Former State Education Board President of Abbeville Criticizes Election of Supt.; Prefers Appointment

Frank A. Godchaux, Sr., Abbeville industrialist and former president of the State Board of Education, has pointed out in a recent issue of the Parent-Teacher bulletin of the state that while other states are taking steps to remove their school systems from politics, Louisiana has been going backward in that respect.

The gist of Godchaux's contribution to the bulletin concerned the election of the superintendent of education in Louisiana rather than his appointment. He termed the election practice "tying in the administration of our schools with the factional politics of gubernatorial campaigns".

Godchaux's item in the state bulletin was recently the source of an editorial appearing in the New Orleans Item. The editorial is reproduced as follows:

"While other states are taking steps to remove their school systems from politics, Louisiana has been going backward in that respect.

This point is made in the Louisiana Parent-Teacher Bulletin by Frank A. Godchaux of Abbeville, a former president of the State Board of Education.

"The trend in other states is for the board of education to appoint the administrator of schools. In addition, leading educators say the board should have the right to approve or disapprove persons picked by the administrator to serve on his staff.

"But in Louisiana we still elect the Superintendent of Education, thus tying in the administration of our schools with the factional politics of gubernatorial campaigns.

"And Godchaux believes we have gone from better to worse in selection of staff officials since he stepped down as president of the state board four years ago:

"I consider it unfortunate that someone has succeeded in getting the Legislature to enact a law permitting the Superintendent of Education to select staff members without the approval of the board.

"This opens the door wide for political appointments in case the superintendent may want to use this method of strengthening his hold on our public school system.

"Godchaux cites two flaws in electing a school administrator:

"The man thus selected is often the wrong one for the job. He is chosen, not on professional merit, but on the relative popularity of his political ticket.

"Since he gets his job through politics, he is likely to be more interested in seeking favor with political leaders than in working with the State Board of Education to improve state schools.

"In other words, the election system may collar the state with a double handicap—the wrong man with the wrong attitude.

"The PTA article notes that:

"Where (state boards) have no voice in selecting the chief school officer and no voice in choosing his staff, they are subordinated to a confirming body and are in no position to be responsible for the success or failure of a state's educational program—either in policy making or administration.

"The natural result is that the state school administrator is in position to dominate educational policies and administer them as he sees fit.

"Having absolute control over his staff and having what he interprets as a mandate from the people (actually, he has no mandate at all but was fortunate enough or smart enough to get on the right political ticket), there is no one effectively to question either his program or his method of allocating certain available funds.

"It is possible for him continually to increase his political popularity by strategical appointments and monetary allocations. There are many ways to make procedure appear justified.

"The three methods now used in this country for selecting school administrators are: Popular vote, appointment by the state board of education, and appointment by the governor.

"Only one of these methods is growing in favor—appointment by the state board. Since 1946 one state a year has changed to this procedure. Seventeen states now use it. Six others are considering it.

"Godchaux believes Louisiana citizens should work for a constitutional amendment to make our Superintendent of Education appointed by the Board of Education and responsible to the Board.

"Many parents and taxpayers will agree with him.

"If the voters are acquainted with the facts, they may well force Louis-

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