

The Importance of People

Column Editor: Harold Benjamin
Contributor: Donald W. Cox

The first word in the title of the following contribution is a test of the reader's cultural origins. If he thinks at once of honor, reverence, duty, loyalty, helping old ladies across the street, and starting a fire by the bow-drill method, he has a good background. If he is not now a good man, it is not because of a lack of worthy influences in his early adolescence. If, on the other hand, scouting makes him think of a clean hit between first and second, a southpaw with speed and control, and hoarse screams of rage at certain types of blindness, he has a different background. If he does not frequent stadiums or bars on summer afternoons or evenings to stare at grass, dirt, and bobbing figures, either in the flesh or on a flickering screen while muttering non-reverent objurgations and gulping non-dutiful beverages, it is not the fault of his early environment. These observations, of course, do not apply to the contributor of this column. Like the present editor, Dr. Cox made the connection between the greatest professionalized sport and the noblest non-sporting profession only with considerable academic effort.

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Scouting for Better Teachers

MAJOR LEAGUE baseball clubs need master players. That is how pennants are won. That is how the merry music of the turnstiles is stepped up in tempo of profits to the owners. Ball clubs scout for players. They send out reconnaissance agents to beat the bushes for talent. Shrewd, diamond-wise veterans of the game hunt for ivory in the minors, in the semi-professional circuits, and even in the colleges. These scouts hunt for recruits, analyze strengths and weaknesses of their finds and assess the potential contributions to the club of every player they see in action. They perform this scouting function for the most part, moreover, with all the devotion to group success and consecration to the goal of winning that they displayed in their own active days at bat or in the field.

Schools, Too, Need Good Players

Schools need master teachers. That is how educational success is won.

That is how the merry music of public support and approval of education can best be gained. Everybody, it seems, agrees with this principle, but practically nobody does anything about it. Why not take a cue from the diamond scouts searching through the sticks for talent? Why not send out professional reconnaissance agents to hunt for pedagogical ivory?

Such a proposal will be greeted with hasty but natural hoots of derision in certain quarters. Here are some of the immediate objections that will be raised.

There is no parallel, it will be said, between the problems of recruiting ballplayers and teachers. The gulf in dignity, social significance, prestige, quality of performance, and emolument is so great between the two careers (not saying on which side the weight of each such item falls), as to make analogy more dangerous than usual, it will be further noted.

Let us examine present practices in securing teachers to see how dangerous the analogy really is. There was a time in this country when school boards and superintendents often advertised in the press, inviting applications from teachers qualified for particular jobs. Today such advertisements are used for carpenters, salesmen and strawberry pickers but seldom for teachers. They are never used for professional baseball players. Why not?

Because good baseball players are so scarce that a more direct search for them is desired by every club that wants to win.

Good teachers are very scarce, too. They must be searched for directly, painstakingly, and shrewdly. The superintendent can send appeals for teachers to various places, interview applicants, read recommendations, compare photographs, and call upon his friends for suggestions. All of these items, however, have a low correlation with teaching success. The best criterion of teaching success is teaching success itself.

What Is the Educational Scout's Job?

How can teaching success be judged?
Only in action.

Somebody has to see the candidate in teaching action in order to know how well he can teach or whether he can teach at all. Somebody has to visit the prospective recruit in the classroom.

Can the superintendent or principal, the president or dean do this job?

Yes, if qualified, but in many cases it would be very difficult to have administrators of such high rank do so. There is an old tradition, particularly in higher education, that a teacher whose class is visited by an adminis-

trative officer is being treated unfairly, spied upon, and dissected. There is also sometimes a jealousy between school systems and a fear that rival administrators will steal talented instructors by offering higher inducements, financial or otherwise, to a change in jobs.

Should Teachers Be Bought, Sold or Traded?

Of course the solution to most of the difficulties connected with educational scouting would be to adopt the organized baseball system in which players are "owned" by clubs. Under such a scheme in education, the teacher would cease to be a free agent in choosing his job location except upon entry into professional ranks. Practice teachers with a brilliant record of success in the laboratory schools might be offered fabulous bonuses, new convertibles, fur coats, or diamonds to sign with San Francisco or Battle Creek. Candidates for the doctorate of philosophy whose dissertations hit the headlines might be given substantial down payments on houses to take the academic equivalent of the king's shilling.

Evaluation of Teaching Solved

The greatest value in this arrangement would undoubtedly come from the careful judgment of teaching ability by scouts. Administrators would know just how good each teacher was not merely in dollars but more importantly in relation to other teachers.

Educational public relations would also be helped by this system. Banner headlines in Podunk would proclaim, "MATH PROF TRADED," while *School and Society* would run pages of notes like this:

"The Regents of the Petaluma State University announced on October 11 the transfer to Dead Coon Lake College

of one English Department head and two assistant professors of education in exchange for a dean of liberal arts and an instructor in physics. At the same time Joseph Crook Doakes, professor of philosophy, whose academic batting and fielding averages have been declining for two years, was released outright. Asked to comment on his new status as a free agent, Dr. Doakes said, 'I recognize that the Uni-

versity could not be expected to keep me on the bench indefinitely, but I believe I have several good years left of service to organized education. I would like a scouting job in the junior-college circuit or, failing that, I will consider a presidency of one of the larger institutions. I will not take a superintendency or a deanship.'"
—Donald W. Cox, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Currículum Bulletíns

Column Editor: Eleanor Merritt

This regular column, under guidance of Eleanor Merritt, will continue to serve those who are interested in curriculum materials.

The editor of this column needs your cooperation if bulletins listed here are to represent really significant trends in meeting needs through the providing of appropriate instructional materials. Why not share with other educators your new local bulletins? You may do this by sending a copy for possible review or listing in this column to: Miss Eleanor Merritt, consultant, Curriculum Laboratory, Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

One-Volume General Guides to the Instructional Program

GENERAL teaching guides have been developed in school systems throughout the United States at the state, county and local levels. These guides usually contain several subjects for a sequence of grade levels in a one-volume publication. In comprehensive bulletins of this nature, much information is available to guide the teacher in planning the instructional program at a particular grade level or in a subject area.

The following are illustrative of the one-volume bulletins available at the elementary, secondary or the elementary and secondary school levels.

► New Mexico State Department of Education. *Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Schools of New Mexico*. Bulletin Number 11, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1950, 301 p.

This cooperatively developed, illustrated bulletin offers many helpful

suggestions for the teacher and supervisor in the instructional areas of the language arts, Spanish and arithmetic at the elementary school level. Particularly pertinent to the schools of New Mexico are the sections: Teaching the Non-English-Speaking Children; Spanish; and Information Concerning the State of New Mexico.

► Pennsylvania State Department of Public Instruction. *The Elementary Course of Study*. Bulletin 233-B, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1949, 587 p.

As a result of state-wide democratic participation by planning and production committees, this bulletin was developed to help the teacher, administrator and other school personnel give direction to the curriculum. Helpful general information for the teacher and administrator is included in the beginning sections of this bulletin.

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