

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



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AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

November 11-17, 1956 has been designated as American Education Week. The week has been an annual observance since 1921; it is sponsored jointly by the National Education Association, American Legion, U.S. Office of Education, and National Congress of Parents and Teachers "for the purpose of informing the public of the accomplishments and needs of the public schools and to secure the cooperation and support of the public in meeting these needs."

It is appropriate that American Education Week should follow immediately after the national election, that it should be the first thing to which the nation's attention is attracted after the new government has been selected, and that it should begin on Veterans' Day. American statesmen of all generations and all parties have seen clearly the importance of adequate public education for the democratic institutions based on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Advising generations to come, George Washington in his farewell address included this: "Promote then as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." Jefferson put it in these words: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." Abraham Lincoln gave this evaluation: "I view it as the most important subject we as a people can be engaged in." "Without popular education no government which rests on popular action can long endure," are the words of Woodrow Wilson.

"The social and economic problems confronting us are growing in complexity. The more complex and difficult these problems become, the more essential it is to provide broad and complete education; that kind of education that will equip us as a nation to decide these problems for the best interest of all concerned." These are words from Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Dwight D. Eisenhower has put it this way: "Because our schools help shape the mind and character of our youth, the strength or weakness of our educational system today will go far to determine the strength or weakness of our national wisdom and our national morality tomorrow."

The National Education Association through its Educational Policies Commission pointed to the above relationships in a very succinct 1955 publication entitled "Public Education and the Future of America." One of the well-stated principles of that little volume is this one: "However, only an education specifically designed to support and advance freedom, equality, and self-government

will do so. One cannot wisely put his faith uncritically in just any kind of education no matter how much there is of it. Anti-democratic and totalitarian nations are as vitally interested in education as are the democracies. Few of the latter have been as concerned with schools as Nazi Germany, prewar Japan, and contemporary Russia. The crucial question, then, is the kind as well as the extent of education. Americans today more than ever need an education consistent with the principles of their distinctive way of life.

Hundreds of thousands of competent and well-trained young people from every community in the nation are giving themselves to the task of educating the rapidly increasing number of young people in our midst. Their success, however, is largely conditioned by the cooperation, support, and guidance given by the people and institutions which comprise the social life of that community. We may well expect that the more spiritually minded segment of the American community will be in the forefront in this interest.

THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

At the opening of the present school year, the U.S. Office of Education reported that 32,800,000 students entered public elementary and secondary schools. That office estimated the teacher shortage as being 120,700 and offered ominous evidence that the situation is bound to get worse rather than better the next few years.

The children who have already been born will increase public elementary and high school enrollments 30% in the next ten years. This will mean that the total teaching force must be expanded more in the next ten years than it has been in the last thirty-five; three new teachers must be recruited during the next ten years for each two that we now have, which means a recruiting of 200,000 teachers per year for the next ten years.

Approximately 400,000 people graduate from American colleges each year. This will mean that 50% of the college graduates would be needed in the teaching force to meet our needs. During recent years approximately one-fifth of the college graduates have gone into teaching.

The situation in the parochial schools of the nation is not greatly different. An editorial in the January 7, 1956 issue of the Jesuit publication America stated: "Here's the story in sobering figures. In 1952 there were 29,000 teachers, six religious to one lay teacher, in 2,200 U.S. Catholic high schools and academies providing for 550,000 pupils. To meet the needs of 1960, present facilities must be expanded and many more schools built for an estimated total of 910,000 students."

"What about the elementary-school situation? In 1954, there were 9,300 Catholic grade schools with 3.15 million boys and girls in attendance. These youngsters were taught by 72,000 teachers. The proportion of religious to lay teachers was seven to one. Within this present decade, along with the enlarging of present school plants, enough new schools must be built to accommodate a new total of 3.6 millions."

The editorial closed by appealing for more teachers, whether they come as priests, brothers, sisters, or as lay teachers, and with the reminder: "...Catholics share our national responsibility for building and staffing good public schools."

SOME INTERESTING TRENDS

In April of this year the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards, reported on trends in youth employment and school enrollment. Since 1953

employment of youths 14-17 years of age has increased by 350,000 or from 23 to 26% of the population of these ages. This increase is entirely among school-enrolled youth, working at part-time jobs outside school hours. In 1953, 1,282,000 or 17% of all school-enrolled youth had jobs; in 1955 this number reached a post-war high of 1,722,000 or 22% of the in-school group.

The report showed, however, that during this same period there has been a decline in opportunities for youngsters who drop out of school. Of the million youth 16-17 not enrolled in school, 55% had jobs in October, 1955, compared with 59% in 1953. The proportion unemployed in this age group continued to be high. Of those identified by the census as in the labor force, 15% were unemployed in 1955, compared with 12% in 1953.

The trend toward part-time employment on the part of young people who are still in school may well be viewed as constructive, inasmuch as it gives the person economic status and responsibility while still in school.

Looking at the problem simply from the viewpoint of supply of workers, the Labor Department points out that most good jobs today require at least a high school education. Of 71 "shortage" occupations, the minimum educational requirement was four years of schooling at the high-school level or more for all 71. "Our country needs persons with skill and knowledge," says the Labor Department report. "Because educated people are needed, and wanted, they get the job preference." "In almost every occupation a high-school diploma is the minimum needed for desirable employment and promotion. It is your calling card to advancement."

The Labor Department's concern for an educated labor force in the nation might well be translated into comparable terms in the interests of the advancement of our Christian faith. A survey of the man-power resources of our churches would most certainly reveal that millions of Christians are exercising an influence far below their potential, simply for the lack of the competence which comes from an adequate, general education.

The Protestant heritage with its emphasis on the authority of the Scriptures rests on the assumption of a literate public, a public that not only can, but does, read.

BACK TO SCHOOL

At the beginning of this school year a "Back-to-School Committee", sponsored jointly by the U.S. Departments of Labor and of Health, Education and Welfare, appealed to American youth to return to school. The fact sheet which they released revealed that on the basis of today's predictions a high school education may be worth from \$30,000 to \$50,000 over a total life time. The committee showed that a high school graduate should earn \$50,000 more than the eighth grade graduate and \$30,000 more than the student who starts high school but does not finish. The final year of high school can add \$466 to a man's annual income, said the fact sheet; while the eighth grade makes an addition of \$303 to a person's earning power per year, the eleventh grade adds \$238, and the twelfth grade \$466. Statistical studies were also reviewed to show that a person with a good education is much less likely to be unemployed than one who has left school prematurely.

A back-to-school movement in the churches of America would normally be based on a motivation which is more distinctively Christian. Furthermore, such a movement should apply not only to high school youth, but to the college age, to the college graduate, and to the adult of all ages. Continued personal growth is a fundamental principle of the Christian life.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND SCHOOL NOTES

In recent weeks guidebooks for the teaching of moral and spiritual values in the public schools have been adopted in Florida and in New York City.

State School Superintendent Thomas D. Bailey of Florida explained, "The guidebook shows teachers how they can handle the question of moral and spiritual values without violating the law on the principle of separation of church and state." The guidebook lists "fundamental cornerstones" in moral and spiritual values which it says can be taught in the public schools and specifies "safeguards against denominational teaching in the public school classrooms and against violation of any child's religious freedom."

The original New York statement, approved by the Board of Superintendents in June, 1955, was strongly supported by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York and strongly opposed by Protestant and Jewish groups, as well as by organizations of teachers and of parents. A revised statement was issued in July, 1956; public hearings were held in September; and the Board of Education unanimously voted approval in October, 1956 despite continued opposition by a number of groups. Opponents voiced concern that its adoption might lead to the indoctrination of school children in certain religious beliefs and that it "would logically and inevitably lead to a religious test for teachers (for) how else could there be a guarantee that belief in God and the supernatural would be taught sincerely."

The New Zealand House of Representatives last month rejected a Roman Catholic petition asking state aid for private schools. The chairman of the House Education Committee reported that many witnesses held that the tradition of church-state separation would be impaired if such a petition were granted.

The Evangelical Confederation of Colombia reported recently that in March, 1956, members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Magangué, Bolívar Department, sought the approval of the local Inspector of Education, in this city as in many others a Roman Catholic priest, for a primary school they intended to open. They had already secured the approval of the School Superintendent of the Department for this school which would have accommodated children for whom there is no room in the public schools. It is reported that at present only 36% of the school age children of Magangué can attend school because of the lack of classrooms.

Father Vergara said that he would not approve the school unless a portrait of the Sacred Heart of Jesus were enthroned in the classroom and unless the Chamber would remove Sr. Luis a Rubiano from its membership. Sr. Rubiano, a Protestant Christian, was a founding member of the Chamber. The priest declared that if the organization would carry out his orders he would recommend that the school be granted government approval and that he would give it all possible support, even to teaching a course, if necessary.

In Spain, also, education is under clerical control. The first paragraph of Article XXVI of the 1953 Concordat between the Vatican and the government of Spain states: "In all institutions of learning--whatever their level and purpose and whether belonging to the State or not--education will be imparted in accordance with the dogmatic and moral principles of the Catholic Church."

In Denmark, where there is also a state church, and where the law specifies that religious instruction "must be in accordance with the teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church", a Roman Catholic has been appointed principal of a primary school for the first time. The Copenhagen paper Kristeligt Dagblad applauded the appointment, saying that it is only right and reasonable that a Roman Catholic can become principal of a school, and expressing the hope that a similar arrangement might be made for Protestants in Spain.