

college people and public school leaders now engaged in field programs keep careful records of their experiences with attendant successes and failures, evaluations and implications, knowledge

may be rapidly advanced. The outcome can do much to improve the quality of instruction available to youth in smaller communities.—*Merle A. Stone-*
man, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Letters from Abroad

Column Editor: Gertrude H. Fitzwater
Contributor: Immanuel Yafeh

EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

Education is full-time partner to the pioneer in the settlement and construction programs of the world's youngest democracy. Immanuel Yafeh, contributor of this month's letter, is headmaster, Elementary Division, Reali School, and Lecturer on Method and Supervisor of Practice Teaching, Teachers College, Haifa, Israel.

Mr. Yafeh is a graduate of Hebrew Teachers College, Jerusalem, and has studied at the Institute of Education, University of London. Most of his twenty-one years in professional work have been spent in elementary education. He is author of four books for children. At present, Mr. Yafeh is observing schools in the United States under sponsorship of the Department of State and of the Office of Education.

HEBREW educators in what was, until 1948, Mandatory Palestine, could boast several outstanding achievements.

Foremost among these was the revival of the Hebrew language, which in two generations ceased to be a dead, classical language like Latin or Sanskrit. It became a living language, in use at home and in the streets, in kindergarten and university, in newspapers, in research and in literature.

Another achievement was establishment of a system of public schools which provided education to practically every Jewish child in the country. This system, in 1948, provided for about 100,000 pupils, enrolled in kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools, continuation schools, vocational schools and teacher-training institutions. A Hebrew university, a technical college of university standard, and an institute for research and post-graduate studies were established also. Illiteracy was practically nonexistent. All

this was accomplished without the authority of a government, without a law of compulsory education, and often without adequate funds and under adverse conditions.

The Jewish youth of the country were from an early age taking active part in the life and aspirations of the young, democratic community. They were inculcated with constructive and positive ideas, they were bent on pioneering and settlement, and they acquired a peaceful approach to international problems and a proper esteem for other cultures and peoples. These were the qualities which enabled the youth of Palestine, and later Israel, to do their part in the resettlement and rebuilding of the country, and (this is not a paradox) to win their war.

With the establishment of the State of Israel great progress could be expected. One of the early steps of the new government was to introduce compulsory education, free of charge, for

every child in the country, Jew and non-Jew alike. The law at present provides only for the ages of 5 to 14, but is intended to include gradually ages up to 18. There is provision also for working youth from 14 to 17 years old. Special education and services are provided under the Education Law for handicapped, mentally retarded, and delinquent children. Included also in the program are extensive agricultural and technical education, curriculum research and experimentation, and encouragement of pioneering youth movements.

But problems facing education in Israel have been growing in scope and complexity. Israel's policy of admitting into the country every Jew who wants or has to come caused the population to increase by nearly half during the past two years. The population is still increasing at the rate of about 20% per year. Many of the newcomers are from countries with low standards of culture and living; many are remnants of Nazi persecution and of D.P. camps, and to

them readjustment is difficult even under ideal conditions. They come with varying cultural patterns, living standards and languages. The education of their children was in many cases incomplete and interrupted, if not worse, and almost always it was alien to the language, traditions, spirit and ideas of education in Israel. To overcome all this Israel will probably have to become the greatest psychological laboratory of our time.

Efforts to Meet Teacher Shortage

To meet the acute shortage of teachers, studies at teacher-training institutions have been accelerated and cut by one year; graduates of secondary schools have been granted temporary licenses after receiving a concentrated course in pedagogy and methods of teaching, and the same is being done with immigrants who have some knowledge of Hebrew and who have had some teaching experience in other countries. To avoid the possibility of a lower standard of education, these "emergency teachers"

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will have to complete their own education in evening classes and summer courses. The increase in the numbers of available teachers enabled the government to establish schools in every new settlement and immigrants' camp and to open transition classes for immigrant children in many of the older schools. Several Children's Villages also are doing much in this direction; and many collective settlements have adopted groups of children and youth, whom they maintain and educate.

The Army too plays a large part in the education of immigrants, both men and women, of age 18 or over. Some six out of eighteen months of compulsory military service are devoted to the study of Hebrew, the geography and history of Israel, and to agricultural work. Many of these young people leave the Army in organized groups, to settle on the land.

Orientation courses for professional people, evening classes in Hebrew and other subjects, vocational courses for adults, and various other courses have been established. The older settlements have been sending some of their best and most experienced members to help newcomers establish their own settlements, to live among them, and to give them guidance and advice. Cultural and educational work is going on wherever there are immigrants.

Much has been accomplished, yet the great experiment has only just begun. The difficulties seem at times insurmountable. Israel is recruiting all its resources and all the help and advice that are available. Prominent among the people whom Israel has consulted is the U. S. Commissioner of Education. Great efforts—mental, physical and financial—will be needed before the work is done.—*Immanuel Yafeh.*

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