

## Our Readers Say

IN THESE DAYS of teacher unrest it might be wholesome "for the good of the service" to report on some of the causes of teachers' discontent which have aggravated the low salary crisis. Our periodicals for administration could take the lead in bringing about any needed changes not connected primarily with money rewards. These publications are run by fine men and women, not by pedagogues (in the hostile modern sense) and what is published is, or could be, the best that our leaders have to offer. Teachers respect these publications, of which indeed many are well worth reading from delightfully written editorials to the very last advertisement.

It is true, the reader may feel that the contributors, in their effort to be "constructive," show too much acceptance of school administration as it exists and too little critical analysis of the way schools in some districts are actually run, too much unconsciously smug approval of the newest theories being tried out, and too little concern for the talents, capabilities, personality and *rights* of teachers. It has long been the habit for administrative officials in large public school systems to *arrange* and for teachers to *accept*, but teachers who are worth their salt are today unanimous in thinking that this should not be if teaching is to be as good as it should and could be.

The emphasis upon duty for teachers and not for administrators has been one weak spot in our attitude towards the problem of educational leadership. The startling exodus of teachers from the classrooms warns us to mend our ways and before it is too late transfer back to the teachers their authority and the freedom to use it.

Just run through the tables of contents of most of our educational periodicals,

especially those concerned with administration and supervision and see how few titles point to the need for improvement in our "leadership" personnel, and how many emphasize the need for improvement of teachers. Even where the title indicates a criticism of leadership the article itself turns out to be merely a warning to attend to the improvement of teachers.

In fact, teachers think the administrator believes that all teachers, like belated adolescents, need radical improvement and constant overseeing. It sometimes looks as if the administrative body, by implication, at least, considers itself—*ipso facto*—always superior to teachers, not only in the practice of administration but—no matter how long they have been out of the classroom—also in ability to teach. Some of the articles make teachers angry. Why, they ask, is it that even teachers whom the administration has chosen on its own terms, seem to need so much improvement; why should painstakingly trained graduates of *approved* teachers colleges, who must have been satisfactory when chosen, at once appear to be in need of repairs which they are not capable of making for themselves, while the administrators, who once were teachers too, require in their own eyes, no improving?

Teachers believe, from their own experiences, that it is a very rare executive who ever thinks he should sit down and look himself and his administrative colleagues in their educational faces and honestly appraise what he sees. He is probably not aware, even then, that, although he is himself not guilty, there are some "leaders" who think they can do no wrong, that their way is the only right way. It is too bad; since, for best results, a teacher should be working for a cause and not for administrators.

If administrators as a group of educators,

and not officials, under the aegis of our best periodicals remembered that "teaching" alone cannot make children learn, that some children never learn as well as we want them to learn, no matter what any one does; if *all* administrators, and not only some of them, would assume that teachers in the classroom know far more about the children in their classrooms than any supervisor; if *all* administrators, and not only the most revered, would now and then inspect the teachers' work in a spirit of humility and with the purpose of learning instead of criticizing; if there were fewer "training" efforts and more matter-of-fact acceptance of teachers' complaints, judgments, opinions, and hints; if *all* administrators, and not only the most thoughtful and best beloved, remembered at least occasionally that for good teaching they are, in the last analysis, the least necessary of all school personnel whose existence is justified pedagogically only if they make the teachers' work easier and more worthwhile; if *all* administrators, as well as those who in their souls remain teachers to the end of time no matter what they are called, remembered that for education the essentials are the teachers and their talents, our school systems would stand a better chance of doing a real job of educating.

The great teacher is humble because he knows how much more there always is to learn; the great supervisor is a human being, who also knows his limitations, and his associates—even the least to the proudest—love and respect him for it. The useful administrator knows he is not wiser than the teacher simply because he has more power and a larger salary. He knows he gets his position and the higher salary because so few persons want the thankless job, i.e. his salary is the answer to supply and modern demand. Let the administrator tell the teaching force just that, and see how quickly morale improves and how much more responsibility teachers will accept for their own success.

Teaching will not improve so long as others want to do the thinking; teachers who have brains and ability will not want to be called teachers if that means carrying out orders. Talking about it never made any teacher better, criticism never did any good—it only "riles" the good teacher and makes the less industrious willing to let the administrator do the work. Why think when thinking is not needed, why use one's intelligence when intelligence is not wanted, but only obedience.—MYRTLE MANN GILLET, *Supervisor, Special Education, Philadelphia Public Schools.*

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## The Changing World

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these two groups together and give prospective teachers experience and children needed instructional service? Similarly, schools of education, teachers colleges, and other institutions preparing teachers are located in rural or urban communities that need community services of various sorts. The students in these colleges could secure fine experience in this type of community service and the communities could benefit from the services rendered.

We shall never have a really vital education until we have a vital teacher education, and we cannot secure this education out of formal bookish materials and even more bookish experiences. Teach-

ing is a vital human endeavor; it is constantly changing in terms of the life which supports the school. Teachers must understand human beings. To do so they must know something of the sciences which throw light on the human organism and behavior. But they can best study these sciences when they spend at least part of their educational lives and experiences working with people in schools and communities. Some schools of education, teachers colleges, and liberal arts colleges are going to undertake this kind of program in the near future. These schools will lead the way to a really effective teacher education.

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