

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

JOHN MAURICE MUNSON

1933–1948

“Michigan is a great State, But neither because it is large nor rich is Michigan a great State. What then makes Michigan great? I will tell you . . . I see boys and girls ten hundred thousand of them, all different, all aspiring, all good. It is they that make Michigan great.”

J. M.

The administration of John Munson was in stark contrast to that of Charles McKenny. At its inception the Great Depression was casting its rapidly darkening shadow over the land. The McKenny era saw a great war—but war provides a motive and stimulus, a reason accepted for self-denial, disappointment, suffering. What can one say, however, for a depression, whose destructiveness, material and moral, is more widespread than war, and for which there is no glorious purpose to be served? But the Munson era saw war, too, larger, far more destructive than the earlier war, far more demanding on the life of the College; and, in its closing years, the sudden overwhelming flood of returning veterans of that war.

John Munson’s father fled from Sweden and came to America to escape the thralldom of a landlord who demanded implicit obedience from those who lived and worked on his estate. A letter from an older brother, Oliver, who was born in Sweden, describes the situation vividly:

Father’s people lived in poverty under a tyrant landlord who was not satisfied because father hired a man to do the work for him. (Father was attempting to supplement his income by building up a business in herring) . . . One day father was out chopping wood when he shouted that Pino (the landlord) was coming and that he would split his head with an ax.

Mother took father's arm and led him into the house, put him in a bed covering him up, strictly forbidding him to enter into any dispute with Pino who was a three hundred pound giant with a long beard.¹

Munson was born in Kane, Pennsylvania, where his father, after a few years, had brought some land and re-united his family. At age 13 he left home, joining the throngs who sought escape from the growing financial panic which reached its climax in 1893. He went to Michigan's Upper Peninsula where he worked as millhand and lumberjack on the Menominee River, printer and night school student, farmhand, and finally, teacher in the country and village schools. Munson explained how he came to be a teacher:

I came to Michigan in the early nineties. Shortly thereafter we had in this land what was known as hard times. The pinch of the city drove me to the woods. One day the other fellow on the cross-cut saw, a district school teacher, and an original ferrisinstitooter, said to me as we paused to drive the wedge: "Why don't you study up evenings and go with me to the teachers' examination in the spring? You don't want to stay in the woods all your life? And that is how, on the 19th of April in ninety-five, I passed the examination and was called to teach.

Learning of Ferris Institute at Big Rapids, Michigan, where one could prepare for college, he enrolled. It was here that he attracted the attention and admiration of the founder and head of the Institute, W. N. Ferris (later to be Governor of Michigan), and formed a close and lasting friendship with a fellow-student, Isaiah Bowman (later to become one of the world's most eminent geographers, and President of Johns Hopkins University).

From this humble beginning, Munson served successively as teacher in the public schools;² superintendent of schools;³ Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction for six years (appointed by Governor Ferris); Director of the Training School of the Central Michigan State Normal at Mount Pleasant (1919-1923); and President of the Northern Michigan State Normal School at Marquette (1923-1933). From this position he came to Ypsilanti.

Along the way he acquired a college education. A student at Michigan State Normal College (roommate, Isaiah Bowman), he received the BA degree in 1903. While superintendent of schools at Harbor Springs, with the aid of correspondence courses, he met the

requirements for the PhB degree at the University of Chicago in 1911.

The high regard and strong support of Governor Ferris are noteworthy throughout these years. In 1931, in connection with Munson's unsuccessful candidacy on the Democratic ticket for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ferris wrote him:

I suppose I am responsible for your nomination. You can rest assured that I am not ashamed of it. You are one of the men I have always admired and whether you are elected Superintendent of Public Instruction or not, I shall have no regret that I did what I thought was my duty. Sooner or later the better ways in politics are going to win.⁴

When the opening occurred at Marquette, Ferris wrote again:

I have just learned that a President must be chosen for the Northern State Normal School. You are the man for that job. I am not at all sure that I will be able to accomplish anything, but I can have the very great pleasure of trying to accomplish something.⁵

The State Board of Education on May 8, 1933, named John Maurice Munson president of Michigan State Normal College, effective July 1. This was simply a transfer of one of its presidents, who had made an excellent record, from the smallest to the largest of the four State Teachers Colleges. Munson served in Ypsilanti for 15 years.

Munson's conservative approach to education was well indicated in a letter that he wrote to a fellow educator at about this time:

I have said many times that we have been doing business educationally for several decades on the foundations laid by Angel, Pattengill, and Ferris. These men were the top-notchers in building up real educational sentiment. I believe that the modern quantitative movement in education has its place and is of value, but we still need some of the old-fashioned kind.⁶

At the State level, Munson's influence was broad and significant both as to State Board policy in meeting problems generated by the Great Depression, and on the curriculum of the four teachers colleges.

The appalling destructiveness of the Depression was felt deeply by the teaching profession in Michigan. In October, 1933, the State

Board called a conference of leading educators to consider constructive steps that might be taken. The conference adopted the following resolution:

Whereas, we are facing the greatest crisis in the world's history and

Whereas, education is a major means by which people can be brought to a realization of their responsibility in relieving the situation and preventing its recurrence and

Whereas, to accomplish such results we need at all times highly capable and well trained teachers, to the end that the children of our commonwealth shall be assured a sound and dependable education (under the direction of the highest type of citizens possible to secure) which will perpetuate the ideals of citizenship and society in keeping with the ideals of our state and federal constitutional governments:

Therefore Be It Resolved:

1. That the State Board of Education create an extra legal Planning Commission whose function shall be to act in an advisory capacity to the State Board in reference to teacher training problems.
2. That the certification of all teachers in the State be the exclusive responsibility of the State Board of Education.⁷

Within two days the State Board took action to implement the resolution as far as it could and passed another stating that it would undertake “*at once* the development of a uniform state program for the certification of teachers and for standards of training.” It proceeded to set up an Extra-Legal Advisory Planning Commission, to be composed of representatives of the University of Michigan School of Education, Michigan State College, the teachers colleges, the Association of Private Colleges, municipal colleges, Catholic colleges, a superintendent of schools, and a county commissioner of schools.

Munson was named to represent the teachers colleges.⁸ The work of the Commission proved to be of outstanding and lasting importance to Michigan education. Munson's contributions consisted of a joint report with E. L. Austin of Michigan State College on the current supply and demand of teachers, especially in the elementary school (“The Present Teacher Employment Situation”) and his report as chairman of a committee on teacher training (“Tentative Proposals for a State Program of Teacher Training”).⁹ The former, presented in April, 1934, called for a study which Munson himself

undertook and published the following year, with important consequences.

The teacher training report contained proposals that, in time, became important in the Michigan pattern. They not only influenced the Certification Code, but also the teachers colleges in restating their curricular and degree requirements. Among these proposals, as embodied in the final report of the Extra-Legal Planning Commission, were some that would soon be implemented in a uniform Certification Code for the State (1936), and others that would ultimately appear in the new State Constitution, adopted some 30 years later (1963).

Recommendations adopted in the Certification Code were that four years of college work be required for a provisional certificate, five years for the permanent certificate at all levels of teaching in the public schools; and that there be strong emphasis on academic preparation. The statement on academic preparation read as follows:

The preliminary years of college training . . . should be devoted to basic training concerned with the widening and deepening of cultural interests and with the control of subject matter. The basic courses . . . should emphasize fundamental principles in social, political, and economic fields. Pedagogical considerations should be delayed as late as may be feasible in each curriculum.

Recommendations incorporated in the Michigan Constitution of 1963 were that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction should be appointed by the State Board of Education, that the State Board should be a non-partisan body, and that there should be a state educational planning commission representing the several levels of the teaching professional as well as the employing authorities.

The legislature acted in 1935 to place sole authority for the certification of teachers in the State Board.¹⁰ This placed on the Board the necessity for developing certification policies and procedures. It referred this problem to the Extra-Legal Advisory Planning Commission. The Commission, its basic policies resting on the recommendations of the above-mentioned report, proceeded to write a Certification Code for Michigan teachers.

Meanwhile, the heads of the teachers colleges had proceeded to draw up a recommendation affecting degree requirements and definitions. In late 1933, the Normal Executive Council (composed of the four presidents) had authorized Munson and Paul Sangren,

Dean of Administration at Western State Teachers College, to draft a statement that might be included in identical form in the yearbooks of the four colleges. The resulting report, presented by Munson in 1934, was adopted verbatim by the Board, which took the occasion to add a statement that henceforth the teachers colleges would permit students to graduate with a degree only. Up to this time, the official requirement was that, to be granted a degree, a student must meet the requirements for a teachers certificate. This liberalization was particularly pertinent in a time when young people, unemployed, were making the decision to use their time by furthering their education.

The statement as adopted by the Board was faithfully reproduced in the yearbooks of the four Normals for more than twenty years; its essential elements are still basic policy. It included an extended statement of Purpose and Control which placed explicit emphasis on the fundamental importance of the liberal arts. A section was devoted to a grouping, under seven heads, of all subjects taught, accompanied by a statement of minimum requirements for all students, regardless of curriculum followed, which would insure a broad exposure to the liberal arts.¹¹ It also sharpened the distinction between the BA and the BS degrees.

The Munson study on the supply and demand of teachers was prompted by the publication in 1933 of a "Report of the Committee on Teacher Training," published by the Michigan Education Association and sponsored by the Michigan Conference of City Superintendents. This report purported to show a large oversupply of teachers in Michigan. The conclusion had a vicious effect in that it gave the Legislature an excuse for providing niggardly support for the teachers colleges, and even persuaded Governor William A. Comstock to propose, in the interest of economy, the closing of two of the four teacher training colleges. Furthermore, it discouraged young people from enrolling to become teachers.

Munson, writing to the Extra-Legal Planning Commission, called for a study to ascertain "the complete and accurate facts." He then went on to say that in its conclusion as to the number of new teachers produced in the year 1931-32, the report made an "overstatement" as to the teachers colleges of 137 per cent, and a similar overstatement as to the other teacher training institutions.

In the detailed, scholarly report that he presented the following year, replete with statistics and charts, Munson made a distinction

between teachers who were “available and satisfactory” and those simply classed as teachers,¹² and showed that at all levels and in all specialized categories there would be a demand for every new teacher in 1935.

As mentioned above, the Governor was persuaded to recommend that two of the teachers colleges be closed as an economy. He did this in early January, 1935. The Senate thereupon appointed an investigating committee. Munson appeared at the hearing and was able to present a detailed and convincing report on the colleges. The committee voted unanimously to oppose the closing and the Senate unanimously adopted the report.

The chairman of this committee was Frank R. Mosier. In a letter to Munson on the occasion of the latter’s retirement, he commented:

. . . The way in which you stood up under the insinuating manner and grilling attack a certain Senator made upon you in the hearing on the investigation of closing a Normal College . . . I remember the unusual demonstration you gave as an educator in responding to the Senator’s tirade in such a way that the committee voted to maintain the same Normal School . . . I am convinced, that had you not appeared before our committee, our college situation in Michigan would have been quite different.¹³

In 1938, the Extra-Legal Planning Commission recommended to the State Board that it approach the University of Michigan with a request that they appoint a committee to confer with the Board on the possibility of establishing a joint program of graduate work with the teachers colleges. Such a program, leading to a master’s degree in education, to be conferred by the University of Michigan, was agreed upon. One consequence of this arrangement occurred the following year when the calendar of the teachers colleges was changed from the quarter plan, which had prevailed since 1899, to the two-semester plan because the U-M operated on this system.¹⁴

John Munson was in his mid-fifties when he arrived as Normal’s President. He had presided over a much smaller institution at Marquette. His experience as Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, had, however, provided him with an overview of the State educational scene, and his earlier post as director of the laboratory school at Mount Pleasant Normal had contributed to his understanding of the teacher training program. No prior experience could,

however, have given him or anyone a foretaste of the problems that lay ahead.

One can scarcely imagine a more inauspicious time for taking over the administration of a college. A man of average character or lacking the high esteem of fellow educators throughout the State could not have survived those first years. Because of the illness of President McKenny during the last months of his administration, the State Board had appointed an executive committee to administer the College. This was composed of Clyde Ford, head of the Department of Modern Languages, as chairman; Clemens Steimle, Registrar; and Charles Anspach, head of the Education Department. It was with this committee that Munson dealt as he prepared to take over.

The overriding problem was that of State financing. The State Legislature, faced with drastic cut in income, was reducing its appropriations to the University of Michigan and Michigan State College by 15 per cent. The four teachers colleges were anticipating a cut of 25 per cent. Munson proposed that these colleges be allowed to retain student fees instead of turning them over to the State. This would even out at about a 15 per cent cut. In May of 1933, Ford wrote to Munson as follows:

I had the chagrin of seeing the salary (of the president) for our institution and for Western State Teachers College cut down, from \$4,500 to \$4,000, in spite of the fact that I made as valorous and violent a protest as I could. I spoke of Ypsilanti as the mother of teachers colleges, talked about standing and size and all the rest as arguments why the president's salary should be commensurate . . .

So Munson saw his salary cut after his appointment and before taking over the position.

As a matter of fact, the president's salary at Ypsilanti had, in 1929-30, reached a high of \$9,000. At Northern, Munson had received \$8,000. The \$4,000 that he received at Ypsilanti remained at this level for four years, and proved to be the lowest reached during the Depression. During this time, department heads at Normal who had been earning a salary of \$5,000 found their low at \$3,192, and full professors were dropped from \$4,500 to \$2,400. It should be noted, in this connection, that a double standard as between men and women still obtained. For example, that exceptionally capable and valuable full professor, Estelle Downing, found her pitiful

income of \$3,200 cut to \$1,884. Actually, the legislative cut in appropriations to the teachers colleges amounted to a disgraceful 33.5 per cent in that fateful year.

To a close personal friend in Aberdeen, South Dakota, Munson wrote: "Inasmuch as we have been cut 33.5 per cent, the job is not a pleasure entirely."

Doubtless the most difficult obligation that confronted Munson upon assuming his duties was that of reducing staff. The task had been begun by the executive committee. When it was completed, 23 members of the faculty had lost their jobs (two on the basis of leave without pay), and six others were placed on half-time. The same excruciating necessity was experienced by the other three teachers colleges. It was reported that when Normal's registrar was approached on the matter he shouted "That's the President's headache," and walked rapidly away.¹⁵

In the year before Munson arrived at Ypsilanti, the effect of the Depression on enrollment had been felt for the first time. From 1931–32 to 1934–35 it declined 28 per cent.¹⁶ During the same period, however, the legislative appropriations for general operation for Normal declined 40 per cent.¹⁷ But this was only the start. In the period 1935–36 to 1940–41 enrollments took a turn contrary to the Depression, and climbed. The gain from the base year 1934–35 was 49 per cent. The increase in appropriations, however, was only 17 per cent.¹⁹

Then came war. This time the decline in enrollments was precipitous. The drop from 1940–41 to 1941–42 was 500, and from 1941–42 to 1942–43 was 550. The total decline caused by war over a period of four years (1941 to 1945) was a good 50 per cent of the pre-war enrollment.²⁰ Less than 50 men were left in the college dormitory. During this period, however, the legislature gradually increased the appropriations.

In the third period of drastic change, the post-war period, veterans flocked to the college campuses of the nation. In three short years 1,550 additional students came to Normal, a total increase of 130 per cent. The men definitely outnumbered the women. To meet this situation the legislature increased the appropriations from 1944–45 to 1947–48 by some 63 per cent. For the first time in Normal's history the budget reached the million dollar figure.

It should be noted, however, that the federal government (under the Fulbright Act) had undertaken to pay the actual cost of the vet-

erans' education, a cost that was calculated in painstaking detail and set forth in the annual contract. This money went directly into the general fund of the State of Michigan. It was not available to Normal. Unlike the University of Michigan and Michigan State, who could retain the tuition money, the Normal College had to live strictly on its appropriations.

In the years beginning with 1955-56, when the College expanded from a student body of 2,800 to one of 8,500 in a decade, an important distinction from the earlier periods should be noted. The years of depression and war were years of crisis and uncertainty. No one could know how long the Depression would last or to what depths it would go; no one could predict the coming of the war, its length, or the extent of its demands. Conditions had to be met as they appeared. In the later, more happy, period, however, increasing enrollments could be and were foretold long before they appeared. Studies of the birth rates of the 1940's were made, culminating in specific estimates of the number of students the colleges might expect from year to year. It is true that enrollments exceeded estimates both in point of time and degree. But the legislative mind, the administrative mind and, to a degree, the public mind were prepared in advance. The result was that a very reluctant legislature was forced to realize that increased appropriations for operation (and also for capital outlay) would be necessary.

During a period in which money for higher education in any form was extremely hard to come by, Munson succeeded in procuring funds for 13 buildings.²¹ More came as the result of two magnificent gifts to Normal, that of Walter Owen Briggs sr., which provided the outdoor athletic plant, and the Horace H. and Mary A. Rackham Fund, which provided a splendid facility for the work that Normal was doing in the training of teachers for handicapped children.

The gifts were an expression of confidence in Normal, and a recognition of important work being done there. The one originated in the desire of Briggs (Chairman of the Board, Briggs Manufacturing Co. of Detroit, owner and president of the Detroit Tiger Baseball Co.) to do something for the city in which he was born. Dean of Men James M. (Bingo) Brown served as guide when Briggs came to Ypsilanti to choose a site for an athletic stadium. After they looked the city over, the Dean led his guest to the Normal campus and stressed not only the importance of physical health for the coming generations but also the advantage that the College offered for per-

manent care and maintenance. Needless to say, no obstacle was encountered when Briggs made his offer to the State Board.²²

The Rackham gift was a recognition of the pioneering work done at Normal by Charles M. Elliot in Special Education.

In addition to these benefactions, several highly important additions were made to the campus. It was the Munson era, for example, that saw the construction of the first dormitory. There were five by the time he retired.²³

The barriers once crossed, other federally assisted projects followed. A most urgent need existed for a College hospital. Students were being cared for in a seriously inadequate "health residence," a frame dwelling on the edge of the campus that the College had acquired. A new fully-equipped, up-to-date and, for the needs of the time, commodious health service building was completed in 1939. The following year, the John W. Stevens Shop, a two-story structure suitably equipped, was completed. This shop made possible construction activities of considerable magnitude by Normal's maintenance staff.

In 1940, the Milton S. Hover Elementary Science Laboratory building was completed, a tribute to the beloved dean (also head of the Natural Science Department) who died in that year, and a monument to the work of an earlier head of the department, William Hittell Sherzer, who had introduced and established nature study as a vital part of the curriculum for teachers of the elementary grades.

The War Years

The sudden precipitation of the nation into the world war, on December 7, 1941, not only interrupted the building program but brought a train of events that profoundly affected the campuses of the nation. In no time at all, students who were the inheritors of many generations of carefree, uninhibited, unregimented campus life were in uniform, responding to the barked orders of "non-coms."

College administrators were faced with rapidly dwindling student enrollments, surplus faculty, severe budgetary problems, and all of the apprehension that accompanies an uncertain future. Some of the private colleges were forced to close their doors.

Faculty members had to wrestle with the question as to where their services would count for most in the great conflict, complicated by the responsibilities and ties of family. Many decided to enlist in the armed services.

Students were faced with the question of whether to enlist, and in what branch, or await the call of the draft board. Draft boards deferred the call for students who were doing well in their studies. The armed services organized college training programs for those who could qualify. But always there was the pressure to enter directly and immediately into the struggle—pressure from families whose sons were already in the service, from friends, from conscience.

The women students, too, were faced more and more with a decision as the armed services developed their women's auxiliary corps, and as war industry called for labor.

It is noteworthy that the Normal men of the 1940's went off to war quietly, in a spirit of grim determination. The war was an unwanted interruption of their plans, an extremely unpleasant task that must be performed, and the sooner and more thoroughly it was accomplished, the better. Quite absent was the frenzy of enthusiasm that characterized the Normal men of 1917-18.

Over the next years the thousand and more young men who left the campus to enter the armed services were joined by twenty-two members of the faculty. As time wore on, more and more accounts appeared in the student paper of Normal students whose lives had been taken, until a grim total of sixty-three was reached.²⁴ Leroy Grindle, former track captain, was the first to go—killed in a bomber crash near Pendleton, Oregon.

Enrollments at the College dropped in three years from somewhat over 1,900 to a low of less than 700. Faculty were now in surplus. The State Board acted promptly to retain all positions, and to implement this policy made off-campus ("extension") teaching, traditionally an extra assignment with extra remuneration, a part of the regular load. To meet the unabated need for teachers in the public schools, training time was shortened. Seniors who were within 10 credit hours of meeting the requirements for a teaching certificate were, upon request of an employing official, granted special certification. The spring semester was shortened by omitting the spring vacation week. The summer session, with an earlier start, was lengthened from the traditional six weeks to nine, thus providing

opportunity for the earning of more credit in the calendar year.

Early in 1943, there developed a situation that threatened the very existence of Normal and came close to making her a casualty of the war. The great bomber plant at Willow Run, destined to play such a vital role in the winning of the war by its amazing production in volume of the B-25, was getting under way. Thousands of war workers were being brought to the Ypsilanti area, and these included large numbers of women. (Indeed, it was uncommon for a wife of a Normal professor to be found working in the great plant.) The problem of housing rapidly became acute. Plans were laid and construction begun on a large project of temporary, barrack-like housing in the Willow Run area, on the eastern limits of Ypsilanti. But it was argued that these facilities would not be adequate, or in time to meet the need. A demand was made for the use of the College facilities, not only the dormitories but classroom buildings remodeled to become dormitories. Col. George E. Strong, internal security officer of the Army Air Force central procurement district, stated with untroubled conviction:

It's part of our job to do everything possible to attract more women workers to the bomber plant. Employees there eventually will be more than fifty per cent women. The army originally planned to establish a ground school for aviation cadets at the Ypsilanti institution. These plans have been abandoned partly because the Army feels the school buildings would be more valuable as quarters for bomber plant workers.²⁵

Not a word was said about the numerous and large dormitories of nearby University of Michigan. The Normal alone was to be sacrificed to the war effort, and no appeal to the popular mind could have carried greater weight—the winning of the war. The threat to the college was deadly.

Munson took prompt steps to meet the crisis, alerting Governor Kelly and the State Board, calling on a faculty committee to draw up a detailed brief in defense of the College, and calling upon the alumni to come to the rescue. The latter responded with hundreds of letters of protest. The student body sent a letter to the Governor citing Normal's sacrifices in the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I and the present war. Kelly immediately took a public stand on the issue and referred it to the Defense Council, composed of the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction

(Eugene B. Elliott), the State Director of the National Housing Authority (Raymond M. Foley), and the President of Michigan State College (John Hannah).

Kelly wrote to the *Ypsilanti Daily Press*:

In the Normal College the state has not only a six million dollar investment, but a college of which the people should be proud. It is one of the leading colleges in the United States. You can't just close a college of that kind and reopen it when you want to. It is too big a proposition to temporize with. We will employ all the weight of the Defense Council, and with the assistance of your paper and the community we shall not be losing time but will be progressing in the vital work of obtaining housing for workers. Those bombers are going to be kept going, but not at the sacrifice of something as precious as the Normal College, unless it is absolutely necessary.

Foley took an immediate stand against the proposal, stating that at best the college facilities could house not more than 2,000 workers, that to close the school would ruin it for the next 20 years, and that great progress was being made by the government in construction of 10,000 units near Willow Run. President Hannah was quoted, in a letter to the Normal alumni, as saying, "The Ypsilanti school is one of the finest and oldest teacher training institutions in the nation. To close it would be to cripple it for years." President Ruthven of neighboring University of Michigan proposed that a detailed survey be made of the area to discover available rooms, and this was carried out.

On March 22, the State Board passed a firm resolution which said in part:

Whereas, the State Normal College has, since its establishment, enrolled 68,300 students, has, during the last 40 years, graduated 27,000 teachers, and has, during the last 12 years, graduated annually an average of 590 teachers, and

Whereas, the need of teachers due to the war crisis is now the greatest in our history . . .

Be it therefore Resolved, That it be the declared policy of the State Board of Education to continue the College in all its constitutional and legal functions as an educational institution, striving by all means to produce trained teachers for Michigan schools in the present emergency . . .

By the end of March the madness had subsided; the college was saved.

The campus still intact, recruiting teams continued to appear representing Army, Navy, Marine Corps. Then came the college training programs—the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps, the Army Air Corps Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Navy V-1, V-5, and V-7 programs. The question arose as to course credit for those forced to leave college before the semester was over. The administration decided to give full credit if more than half the semester had been completed. The Army Enlisted Reserve Corps received the largest number of enlistments, but by April of 1943 all had been called into active service. As these “E.R.C. boys” left, the student paper editorialized in youthful language:

We, the students who stay on campus, want these boys to know that we don't like to see them leave . . . we are thinking about them—and, yes, praying for them too . . . Let us always remember that this war *will* end. This time of suffering *will* pass. He *will* return. We *will* be a vital part of the future world.

In February of 1943, preparations were made to receive several hundred aviation cadets who were assigned to Normal's campus for a period of training. Women were moved from King and Goodison dormitories to Munson Hall. Then, at the last moment, as the men were about to entrain for Ypsilanti, the order was countermanded.

In September of that year, however, a firm commitment was made with the newly-established Army Specialized Training Program. Company H of the 4651st Service Unit, 300 strong, arrived, under the direction of Capt. Charles F. Wetherbee, a genial but exacting giant from Texas. The women having been restored to their own dormitories, the new arrivals were housed on the upper floors of the men's dormitory (Munson Hall) with the ground floor assigned to the few civilian students left at school. A parallel unit was at the same time installed at the University of Michigan, under the tutelage of the College of Engineering.

These were described as engineering units. Their curriculum consisted of chemistry, physics, geography, mathematics, surveying, military science, American history and English composition. The object was to provide training for young men of superior ability such as would enhance their usefulness in a number of areas in the army.

Many colleges and universities over the nation, from 42 States, were represented in Company H.

A special plan of classes was arranged on a sequence of two twelve-week terms, additional instructors were secured where needed, and a highly intensive program ignored the traditional college vacation periods. The men were serious. From time to time their progress was tested by national examinations. Normal was inclined to take credit for teaching effectiveness when Company H consistently showed an edge over their counterparts in Ann Arbor, particularly in the areas of chemistry, mathematics, and physics.

Thus, for the better part of a year Normal conducted two colleges side by side. Relations between the civilian and military were good. Although the men of Company H were not permitted to engage in college athletics they loyally attended athletic contests. The football schedule for that fall consisted of just two games, both with Wayne University of Detroit. The army marched into the stands and cheered the Normal team to an unexpected victory. The victory was repeated, with an identical score, at the return engagement in Detroit. It was one of the few perfect football seasons in Normal's history.

When, in late March of 1944, Company H marched under the windows of the women's dormitories and down to the train that would take them away to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin, not a few were the tears that were shed. It was later reported that most of these boys were quickly shunted to the battle front in Europe and had scant opportunity to use their training. Many were pleased to be on active service to escape growing criticism from many whose sons were not so fortunate. Awareness of this attitude was expressed in a poem by one of the men, in part as follows:

Maybe you think we aren't aware today of what is going on, that being here securely barricaded from the war by these scholastic bulwarks, we're content to sit and wait and let the others fight.

And yet that lank, brown soldier, shaking New Guinea caterpillars from his clothes, burned, bony, brave, defying with a laugh the sticky swamp, mosquitoes, death, and Japs, happens to be my brother.

Perhaps some day this bookish bomb of mine will blast as big a hole in Hitler's fortress as Bill's grenade in Hirohito's palace.²⁶

Nor was this feeling that college was not a good place to be in when others were fighting and dying confined to male civilian and A.S.T.P. students. The women, too, became increasingly restless. In November of this same year an editorial in the college paper, addressing "you (coeds) who feel your job in this emergency should not be 'putting in your time' at school but rather 'doing' something vital, perhaps in one of the services of the country," reminded that those preparing to teach were working for the future of America.

The Post-War Years

The war over, a different array of problems presented themselves. Veterans began to appear on the campus—at first a few at a time, then in a rapidly rising flood as the liberal assistance offered by the Fulbright Act (enacted in 1944) attracted the attention of those desiring a technical or college education. The precipitate nature of the demobilization of our armed services greatly complicated the situation in the colleges.

Veterans appeared on campus as soon as they received their discharge, and this meant that provision had to be made for enrollments, always lower than in the fall, now became the larger of the two. From fewer than 700 in the fall of 1943²⁷ the total jumped to more than 2,200 in the fall of 1946. In the spring semester of the latter year well over 300 additional veterans appeared and it became necessary to pressure Lansing for a deficiency appropriation to staff the classrooms. Applications of more than 200 veterans were held in abeyance until, at the very last moment, the Administrative Board voted the extra money. Telegrams were at once sent out to the 200 telling them to come. Enrollments continued to leap upwards in the ensuing years until, in 1949–50, the post-war high (as of that time an all-time high in the history of Normal) of 2,693 was reached.

Now the Normal had a housing problem. Additional beds were installed in the dormitories until their capacity was doubled, but this was not enough. Munson was unwilling to do what so many colleges were doing, erect temporary structures on the campus. They would, he felt, soon become an eyesore and a health menace. Hauling cinder

blocks into the unused basement of the Union building (McKenny Hall), he created a new dormitory, four men to a room. But this was not enough. Two large barrack-like structures in the south side of Ypsilanti, war housing for colored labor, were purchased from the government. One of the buildings burned. And more and more veterans arrived.

The vast array of war-housing barracks at Willow Run (many of which, ironically, had never been occupied) became available for student housing. The University of Michigan contracted for a large portion of this facility but Normal secured enough to meet her needs. Bleak, draft quarters were rapidly transformed by enthusiastic young families into the paradise of home. Hardships and inconveniences were more or less cheerfully borne. A social and recreational center, a veterans' student union, was created by the U-M. New-comers on the faculty who could not find housing in Ypsilanti went to Willow Village. The U-M bused its thousands to and from campus; Normal's hundreds were included.

To the classrooms the veterans brought a seriousness of purpose, awakened minds, a breadth of experience that stimulated and invigorated the entire school.

Many a former student who, before entering the service, had been on the scholastic ragged edge now stormed back to establish a commendable, sometimes a superior, record. A liberal policy of admission for those who had done poorly but had an honorable service record proved to be well-justified. If any instructor in any subject had fallen into the lazy routine of trivial questions and pat arbitrary answers, he soon found the new presence not altogether comfortable. This new breed of students was not content to be told, they had to be shown.

But scarcely had the College met these post-war problems and begun to settle down to a fairly calm existence when it became conscious of the imminence of a problem of a different nature. President Munson would soon reach the age of 70, the Munson era was coming to a close.

As his retirement drew near, concern for what the future might hold for the faculty became paramount. The present administration had been highly authoritarian. Would the next administration be similar? The thought was intolerable. Faculty thinking was in process of being conditioned for faculty participation in administration.

During the years that Munson had ruled complacently in "splen-

did isolation,” a ferment had been brewing over the nation. In 1915, a national organization had been formed whose main concern was academic freedom, spurred by arbitrary dismissals of faculty that were occurring all too frequently in the colleges of the nation. This organization was known as the American Association of University Professors.

A chapter of the Association existed at Normal. The spark caught on. A self-initiated organization of faculty led by members of the AAUP drew strong support. Efforts to persuade the State Board to permit faculty participation in the selection of the next president were made. Though the attempt was abortive, this organization did succeed in writing a constitution for an all-college faculty organization which provided for active faculty participation in college administration. With some modification the constitution was later accepted by the incoming president.

The campaign for faculty participation in the choice of the next president, and, for the future, faculty participation in the administration of the College generated considerable heat on the campus. Off-campus the inevitable occurred—newspaper interpretation that this was a revolt against Munson. The wire services carried to papers throughout the State and nation the assertion that “dissatisfaction with the administration of President John Munson led to a demand by members of the faculty of Michigan Normal College for sweeping administrative changes on his retirement, expected in June.”²⁸ Shocked at this kind of publicity, the faculty committee wrote at once to Munson: “We were chagrined this morning to see the scurrilous article in the *Detroit Free Press* . . . At no time in our negotiations with the members of the State Board has there been voiced one word of criticism of the present regime.”

As for Munson, he made no move. Once he commented, “If they wanted a change, why didn’t they come and see me?”

Special attention to John Munson the person is warranted. Rugged, willing to absorb punishment for unpopular decisions, a man of high integrity, deeply committed to the role of the educator, with a lively sympathy for those in distress, a sense of humor that flashed unexpectedly and delightfully, his virtues were obscured, his effectiveness as an administrator blunted, by a certain gaucheness.

Certain idiosyncracies and retroversions only aggravated the difficulty. For many years telephones were an expensive intrusion, even in administrative offices. Face-to-face encounters were much more

satisfactory. Yet the President's outer office was much like the reception room of a doctor's office where the time of the patient was of no consequence. Manner of dress revealed a lack of attention to the on-moving world. Isaiah Bowman, his lifelong friend, wrote him once in these gently chiding words:

From the photograph that you enclose I see first, that you survive; second, that you are in good physical condition; and third, that you wear high shoes. In the Baltimore climate, the last named are not essential, even in winter. I maintain that there are three marks of the conservative man: he wears a nightshirt, suspenders and high shoes.

But Munson represented values that were long upheld with pride as typical of the American character—forthrightness in dealing with others, an abhorrence of shame, thrift in public as well as private enterprise, a strong sense of responsibility in public trust. He believed that the reputation of the College should stand strictly on its performance and be revealed in the reputation earned by its alumni. He insisted that there was no money in the budget for advertising beyond the informative college bulletins. He believed that intercollegiate athletics should be amateur in the original sense of the term and refused to allow his coaches to go forth on recruiting missions to lure promising high school athletes to Ypsilanti. He placed great emphasis on the liberal arts as basic in the preparation of the teacher and insisted that the professional courses be limited to a minimum. He strongly and effectively supported a foreign language requirement for graduation.

Munson was adamant and unyielding in adhering to rules and standards. Once a regulation was established, it must be applied literally and equally to all. Every candidate for graduation must show every last required hour of physical training, regardless of age. Graduation lists were never posted until all the grades were in, and no one crossed the platform at commencement who had not met all requirements.

On the other hand, he was slow to dismiss students with sub-standard records, and kept a chart which showed clearly the number of students who, year by year, succeeded in raising their average to the minimum of "C" required for graduation. At the close of each semester he presided personally over an administrative session that reviewed the grades of every student. He signed congratulatory notes

to the parents of those whose record was superior. He imposed restrictions on the class load carried by students, requiring that those who were earning their way through college by holding remunerative jobs and those who were faltering in their grades restrict themselves to a lighter academic load. The records in the registrar's office were reorganized in such a way that the current semester's grades and the overall grade average for every student could be seen at a glance.²⁹

Fully aware of the economic status of most of Normal's students, he made every effort to keep the cost of an education to a minimum, both as to tuition and living expenses.

Munson accepted his presidential trust as a total personal responsibility and knew not how to delegate authority. Like the lord of a medieval manor, he took complete charge. No fact of any consequence should elude him, no question asked about his college should go without an informed personal answer. He did the hiring and, when necessary (which was rare), the firing. He drew up the complete budget. Maintenance, supplies, and new construction were within his direct province, and clerical personnel as well as faculty. When a position on the faculty was to be filled he usually would consult the department head, yet he might not. The librarian must submit her lists of proposed purchases to him that he might scan them for titles that might react against the College in the eyes of the legislature.³⁰

Faculty standing committees were always appointive, and restricted to matters of routine administration. The time and energy of the faculty should be protected from dissipation in non-teaching duties.³¹ Participation in community activities by his administrative staff was frowned on for the same reason, time and energy should be devoted to the job at hand. Attendance at conventions and conferences that kept faculty from meeting their classes, or administrative staff from their desks, was made difficult.

Having said all this, however, it is important to point out that Munson inspired respect and confidence. And he took considerable pride in having won from the State Legislature the appellation of "Honest John." Fred W. Green, as ex-Governor, in a letter to Normal's Dean of Men, James M. Brown, wrote:

I recall he was the one head of an institution in Michigan whose requests did not have any looking over. When he asked for something it was always something that was really needed, and he never over-asked.

Recognition from his profession was well exemplified in a citation accompanying an honorary degree of Doctor of Arts in Education awarded him by Wayne State University, which read in part:

He is recognized as an able college president, and as an authority in school law. Under his wise guidance much constructive educational legislation has been formulated for the State of Michigan. As an educator, administrator, and well-beloved counsellor he has contributed broad vision and sound direction to our state program of education.³²

Munson retired in 1948, having reached the age of 70. His retirement brought many letters that contained much more than formal good wishes—from members of his faculty expressing appreciation for the sense of satisfaction and security which they had derived from confidence in his integrity, and gratitude for personal consideration shown in times of illness and distress. From associates, near and far, recent and past, appeared anecdotal letters expressing esteem and often gratitude. A large banquet was held in his honor, laudatory speeches were made, colleagues and friends from around the State were present.

The inauguration ceremony for the new president took place a year later, combined with the observance of Normal's centenary year. The president of the State Board presided, honored guests were on the program, Munson addressed a charge to his successor. No word in appreciation of the service of the retiring president was spoken.

Many have commented that if only Munson had married, his abrupt and arbitrary manner might well have been refined. He had three loves, history (especially American), the State of Michigan and the children of Michigan. His political hero was Grover Cleveland. His knowledge of the State of Michigan was so detailed that a student coming from the smallest hamlet would find a president who had been there and remembered the place.

Munson died in 1950, in Ypsilanti. In his will he assigned the bulk of his estate to the Michigan Historical Commission to organize and carry through a project for the writing and publishing of a history of Michigan, and a history of education in Michigan.³³