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Virginia has been one of the most backward states in the development of its educational system at all times. In 1671 Governor William Berkeley reflected the attitude of the ruling aristocrats in saying: "I thank God that there are no free schools in Virginia". A whole century later in 1779 Thomas Jefferson, Virginia's greatest advocate of public schools, as the newly elected Governor introduced in the legislature a bill to provide for a system of public schools throughout the state. It required a number of years to secure the passage of the bill and then it had been so amended as to prove of little value. The most obnoxious amendment left the inauguration of the school system to the court of each county. Only nine county courts were willing to have public schools.

Of course during their period there were various local free schools established for the poor by philanthropists and there were private schools and academies for the wealthier class.

A state-wide system of public schools was first inaugurated in November 1870. This system of schools was mandatory under the terms of the constitution adopted on July 6, 1869. The convention adopting this constitution was composed of ~~105~~ 105 members. Of these 24 were negroes and 33 were natives of other states and foreign countries.

The most outstanding developments of recent years in the school system were the adoption of a compulsory attendance law and the adoption of the county as the unit of school administration. The latter plan is one in which Virginia took the lead over most states.

Throughout our entire educational experiences the resistance of the aristocrats of Virginia has been a powerful factor in retarding the progress of our schools and the influence of this element in our political life in the same direction is not unnoticed today.

HOW VIRGINIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMPARE WITH THOSE OF  
OTHER STATES

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In a brief historical sketch of our schools a few weeks ago it was pointed out that the aristocrats of Virginia had opposed the establishment or improvement of our schools through the centuries of our existence in the New World. It is, therefore, not surprising that Virginia is excelled in its educational institutions by most of the other 47 states.

Various school experts have at various times undertaken to rate and rank the efficiency of each of the several states of our country. Most of them use approximately the same standards or criteria. There is little difference in the final ranking.

In 1928 Virginia ranked thirty-ninth among the 48 states. In 1930 her rank had dropped to forty-third. With the rapid reduction in the state and local school funds and the consequent shortening of school terms there could not well have been a xx favorable change in our standing since 1930.

Virginia spends about one-half as much per child in school as the average for the United States. We have a per capita wealth greater than that of any other southern state and yet in 1931-32 every state touching our borders, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina paid its teachers higher salaries than Virginia.

When we consider the astounding fact that for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1932 Virginia paid \$100,000,000 in internal revenue taxes to the Federal Government and in such payments was exceeded by only four states of the Union we feel compelled to deny that our poor standing in education is due entirely to our

lack of resources. We have to begin to question whether the difficulty might lie partly in the attitude of our political leaders who control the purse strings and likewise mould public sentiment. Our Federal Government, for example, hands out a special dole of more than 7 million dollars to build roads in the state. What does it do for the children whose life destinies so depend on our handling of the schools? As yet, almost nothing.