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I

THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

The public school system of Virginia is facing today one of the worst crises in its history. Unfortunately, few seem to realize the fact. During the last few years we have witnessed such great military, political, and economic revolutions, explosions, and upheavals; that we have failed to notice a silent, unobtrusive movement, driving with slow but destructive force against the very foundations of our democratic society. I refer to the shortage of public school teachers.

Civic stability, vocational efficiency, health, morality—practically all of the virtues that make a people great—are dependent in a large measure upon our scheme of general education. Now, no school is much better than its teacher. We may build splendid palaces to teach in; we can secure the best system of school laws that legislative genius can devise; we can procure every mechanical aid possible to teaching; we can even pay high salaries for school work; but the school will always remain only as good as its teacher.

From an exhaustive study by the N. E. A. we find this situation confronting the nation:

(1) 140,000 have quit the teaching profession during the past year.

(2) 35,000 schoolrooms, without teachers, failed to open their doors for the fall term.

(3) 65,000 more schoolrooms have been filled by teachers temporarily certified, that is, below regular teacher standards.

(4) Normal school enrollments have fallen off 30% the past year, while colleges and universities are crowded.¹

As late as February 13 the U. S. Commissioner of Education reports that 18,279 public schools in the U. S. are closed because of the lack of teachers and that 41,900 schools

are being taught by teachers who are unqualified to teach, but have been employed in the emergency to keep the school open.

But what of the conditions in Virginia, our own State? It is reported that she now faces a serious shortage of teachers with 3,500 of her classrooms taught by those that can not meet the standard requirements for public school teachers.

Unfortunately the loss to our teaching force has not been from the withdrawal of the weak, non-progressive element of teachers, but has occurred in the withdrawal of the younger, more progressive, more ambitious, and on the whole the most capable and most promising of our teachers.

One of the most tragic features of this situation is that the shortage of teachers has gravitated until practically the entire handicap is resting upon our rural schools. Out in the open farm land of the country and back in the hills and mountains where the staunchest of our citizenship stand in the shadows of the world, looking eagerly to the long promised day of equality of educational opportunity, we see the only school of a generation with closed door and shattered window panes, slowly gathering the cobwebs of disuse. The school situation appears to me to be analogous to a great ocean liner, far out at sea, with no help in sight, with a great hole staved in her side, sending out "S.O.S." calls that are never picked up, the remaining crew with life boats ready to shove away when all hope of saving the ship is lost, and the ship in the gathering gloom slowly sinking, inch by inch.

But what of the future? Now, I do not care to essay the role of the alarmist, but after attending a great many teachers' institutes, after talking with many teachers, and after studying vocational surveys of several Virginia colleges for women, I am convinced that we shall confront in September a condition worse than we are now facing, unless extremely energetic measures are taken to stem the tide that has set in away from the teaching profession.

¹ In Virginia, however, enrollment in normal schools has been greater than in any previous year.

profession the most capable, the most promising of our young men and young women. The National Educational Association has gone on record as advocating a minimum salary of \$1,200 a year for grade teachers. Now, we do not believe that any lower salary will stop the exodus from the teaching ranks. We must cease to talk about a living wage; workers in other callings are not willing to work for simply a living wage, why should teachers? We need a thrift wage. We should have a salary scale that will not assume that the teacher has parents who will take care of her in the three, four, or five months she is not teaching; neither should the salary be predicated on the needs of the individual teacher alone, but should be computed on the basis of a man or woman with dependents. A study made by the Russell Sage Foundation and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics a few years ago revealed the fact that "about 80% of the women who work entirely support or contribute to the support of others besides themselves." This salary should take into account, too, the necessity of providing for old age. I feel ashamed whenever I think of the fact that the State feels under moral obligation to provide a pension system for its teachers and then takes from teachers' meager salaries 1% to keep up this pension fund. I do not want to be a pensioner on the State. I want to save enough during my active years of service for the State to take care of myself. And in addition to these necessities a teacher's salary should enable him to live respectably and keep abreast of the times professionally.

There is one idea in the State that we must get rid of, that is, that it is possible to provide a satisfactory school system without an increase in school taxes. Now the man who objects to increased taxes for schools can defend his position by claiming that the teacher at present is receiving all he is worth, or may acknowledge that he is an object of charity and wants the teacher to come as a missionary and render this service to his dependent children. Let us at least get away from the charity idea in education.

Let us take courage, however. The scales are dropping from the eyes of some who have been blind to the educational needs of the State and in practically all parts of the State we find in the majority those who are willing

to put their brain, muscle, and purse behind the public school.

The legislature, just adjourned, increased the general State appropriation 33 1-3 per cent; it passed the second time the resolution submitting to a vote of the people a constitutional amendment removing the limitation on local taxation; and the people are for it. Again, very encouraging reports come from Washington as to the future of the Smith-Towner Bill, an act which, if passed, will bring to Virginia \$2,000,000 annually for purposes of public education.

It is even more encouraging to see what splendid efforts some of our city school systems are making locally to meet the present crisis squarely and effectually. The following are salary scales recently adopted:

Bristol—Class A Teachers \$1,000 to \$1,200 at end of fifth year. Class B \$950 to \$1,150. Class C (Normal School Graduates) \$900 to \$1,000. Thereafter \$25.00 per year increase through A, B, C.

Norfolk—Elementary Teachers \$1,000 to \$1,500. Elementary Principals \$1,800 to \$3,000. High School Teachers \$1,100 to \$2,400. High School Principals \$2,400 to \$4,000.

Richmond — Elementary Teachers \$737 to \$1,304.50. Junior High Schools \$737 to \$1,630. High School Teachers \$805 to \$1,740.

(Richmond expects an increase from the City Council of 10% over the above figures.)

Newport News—Elementary Teachers \$850 to \$1,600. High School Teachers \$1,200 to \$2,000. Elementary Principals \$1,500 to \$2,100. High School Principals \$3,000 to \$3,500.

Now we must bear in mind the fact that salaries of teachers, like the salaries of other public servants, being dependent upon fixed taxation, share not only in the depreciation of the dollar, but also in the increased purchasing value of the dollar when prices drop and the value of currency increases. It is highly probable, therefore, that during the next few years the gains we are now registering for teachers' salaries may become a wage

more nearly commensurate with the real services of the teacher.

We must not lose sight either, in these days of economic pressure, of the one golden thread that runs always through the real teacher's experience, the heartening satisfaction of knowing that in the great drama of life and civilization the work of the teacher stands out as one of the noblest of human services and, while it may be the height of civic ingratitude to use this motive as a shield for the individual selfishness of those whom the school benefits, let us not lose this compensation that, in the inventory of our life, may yet call forth for us the "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Now is the time of all times to enter the profession of teaching. An expectant world stands throbbing with new, thrilling problems, calling for strong, true, competent teachers to point to our bewildered people the way of a sane, virile, and stable Americanism. It is a challenge that should appeal to every young man and young woman of ability who ponders over the question, "What shall I do with my life?"

It is the duty of every teacher and school official to use his influence to induce as many as possible of our high school graduates to go into training for teaching. This problem of the teacher shortage can not be solved by teacher-training institutions alone, but every teacher who wishes to save his profession from collapse and every superintendent who wishes to save his teaching force from disintegration must use his full influence to enlist the most capable of our high school graduates in teaching—the greatest field of service today for our Commonwealth.

In the words of Dr. W. C. Bagley, "Western civilization hangs today in the balance. Every gain that the race has made is threatened with destruction. Only a thin line separates France and England and Italy from the menace of barbarism. Upon our nation may devolve the responsibility of keeping the torch aflame. Upon the trained intelligence, the clarified insight, and the disciplined will of our people in all likelihood will depend the fate of the world in the decades that are to come. First, last, and all the time it is an educational problem. It is your problem and my problem, your duty and my duty. At no time in the history of our profession has the need for devoted, consecrated,

and united action been so imperative as it is today. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder with unbroken ranks and see the battle through to glorious victory."

SAMUEL P. DUKE

II

THE TREND OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTISE AND IDEAS AS INDICATED AT THE CLEVELAND MEETING, FEBRUARY

23-28

No good teacher questions the importance of knowing what are the most prominent present-day educational issues, the questions that are receiving most attention from educational leaders. The conferences of the National Educational Association, including addresses, discussions, general conversations, and commercial exhibits, form one of the best means of detecting the strongest and newest educational tendencies.

In this article there will be pointed out what seems, judging by the Cleveland meeting in February, to be the trend in professional discussion and practise. Certain important topics that appeared on the official program have been discussed for years and do not reveal any new phases. Such topics will not receive any attention in this review.

I. One of the developments in method that is growing rapidly in favor is known as visual education, which might mean a number of things, but which refers chiefly to the use of motion pictures in education. Visual education was made prominent at the Cleveland meeting by three principal means: the Department of Visual Education was given a regular place on the program; the Society for Visual Education distributed circulars and was active in other ways; and the numerous commercial enterprises displayed motion picture machines and projection lanterns at Exhibit Hall.

This method of instruction has much of value in it that should be understood and used in educational practise; but it is easy to be misled by the claims of the ardent supporters of visual education. One is reminded