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✓ S.B. 230 - MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AT DANBURY FOR BUILDING PURPOSES (\$300,000)

Hearing before Committee on Appropriations held March 25, 1925.

SENATOR GREGORY: Two years ago as one of the members of the Educational Committee I visited Danbury for the purpose of ascertaining whether they needed a dormitory or not. After scrutinizing the situation very carefully the committee were of the opinion that the dormitory was absolutely essential in order that the school could function properly. The train service to Danbury is very poor. It is such that many students are unable to get there on time in the morning - they get there at 10:20, some of them. Then we found many of the students were unable to get suitable boarding places. Many of the best people in rural communities will not let their girls go to the normal school unless they know where they are. The dormitory would give them proper supervision. One of the state's problems is to supply the rural communities with teachers. This school aims to supply such teachers. With the building of this dormitory that would be eliminated as far as Litchfield and Fairfield Counties are concerned. Girls from the farm homes would go in greater numbers because they would have proper supervision. If your committee desires further information as far as the educational committee is concerned I, as senate chairman, and Mrs. Lewis, would be pleased to come before you any time.

SENATOR SHAW: The people of Danbury have been after this normal school proposition a good many years. We have almost reached the promised land. Last year the bill was killed at the last moment. This is more than a Danbury matter. Danbury people are for it because of local pride in their institutions. They are proud of the normal school. The State saw fit to place one of its schools in Danbury and they are working not alone for Danbury but for Connecticut. The state has invested thousands of dollars at Danbury. For years the State Board has had in mind the completion of that plant. In the opinion of the people who are here it is an essential part of the plant. It is not so much an addition as a completion. (Reads extracts from report of the State Board of Education in regard to dormitories). This is an educational bill. It has the hearty support of the State Board of Education. I do not need to tell you it has the hearty approval of the people of Danbury. We want to give you the facts and leave it to your judgment, hopeful you will see your way clear to giving us the appropriation. There were 61 pupils in 1920-21. The next year the attendance increased to 135 - more than doubled. If the state is to get all it is entitled to put of the investment it already has we maintain it can only get it by establishing a dormitory. It will benefit the attendance. It serves a rural community. I maintain the best teacher is the



teacher from the farm. I believe her birth and training is such she has advantages no city girl can have when it comes to ~~managing~~ managing children. This school reaches out and educates the farmer's daughter from the upper end of Litchfield County to the Sound.

MR. WADSWORTH: What is the attendance?

SENATOR SHAW: 122. 50% more could be accommodated without change of faculty of the present plant.

SENATOR PIERSON: How many would you accommodate in this dormitory?

PRINCIPAL: We would like 140.  
V.A. Blackmer

SENATOR PIERSON: What is the net cost to the state per capita for housing a normal school student in a dormitory?

PRINCIPAL: It costs nothing except the dormitory. A certain amount of depreciation is charged up against the students.

SENATOR PIERSON: The building would be practically self-supporting?

PRINCIPAL: I think so.

SENATOR PIERSON: Is Willimantic self-supporting?

DR. M. REDITH: yes.

SENATOR SHAW: These catalogues show a wonderful increase in attendance at Willimantic.

MR. WADSWORTH: Is the attendance increasing?

SENATOR SHAW: It is fluctuating. I think this would add 50%.

SENATOR BRINSMADE: I wish to speak in favor of the Normal School in Danbury as a member of three different educational committees in the general assembly. I have come into close touch with the needs of the state from an educational standpoint and it seems to me this is nearly a necessity, if not quite. It is bound to improve the morale and equipment of the persons there to prepare them for teaching. It has been a great success in Willimantic and it seems to me if the state can afford it they ought to have this school at Danbury.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM SHERMAN AND WASHINGTON asked to be recorded as in favor.

MR. PIERPONT: I want to emphasize one point that has been brought out. You have a valuable investment now working only to half capacity. This appropriation calls for another investment which will carry itself. It will increase the value of the investment you have. I find there have been girls from



Litchfield who have gone to this school and are teaching out in the country. Girls cannot commute from Litchfield to Danbury when they are taking their training teaching out in the model schools and at other times it is difficult because the connections are very poor. It is difficult to get a suitable place to live. They have to be shoved around from one place to another, and put up with unheated rooms.

MRS. FENNIMAN, REPRESENTATIVE FROM NAUGATUCK, said she knew about the Danbury situation from having lived at one time in Norwalk, and earnestly favored the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE FROM DANBURY said he lived in that section of the town, has a daughter to graduate from the school, and knows a good deal about the situation, and that it is hard for the girls to find places to live. Wishes to go on record as in favor.

MRS. NEVIUS said she lived within five miles of Danbury, knows the boarding conditions there, and knows how hard it is for the girls to commute. Strongly favors the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE FROM WATERTOWN, MRS. COE OF WATERBURY, MRS. GREEN OF DANBURY all asked to be registered in favor of the dormitory.

MR. PAYNE OF NEWTOWN said his own daughter went to the Danbury Normal and knows the hardship it was for her to commute to Danbury and get home late. Favors the bill.

JUDGE DAVIS OF DANBURY said the bill had been before the legislature many times; that on one occasion it went through both houses to be vetoed by the Governor. One reason for that was the bill didn't carry a sufficient amount of money. Nothing can be said against the bill. The State of Connecticut has started a job there and hasn't completed it. Six years ago the legislature gave Danbury \$35,000. for developing purposes and nothing has been done about it since. Eight years ago an appropriation was made of \$15,000. for the purpose of acquiring land and that was expended eight years ago and nothing done about it since. We think the state should complete the job. Other legislatures have been in favor of it; the state board of education favors it; at the hearing before the educational committee Mayor Fillow, Senator Peck, the superintendent of schools, and others appeared in favor of it. I think Governor Templeton did right in vetoing the last bill because the appropriation was no where near enough.

in connection with the normal schools was begun in 1907 by the REPRESENTATIVE HILL asked to be recorded in favor. He worked to get the principle adopted by the State Board. In 1917 money was ap- MAYOR FELLOW said they had had the school nearly 25 years. Conditions have changed greatly. We have in our section a lot of American girls and they are what is needed in this country at present. You can get the genuine American girl there for decent teaching. Danbury is about to build a new high school. At the time the school was built matters were different but now it is practically impossible to find a boarding place in Danbury. I want to urge consideration of this proposition.

DR. MERRIDITH: The State Board of Education is unanimously of the opinion students in the normal schools should be housed in dor-



MRS. LEWIS, HOUSE CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION: The educational committee last session felt this was badly needed. We think the need is even greater now. Both as a resident of Fairfield County and as House Chairman of the Educational Committee I am very much in favor.

PRINCIPAL HIGGINS: We are not asking this for Danbury. We are asking for something to benefit the schools of the state. We feel that is true because the normal schools are designed to equip teachers. We should have two factors - people trained from a source that is right and sufficient control over the time of these girls to see they live under reasonable living conditions. There are two sources of students - one the rural source, the other the industrial centers. If we have a school without a dormitory we are almost certain to fill it largely with people from the industrial centers. We need also students from the rural sources. They are better equipped, better qualified naturally, and willing to go back home and teach. It is difficult to get a girl brought up in the city to teach anywhere except in her home town. Experience at Willimantic shows a greatly increased number of students who come from rural sources. The year before the Willimantic dormitory opened they had 61 students; the year following twice as many. This year with three of the four schools decreasing in number, Willimantic is the only one that has increased. It is necessary if the school is to do the best work to control the conditions under which the girls live. A school can do very little about the character of its pupils if they have them only in class, - and the students commute or live under conditions which we cannot control at all. The experience of Willimantic shows that the morale of the student body is very greatly benefited. Danbury is a small city and living conditions are particularly difficult. It is hard for the girls to get satisfactory places to live. Conditions are much worse than they used to be. The students who commute cannot get there until 10:20 in the morning and we have to crowd our work into very short time. I do not need to tell you the demoralizing influence of commuting, spending time in the railroad station and on the train. By extending our control over the living conditions we fully believe a dormitory will improve the ~~quality~~ quality of the work the school can do. The increased value of the product will come without increased cost, as has been said. The school could now have fifty percent more students without any additional expense for instruction and only slight expense for books and supplies. The movement for dormitories in Connecticut in connection with the normal schools was begun in 1907 by the principal of the Danbury school. For ten years he worked to get the principle adopted by the State Board. In 1917 money was appropriated for a site. We have been trying ever since to get the necessary appropriation to carry through and have this dormitory to increase the value of the work we are doing. We have here a representative of the alumni and representative of the student body. Last year we had 250 students. We had the Bridgeport Normal school students. They left in a body because they established a city normal school at Bridgeport. Our entering class this year was larger than last year.

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