IN TIME OF CRISIS it is unrealistic for any tax-supported enterprise to expect immunity from criticism. The public schools are no exception. As costs of living spiral upward taxes come by many to be viewed with a jaundiced eye. Investors and workers in private enterprise expect and often receive increasing returns. Some of this attitude likely carries over to the schools. And there are some persons who fear the power of education when it appears to them that their personal interests and welfare are not placed above those of others. The world situation and conditions of general unrest also contribute to confusion and suspicion.

It is only natural, therefore, that as educational costs continue to mount, closer scrutiny of the public schools is bound to come. In many instances adverse criticism may be directed toward the schools. The battles thus far encountered may well be but minor skirmishes in comparison with those which the future may bring. Much of this will depend upon the attitude of those who are on the firing line in education today. All of us are in this category, and we have a very real obligation if public education is to continue to be the bulwark of American democracy.

Planned Program Is Needed

We must learn to face criticism and to take it in stride. This suggests no foolhardy disregard of reality nor a militant defensive action characterized by weak excuses, unnecessary apologies, name-calling, and other questionable tactics which are substituted for a more positive position. Instead it proposes a planned program of action grounded in an effective and realistic educational program and in a sound working relationship with the public. The enemies of public education likely will seek other fronts on which to attack the schools. They undoubtedly will attempt to confuse and then to conquer. Eternal vigilance is essential to anticipate these attacks and to prepare for meeting them. And there are preventive measures which reduce the likelihood of their development and minimize their adverse effect.

It must be remembered, also, that some criticism is legitimate, called for, and even essential to better education. Admittedly, some of the criticism is obviously unjustified and is aimed at weakening or destroying the public schools. And some of it is not. Attempts to link honest criticism with subversive movements may only serve to alienate well-meaning citizens who are sympathetic to the schools even though they may be critical of them. We must, therefore, learn to distinguish between these two major types of criticism and to govern our actions accordingly. Caution should be exercised in either instance so that our action is wisely conceived and vigorously prosecuted. And we must learn to differentiate between those persons who are well-meaning but are misled into unjustifiable critical positions and those who take such positions deliberatively and with malice aforethought.

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To the former—the constructive criticism of persons vitally interested in better schools—we should attend carefully and be prepared to make changes consonant with sound educational theory and practice. More than this, we should actively seek the criticism and help of such persons so that a broader basis of common understanding may be developed upon which our common problems may be attacked more intelligently in a cooperative manner. At times it will be necessary, also, to resist reactionary changes which are proposed in good faith but which are not well founded in fact or in an understanding of the situation.

Against the obviously destructive attacks aimed at weakening the public schools we must take a unified stand and enlist the support of those forces which will join with us to combat a common foe. For the foes of American public education are also the foes of American democracy. Educationally, as well as politically, the answer to the Big Lie is the Big Truth.

Self-Criticism Is Helpful

It would be helpful, also, for educators to be more critical of themselves and their work. Perhaps the most fruitful criticism is self-criticism. Sometimes we have moved too rapidly, not only for the public, but for those within our own ranks. At other times or places we have hardly moved at all. It would be wise to assess our strengths and limitations more often and to be sure that we are really doing the very best job we can.

In time of crisis it is easy to become fearful and to take sanctuary in evading issues and in retreating to academic ivory towers. And yet it is exactly at such times that this lack of moral stamina is most devastating. At no other time is educational lag more likely to worsen.

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than when changing conditions pose new needs concerning which the schools are oblivious or toward the meeting of which teaching is ineffectual.

We must carefully avoid using the present crisis as an excuse for inactivity or as a specious reason for not doing something which is called for but which we never intended to do anyway. The consequences of this sort of internal weakness may well be far more deadly than attack from the outside, and certainly the symptoms are more difficult to detect. We must be eternally vigilant to avoid internal decay.

**A Look to the Future**

Educators should not perpetually be fighting only a rear-guard action. We must build constructively for the future. This implies change. And to accomplish this a sound, sane and continuous program of public relations is a must. It is highly important that such a program be in operation before educational changes are undertaken. As stockholders in the vast enterprise of public education, parents and patrons have a real stake in the schools.

Realizing that criticism is a counterpart of crisis, we should neither be unnerved nor apathetic in the face of our present problems. In time of crisis the proper interpretation of the public schools is particularly essential, and cooperative school-community working relationships are the only real and lasting answer to this and to any future crises which may arise.

—Stephen Romine, associate professor of education and director of the Bureau of High School Counseling and Accreditation, University of Colorado, Boulder.

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**National Training Laboratory in Group Development**

The National Training Laboratory in Group Development will hold an expanded four-week summer laboratory session at Gould Academy, Bethel, Maine. The dates will be from June 22 through July 18.

Approximately 100 applicants will be accepted for this session. Persons involved in problems of working with groups in a training, consultant, or leadership capacity in any field are invited to apply.

Purpose of the training program is to sensitize leaders in all fields to the existence and nature of the dynamic forces operating in the small group. Each trainee group of 15 to 20 persons is enabled to use its own experience as a laboratory example of group development.

The Laboratory research program in group behavior and training methods is an important part of the training, and the use of research tools which are within the range of the Laboratory training program is incorporated into the curriculum.

The NTLGD is sponsored by the Division of Adult Education Service of the NEA and the Research Center for Group Dynamics of the University of Michigan, with the cooperation of the universities of Chicago, Illinois, California, Ohio State, Antioch College, Teachers College, Columbia University, and other educational institutions. Its year-round research and consultation program is supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. For further information, write to the NTLGD at 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.