

## Significant Books in Review

Column Editor: Harold G. Shane  
Contributors: H. Gordon Hullfish  
Harl R. Douglass  
William G. Brink

In the present and the immediately subsequent issues of *Educational Leadership* several distinguished educators present their reactions to recent books which were written to analyze critically the programs, philosophies and policies of American schools. This month H. Gordon Hullfish and Harl Douglass lead off. Dr. Hullfish reviews Robert M. Hutchins' *The Conflict in Education* and Albert Lynd's *Quackery in the Public Schools* while Dr. Douglass turns his attention to Paul Woodring's *Let's Talk Sense about Our Schools*.

In this issue, also, William G. Brink reviews Herbert J. Klausmeier's *Principles and Practices of Secondary Teaching*. Next month E. T. McSwain examines Arthur E. Bestor's *Educational Wastelands*.

HAROLD G. SHANE

► Hutchins, Robert M. *The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953. 112 p.

► Lynd, Albert. *Quackery in the Public Schools*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953. 282 p.

*The Conflict in Education*, based on lectures delivered by Robert M. Hutchins in 1951 and 1952, presents the author in the dual roles that have characterized his writings since 1936, the year in which *No Friendly Voice* revealed that the new president of the University of Chicago was not pleased with the state of American education.

In one of his roles Hutchins has resisted, as few others have, all who would put blinders on the American vision and limitations on the American mind. He has done so on campus and off. He does not waver here. He rightly contends that a culture which is afraid to indulge in self-criticism "cannot long endure"; that "there is no hope in the university unless it takes seriously its

mission as a center of independent thought"; that "the public should understand education," and, further, that "it would do no harm if teachers and professors understood it, too."

Thus, in the first chapter of *The Conflict in Education* Hutchins speaks up, as all in education should, at a time when many on the trail of freedom have folded their tents, lowered their voices, and fled. Hutchins holds firm and the banner he carries is a proper rallying point for all who cherish freedom:

"We hear during the cold war in America that the American way of life is in danger. You would suppose, to listen to the people who say this, that the American way of life consisted in unanimous tribal self-adoration. Yet the history and tradition of our country make it plain that the essence of the American way of life is its hospitality to criticism, protest, unpopular opinions, and independent thought. The great American word has always been freedom, and, in particular, freedom of

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thought, speech, and assembly. Asserting the dignity of man, and of every man, America has proclaimed and protected the freedom to differ. America has grown strong on criticism." (pp. 24-25.)

At this point a reader, unfamiliar with Hutchins, but familiar with the writings of John Dewey, would say, "Amen. We'll whip this thing together." But he would be wrong, not because Hutchins is insincere but because, in his other role, Hutchins would repel him. In this role Hutchins, caught within a neat little pattern he spins about the nature of man, of knowledge, of truth and of education, denies that the pragmatism of Mr. Dewey is a philosophy and, without hesitation or modesty, lays out a philosophy that, since his pattern has no escape hatches, guarantees education an unchanging character, "the same in every age and in every society."

### **The Great Conversation**

This is all too easy—is, in fact, a retreat from the role Hutchins establishes in the opening chapter and reaffirms in the final one. Though he believes in the "Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history," he is unable to carry it on. It is his contention that "Criticism, discussion, question, debate—[these] are the truly human methods of instruction." (p. 96) Yet the sad fact is that the Great Conversation must remain a rigged one as long as Mr. Hutchins lays down a premise about the nature of man which does not permit the psychologist, the biologist, the anthropologist—these, at least—to participate. Neither man nor society can be confined to Mr. Hutchins' oversimplified thought on this score.

The author presents his position after a criticism of what he takes to be the "leading theories or doctrines of educa-

on." These he designates as "adjustment to the environment," "meeting immediate needs," "hastening social reform," and "having no theory at all." Perhaps not all readers will recognize these, in the form, at least, in which Mr. Hutchins presents them. To the degree, however, that the theories are acted upon in the terms in which they are discussed their inadequacies are clearly revealed. But here is the rub. The reader may have some difficulty in places determining whether a weakness in theory, or in Mr. Hutchins, is revealed. His uncritical equating, for instance, of John Dewey's thought, which he does not admit to the status of philosophy, with the "educational philosophy called reconstructionalism" will lead many readers to the conclusion that the Great Conversation has become an uninformed monologue. There is no ground for equating these views, or for deriving the one, reconstructionism, from the other, pragmatism.

All of this is too bad. What Mr. Hutchins has to say to his society and to educators about the central mission of education is much too precious to be lost as thought is denied its admitted critical function by a need imposed upon it to conform to the limits of an uncriticized premise concerning the nature of man.

### A Budget of Criticism

When we turn to *Quackery in the Public Schools*, by Albert Lynd, we enter another realm of discourse. Mr. Hutchins believes in the Great Conversation; Mr. Lynd, on the other hand, leans towards the Great Insult. I hasten to add, after a second reading, that Lynd is as sincere in his effort to improve the schools as is Hutchins. He is not an "enemy of the public schools," a charge he seems to anticipate and which, in truth, his calculated sneers oc-

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asionally invite. He believes in public schools. He is against the public support of private schools. He believes Federal Aid will be necessary to provide a proper level of financial support for education in the local community. He is "opposed to the substantial teaching of religion in the public schools. . . ." He believes laymen should take an interest in the public schools and acts upon this belief by serving on a Board of Education. He believes many devoted teachers have been strong enough, or fortunate enough, to escape the "oceans of piffle" in which "Educationists," in whom he does not believe, drown those of lesser strength.

A charge of *quackery* ought not to be lightly made. If made, it should be sustained, not merely hurled. And whatever of blindness and stupidity, or even of ignorance, this writing may point to among the educationists, the deliberate initiation of fraudulent practice in order to pawn it off on an unsuspecting public is at no point revealed.

Mr. Lynd does have a "budget of criticism." He finds that the doctrine of needs has led to educational practices of which he disapproves, and to some that seem wondrous, indeed. Educationists have come to the same conclusion. He implies that proposals for curriculum change emanate from a single source, as they do not, and that what is proposed is welcomed by the public schools (or, if not, that it is somehow sneaked into the picture), as it is not, on either count. He notes that some "research" has been picayunish and trivial but fails to note that educationists made this same charge long ago. He is concerned, as many educationists are, about a tendency it would be hard to justify to proliferate courses. Moreover, he does not like progressive education. Many within this movement would not like it either, were it a movement of

such limited insight as the writing here suggests.

Although Mr. Lynd is no enemy of the public schools, he is an enemy of the legitimate criticism he wishes to put forward. The proper force of his criticism is lost from view as what I can only call "his bad manners" intrude upon the reader. This need not have been the case, as a chapter in which he sets forth "a layman's distillation of Mr. Dewey's key ideas" demonstrates. He shows here that he can state a case with relative calm and fairness. But this level of writing is not long maintained, as the following device makes evident:

"'Democracy' is the recurrent chant in the litany of the new schoolmen. They use it as often as the Russians and with about the same meaning: that is, something the self-accredited experts have decided is good for us." (p. 35)

It is true, as educationists know, that "the first and fundamental meaning of democracy is the political one of popular sovereignty"; it is also true that Mr. Dewey's definition of democracy "goes beyond the limited political meaning." It is further true that the extension of the democratic aspiration to the whole gamut of human relationships has not been the work of Mr. Dewey alone. And it is surely true, finally, as Mr. Lynd points out, that many parents—and, indeed, educationists—who have found it good to have their children in schools that have been influenced by John Dewey's thought do not understand the philosophical ground from which this influence flows.

Mr. Dewey was a participant, to return to Hutchins' phrasing, in the Great Conversation. He could hardly have been more open in his participation. Many who heard him, or who talked with him silently, were impressed by his view of the good life and of the way in which education could facilitate it.

achievement. Many were not, yet the conversation continued. His conversation had no closures. His was a continuing quest to gain better ideas and to gain better control of them.

There is no need here to defend Mr. Dewey. There is a need, or so it seems to me, to note that the conversations free men need to engage in now will not be advanced by the kinds of intellectual how blows that *Quackery* (and words of this sort have the character of a boomerang) strikes. Not all that has happened in education can be attributed to the philosophy of John Dewey, not even all that is bad. Mr. Lynd has a case. He should be heard. I think he will be when he tires of his whipping boy and recognizes that communication requires more than the ability to use language smartly, even when others use it awkwardly.

—H. GORDON HULLFISH, professor of education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

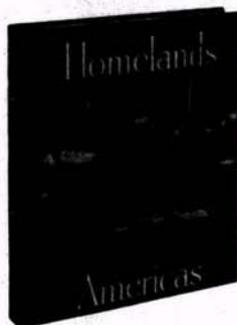
► Woodring, Paul. *Let's Talk Sense about Our Schools*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953. 215 p.

Perhaps the least able and yet most intellectually honest of the books that have appeared in the current rash of criticisms of our public schools and teacher education is one written by a professor of psychology in the Western Washington College of Education in Bellingham.

The volume is very much the opinion of its author. Much of it is based upon facts or what will be accepted as facts, although it has very little documentation throughout its pages. Some of it will not be accepted by a great many, perhaps the majority of professors of education and school administrators.

Professor Woodring regards the topic of his discussion as a controversial one.

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It must be said of some of his fundamental premises that these, also, are controversial, to quote:

"The professional educators have progressively pre-empted a responsibility for policy making to such an extent that interested citizens, even members of elected boards of education, feel that

they no longer have an adequate part in the establishment of basic educational policies. It is difficult to understand how any thoughtful educator can deny this contention."

To many if not all of those who are close to the situation throughout the country, this statement seems untrue. Professional educators have, in recent years, extended an increasing amount of effort to help parents understand what is going on in the schools. The amount of material going from school to parents in the past few years is probably ten times that of a quarter of a century ago. All over the country, Citizens' Committees have been formed with the help of and usually upon the initiative of local school administrators. Advisory committees, mothers' groups

and various other kinds of groups of people have gathered together for the purposes of not only understanding but actually participating in programs in the schools.

The author demonstrates his worry about the possibility that the dull child and the bright child are not adequately cared for in the school. This discussion is weakened by the amount of space given the probability that Mortimer, hypothetical boy with an I.Q. in the 60's might graduate from high school and be accepted for entrance in some state university whose only requirement for entrance is high school graduation—a possibility so remote as to be beyond the imagination of most school people.

A major part of the chapter on "Yesterday and Today" has to do with



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grades or marks, particularly with marking arithmetic papers and with cheating in college. From here on the book becomes an attack on "progressive education," starting out with a chapter, "The shadow of John Dewey." Attention is given to the exception taken by the author to some of Dewey's philosophy of education, as well as to some criticisms of the implications that have been made from the philosophy.

The short chapter on "What Is Progressive Education?" starts out with the statement that progressive education is nebulous and submits to no definition acceptable to all or even to the majority of those who count themselves progressive. This chapter is necessarily weak—a natural consequence of the fact that it is difficult to criticize convincingly the nature of that which is not known. Chapter V, "The Man of Straw," is an attempt to develop the thesis that the so-called progressives try to make ridic-

ulously reactionary all those who oppose them.

A chapter on the teachers college in America is a defense of the teachers colleges and at the same time a criticism of them. Much is made of the expansion of courses in recent years, particularly the tendency to "expand into a course an idea that might be handled in a few hours." No example is given. There are no doubt available examples, though it is quite improbable that the examples are at all typical of practice.

Apparently in an effort to be facetious, Professor Woodring centers his chapter, "What Becomes of the Three R's?" around a weird hypothetical school, the like of which most surely does not exist anywhere. In this school the curriculum is built around fly fishing and fly casting to the neglect of all intellectual teaching.

In line with many other criticisms of progressive education, the author in-

sists in his chapter, "Hickory Sticks and the Problem of Discipline," that progressive education does not give adequate disciplinary training. To many educators, this would seem a question of what is meant by discipline—discipline by fear and authority or self discipline.

The chapter on "Academic and Other Freedoms" is pointed toward the danger of unfair criticisms of teachers in these times when the fear of communism is causing people to strike out all about them, punishing the innocent with the guilty.

A short chapter is devoted to better support of the schools and higher teacher salaries. The best chapter in the book is, "What We Know About How We Can Teach," in which a number of splendid statements accepted by a very large number of teachers and practically all progressive education people are given, although the author attempts to point out how his point of view differs from that of the progressive educationists. There is a short and stimulating chapter on "Better Relationships Between Parents and Teachers and Citizens' Committees." An excellent feature of the book is the appendix of short reviews of a number of excellent books on modern education.

The author has undertaken to cover a great deal of territory in a very small book. Naturally a considerable amount of ground under the headings of chapters is not covered, and a considerable amount of the treatment is superficial. It is, nevertheless, a book that may be read with considerable interest and considerable profit by all college teachers of education and all administrators and teachers who have the background to evaluate what is offered. As a book for parents, citizens and prospective teachers, it is not recommended because of its propensity for misleading by giving

partial information and occasionally including the author's bias without adequate warning.

—HARL R. DOUGLASS, professor of education, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder.

► Klausmeier, Herbert J. *Principles and Practices of Secondary Teaching*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953.

Programs for the professional preparation of secondary school teachers provided by teacher education institutions have quite commonly included courses in general method. An examination of the textbooks used in such courses during the past half century reveals important changes in both objectives and content. Early textbooks placed emphasis upon the development of a systematic pattern of teaching which was believed to be universally applicable. There followed a period of gradual and extensive differentiation in methods illustrated by the popularity of the project method, problem method, socialized discussion, and laboratory methods.

Recent textbooks in the field of general method give unmistakable evidence of a growing awareness of the crucial role of the teacher and of the conditions and facilities that will best promote meaningful learning. Accordingly, emphasis has been focused squarely upon attempts to aid teachers in dealing with the varied problems encountered in teaching. Illustrative of this tendency is the new book by Herbert J. Klausmeier, entitled *Principles and Practices of Secondary School Teaching*.

Modern in viewpoint and written from the standpoint of the classroom teacher, this book in the opinion of the reviewer makes a significant contribution and will be welcomed by instructors of methods courses. The author rightly points out that, if teaching is to be effective, it must be based upon "an

integration of understandings and skills drawn from many sources." The first five of the fifteen chapters in the volume serve to establish a foundation of understandings relating to the goals of secondary education, the nature of adolescents and the nature of learning. The remaining chapters are designed to develop within teachers the abilities and skills involved in dealing with several of the most significant as well as persistent problems in teaching, such as instructional planning, organizing and directing learning activities, using instructional materials effectively, building effective study and work methods and evaluating the results of instruction.

That the author has drawn heavily upon his own experiences as a high school teacher and as a supervisor of student teachers as well as upon experimental literature will be evident to anyone who reads the book. Particularly commendable is the viewpoint that the modern secondary school teacher must be a versatile teacher. This implies that he will face numerous decision making situations relating to the selection of appropriate methods and materials. Teachers who read this book carefully will, in the reviewer's opinion, be greatly aided in making such decisions.

—WILLIAM G. BRINK, professor of education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

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*THE FREE MAN is loyal to the values and processes of democracy.*

*The free man is loyal,*

*First, to himself as a human being of dignity and worth*

*Second, to the principle of human equality and brotherhood*

*Third, to the process of untrammelled discussion, criticism, and group decision*

*Fourth, to the ideal of honesty, fair-mindedness, and scientific spirit in the conduct of this process*

*Fifth, to the ideal of respect for and appreciation of talent, training, character, and excellence in all fields of socially useful endeavor*

*Sixth, to the obligation and the right to work*

*Seventh, to the supremacy of the common good*

*Eighth, to the obligation to be socially informed and intelligent.*

—GEORGE S. COUNTS, *The Education of Free Men in an American Democracy*. Washington, D. C.: Educational Policies Commission, National Education Association. 1941, p. 55.

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