houses boldly advertise various brands of pistols at cheap rates, and Uncle Sam, through his postmen, deliver the goods to the purchaser. Thus a government puts the pistol into the itching hand of crime and creates an accessory before the act. Take the gun away from the hold-up man and the bandit would be a coward, and robberies and murder would be minimized. The U. S. government should do its share, in prevention. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 11)

### Respect for the Law

**1925:** Fewer laws, strict enforcement, and quick punishment of offenders would increase greater respect for the statutes. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 11)

### Crime and Prisons

**1923:** The taxpayer is "paying the freight" on overcrowded prisons today because public interest is apathetic, more or less in moralism and child welfare work. (Bodine, 1923, p.8)

**1925:** Some of our prisons are a disgrace to civilization and do not reform depressive men. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 11)

### Parole System

**1925:** The parole system in penitentiaries is the natural sequel of inadequate capacity of those institutions, and adult probation is handicapped by the fact that paroled convicts—many of whom leave the 'stir' to go 'straight' become marked men whom few employers desire, and after being hounded by the police become discouraged and return to the old life of evil. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 11)

### Murder

**1925:** Murder is reaching a peak in America; there is nothing so cheap as life. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 12)

### **Adult Criminals**

**1925:** Many of the adult criminals to day are the speckled fruit of an unfit parent tree. (Bodine, 1925a, p. 12)

### **“MEMORIES OF A MISSOURIAN”**

Mr. Bodine, born in Hannibal, Missouri, delivered his second address—

“Memories of a Missourian”—in 1929, at the League’s annual convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Returning to his state of birth, his talk contained a “little levity” to offset his earlier “heavy speech.” While his early career before being chosen as the Chicago Superintendent of Compulsory Education has been chronicled (McCullagh, 2005), Bodine’s humorous remarks suggest events leading to his subsequent life and career:

Merely as a place in memories tonight, a kind fate diverted my destiny in life to be one of you instead of a farmer on the banks of the Mississippi River where my father bought a farm, unfortunately in the lowlands. But mother didn’t raise her boy to be a farmer. The river periodically had its floods. Our farm was under cultivation one year and under water the next. We raised everything except the mortgage. In flood years we raised the finest crop of hops you ever saw, but they were hops from frogs that took keen delight in dancing a Charleston on the roof of our floating barn, and making swan dives to mock the razor back hogs that had no life preservers to keep from floating down the river with a one-way ticket and no stop-overs to new Orleans. (Bodine, 1929b, p. 75)

Imagine the enjoyment and laughter of the convention audience that evening as Mr. Bodine shared this story and other humorous reflections, including being lost in a cave—the same one as Mark Twain—“with a fat, red-headed girl,” who threw her arms around his neck clinging to him as if he were the “Rock of Ages,” but only later to marry a “big butter-and-egg man from Michigan” (Bodine, 1929b, p. 75).

### **THE WAR YEARS AND BEYOND: 1941-1947**

In October 1941, the League held its annual convention in Knoxville, Tennessee, with about 300 delegates in attendance (Rogers, 1941). Fred W. Spalding was elected president, and Rochester, New York was the site chosen for its next annual conference in 1942 (“Rochester Gets,” 1941, p. 8). President Bodine was scheduled to speak on “The Constructive Value of the R.O.T.C. in High Schools” (Mosher, 1942a, p. 1) in 1942. By September 1942, after League members responded to a request from the President whether the meeting should be held as planned, most recommended postponement. The September League Newsletter headlined “Rochester Meeting Scheduled for October Postponed: War Situation Make Meeting Undesirable” (Mosher, 1942b, p. 1). The League’s News Letter became the primary means of communicating to its members until the first post World War convention was held in October 1946, at Baltimore. Life President Bodine did not attend the 1946 convention (Spalding, 1946-47). In early November 1947, the annual convention returned to Chicago—the birth place of the League—to celebrate its thirty-third meeting and “to pay tribute” to Mr. Bodine (Morneweck, 1947, p. 3). The Chicago convention was Mr. Bodine’s farewell—his good-bye—to the League that he co-founded, developed, and nurtured for over three decades.

It was also time for a change in leadership. Fred W. Spalding, who had been elected president at the 1941 conference in Knoxville (“F. W. Spalding,” 1941, p. 14), continued through the war years, and served until the 1947 convention, when Carl D. Morneweck was chosen. President Spalding was elected Honorary Life President, an honor reserved for few men, including Life President Bodine, the first so chosen (Spalding, 1947, p. 7).

## RETIREMENT AND DEATH

At the twenty-seventh annual convention 1937, Martin M. Hihn—League President for three years—addressed the delegates on the past, present, and future of the League. It was Mr. Bodine who “assigned” him to speak on this topic, and, not surprisingly, he objected “[w]hen, as a matter of fact, there is not a person in this room nor in the entire country who is more competent and has at his command more information regarding the history of the League than ‘Pop’ Bodine.” President Hihn’s praise of Mr. Bodine continued: “[H]e founded and organized this international association for the advancement and training of all persons interested in the enforcement of school attendance laws, in order that all children should derive full benefit of the educational opportunities provided by the state” (Hihn, 1937, p. 114). And, of course, Mr. Bodine did so with many able leaders who joined the League.

After a long and successful career spanning almost a half-century as the Superintendent of Compulsory Education for the Chicago Board of Education, Bodine (1946) submitted his resignation to be effective on August 31, 1946. The following year, he was honored at the League’s thirty-third annual convention held in Chicago. Carl D. Morneweck, in his president’s message, remarked: “We were delighted to meet again in Chicago, the home of our founder, Mr. Bodine, and to pay tribute to him for his foresight and efforts” (1947, p. 3). Past President Fred W. Spalding, just elected Honorary Life President, reflecting on the events of the convention, commented:

Must get ready for the evening meeting in honor of our founder, Mr. Bodine, of Chicago. Imagine forty-seven years as head of an attendance department. Sure must be a place in Heaven for one serving so well and so long. Must get there early. Arrive early and there is Mr. Bodine calling each by name as always. Looks a bit older but is still the same. Meeting presided over by Gene Sheridan of Newark, New Jersey. Many nice things said about Mr. Bodine. He is called

upon to speak. Fine address. Everyone leaves well satisfied. We have honored a great man. His job was well done. I leave him tired but happy. May God continue to bless him. (Spalding, 1947, p. 6)

The current Superintendent of the Chicago Bureau of Compulsory Education, Frank L. Beals (1947), in his letter to Bodine, shared the sentiments of the attendees when he wrote: “I should like to tell you that the evening devoted to honoring you as the founder of the League was the highlight of the Convention.”

Death came to Honorary Life President Bodine on 26 November 1951, in his eighty-ninth year, while residing at the Lake Shore Convalescent Home in Chicago, his city since the mid-1890s (“William Lester Bodine,” 1951). Much earlier, his mother, Eliza, died at his home in 1916 (Bodine—Eliza,” 1916). His wife, Mae, died on 15 May 1945 (“Bodine—Mae,” 1945), and their son, Robert, died on 20 August 1951, at age 57 years (“Bodine—Robert,” 1951). Bodine and the family are interred at Rosehill cemetery, established in 1859, and the largest cemetery in Chicago. It includes “the graves of numerous Chicago mayors . . . , Civil War generals and soldiers, and . . . [a] Vice President of the United States,” and other leaders (“Rosehill Cemetery,” 2001). Befitting a man of his stature, the *New York Times* allocated four lines to his passing with a concise but incomplete summary of his accomplishments:

Mr. Bodine, who retired in 1946 [after 47 years as superintendent of compulsory education of the Chicago Board of Education], previously was a labor commissioner for the State of Colorado and a special master commissioner of the United States Court, Eighth Judicial District, in Omaha.

He helped establish free bus service for crippled school children and the Chicago Parental School for Truant Children. Mr. Bodine also aided in drawing up child labor and compulsory education bills that later were adopted by the Illinois Legislature. He was author of “Bodine’s Reference Book on Juvenile Welfare.”

It is fitting—as the *New York Times* did—to recall one of Mr. Bodine’s cherished accomplishments as the Superintendent of Compulsory Education in Chicago from 1899 to 1946. In 1930, at the Twentieth Annual Convention in Rochester, New York, Mr. Bodine titled his speech “Echoes of Experience.” It was his desire at the evening banquet to “tell you a few stories from life” (Bodine, 1930, p. 80). One of his many stories that evening pertained to free bus transportation for “crippled children” in Chicago. Mr. Bodine fondly recalled:

Of all echoes from the voice of experience in my official life, the dearest one that that stirs the deepest in the soul of happy memory, is the day that I started the first bus in Chicago to give crippled children—previously pale faced little prisoners at home—a chance to go to a new school equipped for their needs; to give them an opportunity to live and learn; to brush away the tears of loneliness and smile in the new Paradise of Education and Comradship, under the care of those humane Samaritans of the schools—the teachers, the bus attendants, the nurses, and the physicians, by the grace of the Board of Education, and a **sympathetic God who not forgotten his own.** (Bodine, 1930b, p. 83)

It was his leadership of the National League over three decades—left unsaid by the *New York Times*—but enshrined by William D. Chmela, who proudly declared in his presidential acceptance speech that “IAPPW is WILLIAM BODINE” (1954, p. 54). Co-founder, first President, Honorary Life President, and inspirational leader of the National League of Compulsory Education Officials and later the National League to Promote School Attendance, Bodine would be pleased with the continued vitality and mission of The International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention. A visionary leader in the first-half of the Twentieth Century, Association members in the Twenty-First Century will appreciate his memorable statements reflecting a continuing commitment to the welfare of children and youth, including increased emphasis on prevention of truancy and



delinquency; equal opportunity for women; and, improved salaries and pensions for attendance officers.

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