

## TEACHERS ARE "DIFFERENT"

• MARGARET E. HARRIS

MANY PEOPLE now in the teaching profession began their career when and where they were considered public property to such an extent that their social activities were regulated by the local board of education. At present it is rare to find a board ruling which is even concerned with how many dates a teacher has, the days of the week on which it is proper to have dates, where the teacher shall board, or which church shall have the right to his or her membership and services. However, there are too many places over the nation where a necessity to "trade" with the local board places on the teacher a constant fear that some action as an individual may jeopardize employment.

A wise community wants for its children the best its teachers have to give. How can this be assured? Many communities and administrators would be shocked if told they were not being reasonable with regard to their teachers. But treating teachers as human beings

pays rich dividends. Of course, there are some teachers who may never be worth much to children or community. Other teachers can and should show more initiative in finding a functional place in the community. However, any community would do well to examine its inconsistencies of attitude and practice toward teachers, for it would discover that most teachers respond gratefully and richly to considerate treatment. Unfortunate community feelings toward teachers vary with different parts of the country, but certain of them are general. Among those most often encountered are:

### *Colorless Personality and Altar Bent*

1. Teachers are uninteresting personalities; they will not discuss anything except school work. Could this attitude be traceable in part to the types of activities expected of teachers by the community? The smaller towns expect the teachers to take charge of Sunday School classes, lead Boy or Girl Scout troops, be president of the P.T.A., or do similar things which cut them off from normal association with other adults having varied interests. Members of no other profession are expected to confine their relations outside work hours so wholly to their co-workers or juvenile society. Larger communities often disregard all mem-

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*Teachers have a job to do just like anybody else. Why an aura of "difference" would have grown up around them is a little hard to understand. But in some communities this has happened, and the unfortunate teachers are left suspended in a kind of social vacuum. Margaret E. Harris, Supervisor of Schools in Pike County, Alabama, describes some prevalent misbeliefs about teachers and discusses the unhappy situations to which they can lead.*

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bers of the school staff except the superintendent.

Many teachers have interests and gifts undiscovered by the community. Their discovery would enrich community life and probably mean more rapid growth of the teacher's skills. If a teacher dares refuse to accept the responsibility of the usual requests made of her to take over the community jobs which no one else wants, she is likely to find herself ignored almost completely. In some communities teachers are considered "outsiders" to such an extent that it is difficult for them to find a place to live.

2. Young teachers are interested only in getting married; so you cannot expect good work of them. Desiring marriage and a home of one's own is normal for young people of our society. If the young men and women teaching in our schools have opportunity for wholesome association with members of the opposite sex they respond to professional leadership on a high plane. Their capacity for work is prodigious and their standards are much more severe than are those of many of their elders in the profession.

#### *Teachers Must Measure Up to Arbitrary Standards*

3. Married women should not teach. There is usually very little reasoning of any kind by opponents of employing married teachers. True, for many people, marriage presents more problems than it solves. But the person who is able to adjust to the difficulties contingent upon establishing successful family life should be able to adjust very successfully to school living. Add to this the insight a thoughtful mother has into child development and you

have assets invaluable to good teaching.

4. Teachers should be able to do with and for children all of the things which parents and community have not been able to do. Right now this attitude is focused on blaming the schools for the wave of juvenile delinquency. Teachers *have* done more specialized study than parents on problems related to child behavior and learning. And sometimes there are mental and emotional emergencies when a specialist is needed, just as there are physical emergencies which the family doctor does not try to handle without the aid of a specialist. However, many of the problems with children could be solved without a specialist, but they go unsolved because community, parents, and teachers do not work out a curative or, better still, a preventive program together. Leaders are constantly pointing out the fact that learning takes place in the total environment, and many factors work together to produce or prevent delinquency.

#### *Teachers Aren't Leaders*

5. Teachers show no leadership ability; they have no sense of daring. For one to feel free to exercise leadership, it is necessary to have an assurance of security economically, socially, and professionally. When there is no guarantee of tenure if one does a good job, or if one's tenure depends upon acting as a tool of some vested interest, there certainly will not be much incentive for leadership. Honest mistakes must be accepted as the natural lot of anyone who ventures to have and carry out an idea. Along with this, one should consider that the person who has to spend a great deal of time manipulating a sub-standard salary to care for most pressing

family and personal needs has exhausted both time and emotions to such an extent that leadership abilities have been greatly impaired.

Another aspect of this problem has to do with social and professional acceptance and appreciation which tend to create new demands on a person and to stimulate more thoughtful action. This factor should be seriously considered by staff members of the school system who hold administrative or supervisory positions. One of their duties is to develop leadership among teachers, but all too frequently they have so little insight into the possibilities of this assignment that they not only do not help develop leadership—they actually prevent it.

#### *A Leaky Roof Doesn't Matter*

6. Environment has no effect on the quality of teaching. This myth is hardly ever put into words but the drabness of many large city school buildings, the inadequacy of many rural buildings—even to protect the inmates from the weather—speak loudly for the lack of concern about environment. Even big business has found it profitable economically to make surroundings attractive as well as scientifically adequate. This applies to both physical and emotional environment.

Perhaps you have other myths to add to this list. Effective action in combating all of them must be based on respect for the teacher as a person.

¶ Cooperation between campus and field helps young teachers fit easily into new jobs

## CAN WE SEPARATE IN- AND PRE-SERVICE?

• DAVID M. TROUT

A NEW EDUCATIONAL problem is beginning to make its appearance in the courts. In certain States the law re-

quires that the county superintendent or commissioner of schools shall have had, let us say, for example, thirty months of teaching experience before he takes office. Last year candidates who had done five months of practice teaching for which credit was granted toward graduation and certification and had, subsequently, taught twenty-five months, were challenged on the ground that practice teaching cannot be regarded as teaching experience. Litigation concerning this issue is now pending.

*One of the fetishes in educational thinking has been the belief that in- and pre-service are separate branches of the profession. Increased coordination of plans and programs between institutions of higher learning and teachers in the field is fast eliminating this unnecessary jog in teacher growth. David M. Trout of Central Michigan College of Education discusses the significance of this change in the light of the major emphases which traditionally characterize teacher education in the United States.*

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