Board Ousts Education Dept.

Man For Active Political Role

(Special To The Advertiser)

ALEXANDRIA, July 22—The State Department of Education at its monthly meeting here Monday, July 21, abolished the post of assistant state supervisor of school plants and transportation and thereby in effect discharged its incumbent, J. B. Myers. It has been openly charged that Myers was known about the state as the political under-cover-man for State Superintendent of Education John E. Coxe, now a candidate for re-election on the New Orleans Old Regulars—Jimmy Morrison ticket. The action of the board was unanimous. Evidence was that Myers had been devoting part of his time the past few years as a $4,000 a year State Department of Education employee, in seeking to build political campaign strength for Coxe. Myers and Coxe were before the board for nearly two hours in executive session. The only announcement made by the Board afterward was that Myers’ post had been abolished.

Opponents of the injection of politics in the state public school system have been watching the developments for some time. The action of the State Board of Education was the first exercise of its new power over the State Department of Education under laws passed at the 1946 session of the state legislature. One of those laws gave the Board the duty of confirming or rejecting Coxe’s annual budget and all appointments under it, including re-appointments. In effect the Board rejected the nomination of Myers by Coxe but its legal procedure was to abolish the post entirely on the ground that it is superfluous.

In his capacity of inspecting school plants and school transportation in all of the state’s 64 parishes Myers traveled the state a great deal and was in constant touch with school officials in all parish systems. Charges are reported to have been brought to the attention of the Board that there was political activity. Parish superintendents from a number of the parishes are said to have sent in complaints.

It is reported, without confirmation, that a majority of the State Board of Education members had reached the conclusion last March that the post occupied by Myers should be abolished. Coxe is said to have been informed of this decision but it was charged that he had not informed Myers of the situation and had actually included a salary increase for him (Myers) in the budget submitted to the board.

Myers made no statement after the Board decision to abolish his post was made known.

Other action taken was:

(1) Approval of the employment of professional services to make a topographical map of Northwestern State College at Natchitoches; approval of adding $25,000 to the school budget.

(2) Approval of paving St. Mary’s Street which runs through Southwestern Louisiana Institute at Lafayette. The college will pay $5,000 and property owners adjacent to the college will pay the remainder, $13,000.

(3) Approval of building a $250,000 girls dormitory at Southeastern Louisiana College at Hammond, also repairs costing $6,000 to government airport buildings which have been taken over by the school.

(4) Installation of air-conditioning in Southern University’s negro law school at Scotlandville; appointment of Pavrot and Reed as architect for the new school for negro blind and deaf at Scotlandville.

(5) Referred to the state attorney general for a ruling a request by the Southwestern Louisiana Trade School at Crowley to buy workmen’s compensation insurance.

(6) Referred to the director of higher education, E. E. Ewerz and to the council of college presidents, a request by Southeastern Louisiana College and Louisiana Polytechnic Institute to create Crowley to buy workmen’s compensation also referred to same authorities a request by Southwestern Louisiana Institute a request to establish a senior reserve officers training unit.

Approved purchase of $180,000 worth of property south of Louisiana Polytechnic Institute at Ruston for expansion of the school.

Educators said the state, however, would reimburse from $20,000 to $40,000 of the purchase price the city of Ruston “by selling some 15 residences”.

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