SHAKER HEIGHTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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UNIFICATION AND TAX REFORM: Decisions Required

The subject of "unification" caused much rancor and promised to expend more delegate time than any other topic at the 1970 OEA Convention in Columbus. From the outset, it was clear that the subject would require more time than was then available. As a result, the OEA leadership and delegates opted to delay action until a special spring meeting could be called. The date for this meeting is now scheduled for May 14 and 15.

The following, taken from the agenda of proposals to be acted upon by the 1970 delegate assembly, exemplifies the type of proposition made relative to unification:

NB-48 WHEREAS, all states in the North and West of the United States, except Connecticut and Ohio, are unified or committed to unification;

WHEREAS, Ohio must not stand out, in this manner, as opposing the national association;

WHEREAS, Ohio teachers, in such a wealthy state as Ohio, must not follow the poor example set by the state legislature in providing for education, but must support their educational profession on all levels;

WHEREAS, Ohio can then realize the power and added strength of NEA on state and local levels;

WHEREAS, Ohio can benefit from the Uniserve program; (what is this program?)

THEREFORE, I MOVE:

(a) That this OEA General Assembly commit itself to unification.
(b) That an ad hoc committee of the Executive Board of the OEA be set up to negotiate with the NEA to clearly define areas of service.
(c) That referral to the constitution revision committee be made to allow for the implementation of this motion.

Moved by El Crary, Garfield Heights

Seconded by Diana Kull, Garfield Hts.

The above makes quite clear that Ohio remains aside from states unified with NEA. Ohio continues as one of twelve affiliated states with NEA.

More, however, than mere unification with NEA emerges when the topic is defined by OEA leadership. Both the extent and the intent of OEA and NEA appear in the following:

In the eyes of the NEA and the OEA, unification means the requirement of belonging to the local, the district, the state, and the national organizations without choice; thereby, we hope, welding together the professional educators in an organization that goes from the local to the national level.

> If a state becomes unified or a local association becomes unified, then in essence they would agree to be responsible for membership participation at all four of these stated levels. ....[1]

NEA defines the concept more ethereally, also, more insistently.

> DEFINITION....unified membership " is an outward, visible sign of an inward, spiritual unity" among local state, and national associations. It insists that there be a single teaching profession operating in three or more community levels and that the professional associations which operate in these communities are united in purpose, program, and association characteristics. Since these associations may serve the individual practitioner in all community levels and represent him before all governmental and power groups, it is fitting that individual membership in any one would require membership in the others, with the membership fee expressed as a single total of the individual fees of all associations.

[1] Dr. Edward F. Jirik, Director of Instructional Services, OEA. Letter, January 20, 1971.

If the above spells out the condition of unification, what then constitutes the condition of "affiliation"? Standards of affiliation for local associations to OEA effective January 1, 1971, cover several pages and will not be fully explained here. Sectional V of the "Affiliation Standards for Local Associations" follows shortly since it contains the principal ideas so far as requirements for affiliation are concerned. SHTA is affiliated with OEA under the terms of this entire document. Presumably, OEA is affiliated with NEA under a similar document. In return for formal affiliation, the parent organization pledges to perform a number of services for the affiliate. These services are enumerated in the document presently under discussion. The same sort of thing goes for unification, but the services extend much further since unification entails closer ties between organizations.

[2] "Facts About Unification," NEA, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Consideration for affiliation shall be given to those local Associations who have met the following provisions:

A. A Constitution consistent with the Constitution of the Ohio Education Association and containing:

1. A clear statement of objectives.
2. Provision for the election of officers and executive committee by ballot.
3. Provisions for the election and installation of all officers to be conducted in the Spring.
4. Provisions for a dues structure shall be adequately funded and a quality program for the membership. (Not less than $5.00 per year.)
5. Provisions for regular meetings of the governing body, to carry on business of the Association.
6. Provisions for at least two general membership and/or Representative Assembly meetings per year.

B. 75% of the members belonging to the local Association must be OEA members.

C. Submit with affiliation application a report of the proposed prgrams and activities which will be carried on during the year. This report should include local activities and those proposed on the state and national level.

D. Evidence of a direct avenue for discussion with the board of education concerning professional activities, salaries, fringe benefits, working conditions, curriculum, etc. This shall include evidence of an effective procedure for solving problems educators may face in the performance of their related duties.

When a local Association is not the recognized representative, said Association shall hold in readiness a procedure for negotiating with the board. This procedure shall be submitted at such time as they become the recognized unit.

E. Show evidence of an effective newsletter or another mode of membership communication.

F. Evidence of an effective committee structure including:

1. PR&R Committee.
2. TEPS Committee.
3. Legislative Committee.
4. Professional negotiations.
5. Salary or finance.
6. Public Relations
7. Any other committee used to effect the reported program of the Association.

Each committee shall have contact with and knowledge of the respective state program.

G. Evidence that delegates were sent to the OEA Delegate Assembly and were prepared by attending pre-convention briefing sessions.

Considerable evidence exists which indicates that the OEA leadership seeks unification. When the 1971 standards of affiliation are compared to older such standards and are then in turn compared to criteria for unification, it becomes clear that the leadership pushes for the latter. Further, an attempt was made at the 1969 OEA Convention to place unification in effect. Much opposition developed among the assembled delegates causing the plan to be deferred until 1970. As indicated in the opening sentences, the 1970 convention postponed action until the spring of 1971. Delegates to the 1970 OEA Convention, in addition to being OEA members, were required to belong to NEA as well. Certification as a delegate was, otherwise, denied. In recent balloting to elect delegates to the 1971 NEA Convention from OEA, only those persons holding memberships in both NEA and OEA legally voted.

Since we have lived with affiliation, we should know what it means. Affiliation means that we have carte blanche among those professional groups we wish to join. It represents autonomy, laissez-faire, rugged individualism. In its extreme, we may use all sorts of excuses to shore up our reasons for certain actions. In addition to being able to withhold membership totally, we may join only the state and national organizations on the excuse that the local does nothing for us as individuals or, perhaps, is controlled by administration. We may join the local to the exclusion of state and national organizations on the excuse that these organizations do nothing for the local or, perhaps, are too radical. In any case, as individuals we remain free. As a professional group of educators, we remain fragmented, ineffectual, and helpless to pursue courses of political action which benefit education and for, more selfishly, our personal economic welfare. The latter, over the long haul, certainly stands to benefit education.

To illustrate the point of political action, most of us agree that real estate taxes at the local level are insufficient to carry the cost burden of present-day, public education. Local school districts must look elsewhere for further financial aid. Since municipalities have elected to retain their shares in real estate taxes and have further opted to use a local pay roll tax for their increased fiscal needs, school districts look to the state. Separate, local education associations are impotent to deal with such a state-wide problem. To varify this, we need only look to several facts concerning Ohio: (1) Ohio stands fourth in total public school enrollment (2) It stands fifth in total personal income. (3) Measured as a percent of per capita income, it stands last among all states in local and state taxes collected. (4) It stand forty-sixth with regard to per capita expenditures for all education. (5) It takes thirty-first position in revenue expended per pupil for educational purposes. (6) It assumes thirty-sixth position in percent of state revenue expended for education. These facts unmistakeably point to a low level of state support for public education.

As things presently stand, OEA can do little more than can separate, local associations since OEA is a weak affiliation of such associations. Last autumn when OEA through consent of its duly elected delegate assembly chose to lend campaign support regardless of party ties to candidates who were in favor of tax reform, some grumbling occurred among the ranks of educators. Much of the grumbling was directed to the fact that OEA supported the Democratic candidate for governor. Yet of the two major candidates, only the supported candidate clearly affirmed his position in favor of tax reform and its consequent increased state-aid for public education.

All in all, OEA was fortunate that a large number of its supported candidates for the legislature was elected. The question is, "What does OEA do if the Legislature fails to enact effective tax reform which approximates what the governor has asked in his message to the General Assembly? What do we as a local ask OEA to do for such districts as ours who seemingly at this point will be penalized by Gilligan's formula of state-aid to local districts.

Power, in this case, resides in blocs of voters who have specific purposes, who will campaign for those purposes, and who are organized in such a way that they not only can, but will take actions designed to obtain those purposes. Last autumn, OEA came close to being such a bloc because of the fervor which it and other organizations generated with reference to tax reform. It lacks, however, the strong cohesiveness, the power which may be needed to make tax reform a reality if the legislature or governor choses to do otherwise. Unification yields a possible route. Presently, it is the only route. Henceforth, little doubt exists that we will need a stronger OEA or similar organization since a larger and larger percentage of the educational dollar will flow from Columbus. As implied earlier, however, a stronger state organization requires some surrender of our vaunted autonomy.

At the forthcoming May meeting of OEA delegates, the assembly is to decide the best path to follow if, in fact, the legislature is not making headway on the reform. This represents the original purpose of this meeting. The thorny issue of unification was an addendum. Concerning unification, your SHTA delegates will vote as the majority decides that we should vote. An election for the purpose of this instruction will be held shortly.

As for the tax reform issue, it remains fluid. At this point, it seems best that your delegates remain instructed so that they may follow what seems to be the best course of action at the time. Herein lies the answer for participation in a strongly unified professional organization. Take part, learn the issues, select responsive delegates, and instruct them as to how you, the majority, want them to represent you on those issues which are clear-cut. Your delegates, we hope, will vote intelligently when uninstructed.

Charles W. Hendrickson

SHTA delegates to OEA

1. Sal Fabrizio
2. Chuck Hendrickson
3. Dick Oberdorfer
4. Don Scherer
5. Bill Schuman

1st Alternate

Don Vogel

ENCOURAGING UNIFICATION - from NEA's "Facts about Unification"

Unification has great possibility of increasing membership in the National Education Association. While the total effect of this is not predictable, historic assurance that this will happen allows the Association to offer the following agreements:

. The National Education Association will guarantee to reimburse the state or local association, or both, for any loss in membership income for a three year period from the date of unification provided there is no decrease in the dues of the association.

- The NEA will reimburse the state association at the rate of 15 cents per NEA member for processing memberships (distribution of materials to locals, receiving, and transmitting).

- Where the state association has adopted compatible computer processable membership transmitting, the NEA will reimburse the state association at the rate of 25 cents per member for processing memberships.

- The National Education Association will pay one half the cost of printing mutually satisfactory enrollment forms for unified local, state, and national membership.

- With any state association making a commitment to unify by 1970 the NEA will enter into a cooperative arrangement involving a fair share of NEA funds--to be determined by agreement between the Executive Secretary, the NEA State Director, and the Division of Field Services--for the purpose of conduting leadership training within the state.

- Following unification, the NEA will enter into discussion with the state association to see how unification of program may be developed to improve the service to members.