Brooklyn Teachers Association

Report of the President
1905-1906

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS TAKEN FROM WORK DONE BY MEMBERS OF THE ART CLASSES OF THE ASSOCIATION
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OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION
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School Legislation for the Year.

There has been very little school legislation this year, although many bills aimed at the New York school system were introduced in the State Legislature.

The Brooklyn College.

Comptroller Edward M. Grout appointed a committee of 100 early in the season to take up the matter of a Brooklyn free university or college, and a bill was introduced in the Legislature which sought to authorize the city to establish such an institution in Brooklyn and which allowed other collegiate institutions, such as Polytechnic Institute and Adelphi College, to become part of the proposed institution. The president of this association was appointed a member of the committee of 100 and he appeared before the Senate Committee on Cities as well as before the Mayor in support of the bill. The bill passed the Legislature and was approved by the Mayor, but was allowed to die by Governor Higgins, who failed to approve the measure. I think the matter to be of such absorbing interest and value to the members of the Brooklyn Teachers Association, as well as to the community of Brooklyn, as to warrant a statement of the conditions which exist as they were presented in the hearings before the Senate Committee on Cities and the Mayor by Comptroller Grout and other members of the committee of 100.

"Concretely, Brooklyn is facing a condition in which theories do not count. It is a community of near a million and a half—growing so rapidly that we can see the day when the west end of Long Island will contain a majority of the inhabitants of the City of New York. No other community of its size in the United States or in Europe is without a great institution of higher learning. Everywhere higher education is mainly supplied, not by tuition fees which pay but a percentage of cost, but by the benefactions of rich men, of dead men and live communities. Brooklyn has not such an institution, and its boys and girls need it now. Rich men have not been generous; dead men's wills have not supplied the need, and Brooklyn, not willing to wait longer, to the permanent loss of those boys and girls who each year mature, asks to have the city, of which
it is a part, do for it substantially what that city is doing for Manhattan and the 
Bronx by the College of the City of New York and the Normal College for girls."

Statistics show that while of the population of the whole United States
.15 per cent. attend colleges and universities, in Brooklyn but .06 per cent. are in
attendance at institutions of higher learning. The average attendance at college
in the United States is, in other words, two and a half times as large as in
Brooklyn. For Manhattan the figures are .12 per cent., or twice those of
Brooklyn. In Chicago .20 per cent. of the population attend college, and in
Philadelphia, .21 per cent. The Brooklyn boys and girls are being cheated
out of their birthright.

Brooklyn has a larger population than twenty-five States and Territories—
where public universities are established—and larger than all but the two cities,
other than New York—Chicago and Philadelphia, mentioned above.

Brooklyn has a population of about 1,400,000—with Queens added—
1,600,000, as against Manhattan’s population of about 2,200,000. There are more
than 200,000 children in her public schools and about 12,000 pupils in her six
high schools and academies, of whom about 1,000 are graduated each year.
Brooklyn has five institutions of higher learning with something over 800 stu-
dents to seven in Manhattan with 3,800 students (excluding the public college).

The only opportunities for free education to Brooklyn pupils are in the
College of the City of New York and the Normal College. The College of the
City of New York had provision last year for 671 students in its collegiate
department. To allow the average, Brooklyn ought to have collegiate accom-
mmodations for at least one-third of its high school and academy pupils, or 4,000,
and has, in fact, opportunity for less than 1,000.

The City of New York has just made provision to the extent of $6,500,000
for new buildings, recently opened, and adequate equipment for the College of
the City of New York which is located and planned to supply the needs of Man-
hattan and the Bronx. Brooklyn requires another similar institution with similar
buildings and equipment to supply the needs of Brooklyn and Queens. The
increase in population of Brooklyn and Queens has been nearly 70 per cent. in
fifteen years and it is a matter of but a few years when the population of these
two boroughs of the city will exceed that of the rest of the city.

Until very recently the three great colleges and universities in New York City
—New York University, the College of the City of New York, and Columbia
University—were located in Eighth Street, Twenty-third Street and Forty-ninth
Street, respectively. By referring to the accompanying map it will be seen that
the dotted circles drawn with radii of five miles each and with these locations
as centers include the greater part of the settled portions of Brooklyn, and even
Jersey City, and that these institutions were easy of access to Brooklyn and
Queens pupils. In fact they were nearly as accessible to Brooklyn pupils as
they were to Manhattan pupils.

Two of the colleges and universities referred to have moved much farther
north, to 139th Street and Amsterdam Avenue and to 116th Street and Amsterdam
Avenue, and the third will soon be located in Fordham Heights. From the
map it will be seen from the full line circles drawn with the new locations as
centers and with radii of five miles each, that Brooklyn and Queens are virtually
left without the circles and that the new locations are practically inaccessible
to Brooklyn pupils. The lower full line circle is drawn with the location of the
proposed new college near the Brooklyn Institute Museum as a center. The
radius is five miles. Every portion of Brooklyn comes within the circle. It is
ture that transit facilities have improved and that when the tunnel is completed
to Flatbush Avenue a small part of Brooklyn will be closer to these new sites,
but even when the larger improvements contemplated for Brooklyn are com-
pleted the average Brooklyn pupil must spend from one and a half to two
hours each way if he attends any of these institutions. It is unreasonable to ask
the students of Brooklyn and Queens to expend so much more time and strength
in transit, so much more money in cost of transit, and risk so much more in health and well-being than is imposed upon the youths of Manhattan and Bronx in their search for higher education, and indeed the population of the whole city is growing so rapidly that it will soon stretch to the utmost the capacity, not only of these existing institutions, but of this additional one in Brooklyn which we seek.

With Columbia University, the College of the City of New York and New York University removed without the limit of reasonable and economical access to Brooklyn students there are but two alternatives to be followed by those who are ambitious for further education—they must abandon their plans for further advancement or they must enter institutions outside the city where living expenses can be kept down to their means. For the great majority of pupils this latter alternative is not at all feasible, and the first, namely, abandonment of any further education, must necessarily follow. These pupils are entitled to have an institution of the character proposed established in their midst which they can attend without leaving home. The large number of high school pupils—and it is increasing at an extraordinarily rapid rate—should be reason enough for
the establishment of the proposed institution. As teachers we should do all in our power to obtain for the children, for whose education we are held responsible, every advantage possible for their uplift.

From the teachers' standpoint there is another strong argument for the establishment of a free higher institution of learning. This association has for many years maintained at large expense numerous courses of study for its ambitious members, for self-improvement, much of which has in later years, by arrangements with degree-granting institutions, either counted toward a degree or exempted the pupils from certain examinations for promotion. During the year just past, for instance, more than 650 teachers have been in attendance, after school and on Saturday mornings, on the twenty-five courses arranged for the benefit of its members. This large body of mature students desires the establishment of an institution similar to the one contemplated in the measure which came so near becoming law, in order that they may carry on studies for their improvement under most favorable conditions. The very nature of their work and their hours of labor make it impossible for them to attend institutions across the river, and they are undoubtedly in favor of the plan submitted by the committee of 100. It is hoped that in the very near future we will see the fruition of the plans so well inaugurated, and that there will be established as a part of the institution a teachers' college where the teachers may secure advantages which will not only elevate them, but which, through this very elevation, will raise the standard of teaching and necessarily raise the general tone of the pupils under them to the very great advantage of the community at large. We should not shoulder the expense incurred in advancement that so materially benefits the
community and we feel that we should have the opportunity to pursue these courses which make us better teachers, at the expense of the community which ultimately receives the benefit.

**Attempt to Nullify the Davis Law.**

An attempt was made at the last moment, just before adjournment of the Legislature, to nullify the "Davis Law," when the Senate Committee on Affairs of Cities introduced as a committee measure, at the request of the "City Club," the same "Club" which sent a man from Manhattan before the Mayor to oppose the Brooklyn College bill, a bill which aimed to put into the hands of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment the right to fix the salaries of the teachers. The vigilance of Auditor Cook, who happened to be in Albany, and of the officers of the Board of Education and the various teachers' associations caused the cities committee to drop the matter. Eternal vigilance seems to be necessary if we want to hold fast to that which we have obtained through strenuous action in the past.

**The New Absence Rules.**

During the year past the Board of Education adopted new absence rules. This was done in the effort to make the rules agree, if possible, with the requirements of the new Retirement Law. The rules as proposed seemed to be very unsatisfactory to the great mass of teachers and very strong objection was made to their adoption by those teachers who attended the hearing before the Legislation and By-laws Committee of the Board of Education, given on February 9, last. The rules differed very little from the old ones to which such strong objection has been made in years past. The committee conceded but one point and that was asked for by the president of the Brooklyn Teachers Association. The rules proposed did not allow a teacher to be excused with pay if absence was caused by personal illness unless the teacher had taught for one year. The old rules required that a teacher should teach three years before she could be ill! My plea that there should be no discrimination was listened to and the rule was not made part of the new legislation. The new rules are temporary, and I have no doubt that after the new Retirement Law has been in operation long enough to get to working properly, the rules can be adjusted satisfactorily to all concerned.

The teachers should unite in asking for such rules as will refund every penny deducted from our salaries for *any justifiable absence*. Deductions should be made for all absences and each application for refund should be passed upon