



## THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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### Education's Sickness Can Be Cured

THE Great Debate in U. S. education has already burned a gaping hole in the nation's conscience.

The opposing viewpoints expressed on the right hand side of today's editorial page give some indication of the intensity of conviction in professional circles.

But the ultimate caretakers of U. S. education are not professionals at all. They are the ordinary citizens, the patrons of individual schools and school systems, who supply the leadership and the support necessary to any public enterprise in a democracy. In the end, they must furnish the will power, the ingenuity and the resourcefulness to solve current problems. The task ahead may tax their will and their means, but it certainly will not exceed their powers.

There is real danger at this point, however, that they will be swept by the fervor of U. S. education's Great Debate into dangerously extreme attitudes. It must be understood that the argument is not one of black and white contrasts. There are grays in the picture, too.

**PUBLIC** education in America is not as bad as its sternest critics say it is. Neither is it as good as many of its defenders proclaim.

We firmly believe that a serious deficit in both the quantity and quality of public education has been brought to light.

We believe improvements will have to be made.

We do not believe that these improvements will be made by trying to make little engineers of all of our children, boarding up the teachers colleges or returning to the Little Red School House.

Certainly we must have democracy in education. But this does not mean that the same program of education should be required of all children or that all should proceed at the same rate. A democratic education is one which makes it possible for each individual to develop up to the full limit of his potentialities. It means equality of opportunity. But if a particular student's po-

tentialities are greater than his neighbors he should venture beyond his neighbor in his educational development.

Paul Woodring, a Fund for the Advancement of Education consultant, puts it this way:

"We are wasting a major portion of America's most important natural resources—the brainpower of our most talented youngsters — by our failure to make special provision in all our schools for these boys and girls."

This obviously must be corrected.

**A**S for the debate over teacher education, it is an oversimplification to say the decision is simply between something called "subject matter" and something called "methods."

Of course the teacher should know the subject he is going to teach. He should have a broad, scholarly knowledge of it. But that is not enough. The teacher must be educated well enough to be able to teach the subject in relation to the whole world of knowledge. Nor is that enough. Despite what the fundamentalists argue, it is not reasonable to expect that he should also have a professional understanding of the child and of the learning processes and be equipped with certain professional skills in organizing instruction and managing a classroom. These latter factors can be, and have been, overemphasized at the expense of a broad academic background in "subject matter" but they cannot be ignored completely.

**G**REAT tasks remain. Curricula must be strengthened. Certain frills must be given up to basic values. The sciences must be given their proper emphasis—but so must the humanities. Opportunities for talented youngsters to go on to higher education must be improved. And there must be some new, hard thinking on the problem of finding enough able teachers and holding them against the competition of industry.

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## Are The Schools Short-Changing The American Public?

YES . . .

By ARTHUR BESTOR  
Professor Of History, University Of Illinois

THE nub of the crisis in American education today is simply this: The American people have done their part by building a magnificent structure of public education; the professional educators (with notable exceptions) have let the American people down by failing to develop the school system into a powerful instrument of intellectual training, with high standards and serious, democratic purposes. By frittering resources away upon trivial and short-sighted programs, they have deprived the masses of America—bright and average alike—of intellectual opportunity, of intellectual stimulus, and of high intellectual achievement.

Let us look at these two complementary aspects of American education—first at its size, and second at its quality.

### PUBLIC SCHOOL

In the United States today virtually every child between the ages of 6 and 18 is in school. Three out of every five are graduated from high school, and half of these go on to college. This has been universally available so long that the last census could report one third of the entire adult population as possessing high-school diplomas.

The means of education have been provided liberally by the public. Have these means been used to good effect by the professional educators? What are the actual standards of intellectual achievement in our mass educational system? How do these standards compare with those of other countries?

### WORLD INADEQUACY

In attempting to answer this question, we find ourselves up against a roadblock at the very outset. The statistics that would give us the intellectual achievement of American public schools are woefully inadequate. I am forced to conclude, in no accidental manner.

On November 13, 1957, President Eisenhower broadcast the following summary of Soviet accomplishments in education:

"Remember that, when a Russian graduate from high school, he has had five years of physics, four years of chemistry, one year of astronomy, five years of biology, ten years of mathematics through trigonometry, and five years of a foreign language."

### WHY NOT?

The specific information in this statement will be discussed in a moment. My present point is that neither the President nor anyone else can make a statement about the intellectual achievements of the American public-school system that is capable of being compared, point-by-point or percentage-by-percentage, with the President's factual statement about education in the USSR. The U. S. Office of Education can tell us how many students know when they graduate from American high schools. It would be a good thing if Congress asked why not?

In December, 1956, I received a letter from the Director of Publications Services of the Office of Education, asking me to explain certain criticisms I had made. I replied in a seven-page letter dated Dec. 29, 1956, wherein I urged the regular publication of information concerning the programs of study that each year's crop of high-school graduates have actually completed. The object would be to provide factual answers to such questions as these:

### POINTED QUESTIONS

Among each year's high-school graduates, what number, and what percentage, have completed programs including all three standard high-school science courses (biology, chemistry, and physics)?

How many, and what percentage, have completed four years of mathematics, through trigonometry?

How many, and what percentage, have studied a foreign language for four years? For three years? For two years?

Above all, how many, and what percentage, have completed a balanced four-year program including all these things?

### NO ANSWER

Answers to these questions are essential if we are to know how the American school system stands up alongside the educational systems of the rest of the world. I can guess why professional educators might oppose the publication of such data. The duty of the Office of Education, it seems to me, is to gather information that the public needs regardless of the pressure of special-interest groups.

The fact, however, is that I have never received even an acknowledgment of the letter I was asked by the Office of Education to write.

**DISSENT FORBIDDEN**

Because of the lack of complete, relevant and comparable information on the programs actually completed by American public-school students anyone who wishes to evaluate our standards and achievements is forced to draw inferences from the meager statistics that we do have—mainly figures showing total nationwide enrollments in particular courses or subjects.

Obviously it is possible to draw somewhat different conclusions from the same data. These are alternative ways of comparing statistics and reasonable men may differ as to which is the appropriate way in a particular instance. Professional educators, however, will not admit that there can be honest differences of opinion concerning the conclusions to be drawn from educational statistics. Any conclusion with which they disagree is automatically branded false, and the person who draws the conclusion is denounced as dishonest.

### TRUTH WILL EMERGE

Intimidation and suppression will not succeed in keeping the facts about the school situation from the American public.

American schools offer physics for one year, to 12th-graders, or 12-year-olds. Soviet schools require physics for five years, beginning it with sixth-graders or 12-year-olds. School attendance is now virtually universal through the seventh grade in the U. S. S. R., hence even the pupil who drops out after that grade has had two years of the subject. Prof. Harold C. Hand of the American Association of Secondary-School Principals believes that only the top third of American 15-year-olds can "profit very much from taking physics." Let me paraphrase an old vaudeville gag. Who is dumber than a dumb Russian?

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NO . . .

By WILLIAM G. CARR  
Executive Secretary, National Education Assn.

FIRST, I DO not allege that our schools are perfect. Please remember that if I repeat some of the recent pessimism, it merely is to redress the present lack of balance and to deny that there is much room for improvement.

Second, I do not question the right of citizens, including newspaper editors, to evaluate their schools. On the contrary, I affirm that right and, in addition, I declare it to be a duty. I hope, in the same way, that you will agree that teachers, who are also citizens and taxpayers, should not be excluded from having opinions on this subject and expressing them with vigor.

Now for a few kind words about a great American institution.

### GREAT ACHIEVEMENT

First, I am proud to assert that the American school system is one of the truly great achievements of our country. It has provided elementary education for every American child. It provided secondary education on a scale fifty years ahead of most of Europe. It has given every educated child the basic tools of literacy. It has not only given newspapers and books to the masses, but it has cooperated with homes and churches to develop moral and spiritual values. It has developed esthetic and cultural interests on a vast scale, distributed very widely throughout the population.

As evidence, consider for example the circulation of good newspapers, books, and magazines or the attendance at symphony orchestras. It has so increased the productive skills of the American people that a rising standard of living has been achieved despite the enormous drain on the economy required by nearly twenty years of war and heavy defense expenditures. It has taught American youth the knowledge, the loyalties, and the civic skills required by a people who can and do govern themselves.

Second, I am proud to assert that our schools are controlled by local boards composed in the main of public-spirited men and women chosen by their fellow citizens. I believe this is a sound system.

### 'Is That The Height Of Our Ambition?'



However, I beg leave to doubt whether collecting and absorbing knowledge is or should be the sole or even the most important function of the schools of this nation. We have asked our schools to teach health and safety, the skills of vocational effectiveness, the ability to work with others, an abiding and informed loyalty to free institutions—in short, we have asked our schools to help students adjust their personal drives and impulses to the requirements of democratic group living. Storing up knowledge is not, in my opinion, the controlling aim of our schools. I do not, of course, deny the crucial importance of exact and well-arranged knowledge, but a man with much knowledge and no social adjustment is at best an unhappy misfit, and at worst a dangerous one.

I conclude, therefore, that local control of education is, in the main, a good policy. It has served us well. It is today protecting us from much rash and doubtful action.

### PLEASING EVERYBODY

Parenthetically, this issue provides a good illustration of the peculiar nature of the education of these days. Adm. Rickover says, quite rightly, that the control of education is in the hands of local school boards, whose members seldom qualify as educational experts. Professor Bestor, on the other hand, has written a large book in which the principal complaint is that the control of education is far too much in the hands of educational experts. And the moral is that you can't please everybody.

Third, I am proud to say that both public and private schools are preparing their graduates to succeed in college. There is a respected place in our country for both good public schools and good private schools. Personally, I deplore the effort to exile one or the other of the other. However, in view of some current statements, it seems necessary to say that private school graduates do not attain college records superior to those of the graduates of public schools.

### TALENTED CHILDREN

Fourth, I am proud to say that our schools are serving all the children of all the people. It is quite true that more talented pupils have been unfortunately targeted in some schools. It is also true that average and inferior students have suffered the same fate. School people generally want to adapt education to individual differences. This is one of the controlling objectives of their profession. They know how to do it. The basic reason why they do not do better in this respect is not lack of knowledge or lack of desire, it is lack of courage.

Fifth, I am proud to say that our schools are not only good but getting better. This statement is, in a direct contradiction to Professor Bestor's recent article in U. S. News & World Report which proclaimed on the front cover that we are less well-educated than we were 50 years ago.

### BETTER RESULTS

Numerous studies have compared today's schools to those of a previous generation. While there are exceptions, the weight of the evidence is that students do better today than the predecessors did on the same tests.

It is said that reading, writing and arithmetic are treated too casually in our schools. On the contrary, more time per pupil is devoted to the "three R's" than ever before.

Professor Bestor says that lots of American high schools (however many "lots" are) do not even offer courses in geometry and algebra.

**HERE ARE THE FACTS**

The fact is that 94 per cent of American high school students have an opportunity to take algebra in geometry. The remaining 6 per cent are in very small rural schools.

A Gallup poll, in the spring of 1954, disclosed that people 18 to 30 years old were the best read of all age groups in the society and the best informed.

The United States Army report at the close of World War II specifically states that the discipline was the best ever under any military command.

Army tests given in World War I and World War II show an average increase of nearly four grades in reading, the most important national achievement in 1945 was

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### James Ardrey Bell: The True Measure

JAMES ARDREY BELL, who died Sunday at the age of 91, was more than Mecklenburg County's oldest attorney. The true measure of his distinction was service rather than longevity.

With notable firmness and a deep sense of personal dedication, Mr. Bell served his community and his state well during a particularly demanding period of growth. He and his fellow builders gave this developing metropolis the unique personality it was to possess for years. To such men, service was a way of life, a tradition, a customary approach to the day-to-day challenges of social, political and economic change.

Mr. Bell's service was not limited to Mecklenburg's boundaries. He was a member of the State Senate from 1934 until 1938 when North Carolina was experiencing some of the bleakest days of the depression. He was a member of

the Advisory Budget Commission in 1937-38 when the state's economy was being newly patched and mended.

He served Duke University with a kind of earnest devotion that soon resulted in his being named vice chairman of the board of trustees. He was equally active in the lay affairs of Charlotte's First Methodist Church, serving as chairman of its board of trustees. As a trustee of the Western North Carolina Methodist conference, he labored long and valiantly for an endowment for retired clergy men. In addition, he was active in numerous local civic endeavors, of every description.

It was the kind of service that leaves us all a little richer.

James Ardrey Bell served well. He will be long remembered by the community he helped to mold into an image of greatness.

Sports authorities estimate that there are 2 million more tennis players than there are in America. Politicians with White House ambitions may want to clip and save this challenging statistic.

COLUMBIA (S. C.) STATE

From The Raleigh News & Observer

### THE OLD STORY RETOLD

DESPITE the sticky pencils of daffodil vendors trying to conjure water from mist, the swimming hole remains precious in the memories of older men. Despite the wholesale advent of the pool, the swimming hole remains exhilarating for many little boys. The creek represents freedom of individual action. Not every boy wants to be a foolish tree-topping daredevil, but there is an implication of abandonment that is almost irresistible. Supervised swimming is to some heads boys what a lesson in poetry writing might be to Carl Sandburg. It isn't always so much that a naked body bobs more delightfully with running water as it is that a garment seems to entail a mean odorous

ming and coolness but even more so for wild berries and nuts, for flying squirrels and bullfrogs, for trees to ride and for low "monkey" limbs to perform on. You have to have a paper sack of daffodils, the little petals of poems and the obdurate physical immensity of arrowheads that are actually odd-shaped rocks.

The boy doesn't try to attain adult logic to rationalize all of this. He feels about the swimming hole as the mountain climber does about the towering peak. It is there. It must be conquered.

### Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

MEMBERS of the House Appropriations Committee are agreed that Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks deserves a trophy in the "How foolish can you get" category as a result of his recent testimony before the laugher.

"Do you mean that?" inquired Rep. John Shelley of California. "Do you mind explaining?"

### Weeks Blames Sputnik For Recession

"Well, as I interpret it," replied Weeks, "the news about the Sputnik landing caused some public alarm and affected the business economy. The people were scared so that we had a letdown in spending. Then, too, the winter weather al-

ways slows down business."

"Thank you, Mr. Secretary," commented Democratic Shuler, without attempting to conceal his partisan feelings. "You have given us a good illustration of the kind of thinking in this administration on the problems of our people."

**Neptunism Rollcall**

The late Sen. Herman Welser of Idaho has left this earth in a rather peculiar manner. He was hit by a heart ailment, but his influence and relatives still hold sway in the Interior Department. The late senator had an interesting working arrangement with ex-Secretary of the Interior, "Generous Doug" McKay, when it came to neptunism. This neptunism has now landed out a bit under

kindly Secretary Fred Seaton.

The Interior Department payroll shows that Welser has had three brothers-in-law on the payroll. They are: Edward Wootley, director of the Bureau of Land Management; William Gurnsey, who has been appointed to his position by the Interior Department, until quite recently when he retired because of an accident; and Edward Wootley, who has been appointed to his position by the Interior Department, until quite recently when he retired because of an accident.