

The First Year of Ball State:
Personal and Policy Conflicts, 1918-1919

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This paper discusses the various issues confronted between 1918 and 1919 by the Eastern Division of the Indiana State Normal School which became Ball State Teacher's College. The primary emphasis is placed upon how the administrators and faculty approached and dealt with the controversies and conflicts during this school's first year of operation. Letters of correspondence between the Eastern Division and the Terre Haute Division of Indiana State Normal School were the most crucial resource by which the dialogue between the two schools was reconstructed.

This paper will deal with four of the issues that Ball State faced during its first year of operation. Ball State University, called the Eastern Division in 1918, was started as an extension branch of Indiana State University, then known as Indiana State Normal School (I.S.N.S.) (1). This new division of the Indiana State Normal School was the result of the circumstances and opportunities facing I.S.N.S. in 1918. The state of Indiana needed more and better teachers, but I.S.N.S. could not by itself meet this need (2). Moreover I.S.N.S. was faced with a surplus of faculty, since World War I led to a decrease in student enrollment (3).

One of the opportunities available to I.S.N.S. was that Frank and Edmund Ball and their wives offered to give to the state of Indiana academic facilities they owned near Muncie if the state agreed to use them to establish a post-secondary school. The Ball brothers had recently purchased the property for \$35,100, or less than ten percent of its estimated \$409,492.20 value. After purchasing the property, Frank and Edmund Ball took advantage of a 1917 law that permitted for the state of Indiana to receive gifts of property (4). This was not a maverick initiative for the Ball brothers because the Muncie community had already expended a great deal of effort in the years prior to 1918 trying to establish a college nearby (5). Community leaders felt that an institution of higher education would be a

positive force in the development of the city. This same motivation was the guide for the actions of the Ball brothers (6). On the other hand, the I.S.N.S., in 1918, viewed the school as an opportunity for it to transfer its surplus faculty - the result of World War II's waning effect on student enrollment - elsewhere. The I.S.N.S. had previously rejected a 1909 offer for assuming proprietorship of the Muncie school because the president of I.S.N.S., William Parsons, did not deem it desirable to have two large teacher training institutions within the same state. In 1918, however, it decided that because of its present circumstances, taking advantage of this opportunity could be beneficial (7).

Two men were instrumental in this process of transferring the ownership of the property to the state and turning it into a functioning school--William Parsons and Benjamin Moore. Parsons was the president of I.S.N.S. and had served in that capacity since 1885 (8). His refusal to adopt the Muncie institution in 1909 and his consent to do so in 1918 were the decisive factors in both situations (9). One of the underlying concerns that Parsons had in these decisions was his desire to keep the resources directed towards teacher training in Indiana consolidated in one institution (10).

Benjamin Moore, the Superintendent of Muncie Schools, was the other major participant in the acquisition and

development process. He became the first Dean of the Eastern Division, partly because he had past connections with the I.S.N.S.. In 1898-1899 he served on the Board of Visitors, a group that was called to give an annual assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of I.S.N.S. (11). Moore was contacted by a member of the 1918 Board of Visitors, L. P. Benezet, in the spring of 1918 and informed about the possibility of a new normal school being established in Muncie. Moore was delighted to hear of such an opportunity to procure a teacher training institution in his deprived part of the state (12). He saw a need for additional teachers in Indiana and offered to provide any assistance that he could to aid the process (13). These two men, Benjamin Moore and William Parsons, will be the central focus of this paper.

The four issues that the Eastern Division of the Indiana State Normal School confronted in its first year included determining its degree of autonomy from I.S.N.S., abiding by a coherent requisition procedure, managing conflict within its faculty, and harmonizing the leadership and communication styles between the leaders. The first question that I.S.N.S. dealt with was the relationship between Terre Haute and Muncie. In the first recorded document that offers a name to the Muncie school, the Board of Trustees Minutes of April 17, 1918, Parsons referred to the school as the "Muncie Auxiliary." After the school was

officially made part of the I.S.N.S., the name given it was the "Muncie Branch" of the I.S.N.S. (14).

On July 2, 1918, Benjamin Moore, the new Dean of the school in Muncie, wrote Parsons saying that the people of the Muncie community had been engaged in much discussion about the matter of the name and were dissatisfied with "Muncie Branch" for two reasons. The community sought a name that covered a more significant area regionally than the word "Muncie" implied. Second, the word "Branch" "suggested a relation to the Terre Haute school which actual practice in its organization had not born out and which," according to local opinion, "was not in the thought of any one when the name was suggested." Moore proposed the name "Eastern Division" (E.D.) (15). Parsons was receptive to the suggestion and took the question to the Board of Trustees on July 3, 1918. The board gave Moore and Parsons the power to act upon the naming of the school. Parsons confirmed the idea in a letter responding to Moore and the new designation became official (16).

This was a peaceful resolution, but the issue of autonomy was also raised in more specific and pointed situations. Parsons was repeatedly confronted by ambitious policy proposals coming from Muncie. The first such situation occurred when professor Erle E. Clippinger, chairman of publicity, added to the catalog teacher training programs for grades one through high school, while Parsons

wanted the school to cover only grades one through six. Clippinger did this on his own initiative, probably because he thought that the two schools should provide the same curricula. Though Parsons had different aspirations for the E.D., he commented, for reasons that are not stated, that he did not feel he could do anything to "change the situation (17)." However, Clippinger's idea that the E.D. should use a separate advertising bulletin than that of the Terre Haute Division did come under fire from Parsons, who said that all materials sent out from the schools ought to suggest that they are "not two separate schools--only two branches of the same school." This same reasoning was used for having both divisions of I.S.N.S. share the same letterhead (18).

In fact, before the Muncie institution was even acquired, the issue was raised as to whether it should be subordinate to, co-ordinate with, or independent from the I.S.N.S.. The 1918 Board of Visitors paid a visit to the Muncie facilities and recommended that "the new school at Muncie be placed on an independent basis with an adequate financial foundation at the earliest possible date" (19). Instead of following the Board's recommendation, I.S.N.S. deferred any such possibility of establishing an independent institution or a much feared future competitor. The I.S.N.S. did this by accepting the E.D. under the condition that no attempts be made towards independence from Terre Haute (20). The last recorded mention of a person

considering establishing the ED as an independent institution was made by Mr. Fred Rose, a local Muncie banker, who discouraged a Mr. Waldo, a member the 1919 Board of Visitors, from making a recommendation such as that in his report at that time (23).

Another major issue during the first year of the E.D. was the question of proper requisition procedures. From as early as July 31, 1918, correspondence between Dean Moore and Parsons dealt with the topic of financing (22). Parsons wanted both divisions to use the financial base which in past had been employed at the Terre Haute division. Parsons avidly called for the "strictest economy" to be adhered to in all areas of operation (23). Moore understood this request and seemed to accept it (24).

Over time, however, Moore seemed unable to abide by the policy. He was repeatedly criticized for making purchases without first sending a requisition to the Board of Trustees (25), for not using a bidding process before selecting a supplier, for running classes below the minimum enrollment requirement (26), and for allowing for faculty members to send requisitions straight to the Board of Trustees before he himself cleared the request (27). Correspondence between Moore and Parsons indicates that these problems developed from the beginning and continued throughout the year (28).

Parsons did give a reason other than finances to support his stance. He said that the school's books were

audited every year by the State Board of Accountants Field Examiners, who were unsympathetic to improper requisitioning of funds. Thus, the Board of Trustees placed pressure on Parsons to abide by the approved procedures in all but the most serious of emergencies (29).

Over the summer of 1919, when Parsons made efforts to revamp the E.D., he reported that the aforementioned violations were still prevalent there (30). Though these problems were not solved under Moore's leadership, some of the same problems were reported to have existed in Terre Haute, and no clear answers on how to solve them were proposed by either side (31).

A more crucial problem at the E.D. involved division within the faculty. As mentioned earlier, most of the faculty came from the I.S.N.S., and as part of the move most of them received promotions: for example an advancement from an assistant professorship to department chair was quite common (32). These new promotions, though they did not cause obvious problems, did signify a considerable advancement of the faculty for reasons other than ability. Such a change of responsibilities within an institution could have repercussions. Dr. William O. Lynch, who conceivably felt left out because of these promotions, was reported to have resented the fact that he was the only department head transferred to the E.D. (33). But more importantly, the operation of the E.D. was gravely affected

by the continuation of factional relations among these faculty members. Strife had set many of the I.S.N.S. faculty at odds with one another, and these peculiar hatreds appear to have accompanied them to the E.D. (34).

The event that caused much of this tension was the dismissal in 1918 of Dr. J.J. Schlicher, an allegedly pro-German faculty member, from I.S.N.S. (35). The conflict surrounding Dr. Schlicher had been brewing for a few years, and it erupted in 1918 (36). The result was that professor Clippinger and professor Lynch developed strongly differing opinions (37). Lynch was in favor of Schlicher (38), but Clippinger, the leader of the opposition, sided with and strengthened the sentiment of Parsons, which eventually led to Schlicher's dismissal (39). Schlicher reported in his diary that a "gaping gulf" (40) resulted at the I.S.N.S. and that he was the victim of the "talk of [his] venomous colleagues" (41). The relevance of this to the E.D. is clear when we look at the November 5, 1918, entry in Schlicher's diary, in which he said that Lynch sent him lots of news about how Clippinger continued his suspicions, but now Clippinger was directing them towards Parsons and Moore (42).

How bad did conditions become at the E.D.? Parsons reported in a letter to a L.N. Hines, a member of a committee sent in March of 1919 to investigate problems that had arisen at the E.D., that during the summer quarter of

1918 there was little or no friction among the faculty but that the situation changed at the beginning of the 1918-1919 regular school year. Some faculty opposed Moore, including "Professors Clippinger, Breeze, Sink, Baxter, Johnson, Studebaker, Armstrong, Smith, Schlater, Jennings, and Lieutenant Morrison," the leader of the Student Army Training Corps unit stationed at the E.D.. However, Professors Lynch and Rhodes felt favorable towards the dean, and a Miss Baker and a Miss Nugent didn't believe that the criticism against Moore had "sufficient grounds." This criticism was that Moore had "no reasonable, consistent, well-thought out theory and view as to what the school should try to do [and his course was] vacillating and very contradictory" (43). Before Parsons reported this information to Hines, the Investigation Committee of which he was a member, reported that the faculty was divided into two groups--one behind Moore and one behind Clippinger--and the committee recommended that both of these men should not be retained at the end of the school year (44).

The last major problem that arose during the first year of operation of the ED involved communication difficulties between Moore and Parsons. This does not mean that they did not get along. On the contrary, Parsons noted that the relationship between Dean Moore and himself was cordial (45). Throughout the year Parsons extended the greatest freedom to Moore, following a "whatever-you-decide-to-do-is-

fine-with-me" approach on most matters (46). The only instances where Parsons seemed to have lost patience with Moore's actions was in the previously mentioned area of requisitions (47). Parsons' comments in his letters to Moore do not indicate extraordinary concern about the abuses of policy Parsons confronted.

A change occurred for a short duration as Moore and Parsons conversed about the future of Moore's employment at the E.D. following the division within the faculty. The two discussed the topic orally on the 22 and 23 of April, 1919, and then debated the contents and conclusions of that discussion in letters throughout the next week (48). Parsons claimed that Moore agreed to relinquish his position as dean at the end of the summer 1919 to pursue only his duties as the Professor of Methods, Observation, and Practice (49), while Moore contended that he had "clearly stated" that the issue should be postponed until Frank C. Ball returned from a trip to the Orient and could be consulted (50). Parsons also noted that there were "sharp differences," but that they remained on good terms with each other. He felt that the issue of Moore's resignation had been dealt with properly and decisively (51). These good terms changed when he received Moore's letter of response, in which Moore held a contrary opinion about the conclusions formed throughout the discussions - that he should not render his resignation immediately (52).

Parsons wrote L. N. Hines that he felt an urgency to settle the matters so that he could seek a replacement and added that he did not believe that Moore understood this to be the primary issue (53). This sheds light on Parsons' strong response to Moore's protest in which Parsons said he was amazed at such ideas. Parsons believed their verbal agreement to have been "explicit and definite." His first letter was intended to prevent any such disagreements. As a rebuttal to Moore's response, Parsons took the liberty to declare their conversations "null and void" and added that all further actions would be based on his judgment. He went on to say that he "absolutely refused" to discuss Moore's future anymore in a verbal context and that the issue would go before the Board of Trustees as planned (54). On April 30, Moore pleaded his cause through another letter (55). The resolution to this issue was that Parsons followed through as planned, and Moore was stripped of his executive duties (56).

This conflict within the administration is certainly an after-the-fact affair because the first year of the school had nearly transpired. From the correspondence discussing this dispute, no precise understanding can be ascertained, but it is considerably transparent and should be noted that underlying causes inflicted this incident and the other problems of the school. The conflicts mentioned within this paper definitely contributed to but were not solely

responsible for the turmoil that the school faced.

Thus, the initial year of what became Ball State University was hardly a tranquil one. Arguments over matters as seemingly trivial as requisition policies and as crucial as institutional missions occurred. Administrators had misunderstandings and faculty members divided into factions. Perhaps such problems are inevitable in academic life. But, according to President Parsons, these difficulties almost killed the institution: "I am very sure that the school cannot be permanently successful without greater harmony of feeling in the faculty, general cooperation, and a united effort to advance the best interest of the school" (57). In spite of this seemingly bleak beginning, the Eastern Division successfully evolved into a model university--Ball State University--built upon a strong and enduring foundation.

Endnotes

1. William O. Lynch, *A History of Indiana State Teacher's College*. (Indianapolis, IN: Bookwalter Company, 1946), 261-262.
2. L. P. Benezet, Evansville, to William Parsons, Terre Haute. 5 February 1918 [University Archives, Cunningham Library, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN. (Hereinafter cited as ISUA)]. Parsons Papers, Box 7.
3. Lynch, 265.
4. Glenn White, *The Ball State Story* (Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 1967), 41-42.
5. Charles Van Cleve, *History of Ball State Teacher's College*. Unpublished MSS [University Archives, Special Collections, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, IN], 22-23.
6. Commercial Club (The), Muncie, to William Parsons, Terre Haute, Spring 1918. Letter (ISUA), Parsons Papers, Box 7.
7. Lynch, 264-265.
8. Ibid., 233.
9. Ibid., 264.
10. Ibid., 257.
11. Benjamin F. Moore and S. L. Scott and Robert Spear, "Report of the Official Board of Visitors," Muncie, 1898-1899 (ISUA) Parsons Papers, Box 7.
12. Benezet, 5 February 1918.
13. Benjamin F. Moore, Muncie, to William Parsons, Terre Haute. February 1918-December 1919, 16 February 1918, Stucco Letters (ISUA), Parsons Papers, Box 7.
14. Lynch, 261.
15. Moore, 2 July 1918.
16. Lynch, 262.
17. Van Cleve, 62.
18. William Parsons, (bound) "Letter Press Papers" to many people, 4 volumes 1) 4 January 1918-6 May 1918; 2) May 1918-August 1918; 3) August 1918-May 1919; 4) May 1919-February 1920, 24 June 1918 [Hereinafter these shall be cited as LPP] (ISUA).
19. L. P. Benezet and C. O. Williams and D. B. Waldo. "Report

of Official Board of Visitors," Muncie, 1918. (ISUA), Parsons Papers, Box 7, 7-8.

20. Lynch, 260-261.

21. F. D. Rose, Muncie, to William Parsons, Terre Haute, 17 March 1919-2 February 1921, 17 March 1919, Letters and telegrams (ISUA) Parsons Papers, Box 7.

22. Parsons, LPP, 31 July 1918.

23. Board of Trustees, Indiana State Normal School, Terre Haute, "Minutes," 7 August 1919, 167.

24. Parsons, LPP, February 1918-December 1919.

25. Ibid., 29 July 1918.

26. Board of Trustees Minutes, 10 July 1919, 156.

27. Parsons, LPP, 6 December 1918.

28. Ibid., February 1918-December 1919.

29. Ibid., 29 July 1918.

30. Board of Trustees Minutes, 10 July 1919, 156.

31. Parsons, LPP, 20 May 1919.

32. Lynch, 263.

33. J. J. Schlicher, "Diary," Transcribed by John Bruechener, 1918-1919 (ISUA), 22 April 1918.

34. Board of Trustees Minutes, 7 August 1919, 167.

35. Ibid., 167.

36. Parsons, LPP, 24 August 1918.

37. Board of Trustees Minutes, 7 August 1919, 167.

38. Schlicher, 29 March 1918.

39. Ibid., 16 April 1918.

40. Ibid., 18 February 1918.

41. Ibid., 7 March 1918.

42. Ibid., 5 November 1918.

43. William Parsons, "Memoranda of Conversations on the 22 and

23 of April" April 1919, Stucco Letters (ISUA), Parsons Papers, Box 7. Parsons, (LPP), to L. N. Hines, 25 April 1919 [Hereinafter these two documents will be cited as Memoranda].

44. Board of Trustees Minutes, 7 August 1919, 167.
45. Ibid., 167.
46. Parsons, LPP, 17 April 1918.
47. Parsons, to Benjamin F. Moore, 29 July 1918.
48. Parsons, to Benjamin F. Moore, 24 April 1919.
49. Parsons, Memoranda, 25 April 1919.
50. Moore, to William Parsons, 28 April 1919.
51. Parsons, Memoranda, 25 April 1919.
52. Parsons, to Benjamin F. Moore, 29 April 1919.
53. Parsons, Memoranda, 25 April 1919.
54. Parsons, to Benjamin F. Moore, 29 April 1919.
55. Moore, to William Parsons, 30 April 1919.
56. Board of Trustees Minutes, 7 August 1919, 168.
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