

German Instruction in the Public Schools of Indianapolis, 1869-1919 II.

*Frances H. Ellis**

Apparently no change was effected in Indianapolis at the beginning of the new school year in September, 1869, by the state school law, which had been passed earlier that year to provide for the teaching of German in the public schools.

The school board had appointed Superintendent Abram C. Shortridge to obtain the opinion of the superintendent of public instruction with regard to the teaching of German in the public schools, so that the board might understand clearly what it was expected to do. The question was: "Does the recent amendment of Sec. 147, of the Revised School Law, make it necessary for the School Board to procure a German teacher for each and every School in this city?" The following was the decision: "The provision of law is expressed that whenever the parents or guardians of 25 or more children in attendance at any school of a township, town or City, shall so demand, it shall be the duty of the trustees to employ efficient teachers and introduce the German Language as a branch of study into such schools. It is not required that 25 pupils shall desire to study German. This provision of law will be satisfied by furnishing all pupils desiring to study the German Language with a competent teacher of that Language. Ordinarily one teacher of the German will be sufficient for the schools of a city or town; but if pupils cannot be accommodated without the employment of a greater number, a greater number must be employed. It is not intended that any of the Public Schools shall be taught in German, on the contrary it is expressly provided that they shall be taught in the English language. The German is not to be the language of the Schools but a branch of Study."¹ The only business pertaining to German during the new school year 1869-1870 was the appointment of a new teacher for the

* Frances H. Ellis is associate professor of German, Indiana University. The first part of this study appeared in the June, 1954, issue of the *Indiana Magazine of History*; the third and final part will be published in the December, 1954, issue.

¹ Minutes of the Indianapolis Board of School Trustees, September 3, 1869. (These minutes, which are in manuscript, will henceforth be cited as Minutes.)

Ninth Ward, and one for the high school, to replace a teacher who resigned in October.² No petitions were presented.

Der tägliche Telegraph in reprinting the annual report of the German department of the council on education for the city of Cincinnati, hoped that Indianapolis would follow that city's example by accepting the constructive suggestions therein contained. In the main, these were: that the course for the grammatical instruction in English and German be placed in close reciprocal action; that a seminary for teachers be established for the training of competent teachers; that the supervision of the German department in the public schools be placed in the hands of an experienced supervisor.³

By the end of the school year the German citizens had not yet taken advantage of the amendment which had cost so very much effort to have passed. The situation in June, 1870, with regard to German, was, in all respects, exactly the same as it had been at the end of the previous school year. The *Telegraph* felt called upon to prod the Germans of Indianapolis to action by recommending a plan recently adopted by the Evansville schools, the most important part of which was to begin German instruction in the primary grades and to follow through with it for at least six years.⁴ One indication perhaps that the suggestions of the *Telegraph* were not unheeded, was the appointment of a Mr. Dingeldey as teacher of German in the high school and supervisor of German instruction in the public schools. Dingeldey had been on the staff of the German-English School for several years, and was recognized as a very competent and successful teacher.⁵

The first petition to be presented to the board came in August, 1870, from a most unexpected source, namely, "from Susan Breem and twenty-five other colored citizens of the north-east part of the city asking that the German language be taught in the schools their children attended." It was accepted.⁶ On February 4, 1871, "upon application of citizens it was ordered that German be taught in the Second

² *Ibid.*, September 9, 29, October 13, 1869.

³ *Der tägliche Telegraph*, November 29, 1869. (Henceforth this newspaper will be cited as *Telegraph*.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1870.

⁵ *Ibid.*, July 13, 1870. Dingeldey's salary was \$1200.00, the same as that of the principal. The next highest was \$900.00.

⁶ Minutes, August 3, 1870.

Ward building, as soon as suitable teachers can be obtained.”⁷ In April, Shortridge, the superintendent, reported that for the past month 535 pupils had been studying German, “116 of which were English speaking and 419, German,” seemingly a slight decline from the preceding year.⁸ Another petition arrived in July, 1871, “from the Finker Street District.”

At this same July meeting of the board, Clemens Vonnegut, from the committee on German, music, and drawing, “reported a petition from the meeting of the German citizens held at Washington Hall, in reference to German instruction in the schools.” He accompanied it with the following report from the committee: “The undersigned recognize the necessity for a better system of instruction in German in as many of our schools as the same can be taught without too much of an interference with instruction in English branches. The difficulties in the way are:

1st. The want of well-trained teachers.

2nd. The lack of pupils who wish to study German in sufficient numbers to allow of a proper grading.

3rd. The additional expense incident at the introduction of the most approved system.

“The first difficulty named can be overcome by paying sufficient salaries to induce trained teachers to come to our city from elsewhere. The second difficulty named might be overcome by having it announced that a certain number of rooms are to be opened for the reception of pupils who will become such in the English and German schools jointly, thus allowing a concentration of pupils whose parents may so desire in some of our largest buildings.

“The third objection we do not consider as the results will sufficiently repay us for any additional outlay, if the system proves successful.

“By commencing the improved methods, the system can be extended, and improvements made as the work progresses. Your committee asks the Board to take early action in the premises.”⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, February 4, 1871.

⁸ *Ibid.*, April 3, 1871.

⁹ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1871. Vonnegut thought that if the board would agree to pay \$800.00 for male teachers one could be obtained immediately and possibly more later, while a salary not to exceed \$700.00 might be sufficient to attract some female teachers in neighboring cities “of sufficient competency to improve our present system of German.”

The report was tabled until the following meeting, when it was again read and considered.¹⁰

The committee no doubt began to realize that with improved methods there would soon be an expansion in German instruction, and therefore it drew up and presented on October 7, 1871, a set of rules and regulations which, with only slight changes, remained in force until 1900, when there was a drastic revision. Since they give an overall picture of the government of this branch of instruction, they are included here with the minor changes made in 1874 enclosed in brackets:

“Committee on German, Music and Drawing submitted the following report: Rules and Regulations concerning the German department of the Public Schools of Indianapolis:

I. Instruction in the German language shall be given in the second, sixth and ninth Districts [also Fourth and Eleventh] and in the High School.

II. Hereafter instruction in German shall be introduced in such schools as have an attendance of one hundred or more children that can speak [who wish to study] German, provided that the School be held in a building suitable for the purpose, and that the parents of the children attending the school shall petition therefor.

III. There shall be appointed a teacher of German for the High School, who shall also be principal of German instruction in the District Schools. He shall devise such plans as may be expedient or necessary and report quarterly or semiannually to the Superintendent or the Board the condition of said classes. He shall furnish the different German teachers with instruction respecting the lessons and Books, and is empowered to convene them, at some convenient time, to consult with them about the best methods, and other matters pertaining to his department.

He shall visit at least one school each day without neglecting his classes, he shall examine the different schools and classes at the end of every scholastic year independent of the [German] examination, and in general be governed by the corresponding rules and regulations of the Board applicable to him as teacher and Officer.

IV. Female teachers shall be employed if they can be obtained. But no teacher shall be deemed competent to in-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1871.

struct in the German department, unless proficient also in English.

V. Instruction in German shall commence [with the German speaking children] not before C Primary grade, and [with English speaking children in the C Intermediate Grade] children not able to speak German shall not be allowed to commence German before completing the D Intermediate Grade.

VI. The instruction in the German language must adapt itself to the English classes.

The recitation of German classes is to be as follows: In the C Primary, two lessons per day, one in the forenoon of twenty minutes and one in the afternoon of fifteen minutes. In the B Primary, one lesson in the forenoon and one in the afternoon, each twenty minutes in length. One lesson of thirty minutes each day in the A Primary, and upwards. In the High School one lesson of thirty minutes per day. The pupils from C Primary upward to be allowed one half of the time devoted to writing in school for the purpose of practicing German script, provided the German Teachers can so arrange as to supervise the same.

The German language is to be used in giving instruction, except when the pupils do not speak German.

VII. Whenever it is practicable the instruction in English should be so regulated by the supervising principals of the different schools as not to overburden the scholars who wish to learn German.

VIII. It must be insisted, that no scholar who has once entered a German Class, can leave the same without the most urgent reasons, to be judged of by the teacher and the German Principal. The classes are formed in the beginning of the scholastic year, and no pupils are admitted into them after they are started, except after due examination and approval by the German principal.

IX. The boundaries of the respective schools in which the German is taught shall be no hinderance to a scholar who residing in another district wishes to join a German class."¹¹

The board accepted the report, even though Vonnegut's name was not signed to it. He had disagreed with a few

¹¹ *Ibid.*, October 7, 1871. The words and phrases in brackets indicate some minor changes that were made April 17, 1874. See the minutes of that date for the complete set of regulations.

details, and therefore submitted a minority report on October 13. In it he set forth that he believed more time should be given to the teaching of German: at least one hour every day to every class; that sufficient room, and a sufficient number of teachers, even a sufficient number of buildings should be reserved for German scholars alone; and that the German language should be made one of the branches of the training school for teachers which was soon to be opened.¹² Nothing was done immediately about this report except to spread it upon the record.

After adoption of the rules by the board, there is a lull in the minutes. The trustees were busy building new school houses, for which many special sessions were required. Only two petitions for German came in before the end of the year 1872. The one from the Fourth Ward, which had already been submitted the previous summer, but had been deferred, was presented on July 19, signed by thirty-three citizens and eighty-eight children, and was granted at a special session of the board ten days later.¹³ The second one, in November, was from one hundred parents for instruction in the Eleventh District.¹⁴ In December, in the report of the principal of the high school, it was recorded that 112 pupils out of a total of 253 were studying German in the high school.¹⁵ During the summer of 1873 the German citizens of the Eighth District petitioned the board for the establishment of a German-English school in the southern part of the city.¹⁶ At this time

¹² *Ibid.*, October 13, 1871.

¹³ *Ibid.*, July 19, 29, 1872. The petition had originally been presented by Vonnegut on July 29, 1871.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, November 15, 1872.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, December 6, 1872. According to the report, the distribution of subjects in the high school was as follows:

Number belonging to school	.....	253
" studying	Elocution	.....253
"	English language (first year)	..145
"	Latin	.....134
"	German	.....112
"	Chemistry	.....35
"	Physiology	.....26
"	General History	.....72
"	Algebra	.....213
"	Geometry	.....17
"	Astronomy	.....15
"	English Literature	
"	(senior grade)	.....19
"	Mental and Moral	
"	Science	.....253

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1873.

also, Dingeldey resigned and was replaced by Charles E. Emmerich.¹⁷ By September, German had likewise been introduced into the schools of the Seventh District.¹⁸

As the school city of Indianapolis grew, the board of trustees found it necessary in 1873 to set down rules and regulations for itself as well, so that diverse matters could be handled more efficiently through the standing committees. Section eleven defined the duties of the standing committee on German, music and drawing: "It shall be the duty of this committee to take the general charge of instruction in the German language in the District Schools; to recommend to the committee, on the appointment of teachers, such persons as it may find best fitted to teach the German language, when vacancies occur, and to report quarterly to the Board, the condition and wants of the German department of the District Schools, to arrange the number of lessons in Music," etc.¹⁹ The committee worked faithfully and in the spring presented to the board the outlines of study. The course of instruction in German for the public schools of Indianapolis was spread on the minutes of April 17, 1874.

Shortridge's report of June 19, 1874, shows a total of 718 pupils studying German in the district schools and 138 in the high schools.²⁰ The total enrollment in all of the public

¹⁷ Emmerich, who was born in Coblenz, Germany, in 1845, had come to the United States in 1865. He began teaching in the district schools of Indianapolis in 1869, then taught two years at Madison, Indiana, before being called by Abram Shortridge in 1873 to teach in the Indianapolis High School.

¹⁸ Minutes, September 29, 1873.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, September 19, 1873.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, June 18, 1874. According to Shortridge's report, the number of pupils studying German in the district schools and in the high school for the year 1873-1874, was distributed in the following manner:

District	German	American	Total
2	76	37	113
2	66	14	80
6	197	—	197
7	51	21	72
9	169	—	169
11	70	17	87
	Totals	629	89
			718
High School	First Year	80	
	Second Year	35	
	Third Year	20	
	Senior Year	3	
	Total	138	

schools at that time was 7801.²¹ Another petition, this time from the Thirteenth District, representing "the parents of 112 pupils, who intend to study the German language" was approved in August.²²

German instruction in the Indianapolis public schools was still not satisfactory to the German citizens, however. They felt that the results to date were not at all good, and would not be until the entire system underwent a thorough change. In a petition to the board in February, 1875, they therefore suggested that the time for the study be extended, twenty minutes a day being "entirely insufficient to enable even the most willing and efficient teacher to produce any but trifling results," and that two school houses, one north and one south, be designated for the explicit purpose of devoting half the time to English and half to German. The details they left to the judgment and experience of the board.²³ One result of this petition may well have been the consolidation of German classes in the grades 2A to 8A for the German-speaking and the English-speaking children; up to that time the former had begun their German in the 2A and had continued it through the 8A, whereas the latter had not begun to study German until the 6B. This merging effected an economy in teaching force, and seemed to "be attended with no serious disadvantages to either class of pupils."²⁴ All pupils, American as well as children of foreign parentage, now had to begin in the C Primary grade, and no pupil was allowed to begin in the C Intermediate grade (i.e., the 6B).²⁵ The success attending the instruction caused a great many English-speaking children to enter the German classes. It therefore became necessary to change the method of instruction and also to change textbooks.²⁶

During the year 1877 German was being taught in ten district schools to 2,432 pupils, but, oddly enough, it was taken out of the first year in high school and kept in the

²¹ *Ibid.*, April 3, 1874.

²² *Ibid.*, August 7, 1874.

²³ *Ibid.*, February 19, 1875.

²⁴ *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the City of Indianapolis, 1882-1883*, p. 28. (These reports will henceforth be cited as *Annual Report*.)

²⁵ Minutes, September 3, 1875.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 3, 1877. The series of texts adopted in 1877 was Klemm's *Reading and Speaking German*, Books 2-6, published by Henry Holt and Company.

last three years only.²⁷ This change in the course caused a break in the continuity of the study for those who had begun German in the grades, and delayed those who wished to prepare for college. Furthermore a pupil could not take both Latin and German, but had to choose between them. The principal in his report for the year 1878-1879 called attention to the disadvantages of both features and said succinctly: "The particular subjects proper for a high school course ought not to be determined upon economic grounds, but purely upon a consideration of the intellectual wants of those who are to take them."²⁸ Nothing was done immediately, however, to rectify matters.

Evidence that pupils were continuing their German in high school even through their senior years is found, for instance, in the graduating class of 1878. Twelve of the thirty-three graduates were enrolled in German at the time of graduation. Two of the twenty-seven essays that were read at the exercises were in German, even though German was not the native tongue of the young ladies who read them.²⁹

The more demand there was for German instruction, the more it cost; therefore in 1875 a plan was devised, as we learn from an annual report published several years later, "of placing teachers in charge of a room in which a part of the pupils studied German, to teach this language in addition to the regular work of the grade." The main reduction came, however, by placing these teachers in such a way that it was necessary "to employ special teachers of German but half a day in a building, which had more than classes enough

²⁷ *Manual of the Public Schools of Indianapolis, 1876-1877*. Compare also *Annual Report, 1882-1883*, p. 29. According to the *Annual Report, 1878-1879*, p. 71, 131 of the pupils in the grades had been born in Germany, and 2,147 of the parents were immigrants; p. 73, in the high school only 1 pupil and 31 parents had been born in Germany. Germany furnished 18 per cent of the adult population of the city.

²⁸ *Annual Report, 1878-1879*, p. 103.

²⁹ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 20, 1878, reporting the tenth graduation exercises of the Indianapolis High School, said: "Miss Sallie Barbour followed with a German essay, 'Das Nibelungen Lied.' The young lady's voice was so engaging, her manner so animated, her smile so winsome, that everybody concluded her essay was of good literary quality, although but few present could understand the German tongue. She was rewarded with applause and unnumbered floral greetings from her admirers." The reporters added: "Miss Libbie Hamilton read a German essay, entitled 'Verborgene Kraefte' which being interpreted, means 'The effect of the hidden forces upon society.'"

for a half day's time, but not enough to occupy the full time of a special teacher."³⁰ In 1882 an additional variation was introduced: "All German studying pupils of grades 6, 7, and 8 were collected in two rooms at the High School building, and teachers were assigned to these rooms each half day, so that equal instruction was given in both languages to all pupils. To accomplish this the teacher of English taught Arithmetic, Grammar, and a part of the Reading in both rooms; while the teacher of German taught German, Geography, History, Spelling, Writing, Drawing, Music, and a part of Reading, using her instruction in the German language, except in the Reading class and in the dictation of English words for Spelling. The language of the school room was thus one-half the time English and one-half German."³¹ To accomplish this the pupils were furnished geographies imported from Germany.³² Since these German texts were, however, not sufficiently detailed for countries "outside the German Empire and France," a translation into German was made of the book in regular use in the schools. The board had it printed and then sold it to the pupils.³³

"Geography thus became the main German study of the pupils, and they recited in English or in German as directed, the lessons they studied in German. The difficulty found in doing this was not greater than was anticipated. Vocabularies and interlinear translations were arranged for them. All study of this kind was done in the presence and with the aid of the teacher, and in a few weeks, considerable readiness was secured. These pupils were about equally divided between children of German speaking and children of English speaking parents. . . . Examinations were in English, except in German and Geography." In geography and in United States history, taught from a German translation of Campbell's *United States*

³⁰ *Annual Report, 1882-1883*, p. 29. Teachers who taught German in addition to their regular work were paid \$25.00 a year extra.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

³² Minutes, August 4, 1882. Two texts were imported: D. Richard Andree, *Volkschul Atlas* and Daniel, *Leitfaden für den Unterricht in der Geographie*.

³³ The *Annual Report, 1882-1883*, p. 30, gives the title of the book in general use in the schools: Guyot, *Intermediate Geography*. In the Minutes, June 1, 1883, it is recorded that the translation of the geography was made by a Mrs. French and that she was paid \$50.00 by the board of school commissioners for her work, even though she had not expected any remuneration.

History, the examinations were in German and also in English.³⁴ "At the end of the year the classes would write an examination in these subjects in either language with equal facility. The amount accomplished in Geography and History was not equal in extent to that done by pupils using English text books. At the beginning of the year the lessons in these subjects were necessarily much shorter than those that would otherwise have been given. During the last quarter of the year full lessons were given and readily learned." The superintendent thought that there was "a great educational value in thus studying the same subject in two languages," because it taught "the pupil the very difficult lesson that a thought is independent of a form of words, and may be variously expressed. It threw the pupil perforce into the selection of words for the expression of his thought rather than into his memory for the set of words there stored."³⁵ Although some pupils were more enthusiastic than others over this type of work, the experiment was on the whole considered a success, and this method of instruction in German in the higher grammar grades was continued over a period of years.

At the end of the school year of 1882-1883 the number of schools in which German was being taught had been increased to thirteen in addition to the high school.³⁶ From the 2A through the 8A, 2,460 pupils were enrolled in German, 1,402 of whom were of German parentage.³⁷ One noticeable and deplorable fact in the table of statistics of those studying German for the year 1882-1883, was the great decrease of pupils in the upper grammar grades. There were two reasons for this, namely, withdrawal from school and dropping the subject because it was too hard, although many other reasons were offered as excuses. By the fourth grade, for instance, only 37 per cent of those who had started the German remained in the schools, whereas 50 per cent of those not studying German continued.³⁸

In order to have uniformity, more control, and more success in the teaching of German, the superintendent of

³⁴ *Annual Report, 1882-1883*, pp. 20-31. United States history was taught from Fischer, *Geschichten der Vereinigten Staaten*, a German translation of Campbell's *United States History*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁶ *Manual of the Public Schools of Indianapolis, 1882-1883*, p. 60.

³⁷ *Annual Report, 1882-1883*, p. 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

German, Charles E. Emmerich, prepared a program for the course of German studies. This was submitted to the board on August 16, 1884, by the committee on German, etc., with the recommendation that it be printed.³⁹ In September, the same committee recommended that the supervision of German be somewhat enlarged,⁴⁰ and on January 16, 1885, the board concurred in the report of the committee on German, music, and drawing, which put German back into the first year of high school.⁴¹

On May 15, the committee, through Vonnegut, reported the system of teaching the German language in the higher classes through the teaching of geography, history, etc., to be a success and sought permission to have a new history compiled for use in the classes.⁴² This was granted. The first printing of the new book was already exhausted by the end of the year, since some copies were sold outside of Indianapolis.⁴³ German instruction was functioning well.

But then, just when the board seemed favorably disposed toward the instruction of German in both the grades and in the high school, suddenly a dissonance sounded on May 11, 1886, with the presentation of a surprising resolution by George Merritt, one of the trustees, to suspend the teaching of German for one year. The motion failed of adoption but was referred to the whole board to be considered again along with other financial matters.⁴⁴ On May 21, 1886, Joseph J.

³⁹ Minutes, August 16, 1884. No copy of this course of study seems to be extant.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, September 5, 1884. The committee also recommended that in consequence of such additional work Emmerich's salary be increased to \$1,500.00.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1885. The minutes read: "In order to give those pupils from the 8A grade and entering the 9B grade that had studied the German language an opportunity to continue said study and giving them the necessary facility to use said language freely, we deem it proper that it should be made optional for them to continue said study and postpone instead of it, the study of Physical Geography to the next semester."

⁴² *Ibid.*, May 15, 1885. Emmerich proposed to do the work with the help of another competent person for a small compensation. "Mr. Vonnegut also moved that a sufficient amount be allowed for the printing of said book, to be paid back later through the sales therefrom." His report was referred to the committee on German, etc., and the committee on textbooks, with power to act.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, December 5, 1885. By the end of the year the supply of 115 books was already exhausted and permission was requested for another printing. It was thought that about one hundred would be needed for Indianapolis and fifty "would probably be demanded by other cities."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, May 11, 1886.

Bingham, another trustee, unexpectedly moved the consideration of an even stronger resolution: "Resolved that the office of Supervisor of German be abolished, and that the teaching of the German language in the Primary Grades be suspended for one year and until the Board shall have recovered from its present financial embarrassment." This motion was tabled until later in the meeting, when it was moved and passed that consideration of the resolution be indefinitely postponed.⁴⁵ The "indefinitely" proved to be a short interval, for a little less than a year later, on April 15, 1887, the same discordant note was heard. This time, Dr. Henry Jameson, a trustee, presented the following: "Resolved that it is deemed expedient by this Board on account of its finances to discontinue the teaching of German in the District Schools."⁴⁶ The resolution failed of adoption. There were two ayes, and nine nays. This did not end the matter, however. On May 1, 1887, J. H. Greenstreet read section 147 of the Indiana school law regarding the teaching of German in the public schools and asked the adoption of his motion that "the German language be taught in no school of this city during the school year ending June 30, 1888, where the petition for the same has not been signed by the required number of parents or guardians and filed with the Secretary of this Board before the first day of June next." A postponement of action was moved until the special meeting. Greenstreet then presented the following: "I call the Board's attention to section 147 of the School Law of the State which reads thus 'The common schools of the State shall be taught in the English language and the trustees shall provide to have taught in them orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, English grammar; physiology, history of the United States, etc.' and I move to have the consideration of this clause of the law referred to the Committee on Judiciary to be reported at the next meeting of the Board, whether the present course of study in which geography and history of the United States is taught in the German language is in violation of this law." This question was referred to the judiciary committee.⁴⁷

On May 13, 1887, Bingham reported from the judiciary committee that "the method of teaching German under that

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, May 21, 1886.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, April 15, 1887.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, May 1, 1887.

section of the law is left to the discretion and direction of the Board, and the Board in the exercise of that discretion and right having determined that the best and most efficacious method of teaching German is the present course of study in that language adopted by the Board, which includes the study of Geography and History of the United States in the German language, hence it is not in violation of Section 147 of the school law."⁴⁸ German had come through the skirmish safely—for the time being.

To keep to the letter of Greenstreet's motion, Vonnegut, on June 14, 1887, presented petitions for sixteen schools; these were ordered placed on file.⁴⁹ On August 5, the recommendation for 200 more United States histories in German was concurred in,⁵⁰ while on October 7, 1887, approval was given to the recommendation that a suitable textbook for instruction in German grammar be prepared for use in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, the so-called German annexes.⁵¹ It seems that the textbooks on the market were not adopted to the work in these grades but were intended rather for high schools and colleges and were also too expensive.

The school year was not to end in the same amiable manner, however; on May 4, 1888, Greenstreet presented a resolution for the discontinuance of the teaching of German in the public schools, the question to lie over until the next meeting.⁵² On May 18, 1888, the resolution was called up and was amended by Greenstreet to read: "Resolved that the teaching of German be discontinued in all schools except High Schools No. 1 and 2, from and after the close of the present school year." This time his reason was that there were twenty rooms with a seating capacity of 500 to 600 set aside for German recitations to the exclusion of the study of English and that the seating capacity of the school buildings was inadequate by 300 to 500 seats under the present system and that further debt could not be created. The matter was referred to the committee on buildings and grounds to in-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, May 13, 1887.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1887. Petitions were filed for schools Nos. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 24, 25, 26, and 28.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, August 5, 1887.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, October 7, 1887.

⁵² *Ibid.*, May 4, 1888.

investigate and report to the board the amount of room occupied by the German classes.⁵³

On June 1, E. L. Williams made an incomplete report for the committee on buildings and grounds, stating, "first—that no child entitled to the same had been refused admittance to the schools for any reasons; second—that there were at present 2,750 vacant seats in the District schools and 231 in the high schools, making a total of 2,981; third—that the financial condition of the Board had been materially improved." After accepting the above, further time was requested for a complete report, which was granted.⁵⁴ In spite of the fact that this report nullified the ostensible reasons given for Greenstreet's resolution, the opposition to German continued. In August a new attack was made. Trustee Hughes presented amendments to the rules and regulations of instruction in German to the effect that only three teachers of German should be appointed in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades; and one teacher for High School No. 1. Instruction in German, in other words, was to begin in the sixth year, instead of in the second as heretofore. Furthermore, German was to be placed under the superintendent of schools and the office of supervisor abolished. To avoid a vote, John P. Frenzel moved that the board adjourn, but the motion didn't pass. It was then moved and seconded that the amendments be adopted, whereupon the chair decided that action should be deferred until the next meeting.⁵⁵ However, the matter did not come up, either at the next meeting, or throughout the year. German teachers continued to be hired; new texts adopted, and further translations made.⁵⁶

The year 1889 passed uneventfully and 1890 began. On the surface all seemed well, but there were undermining forces at work *um das Werk zu vernichten*. At a meeting of the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1888.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1888. Williams added that "the authorized obligations of July last had aggregated \$200,000 . . . it would be \$160,000 for the coming July, thus showing a difference of \$40,000."

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, August 3, 1888.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, September 21, 1888, April 10, May 3, July 1, 5, 1889. Changes in texts included the substitution of Klein's *Second German Reader* for Weick and Grebner's *Second German Reader*. Those parts of the text in Swinton, *Intermediute Geography*, which were used for instruction in grades 6B, 6A, and 7B, were translated into German and a sufficient number of copies of the translation were ordered printed for use in the German annexes.

board on May 2, 1890, the unexpected happened. Frenzel, a member of the board, was traveling in Europe, and J. A. Buddenbaum, who had just recovered from a severe illness, was also absent.⁵⁷ This meant that there were only four members of the board present who were in favor of the instruction of German, and five who were hostile to it. The meeting began in routine fashion, and continued in the same way until just before the time of adjournment, when Theodore P. Haughey arose and presented the following: "Whereas the committee on Text Books and course of Instruction has made its annual report and has no recommendation of change in regard to the course of study in the German language and whereas, many members of this Board desire to lessen the cost of instruction in this branch, therefore Resolved that instruction in the German Language be restricted to the three highest grades of the District Schools and the High Schools and that the Committee on Text Books and Course of Instruction be and are hereby instructed in conjunction with the Superintendent of Schools to make such modification of the present course of Study in the German Language as shall make the course adapted to the shorter time thus allowed for its prosecution; and Resolved further that the Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Public Schools be amended as follows, to conform to the foregoing changes in the course of study in the German Language."⁵⁸ Then followed his amendments and in support of those his remarks, which were, in brief, that the time for the beginning of German instruction was not fixed by law; that about \$6,800.00, expended for German below the sixth grade, could be saved; that it was not fair to pay out so large a sum of money for this particular branch of study; and that statistics showed that although many pupils began the study of German in the second grade, the number of those who finished was disproportionately small. To prove this last point he showed statistics from 1882 through 1889 and added: "We find from statistics I have with me, that 617 scholars commence German in the second year, and they gradually fall off each year until they reach the High School, where there are but 38 who enter that school studying German, therefore 575 out of 617 must have studied that language but a short time. Practically then we are expending

⁵⁷ *Telegraph*, May 3, 1890.

⁵⁸ *Minutes*, May 2, 1890.

all this money to teach German to 38 pupils, this being the number who study it long enough to secure its advantages."⁵⁹ Haughey then moved the adoption of his report. This was a surprise attack, and those in favor of German instruction were stunned. J. W. Loeper was the first to recover; he asked, why cut off only the first six years, why not be honest and take out all instruction of German, for that was certainly Haughey's intention. Vonnegut declared that this was a serious matter and needed careful consideration. He refuted several of the points which Haughey had made, and then remarked that with regard to the high percentage of loss among the German pupils, there was likewise a decided loss in other branches and classes, and that possibly the perverse influence of others also had much to do with this point.⁶⁰ Dr. A. R. Baker, favorable to the German, moved to postpone action until the next meeting, which motion was lost by a vote of four to five. Then Loeper moved to table the amend-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Number of German pupils enrolled:

	1882-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89
2 year	665	728	663	637	787	651	390
3 year	600	719	710	707	700	642	522
4 year	426	475	481	581	518	447	470
5 year	338	358	349	360	467	350	253
6 year	214	179	180	141	196	194	197
7 year	142	142	99	144	150	135	126
8 year	72	90	82	72	96	52	48

Compare also the *Annual Report, 1887-1888*, p. 45, for the annual report of the German department in the Indianapolis public schools:

Grade	Boys	Girls	English	Speak.	German	Speak.	Close of Yr.
2B	155	147	90	92	65	55	31 31
2A	176	173	97	86	79	87	151 140
3B	175	183	74	93	101	90	153 129
3A	156	176	54	79	102	97	136 163
4B	141	113	43	42	98	71	131 132
4A	108	122	45	37	63	85	99 96
5B	98	81	30	22	68	59	95 111
5A	87	84	22	13	65	71	55 45
6B	62	68	16	12	46	56	68 63
6A	29	35	10	10	19	25	44 39
7B	46	36	8	11	38	25	29 36
7A	25	28	5	5	20	13	27 21
8B	17	11	4	3	13	8	16 12
8A	13	11	2	1	11	10	6 7
Total	2,556		1,016		1,540		1,945

⁶⁰ *Telegraph*, May 3, 1890. General attendance figures were low, too, according to figures presented in the report for the year ending June 30, 1892. The per cent of pupils who attended eight months or longer in the public schools from 1880 to 1890 ranged between 62 and 67 per cent.

ments, which was also lost by the same vote. Haughey's motion to adopt was then concurred in by exactly the same vote of four to five.⁶¹

The opposition had bided its time, and had been ready to act, when a favorable moment should present itself. The proponents had done all they could to stave off action, but had been helpless; and so German instruction, which had been installed after much hard work, and which had been built up with untiring assiduousness over a period of some twenty years, was now put out of the first six grades by one vote!

German instruction in Indianapolis had suffered a severe setback, but it was not beaten. The next afternoon Clemens Vonnegut sent the following letter to every member of the board: "Allow me to call your attention to the fact that the resolution of last night is a willful transgression of the law. Such transgressions, if they are unimportant, as seem reasonable, as for instance demanding 100 instead of 25 as the requisite number of pupils and commencing with the second instead of the first year, are borne cheerfully, but in this case where we deal the death stroke to the study of German, which after much deliberation and work has acquired approximate perfection in respect to efficiency and cheapness, it must provoke a fight—an expensive lawsuit, with many unpleasant consequences."⁶²

The *Telegraph* in a series of editorials declared that this was merely the first step to eradicate German from the school system and called upon all Germans to rally to the cause.⁶³ It said that this decree was not the wish of the majority of the members of the board, since it had been passed when two of those in favor of German instruction had been absent, but that it was the result of the decided agitation

⁶¹ Minutes, May 2, 1890.

⁶² Indianapolis *News*, May 3, 1890. The *News* in its headlines said that the move was inspired by common sense and a necessity for economy. In an editorial it approved highly of the action of the board as "good business, good sense and good economy,—in the double meaning of saving and fitness. . . ." It added: "The thought and sentiment, the aims and ideals of the country are being compacted and unified. In this course the general thought now agrees in the uselessness of a foreign language in the public schools, where the American citizen is being made. It is still clung to by some German-born citizens or the inheritors of German sentiment, but it is a matter of sentiment merely, not thought. It touches feeling, not reason, and in time—and a very short time—it will go its way. It cannot resist the conclusion of reason—the logic, the hard sense of the time."

⁶³ *Telegraph*, May 3, 1890.

against German begun in 1886, which had been carried on through the press, until it had influenced citizens into believing that instruction in German was worthless and unnecessary. The agitators pretended that that which was the result of their own machinations, namely the decrease in German enrollment between the second and the upper grades, was the cause for the abolishment of German.⁶⁴ The editorial added that the Germans had contributed relatively more to the development of Indianapolis than any other national group. It suggested that people take a walk through Indianapolis, notice the many German names of firms, and then ask themselves what would remain of the city, if these names were subtracted. Pointedly it inquired if such a nationality did not deserve consideration?⁶⁵ The *Telegraph* inferred that there was an overemphasis upon the \$10,000.00 spent for instruction in German in view of the fact that the Germans represented 6,000 voters.⁶⁶ Likewise criticism of the extra buildings necessary for such instruction was misplaced, because the critics had failed to weigh the savings effected in education through some of those very Germans. There were four large parochial schools, two Catholic and two Lutheran, which were supported privately, and did not cost the city one cent, and yet the Germans who sent their children to these schools also paid the taxes for the public schools.⁶⁷ Another silly argument, continued the *Telegraph*, which the opponents used, was that there could be no unity in this country if other languages were spoken. In refutation it cited Switzerland and Belgium.⁶⁸

On Friday, May 8, a protest meeting was held, at which 400 Germans, mostly men, were present, the greatest number that had ever come out on a week night. All strata of society were represented and ready to fight for what they thought was right; many of them had left Germany because of their

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, May 6, 1890.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1890.

⁶⁶ According to the census figures for 1890, the population of Indianapolis was 105,436. Foreign population: 14,487; of this, German: 7,893. *Eleventh United States Census, 1890*, Part I, 370, 670-671. Revenue for school purposes, June, 1888, to June, 1889, was \$252,004.95. *Telegraph*, May 9, 1890.

⁶⁷ *Telegraph*, May 7, 1890.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, May 8, 1890.

principles, therefore it was not to be expected that they would give up a cause without a struggle. A chairman was chosen, the situation was fully explained, and then the address to the school board, which had previously been drawn up, was read. In this the alleged reasons for the dropping of German in the first six years were refuted by showing, first, that instead of a deficit during the preceding year, the school board books actually showed a balance of \$3,621.83; and second, that, according to the report of Superintendent of Schools L. H. Jones for the year 1888, an alarming loss in enrollment was apparent from the fourth year on in every school system with which he was acquainted, not just in German, but in all classes. Many arguments were advanced for the retention of the German, the most effective of which was the fact that on the tax ledgers of the city of Indianapolis, the Germans, who numbered 15 per cent of the population, paid 40 per cent of the taxes. Yet these Germans had required only 4 per cent of the school funds for instruction in German, an instruction which had benefited both German and American children.⁶⁹

On May 16, the memorial respecting the question of German instruction in the public schools was presented to the school board. It was read by Superintendent Jones.⁷⁰ Haughey arose immediately and discussed the increased budget for the following year; Vonnegut explained certain points in the communication in greater detail; then J. B. Conner spoke. The *Indianapolis Journal* reported his remarks: "It was never the theory nor the spirit of the law, that the German language should be taught in the Public Schools for the purpose of a spoken language. The debates in the Legislature show that it was demanded on the ground that Latin, Greek and French were taught more or less in the high schools, . . . But it now seems that some of our people have taken the law too literally, and supposed that it was the purpose to teach another language for common use besides the English. . . . It is very well known that the object of teaching Latin and Greek and French in the Public Schools is not to enable anyone

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, May 9, 1890.

⁷⁰ Minutes, May 16, 1890. Loeper of the school board made the motion, which was adopted, that the memorial be received and placed on file, but it does not seem to be extant.

to utilize them as a spoken language, for in these are found chiefly the roots of the English language. . . . German stands fourth in value to the English in this respect."⁷¹ At this point Vonnegut attempted to set Conner straight linguistically. There were further remarks on the part of the opposition, but the delegation which had brought the communication was not allowed to speak. Buddenbaum, who had been absent two weeks before, asked that he might be recorded as voting against the motion to restrict German, but the request was ruled out of order. He then moved to reconsider the motion to restrict German instruction; as he was absent when the original motion was made, however, it was ruled that he could not move to reconsider.⁷² At this point Vonnegut requested a motion from the opposing forces to reconsider the matter, but no one would do so. Consequently the fate of German instruction, as far as the school board was concerned, was sealed.⁷³

Both Catholics and Lutherans protested the action of the school board. As citizens who payed taxes at the same time that they sent their children to private schools, they felt that they were justified in their protestations. Furthermore, as the Rev. Phillip Wamsgans pointed out, in the public and private schools of both Illinois and Wisconsin, instruction in German had practically been wiped out by law. Indianapolis had now taken the first step in that direction. Both denominations felt that the parochial schools would be next in the line of attack, and that it therefore behooved them to stand shoulder to shoulder with their compatriots, regardless of creed or party.⁷⁴

Hatred of the German language seems not to have been confined to Indianapolis alone, but had sporadic outcroppings in other places, judging from stories that sifted into the news from such German cities as Madison, Wisconsin, and Cincinnati, Ohio.⁷⁵ The battle that was being waged in Indi-

⁷¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 17, 1890.

⁷² These details are taken from the report of the meeting in the *Indianapolis News*, May 17. The minutes themselves are very brief and do not give details.

⁷³ *Telegraph*, May 17, 1890.

⁷⁴ For the Catholic protest, see the *Telegraph*, May 9, 1890; for the Lutheran, *Ibid.*, May 19, 1890.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, May 28, 1890.

Indianapolis, not only attracted attention in other states, but elicited moral support from all corners. The Baltimore *Correspondent* called it *ein Kulturkampf, in der besten Bedeutung des Wortes* (a cultural battle in the best sense of the word).⁷⁶ Catholics, meeting in convention in Milwaukee, and Lutherans, at Chicago, made it a subject for discussion and action. One of the Lutheran speakers, for example, called attention both to the great work which Henry Melchior Mühlberg had accomplished in Pennsylvania in founding churches and schools, in which as he said, Luther's language had been taught, and to the work of Karl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther in St. Louis.⁷⁷

In the meantime the petitions prescribed by law requesting instruction in German in the grades had been filed.⁷⁸ And now it was election time for four new trustees, two from the Sixth and two from the Ninth districts. Every German was urged by the *Telegraph* to vote. Reprints from various German papers in other states urged the Germans in Indianapolis to protect their rights by the ballot.⁷⁹ The Indianapolis *News* carried an editorial saying that German was dangerous to the American character of the American schools, and the *Telegraph* retorted: "Where is the German who has ever agitated against American schools? The American character is hurt through such flagrant violation of the law, and through the artificial majority of the Board. Anyway, if it is hurt by teaching German in the five lower grades then why not in the three upper? The reasoning is not logical."⁸⁰

Election day arrived. Tremendous excitement was reflected in the *Telegraph*.⁸¹ The vote was heavy, and the result was as might have been expected. All four candidates were incumbent members of the school board up for re-election,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, June 6, 1890.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Minutes, June 6, 1890. The *Telegraph*, June 7, reported this meeting as a stormy one, but the minutes are silent on that point.

⁷⁹ *Telegraph*, June 7, 10, 11, 12, 13. On June 12, the *Telegraph* reported that the Louisville *Anzeiger* had reprinted the *Telegraph's* call to arms and had added that if the Germans in Indianapolis were not able to win with the law on their side, then in one city after another they would be defeated.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, June 13, 1890; Indianapolis *News*, June 12, 1890.

⁸¹ *Telegraph*, June 14, 1890.

consequently the two German candidates, Vonnegut and Loeper, were re-elected in the German ward, and in the Irish ward, the two restrictionists, John James Garver and John Galvin. The only surprise was that the Germans polled a large vote in the Irish ward.⁸² The *Indianapolis Journal* commented: "The teaching of German was the sole issue where neither side won an advantage. . . . The school election brought out a large poll and showed that the discussion on the restriction of German had to a certain extent entered nearly every stratum of society. Good nature prevailed for the most part, but occasionally there were some warm words. There was a deep undercurrent of feeling, indicating pronounced convictions on the subject."⁸³ Even though the standing in the school board was as before, a majority was assured as soon as Frenzel should get back from his trip to Europe, for then the friends of German would again have six votes, the restrictionists only five. Wherefore the *Telegraph* rejoiced that, although German instruction might suffer an interruption, it was not lost, but would be reinstated.⁸⁴

The *Indianapolis Journal* took the attitude that if the Germans persisted, if they continued in the agitation, the eventual results would be the abolishment of German.⁸⁵ Undeterred by this prediction, the Germans decided at another protest meeting held on June 18 that if no German teachers were appointed for the coming year, then a mandate from the courts would be demanded. All preparations had already been made, so that there would be no delay.⁸⁶ On June 19, the board met; but no German teachers were appointed, because those favoring German would not vote for the teachers in the high school and the annexes unless the other teachers were included.⁸⁷ The next step was therefore the appeal to the courts.⁸⁸

⁸² *Ibid.*, June 16, 1890.

⁸³ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 15, 1890.

⁸⁴ *Telegraph*, June 16, 1890.

⁸⁵ *Indianapolis Journal*, June 16, 1890. Immigration no longer played a part; it was now considered an evil, and it was felt that it should be restricted by the federal government.

⁸⁶ *Telegraph*, June 19, 1890.

⁸⁷ Minutes, June 19, 1890.

⁸⁸ *Telegraph*, June 20, 1890.

The Germans began their suit on June 21, 1890.⁸⁹ The matter was taken up in the Marion County circuit court on the afternoon of July 11. On that day, however, the attorneys for the school board did all of the talking so that the lawyers for Theodore Sander, in whose name the suit was filed, did not have a chance.⁹⁰ This of course created suspense and tense excitement which lasted until circuit judge Howland handed down his written verdict on July 17. The *Telegraph* announced the verdict in the heading: "Hier wird Deutsch gesprochen/Und auch in allen Graden unserer öffentlichen Schulen gelehrt, wie bisher so fügen wir stolz and freudig bei." (German is spoken here and is taught in all the grades of our public schools, just as formerly, we add proudly and joyously.)⁹¹ On July 18, the committee on German, music, and drawing conveyed the mandate to the school board in the following words: "Whereas the Circuit Court of Marion County has decided in the case of the State of Indiana on the Relation of Theodore Sander vs. the Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis, that it is the imperative duty of this Board to employ efficient teachers and introduce the German language as a branch of study in every school building in the city of Indianapolis, upon the proper presentation of a demand signed by the parents of the requisite number of pupils, whatever grades may be taught in said building, and Whereas the Court also held that the same duty rested upon this Board as to all studies prescribed in terms by the Statute, which decision is far reaching in its effects and these questions might forever to be put at rest, and whereas—to delay the appointment of teachers to teach German until this question could be determined on appeal by the Supreme Court, would be detrimental to the best interests of all concerned. Therefore be it resolved by this Board, that the persons heretofore recommended by the Committee on the Appointment of Teachers as per report hereto attached be appointed for the several schools to which they were recommended and that the Attorney of the Board be directed to take the necessary steps to perfect the appeal of said cause

⁸⁹ 129, *Indiana Reports*, 15.

⁹⁰ *Telegraph*, July 12, 1890.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1890.

to the Supreme Court and prosecute the same to final determination."⁹²

There was nothing left for the board to do except to concur in the report, and appoint the teachers for the nineteen grade schools, plus the two annexes and the high school, and again to include the name of C. E. Emmerich as supervisor of German. The appointment for one of the grade schools, No. 9, was left blank, but was filled in on August 15.⁹³

The matter was not settled finally, but was to be carried to the Indiana Supreme Court; nonetheless, the Germans considered this first verdict handed down by an impartial American judge a great victory. Congratulations began to pour in from German papers all over the United States, among them the Cincinnati *Volksblatt*, Louisville *Anzeiger*, the St. Louis *Westliche Post*, the *New Yorker Staatszeitung*, the *Evansville Demokrat*.⁹⁴

Even before the verdict had been handed down, Vonnegut had proposed on August 1 that the instruction of German be begun in the first grade, instead of the second, in order to teach it more efficiently and to make it more accessible to children who did not hear German spoken at home.⁹⁵ The board was agreeable to submitting this suggestion to the superintendent, who reported on August 15 that he would advise introducing the German language into the 1A in such schools as could be taught by the German teacher at the school, leaving the arrangement for other schools until the department had profited from the experience of these.⁹⁶ Perhaps this did not prove feasible, for in later reports mention is made only of seven years of German in the grades.⁹⁷

The verdict of the Indiana Supreme Court was handed down the following year, 1891. It upheld the decree of the

⁹² Minutes, July 18, 1890.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, August 15, 1890.

⁹⁴ *Telegraph*, July 19, 21, 1890. On July 18, the *Telegraph* printed the following telegram of congratulations: "Cleveland, 17. Juli/ Adolph Seidensticker/ Der nationale deutschamerikanische Lehrerbund in seiner zwanzigsten Jahresversammlung in Cleveland sendet dem Deutschthum von Indianapolis herzliche Glückswünsche zum Siege; es giebt noch Richter in Indiana. Fick, Schriftführer"

⁹⁵ Minutes, August 1, 1890.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, August 15, 1890.

⁹⁷ *Annual Report, 1901-1902*, p. 90.

lower court and its opinion was that "the board of school commissioners can not set up a lack of funds as an excuse for their refusal to introduce the study of German, where it appears that studies not named in the statute as required studies are taught at an expense greater than would be necessary for the teaching of German."⁹⁸

Legally, the path had been cleared; German instruction was not only assured its existence, but could begin to expand unhampered.

⁹⁸ 129, *Indiana Reports*, 14.