

# Uniting Forces To Improve Education

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## Industry-Education Cooperation

THERE MAY have been a time in the industrial history of America when its leaders followed the policy of "the public be damned." That time is gone forever, along with six-shooter law and other aspects of a frontier civilization. Today the improvement of public relations is a major goal of all business and this extends to the "junior public" now in our schools. The welfare of industry as well as that of the people depends on harmonious relationships between both. No good can thrive in an atmosphere of misunderstanding or antagonism.

If, however, we seek harmony and cooperation for the future as well as the present, our children must be educated to that end and in this our large industries and business are willing, even eager to help.

In recent years more and more local and national industries are working with educators to improve the understanding of our basic economy among the young people of our country. And educators have found it helpful to do their share of the job. It would be foolish to make the sweeping generalization that *all* American business is engaged in such an undertaking, but what some companies are doing to achieve a better understanding of what is going on in industry and in schools is highly creditable. In the end it is bound to lead to greater support for the many worth-while things schools are trying to do for children.

In the past the tendency of outside groups was to exert pressure on the

schools to get what they wanted, or distribute thinly veiled advertising. Little effort was made to develop cooperative working relationships. The effort at indoctrination created suspicion on the part of the school people. The result was antagonism.

### Constructive Efforts

In recent years a new approach and attitude have been developing. The leaders of business and industry are beginning to realize that the way to build a better educational liaison is to work with and for the schools so that the benefits may be mutual.

A few of the more constructive efforts in this direction are:

**Resource Materials.** More and more companies are producing for school use materials based on the needs of the whole curriculum. These are only remotely suggestive of advertising. Instead, they are more concerned with the needs of teachers. Instructional materials are prepared with the advice and counsel of curriculum and materials specialists and do not highlight any particular product, name or brand. The fact that these materials will make a contribution to curriculum is sufficient return for industry and business. Many of the materials are pretested in classrooms before being circulated.

There still exists a need for closer cooperation between the school and the producer of sponsored materials, and teachers should develop higher standards for selecting these materials, but the situation is far better than it

ever has been and the resource materials themselves are becoming excellent additions to the teacher's supply of tools for learning.

**Business-Education Day.** This is a day planned for teachers to visit some local business or industry. The program usually consists of a trip through the plant, a luncheon and a discussion period. Although such an industry-school contact is valuable as well as pleasurable, it lacks the element of continuity. It is a one-shot type of public relations. Businessmen and educators must have opportunities to work together for longer periods of time if an effective working relationship is to result.

**Teacher Workshops.** A few industries are beginning to finance educational workshops for bringing about better cooperation between their world and that of the teachers. Some of these are general workshops; others are centered around more specific topics such as economic education and the use of community resources. The company sponsoring the workshop provides funds for tuition, travel and, in some cases, housing. In these workshops, business leaders and educators gather together for a considerable period of time to work on mutual interests. This exchange of views accompanied by on-the-spot observation, helps to develop understanding of each other's problems and will eventually lead to better education for all children and youth.

**Plant Education.** A rather unique approach to developing better understanding between industry and education has been started by American Iron and Steel Institute. This organization has prepared a series of booklets designed to assist its own Institute mem-

bers to acquire a better understanding of how to work with schools. These booklets emphasize the need for greater support for public schools and point out how individual companies can assist the schools in achieving educational objectives.

The millennium, of course, is not here as yet. There are some educators who view with suspicion any attempt by business and industrial groups to work with schools. They remember earlier experiences which were not altogether happy. Nevertheless it must be recognized that if a good educational program is to be developed in any community, it can only be with the help of people in that community, and industries and businesses of any community are "people." They can help to supply a kind of education which is a necessary supplement to book learning. Trips to industries, institutions, organizations are important sources of learning. So are the personal contributions which representatives of labor, business and government can bring into the classroom when they are invited to address student bodies.

Schools should use these community resources whenever possible. To do so, however, the school must develop effective ways of working with the groups which make up the community. This effort should not be limited to just a few groups in the community but should include all people who want to or should work with schools. We, as educators, must be willing to meet them half way. Only by cooperative action can we hope to provide a truly functional curriculum for an atomic age.

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