

The Changing World

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NEEDED: A NEW DYNAMIC IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

AMERICA GREW to greatness on faith, industry, courage, and confidence in the future. Those who remember the pre-First-World-War world recall the confidence with which small businessmen, farmers, and workers faced the world of tomorrow when it came to investments, community planning, and business enterprise. Since the great depression all this has been largely changed. We are jittery and insecure with regard to the future. In the face of definite shortages of a great variety of articles there is talk of over-production. In the face of a scarcity of labor there is discussion of unemployment.

On the educational front we exhibit the same jittery behavior. Our colleges, though filled to overflowing with students, are afraid to make adequate provisions for fear there may be a rapid downward trend in enrollment. This is a period for expansion, for bold enterprising action, and far-flung experimental effort. None of these characteristics is widely present in education today. On the contrary we are returning to outworn curriculum patterns, educational procedure, and organization. Our educational leaders are cautious, fearful, and lacking in vision. When faculties and students need the stimulus of creative thinking, of a bold adventurous spirit, and a confident faith in democracy, our leadership falters, hesitates, takes a worm's-eye view of the problems we face, and exhibits a pathetic lack of faith in the future of both education and free institutions.

Generally speaking, the layman is more alert to the educational needs of our country and to the potentialities of a forward-looking program than is the educator himself. The layman also has more faith in free institutions and more real sensitivity

to the cultural needs of our times. But the layman is becoming dangerously out of patience with the cloistered attitudes and dilatory action of educators. The result has been a marked loss of confidence in education on the part of layleaders in our society. The common man has weighed us and found us wanting in the educational leadership he wants.

Clearly, American education needs a new dynamic in its leadership. It needs a leadership with confidence in democratic ideas—that has faith in freedom and in the future of our country. This leadership must replace caution and timidity with bold enterprising action. It must take chances on new educational ideas and move out on new educational frontiers. There will, of course, be the objection that such action is risky on educational grounds and fraught with the possibility of financial loss. The answer is that all gains in science, in business, and in professional advancement have been the result of risk-taking. The unwillingness of our business and educational leadership to take risks at present is a bad omen for the future of our free society and of our education.

Beyond the summer lies a new school year. Let us approach it with faith in people, in democracy, and in our country. Let us give the world a positive demonstration of the workability of freedom. Let us demonstrate the moral power of our democratic outlook through positive, bold, and energetic action on educational and social fronts. In so doing we will regain what we have lost in public confidence; we will achieve an effective education; we will save our free institutions; and we will earn the respect of the world for our people and for the values we profess.

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