

Education—The Criterion Of Our Age

Education is now undergoing one of the most extensive examinations in modern times. The magazines are hot on the scent. The politicians are snooping, hoping to find a Commie here or there. The professional educators go on manufacturing vocabulary at an increased rate. More buildings are built. More students are born. More teachers are hired.

Yet, the people who are doing the talking are not satisfied. The teachers are not satisfied. And worst of all, the students are not educated. It would seem that everyone is trying to get into the act. Everybody from the artist to the Rotarian, from the Supervisor to the philosopher. The person with the least-loud voice is the teacher, the forgotten man.

And, unfortunately, the teacher should be doing the talking. But that is a difficult process, for the teacher is sick. He is financially anemic. The salary scale for the so-called "profession" is the biggest horse-laugh since Man O'War. Then, there are the local politicians to appease, there are the educators to appease, there is the family to support. All in all, the teacher has little enough time to teach, let alone to talk about it.

Besides, who would consult a teacher, anyhow? Is it not true that people teach because they cannot do anything else? Why, of course. This is common knowledge, and any man on the street can cite five examples of incompetent teachers in his home town. Thus, teachers are the last ones to be consulted . . . about anything.

Other professions, such as medicine and law, have a high standing in the community. They are so situated, we believe, partially because they have set up standards which are substantially high and rather difficult of attainment. They, in short, have established examinations which require a degree of ability in order that they might be passed. The layman, when he considers the fact that he could not pass the examination, has a tendency to respect the man who has passed the test.

The teacher, on the other hand, has only to get out of college, with a dibble of "education" courses, and he is "certified." Well, the average man reasons, anybody can do that. The millions of veterans who have come to college have somewhat watered-down the sanctified atmosphere with which college *per se* has previously been covered. Anyone can do it. It's simple. There are no entrance exams. Just go to classes for four years and they'll give you a Bachelor's degree with all the rights and privileges thereunto appertaining. Whatever they are. Take the Education courses and you get a certificate too. Then, if you get into a pinch, take a teaching job. Everybody is doing it.

There are young ladies who are waiting for the right man to come along. They teach for a year, get married, and begin a family. Well, families are all right, but what about the continuity in the teaching profession if people are more or less marking time, waiting for the right man?

And then, there are those who, unfortunately, stay in the profession until they die, after a very long life. They run a farm, sell insurance, and operate a store on the side. They are at the school-house for a few hours per day. Actually, the \$250 per month which is paid to this type is wasted, in whole or in part.

And then there are those few faithful servants who labor, unceasingly, for the education of the children. They are the true martyrs of the modern education cause. But they are few in number.

Why is it that there are few good teachers, many sloppy teachers, and many transient teachers? Why do people run an insurance firm and teach school too? The answer is to be found in the fact that the salary cannot draw people of the quality needed, in the quantity needed. The salary, in turn, is low because (to a large extent) because the layman has a rather unimpressive opinion of the average teacher. In short, the teacher is not thought to be really prepared.

We would propose, therefore, that merit examinations be instituted for high school teachers, to be administered by teachers. We believe that only as teachers establish high standards will they ever be able to demand high pay. And we feel sure that until high pay exists in the profession, there will not be attracted to it the high-caliber men and women who are needed if the educational program is to succeed.

Today, on the threshold of possible world

war, in a nation which is looked to by the world for some degree of leadership, we are in danger of muffing the ball. Historians, if ever they have the opportunity, will undoubtedly see in the current period a crisis which the American people brought upon themselves. The historians will probably see with clarity the thing which we apparently see with such great difficulty: They will see that we failed to educate the young.

It isn't too difficult to see it today. Don't we spend two billion on education and nine billion on alcohol?

Does anyone doubt where the emphasis now lies?

BUT SEE FOR YOURSELF

You drop a penny postcard into the mail. You wait five days, and you get the information. That is what we did. The North Carolina Department of Education in Raleigh obliged us with material on the educational system in this state—and how it compares with other states. The figures are for 1948, but the relative standings have not changed much since then.

We are amazed, hurt, and angry. But see for yourself:

1. We have a large school-age population in comparison to the total population in the state. Our rank is 6.5 in the nation.
2. Our income per school-age child is \$3,395. ON THIS WE RANK 43rd.
3. We allot an estimated 2.6 percent of our state and local revenue to schools. On this, WE RANK 14th.
4. We spend \$115.00 on each pupil. WE RANK 42nd.
5. Value of school property per student, \$225.00 RANK 42nd.
6. Ratio of high-school enrollment total enrollment, 19 percent. RANK 41st.
7. Average annual salary of teacher, principal and supt., \$2125. RANK 34th.

So often we hear the phrase at banquets and such places that "North Carolina leads the South," in this, or that, or the other. That statement is equivalent to a man's saying that he can lick anybody who does not weigh more than fifty pounds. Or that Chapel Hill is the largest town in the township. In short, such a statement is meaningless.

It seems to us, therefore, that we should keep our eyes on the nation. We should remember that but for such states as Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina, we would be on the bottom of the heap in many of the national ratings.

One other statistic which might be of interest: In 1947-48, the White school property totaled \$142,868,760 or \$240.00 per pupil. The Negro school property totaled \$23,198,447 or \$89.00 per pupil. Thus in the "equal but separate" facilities, the value of the property per White student is about 275 percent of the value of the property per Negro student!

There is an old saying that there are liars, damned liars and statistics. Maybe so. There is also a saying that ignorance and hyperbole are brothers. We have heard, recently, several grandiose claims made concerning the equality of facilities for Negroes in secondary schools. We feel that these claims, which represent hyperbole, are made by people who are not informed, and perhaps that explains their fear of statistics.

In any case, the state of North Carolina is to be congratulated on having expended such a large percentage of the recent bond money for the building of schools for the Negroes. It shows that the state is trying to make the best of a bad situation. The only unfortunate aspect about the matter is that we must do better, much better, or we shall have to swallow the pill of unsegregation in the secondary schools. That this would be an unwise move is manifest. That such a preposterous inequity as now exists will FORCE the issue soon is also manifest.

The Tar Heel

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1951—Another Riddle

A little man hastily brought his car to a stop, mopped his forehead, got out and walked across the street to the schoolground. The lawn was an acre square and a foot thick. A whiskey bottle poked its label out of the grass. "Give it another year," he thought, "and we could sell timber. I'll have to get the lawn mowed this week."

He climbed the steps, eroded by generations of feet, to the pseudo-neo-Spanish-American structure. The brick walls of the building looked reasonably imposing . . . from the outside. They didn't show their twenty-five years. Grass was growing between the cement steps. "Have to have that cut. Can't have the place looking like part of a ghost town." Ten steps and he was on the concrete piazza at the end of the building.

Eight families of wasps and their first cousins, the dirt daubers, had moved in during the three-months sleeping period of the schoolhouse. They buzzed warningly in the hot August sun. Two gargoylish water fountains started rustily at him from their concrete anchorage. He pressed a pedal of one with his foot, and the water system clanked throughout the building. He heard sympathetic noises from the fountains at the other end of the structure. He hastily went to the door, hauled out of his pocket a bunch of keys which weighed a pound and began to try them in the lock. "Now which one is it? I can't remember from year to year." On the fifth try, he got the right one. He opened the door which scraped on the concrete, and he anchored it with a brick. Then down the hall, the long hall which ran the length of the building boards creaking, dirty, oil-covered to lay the dust that had been ground into impalpable grit. The walls had been calcimined—"when was that? Several years ago. Have to keep a light burning here, even during the middle of the day."

A picture on the wall, behind a dusty, broken glass, depicted George Washington crossing the Delaware. "Hasn't been cleaned in five years." A picture of some American Indians and early settlers in North Carolina was hanging at an angle which it had held for many moons. A piece of fallen plaster lay in the exact center of the hall, as if it had been aimed precisely. He flipped a switch. Nothing happened. He flipped it back, went on. He wandered into the Ninth grade Home Room. A table, devoid of even debris, gave evidence of the thoroughness of the departing teacher. The table had served as a desk. Thirty-two seats, of five distinct types, made uneven rows in the room, their tops preserving many generations of laboriously carved initials.

He looked at the greenish blackboards, full of infiltrations by thumbtacks. The putty was falling from the windows. One pane was broken. Another missing. The pencil sharpener hung to the window frame by one screw. "Must have the County man come up and go through this place," he thought.

The Principal, for it was he, left the ninth grade room and went to his office. He stopped outside the door and looked at a crude drawing, done in 1925 by an eighth grade student, illustration Man and His Progress. From the drawing, it appeared that man had progressed only in transportation. A heavily riveted locomotive was puffing beside a disconsolate Camel. The young artist had meticulously copied the pyramid off a cigarette label.

His office was in chaos. Hundreds of textbooks, hastily tied together by departing teachers, cluttered the floor. Several piles were torn, mutilated, backless, frontless. "Have to take these to the Superintendent in the morning and get some replacements." He dropped into his chair, wrote his initials in the dust on his desk, and began to think about a schedule for the new year. The fetid odor of the closed building irritated his nose. He produced a cigarette, lit it, and the smoke hung motionless in the air. He opened a window and more dried putty fell. He slammed the window and the putty showered. He crushed his cigarette in the wastebasket, locked the office door, and left the building. "I'll work out the schedule at home," he thought. He got into his car, mopped his wet face with a damp handkerchief, and drove away.

In the ninth grade room, a cautious spider caught a distracted fly.

Letter From An Editor

Editor:

I want to congratulate you on your verbal broadside at big time football, and especially on your courage in exposing the true picture. I have long been of the opinion that the whole thing is just too big and as amateur sport, an almost complete hypocritical farce. If they would just come right out and say, "Here's our professional team hired by us to play for us," it wouldn't make so much difference. Then, at least, they'd be honest.

The ironical thing about it is that in many colleges and universities where the situation is approximate to that at UNC, they profess to teach honesty, morality, Christian principles and just the highest type of ethics, when all the time they're getting away with anything they can to

help win football games. Officials get mighty indignant over some boys throwing a basketball game, forgetting that with their under-the-table bonuses, convertibles, etc., they're teaching the boys by example to get away with anything they can.

Anyway, you're making a good fight, and I admire you. And don't let anybody scare you because nine times out of ten whoever it is that's brow-beating you is a helluva lot more afraid of you than you could ever be of them. As long as you are right, there will be plenty who will stand shoulder to shoulder with you.

Dave Clark
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Wake Forest