

THIRTY YEARS OF WISCONSIN AND MISSOURI COOPERATION
IN RACINE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL - A WORTHWHILE FEL-
LOWSHIP FOR FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

Nathan R. Pope
March 14, 1977
Senior History

In 1975, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Beth were removed from the congregational rolls of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church (WELS), Caledonia, on the charges of unionism in connection with sending their children to Racine Lutheran High School.¹ During that same school year of 1974-1975 which saw the Beths fall out of favor with their pastor, Rev. Wm. Hein, First Ev. Lutheran Church of Racine sent nine of her children to Racine Lutheran High School with no disciplinary action taken against the parents who enrolled them. Obviously the two churches, Trinity of Caledonia and First Lutheran of Racine, along with their respective pastors, held dissimilar views on the matter of sending Wisc. Synod children to Racine Lutheran High School. This paper will deal with this intriguing subject under the theme:

THIRTY YEARS OF WISCONSIN AND MISSOURI COOPERATION
IN RACINE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL - A WORTHWHILE FELLOWSHIP FOR FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

I. Origin and involvement

In a manner of speaking, First Ev. Lutheran Church of Racine looked upon Racine Lutheran High School as its own. There was good reason for such sentiment. Early in the

¹Proceedings of the Southeastern District (WELS), 1976.

forties, members of First Lutheran along with others from Trinity and St. John congregations (LC-MS), met to discuss the possibilities of providing secondary Lutheran education as a complement to ^{the} Racine area's already well-established Lutheran Day Schools. In 1943 the concrete proposals for a Lutheran High School were broached at a meeting of the Synodical Conference Committee of Racine County. Enough interest was aroused among the various churches in the late summer of that year so that various personalities outlined definite goals and objectives:

- 1) to establish a Lutheran High School.
- 2) to begin in 1944 with a ninth grade.
- 3) to add a grade each year until a full senior high school was attained, and
- 4) to elect two men from each congregation to form a Lutheran High School Association and draw up a constitution.²

On May 22, 1944 a charter of incorporation was signed by the following men:

Rev. Herman Bartz (Grace, LC-MS)
 Frank E. Shartow
 John L. Krenzke
 J.J. Shelling
 Rev. Frederick Eseman (Trinity, LC-MS)
 Fred L. Weber
 Victor E. Wollang
 Edgar A. Berg
 W.A. Riegelman
 R.W. Lonekamp
 Ben Pfeiffer
 Rev. Edwin Jastor (Epiphany, WELS)³

Racine Lutheran High School opened its doors in the fall of 1944 at 734 Villa Street, in the vacant school building belonging to First Lutheran Church. First Lutheran con-

²Lutheran High School of Racine, a dedication booklet; (Racine: The Lutheran High School Assc.), 1952, p.12.

³Constitution, Articles of Incorporation.

sented to let out the building to the Association rent free. In view of the fact that Racine Lutheran High School occupied these premises for its first eight years, it is rather surprising that the name of First Lutheran's pastor, Rev. Theo. Volkert, is conspicuously absent from the list of incorporators. Surprising too, if one remembers that individuals from First Lutheran were involved with others in the initial groundwork of the school, and that the attitude of the people themselves in the church to the Lutheran High movement was extremely wholesome. The minutes of the Lutheran High School Assc. of May 22, 1944 reveal the following report:

Mr. Schelling was asked by the chairman to give a report on what the committee had done in regard to securing and renovating the school building on Villa Street. Mr. Schelling stated that the committee was well received by the council of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church and that the building had been secured, and the necessary renovations would be arranged.⁴

Evidently, advancing age did not fill Rev. Volkert with the same measure of confidence in the school as was evident in his own flock.⁵

First Lutheran supported the new High School from its modest beginnings. The fall enrollment in 1944 saw 58 freshmen fill the classrooms. The next year witnessed the enrollment climb to 98. In 1946, with the addition of a third year, the total student body numbered 157. By September 1947 enrollment had reached 220! This represents a 380% increase

⁴Lutheran High School Assc., minutes.

⁵Pope, the Rev. Reinhart. Private interview, March 4, 1977.

over a four year period!

The increasing student body demanded a better school plant. The school building on Villa Street was a three story affair, containing eight rooms. With a make-shift refectory, auditorium and library, plus several offices for faculty members, the growing student body was in need of additional space. First Lutheran was willing to cooperate in this concern. The congregation gave approval to renovate and build additional classrooms in the empty basement of the church. These plans never materialized. On May of 1947 the Lutheran High School Assc., perhaps with Luther's exhortation in mind ("something must be dared in the name of Christ"), decided to start a fund-raising campaign to build a school plant. By this time membership in the Association had risen above the two thousand mark.

At this point something should be said about the operation of Racine Lutheran High School. Lutheran High is controlled and operated by an association of individuals, who were formerly gathered together for common ventures of faith in the Synodical Conference. As such Lutheran High was, and is, not under the direct control of the various churches themselves, but by a group of individuals. This makes Lutheran High a rarity. Officially it ventures to hold a position which is neither Missouri nor Wisconsin. Its constitution states that Lutheran High would teach the Christian doctrine according to the Lutheran confessions. This concern for the true

evangelical Lutheran faith is still carried over into the call documents presently used by Lutheran High. According to John Bleeke, the present principal of Lutheran High, it is somewhat unusual for a Lutheran high school to have the following items incorporated into call forms:

(that the called person is) to instruct and train the young people in his charge diligently and faithfully in the subject fields in which he is prepared, and teach them in the light of God's Word as contained in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, and, professed in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord, and as explicated in the Brief Statement, and the theology of Pieper and Mueller.⁶

This conservative Lutheran concern was likewise reflected by its Board of Trustees. After the break-up of the Synodical Conference, the Board, under pressure to settle doctrinal issues, passed the following resolution on which all faculty members were to comply:

Resolved, that we adopt a policy on theology in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord, and expressed in such works as Mueller's "Christian Dogmatics", Koehler's "Summary of Christian Doctrine", and the Brief Statement, and that all faculty members be held to comply with it.⁷

The confessional solidarity of First Lutheran, of Lutheran High and its faculty, of the various churches constituting the Synodical Conference Committee of Racine County, and of the members of the High School Assc. was never really in contention. This peace among the ranks, and the mutual cooperation, will be picked up in the second part of

⁶Bleeke, John. Personal interview; Feb. 11, 1977.

⁷Ibid.

the paper entitled "Mutual Impact." However for this historical viewpoint one need only remember that the rapid growth of the school from 58 to 220 pupils in four years bears out the underlying common ground and cooperation between the Synodical Conference Lutherans in Racine.

In 1951 Rev. Theo. Volkert retired after forty two years at First Lutheran. Succeeding him was Rev. Reinhart J. Pope of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of Crivitz, Wisc. The arrival of Rev. Pope to Racine ushered in a productive and fruitful cooperative involvement with Lutheran High School for First Lutheran. Rev. Pope early revealed his support of the school and also his readiness to involve himself in it. On May 3, 1952 he was elected to the Board. Two years latter saw him acting as the school board Chairman, a post which he served from 1954 to 1956. Besides its obvious involvement in the school in the person of its pastor, First Lutheran was represented equally by a number of teachers, two of which were principals of Racine Lutheran High School, - Rev. N.S. Tjernagel, and Mr. Gustave Kalb. Rev. Tjernagel was called as principal of the school in 1950; G. Kalb became Vice-President in 1958 and principal in 1964. Recently, Mrs. Jerry Schultz became First Lutheran's latest teacher, being contracted to teach business education in 1974.

Through the years First Lutheran was well represented by her men who served on the Board of Trustees. While a

listing of all the men from First Lutheran who had served on the Board would be interesting to a select few, it does not serve very practical here, and would perhaps border on the pedantic. However, it may be of some interest to know that as late as the school year of 1976-77 First Lutheran was represented by three of her members:

Mr. Robert Liebenow
Mr. Bob Petersen
Mr. George Maranger⁸

It can be said of the men who served on the Board from First Lutheran that they did not distinguish themselves as religious extremists, or as an embattled, bellicose minority. They were respected.⁹

One can also measure First Lutheran's involvement by her fiscal support of the institution, and by the number of children which were sent.

Money-wise, the matter of First Lutheran's participation can be passed over quickly. Using the representative years of 1963 and 1964 First Lutheran placed fourth out of twenty six churches in amount of support. This figure is pretty well illustrative of the church's support of the school with their pocketbooks through all the years in which she was associated with Lutheran High.

First Lutheran's impact by the number of children sent was equally significant. The '50's and '60's were the Golden Years" for the church's association with Lutheran High. This is indicated best by the amount of students which she

⁸Lutheran High School Association, Minutes 1976.

⁹Bleeke. Personal Interview, Feb. 11, 1977.

enrolled. The reader may be interested to know that this involvement was not out of line with the WELS support of the school as a whole. Wisconsin Synod association and support of the school was substantial. From 1945 to 1967 Racine Lutheran High School enrolled a total of 6528 pupils. Of these numbers this breakdown revealed,

3716 students from the LC-MS and Slovak Syn.
2236 students from the WELS
576 students from other church bodies

Stated in a percentage ratio, the student body from 1945 to 1967 was,

56.9% LC-MS and Slovak Syn.
34.3% WELS
8.8 Other church bodies

First Lutheran pupils during this time period, 1945 - 1967, made up 12% of the WELS student body, and 7% of the entire student body.

Since it was the arrival of Rev. Pope that launched First Lutheran into a greater role at Lutheran High a systematic breakdown, beginning with the first year of his arrival, was made. This year by year tally revealed a surprising turn of events. In a ten year period, from 1952 to 1961, the pupil enrollment at Lutheran High from First Lutheran averaged 11 students:

52-53 13 pupils
53-54 12 pupils

54-55	.....	7
55-56	.....	12
56-57	.....	10
57-58	.....	9
58-59	.....	9
59-60	.....	9
60-61	.....	12
61-62	.....	17

However, in the next ten year period, 1962-71, the average number of pupils per year being sent to Lutheran High had risen to 22 students, exactly twice the average number of the previous ten years! The yearly breakdown will show that the school year of 1970-71 was the high point for First Lutheran enrollment in Lutheran High,

62-63	.....	16
63-64	.....	24
64-65	.....	23
65-66	.....	23
66-67	.....	20
67-68	.....	18
68-69	.....	18
69-70	.....	26
70-71	.....	<u>29</u>
71-72	.....	19

To understand and explain the dramatic increase of students at Lutheran High who came from First Lutheran one could look for various causes. The Racine public schools are notorious for their unpredictable and, at times, unsavory teacher disputes. Strikes seem to come annually in the Racine educational system, but whether one can use this as a reason for the rise in First Lutheran's numbers in Racine Lutheran is rather doubtful. Perhaps it was true in the year 1970. That was a year of teacher disputes,

and may have had some degree of influence in sending those twenty nine children to the Lutheran High School; but, that the argument of teacher unrest should be used to explain the entire upswing in First Lutheran's pupil contribution to the school is not realistic. The increase of First Lutheran children at the high school started back in the year 1961, where total enrollment from the church was 17; perhaps, it started in 1960, when the enrollment from First Lutheran had climbed back to 12. A better answer to the gradual increase of students probably lays in the fact that First Lutheran reopened their defunct Christian Day School in 1959. It would seem that this reawakened appreciation for Christian education not only proved itself of worth for the reestablishing of a local Day School, but that once the project got off the ground and became a reality attention was likewise focused on the rewards and value of an on-going Christian education for these children in Lutheran secondary education. First Lutheran's participation with Racine Lutheran High School was well established during these twenty years, 1952-1971.

MUTUAL IMPACT

The five-year period from 1972-76 witnessed a significant drop in First Lutheran high schoolers at Racine Lutheran. A break-down of each year revealed these figures,

72-73	.....	19
73-74	.....	13
74-75	.....	9
75-76	.....	9
76-77	.....	10

These five years saw the average of 22 students per year, set by the ten-year period of 1962-71, fall to 12 pupils per year, almost in half. This general enrollment decrease from First Lutheran pupils was a micro-reflection of the entire WELS participation in Racine Lutheran High School. WELS was phasing out its involvement in Lutheran High according to synodical dictates. These figures show the WELS pull-out from Lutheran High in the years 1969 to 1974.

69-70	.....	94
70-71	.....	69
71-72	.....	45
72-73	.....	31
73-74	.....	27
74-75	.....	21

These figures take on a more precise meaning when given on a percentage basis,

69-70	.....	29%
70-71	.....	21%
71-72	.....	14%
72-73	.....	10%
73-74	.....	8%
74-75	.....	6%

A comparison of pupils from First Lutheran to the combined WELS student enrollment at Racine Lutheran during this same time period, 1969-75, will serve to indicate that the church maintained her understandable close ties with

the school during the waning years of the WELS pull-out.

	<u>Total WELS</u>	<u>First Luth. pupils</u>
69-70	94	26
70-71	69	29
71-72	45	19
72-73	31	19
73-74	27	13
74-75	21	9

These comparative figures reveal the reluctance of First Lutheran to cut their ties with Lutheran High. The percentage of First Lutheran pupils in the total WELS student body during these six years was,

69-70	.....	28%
70-71	.....	42%
71-72	.....	42%
72-73	.....	61%
73-74	.....	48%
74-75	.....	43%

This reluctance on First Lutheran's part is especially marked is one looks back to figures already presented, where from 1945 - 1967 First Lutheran's children attending Lutheran High made up 12% of the WELS enrollment. The average number of children from First Lutheran in the WELS enrollment in the years 1969-74 rose to 44%!

Continued, detereorating theological strife within the LC-MS and the eventual demise of the Synodical Conference foreshadowed the withdrawal of WELS from Racine Lutheran High School. This caused some anguishing decisions and sad feelings among conservative Lutherans in Racine. Here then something must be said of the Lutheran scene in Racine.

The conservative Lutheran climate in the Racine area was responsible for the close, joint cooperation of the WELS and LC-MS in the conception and operation of Lutheran High School. The unity which both Lutheran bodies evidenced in Racine was perhaps unique among those regions where Synodical Conference churches were gathered. James B. Schelling, writing in The Racine Lutheran's Venture of Faith, remarks,

...in some areas, and particularly among certain individuals, tempers have flared, insults have been spoken, and serious ruptures have occurred. But, thanks be to God, such has not been and is not the case in the Racine area. Rather, the Synodical Conference Lutherans of this area have cooperated with one another and kept peace among the ranks. In fact, they have united their efforts for many causes. One of these has been the establishing of a Lutheran High School.¹⁰

In addition, he continues,

For many years there has existed in Racine a Synodical Conference Committee. This committee consists of at least one pastor and one layman from each church of the Conference. Its purpose is to promote fellowship among the congregations, spiritually edify one another, and to plan and conduct joint endeavors for the expansion of God's Kingdom. One of these projects is the annual Good Friday Tre-Ore Service. Racine Lutherans can be thankful for the existence of such a committee. If only all Lutherans could agree and cooperate as this group has!¹¹

This mutual confessional Lutheranism in Racine was not blind to the problems then besetting the Synodical Conference. Racine did not have its head buried in the "sands" of local peace and solidarity. The Lutheran High School

¹⁰Schelling, The Racine Lutheran's Venture of Faith, p. 1.

¹¹Ibid, p.2.

Association adopted the following memorial already in 1953 in regard to the confessional problems existing at large in the Synodical Conference, and forwarded to the WELS convention,

3. Whereas, although we enjoy excellent inter-synodical relations in the area of our Association, we realize that there are serious difficulties troubling the Synodical Conference.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Lutheran High School Association of Racine, Wisc. memorialize and herewith earnestly petition the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Wisc. to use every possible means and every possible Christian virtue to preserve a God-pleasing unity in the Synodical Conference, thereby continuing to make possible our joint efforts.¹³

Earlier in August of that same year, the L. H. S. Association sent a letter to Dr. Benken requesting that he too would use his influence to ensure a God-pleasing solution to the Missouri controversies,

...To take this opportunity and this means to plead with you as president of the Missouri Synod to do all in your power to maintain full fraternal relations with the Wisc. Synod. Such unity is vitally essential for the continued growth of Lutheran secondary education in Racine.¹⁴

Racine concern for confessional solidarity and peace did not end with these pleas. As the synodical troubles increased in the late fifties, the Board of Trustees on Sept. 21, 1959 "sent a letter addressed to the Wis. Synod Convention held in Saginaw, Michigan in August, with the

¹³L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1953.

¹⁴L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1959.

plea that continued good relations between the two synods be strived for."¹⁵ Lutherans in Racine were hoping for the best. However, their fears were realized when the two synods split company in 1961. The question, (which all had seen years before, and now was real), presented itself, "What was to become of Lutheran High School?" It had been a joint effort between the two churches; but, what effect would the split have on its operation? No one had any answers, and the solution was really not pushed during the decade of the early sixties. As Principal D. Schulz reported to the Assc. on May 20, 1962 "no predictions could be made at this time."¹⁶

During this period of uncertainty, fears were manifested that WELS participation in Lutheran High might be jeopardized because of the Synodical split. Two amendments were proposed by Rev. Pope of First Lutheran which were aimed at protecting WELS's rights,

Article 12, Section A.

"Members in good standing in a church belonging to or affiliated with the Synodical Conference, as it was constituted in 1953.

Article 14, Section A.

"Termination of membership in a congregation affiliated with the Synodical Conference, as it was constituted in 1953."¹⁷

A special meeting was held on July 15, 1963 to settle

15L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1959.
 16L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1962.
 17L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1963.

the ammendment proposals,

The motion to adopment was seconded, discussion followed. At this point R. Riegelman proposed an ammendment to the resolution:

Be it resolved that in these deep crises for the synods represented in the Lutheran High School Association, every precaution be taken to safeguard the internal and external policies of Lutheran High School from introductions that would divide the administration and the fellowship of the school,
 And be it further resolved that the Lutheran High School Association affirm its confidence in the school's present program of Christian fellowship as exercised in worship and instruction.
 And be it further resolved that the Lutheran High School Association declare any thought of change out of the question --- destructive to the interests of the school, its supporting congregations, the Lutheran High School Association and the Kingdom of God.

The chair ruled the ammendment out of order at this meeting. A motion to bring the ammendment to the floor lost.

Discussion on the original Resolution followed. The Resolution to amend the Constitution was carried by two thirds majority.¹⁸

The Association was thus clearly not anti-Wisconsin, and the WELS position was honored.

Still, scriptural controversy was not foreign to the confessional Racine area. In his annual President's report of 1965, Rodney Olson said,

Doctrinal differences created several problems for the Board of Trustees...the Board knows that committees representing the different groups have had several meetings to discuss the future

¹⁸L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1963.

of your High School because of this problem,¹⁹

Naturally, the doctrinal problems within the LC-MS were bound to surface in Racine, and so focus that church body's wide-spread controversies on the local level. The "Streiter Case" of 1965 may have substantiated the fears of some ultra-conservative Lutherans in the area that cooperation with the LC-MS in Racine Lutheran High School could no longer be tolerated. The center of this controversy was the afore-mentioned Rev. Streiter, an ordained LC-MS pastor, called to teach religion at the high school. Charges were brought against Rev. Streiter at a special meeting of the Board of Trustees on April 19, 1965. The minutes read,

Rev. Pope presented his views first in a written statement. He stated that the basis for disagreement is in regard to the doctrine that all of the Bible is inspired. He charged that students are not being adequately presented this view of the Bible. The theories regarding the authorship of the five books of the Moses destroy the inspiration and reliability of the books. Jesus accepted the Mosaic authorship. Students are confused by the presentation of these theories. Another view that is presented holds that exaggerations and inclusions of myths is possible in the Exodus epic. Another theory divides Isaiah into two sections and claims that the latter section was not written by Isaiah. All parts of Isaiah are quoted by New Testament writers as Isaiah's writing. Another view that has been presented states that the message of a book applies only to the people to whom it was written. These theories are presented to the students for their judgment. But teachers should warn their students against these theories and show why they are false.¹⁹

¹⁹L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1965.

Rev. Streiter objected to the claim he was teaching JEPD in the classrooms,

Rev. Streiter stated that his purpose was to witness at this meeting. He said that some Wisconsin Synod men seem to think he is a modernist. He reaffirmed his oath of ordination. He did not teach historical critical as fact. He tried to make pupils aware of the attacks being made on Scripture. His removal from office as suggested by Rev. Pope could be made only on the three grounds laid down in the oath of ordination. He objected to the manner of the charges made against him. He said the situation at LHS is untenable due to the break in Synodical relations. He maintained that he stood in the mainstream of Missouri Synod teachings. His recent article, which was considered heresy by Rev. Chworowsky, was approved by Delbert Schulz, Rev. Koehneke, Dr. Halter, Dr. Pallmeyer who are recognized leaders of the Mo. Synod. He stated that this meeting is not a trial since he could be charged and tried only by Mo. Synod officials. The Wis. Synod is bound by the Saginaw Convention to dissolve cooperation with the Mo. Synod.²⁰

A representative sampling of some of the testimony given at this special meeting will give the reader an understanding of the uncertain and controversial-charged atmosphere of the religious classrooms taught by Rev. Streiter,

Streiter: All information taught was received in Concordia Seminary classrooms. Students have a bias toward their instructor.

Chworowsky: Am not raising problem to harm LHS but from a pastoral concern. Questions are raised but not answered in the classroom. Students in Bible Class reflect confusion. Things are being taught which are not in Scripture.

Streiter: Do not teach there are errors in Scripture, but that error may occur in manuscript

²⁰L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1965.

transmission. Some manuscripts are not complete. Errors in manuscript taught as a possibility.

Pope: We do not want a repetition of what is taught in parochial school but we do want a harmony of teaching between elementary and high school.

Benke: There is guidance but not definite insistence on one answer, no spoon feeding of students. Get students to do their own thinking.

Streiter: Pastor Schulz pioneered this method of religious instruction. Scripture in the autographs do not contain error. Personally think that Isaiah may have been written by two men. Mo. Synod considers this not a doctrine but an historical judgment. Authorship does not affect inspiration of the book.

Chworowsky: Can we point to the Scriptures as really being the Word of God since we don't have the autographs?

Streiter: Do you deny there is an error?

Chworowsky: No, but Jesus had the same Scripture and did not point out the possibility of error.

Pope: Students should get authoritative answers from teachers of religion.

Chworowsky: You should consider the Wisconsin Synod students in classroom.

Streiter: All Mo. Synod schools use the same theology and methodology. Can you according to your conscience allow any Wis. Synod student to be taught by any Mo. Synod pastor?

Chworowsky: I would not want any of my children taught by Mo. Synod teachers without a colloquy assuring agreement in doctrine.

Streiter: Are you trying to force Mo. Synod to be Wisconsin?

Mr. Kalb: The school is neither Mo. or Wis.
The school has a right to say what is taught. (Emphasis writer's)

Pope: The Association is to determine its own
theology. (Emphasis writer's)

Chworowsky: I would hope that the theology
taught would be conservative Missouri in accord
with the Brief Statement. Teaching of religion
should be in accord to both parties.

Strieter: None of the charges have been sub-
stantiated to demand a resignation. The pro-
blem is in methodology not theology. Students
are being antagonized against teachers.

Chworowsky: I have not requested Rev. Streit-
er's resignation, but have asked for the Board's
opinion of Pastor Streiter's teaching.

Mr. Schulenberg: The Administration Com. had
not taken up rumors since nothing had come to
us in writing before. Problem is one of class
procedure. Consider the maturity of the stu-
dents. They need definite answers. Do you
keep notes on what is said in classroom?

Strieter: I have notes for my presentations.
I have definite answers where the Word of God
if clear. The source theories are in a state
of flux in the Mo. Synod. (Emphasis writer's)

Chworowsky: Our own congregation can not sup-
port school if JEPD theory is left open. Don't
present theories that destroy confidence in the
Word of God.

The group joined in the Lord's Prayer with ad-
journment following at 10:00PM.²¹

The challenge to Rev. Streiter's teaching in the religion
classrooms by Rev. Pope and Rev. Chworowsky was not constru-
ed as inter^{fe}rence by the Board.²² Rev. Streiter "left" Luth-
eran High, and accepted a call to River Forest. Later, he

²¹L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1965.

²²Bleeke. Personal Interview, Feb. 11, 1977.

"left" that institution also.

The Streiter situation was an isolated incident of false teaching in Racine. However, it sounded the warning for confessionally minded WELS people. Sooner or later the synodical split too would have to be evidenced in the WELS participation at Lutheran High. For the WELS churches which chose to send their children to Lutheran High, this matter of fellowship became an increasingly difficult problem to handle. It came to head in the mid-seventies for First Lutheran. On Sept. 7, 1975 a letter was sent to all congregational members who were students, instructors or Board members at Lutheran High.

This call for correct fellowship practise by Rev. Pope outlined the following subject matter,

The High School demands that all students and faculty must attend chapel, but are invited to participate. This means that we can be present without participating. This can be indicated by silence, by remaining seated, etc., or by notifying the administration of our action. This does not mean denying completely whatever is done in such a service. We may appropriate whatever is beneficial to our faith, but we do as private individuals, not as participants or sponsors. In previous years we had to be tolerant in this matter, because we were in a state of transition. But this is past now, and as the principles point out, we also have WELS alternatives in the area.²³

(Emphasis writer's)

The above underlined sentence pretty well states the policy of First Lutheran to the "problem" of sending students to Lutheran High after the synodical split - it was handled

²³Congregational letter by Rev. Pope, Sept. 7, 1975.

with the utmost evangelical attitude. Parents were not removed from the congregational rolls because they allowed, and/or send their ~~children~~ children to Lutheran High. In this respect, Rev. Pope's policy was construed not only as love for his parishoners, but also for Lutheran High School.²⁴ So then, through evangelical witnessing First Lutheran was persuaded that she must cut her ties with the school. The figures indicate this to be the case,

	<u>Student Body</u>	<u>Per. of First Luth. pupils</u>
69-70	324	8%
70-71	328	9%
71-72	321	6%
72-73	310	6%
73-74	338	4%
74-75	350	3%

First Lutheran never had a "falling out" with Racine Lutheran High School. For that matter Lutheran High was sorry to see not only First Lutheran pull out of its school but also all the other WELS churches. The May, 1972 Assc. meeting stated quite plainly,

We still welcome any and all WELS students. Constitutionally, this is still their school. They are a positive force in our student body. The doctrinal position originally set for the school remains unchanged. Your Lutheran High School teaches and supports the same fundamental Lutheranism we espoused as a Synodical Conference school a generation ago.²⁵

First Lutheran's long relationship with Racine Lutheran was close. For years when one thought of Lutheran High

²⁴Bleeke, Personal Interview, Feb. 11, 1977.

²⁵L. H. S. Assc., Minutes of 1972.

one also thought of two congregations - St. John's, because it gave the greatest amount of students and money, and First Lutheran, because it was the home of the school. First Lutheran, as has been pointed out a number of times, felt a very strong tie to Lutheran High, both the congregation and her pastor. They were reluctant to give up the school which was born in their midst, and in a sense looked upon it as their own. They didn't want to surrender it to the majority even though the majority had always been Missouri. First Lutheran's pastor and many of her members put a lot of themselves in the school. Many of the women of the congregation worked in the two "Thrift Shops" that helped send financial aid to the school (a random sampling of the women who worked in the Thrift Shops would have shown that one out of three called First Lutheran their home).²⁶

Thus in view of First Lutheran's emotional involvement with the school and its various organizations, separation from it was, and is, no easy matter.¹ The strong continuity was there between school and church. Therefore parents could not just be simply "ordered" to send their children elsewhere. First Lutheran's policy towards Racine Lutheran was one of orderly retreat. This proved to be the best approach to the situation - First Lutheran did not lose a family to the Missouri Synod due to a less than evangelical attitude regarding the matter of phasing out participation

²⁶Bleeke. Personal Interview, Feb. 11, 1977.

in the school. The same can not be said of some of the WELS churches in the Racine area.

The WELS churches in the area which saw pulpit changes also witnessed their ministers view Racine Lutheran High School as a foreign institution, and understandably so. This happened at Trinity, Caledonia when Rev. Choworowsky and especially, when Rev. Hein came. Trinity's Koelpin, Choworowsky and Hein's predecessor, had been an ardent supporter of Lutheran High, but with his passing out of the picture Trinity steadily withdrew itself from the school's orbit. This was true also at Epiphany, Racine. Rev. Jastor was one of the original incorporators of Racine Lutheran High School. And belonging to Epiphany also was Ernie Mross, Lutheran High's publicity man and known throughout the area as "Mr. Lutheran High." However, with the arrival of Rev. T. Kraus, Epiphany passed into a different and strange relationship with the high school. Rev. T. Kraus discouraged and warned against any Epiphany involvement in the institution. Both congregations lost families to Missouri. It was easy for men like Hein and Kraus, who were not a part of the original and friendly movement, to quickly implement the District's directive of phasing-out relations with Racine Lutheran. But for First Lutheran it was different. Here there was a continuity of dedication to a fine institution. Racine Lutheran High School was home.²⁷

²⁷Bleeke. Personal Interview, Feb. 11, 1977.

Racine Lutheran High School is still home for many in First Ev. Lutheran Church. Yet, whether one agrees or not with Synod's directive that cooperation in the school must be broken, it had to be done. It was an awkward situation, and rather embarrassing for "North Avenue" in Milwaukee, that there were still pockets of conservative Wisconsin and Missouri folk who could work together, and cooperate, in a mutual endeavor while the two churches at large could not. The implementation of the synodical split had to be carried out also in Racine. What can be said for First Lutheran's participation at this point in L. H. S. was that it placed emotional issues on the sidelines, and opted for a confessional stand. It was a wrenching experience for many people in First Lutheran when they were told that they would have to phase-out their participation in the school, and that they, in the future, could no longer as a church be a part of Lutheran High. It was hard on Lutheran High and hard on First Lutheran. But the love has prevailed. All men, the scriptures say, will know us by our love; and, no one can point out among First Lutheran the bitter feelings which existed against Racine Lutheran by others. Although First Lutheran as a church can no longer support Racine Lutheran High School, she can as individual members respect and support that for which she stands.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bleske, John. Personal Interview, Feb. 11, 1977.

Lutheran High School Association, Minutes (1945 - 1977)

L. H. S. Constitution, Articles of Incorporation.

Lutheran High School of Racine, a dedication booklet (Racine: The L. H. S. Assc.) 1952.

Proceedings of the Southeastern District, 1976, WELS.

Schelling, J. The Racine Lutheran's Venture of Faith,
Course Thesis (Concordia Seminary: St. Louis, Mo.), 1957.