Education

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*American Journal of Sociology*
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EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

William J. Cooper was appointed commissioner of education, and Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, secretary of the interior. The Office of Education during 1929 commenced its survey of secondary education throughout the country. Other educational developments in 1929 were the accrediting of Negro colleges according to their ability to do work acceptable for admission to medical schools by the American Medical Association; the decision of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools to inaugurate a policy of rating Negro colleges within its territory; the appointment of a commission by the American Council of Education to study the problem of introducing social sciences in the public schools; the creation of a single board of control for all the public higher educational institutions of the state of Oregon; the study of the problems of articulation between the different units of the American public-school system, including elementary, secondary, collegiate, university, and professional education contained in the Seventh Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association; and the Carnegie report on college athletics.

The year 1929 resulted in rather extraordinary educational activity on the part of the federal government. These activities are of nation-wide interest; their significance is not in all cases easy to estimate. In general, however, the trend has been toward better definition of the functions of the national government in education and continuation of service relationships to state and private educational agencies through wider co-operative effort.

In so far as the year has been characterized by federal educational activity of different character and greater extent than had formerly been the case, the fact is due in large part to changes in governmental personnel and to the extremely favorable official relationships that were thus created.

In February, 1929, William John Cooper resigned as state superintendent of education in California, to assume the office of United States commissioner of education, made vacant by the resignation of Dr. John J. Tigert in the fall of 1928. A month after this appointment, President Hoover selected another Californian, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, president of Stanford University, as secretary of the Interior Department. Thus the official channels for federal educational business were commanded by Californians, all of whom
were keenly interested in education. The advocates of a "federal department of education with a secretary in the president's cabinet" hoped that their cause might be realized. This hope was dashed, however, when the secretary of the interior, with the approval of the president, formally repudiated advocacy of such a transformation. In a formal statement read before the annual meeting of the American Council on Education in May, 1929, he declared:

The place of the national government is not that of supplying funds in large amounts for carrying on the administrative functions of education in the communities, but to develop methods, ideals, and procedures, and to present them, to be taken on their merits. The national government, too, can give widespread information on procedures, can report on what is going on in different parts of the country and in the world, and can unify to some extent the objects of those in the field of education in so far as unification is desirable. There is a distinct place for this sort of thing in the administrative side of the national government, but it should not be recognized as an administrative position with large funds at its disposal. A Department of Education similar to the other departments of the Government is not required. An adequate position for education within a department, and with sufficient financial support for its research, survey and other work, is all that is needed.

This statement was followed by action that may or may not be of far-reaching significance to American education, but certainly emphasizes the intention to reduce the educational administrative functions of the United States Interior Department to the minimum and to formulate policies for greatly enhanced non-administrative educational work by the federal government that may materially affect the educational activities of other departments.

Of relatively minor practical importance but indicative of the policy expressed by Secretary Wilbur was the change of the name of the United States Bureau of Education to the United States Office of Education.

Of more importance than this change of name is the attempt to formulate more exact definition of the functions of the federal government in education. For this purpose Secretary Wilbur called a conference of leading educators on June 7, 1929. Dr. C. R. Mann, director of the American Council on Education, was designated as chairman, and Mr. J. W. Crabtree of the National Education Association, secretary. Three subcommittees were organized: one
under the chairmanship of Dr. James E. Russell to consider the educational activities of the national government; one headed by President Lotus D. Coffman, of the University of Minnesota, to consider subsidies to the colleges; and the third, to study other subsidies under the direction of Mr. Frank Cody, superintendent of the Detroit schools. This commission later secured $100,000 from the Rosenwald Fund to finance the study, and Dr. Henry Suzzalo was chosen to direct the work.

It will be noted that the work of the Commission, as indicated by the subcommittees, gives considerable emphasis to matters of subsidy. This fact and the discussions of the Commission have led to concern in certain quarters lest the Commission report a general disapproval of federal aid for education in the states.

At the present time the more important federal aids to state education consist of annual income from land grants made available by the Morrill Act of 1862, the flat appropriations derived from the Morrill Act of 1890, and the Nelson Amendment of 1907. In addition, funds for research, especially for agricultural research, are made available through the Hatch Adams and the Purnell Acts. In none of these cases does the grant of federal money carry an obligation to the state to appropriate further funds. Two of the federal subsidies—the Smith-Lever funds for agricultural extension and the Smith-Hughes funds for vocational education—do require that the state or local community provide an amount of money equal to the federal grant. Since it is the land-grant colleges and vocational education that receive the major portion of federal monies, some concern has been felt by the beneficiaries lest the committee disturb existing arrangements. This fear is probably not justified since both these interests are adequately represented on the Commission, and the character of the other members is such as will effectively prevent distortion of logical conclusions.

In harmony with President Hoover's plan for determining facts and seeking advice from well-informed experts as a basis for formulating policy, several special educational commissions, in addition to that upon the relations of the federal government to education, have been set up. These include a national commission to consider the problems of illiteracy, a commission to consider the educational
uses of the radio, and, indirectly, a commission on the entire problem of social welfare.

The national study of secondary education for which funds had been requested of Congress in 1928 by Dr. J. J. Tigert, then commissioner of education, was inaugurated in July, 1929. Commissioner Cooper retains the general direction of the survey, but has secured Dr. L. V. Koos as associate director in immediate charge of the professional and technical aspects of the study. Mr. Carl A. Jessen, of the staff of the Office of Education, is acting as assistant to the commissioner in charge of the business and mechanics of the survey and of certain elements of the study itself.

As announced, the plans for the survey definitely provide that it shall not be a study of urban secondary education alone. Special attention will be paid to the problems of high-school education in the smaller communities and rural areas. It will include an examination of the growth and present status of secondary education in the United States, the forms of its administration, the types of high-school organization, the articulation of the high school with the levels both below and above the secondary level, and will treat the curriculums in considerable detail. Of special interest is the plan to study the secondary-school population and its related problems. As outlined by the committees serving on the staff of the commission, this phase of the study will investigate the proportions of secondary-school population in and out of school in relation to age, race, sex, intelligence, and social economic status. In this connection, special inquiry will attempt to determine the articulation of the schools with the occupational life of secondary-school graduates.

In harmony with the purposes and methods of national service to the schools of the country through organized service demanded by various groups, a paragraph was introduced into the Interior Department appropriation bill in the fall of 1929 looking to a national study of teacher-training in the United States. Two hundred thousand dollars is asked for this purpose in order to make "a study of the qualifications of teachers in the public schools, the supply of available teachers, the facilities available and needed for teacher training, including courses of study and methods of teaching."

This project, which will probably be made effective by congres-
sional action, is of special importance in view of the development during 1929 of the rather general conviction that there is an oversupply of teachers. Considerable evidence has been assembled to indicate that this is a fact so far as actual numbers are concerned. However, many educators question whether the supply of well-qualified teachers is excessive. Further, it is claimed by no one that the oversupply extends to all phases and subject-matter fields. Educators who are interested in the deficiencies and inequalities of rural education are especially concerned lest measures be taken to reduce the supply without sufficient attention to the need for more and better-trained teachers in rural schools. This group, therefore, regards the proposed teacher training study as of special importance in that it hopes that from such a study plans of procedure and measures of relief may be devised.

Attention was called in this review of education for 1928 to the fact that opportunities available to Negroes for preparation to enter medical schools were very restricted. As was indicated, this was a situation that affected the medical care of a very large proportion of our population. The American Medical Association, upon the basis of a survey of Negro colleges and universities made by the United States Bureau of Education in 1928, prepared and published in 1929 a reclassification of the Negro colleges upon the basis of their ability to do work acceptable for admission to medical schools. Up to the time of the publication of this new classification, the American Medical Association had rated only five Negro colleges in the United States as doing work that would be accepted at par for admission to medical schools. The new classification rates twenty-five Negro colleges as prepared to offer acceptable work for admission to medical schools. Such a tremendous expansion of approved premedical work should greatly facilitate training of Negro physicians.

Of hardly less importance than the expansion of opportunity thus provided is the fact that the American Medical Association issued the new list with the statement that any college which will pay the cost of reinvestigation may be examined annually in order that due recognition can be given for such improvements as have been made. This enlightened policy is in striking contrast to con-
ditions that previously based judgment of the ability of Negro colleges to offer premedical work upon facts that were in some instances ten years old.

It should be noted in this connection that the American Medical Association does not wish to encroach upon the accrediting and classification functions of the regional and national accrediting associations of colleges and secondary schools. The ratings given by the American Medical Association list are not intended to refer to four years of work given by the institutions but represent the ability of Negro colleges to offer two years of acceptable premedical college work. The list is effective only until such time as provision is made for the classification or approval of colleges for Negro students by the established regional accrediting associations.

The only regional association which does not rate Negro colleges within its territory has been that of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It is of extreme educational importance and of great sociological interest, therefore, that at the meeting of the Association in December, 1929, the Association voted without a dissenting voice to rate both Negro colleges and high schools within its territory. A committee was appointed for this purpose with Mr. H. M. Ivy, superintendent of schools at Meridian, Mississippi, as chairman. There seems to be no reason why this decision of the Southern Association to assume responsibility for passing judgment upon the quality of the work of Negro colleges and high schools should not be carried to completion within the near future, except the necessity of securing approximately $25,000 for the prosecution of the investigation. In view of the national importance of the action of the Southern Association and the splendid opportunity it gives for the improvement of race relationships, it is difficult to believe that the required funds will not be forthcoming.

Probably the proposal of the year that is most important from the standpoint of its potential effect upon actual instruction in the schools is that made by Dr. C. H. Judd, of the University of Chicago, before the American Council on Education in May, 1929. Dr. Judd pointed out that the timidity of the colleges in attacking social problems is accentuated in the public schools. "It is striking-
ly true that the rank and file of even the college students of the country are relatively little affected by the social sciences, and that high school and elementary school pupils are hardly reached at all.”

Yet society depends upon these schools to prepare the rank and file of its citizens for participation in the community life of the nation in such fashion as will enable them to vote and act intelligently upon economic and social problems of national and state concern. The school authorities, for safety’s sake, quite generally hesitate to introduce live social discussion and instruction, or they are unable to do so since such work usually affects the standing or the advantage of one or another social or economic group. Dr. Judd made a plea for the appointment of a commission to carry on a series of experiments under ordinary school conditions for the purpose of securing and sifting a large body of material which might be formulated in such a way that it might be utilized in the schools “with sufficient sanction behind it so that teachers will be free from the inhibitions which now handicap them in devising social instruction.” The American Council on Education appointed such a commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Judd, and co-operative arrangements have been made with several school systems whereby the plan may be financed. The significance of this development is apparent from the statement of the principle that will control its activities. “The proposal is not that social studies be added to the present curriculum, but that a comprehensive reconstruction of the curriculum be undertaken with a view to making social studies the core to all that is taught in the schools.”

Attempts to secure unity of educational effort and consideration of the problems involved occupied an increasingly important position during 1929. In the field of higher education the most striking movement in this direction was the creation of a single board to control all the public higher educational institutions of Oregon. The five institutions had been under the control of three boards, one each for the university, the agricultural college, and the normal schools. A fourth board, that on higher curriculums, had the function of preventing and abolishing undesirable duplication of work between the institutions. These old boards were eliminated and their powers and duties lodged in a single board of nine members.
Political and local influences are guarded against by making the term of board members nine years, by restricting the governor's power of removal, by making ineligible for membership any resident of a city in which one of the institutions is located, and by permitting upon the board not more than one alumnus each from the university, the agricultural college, and the normal schools. All funds are allotted to the institutions by the board and no representative of an institution may appear before the legislature or any of its committees without the written authority of the board.

The law which established this experiment in co-ordinated control of the state public higher institutions further stipulated that prior to inauguration of the new policy the board should arrange for a survey of higher education in the state by an impartial outside agency. The United States Office of Education has been invited to undertake this survey and will complete the work in 1930. In order to insure that the board has continuous and comparable information concerning the institutions under its control, the law made provision for the employment of an executive secretary "fully qualified by educational training, ability, and experience."

Of somewhat different character and scope, but equally indicative of educational interest in unity of effort on the part of the various agencies and levels of education, was the Seventh Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, published in 1929. This publication was devoted entirely to the problems of articulation between the different units of the American public-school system—elementary, secondary, collegiate, university, and professional. It is significant also that the commission which prepared this Yearbook was continued, with instructions to carry on further investigation of the same subject for report in the Yearbook to appear in 1931.

Another publication that disturbed academic calm to a greater extent than any report since that on medical education was the Carnegie report on college athletics which appeared in October, 1929. The importance of this report lies not alone in the facts submitted in regard to the commercialism of college athletics and the exploitation of athletic ability by educational institutions. It is of even
greater value in that it provides disinterested outside leadership in attack upon a situation with which college and university presidents cannot deal effectively at first instance. They are seriously handicapped by the fact that the public is ignorant of the effects of commercialized college athletics upon educational standards, and misinterprets intercollegiate contests as evidence of undergraduate enthusiasm. The report should tend to change the attitude of the public and to make it realize that the forces which largely mold the present form of intercollegiate athletics are those traceable to the financial returns to the institutions and to the newspapers that provide the ballyhoo.