

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ECONOMIC STATUS
OF THE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER
1932 AND 1938

A THESIS

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EDUCATION AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE KANSAS STATE
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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this problem is to make a comparative study of the economic status of the high school teachers during the year 1932, which is supposedly the low year during the depression, and the year 1938.

There has been no attempt made to build a salary schedule, nor to justify or criticize the present salary levels. Neither has any attempt been made to differentiate between high school and elementary school salaries, nor between the salaries of men and women. It is not the purpose of the study to give arguments for or against higher salaries. The main theme of this study is to compare the purchasing power of the high school teacher's dollar in the two years, 1932 and 1938.

Many references are being made, at the present, to various increases in salary by local boards of education. The usual tragedy lies in the fact that people do not see far enough into the real situation to understand just how small or how large a five or ten per cent restoration really is, in relation to the present living conditions.

It is the intention of this study to give a more graphic

picture of the situation and to present some of the facts necessary to get a clearer view of the high school teachers' salaries as it exists in the state of Kansas. In an endeavor to do this, a number of questions immediately come to the front. Some of these are: Was the year 1932 really the low year for high school teachers financially? Did high school teachers receive a higher real income in 1938 than in 1932? What was the average salary in the state for the two years? And what was the purchasing power of the teacher's dollar during these two years? All of these questions, and many more in this field, are pertinent to teachers and administrators as well as to boards of education.

Importance of the Study

A generation or so ago the greater per cent of the teachers looked upon a teaching position as one of transient character, and in many cases were merely preparing themselves for some other field of activity. With the development of teachers colleges and the profession of teaching, there seems to be more adequate salaries, more permanent tenure and a steady increase in the security of the teacher.

It is vital for teachers to know the relationship of the cost of living to their own welfare, as there seems to be a common tendency to impose upon the teacher a considerable portion of the necessary reduction in public expenditures.

Studies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics compiled for the federal government are weighted for manual workers rather than for the salaried professional workers. Teachers' salaries and the cost of living become significant when it is found that the data on the economic status of the teacher have been neglected.

Further education for the average teacher is becoming almost mandatory, and more and more teachers are taking short courses lasting a month or six weeks in order to get further training along a particular line. To be at all efficient in his occupation the teacher has to spend a certain per cent of his salary for specialized books and magazines as well as for professional and general types of literature.

Travel is becoming increasingly desirable for teachers. Harold F. Clark¹ states: "If at all possible, each teacher should plan for a trip each year or every other year at least."

For these reasons it is extremely important that the teacher have more information than is now available regarding adequate standards of teachers' expenditures.

Statement of Organization into Chapters

This study is divided into five chapters. The first is an introductory chapter, explaining the study. The second

¹ Harold F. Clark, An Introduction to Economic Problems, New York, Macmillan Co., 1936, p. 271.

chapter is the History of the Subject and Related Studies. Chapter three consists of the cost of living index numbers for the two years taken into account. The fourth chapter is a statement of the Kansas teachers' salaries for 1932 and 1938. The fifth and final chapter includes the summary and conclusions.

Sources of Data

The material used has been gathered from many different sources and writers, and references have been made freely to authorities on the subject.

The pamphlet of Walter Crosby Eells,² Professor of Education, Stanford University, Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living, has been of great assistance in the presentation of the history of this problem from the year 1913 to the year 1932, where this study starts.

The cost of living index numbers for the different years have been taken from the reports of the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, which are published in bulletin form as well as in the Monthly Labor Review.³

The State Superintendent's "Report of Teachers' Salaries in Public School Systems of Kansas," was helpful in establishing

² Walter Crosby Eells, Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living, 1933, Stanford University Press, 94 pp.

³ Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 45 and 46, September, 1937, and March, 1938.

general trends in the salary schedules of the State.⁴

F. C. Shuttleworth, has written two articles "Dollar and Real Incomes of Public School Teachers"⁵ and "Dollar and Real Income of Teachers."⁶ Both of these were used in bringing the history of the subject down to date.

The report of the Committee on the "Economic Status of the Teacher,"⁷ which appeared in the Research Bulletin of the National Education Association, closely correlates this present study to the degree of giving historical background and findings of questionnaires sent to teachers of thirty-seven cities during the year 1932. These questionnaires answered by some 2500 teachers asked questions concerning the following problems: (1) sources of income; (2) current borrowing and reduction of debt; (3) net assets accumulated; (4) distribution of income among major items of budget; (5) income needed to maintain a desirable standard of living; (6) income status of teachers and other occupational groups; and (7) ways of improving the economic status of teachers. Contents of this report will be referred to from time to time.

⁴ W. T. Markham, "Teachers' Salaries and Public School Systems of Kansas," School and Society, Vol. 44, August 22, 1936, p. 238.

⁵ F. C. Shuttleworth, "Dollar and Real Income of Teachers," School and Society, Vol. 39, May 26, 1934, p. 683.

⁶ F. C. Shuttleworth, "Dollar and Real Income of Public School Teachers," Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. 21, February 8, 1933, p. 81.

⁷ National Educational Association, Research Bulletin, Vol. 13, September, 1935, p. 187.

B. W. Frazier⁸ points to the long-time trends as they affect teachers, rather than the depression tendencies. "Depression tendencies, like eddies in swift streams, flowing in rough channels, often temporarily reverse the direction of the main flow of events."⁹ These long-time trends and not the depression tendencies are the best guides to the individual teacher in making of professional plans, and to school administrators in adjusting school policies.

B. R. Buckingham,¹⁰ who was chairman of the committee on the "Economic Status of the Teacher," which in turn was established by the National Educational Association, reports the findings of this committee in the Research Bulletin of the Association. It was the scope and purpose of the committee, as seen by the chairman "to throw light upon the financial standing of the teachers; to appraise on a basis of ascertained fact, the satisfaction which teaching affords in freedom from financial worry and in economic independence."¹¹

The report developed certain interesting and important facts which are in keeping with the trend of this problem, and are here stated as reported by the Committee.¹²

⁸ B. W. Frazier, "Depression Tendencies vs. Long-Time Trends Affecting Teachers," American School Board Journal, Vol. 91, September, 1935, p. 19.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "National Deliberative Committees in Education," Research Bulletin of the National Educational Association, Vol. 12, No. 4, September, 1934, p. 190.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² National Deliberative Committees, op. cit., p. 191.

(a) That the economic welfare of teachers depends much upon the law of supply and demand; (b) makes for fair wages and reasonable employment; (c) that attractive working conditions will bring highly competent teachers in contact with children; (d) that the attempts to study problems in teacher demand and supply have been sporadic; (e) that there is a need for continuous fact-gathering and research; (f) that administrative adjustments and experimentations should follow surveys of conditions, and (g) that the primary responsibility for leadership in the above problems rests on such state agencies as state departments of education, state boards of education, and the state superintendents of public instruction.

Method of Procedure

The salaries of high school teachers for the two years, 1932 and 1938, were taken from the Principal's Organization reports filed each year in the office of the State Superintendent, at Topeka, Kansas. Each four-year high school in the state was listed as to rating, namely class "A," "B," "C," and "D," and the salary of each teacher was entered as an individual figure. These figures were averaged, both according to the school's classification and for the entire group of Kansas high school teachers. Some few schools whose principal or superintendent had not reported on the salaries paid the teachers were automatically left out of this study. In all cases, salaries of superintendents and principals were not entered in this average, nor were part-time teachers. These averages were compared with the cost of living index numbers as established by the Bureau of Labor Statistics; the valuation of the teacher's dollar, thereby, being determined for the two years, 1932 and

1938.

The usual research methods were employed in developing the history and background of the study.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF SUBJECT AND RELATED STUDIES

As it is the purpose of this study to discuss the cost of living indices and their applications to teachers' salaries, a survey of how these indices are compiled is necessary.

The National Industrial Conference Board and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, each compile reliable and commonly used indices of living costs; however, the latter is used much more extensively, and its method of determination should be explained.

During the years 1890 to 1913 the index computed by the Bureau of Labor was based on prices of food collected from a number of large cities. Expansion in 1913 brought data on not only food but clothing, rent, fuel and light, household furnishings, and miscellaneous items. The number of cities from which data were gathered increased from time to time until in 1920 fifty-one cities were included.

In the construction of the index the Bureau started using 1913 as the basic year and arbitrarily set 100 as the cost of living during this year. A separate and distinct index of the various costs of the items, food, clothing, rent, fuel and light, household furnishings, and miscellaneous items are computed semi-annually. Table I shows how these have varied since 1913.

TABLE I

INDEX NUMBERS OF GROUPS OF ITEMS ENTERING INTO COST OF LIVING
IN UNITED STATES.¹ DECEMBER 1913 TO 1932

Date	Food	Clothing	Rent	Fuel Light	House Furn.	Misc.	All Items
Av. 1913	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Dec. 1914	105	105	101	101	110	103	103
Dec. 1915	105	105	101	101	111	107	105
Dec. 1916	126	120	102	108	128	113	118
Dec. 1917	157	149	100	124	151	141	142
Dec. 1918	187	205	109	148	214	166	172
Dec. 1919	197	268	125	157	263	190	199
Dec. 1920	178	258	151	194	285	208	200
Dec. 1921	149	184	161	181	218	206	174
Dec. 1922	147	171	162	186	208	201	170
Dec. 1923	150	176	167	184	222	202	175
Dec. 1924	152	171	168	181	216	202	173
Dec. 1925	166	169	167	187	214	204	178
Dec. 1926	162	167	164	188	208	204	176
Dec. 1927	156	165	162	181	205	206	173
Dec. 1928	156	163	156	181	200	207	171
Dec. 1929	158	161	152	179	198	208	171
Dec. 1930	137	153	147	175	188	208	161
Dec. 1931	114	136	136	168	167	205	146
Dec. 1932	99	122	118	157	147	199	132

¹ Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 36, No. 2, February, 1933, p. 430-31.

To find the index number of the cost of living the six separate indices are combined. Since the expenditures of each are not uniformly distributed, it is necessary to have some weighting system. The system used in the index is based on the expenditures of 12,096 families of salaried workingmen. These families spent on the average 38.2% of their living costs for food, 16.6% for clothing, 13.4% for rent, 5.3% for fuel and light, 5.1% for household furnishings, and 21.3% for miscellaneous items.² These averages are then applied to each of the six index numbers in the following manner.

(For June, 1932)³

Food	100.1	x	38.2	%	=	38.24
Clothing	127.8	x	16.6	%	=	21.21
Rent	127.8	x	13.4	%	=	17.13
Fuel and Light	157.1	x	5.3	%	=	8.33
House Furnishings.....	153.4	x	5.1	%	=	7.82
Miscellaneous	202.1	x	21.3	%	=	<u>43.05</u>
June, 1932, index						135.78

Food prices are obtained monthly from 15 to 25 grocers, meat dealers, bakers, and dairymen in each of the fifty-one cities whose quotations are used. Fuel and light are also obtained from regular correspondents, as are gas and electricity figures as well as coal and wood prices which are reported by 10 to 15 firms in each city. Much of the other data are secured by personal visits of representatives of the Bureau.

² Walter Crosby Eells, Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living, 1933, Stanford University Press, p. 14.

³ Ibid.

In later years the indices of the average cost of all goods purchased by salaried workers are constructed, using an average of the years 1923 to 1925 as the base. Since most of the recent data are published with the figure of 100 used as an average for the years 1923 to 1925, this study will carry graphs and tables accordingly. The quotations, as secured in the fifty-one widely scattered cities, show considerable variation. Of these cities, Kansas City, Missouri, is probably the best representative locality that could be used in respect to the state of Kansas.

It is evident that the weighting, given to these six items of expense, is not well suited to teachers. From Mr. Davis,⁴ article it can be seen that the three items--rent, fuel and light of the lowest salaried teacher is only 50 per cent of the total living costs as compared with 73.3 per cent used in the Bureau of Labor Statistics index number. In this study of the 2612 Cleveland teachers,⁵ by Mr. Davis, as well as Bells' study,⁶ "Salary and Cost of Living of Fresno, California, School Teachers," tends to show that miscellaneous items accounted for more than half of the teachers' budgets,

⁴ H. H. Davis, "Teachers' Salary and Cost of Living," Educational Research Bulletin, Vol. 11, October, 1932, p. 345.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bells, op. cit., p. 18.

as compared to only one-fifth of the workman's budget.

It is well known that such items as insurance, interest, taxes, tuitions, charity, association memberships and other expenses which fall under the heading of miscellaneous, have not shown any particular reduction in recent years. Since miscellaneous items make up a larger proportion of teachers' living costs than the 21.3 per cent used by the index it is even more evident that the weighting given by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is not well adapted to teachers. The standards of things for which teachers spend their money are unreliable for local situations, and more information is needed in spite of the fact that there have been many investigations of this phase of the problem. The report of the Committee on the "Economic Status of the Teachers"⁷ gives the information found in Table II, which is the average per cents of income used for the various purposes by teachers.

When this table is compared with expenditures of other salaried workers it shows that teachers spend much less of their income for food, clothing and shelter, and a larger percentage for education, travel, and for books and magazines, than do the other salaried professional class.

It is well known that teachers' salaries cannot be evaluated in terms of actual amounts of money received; but only with

⁷ Eells, op. cit., p. 42.

TABLE II
AVERAGE PER CENTS OF INCOME USED FOR VARIOUS
PURPOSES BY TEACHERS

Food	15%	Recreation and Education	12%
Clothing ...	10%	Gifts & Aids to Dependents	13%
Shelter	19%	Taxes and Miscellaneous	10%
Health	5%	Savings	16%

reference to the purchasing power of that salary. The changes of the living costs and the fluctuations of the price of commonly used commodities, both from year to year and from place to place, are familiar to all who have any economic responsibilities at all. During the World War prices soared to three and four times their previous levels. The years immediately following the economic chaos of 1929 found prices going lower than at any period during the past decade. "What is needed, however, is some refined measure of the amount of these changes from year to year and in different parts of the country especially as they affect teachers."⁸

Discussions concerning teachers' salaries usually emphasize the cost of living as the chief factor of importance. Since 1913 the cost of living had steadily gone upward until 1920 and the usual line of reasoning prior to the depression was that because of this increase, school teachers' salaries

⁸ Bells, op. cit., p. 46.

should keep pace with the higher living costs. The fact that the peak was reached in 1920 was not generally considered a valid reason for cutting salaries, because the preceding period of inflation had caused teachers' salaries to decline in purchasing power. Partly to make up for this, most school systems maintained the salary level during the decade following 1920.⁹

A fundamental factor that must not be forgotten is that during the years 1915 and 1916, while prices were steadily rising, the salaries of high school teachers showed no significant increase until the year 1918. This lag in salary increases tends to prove that fixed salaries adjust themselves rather slowly to upward changes in the cost of living.

Eells¹⁰ compares the lag of the wage changes of the teacher with the lag of the wage-earner's and finds that wages paid the low-salaried workers are much more sensitive and flexible to changes in the cost of living than are teachers' salaries. The cost of living and the hourly wage in industry advanced almost "hand in hand" from the years 1915 to 1919, the lag being less than half a year, instead of two or three years as in the case of teachers. T. H. Briggs¹¹ relates, "The last to profit from prosperity should not be the first to feel the pinch of depression."

⁹ Harold F. Clark, Introduction to Economical Problems, (Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 271.

¹⁰ Eells, op. cit., p. 46.

Although the index number of the Bureau of Labor Statistics is the best available simple measure of the retail cost of living, the variation of the index number in different localities cannot fail to be unrepresentative and misleading in many special localities.

In various and numerous references it will be found that writers are asking and desiring a new and local index number. As has been said, there are no local measures of this type at all and the general indices available are of ancient data : Although there are variations within a state, a new and local state index of this type would be much more reliable for any kind of computations. Another desirable quotation, which to date is not available, is the distribution of expenditures of Kansas teachers.

The salaries of teachers, like the incomes of other groups of workers, are of significance only when they are considered in terms of what they will purchase. So long as the general level of commodity prices remains approximately the same from year to year, an increase or a decrease in salary can be interpreted as an increase or decrease in real purchasing power. But when the general price level fluctuates over a wide range or shows a consistent trend either upward or downward, such direct translation of money income into buying power is no longer possible. For that reason it has become the custom in recent years to evaluate salaries or wages in relation to the cost of living or the purchasing power of the dollar.¹²

¹¹ R. L. C. Butsch, "Purchasing Power of the Teachers' salary," American School Board Journal, Vol. 87, September, 1933, p. 25.

¹² Loc. cit.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF THE COST OF LIVING 1932 AND 1938

Data taken from the Monthly Labor Review¹ gives a very descriptive picture of the index number for the year 1932. Using 1913 as the base year, or 100, it is found that the index number for the United States as a whole, for 1932, was 132.1, a decrease of 2.7 per cent since June of the same year or 39 per cent below the peak of 1920.

The index numbers showing changes in the cost of groups of items entering into cost of living in the United States for 1932 were: food, 98.7; clothing, 121.5; rent, 118; fuel and light, 156.9; household furnishings, 147.4; and miscellaneous, nearly doubled, stood at 199.3.

Figure 1 shows the variations in the Bureau of Labor Statistics cost of living index number 1913 to 1932, inclusive. It will be noted that the relative cost of living for the country as a whole increased from 100 in 1913 to above 200 for the years 1919 and 1920. In other words the average American family paid twice as many dollars for some bill of goods in 1920 as it paid in 1913. In December of 1932 the composite index number of the cost of living was lower than it had been at any time during the previous fifteen years, although it was

¹ Monthly Labor Review, "Changes in Cost of Living in United States," Vol. 48, December 15, 1938, p. 639.

still 32 per cent higher than it was in 1913.

The single index as pictured in Figure 1, is a weighted average of other index numbers such as food, clothing, rent, fuel and light, house furnishings, and miscellaneous items. Some of these index numbers have shown even greater variations since 1913, as shown in Figure 2, but not so of the miscellaneous index which rose to 209 at the maximum and fell only to 199 in 1932, showing almost no change since 1920. The magnitude of the variation of these various components can be roughly estimated by glancing at the distance between the two points of the respective single index numbers in Figure 2.

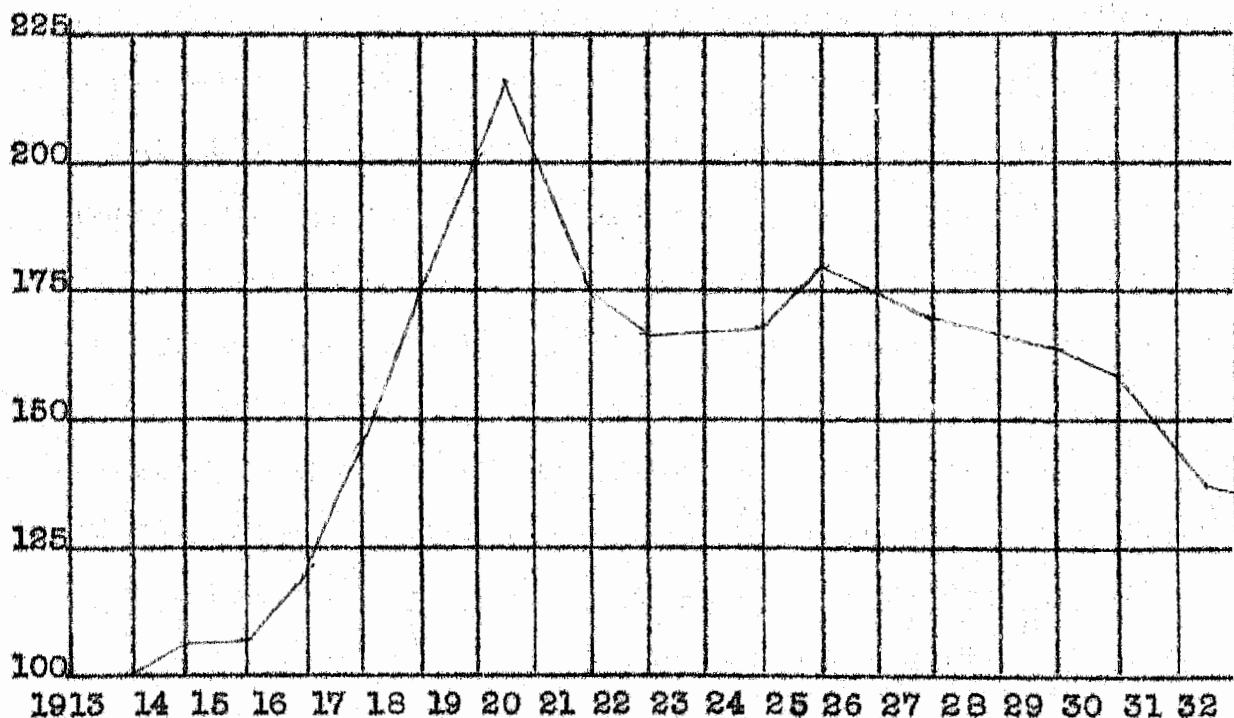


Figure 1²--Variations in Bureau of Labor Statistics Cost of Living Index Number 1913 to 1932 inclusive (plotted for December of each year, and for June, 1920, and June, 1932).

² Walter Crosby Bells, Teachers' Salaries and the Cost of Living (Stanford University Press, 1933), p. 6.

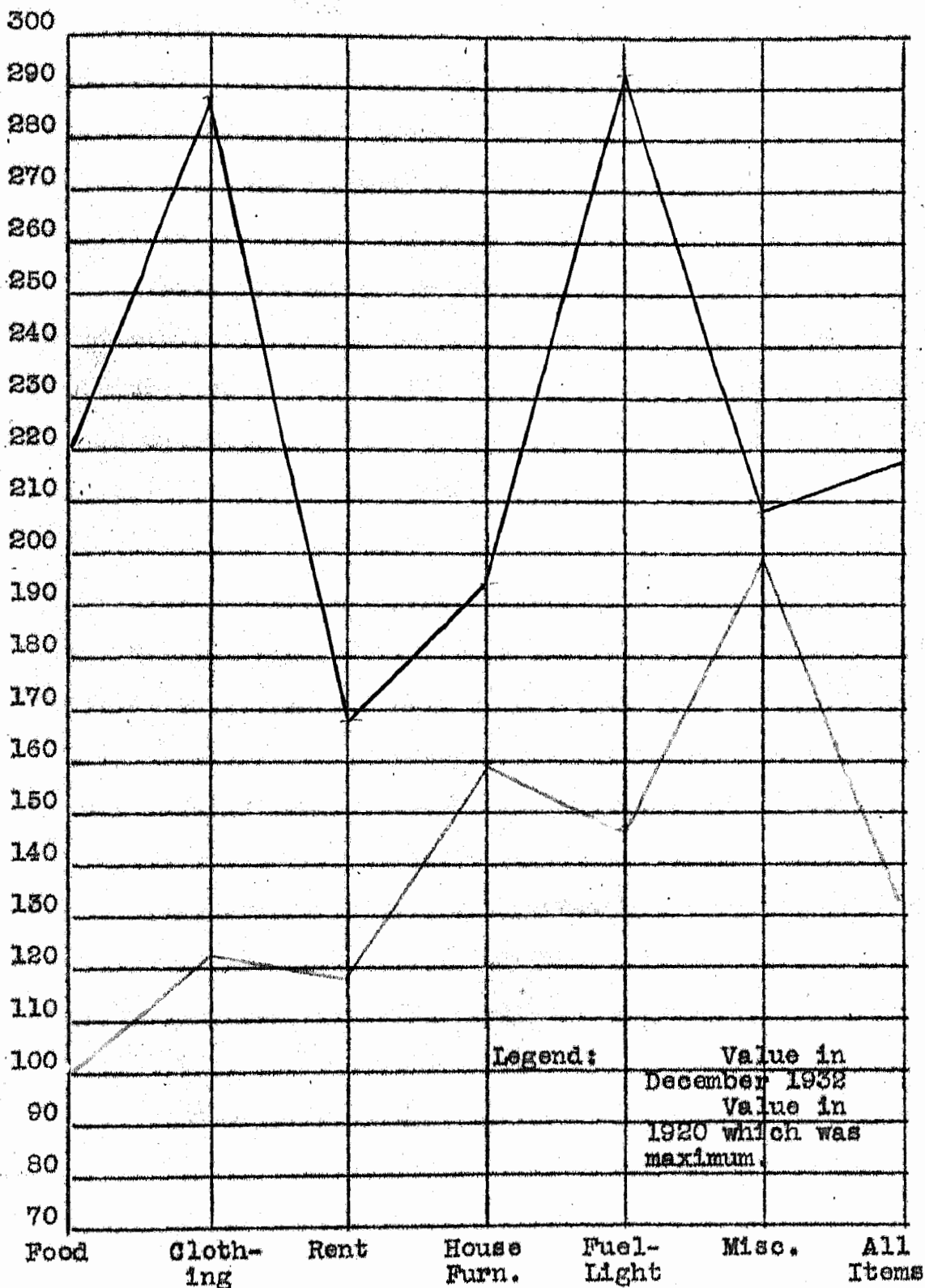


FIGURE 2

VARIATIONS IN THE INDEX NUMBER OF THE CHIEF COMPONENTS
 OF THE COST OF LIVING

(Value in December 1913 equal 100)

Figure 3, pictures the entire range of the index numbers for all components as well as the total cost of living index number. This graph includes data of the years 1923 to 1925 as 100. The variations of the different items can easily be compared by the trend of the composite index number.

Food costs at the end of the year 1938 were only slightly lower than at the first of the year, but considerably lower than the high point of 1937. Probably the most important factor in the heightening of the cost of living since 1932 is the rise in food prices, partly a result of the droughts of 1934 and 1936 and partly because of the administration's crop curtailment programs. In any case, the recent Bulletins of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics,³ indicate that anywhere from 29 per cent to over 37 per cent of the wage earner's budget goes for food. And, from the low point in 1932 to May, 1937, food prices rose 45 per cent and more.

Rent is another booster of the total cost of living, having been estimated by various studies to absorb 19 to 23 per cent of the total income, it has risen to over 30 per cent of the 1934 low; however, since 1923 it has been below the total cost of living index number.

Outside of the high peak in 1920, clothes have kept pace with the other costs of living fairly well, closing the year 1938 on a "par" with the total cost.

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Living Costs in 1938," Bulletin No. R. 907, United States Printing Office, 1939.

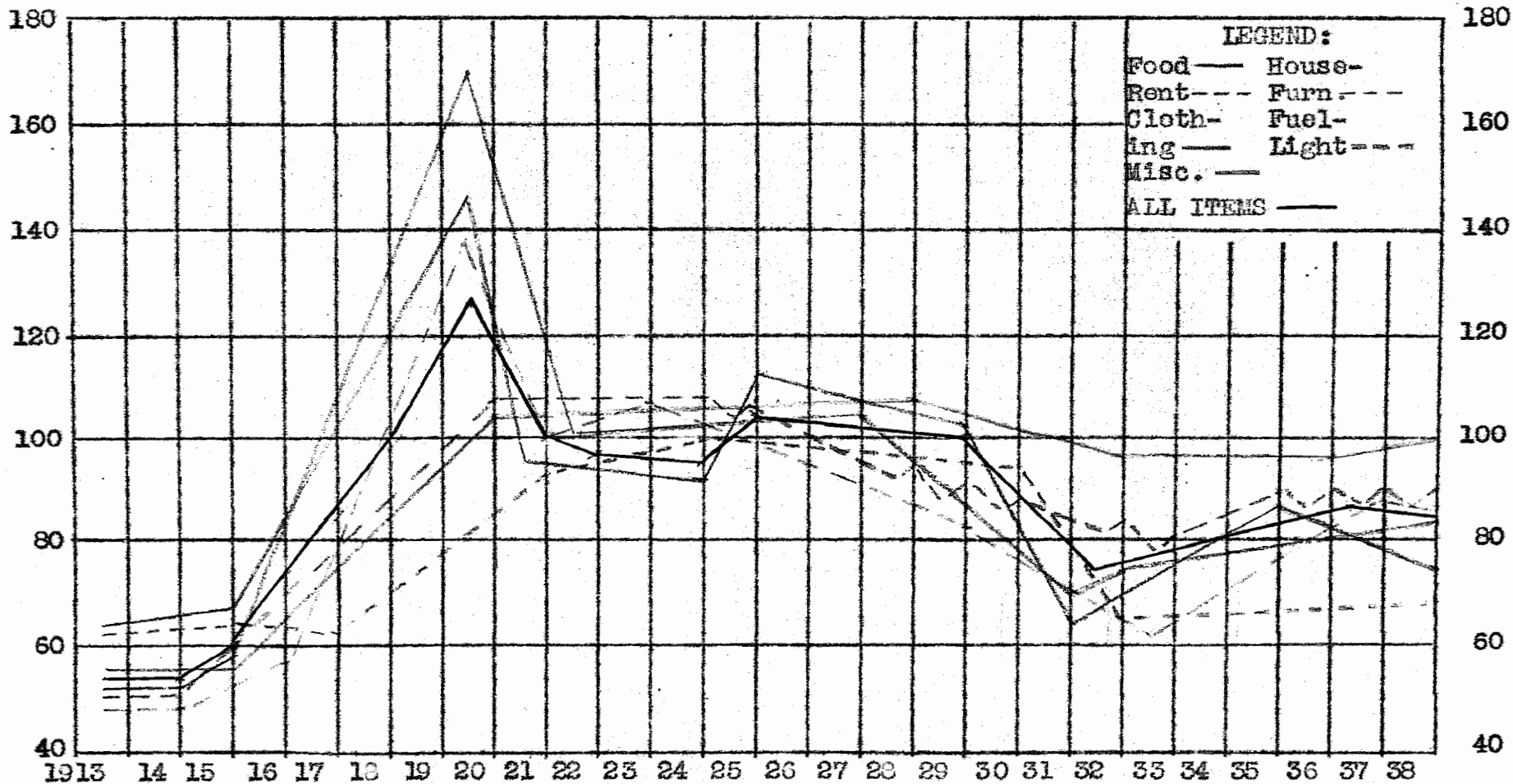


FIGURE 3

COST OF GOODS PURCHASED BY WAGE EARNERS
 AND LOWER SALARIED WORKERS. AVERAGE OF 32 LARGE
 CITIES OF THE UNITED STATES

Fuel and light are found to be somewhat constant in price with the exception of the usual mid-year decrease caused by the warm weather and lack of demand.

The same is true of household furnishings, which took a slight drop during 1938 chiefly because of the price reductions in textile furnishings.

As usual the miscellaneous items showed very little change during the year. In 1932 and 1933 it can be seen that this index number realized a 10 or 15 per cent drop; but since that time has continued to rise slowly and ended the year just under the average index number of 100 established as the average for the years 1923 to 1925.

The total or composite index number shown in Figure 3 registers 78 for the year 1932, which is 22 per cent below the 1923 to 1925 average. The cost of living steadily has increased since this year and in December, 1938, stood at 83 or a 5.5 raise since the 1932 reading. This indicates that the low salaried worker, for which this index is weighted, should have received a slight salary increase since 1932 to register the same financial status for the two years being compared.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF 1932 AND 1938 HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' SALARIES

The median salaries paid to almost all types of school employees declined from 1930-'31 to 1932-'33 and were reduced still further in 1934-'35. An upward trend in salaries in city school systems was started in 1936-'37, and continued to some extent in 1938; however they are still considerably below those of 1930-'31.¹

Table III shows the salaries of high school teachers of Kansas during the two years 1932 and 1938. As has been previously stated, this table was compiled from the Principals' Organization Reports filed in the office of the State Superintendent. All teachers teaching full time in accredited high schools of the state were included in this survey, except a few whose principals did not include salary payments, on their reports. Federal and private schools were excluded from the list, due to the fact that a great percentage of these have living quarters and other necessities of living included in the annual salaries. In cases where the Catholic Sisters are teaching in the high schools, there naturally were no salary terms listed.

It can be seen from this table, that the average salary

¹ Monthly Labor Review, "Changes in the Cost of Living," Vol. 45, No. 3, September 1937, p. 685.

TABLE III

AVERAGE SALARY PAID HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS OF KANSAS

FOR THE YEARS 1932 AND 1938

School Rating	1932 -- 1933				1938 -- 1939			
	No. of Teachers	Total Salaries	Average Sal. Per Teacher	Purchas- ing Power	No. of Teachers	Total Salaries	Average Sal. Per Teacher	Purchas- ing Power
A	2463	\$3613840	\$1467	\$1831	3014	\$4298470	\$1426	\$1718
B	987	1225780	1241	1591	867	864173	997	1201
C & D	324	322859	996	1277	375	339013	904	1089
All Schools	3774	5162479	1368	1754	4256	5501656	1293	1559

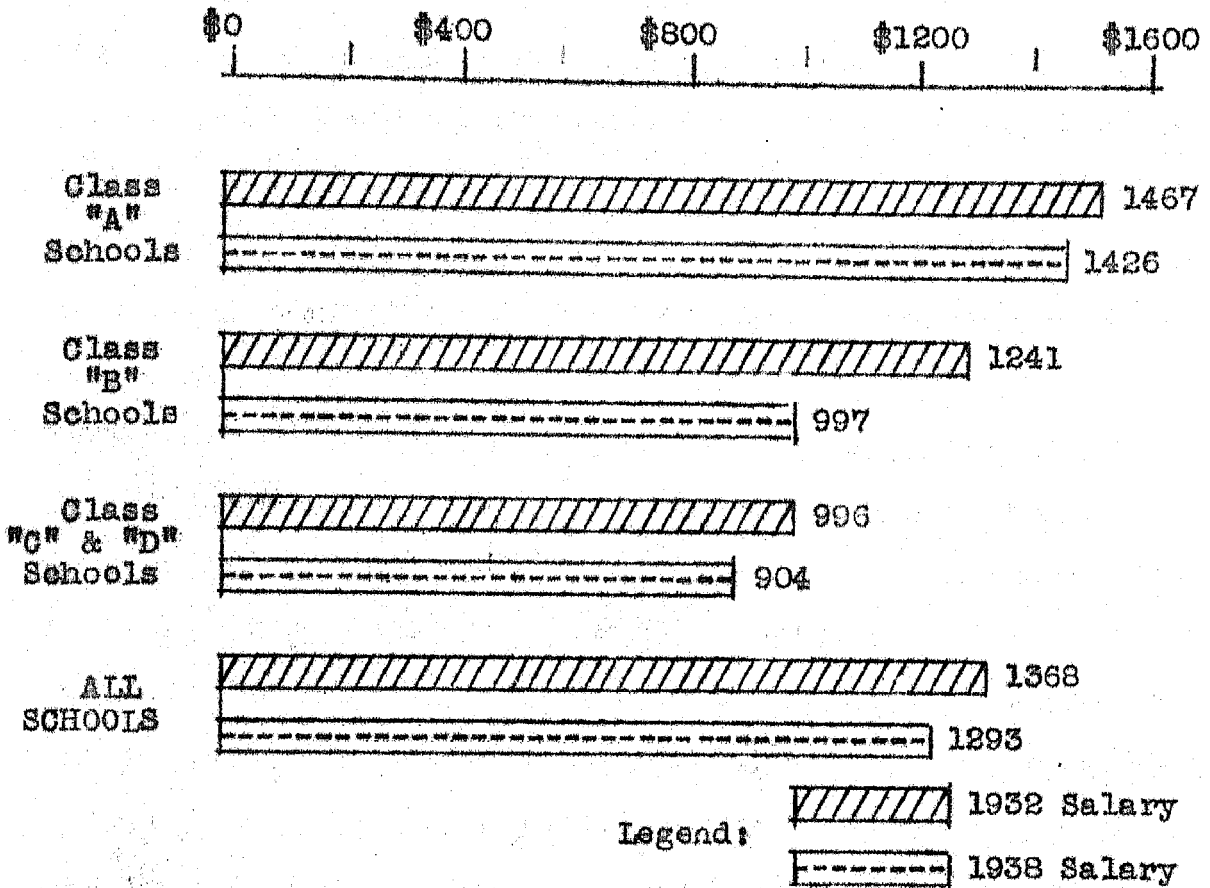


FIGURE 4
 AVERAGE SALARIES FOR THE YEARS, 1932 and 1938,
 OF KANSAS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

for high school teachers in 1938-'39 was \$1293 as compared to \$1368 in 1932-'33. The class "B" schools showed the largest decrease in salaries with 19.6 per cent drop for the year 1938 as compared with the average salary received in 1932. The class "C" and "D" schools were paying 9.2 per cent less in 1938 than in 1932, and the class "A" schools had reduced the salaries 2.7 per cent. The entire group of high schools of the state had lowered the average salary, in 1938 to 6.4 per cent below that of 1932. Figure 4 shows, graphically, these salary changes.

All these average salaries of the different classes of high schools and the group as a whole, as well as the per cents of decrease do not mean a great deal unless some means of establishing the value of the dollar is given.

In Figure 5 will be found a graphic presentation of the purchasing power of the average Kansas high school teacher's dollar for the two years, 1932 and 1938. This graph was prepared by multiplying the average salary by 100 (which was the average cost of living index number established for the years 1923-'25) and dividing this product by the cost of living index number for the specified year. In other words the average salary for 1932 was \$1368 and the cost of living index number was 78 for that year; hence, $1368 \times \frac{100}{78} = 1754$, which is the figure necessary, in the years 1923 to 1925, to equal the figure of \$1368 in 1932.

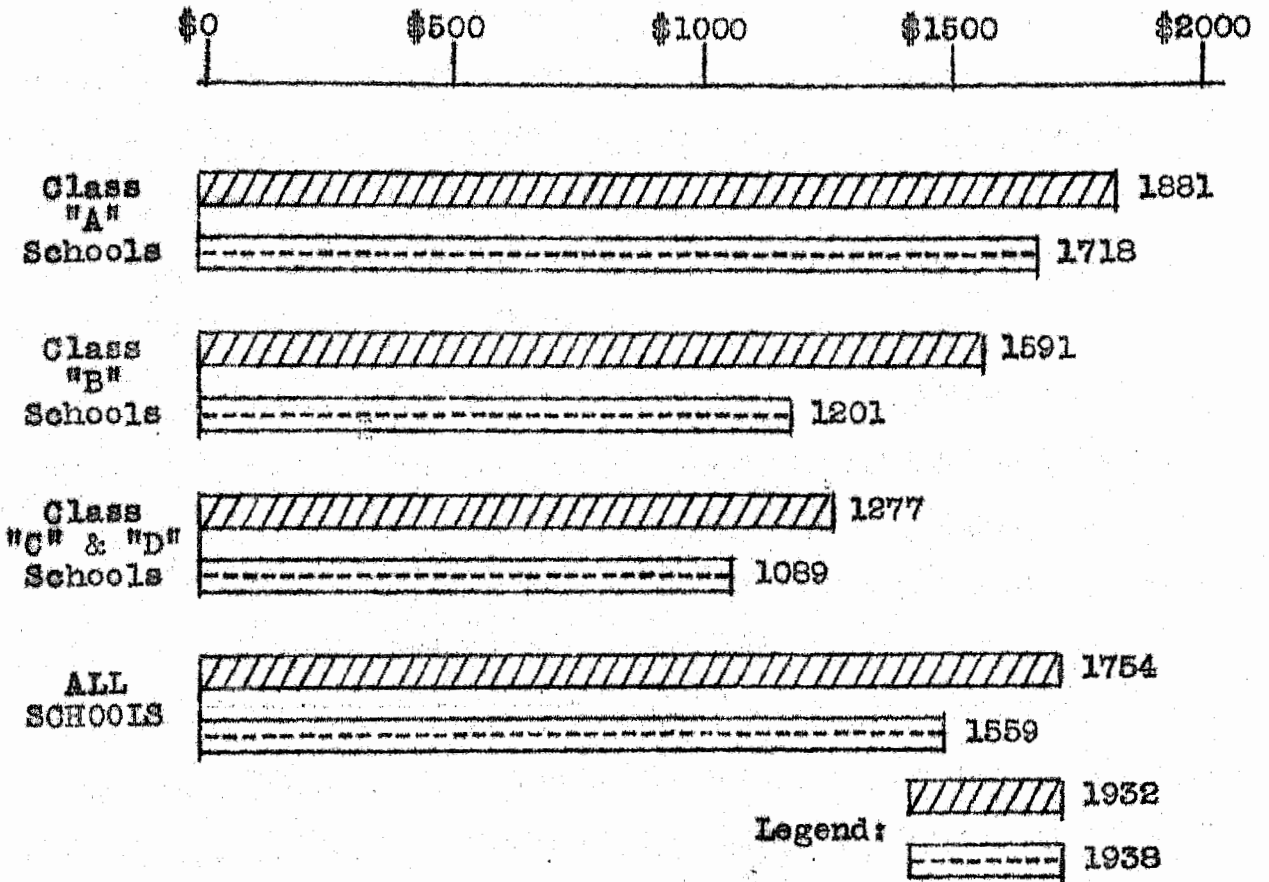


FIGURE 5

PURCHASING POWER OF THE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER'S DOLLAR AS COMPILED BY THE COMPARISON OF THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS INDEX NUMBERS AND THE AVERAGE SALARIES OF KANSAS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS. (1932, 1938)

The average salaries for the years 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937 are not taken into account in this study; however, the trends in salary payments were compared for a number of the larger schools for these years. Salaries for 1931 were only a slight per cent above those of 1932, indicating that the majority of school boards did not start lowering salaries in 1932. Reductions in school costs, however, were all but mandatory during the years 1933-'34-'35 and brought on an insistence upon reductions in school costs, particularly in school teachers' salaries. This series of decreases in teachers' salaries ended in 1935. An upward trend in the salaries paid the high school teachers in Kansas started again in 1936-'37 and continued in the year 1938. This upward trend, however, was not enough to bring the average high school teacher's salary up to the 1932-'33 level in terms of purchasing value.

The difference in the total number of teachers reported for the two different years can be accounted for by two facts. The first is that a number of schools had added more teachers or had hired the part-time teacher for full-time duty. The second is that there were more reports failing to show the salaries paid in 1932 than were missing in 1938.

The schools rated as "B" schools declined in 1938 due partially to the fact that a number of these schools had met class "A" requirements; therefore, there were not so many teachers reported for this class as in 1932.

No particular reason was noticed for the increase in the number of teachers in the class "C" and "D" schools with the exception of a few cases where schools had lowered their respective ratings by hiring administrators that did not meet the qualifications demanded by the state.

Conclusions

In summarizing the findings of this chapter, it is found that the supposedly low year of the depression, 1932, was in reality a very good year for the Kansas high school teachers, financially speaking. In 1938, the Kansas high school teachers experienced increases in the cost of living and were receiving less money, and also money of less value than in the first mentioned year.

The usual salary lag occurred in the down-swing of business and industrial activity of 1930. The average teachers' salary reached the high point in purchasing power in about 1931, with reductions in salary becoming most marked only after 1932. The fact of the matter is, then, that during three years of depression, 1930, 1931, and 1932, the real incomes, or purchasing power of teachers' salaries, actually rose 13 per cent. During this same period the real incomes of wage workers were cut 46 per cent, showing plainly that the teachers who were patiently living, these three years, through the depression were really at the peak of prosperity.²

² F. C. Shuttleworth, "Dollar and Real Income of Public School Teachers," Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. 21, February, 1935, p. 81.

Shuttleworth³ goes ahead to point out, "The facts of the matter are that the country as a whole has been climbing out of the depression ever since the summer of 1932. From the school year 1931-'32 to 1933-'34, the real incomes of teachers were cut 30 per cent." The wage earner, whose salary is more sensitive and flexible to changes in the cost of living, found his real income to have increased 27 per cent during a comparable period from the calendar year 1932 to February 1934.

It would seem to follow then, that it is periods of rising prices and industrial activity which hold back the real incomes of teachers, and not the depression or down-swing of industrial activity. "During the four major depressions of the last forty-five years the real incomes of teachers increased on the average at the rate of 7.5 per cent per year."⁴

The trend of dollar incomes is a comparatively unimportant factor in the determination of real incomes. If, however, the real dollar incomes were cut in half it is only natural that real incomes would also be cut in half, but the trend of financial rating simply does not happen that way. The period during the World War, with the traditional increases in salary, did not prevent real incomes from falling to a marked degree. Likewise, the most strenuous efforts of taxpayers to cut sala-

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

ries in the years 1929 to 1932 did not prevent real incomes of teachers from rising the previously mentioned 13 per cent.

In December, 1932, the cost of living index number was at 78, for the same month 1938 it stood at 83 (Figure 2). The Kansas high school teacher received, on an average, \$1368 in 1932 and in 1938 the average pay was \$1293. (Table II) This amounted to a 6 per cent increase in the cost of living as against a 6.4 per cent decrease in salaries. Taking the class ratings of the different schools into account, it was found that the teacher in the class "B" school received the largest decrease, 19.6 per cent, in salary; "C" and "D" schools paid their teachers 9.2 per cent less in 1938; and the class "A" school teachers were reduced 2.7 per cent. This analysis shows clearly that the year 1932 was a better financial success for these teachers than was 1938.

The purchasing power, as pictured in Figure 5, shows \$1754 for 1932 and \$1559 for the year 1938. This in reality means it would have taken \$1754 in 1923 to 1925 (the average years) to equal the salary received, \$1368, in 1932 and it would have taken \$1559 paid in the average years to equal the 1932 salary of \$1293. Comparisons can be made in like manner from Figure 5, for the class "A," "B," "C," and "D" schools of the state.

It is clear from this analysis that the lag in dollar incomes as well as the cost of living are important factors in determining changes in real incomes of teachers, but only over short periods of time. As the cost of living rises, the real

incomes of teachers fall; as the cost of living falls, the real incomes of teachers rise.

As previously stated, it is evident that the weighting given to the six items of expense of this index number is not well suited to teachers; however, the same condition exists for both years and can be used to some extent in comparing the teachers' welfare for the two different periods. In any case, the year 1932 was a more desirable year financially for the Kansas high school teacher than was 1938. Whether or not this trend will continue is at present difficult to foretell. It would be a most hazardous guess to predict the cost of living or salary trends for teachers during the next three to five years, and even more uncertain as to how radical the change in real incomes may be.

W. S. Elsbree⁵ gives his seven essentials for the successful living of the teacher. These may or may not be of future help in the determining of the cost of meeting these essentials, as a basis for salary scheduling. The changing of the living costs and the fluctuations of the prices of commonly used commodities, both from year to year and from locality to locality, make it extremely difficult for anyone schedule to fit the needs of every system.

The essentials as advised by Mr. Elsbree are:⁶

1. Comfortable and attractive living quarters and environment.
2. Proper and adequate food and nourishment.

⁵ W. S. Elsbree, "Future of Teachers' Salaries," Teachers College Record, Vol. 36, March 1935, p. 490.

⁶ Shuttleworth, op. cit., p. 684.

3. Suitable and attractive clothing, with sufficient variety.
4. Provision for recreation and for social life.
5. Cultural stimulation.
6. Opportunities for professional study and improvement.
7. Sufficient allowance for saving to care for sickness, accidents, and old age.

In trying to cope with this situation of paying teachers an amount that will meet the cost of these essentials, or for that matter any prepared set of expenditures of teachers, educators and teachers should be well versed on the actual situation as it exists in their particular localities. It would be very helpful if the Bureau of Labor Statistics would make available more adequate price data on the goods and services which teachers actually buy. An authoritative index of the cost of living of teachers is a very important need. More serious consideration should be given by teachers and educators to discovering competent and disinterested sources of information on economic and monetary questions. They should devote more energy and ingenuity to the problem of shortening the lag between changes in the cost of living and the changes in the dollar income.

In conclusion,⁷

It would appear that the true meaning of most depression tendencies affecting teachers' personnel can best be discerned in the light of past trends. But the course of such trends also teaches another lesson. Past trends repeat themselves only when the factors that condition them do not change fundamentally. Education, like certain other American institutions, is passing from youth to adulthood. While many characteristics of youth remain, there are some depression tendencies that are sharp reminders of present and future problems to which the precedents of the past may suggest only partial answers.

⁷ Shuttleworth, op. cit., p. 684.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summarizing the findings of this study the following statements are listed as the outstanding conclusions.

(1) Teachers' salaries are not nearly so adjustable and flexible to changes in the cost of living, as are the workingman's wages.

(2) The salary lag, which is so great in the salary trends of the teacher, is comparatively small for the lower salaried workingman.

(3) Long-time trends seem to affect teachers' salaries more than do the rising and lowering of the cost of living.

(4) Actual dollar salaries of Kansas high school teachers were 6.4 per cent lower in 1938 than in 1932, but the purchasing power showed even more decrease, reading \$1754 in 1932 as compared with \$1559 in 1938.

(5) The cost of living index number was 6 per cent higher in 1938 than in 1932.

(6) The economic status of the Kansas high school teacher was considerably lower in 1938 than it was in 1932, in which year industrial activity was at the lowest point of the depression.

(7) Decreases in cost of living tend to increase the real income of the teacher. Increase in the cost of living tends to decrease the real income of the teacher.

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