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James Bryant Conant: A Critical Analysis of His Role as an Educational Reformer

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JAMES BRYANT CONANT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
OF HIS ROLE AS AN EDUCATIONAL REFORMER

by
Harlene Sperling

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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PREFACE

This paper is concerned with a critical analysis of Dr. James Bryant Conant's role as an educational reformer. The study is limited to Dr. Conant's work on American public education. It is concerned with his views on public education, the junior and senior high school, teacher education, the gifted child, and the future educational policy of our nation.

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INTRODUCTION

James Bryant Conant is the respected educational voice of our country. He has recognized the needs of our nation, and he is a definite product of our society. Up until recently he has been generally pleased with the direction of our educational policies. His reports receive a great deal of publicity, and he is rarely criticized by the public. The reaction to his suggestions have been truly favorable.

His influence is especially apparent in the Master of Arts in Teaching programs and the National Science Foundation. He has acquainted the lay public with the intricacies of educational policy.

His underlying central belief is the importance of providing quality of education and quality education for all students. He holds that we should have selectivity in education in the sense that we should select the more talented students and provide them with programs equivalent to their abilities. He is interested in providing education for all students regardless of ability and social status. He is not a believer in universal college education. Several of the themes which reoccur in Conant's works are the quarrel among educators, concern for the talented students, emphasis on scholarly work, and education for all.

James Bryant Conant was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts on March 26, 1893. He was prepared at the Roxbury Latin School and graduated as Bachelor of Arts in 1913. He received his Ph.D. in 1916, and he became a professor of chemistry in 1919. In 1929 he became a Sheldon Emery Professor of Organic Chemistry and became chairman of the department in 1931. In 1932 Columbia awarded him its Chandler Medal for achievement in chemical science. On June 21, 1933 he became president of Harvard and held this position until 1953.¹

During World War I he worked in the Chemical Warfare Service. He served as advisor to the Manhattan project, which produced the first atomic bomb, during World War II. From 1947-52 he was a member of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission. In 1953 he went to Germany as United States High Commissioner until formal occupation was terminated. President Eisenhower appointed him United States Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, and he resigned in 1957. In 1963 he was one of thirty-one Americans who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award.

He is the author of numerous books concerned with American education. His books include: Education in a Divided World, Education and Liberty, The Child, the Parent, and the

¹Bush, Vannevar, "James Bryant Conant - President of the A.A.A.S. for 1946," Scientific Monthly, LXII (March, 1946), p. 199.

State, The Citadel of Learning, Shaping of Educational Policy, The American High School Today, The Revolutionary Transformation of the American High School, Education in the Junior High School Years, Slums and Suburbs, and The Education of American Teachers.

Dr. Conant is viewed differently by his evaluators.

The North Central Quarterly saw Conant as a calm and qualified observer of American education who has escaped the partisan's tag.² In the Harvard Education Review, Paul F. Douglas pays a tribute to Conant.³ The theme is Conant's concern with making education an outgoing, creative process. The introduction and development of General Education courses at Harvard represented an attempt to present a method of study which would carry over as a habit into life. He gave his concern concrete expression in the organization of the Master of Arts program in teaching. Douglas goes on to say that it was in the organization of this program that Conant developed his interest in public, secondary education.⁴

Philip Altbach, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Chicago, accuses Conant of being always careful to stay well

² Harlan Koch, "A Calm Man in a Neutral Corner," North Central Quarterly, (April, 1959), p. 269.

³ Paul F. Douglas, "Conant's 'Intellectual Virus'," The Harvard Educational Review, XXIV, No. 1 (Winter, 1954), pp. 1-5.

⁴Ibid.

within what is considered respectable status quo.⁵ This accusation was valid previously, but Conant has changed his ways! Altbach further states that perhaps the most telling criticism of Dr. Conant as an educator and administrator is that he is essentially conservative in his prescription for American education. He points out that observers have noted that he has not given education the challenging analysis it sorely needs in a line of great change, that he has lulled administrators and school boards into complacency by stating repeatedly that American education needs no basic change.⁶

Theodore Brameld is especially critical of Dr. Conant. He states:

Thus, if any categories of educational theory apply to Conant, eclecticism in one sense is most appropriate. His views and proposals are such a mixture of diverse theories that one suspects him of being a progressive educator in one paragraph and something different in another. Nevertheless, I believe it is possible to demonstrate that he is primarily an educational conservator whose assumptions are accordingly closer to those of the essentialist theory than to those of any other. This theory, stripped to its bare bones, centers in the doctrine that the main purpose of education is to reinforce and perpetuate the social heritage.

This writer is in agreement with his excellent criticism with one very important reservation. It appears that Dr. Conant has

⁵ Philip Altbach, "James B. Conant, Educator," Phi Delta Kappa, XLV, No. 1 (October, 1963), pp. 11-12.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Theodore Brameld, Education for the Emerging Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 50-51.

emerged from his shell and is no longer concerned with maintaining the social order. He speaks out loud and clear in his latest book, Shaping Educational Policy. He calls for radical reforms.

Brameld continues:

As such, and with full regard for the sincerity of his dedication to the cause of education, the largest share of Conant's proposals not only prove to be unsuitable to the culture in which we live, but they become a roadblock in the path of imperative reconstruction. For with the generous backing of the powerful Carnegie Corporation he has convinced vast audiences that no important changes are needed at all. His most radical proposal is to reverse the number of small high schools in favor of consolidated ones.⁸

Dr. Conant, the conservative educator of the past, made this statement in his newest book which convinces this writer that the impact of Dr. Conant will be fully appreciated in the future: "It is my belief there will be more radical changes in the future and this in turn means that our old methods of determining educational policy need drastic revision to meet the impact of the educational revolutions."⁹

⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁹ James Bryant Conant, Shaping Educational Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 4.

CHAPTER I

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Basic Nature of our Public Schools

Five of Dr. Conant's books deal specifically with the theme of public education. In order of date of publication they are: Education in a Divided World (1948),¹⁰ Education and Liberty (1953),¹¹ The Citadel of Learning (1956),¹² The Child, The Parent, and The State (1959),¹³ and Shaping Educational Policy (1964).¹⁴ The first four may be considered as a group since they each echo the views expressed in the other. However, his latest book is a welcome change to his idealistic writings of the past. It is discussed separately in Chapter V.

Regarding the free tax-supported schools of our society, Dr. Conant states, "...they are the product of our special history, a concrete manifestation of our unique ideals, and the

¹⁰James Bryant Conant, Education in a Divided World (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 250.

¹¹James Bryant Conant, Education and Liberty (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 168.

¹²James Bryant Conant, The Citadel of Learning (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), pp. 79.

¹³James Bryant Conant, The Child, The Parent, and The State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 211.

¹⁴Conant, Shaping Educational Policy, loc. cit.

vehicle by which the American concept of democracy may be transmitted to our future citizens. The strength of this republic is therefore ultimately connected with the success or failure of our system of public education."¹⁵ He accuses us of thinking too little of this system of universal education as an instrument of national policy.

Our schools are our concrete expression in our belief in equality of opportunity. The fundamental premises of American education, according to Conant, are equality of opportunity for all children and equality of respect among all occupational groups. These two doctrines are as significant for our future as for our past.¹⁶

He states further:

Every citizen needs to understand them; every citizen needs to realize how they differ from premises in other lands. He will then be more ready to support in every possible way the further development of the American tradition of education and to adapt it to the new world. If one understands why American schools have developed as they have, one will be the more ready to support these schools in such a way as to make them correspond to the needs of the new world in which we live.¹⁷

In The Citadel of Learning, Dr. Conant stated that public demand has shaped the evolution of American education, and informed public opinion will largely determine the future pattern.¹⁸

¹⁵Conant, Education in a Divided World, loc. cit.

¹⁶Conant, The Citadel of Learning, loc. cit., 47.

¹⁷Ibid. ¹⁸Ibid., 51.

Conant, himself, is indeed a product of the evolution of American education.

The evolution of American education is an outgrowth of the status development of the United States. In 1948, Dr. Conant's concern was with the fitness of America to survive in a divided world. He stated:

Our future national strength depends to a large measure on wise and intensive cultivation of those elements in our democratic culture which are peculiarly our own. At the same time the responsibilities of world leadership require us to extend the boundaries of our interest and our sympathy as never before. We must formulate the goals of our free society in terms consistent with our past, yet force our imagination to leap two oceans. For if we are to combat the Soviet philosophy on other continents, not only must the morale at home be high but our foreign policy must be farsighted and courageous. Surely we deserve to survive only if we prove worthy of the duties that the military defeat of the Axis powers have imposed upon us. There is no room for chauvinism, complacency, or isolationism in our thinking. We can be both intensely American and yet international-minded, but loyal to the unique manifestations of democracy in the United States and staunch friends of free societies of all types wherever they may be found. Indeed, one is tempted to go further and say not only is such dual loyalty a possibility, it is the essential condition for the freedom of this nation and the continuance of Western civilization.¹⁹

This theme was stated earlier in a paper read at the Boston Conference on Distribution in the Summer of 1947. He stated that primarily our survival depends on a vigorous demonstration in the next decade that we can make our form of democracy function even in a war-torn-world.²⁰

¹⁹Conant, Education in a Divided World, loc. cit. 18.

²⁰James Bryant Conant, "America's Fitness to Survive," The Harvard Educational Review, XVII, No. 3 (Summer, 1947) pp. 221-227.

In an article entitled "Strengthen Education to Strengthen Democracy in a Divided World", he expressed the view that our educational goal is admittedly ambitious -- first-rate free education for all future citizens of this country.²¹ In some localities we are near the goal and far removed from others. Conant said that in the near future we should aim to bring all elementary and secondary schools up to a minimum standard in terms of adequacy of plant, teachers' salaries and ratio of teachers to students; we should improve the guidance programs and support the research on which these programs must be based; increase the number of two year colleges in each state, and institute a scholarship program for talented youth destined for a few professions.²²

He is very concerned with how a citizen shall appraise the school as it exists and how he shall evaluate new proposals for expansion or reform. He offered four criteria for a citizen: (1) realize he must break the problem down and appraise each individual school, (2) appraise the neighborhood which the school in question serves, (3) examine the morale of schools, (4) school buildings must be adequate.²³

²¹James Bryant Conant, "Strengthen Education to Strengthen Democracy in a Divided World," School Life, XXI, No. 4 (January, 1949), p. 13.

²²Ibid.

²³James Bryant Conant, "Education for a Dream," Saturday Review of Literature, (February 18, 1950), p. 8.

To appraise the schools, the citizen may ask these questions: (1) are the students of high intellectual ability being identified, stimulated, guided into proper channels?, (2) are the pupils with artistic gifts being given an opportunity to develop these talents? (3) is the program relevant to students' and parents' ambitions and needs? (4) is the vocational training broad in scope?²⁴

Concerning the interrelationship of the child, the parent, and the state, Dr. Conant points out that the parent in every state has the choice of sending his offspring to a public, tax-supported school or to a private school. Compulsory attendance for a considerable period of years in an approved school is one limitation which the state today places on the freedom of the parent.²⁵

Dr. Conant constantly points out that our schools are unique outgrowths of our unique American life. The basic nature of our schools rests in the belief in equality of opportunity for all and equality of respect for all.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Conant, The Child, The Parent, and The State, loc. cit., 15.

Education and Liberty (1953)

The first chapter of Education and Liberty is concerned with a comparison of British and American education; the second considers the four year liberal arts college and its influence on secondary education; the third and last chapter outlines some of the problems we now face in the United States and suggests certain answers and emphasizes the unique nature of the comprehensive high school.

Dr. Conant points out that within a few years (middle 1950's), the number of adolescents in this country will be fifty per cent greater than at the present. He makes the following suggestions for programs for the future:

- (1) We do not expand our four-year colleges either as to number or as to size.
- (2) We do not expand the four-year programs in our universities; rather, we contract them.
- (3) We attempt to make a two-year college course (following the regular high school course) fashionable; to this end we might award a bachelor's degree of general studies to the graduates of such colleges
- (4) We endeavor to create a climate of opinion in which the length of the education beyond eighteen is not considered the hallmark of respectability.
- (5) We continue the expansion of our junior and senior high schools to meet the new bulge in our enrollments, but in so doing, recognize the need for remarking the curriculum in many schools.

- (6) We adhere to the principle of a comprehensive high school with a common core of studies and differentiated special programs, but in so doing we make far more effort to identify the gifted youth and give him or her more rigorous academic training in languages and mathematics.
- (7) We explore the success of some high schools in recent years with "work experience programs" and expand these programs, including particularly the thirteenth and fourteenth grades (the two-year colleges).
- (8) We provide by private and public action for more scholarships for high school graduates, but only for those who are potential professional men and women (advanced education for others should in general be offered locally by two-year terminal colleges).
- (9) We endeavor to transform all the present four-year colleges into institutions with high academic standards and arrange the curricula with the thought that a majority of students in these colleges will go on to professional training after two, three, or four years, depending on the ability and drive of the individual.
- (10) We continue to experiment with general education, at every level for the future manual worker, the future salesman or executive, and the most highly specialized university graduate.²⁶

Dr. Conant's concern for universal education is apparent in all of his recommendations. He no longer endorses the two-year terminal colleges, but he is still in agreement with his other suggestions.

Conant admits that there is nothing new in his proposals. They reflect a belief in general education. He states that his proposals are based on his conviction that as far as

²⁶ Conant, Education and Liberty, op. cit., 57-58.

possible the public schools in the United States should be schools where the youth of very different backgrounds and outlooks share a common experience, where the extracurricular activities and at least a common core of studies including English should cut across vocational interests and cover a wide range of aptitudes.²⁷

Dr. Conant says that he has sometimes been accused of painting an idealized picture of American public schools.²⁸ He does, however, admit some shortcomings. First and foremost among these is their failure to be sufficiently concerned with the intellectually able youth. The writer wishes to point out that his concern precedes the impact of Sputnik and the mass hysteria which followed concerning the gifted child.

A second shortcoming which Dr. Conant cites is the fact that we are losing a vast amount of talent particularly in small cities, towns, and in the country because the boy from a poor family cannot afford to go to a college or university which can develop his potentialities. The improvement of educational guidance in the guidance in the high school would result in an increase in the percentage of the very able who proceed with their education.²⁹

He expresses his opinion of private schools as follows; "I cannot help regretting the private schools have been

²⁷Ibid., 59. ²⁸Ibid., 63. ²⁹Ibid., 69.

established in the last twenty years in certain urban areas where a generation ago a public high school served all the youth of the town or city."³⁰

³⁰Ibid., 82.

The Citadel of Learning (1956)

In his text, The Citadel of Learning, Dr. Conant has included a chapter entitled, "The Citadel of Learning", based on the Spaulding Lecture delivered at Yale in February of 1955; the second chapter is an address entitled, "An Old Tradition in a New World," delivered on the occasion of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of Michigan State College. His third chapter is concerned with some basic problems of American education.

Dr. Conant states, "Within the citadel of learning are to be found, according to my way of thinking, all those creative activities of the human spirit which are not directly related to practical affairs."³¹ Scholars are all engaged in a creative activity whose product each one hopes will have significance for a long period of time.

He continues, "According to my view, instead of passing by the disputes of learned men, we would do well to put them in the foreground of our description of the intellectual and artistic activities of previous generations. For it is as a very human adventure of quarrelsome individuals that the advancement of learning must be seen to be understood."³² He holds that controversy is essential to a healthy condition in

³¹Conant, The Citadel of Learning, op. cit., 6.

³²Ibid., 9.

the citadel of learning.

He points out that the unique features of the American pattern are not to be found by examining our professional education.³³ They are found by noting first that there is no separation of pre-college or pre-university students at an early age (except for a very few who attend private boarding schools or country day schools), and second, that a large fraction of the youth eighteen to twenty years of age is enrolled in some college or university. These two are deeply rooted in American tradition, and this will not be altered. However, it by no means follows that almost all these students should be accommodated in four-year colleges or universities. He states, "There would be no inconsistency with our educational ideals if local two-year colleges were to enroll as many as half of the boys and girls who wished to engage in formal studies beyond the high school."³⁴ He, at this time, urged the adoption of two year colleges as this would free the universities for professional education.

Dr. Conant concluded his book with the following important questions:

Do we as Americans realize how extraordinary an instrument of democracy we have forged in the last hundred years? Are we ready to place high on our list of priorities not only the expansion but the improvement of our public schools? Are we anxious to find ways,

³³Ibid., 70.

³⁴Ibid.

even if they are expensive, to do far more than now for the education of the talented? Are we ready to support a considerable number of universities as centers for research and professional education where the spiritual inheritance of the free world may be preserved and fostered? And not only to support them financially but guard them against the traditional enemies of learning: that is to say, mobilize public opinion to beat off attacks by the forces of ignorance, prejudice, and intolerance?"³⁵

The future of the free world for the balance of the century depends to a large extent on the answers given.

³⁵Ibid., 78-79.

Education in a Divided World (1948)

Dr. Conant was painfully aware of the Russian challenge before it became a real threat to our system of public education. He said that we must demonstrate our belief in our democracy and freedom. He held that the nature of the Soviet philosophy divides our world. A discussion of foreign affairs must precede an examination of our educational system. The points of view of our two cultures can be resolved in the course of time without a military struggle.

Dr. Conant saw our task as one of convincing the Soviet leaders of the successful leadership of the United States among the non-communistic nations. He urged the need for a well informed society to accomplish this.

He stated, "The future prosperity of America depends on the capacity of its economy to remain dynamic while providing satisfying employment for all capable of employment."³⁶ Our educational system must guide and educate a diversity of talent for employment in industry as may best forward the interests of the whole nation. Consequently, Dr. Conant says that it is obvious that the best minds of the country should be devoted to a study of the many problems arising as a consequence of our endeavors through industry and education to keep this nation prosperous, strong, and democratic. Many of the

³⁶Conant, Education in a Divided World, op. cit., 35.

educational problems facing this country are to a considerable degree sociological.

Dr. Conant stated, "The confidence in public education thus expressed is typical of the attitude of forward-looking Americans throughout the land. Labor and management, professional men and women; in short, all the citizens of the country, must look increasingly to our free schools for the effective demonstration of our answers to totalitarian ideologies in a divided world."³⁷ He also pointed out that education underlies our whole economy.

Dr. Conant is concerned with the changing concept of the self-made man. Years ago the self-made man was truly a self-educated man. Many of our previous leaders terminated their education after the seventh grade. An example of a cultural lag is the belief that this is still true today.

Dr. Conant is often asked the question of why should one be taxed to provide schools for other people's children. He has excellent answers.³⁸ First, we wish to insure a vigorous development of this society in accordance with our traditional goals. Second, we desire that as many of our citizens as possible may lead fruitful and satisfying lives. Third, we realize that in order to prosper as a highly industrialized nation we must find and educate all varieties of talent and guide that talent into the proper channels of employment.

³⁷Ibid., 38.

³⁸Ibid., 69.

He is extremely concerned with the public school system. He notes that the suburban high schools of the country are the pride of our public school system. The taxes are usually sufficient to support public education generously.³⁹

A discussion of subject matter material is presented by Dr. Conant. He defines general education as all of those aspects of formal training which contribute to the attainment of the objectives of education for citizenship and education for the good life; specialized education is directed toward the acquiring of certain skills and information and the formation of certain attitudes useful in a vocation.⁴⁰

He points out that perhaps the greatest single cause of complaint concerning our schools and colleges is on the score of the inability of the graduates to express themselves adequately in speech or in writing, and a second is our dismal failure to awaken in more than a small fraction of even our college students a continuing interest in good literature and scholarly works dealing with history, philosophy, and science.⁴¹ We should endeavor to point out the relation of the use of the English language to the subsequent career of the student.

Dr. Conant contends that in so far as public education is under discussion we must leave out theology. Only a completely secular school system can be supported by the tax-

⁴⁰Ibid., 70. ⁴¹Ibid., 132-133.

payers and operated by our democracy. One may trust that no anti-religious fanatics will attempt to police our schools and purge all references to religion.⁴² He stated, "The vast majority of Americans of all creeds, I believe, feel that public secular education is not only possible but highly desirable and in no way inconsistent with the active work of the churches in stimulating the interests of young boys and girls."⁴³

He relates that the study of man in our American schools must start with certain postulates: (1) the sacrosanct nature of the individual, (2) an individual's obligation to other individuals, (3) our type of society requires a high degree of personal liberty and at the same time active and sympathetic cooperation toward certain ends.⁴⁴

Dr. Conant asks, "What should be the high school preparation for college work in science viewed as part of a professional education?"⁴⁵ Teachers and professors are often in disagreement, and this stems from the dissatisfaction of the college men with the way science is taught in the high school and in part from a difference in the appraisal of the value of fundamental instruction in physics, chemistry and biology before a student has reached the freshman year of a four-year course. Most university instructors would prefer a solid foundation in mathematics to even the best school instruction in the physical sciences.

150. 42 Ibid., 94.

43 Ibid., 95.

44 Ibid., 105-106.

45 Ibid.,

Federal Aid

Dr. Conant's views on organization and control of education previous to the 1960's are more conservative than liberal. He condoned the tradition of decentralization and local control. His new views call for centralization. Even federal aid is not unequivocally endorsed in Education in a Divided World where he supports Federal aid for poorer states; The Child, The Parent, and The State, published a decade later, leaves it to the reader to decide.

He stated in Education in a Divided World, "Federal aid to the states to assist elementary and secondary education is but the logical extension of state aid for local control. Federal funds are a necessity in those states where extending the tax base to the state still fails to provide adequate support for the elementary and secondary schools."⁴⁶ The resources of certain of our states are simply insufficient to finance the type of schools our society requires. Conant has little fear that Federal funds granted to the states for the use of public schools will lead to Federal control of our local education because of the strength of school administrators and school teachers. These funds would flow to the states and be dispersed within the state by state authorities.

⁴⁶Ibid., 187.

In his book The Child, The Parent, and The State, Dr. Conant once again considers whether Congress would annually appropriate large sums for the general support of the public schools in many, if not all, the states.⁴⁷ He considers that three basic statements can be made to support the proposition that annually large sums derived from federal income and corporate taxes should be allocated to all (or almost all) states for the general purpose of the public schools.⁴⁸

- 1). There is an overriding national interest in the education of all American children; the interest is underlined by population mobility and is more vital than ever before because of our struggle with Soviet imperialism.
- 2). In all the states there are many school districts which, even if they are large enough, are not performing the educational tasks they should because of lack of money.
- 3). In almost all states the present arrangement for combining local and state taxes is inadequate because the state is not in a position to allocate sufficient funds.⁴⁹

Conant related that there should be a situation in almost all the states where the money should flow from the state capital to the local districts to supplement the funds raised at the local level.⁵⁰

He points out that a new chapter in American public education will have opened if Federal aid is given. We could

⁴⁷Conant, The Child, The Parent, and The State, op. cit., 50

⁴⁸Ibid., 52. ⁴⁹Ibid. ⁵⁰Ibid., 54.

not call it federal control of our public schools, but we would have a powerful federal influence added to the present influence of the central authority in each state. It is not possible to determine whether federal influence would be beneficial or detrimental. There is only one other alternative to this, and this would be a radical revision of the tax structure of the states and federal government.⁵¹ He predicts that in the next decade one of three things seems inevitable. Either our state taxing machinery will have to improve drastically in many states, or Congress will have to start large sums of annual appropriations for public schools. If not, public education in many states will deteriorate or stand still at its present level.⁵²

Dr. Conant's present position is in favor of federal aid to public schools (grades K-12) and in opposition to federal aid to private schools.

⁵¹Ibid., 57. ⁵²Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The Scope of the Study

James Bryant Conant presented a preliminary report on the junior high school before two sessions at the 1960 meeting of the American Association of School Administrators.⁵³ At this time he pointed out that he had not come to any conclusions yet. He noted that he was working with Professor Matthew Gaffney, superintendent-principal for many years at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois; Franklyn O. White, on leave as principal of Central Junior High School in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Alden Dunham, a member of his own staff. As of the date of the meeting, his recommendations would be: boys and girls would fare better in terms of "social arguments" if the break between junior and senior high school were between the eighth and ninth grades; others might fare better if the break were between ninth and tenth grade. He also noted that eighth grade should be departmentalized. Junior and senior high schools can share facilities for the advantages that the

⁵³James Bryant Conant, "Conant Looks at the Junior High School," The Nation's Schools, LXIV, No. 4 (April, 1960), p. 82 plus.

building can be shared and the arrangement may facilitate good articulation in the program for grades seven to twelve. He stated that highly gifted students should be identified in the eighth grade. When addressing lay audiences, he said he would stress the importance of the principal.

Dr. Conant's finished report appeared in 1960. The scope of his study involved 237 schools encompassing ninety school systems in twenty-three states. In the opinion of the writer, his findings are highly inconclusive and are designed to satisfy each and every school administrator that his system fits Dr. Conant's standards. The report has popular appeal, and everyone is smug about his school system. I cannot agree with the fostering of such complacency about our schools. His report abounds of personal opinions and neglects the scientific method. His chief concern lies in the naming of courses and the neglect of content.

After intensive study, Conant has two major findings to report. First, he finds a great diversity with respect to the placement of grades seven and eight in the organization of the school systems.⁵⁴ The writer wishes to ask how such an obvious observation may be called a conclusion. The patterns

⁵⁴James Bryant Conant, Recommendations for Education in the Junior High School Years (Los Angeles: Educational Testing Service, 1960, p. 10.

he found are: (a) first years of a separate 3 year junior high school in a 6-3-3 system, (b) last 2 years of an 8 year elementary school in an 8-4 system, (c) in a 6-2-4 plan they constitute a junior high school in themselves, (d) after first 2 years in a 6 year high school in a 6-6 system, (e) some school systems split the two grades into a 7-5 arrangement, and (f) others include grades 7-10 or 6-8 in junior high school.

Dr. Conant states, "Having noted diversity with respect to the place of grades seven and eight, I have to report that there is no consensus whatever among experienced educators as to the place of grade nine in the organizational framework. Should it be the top grade in a three-year junior high school or the bottom grade in a four-year senior high school?"⁵⁵

Does Dr. Conant offer an answer to this dilemma? Does he attempt to give concrete suggestions? No, he by-passes this major finding entirely and states, "Because of wide diversity in school organizations, professional disagreement, and my own observation, I conclude that the place of grades 7, 8, and 9 in the organization of a school system is of less importance than the program provided for adolescent youth."⁵⁶

Dr. Conant's conclusions abounds with excellent principles derived from educational psychology. Each individual situation should take into account the needs of the individuals involved.

⁵⁵Ibid., 11. ⁵⁶Ibid., 12.

However, why doesn't he make a positive statement as to which program seems to meet these needs the best?

Dr. Conant is concerned with the quality of teachers in seven and eight and says that school boards should do all in their power to maintain the status and prestige of the professional staff in grades seven and eight and to create working conditions that will make teaching in these grades a satisfactory and rewarding experience.⁵⁷ Here, again, Dr. Conant is expressing his personal bias to the importance of the education of adolescents. The writer is surprised that he does not mention that teachers of the academically talented should also be justly rewarded.

Dr. Conant makes it very clear that the three areas which require professional competence which school board members should make every effort not to interfere in are: (1) the appointment of the professional staff, (2) judging quality of teaching, (3) details of course content and choice of textbooks.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid., 13. ⁵⁸Ibid., 13-14.

Recommendations

The main text consists of fourteen recommendations which are summarized with comments below:

Recommendation 1: Required Subjects for all Pupils
in Grades Seven and Eight

One period a day for five days a week will be devoted to: (1) English (including heavy emphasis on reading skills and composition), (2) social studies (emphasis on history and geography), (3) mathematics, and (4) science. There also will be instruction in art, music and physical education. All girls should receive instruction in home economics, and all boys should receive instruction in industrial arts.⁵⁹

Recommendation 2: New Developments in Mathematics and Foreign Language.

A small fraction of pupils should start algebra (or one of the new brands of mathematics) in grade 8. Some, if not all, pupils should start the study of a foreign language on a conversational basis with a bilingual teacher in grade 7.⁶⁰

The writer wishes to know where Dr. Conant has been hiding? Isn't he aware of the "new mathematics" that has been successfully used in the elementary schools? The writer is disappointed to learn that he feels that mathematics is so sacred of a field that it requires the maturity of a seventh grader to grasp. He should have visited classes throughout our Chicagoland area to see what is being done on the lower levels. He could read the educational journals to learn about the new methods. Foreign language instruction has been quite successful in the elementary school, and many pupils can begin this phase of their education much earlier than he suggests.

⁵⁹Ibid., 16-17. ⁶⁰Ibid., 17.

Recommendation 3: Basic Skills

It is recommended that instruction in the basic skills begun in the elementary school should be continued as long as pupils can gain from instruction. He states that this applies particularly in reading and arithmetic.⁶¹

The writer is rather disappointed with the way he repeats the obvious. He points out that pupils with average ability should read at or above grade level; superior pupils considerably above grade level. By the end of grade nine even the poorest readers (except the mentally retarded) should read at least at the sixth grade level. His recommendation would be more valid if he actually offered recommendations to achieve these basic skill goals.

Recommendation 4: Extra-class activities

Group activities which have particular relevance for early adolescents should be part of the total program. These include musical and dramatic activities, assembly and homeroom programs, interest clubs, intramural athletics, and student council.⁶²

Recommendation 5: Block-Time and Departmental

On the one hand he states that provision should be made to assure a smooth transition for the young adolescent from the elementary school to the secondary school. He then states that his reason for advocating block-time teaching is simply to enable one teacher to know his pupils well because of the fact that he meets fewer of them for a longer period of time. Thus, the teacher is in a position to counsel students.⁶³

He again offers to different positions without a solution of his own.

Recommendation 6: Flexibility in Schedule

The daily class schedule should be sufficiently

⁶¹Ibid., 20-21. ⁶²Ibid., 22. ⁶³Ibid., 22-23.

flexible to avoid the necessity for pupils to make choices between, for example, science and foreign language.⁶⁴

Flexibility in schedule is an excellent goal.

Recommendation 7: Challenging All Pupils
Instruction should be organized to provide intellectual challenge for the whole range of abilities found in a school.

This recommendation is excellent, but it can hardly be called original. The principles of educational psychology tell us over and over again that we must meet individual differences. Lawrence E. Vredevoe states that the most significant phase of this report is its emphasis upon a need for a different kind of program to challenge the pupils in these grades.⁶⁶

Recommendation 8: Guidance and Testing
A full-time specialist, or the equivalent, in guidance and testing should be available for every 250-300 pupils in grades 7 and 8. The same ratio applies to grades 9-12.⁶⁷

This is an extremely idealistic recommendation. Unfortunately financial consideration and lack of qualified personnel makes this recommendation infeasible.

Recommendation 9: Homework, Marking, and Promotion
Meaningful homework is profitable in grades 7, 8, and 9; drudgery, however, is not meaningful homework. Teachers and principals should develop careful procedures

⁶⁴Ibid., 24. ⁶⁵Ibid., 25.

⁶⁶Lawrence E. Vredevoe, "Assessing the Conant Report on the Junior High School," The Bulletin of the National Association of School Principals, XLV, No. 264 (April, 1961), pp. 165-166.

⁶⁷Conant, Education in the Junior High School, loc. cit., 127.

to assure coordination of homework assignments between teachers of different subjects.

High standards should be maintained in academic courses in grades 7, 8, and 9 because of the necessity for mastery of basic skills. Some pupils take longer to develop these skills than other pupils, and this fact implies that standards of accomplishment, not effort, alone, are needed below the senior high school level in required academic courses. This fact also implies that a few pupils might be held back, though certainly for no more than two years in the first eight grades.

Homework requirements would involve one hour per day for grade seven and two hours per day by grade nine.⁶⁸

Again, Dr. Conant is parroting principles of educational psychology.

Recommendation 10: Program in Grade 9

In the ninth grade, the curriculum should provide for the usual sequential elective program as well as the continuation of the required courses in general education.⁶⁹

Recommendation 11: Minimum Special Facilities

Satisfactory instruction requires that the following facilities be available for pupils in grades 7 and 8; (1) a well-stocked library (see Standards for School Library Programs, American Library Association, 1960), (2) a gymnasium with locker rooms and showers, (3) specially equipped home economics room for girls and industrial arts rooms for boys, (4) an auditorium or assembly space for at least half the student body, (5) cafeteria space for at least one-third of the student body.⁷⁰

It certainly would be ideal if all of our junior high schools could meet Dr. Conant's bare minimal standards. He would also desire special art, music, and science rooms. He points out that it is possible to use portable equipment for the special

⁶⁸Ibid., 28. ⁶⁹Ibid., 29. ⁷⁰Ibid., 31.

rooms.

Recommendations twelve to fourteen offer concrete detailed suggestions. These, in the writer's opinion, offer the most merit of the entire opinionated report.

Recommendation 12: Coordination of Subject Matter
Instruction

Whatever the organization of a school system, there should be careful coordination in each one of the subject areas in grades K-12.⁷¹

One of the most serious problems in many school systems is the lack of articulation.

Recommendation 13: Size of System-Wide Professional
Staff and Teacher Load, Grades 7-12

A balanced staff of 50 professionals for 1,000 pupils is the minimum acceptable ratio for an adequately staffed school system. A higher ratio of professional staff to pupil is desirable.

The teacher load in grades 7-12 should be approximately the same in most subject areas. The reasonable limits of this load are five teaching periods involving 125-150 pupils per day. Physical education teachers can carry a load of 200 pupils a day, whereas English teachers should be responsible for no more than 100 pupils. It is possible that a few teachers of advanced academic electives in the senior high school may also have somewhat smaller pupil loads. A professional librarian should be responsible for no more than 750 pupils.

Duties of teachers which are peripheral to the main task of teaching should be minimized and constantly reevaluated. No other duty takes precedence over classroom instruction.⁷²

This recommendation is an example of Dr. Conant's idealistic ideas about our schools.

Recommendation 14: Leadership Role of the Principal
The difference between a good school and a poor school

⁷¹Ibid., 33. ⁷²Ibid., 34. ⁷³Ibid., 34.



is often the difference between a good and a poor principal. To exercise leadership, the principal must have sufficient administrative assistance in the form of assistant principals and clerical help. The extent of assistance should vary according to the size and nature of the school. Generally speaking, a full-time assistant principal at the secondary level should be available for every 750 pupils; a clerk or secretary should be available for every 250 pupils. The question to be answered: is the principal forced to spend a considerable fraction of his time doing routine tasks that can be done by either an assistant principal or secretary? If he is, he cannot perform his role as instructional leader; help should be provided.⁷³

In this report, as in his report on the American High School, Dr. Conant holds that there is no overriding reason for a costly change of any one of the many organizational patterns in communities with relatively stable populations, provided that in every school there is a minimum of 125 pupils in each of grades 7 and 8.⁷⁴ He also stresses that for really efficient operation, something like 750 pupils are needed in a three-year junior high school.

⁷³Ibid., 37.

⁷⁴Ibid., 38.

Patterns of Organization

The advantages to the three year junior high school, grades seven to nine, as discussed by Dr. Conant are: (1) provides a separate environment for young adolescents age 12-15, a very special group in terms of growth and development, (2) because of large enrollments, a broad curriculum with specialist teachers and facilities can be provided at minimum cost, (3) a three-year period provides time for young adolescents to establish a feeling of identity with the school and ninth-grade pupils can display effective leadership in school activities without developing the sophistication associated with the senior high school.⁷⁵

Dr. Conant's views on inter-scholastic activities and marching bands in the junior high school are that they are to be condemned because there is no sound educational reason for them and too often they serve merely as public entertainment.⁷⁶ He also notes that graduation ceremonies have no place at the junior high school level.

The two-year junior high school, grades seven and eight, have the same two advantages as the first two listed for the three year junior high school. A third advantage is that the ninth grade is in the senior high school; articulation of the sequential elective program is facilitated by this arrangement.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Ibid., 41-42.

⁷⁶Ibid., 42.

⁷⁷Ibid., 43.

The drawback to this program is the rapid turnover of pupils and the consequential difficulty of developing a cohesive student body. A few school systems have incorporated grade six with the two-year junior high school to offset this last drawback.

The principal advantage to the eight-year elementary school, K-8, is there is little danger that children in grades seven and eight will grow up too fast by imitating the ways of older pupils. The disadvantages to the eight-year elementary school are: (1) many parents and educators argue that the younger pupils should not be in the same building with seventh and eighth graders, (2) enrollments in grades seven and eight are generally so small that a broad program, including student activities, cannot be offered, (3) elementary school teachers are not specialists in particular subject areas, (4) special facilities are often prohibitively expensive because of small enrollments in grades seven and eight.⁷⁸

The six-year junior-senior high school, grades seven to twelve, is common in rural areas where enrollments are small. The advantages cited by Dr. Conant are: (1) overhead and original cost of the building are spread over more pupils, (2) grouping, departmentalization, and special classes are more likely to be possible, (3) the pupils in these grades

⁷⁸Ibid.

share the special facilities and specialist teachers with the senior high school, and (4) articulation of the whole program in grades seven to twelve is facilitated by this arrangement.⁷⁹ The serious drawback is the mixing of seventh graders with twelvth graders in the same school.

⁷⁹Ibid., 44.

Conclusion

Dr. Conant concludes his report by stating: "In addition to adequate financial support there are at least three ingredients necessary for good schools: first, a school board composed of honest, intelligent citizens who know the difference between policymaking and administration; second, a first-rate administrative staff - both superintendent and principals; and third, first-rate teachers."⁸⁰

After reading Dr. Conant's report and paying special attention to those points applicable to his own school, everyone goes away happy. Dr. Conant has given the public reassurance that what they are doing is just fine. Some of his idealistic aims are so high that he couldn't possibly be serious!

⁸⁰Ibid., 45-46.

CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL

A study of the American High School

The task of studying the American High School took shape in Dr. Conant's mind long before the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey made possible his study by giving him a generous grant.

In an address given on November 15, 1944 at Teachers' College Columbia, Dr. Conant stated, "I am almost tempted to generalize that the more educated the person, the less his knowledge of secondary school education."⁸¹ In this speech he suggested an impartial survey of American education, particularly of the high school, and he stated that he expected the outcome to show that the brilliant boys and girls with high scholastic aptitude now enter colleges and universities without many of the skills which they acquired under the old-fashioned curriculum of fifty years ago.⁸²

A discussion of Dr. Conant's book The Revolutionary Transformation of the American High School is an excellent study of the transition in American secondary education.

⁸¹ James Bryant Conant, "A Truce Among Educators", The Bulletin of the NASSP, XXIX, No. 127, (January, 1945), p. 3.

⁸² Ibid., 7.

Dr. Conant states that according to his own interpretation of the last fifty years, the American public between 1930 and 1945 was so concerned with first a depression and then a global war that few laymen fully realized that a revolutionary transformation of the schools had just occurred.⁸³

In 1905 only about nine percent of an age group graduated from high school; only four of five percent entered college, and only one-third of those completing elementary school entered high school. By 1930 three-fourths registered in ninth grade; forty-five percent finished high school, and fifteen percent entered college.

During 1905 the curriculum of the high school was academic. By 1930 the comprehensive high school was found in many parts of the country. Latin was disappearing from the curriculum, and the art and music departments were expanding.

Dr. Conant offers two interpretations of why a revolutionary change in education occurred.⁸⁴ The first view saw the educators in the driver's seat. According to some accounts, one would think that a band of professors of education had decided that for the future well being of our society, it was essential that all American youth stay in school full time

⁸³ James Bryant Conant, The Revolutionary Transformation of the American High School (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959, p. 2

⁸⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

through grade twelve. Therefore, they crusaded teachers and state legislators to raise the age of compulsory attendance to force the boys and girls to stay in school. They proceeded to focus attention on education for citizenship and understanding the ways of democracy. John Dewey, according to this view, was the inspiration and guide for the educational crusade.

According to the second view, educators were observed as public servants. He points out that this account held that the transformation in methods of production which we talk so much about today had already started in the first decade of this century. Apprenticeship training, characteristic of Europe, was disappearing.⁸⁵ Land grant colleges encouraged farmers to go to college. A vigorous humanitarian movement to abolish child labor in this country was underway, and Congress passed a law prohibiting child labor in 1916. The demand for vocational education grew rapidly. The Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 appropriated federal funds for vocational education.

More and more youngsters were in school. Between 1905-1930 the schools from grades six to twelve were filled. The teachers appealed to professors in teacher colleges for help. John Dewey answered in 1916, and Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education was published in 1918 by a commission of the NEA.

In other words, it was the change in the employment

⁸⁵Ibid., 5.

picture which forced parents to keep their children in school regardless of their academic talent and desire to go to college. This, in turn, changed the nature of the schools.

Dr. Conant discusses the reforming spirit as follows:

The reforming educators played their part in the whole transformation; to some degree they guided the boat, even if it was propelled by a power over which they had no control. Let me remind you of the reforming spirit which characterized the United States in the first two decades of the century. Education was believed in as though it were a newly discovered magic process. Presidents of colleges clinging to a classical pattern of education proclaimed its virtue as loudly as reformers like John Dewey. Such faith was in accord with the spirit of the day. American public education was in an optimistic humanitarian mood.⁸⁶

Dr. Conant concludes his observation on the changes in secondary education by finding them to be a consequence of the harmonious reinforcement of a variety of forward moving currents in the history of the century. The essence of his philosophy is that the high schools of the 1930's (which followed, according to Dr. Conant, essentially the same educational pattern as the high schools of today) were the creation of a prolonged surge of sentiment of the American people.

We will now turn attention back to Dr. Conant's current work on the high school. Dr. Conant admits that the title of his book, The American High School Today, is somewhat misleading. He has limited his study to the comprehensive high school one

⁸⁶Ibid., 27-28,

finds in school districts of 30,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. He points out that this book must be considered along with Slums and Suburbs for a complete conception of his views.

The question to be answered by Dr. Conant's report was: Can a school at one and the same time provide a good general education for all the pupils as future citizens of a democracy, provide elective programs for the majority to develop useful skills, and educate adequately those with a talent for handling advanced subjects -- particularly foreign languages and advanced mathematics?⁸⁷

Dr. Conant found eight schools which, in his judgment, were satisfactorily fulfilling the three main objectives of a comprehensive high school. These objectives are: (1) to provide a general education for the future citizens, (2) to provide good elective programs for those who wish to use their acquired skills immediately on graduation, and (3) to provide satisfactory programs for those whose vocations will depend on their subsequent education in a college or university.⁸⁸

His study was concerned with instruction in mathematics, science, and foreign languages. For his method of study, he decided to locate satisfactory comprehensive high schools in different sections of the United States. He selected the schools on a basis that these schools should be of such a nature that less than half the boys and girls were going on to college, and

⁸⁷Ibid., 24. ⁸⁸Ibid., 26.

the distribution of academic ability roughly correspond to the national norm (median I.Q. 100-105).⁸⁹ He picked not more than three or four schools in each state. He visited the schools accompanied by one or more members of his staff. He knew statistical information about the school in advance of the visit. He held discussions with superintendents, principals, teachers, counseling staff, shop teachers, and student leaders.

The following check list was used to assist in evaluating a comprehensive high school:⁹⁰

- A. Adequacy of general education for all as judged by:
 - 1. Offerings in English and American literature and composition.
 - 2. Social studies, including American history
 - 3. Ability grouping in required courses
- B. Adequacy of nonacademic elective programs as judged by:
 - 4. The vocational programs for boys and commercial programs for girls
 - 5. Opportunities for supervised work experience
 - 6. Special provision for very slow readers
- C. Special arrangements for the academically talented:
 - 7. Special provision for challenging the highly gifted
 - 8. Special instructions for developing reading skills
 - 9. Summer sessions from which able students may profit
 - 10. Individualized programs (absence of tracks or rigid programs)
 - 11. School day organized into seven or more instructional periods
- D. Other features
 - 12. Adequacy of the guidance service
 - 13. Student morale
 - 14. Well-organized homerooms
 - 15. The success of the school in promoting an understanding between students with widely different academic abilities and vocational goals (effective social interaction among students)

⁹⁰Ibid., 28.

The criteria which Dr. Conant used is highly ideal, and one receives the impression that he made his conclusions before beginning his highly unscientific study.

Dr. Conant's Critics

Dr. Conant's study of the American High School has provoked a great deal of criticism, both positive and negative. William F. Alexander, professor of education at George Peabody College of Education, presented an excellent preliminary appraisal of the Conant Report. He made five predictions: (1) that this report will be widely read and even more widely cited, (2) that it will be used effectively to resist movement toward establishing selective academic high schools, (3) that it may aid proponents of school consolidation efforts, but not enough to create any sharp reductions in the number of small schools unless the financial and social difficulties in consolidation are generally aided by other sources, (4) that the twenty-one specific recommendations will be used to support and refute many local proposals, with the final decisions being based on such varied factors as to make impossible any evaluation of the Conant's report influence of these decisions, and (5) most important, that this report may mark the completion of an already significant turn in the public press and in public discussions away from attacks on secondary education and toward realistic appraisal of the financial and personnel problems involved in improving secondary education in the United States.⁹¹

⁹¹William F. Alexander, "The Conant Report, a Preliminary Appraisal," Phi Delta Kappan, XL, No. 6 (March, 1959), p. 249.

David B. Austin points out that less difficulty would arise if this report, The American High School Today, was identified as a study of some American high schools which seem to have certain characteristics in common.⁹²

Theodore Brameld, one of Dr. Conant's few continuous critics, finds four major defects in Dr. Conant's educational thought as exhibited in The American High School Today.⁹³ First, the Conant plan for the high school fails to provide for anything like the kind of curriculum now demanded by our "divided world". The only place Dr. Conant allows for these problems is in a senior level course on "American problems". His second criticism is that Dr. Conant supports a curriculum structure that almost totally disregards recent psychological and sociological research as the interrelated character of human experience. He thus ignores learning as a major dimension of such experience.

Brameld points out that a third cluster of difficulties emerges from Conant's required courses for all students. For example, why should biology be preferred over and above a general course in the physical sciences? The writer definitely agrees with Brameld on this point; Dr. Conant is ignoring individual differences.

⁹²David B. Austin, "The Administration and the Conant Report, The Bulletin of the NASSP, XLIII, No. 247 (May, 1959), p. 195.

⁹³Brameld, loc. cit., p. 3-39.

Brameld's fourth position is one taken by many educators. It is based on the fact that Dr. Conant is deeply concerned with the academically talented minority ;: so much so that one wonders at times whether it is not his chief concern. Joseph T. Durham also points out that he is led to believe that Dr. Conant is concerned mainly with identifying and making optimum provisions for the scholastic success of the intellectually able student.⁹⁴

In relation to Brameld's and Durham's criticism of Dr. Conant, it is important to point out that he does not lose sight of other students who are less talented in the academic field. In an address before the Phi Delta Kappan Society in 1958, Dr. Conant stated, "Your national meeting this year is dedicated largely to a consideration of the curriculum of the senior high school, on which public attention has been focused in the last six months as many prominent citizens have spoken about the need of training more engineers and scientists. But my concern with the high school is not limited to one type of student. Furthermore, I would like to say that my present study of the American public high school was organized more than a year ago, before the Russian success with rockets started the landslide of words about the alleged shortcomings of our public schools."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Joseph T. Durham, "The Conant Report: A Critique", The Clearing House, XXXIV, No. 3 (November, 1959), p. 179.

⁹⁵ James Bryant Conant, "Some Problems of the American High School," Phi Delta Kappan, XL, No. 2 (November, 1958), p. 50.

Joseph T. Durham points out that Dr. Conant is faced with a dilemma in the pages of his report. On the one hand, he wants to have a fare of "solid subjects" for all, but realizing that this program is really for the "academically talented" Dr. Conant seeks to resolve the dilemma by proposing that "in the required subjects and those selected by students with a wide range of ability, the students should be grouped according to ability, subject by subject."⁹⁶

Francis Griffith, Principal of Richmond High School in New York finds several faults with the Conant Report on the American high school.⁹⁷ Three major criticisms are offered. First, he points out the limitation of the author. He accuses Dr. Conant of a lack of first hand experiences and a bias in favor of science and language instruction. Secondly, he criticizes the limitation of the purpose which he construes as the discovery of whether the comprehensive high school protects the interests of its academically talented students. He holds that the aim of the report was restricted and the title and implication of the report were misleading. He states that the reader should keep in mind Dr. Conant's restricted purpose when reading the report. Thirdly, Mr. Griffith is concerned with

⁹⁶Durham, loc. cit.

⁹⁷Francis Griffith, "Another Look at the Conant Report," The Bulletin of the NASSP, XLIV, No. 258 (October, 1960), pp. 59-62.

the limitation of the sample. He points out that of the 21,000 high schools Dr. Conant personally visited no more than fifty-five. He did not visit schools in large cities, private schools, free non-tax supported schools, vocational schools, single-sex schools, and only a few suburban schools. Less than half of the population of the schools visited were college bound.

Frank E. Henzlik points out that the reader is left with the impression that the criterions used were too personal.⁹⁸

Harry A. Fosdick, assistant director of public relations for the California Teachers Association, points out that two reactions were found to the Conant report.⁹⁹ One group listed schools that were meeting Conant's standards; other disputed some of the recommendations as unrealistic or on other grounds. Many did neither.

Fosdick is very critical of what has happened since the presentation of the report. Perhaps his criticisms are too premature since they were presented only a year after the report. He stated, "When Dr. Conant recommended that comprehensive high schools offer specific types of instruction, he added that certain types of students should be receiving this instruction. This was a major point in his presentation. Yet school after school announced that it was meeting standards without having

⁹⁸ Frank E. Henzlik, "The Conant Report -- A Critique," The Education Digest, XXV, No. 5 (January, 1960), p. 1.

⁹⁹ Harry A. Fosdick, "Score a Public Relation Coup From the Conant Report," The Nations Schools, LXIV, No. 4 (October, 1959),

taken the simple recommended academic inventory to determine whether actual pupil needs were being met."¹⁰⁰ He points out that although the peak of opportunity has passed, it is still possible to salvage some values if school leaders will analyze and admit shortcomings; then offer a corrective program with the dollar sign attached.

James D. Koerner is concerned with what he calls "the tragedy of the Conant report". He states, "It is tragic not because of its findings and recommendations, which are tragic enough, but because of the unquestioning credence given the book by school boards and parents all over the nation and by public school teachers and administrators."¹⁰¹ He recalls his own experiences in high school to illustrate the falseness of Dr. Conant's recommendations. He says that the spirit of the report is disastrous, and there is no suggestion of the virtue of a liberal education for all or even a large part of American youth. The report shuts intellectual doors, and no one has the right to say someone should not go on to college.

The editor of the California Journal of Secondary Education stated, "In our view the only serious gap in Dr. Conant's view is in the ARTS -- the practical, the visual, and the performing. These he does not list in the basic subjects to be required of

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹ James Dr. Koerner, "The Tragedy of the Conant Report," The Education Digest, XXVI, No. 7 (March, 1961), p. 4.

all youth, or even of the academically talented."¹⁰²

James M. Spinning, columnist for The Nation's Schools, stated, "Here is a former top ranking college president, a recent and top ranking ambassador in one of the most delicate diplomatic posts in the world, an original and leading scientist, a member of high military councils, full of arcane knowledge of recondite matters, covered with honors, fit to lead in any of his many fields of competence, who considers secondary education so important that he chooses it as the next area to command his talents."¹⁰³

Of the report as a whole, John W. Gardner, President of the Carnegie Corporation, stated in the forward of the report, "The distinctive feature of Mr. Conant's contribution is that he has come forward with a positive and constructive approach."¹⁰⁴ He further points out that Dr. Conant emphasizes over and over that our average schools can become good schools, and our good schools can become excellent. He concludes by stating, "If I had to recommend a single piece of reading to all Americans who want to improve their schools, I would ask them to read this report."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² R.N.B., "Dr. Conant and the American High School," California Journal of Secondary Education, XXXIV, No. 1 (January, 1959), p. 66.

¹⁰³ James M. Spinning, "On the Shelf," The Nation's Schools, LXIII, No. 5 (May, 1959), p. 164.

¹⁰⁴ Conant, The American High School Today, op. cit., p. xii.

David J. Hefferan, Assistant to General Superintendent of Schools, Chicago, states, "I gather from the Report that Dr. Conant believes wholeheartedly that we are striving for the excellence of the individual. America's greatness is in the fact that in some small measure we have accomplished this."¹⁰⁵ He points out that communities cannot provide all that Conant asks because they are prevented by state tax limits. Dr. Conant would, most probably, reply, "Change the state tax limits!"

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶David J. Hefferan, "Conant Establishes a Beachhead," The Nation's Schools, LXIII, No. 5 (May, 1959), p. 158.

The Recommendations

The twenty-one recommendations may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. A fully-articulated counseling system
 One full-time counselor (or guidance officer) for every 250-300 pupils in the high school. The function of the counselor is to supplement parental advise to the youngster.
 The counselor should be sympathetic to the elective program which develops marketable skills. The counselor should understand the program for the slow readers and be ready to cooperate with the teachers of this group of students.
 The counselor should be on the outlook for the bright boy or girl with high ability but low achievement.

2. Individualized programs for every student
 No classification of students according to clearly defined programs or tracks such as "vocational" or "college preparatory".
 This recommendation takes into account the feeling of prestige often associated with those enrolled in high academic programs.
 It also takes into account parental ambitions and pressures.

3. To graduate every high school student should have:
 4 years of English
 4 years of social studies
 1 year of mathematics
 1 year of science

4. Subject-by-subject grouping according to ability

5. A course-study record as a supplement to the diploma

6. English composition should occupy half the time devoted to English, with an average of one theme a week.

7. Diversified trade and vocational programs

8. Special consideration for very slow readers
 Those in the ninth grade of the school who read at a level of sixth grade or below should be given special considerations.
 The elective programs of the pupils should be directed toward simple vocational work.

9. A minimum elective program for the academically talented:
 - 4 years of mathematics
 - 4 years of foreign language
 - 3 years of scienceThe essence of this recommendation is that students who have the ability to handle effectively both mathematics and a foreign language should be urged to study both subjects in grades nine through twelve.
10. Special arrangements for the highly gifted
 - Deals with the top three percent of the student population. Special guidance officer should be assigned to the group as a tutor and keep in close touch with these students throughout high school.
11. Annual academic inventory of the talented
 - The purpose is to provide meaningful statistics about the education of the academically talented.
12. At least six academic periods per day
 - This would be in addition to the required physical education and driver education in many states.
13. Prerequisites for admission to advanced academic courses
 - Should demonstrate ability to handle advanced courses.
14. Elimination of class rank as the basis of an average based upon all subjects.
15. Use of academic honors lists.
16. Availability of developmental reading programs.
 - Available for all pupils in the school on a voluntary basis.
17. Availability of tuition-free summer schools
 - Available for advanced students as well as failures.
18. Availability of four-year foreign language programs.
 - This would be available regardless of how many students enroll in the course.
19. Science courses adequate to diverse abilities.
20. Homerooms utilized as significant social units.

21. Required twelfth-grade course in American problems or American government
Should include as much material on economics as the students can effectively handle at this point in their development
Free discussion of controversial subjects.
Goal of course would be to develop mutual respect.

Dr. Conant's chief conclusion is not listed among his twenty-one recommendations. It is stated as follows, "I should like to record at this point my conviction that in many states the number one problem is the elimination of the small high school by district reorganization."¹⁰⁷ He would eliminate the small high school having a graduating class of less than one hundred and maintain and improve community control of the high school.

¹⁰⁷ Conant, The American High School Today, op. cit., 45.

The American High School in the Slums and Suburbs

Slums and Suburbs is described by Dr. Conant as a book of contrasts. The lesson to be learned from contrasting a well-to-do suburb and a slum is that to a considerable degree what a school should do and can do is determined by the status and ambitions of the families being served.¹⁰⁸

Dr. Conant points out that in the suburban high school from which 80 percent or more of the graduates enter some sort of college, the most important problem from the parents' point of view is to ensure the admission of their children to prestige colleges.¹⁰⁹ There is a great deal of concern over the teaching of academic subjects. The problem faced by the educator in these schools is to adjust the family's ambitions to the boy's or girl's abilities. He further points out that the reverse situation is the case in the city slum where as many as a half of the children drop out of school in grades nine, ten, and eleven. The dual task of the teachers in this situation is to prepare the student for getting and keeping a job as soon as he leaves school, and to encourage those who have academic talent to aim at a profession through higher education.

¹⁰⁸James Bryant Conant, Slums and Suburbs (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 9.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

Dr. Conant makes the following comments about the schools in the well-to-do suburbs:¹¹⁰

1. The main problem in wealthy suburban schools is to guide the parent whose college ambitions out-run his child's abilities toward a realistic picture of the kind of college his child is suited for.
2. Expert guidance must begin very early in the suburban schools in this process of educating both parent and child in the realities of college admission.
3. The prestige colleges should be seen as institutions for very bright students, the majority of whom will go to graduate school for advanced degrees. Many will enter the professions.
4. The California pattern of higher education, which includes two-year junior colleges, should be examined with care by citizens interested in solving problems within many states.
5. The place to begin to set standards in American education is at the last rung of the educational ladder -- the graduate level. Requirements for admission to law and medical schools and to graduate schools of arts and sciences should include evidence by examination of a wide and solid academic education. The requirements might be as follows: the ability to write a competent essay; a good reading, writing, and speaking knowledge of at least one modern foreign language; a knowledge of mathematics through the calculus; a knowledge of physics, chemistry, and biology at the freshman level of our most rigorous colleges; at the same level of competence, knowledge of American history and political institutions and English and American literature. The implementation of this recommendation might well have a salutary effect upon the education of bright students in both schools and colleges by bringing about what is called for in recommendation 6.
6. All high schools should try to create a climate of opinion that will encourage bright students to elect the kind of wide program that is required of students in the Bronx High School of Science. Such a program means five rather than the traditional four academic subjects a year.

7. Every high school ought to strive for participation in the Advanced Placement Program.

Dr. Conant makes the following recommendations concerning the schools of the large city slums:¹¹¹

8. The contrast in the money spent per pupil in wealthy suburban schools and in slum schools of the large cities challenges the concept of equality of opportunity in American public education. More money is needed in slum schools.
9. Social dynamite is building up in our large cities in the form of unemployed out-of-school youth, especially in the Negro slums. We need accurate frank information neighborhood by neighborhood.
10. The schools should be given the responsibility for educational and vocational guidance of youth after they leave school until age 21. This will require more money.
11. Increased attention ought to be paid in both slums and suburbs to develop meaningful courses for pupils with less than average abilities. To this end consideration should be given by every school and community to the expansion of work-study programs for slow students, and to the provision of at least an auto mechanics shop for boys in every high school in metropolitan areas.
12. Employment opportunities in the large cities must be promptly opened on a non-discrimatory basis. Because of the attitude of management and labor this can be done only through the use of federal funds.
13. The answer to improving Negro education in the large Northern cities is to spend more money and to upgrade Negro schools, many of which are in slums, rather than to effect token integration by transporting pupils across attendance lines. Fully integrated teaching staffs are a necessity as well.

110 Ibid., 125-126. 111 Ibid.

14. More teachers and perhaps more pay for teachers are necessary for schools in slums than in either the high income districts of the large cities or the wealthy suburbs.
15. No effort should be spared in slum areas to enlist the support of parents in the education of their children. To this end, adult education programs should be improved and expanded.
16. Big cities need decentralized administration in order to bring the schools closer to the needs of the people in each neighborhood and to make each school fit the local situation.
17. Nonpolitical, honest school boards composed of high-minded citizens who can differentiate between policy-making and administration are essential. An aroused public opinion is needed to correct the situation in those cities where such boards do not exist.

Saul Israel evaluated Dr. Conant's recommendations, and he cited several problems which came to his mind.¹¹² First he asked whether or not Dr. Conant is overstressing the dichotomy between city slums and wealthy suburbs. He points out that many schools have "honor" classes, where students from motivated immigrant families, Negroes and Puerto Ricans are given an opportunity to realize their potential. Secondly, he asks how limiting a factor is the low status and ambitions of slum families. Experiences like that in "Higher Horizons" quoted in the study show how the school can sometimes furnish the incentive lacking at home. Next, he considers whether the schools should be given

¹¹² Saul Israel, "A City School Principal Looks at the Latest Conant Report," The Educational Forum, XXXVIII, No. 1 (November, 1963), p. 42.

the responsibility for the guidance and placement of youth between sixteen and twenty-one. The Youth Employment Service of New York, a non-school agency, now gives effective job guidance to young people in neighborhood and other centers. It also helps recent graduates and present students in school buildings. School administrators do not welcome the idea of having intermittently employed older youth hanging around school buildings where there are younger pupils. He also points out that Dr. Conant is opposed to school integration where the housing pattern of an area is segregated. Is he understanding the desire of the rising Negro middle class to enroll its children in schools outside of slum neighborhoods? They wish freedom of choice, even though they may not always take advantage of it. He also points out the value of the mechanics and electronics shops for filling the economic needs of our nation's growth.

The Education of the Negro in the High School

In his final evaluation of Negroes in slums, Dr. Conant states, ". . . I do not believe the education of Negroes in the slums of our Northern cities can be made satisfactory until drastic measures have been taken by labor unions and employers to eliminate racial discrimination."¹¹³ In his new book, Shaping Educational Policy, he focuses his attention upon the fact that until recently all concerned with shaping educational policy for elementary and secondary education have neither ignored the subject of Negro education or accepted completely segregated schools as a matter of course. "We have talked about our public school system and how it responds to and is conditioned by all types of groups and social classes except the Negro."¹¹⁴

He states that when he undertook his study of the comprehensive high school he knew well there were no truly comprehensive schools in a number of Southern states. He relates that he visited schools where at the most there has been only token integration since the Supreme Court decision. He confesses, "And I said not a word to indicate that certain schools I visited were comprehensive only in so far as white youth was concerned."¹¹⁵

¹¹³Conant, op. cit., 52.

¹¹⁴Conant, Shaping Educational Policy, loc. cit., 39.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 40.

Consequently the writer is very much impressed with Dr. Conant's confession. It reflects a change in his usual conservative thinking of the past. It shows hope for the future. One would assume that his future reports will be written in a more practical manner; his idealism is a thing of the past.

The members of the establishment were also silent on the subject. "The influence of the socio-economic situation, the lack of family and community interest in reading books, magazines, and even papers, and above all the blocks to ambition, a consequence of the segregated policy of society, had so handicapped these youngsters from the start that only a very few could reach the levels of accomplishment in academic subjects expected of students in a non-segregated college."¹¹⁶

State by state certain issues should be faced, policy should be determined, and lay opinion would be more important than the view of educators.

It is Dr. Conant's hope and the hope of the writer that the position of the Negro in the community will improve, and a change in the educational status of the Negro will naturally evolve.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 41.

CHAPTER IV

TEACHER EDUCATION

The Scope of the Study

Dr. Conant relates that he undertook the task of the study of the American teacher with some reluctance. The study was composed of two years. The first year was devoted to the details of teacher training, and the second year was devoted to state regulations that place limitations on the local boards' freedom to employ teachers. Seventy-seven institutions were visited in twenty-two states, and all types of schools were visited.

Dr. Conant states, "If I were to try to characterize in two words the conclusion of my study, these words would be "freedom" and "responsibility". The state should allow each college and university the maximum degree of freedom to develop its own program. Each institution should assure the maximum degree of responsibility for those graduates it certifies as being competent to teach."¹¹⁷ He says that he has been arguing for a competition to see which institution will quickly earn a high reputation for preparing well-trained teachers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ James Bryant Conant, The Education of American Teachers (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), p. 217.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Two questions of major importance to public education discussed are: (1) Who should certify that a person is qualified to teach, and on what basis should this decision be made? and (2) What educational program will best prepare prospective teachers for their future work?

Dr. Conant points out that in three respects the situations in the states visited were similar as far as the politics of teacher education is concerned. These similar points are: (1) all are subject to propaganda emanating from NCATE, TEPS, and other national organizations, (2) the state educational establishment, usually led and controlled by the teachers' association, is well organized, politically effective, and exerts the major influence on certification policies, and (3) this establishment is committed in every state to some form of certification that will insure, for the reasons given above, at least a minimal amount of professional education.¹¹⁹

Dr. Conant uses the quarrel between educators as the starting point of the problem found in the education of teachers. This theme goes back to his set of armistice conditions for a truce among educators listed in Education in a Divided World in 1948. They are listed below:

1. Let it be agreed by the professors in our colleges and universities that the high schools of the country today have a job to do which is not measured primarily in terms of their success or failure in the formal education of the specially gifted youth.

2. Let it be admitted that by and large a good job has been done in providing an education for a large proportion of the American youth and that the present movement along such lines as those indicated in the volume, Education for All American Youth, is in the right direction.
3. Let the professors in the faculties of arts and science agree to find out more about the real problems facing the high schools of the country and the type of education which should be supplied to the vast number of boys and girls for whom a four-year college or university is far from being the proper educational channel.
4. Let the faculties of education and the superintendents of schools and those concerned with secondary education agree that in attempting to solve the tremendous problems of the last fifty years they have neglected a number of important matters which concern the type of youth who should in the best interest of the nation go to college.
5. Let those concerned primarily with high school education agree (a) to explore more sympathetically the ways and means of discovering special talent at an early age, (b) to provide a stronger motivation among many groups to evolve a greater degree of intellectual curiosity, and (c) to provide better formal instruction for those of high scholastic aptitude -- all this to be accomplished without a segregation which might turn the boys and girls in question into either prigs or academic snobs.
6. Let the schools agree that if the colleges will give up many of their formal requirements for admission in terms of content courses (as certain of the Eastern colleges have done already, they in turn will be willing to rate their students continuously in terms of scholastic aptitude. Thus, if the college can no longer count on adequate training in special skills, it may know better than ever before that it is choosing potential brains.¹²⁰

He reiterated this theme in 1951 when he stated, "The problem

¹²⁰Conant, Education in a Divided World, op. cit., 144-145.

of recruiting and training teachers is full of difficulties. Perhaps the greatest single change that one could hope for in the immediate future would be the burying of the hatchet by professors of liberal arts colleges and so called professional institutions."¹²¹

¹²¹ James Bryant Conant, "Why Not Bury the Hatchet," NEA Journal XL, No. 5 (May, 1951), p. 352.

The Academic Preparation of Teachers

Dr. Conant states that the breadth and depth of academic achievement of future school teachers could and should be greater than they are at the present.¹²² He points out that only twenty percent of our teachers come from "teachers" colleges, and three-fourths of the nation's colleges and universities offer teacher training.¹²³ He holds that we should endeavor to recruit our teachers from the upper third of the graduating high school class on a national basis.¹²⁴

TABLE I:
A proposed curriculum for the education
of elementary school teachers¹²⁵

Summary	Semester Hours
General Requirements	60
Concentration	30
Professional	30
Total	<u>120</u>
General Requirements:	
The English Language	6
Western World's literary Tradition	6
History (at least one half other than American)	9
Mathematics	6
Philosophy	3
Science (physical and biological studied consecutively)	12
Economics, Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology	9
Introduction to General Pshchology	3
Fine Arts (art or music)	6
Physical Education (non-credit)	-
Total	<u>60</u>
Concentration	30
Professional Sequence (30 semester hours, most of which will be in the senior year)	30

¹²²Conant, The Education of American Teachers, op. cit., 73.

¹²³Ibid., 81. ¹²⁴Ibid. ¹²⁵Ibid., 158.

The professional sequence referred to in Table I would consist of: (1) Course in child growth and development, with extensive laboratory experiences; a year-long study of children in many settings (3 semester hours' total credit for one class meeting plus laboratory experiences each week, perhaps in the junior year), (2) Course in history, philosophy, or sociology of education (3 semester hours, perhaps in the junior year), (3) Courses in the teaching of reading accompanied by regular laboratory experiences (minimum of 3 semester hours for teachers of grades 4, 5, and 6; minimum of 6 semester hours for teachers of kindergarten and the first three grades), (4) A series of intensive workshops in the content and method of elementary school subjects (including a special methods course in the field of concentration for upper-grade teachers) with course work differentiated for lower and upper elementary grades in line with differing demands of those levels of teaching. (Maximum of 13 and 10 semester hours for prospective teachers of upper and lower grades respectively), and (5) Year-long laboratory experiences accompanying course work above and including at least 8 weeks of practice teaching, involving a minimum of 3 hours daily in the classroom (8 semester hours).¹²⁶

¹²⁶Ibid.

TABLE II
Preparation of the high school teacher
in social studies¹²⁷

General education, including 9 hours in history, 3 hours of sociology, and anthropology, 3 hours of political science, 3 hours of economics, and 3 hours of general psychology	60
Educational psychology	3
Philosophy or history of sociology of ed.	3
Further history	33
Further political science	3
Further economics	3
Geography	6
Practice teaching and special methods	9
	120

TABLE III
Preparation of the high school teacher
in mathematics¹²⁸

General education, including 6 hours of mathematics, 12 hours of science, and 3 hours of general psychology	60
Educational Psychology	3
Philosophy or history of sociology of ed.	3
Physics or chemistry	6
Field of concentration (mathematics)	39
Practice teaching and special methods	9
	120

The above tables are given as samples of subject matter preparation necessary for high school teachers. One can substitute the particular field of concentration to derive at suggested programs.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 172. ¹²⁸ Ibid., 174.

Group A. Recommendations Requiring Action
by either a Chief State School Officer, A
State Board of Education or a Legislature.¹²⁹

1. Certification requirements

For certification purposes the state should require only (a) that a candidate hold a baccalaureate degree from a legitimate college or university, (b) that he submit evidence of having successfully performed as a student teacher under the direction of college and public school personnel in whom the state department has confidence, and in a practice teaching situation of which the state department approved, and (c) that he hold a specially endorsed teaching certificate from a college or university which, in issuing the official document, attests that the institution as a whole considers the person adequately prepared to teach in a designated field and grade level.

Three things involved in certification requirements are:

- (1) total amount of preparation, (2) amount of instruction in professional education (varied from state to state), and
- (3) amount of general education and subject matter specialization.

Dr. Conant indicates that his findings show that certification requirements are not rigidly enforced in any state; in all of the sixteen most populous states, it is relatively simple for a local school district to circumvent them.¹³⁰ Large numbers of people are teaching who do not meet the state's minimum standards, and this certainly is a national scandal. He points out that on the basis of the sample drawn, it would appear that throughout the country, nearly half the classes in biology are

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¹²⁹ Ibid., 210-211. The numbering of the recommendation corresponds to the way Dr. Conant has listed them in his report.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 50.

taught by teachers who have devoted less than a quarter of four years to a study of that subject.¹³¹ A similar situation exists in grades seven and eight where thirty-four percent of the mathematics classes are taught by teachers who have studied the subject in college for less than nine semester hours.¹³²

Dr. Conant does not favor the use by the states of standardized tests as the basis of certification. It is too difficult on a nationwide or statewide basis to determine the proper cut-off score. The ultimate test should be how the teacher actually performs in a classroom, as judged by experienced teachers.¹³³ He is also opposed to certification based on specific required courses, and on approved-program approach. He feels that we need a restricted approved-program basis for certification.¹³⁴

5. Programs of practice teaching

The state should approve programs of practice teaching. It should, working cooperatively with the college and public school authorities, regulate the conditions under which practice teaching is done and the nature of the methods of instruction that accompanies it. The state should require that the colleges and public school systems involved submit evidence concerning the competence of those appointed as cooperating teachers and clinical professors.

6. State information service

State Department of Education should develop and make available to local school boards and colleges and universities data relevant to the preparation and employment of teachers. Such data may include information about the types of teacher-education programs of colleges or universities throughout the

¹³¹Ibid., 52. ¹³²Ibid. ¹³³Ibid., 58. ¹³⁴Ibid.

state and information concerning supply and demand of teachers at various grade levels and in various fields.

Dr. Conant maintains that all programs of teacher education and all local school boards should be subjected to more informed public scrutiny than has often in the past been possible. The state educational authorities have unique opportunity and responsibility for this scrutiny.¹³⁵ This recommendation reflects Dr. Conant's conviction that the public stake in education demands the active, continuous, and informed interest of laymen on the local level. This suggestion, in the opinion of the writer, is a good, practical suggestion.

7. Assignment of teachers by local boards
The state education authorities should give top priorities to the development of regulations insuring that a teacher will be assigned only to those teaching duties for which he is specifically prepared, and should enforce these regulations rigorously.

The quality of education would be greatly improved if this recommendation was enforced. Too many teachers are teaching subjects for which they are unqualified to teach. This recommendation would tend to eliminate the hiring of poor teachers.

10. Certification reciprocity among states
Whenever a teacher has been certified by one state under the provisions of Recommendations 1 and 2, his certificate should be accepted as valid in any other state.

This recommendation would refer to initial certification.

Allen F. Rosebrock has expressed the sentiments of the writer

¹³⁵Ibid., 66.

when he stated, "With wide variations of standards from state to state, and from college to college within states, the result of this proposal for unrestricted reciprocity would be to depress the standards of the highest to those of the lowest."¹³⁶ It is suggested that Dr. Conant and his colleagues should have visited the less populous states before making this proposal.

Group B. Recommendations Involving
Appropriations by State Legislatures¹³⁷

4. State financial responsibility for practice teaching
The state should provide financial assistance to local boards to insure high-quality practice teaching as part of the preparation of teachers enrolled in either private or public institutions.

This could be a very expensive procedure if adopted. One would have to be presented with the inadequacy of present practice teaching situations before adopting this proposal. This might be beneficial for the employment of Dr. Conant's "clinical professors".

12. Loan policy for future teachers
Each state should develop a loan policy for future teachers aimed at recruiting into the profession the more able students; the requirements for admission should be left to the institution, but the state should set a standard for the recipients in terms of scholastic aptitude; the amount of the loan should be sufficient to cover expenses, and the loan should be cancelled after four or five years of teaching in the public schools of the state.

¹³⁶ Allan F. Rosebrock, "A Symposium on James Bryant Conant's The Education of American Teachers," The Journal of Teacher Education XV, No. 1 (March, 1964), p. 19.

¹³⁷ Conant, The Education of American Teachers, loc. cit., 211-212.

Dr. Conant, stated, "What I suggest is simply this: If a state is faced with a shortage of teachers, it would be far better to push the new developments with the hope of decreasing the demand than to continue to recruit teachers with very low intellectual ability, as some states do at the present moment."¹³⁸

This plan has been in effect under the NDEA, except that the loan must be repaid in part. This proposal would aid in recruiting people into the profession, but would they be the right people?

Group C. Recommendations Requiring Action
by a Local School Board, either acting alone
or in conjunction with State Action¹³⁹

3. Cooperating teachers in practice teaching
Public school systems that enter into contracts with a college or university for practice teaching should designate, as classroom teachers working with practice teachers, only those persons in whom competence as teachers, leaders, and evaluators they have the highest confidence, and should give such persons encouragement by reducing their work loads and raising their salaries.

This recommendation would mean an increase in the budget. One would presume that only the "best teachers" would be given this assignment. The raise in salary probably would not be the type of incentive a co-operating teacher desires.

11. Initial probationary period of employment
During initial probationary period, local school boards should take specific steps to provide the new teacher with every possible help in the form of: (a) limited teaching responsibility;

¹³⁸ Ibid., 83. ¹³⁹ Ibid., 212-213.

(b) aid in gathering instructional materials; (c) advice of experienced teachers whose own load is reduced so that they can work with the new teacher in his own classroom; (d) shifting to more experienced teachers those pupils who create problems beyond the ability of the novice to handle effectively; and (e) specialized instruction concerning the characteristics of the community, the neighborhood, and the students he is likely to encounter.

In the opinion of the writer, this is an excellent suggestion. It would help new teachers adjust to the profession with ease. One can learn a great deal from other faculty members.

23. Revision of salary schedule by school boards
School boards should drastically revise their salary schedules. There should be a large jump in salary when a teacher moves from the probationary status to tenure. Any salary increments based on advanced studies should not be tied to course credits earned (semester hours), but only to the earning of a master's degree, based normally on full-time residence of four summer sessions in which the program is directed toward the development of the competence of the teacher as a teacher. Such a salary increment should be made mandatory by state law.

24. Financial assistance to teachers for study in summer schools
School boards or the state should provide financial assistance so that teachers may attend summer school after enrolling in a graduate school for the purpose of completing a program of the type stated in Recommendation 23.

This is a good incentive. However, if a teacher is given a salary increase because of his degree, this would compensate for his tuition.

25. Leaves of absence for future education of teachers
School boards should provide leave of absence with salary for a full-time semester residence at a university to enable teachers to study toward a

master's program, provided this program is designed to increase the competence of the teacher; state funds should be available for this purpose.

The writer wonders if Dr. Conant is seriously taking into account the shortage of teachers when making this recommendation.

- 27. In-service education of teachers
 To insure that the teachers are up to date, particularly in a period of rapid change (as in mathematics and physics), a school board should contract with an educational institution to provide short-term seminars (often called workshops) during the school year so that all the teachers, without cost to them, may benefit from the instruction. Such seminars or workshops might also study the particular educational problems of a given school or school district. (No credit toward salary increases should be given.)

This is an excellent suggestion which is utilized in many of our suburban schools.

Group D. Recommendations Requiring Action by the Faculties, Administrative Officers, and Trustees of an Institution engaged in Educating Teachers for the Public Elementary and Secondary Schools.¹⁴⁰

- 2. Collegiate or university responsibility
 Each college or university should be permitted to develop in detail whatever program of teacher education it considers most desirable, subject only to two conditions: first, the president of the institution in behalf of the entire faculty involved -- academic as well as professional -- certifies that the candidate is adequately prepared to teach on a specific level or in special classes of fields, and second, the institution establishes in conjunction with a public school system a state-approved practice-teaching arrangement.

The writer feels that the student is given little freedom

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 214-216.

of choice in planning his curriculum in view of Dr. Conant's rigid required courses text.

13. The all-university approach to teacher training
If the institution is engaged in educating teachers, the lay board trustees should ask the faculty or faculties whether in fact there is a continuing and effective all-university (or inter-departmental) approach to the education of teachers; and if not, why not?"
14. Requirements for collegiate or university teacher-education programs
The board of trustees should ask the faculty to justify the present requirements for a bachelor's degree for future teachers with particular reference to the breadth of the requirements and to spell out what in fact are the total educational exposures (school and college) demanded now in the fields of (a) mathematics, (b) physical science, (c) biological science, (d) social science, (e) English literature, (f) English composition, (g) history, (h) philosophy.
15. Foreign Language preparation
If courses are required in a foreign language, evidence of the degree of mastery obtained by fulfilling the minimum requirements for a degree should be presented to the board of trustees.
16. The establishment of "clinical professors"
The professor from the college or university who is to supervise and assess the practice teaching should have had much practical experience. His status should be analogous to that of a clinical professor in certain medical schools.

This is an excellent suggestion. However, there are usually too many students assigned to each supervisor of student teachers to provide for an ideal teacher-professor-student relationship.

17. Basic preparation for elementary teachers
 (a) The program for teachers of kindergargen and grades 1, 2, and 3 should prepare them in the content and methodology of all subjects taught in these early school years. Depth in a single subject or cluster of subjects is not necessary.
 (b) The program for teachers of grades 4, 5, and 6 should provide depth of content and methods of teaching in a specific subject or cluster of subjects normally taught in these grades, with only an introduction to the remaining elementary school subjects.
18. Practice teaching for elementary teachers
 All future elementary teachers should engage in practice teaching for a period of at least eight weeks, spending a minimum of three hours a day in the classroom; the period must include at least three weeks of full responsibility for the classroom under the direction of a cooperating teacher and the supervision of a clinical professor.

The length of time which Dr. Conant suggests seems like a very short time of actual classroom experience.

Dr. Conant makes the following prediction, "My guess is that, in spite of all the talk about the importance of specialists in the elementary school, self-contained classrooms will continue to be the dominant pattern for kindergarten and the first three grades during the next ten years. During these years, however, there will be an increasing tendency to use specialists in grades four through six. It follows, then, that teachers for kindergarten and the the first three grades must be prepared as generalists capable of handling all the subjects appropriate for these early childhood years."¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹Ibid., 147.

19. Adequate staffing of small colleges training elementary teachers
Those responsible for financing and administering small colleges should consider whether they can afford to maintain an adequate staff for the preparation of elementary school teachers. Unless they are able to employ the equivalent of three or four professors devoting their time to elementary education, they should cease attempting to prepare teachers for the elementary schools.

Dr. Conant apparently takes a very pessimistic view of small colleges. This recommendation is well beyond the means of many colleges of less than two thousand students.

20. Single field diploma for secondary school teachers
An institution should award a teaching certificate for teachers in grades seven to twelve in one field only.

R. Daniel Chubbuck states that this recommendation seems unrealistic in a period of transition during which many small secondary schools will continue to exist.¹⁴² Dr. Conant seems to reject the "core" and other integrated programs.

21. Clinical professors in institutions educating secondary teachers
Every institution awarding a special teaching certificate for secondary school teachers should have on the staff a clinical professor for each field or combination of closely related fields.

22. Teaching diploma for art, music and physical education
An institution offering programs in art, music, or physical education should be prepared to award a teaching diploma in each of these fields without grade designation; institutional programs should not attempt to develop competency in more than one field in four years.

¹⁴²R. Daniel Chubbuck; "Grounds for a Program," Teacher Education Quarterly XXI, No. 2 (Winter 1963-64), p. 48.

The following recommendation is one of the most controversial recommendations of the report:

26. Master's degree programs

The graduate schools of education or their equivalent (in universities organized without such separate degree-granting schools) should devise a program for increasing the competence of teachers as teachers with the following characteristics:

- (1) It should be open to any graduate of the same institution in the same field of endeavor (e.g. elementary education, secondary education in social studies, etc.)
- (2) Courses should be allowed for credit toward the 30 semester hours whether or not the courses are of an elementary nature, provided that they are clearly courses needed to increase the competence of the teacher.
- (3) No credit toward the degree should be given for extension courses or courses taken on campus while the teacher is engaged on a full-time teaching job.
- (4) Passing of a comprehensive examination should be required for the master's degree, as is now the case in some institutions.
- (5) The summer-school sessions should be arranged so that four summer residences will complete the degree requirements, or two summers plus one full-time semester residence.
- (6) If the offering of the arts and sciences is not enough to provide meaningful work in the summer session (as it would not be in some state colleges) arrangements should be made for the transfer of credit from a university summer school with a good offering of courses in subject-matter fields.
- (7) For elementary teachers, the degree should be master of education in elementary education; for secondary teachers, master of education in English (or science, or social studies, or modern languages or mathematics).

The writer is in full agreement with Donald W. Robinson, Associate Director of Phi Delta Kappan, who says that the effect of this recommendation to eliminate late afternoon and evening courses as reputable experiences for teachers would be catastrophic for the extension division of many universities.¹⁴³ If this recommendation was applied across the board, it could eliminate much of the significant intellectual activity of the nation. Moonlighting activities account for some of the best books written, disciplines mastered, and agencies directed. Irving C. Starr does not believe that the graduate level courses taken on an evening or extension school basis are unrelated, hit-or-miss, credit-for-salary accumulating courses.¹⁴⁴ The writer is of the opinion that many educators disagree on this particular recommendation.

¹⁴³Donald W. Robinson, "Education's Flexner Report?," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV, No. 9 (June, 1964), p. 432.

¹⁴⁴Irving C. Staff, "Conant on Graduate Education: Some Pros and Cons," Teacher Education Quarterly, XI, No. 2 (Winter, 1963-64), p. 59. Teacher

Group E. Concerning Voluntary Accrediting Agencies

Before discussing the voluntary accrediting agencies, it is necessary to define terms. The "establishment" as used by Dr. Conant denotes a coalition of organized administrators, classroom teachers, state department of education personnel, professors of education, and executive staffs of such organizations as the school board association and the P.T.A.¹⁴⁵ These work in concert (Dr. Conant charges) to control certification and thereby the education of teachers, presumably in the outline of policy of the NEA.

Regarding the establishment, Dr. Conant writes, "I think it must be said that in almost every state the establishment is overly defensive; it views any proposal for change as a threat and assumes that any critic intends to enlarge its difficulties and responsibilities while simultaneously undermining its ability to hear them. In short, there is too much resentment for outside criticism. In some instances I found the establishment's rigidity frightening."¹⁴⁶

8. Composition of NCATE

The governing boards of NCATE and the regional associations should be significantly broadened to give greater power to (a) representatives of scholarly disciplines in addition to professional education, and to (b) informed representatives of the lay public.

¹⁴⁵Glenn C. Atkyns, "The Establishment in Connecticut," Teacher Education Quarterly, XI, No. 2 (Winter, 1963-64), p. 62.

¹⁴⁶Conant, The Education of American Teachers, op. cit., 40.

Dr. Conant stated, "Both NCATE and secondary school branches of regional accreditation agencies are controlled by people whose wide professional experience well qualifies them to advise colleges on how to prepare teachers, and to advise local school boards on what kinds of teachers to hire. However, both are widely, and I believe somewhat justly, accused of representing only a narrower sector of those actively engaged in American public and higher education; in neither are the well-informed conscientious lay citizens -- who, I believe, have an important role in determining educational policy -- adequately represented."¹⁴⁷

9. Function of NCATE

NCATE and the regional associations should serve only as advisory bodies to teacher preparing institutions, and to local school boards. They should, on the request of local boards, evaluate employment on the request of local boards. They should provide a forum in which issues concerning teacher education and employment are debated.

The recommended changes in certification policy and the proposed reduction of NCATE to advisory status are the points that capture the concern of professional educationalists. Reviewers in this category who favored Dr. Conant's proposals were Chandler¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 69.

¹⁴⁸B. J. Chandler, "The Conant Report and Illinois," Chicago Sunday Sun-Times, Section 2 (October 13, 1963).

and Keeton¹⁴⁹. Rosebrock¹⁵⁰, Stinnett¹⁵¹, Maucker¹⁵², and Stratmeyer¹⁵³ opposed the recommendations.

¹⁴⁹Morris Keeton, "A Symposium on James Bryant Conant's The Education of American Teachers," The Journal of Teacher Education, XV, No. 1 (March, 1964).

¹⁵⁰Rosebrock

¹⁵¹T. M. Stinnett, "Review," The Journal of Teacher Education, XV, No. 1 (March, 1964).

¹⁵²J. W. Maucker, "Review," The Journal of Teacher Education, XV, No. 1 (March, 1964)↓

¹⁵³Florence Stratmeyer, "Review," NEA Journal, (1963).

The Reaction to the Report

The reaction to Dr. Conant's book on teacher education has been mixed, and as he requested there has been controversy. On CBS Radio he stated, "My only worry is that there won't be a controversy I'm hoping there will be a vigorous controversy... whether people end by taking my suggestions or not -- the most important objective in my book would be to have a vigorous national debate among educators and layment on the question of how to educate the teachers of American youth."¹⁵⁴

There are those who agree almost wholeheartedly with him. Lindley Stiles states, "Clearly Conant has issued the sharpest challenge to teacher education since the creation of the normal school."¹⁵⁵ J. W. Maucker, President, State College of Iowa, stated, "Thank God for Mr. Conant. He has struck hard for clarity and sanity in a terribly important and confused sector."¹⁵⁶ Sterling McMurrin, former U. S. Commissioner of Education, says that the adoption of Dr. Conant's general principles would be a great step forward. Morris Keeton, Dean of Antioch College,

¹⁵⁴James Bryant Conant, on CBS Radio, quoted in Journal of Teacher Education, XV, No. 1 (March, 1964), p. 5.

¹⁵⁵Lindley J. Stiles, "Dr. Conant and his Critics," Teachers College Record, (May, 1964), p. 717.

¹⁵⁶Maucker, p. 6.

says that this book provides a framework for a national debate, which if well conducted, could end in significant reform.¹⁵⁷

Maxine Greene stated that the book is probably the definitive survey of the varied patterns of teacher-training in the United States; but Conant's proposals for reform now seem somewhat inconclusive.¹⁵⁸

Dr. Conant's critics are numerous on this book. The majority of them concur with Frederick W. Ness. He stated, "The keystone of the Conant reforms depends in large measure upon the return of certification authority to individual institutions with NCATE receiving only an advisory concession and with the state departments of instruction somewhat in the position of the aged grandfather living with his harassed daughter-in-law. But the various published reviews by representatives of the Establishment scarcely suggest that it is likely to yield its power eagerly to the kindly ministry of its academic relatives, the 1150 colleges and universities preparing teachers.¹⁵⁹" He holds that the sharpest objection to Dr. Conant's program stems from the conviction that colleges and universities are incapable of policymaking themselves.

¹⁵⁷ Keeton, p. 11.

¹⁵⁸ Maxine Greene, "Conant and the Perilous Profession," The Journal of Higher Education, XXXV, No. 2 (February, 1964), p. 104.

¹⁵⁹ Frederick W. Ness, "Conant on Teacher Education: Some Implications for the Liberal Arts College," Liberal Education, L, No. 3 (October, 1964), p. 403.

Roy A. Edelfelt, Associate Executive Secretary, National Council Teacher Education and Professional Standards, says that an obvious weakness in Dr. Conant's report is his preoccupation with mechanics and structure in certification, accreditation, preservice and in-service course prescription, student teaching, and high school prerequisites.¹⁶⁰ Far too little mention is given to the art of teaching, the personal-social-professional development of the student, the social purpose of education, the challenge and purpose of professional commitment, and the developmental process of skills and attitudes in learning.

Wilhelms wishes that Dr. Conant had not come out so coolly toward educational sociology and broader social foundations of education; hadn't thrown cold water on the burgeoning five-year movement, and he wished he could have worked in a more comprehensive image of the school of education.¹⁶¹

Willard B. Spalding, Review Editor, The Journal of Teacher Education, says that the report contains little which has not been advocated previously by students of teacher education, yet the little which is new is of unusual importance. He cites clinical practice teaching, institutional freedom to prepare

¹⁶⁰Roy A. Edelfelt, "What Do You Think of the Conant Report," The Journal of Teacher Education, XIV, No. 4 (December, 1963), p. 361.

¹⁶¹Fred T. Wilhelms, "A Personal Reaction to the Conant Report on Teacher Education," The Bulletin of the NASSP, XLVII, No. 285 (October, 1963), pp. 84-85.

teachers, new charter for graduate programs for teachers.¹⁶²

William Brickman is disappointed that Dr. Conant did not make full use of his foundation grants and advisers.¹⁶³

Allen F. Rosebrock, Director of Teacher Education and Certification, New Jersey State Department of Education, stated, "The proposal to place the approval of teacher education programs and standards for teacher licensure within the power of the faculties of each of the 1,200 individual colleges and universities that prepare teachers amounts to a recommendation for irresponsibility in the most literal sense of the word."¹⁶⁴

James D. Koerner, president of the Council for Better Education, made the following statement concerning Dr. Conant and his report on teacher education:

He proposes a sort of coup d'etat in the political structure of teacher education and a sweeping decentralization of powers; he proposes the re-establishment of the institutional autonomy that has been so badly eroded over the last few decades; he proposes to make academic excellent among the faculty and students of education the sine qua non of a good training program. All this, I submit, adds up to a revolution, or at least a proposed revolution. And I for one am delighted with this very imperfect, incomplete, inconsistent, often impressionistic, sometimes woolly-minded but courageous and apocalyptic report.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶²Willard B. Spalding, "Teacher Education," The Journal of Teacher Education, XIV, No. 4 (December, 1963), p. 461.

¹⁶³William W. Brickman, "Conant, Koerner, and the History of Education," School and Society, XCII, No. 2241 (March 21, 1964) p. 139.

¹⁶⁴Rosebrock, pp. 17-18.

¹⁶⁵James D. Koerner, "Proposals for Radical Reform," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV, No. 1 (October, 1963), p. 7.

Lindley J. Stiles says that some indication of the extent and nature of this reaction can also be gathered from the responses of thirty-eight chief state school officers to a letter requesting a description of any action their state is taking on the Conant recommendations. He stated, "Most state officers agree with the commissioner who wrote, 'In general, it has stimulated new interest in examining every aspect of our operation.'¹⁶⁶ New York and Wisconsin have initiated major efforts to test certain of the recommendations, and several others have financed studies on a lesser scale.

J. W. Maucker finds himself skeptical on two major points of analysis offered by Conant: (1) relying on competition among colleges to raise standards of quality without benefit of accreditation, and (2) expecting so much to be accomplished during the limited student teaching experience.¹⁶⁷ He is left undertain as to whether or not we should be striving for four or five years of pre-service preparation. His criticisms certainly are excellent and valid.

Dr. Conant delivered speeches on the content of his report at the AACTE and NSCTE Convention which took place February 19 - 22, 1964. The replies to his speeches were not so much against Dr. Conant's recommendations as they were against the man himself.

¹⁶⁶Stiles, p. 714.

¹⁶⁷Maucker, p. 8.

The addresses by Harold Taylor¹⁶⁸ and Francis S. Chase¹⁶⁹ were critical. Taylor disagreed with Dr. Conant's theme almost totally. Mr. Taylor stated that Dr. Conant's theme was the quarrel between educators and not the education of American teachers. He has obviously not understood Dr. Conant. Francis Chase criticized Dr. Conant for superficiality, lack of energy, lack of vigor, and being concerned with yesterday's battles.

It is rather difficult to assess the value of this report so soon after its publication. However, Phi Delta Kappan editors tried to assess the impact by questioning the education deans of AACTE member institutions.¹⁷⁰ The first 320 responses (fifty percent of the mailing) were used for this summary.

Forty percent of the deans (126) admitted that the book had some influence on their plans; ten expressed a substantial interest, and an consequent influence. The University of Maine reported a state-wide tryout of the Conant recommendations. The University of Wisconsin reported they are negotiating a research

¹⁶⁸Harold Taylor, "Educators Look at the Conant Report," Seventeenth Yearbook of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Proceedings of the 1964 Annual Meeting, (Chicago, Illinois, 1964), pp. 26-35.

¹⁶⁹Francis S. Chase, "On 'The Education of American Teachers,'" Seventeenth Yearbook of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Proceedings of the 1964 Annual Meeting, (Chicago, Illinois, 1964), pp. 36-42.

¹⁷⁰_____, "Education Deans Report Important Changes -- Some as Result of Conant Influence," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV, No. 9 (June, 1964), pp. 436-437.

grant to test Conant's proposals with respect to basing certification on judgments of teaching competence. Gonzaga University reports that the report has strengthened existing policy.

Fifty-two colleges reported increased time for student teaching. Sixty-eight claimed to have initiated more selective policies of admission and retention of students in the teacher education program. They also announced greater attention to student teaching. Fourteen mentioned improved supervision of student teaching.

Phi Delta Kappan survey of state superintendents' offices reflect continuing action to strengthen certification standards for teachers, and they expressed very little enthusiasm for the Conant proposals.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ _____, "State Superintendents Dissent," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV, No. 9 (June, 1964), p. 438.

Conclusion of the Study

The best way to conclude this section is to quote directly from Dr. Conant. He wrote:

If I were to try to characterize in two words the conclusion of my study, these words would be "freedom" and responsibility." The state should allow each college and university the maximum degree of freedom to develop its own program. Each institution should assume the maximum degree of responsibility for those graduates it certifies as being competent to teach. In the chapters dealing with the preparation of elementary and secondary teachers and in-service education, I have suggested the kinds of programs I have in mind when I refer to an institution's certifying the specific competence of a future teacher. Yet these chapters are not to be taken as blueprints as the only and one way of preparing classroom teachers. Rather, they are submitted as evidence of my contention that teachers can be adequately prepared for initial employment in four years. There may well be alternative programs which would be as good or better.

What I have been arguing for in essence is a competition to see which institution will quickly earn a high reputation for preparing well-trained teachers. Once free competition becomes possible in any state, there will be every reason for the academic professors and the professors of education in each college or university within that state to join hands to enhance the reputation of their particular institution. Before that day arrives, however, laymen will certainly have to enter into the fray in many states, and public opinion must be aroused. Yet in any endeavor the quarrel among educators must not be made more bitter; the goal is not victory for either side but mutual respect and complete cooperation. Thus while this volume is a call for action, it is also a call for reconciliation. Once the quarreling educators bury their hatchets, the layman may put his present worries aside. That united efforts to prepare better teachers would result in better schools requires no argumentation; that the nation would be the beneficiary of such a revolution is a self-evident proposition.¹⁷²

¹⁷²Conant, The Education of American Teachers, op. cit.,

CHAPTER V

SPECIAL INTERESTS

The Gifted Child

Dr. Conant's interest in the gifted child has been a concern of his for a number of years. One may examine his earliest writings and find mention of his concern. He especially enjoyed working with highly gifted youngsters when he was a science professor.

In *Education in a Divided World*, Dr. Conant deals with the question of how a brilliant boy or girl, clearly professional material, should be educated in a high school where not more than thirty percent of the graduates wish to go on for further education. He wrote:

Nine out of ten of the critics of our public high schools never understand the significance of this issue. They talk as though one could insert a curriculum designed for one type of school, the preparatory school, into another social setting. Those with experience have long ago given up the attempt; they have not abandoned differential curricula in the high school, but have tried not only to develop common learnings which cut across all programs, but also to find motivation for the college programs which correspond to the realities of the school in question. In this very difficult process the best interests of the talented youth may have been neglected (I am inclined to think they have), but that secondary education has been "ruined," as some declare is certainly not the case.¹⁷³

¹⁷³Conant, *Education in a Divided World*, op. cit., 173.

One of Dr. Conant's major points about the academically talented pupils is that they can and should be identified early in their schools. His operational definition of academically talented refers to all pupils who have the ability to study effectively and rewardingly advanced mathematics, foreign language, and courses in physics and chemistry.¹⁷⁴ Academically talented refers to fifteen to twenty percent of an age group and refers to a larger segment of the population than does gifted. He also favors ability grouping on a subject-by-subject basis.

He reported on the National Education Association Conference on the Identification and Education of the Academically Talented Pupil in High School, February 6-8, 1958, Washington, D. C.¹⁷⁵ He said that the conference stressed early identification in the eighth grade and even earlier. In some instances, it was found, the attitudes of parents and community may in some cases be a major block to a successful school program for the bright pupil. "Throughout the conference it was taken for granted that the academically talented would be educated in the same secondary schools as others less talented."¹⁷⁶ Ability grouping was stressed. Advanced Placement Program received the acclaim of all groups.

¹⁷⁴James Bryant Conant, "The Academically Talented Pupil." The NEA Journal, XLVII, No. 4 (April, 1958).

¹⁷⁵James Bryant Conant, "Education for the Academically Talented," School and Society, LXXXVI, No. 2132 (May 10, 1958), pp. 225-227.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 226.

In an informal talk entitled, "The Highly Creative Three Percent of the Population, Dr. Conant makes two points.¹⁷⁷ First, the academically talented are an entirely different group from the highly gifted and should be treated quite differently, and secondly, the highly gifted will excell in different specialties, which should be developed in one way or another, at least not blocked.¹⁷⁷

Dr. Conant discusses education of the gifted in Education and Liberty in 1953. He states that the first and foremost shortcoming of the American public schools is their failure to be sufficiently concerned with the intellectually able youth.¹⁷⁸ He wrote that high school superintendents, principals, and teachers must be far more effective in identifying the academically able youth and in preparing them for university education.

Dr. Conant is very partial to the Advanced Placement Program in relation to highly gifted students. The highly gifted student in this program may take freshmen courses in the last year of high school.¹⁷⁹

The accusation has been hurled at Dr. Conant by many critics that his concern for the gifted youngster has taken too important

¹⁷⁷James Bryant Conant, "The Highly Creative 3 Per Cent of the Population," Atlantic City Meetings of the AASA - February, 1959, Creativity of Gifted and Talented Pupils, (Columbia: Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959), p. 19.

¹⁷⁸Conant, Education and Liberty, op. cit., 63-64.

¹⁷⁹Conant, Slums and Suburbs, op. cit., 80.

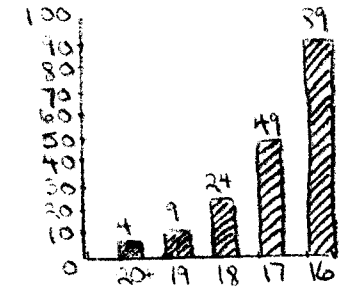
of a place in his book *The American High School Today*. They say that Dr. Conant set out to find out if the comprehensive high school can meet the needs of the gifted child. The writer is in agreement with this view.

A general criticism he hurls at the American public high schools is, "The academically talented student, as a rule, is not being sufficiently challenged, does not work hard enough, and his program of academic subjects is not of sufficient range."¹⁸⁰ He has found that the able boys too often specialize in mathematics and science and exclude foreign languages and neglect English and social studies. The above is reversed for girls who too often avoid mathematics, science and foreign languages.

DIAGRAM A¹⁸¹

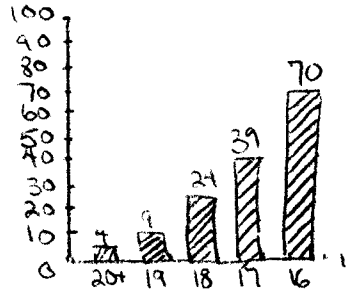
Number of Academic Subjects Taken by at Least 75 Percent of the More Able Boys and Girls during Four High School Years as shown by Inventory of 1958 Graduating Classes

Percent of 45 Schools Enrolling Boys



Number of Academic Subjects Boys

Percent of 45 Schools Enrolling Girls



Number of Academic Subjects Girls

¹⁸⁰ Conant, *The American High School Today*, *op. cit.*, 47.

¹⁸¹ ibid.

The attitude of the community is probably one of the most important factors in determining whether a high school is providing adequately for the education of the academically talented.¹⁸² Many communities put too much emphasis on outside activities such as basketball, football, and marching bands. Home study time for the academically talented student is often neglected.

Many of his recommendations in The American High School Today are concerned with the academically talented. Recommendation number one concerns the counseling system. He stresses that in guiding the more able students, the counselor should be on the outlook for the underachieving bright boy or girl. The Problem of motivation is an especially difficult one.

The teachers of the advanced academic elective courses -- foreign languages, mathematics, and sciences -- should maintain high standards. The standard of performance must be held extremely high.¹⁸³

Dr. Conant recommends ability grouping, and this would be beneficial for the gifted pupil within the comprehensive high school.

The minimum requirements for the academically talented would be:

Four years of mathematics, four years of one foreign language, three years of science, in addition to the four years of English and three years of social studies; a total of at least fifteen hours of homework each week.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 54.

Many academically talented¹⁸⁴ pupils may wish to study a second foreign language or in addition another course in social studies. Since such students are capable of handling twenty or more courses with homework, these additional courses may be added to the recommended minimum program. If the school is organized on a seven-or-eight-period day (Rec. 12) at least one additional course without homework may also be scheduled each year.¹⁸⁵

Dr. Conant recommends a special type of arrangement for the highly gifted pupils (three percent of the national population). The small number of pupils does not warrant special classes; however, special guidance officers can be assigned to these pupils for the full four years.

Dr. Conant states, "A comparison of the document published by the Policies Commission in 1950 entitled "Education for the Gifted" with the program recommended by a conference of the education of the "Academically Talented" (called by the NEA) in 1958 is instructive. For the highly gifted (one percent of the population) the commission recommended in 1950 an academic program which the conference in 1958 thought proper for the upper quarter of the high school student body!"¹⁸⁶

His observation is especially important since he was calling for more attention to the education of the gifted before the rest of the education field and laymen realized the need.

¹⁸⁴Dr. Conant now refers to "academically talented" as the top 15% of the high school population.

¹⁸⁵Conant, The American High School Today, loc. cit., 62-63.

¹⁸⁶Conant, Shaping Educational Policy, loc. cit., 7.

Dr. Conant's New Educational Policy

The true emergence of James Bryant Conant -- Educational Reformer has been evolving over the past several years. In his newest book, Shaping Educational Policy, and in his recent speeches we meet the real reformer side of Dr. Conant. He states, "It is my belief there will be more radical changes in the future, and this in turn means that our old methods of determining educational policy need drastic revision to meet the impact of the educational revolutions."¹⁸⁷ Is this the same person speaking that has continually given the impression that everything is just fine on the educational scene?

He relates that educational policy in the United States has been determined in the past by more or less haphazard interaction of leaders of public school teachers, administrators, and professors of education; state educational authorities; a multitude of state colleges and universities; private colleges and universities, and the variety of agencies of the Federal government through which vast sums of money have flowed to individual institutions and the states. He says that such a jumble of influential private and public bodies does not correspond to the needs of the nation in the 1960's.

Without a drastic Constitutional amendment, says Dr. Conant, nobody is in a position to establish an educational policy in the United States. He contends that some form of cooperative

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 4.

exploration of educational problems between the state and Federal government is imperative.¹⁸⁸ He states, "We cannot have a national educational policy, but we might be able to evolve a nationwide policy."¹⁸⁹ He concludes this may be done without an amendment to the Constitution.

Although the educational power of each of the single states is far greater than that of the Federal government, the state is limited in its power to establish an educational policy. There are limitations to these powers. The first derives from the Federal Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court; the second is the power of Congress to pass laws affecting individuals as citizens of the United States; the third is the practical limitation of the state's ability to raise money.¹⁹⁰

Dr. Conant says that the road to the development of a nationwide educational policy might be opened up by letting the fifty states, or at least fifteen to twenty of the more populous states, enter into a compact for the creation of an "Interstate Commission for Planning a Nationwide Educational Policy."¹⁹¹ The compact would be drawn up by the states and approved by Congress. Each state would be represented.

He assures the reader that he is well aware that there is no novelty in suggesting the appointment of a national body to

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 110. ¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 111. ¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 111.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 123.

plan for the future of American education.¹⁹² This is a time-honored scheme exercised by the President of the United States. However, it can be used more effectively.

Dr. Conant suggests certain premises which would constitute the framework for all the working parties of the Commission:

1. It is assumed that our present form of government should be perpetuated; to that end all future citizens of the nation should receive an education that will prepare them to function as responsible members of a free society, as intelligent voters, and, if appointed or elected to public office, as honest reliable servants of the nation, state, or locality.
2. It is assumed that in every state the parents have a right to send their children to private schools, colleges, and universities instead of to the publicly supported institutions. This assumption follows from the interpretation of the Federal Constitution by the Supreme Court on more than one occasion.
3. It is assumed that each state is committed to the proposition of providing free schooling to all the children in the state through twelve grades.
4. It is assumed that each state desires to have all normal children in the state attend school at least five hours a day, 150 days a year, at least until they reach the age of 18, but that the states differ and will continue to differ in regard to the laws requiring school attendance and the way special provisions are provided for physically and mentally handicapped children.
5. It is assumed that each state accepts the responsibility of providing for the education of at least some of its youth beyond high school; the organization and financing of such education, however, differs and will continue to differ state by state; in each

¹⁹²Ibid., 125.

state opportunities for education beyond high school now includes at least one university chartered by the state and largely supported by public funds; the continuance of such universities as centers of research, advanced study, and above all, fearless free inquiry is essential to the welfare of the state and the nation.

6. It is assumed that the education provided in high school and beyond by public institutions is designed to develop the potentialities of all the youth to fit them for employment in a highly industrialized society.
7. The financing of education, including research and scholarly work in the universities, is a concern of private universities, the states, and the Federal government.¹⁹³

After the framework has been formulated, the commission would determine which subjects to explore and name the working parties. The working parties should proceed to explore in depth the state by state differences and put these differences as the center of the debate when it came to making recommendations.

In the opinion of the writer, the future of American public education rests with educators such as Dr. Conant who are willing to suggest drastic changes in our educational policy. It is truly a pity that it took so many years for Dr. Conant to speak out and say what truly was on his mind.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 129-130.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL

STATES INCLUDED IN STUDY

California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota

Missouri
New Jersey
New York
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
Wisconsin

APPENDIX B: MINNESOTA AND THE CONANT REPORT ON THE AMERICAN
HIGH SCHOOL

Perspectives on the Conant Report¹⁹⁴ considers how well one state meets or does not meet the Conant Report criteria. It is presented as an example of the manner in such a state tries to measure its program with the Conant Report.

L. L. Huntley, President of the Minnesota State Board of Education considers the Conant Report and Minnesota in the light of two important questions: (1) how closely do Minnesota high schools meet any reasonable definition of a comprehensive high school, and (2) what can be done, and by what agencies, to improve our schools to fit Conant's definition of the comprehensive high school?¹⁹⁵

President Huntley found that a large percentage do not meet definition, and their size is such to prohibit them from reaching such a school. His suggestion to remedy number one and two is to increase the size of the high schools in the state. This idea is reinforced by Carl W. Anderson, Principal of Minneapolis Washburn High School and Samuel H. Popper, Associate Professor of Education.

¹⁹⁴Perspectives on the Conant Report, University of Minnesota, (Social Science Research Center of the Graduate School, 1960), pp. 1-103.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 5.

APPENDIX C: STATES VISITED IN STUDY OF AMERICAN TEACHER
EDUCATION

California
Colorado
Connecticut
Florida
Georgia
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
New Jersey
New York
North Carolina
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Tennessee
Texas
Virginia
Washington
Wisconsin

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Approval Sheet

The thesis submitted by Harlene Sperling has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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Date


Signature of Adviser