

Significant Books in Review

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This month E. T. McSwain concludes the series of reviews of recent books which have been critical of American education by examining *Educational Wastelands*, by Arthur E. Bestor. See the preceding issue for critiques of *Lynd's Quackery in the Public Schools*, *Hutchins' Conflict in Education*, and *Woodring's Let's Talk Sense About Our Schools*.

HAROLD G. SHANE

► Bestor, Arthur E. *Educational Wastelands*. Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press. 226 p.

The subtitle of this provocative book, "Retreat from Learning in Our Schools," gives the setting for the author's views regarding public education and teacher education. A more descriptive secondary title is suggested: "Retreat to the Academic Ideology of the Past!"

The organization of the book resembles a collection of essays or addresses prepared by Dr. Bestor to express in a readable style his interpretation of weaknesses he accepts as existing in public schools, schools of education, and state departments of public instruction. The views presented would have been more constructive had the author refrained from frequent use of generalized accusations and personal opinions. A more scientific appraisal of the schools would have enabled the reader to become familiar with data to be found in research and related literature.

The book seemingly reflects a personal crusade against "professional educationists." The author says, in the first chapter, "The charge which this book advances is that professional educationists, in policy-making role, have lowered the aims of the American public schools." The facts to substanti-

ate this serious indictment have not been made available by the author to the reader. While school people are receptive to constructive criticism when it is presented in keeping with the principles of academic freedom and intellectual inquiry, it is unlikely that they will accept Bestor's views.

The author proclaims himself to be a firm believer in the principle of universal public education, yet the content of *Educational Wastelands* indicates a limited understanding of the problems encountered by secondary schools in this country. Is it not undemocratic to advocate an academic curriculum for many youths who will not have the opportunity to go to college? Dr. Bestor's caustic criticism of the Life-Adjustment Program in Secondary Education reflects misinterpretation or lack of understanding of the educational objectives, curriculum content and instructional method recommended for study by administrators and teachers in secondary schools. Specialists in academic disciplines can render great service to school people when they take time to visit many high schools to examine the objectives, achievements and problems to be found in public education.

In Chapter 6, the author has been unfair when he implies that the Illinois Curriculum Project supports the posi-

tion that "The secondary school curriculum must be pried loose from the established disciplines of science and scholarship." Careful reading of the bulletins issued by the Curriculum Steering Committee will show that recognition and emphasis have been given to the importance of academic subjects, instructional methods for developing abilities of an inquiring mind, functional value of knowledge, and desirable standards of scholarship. Attention is directed to curriculum planning that will provide appropriate learning experiences and materials for all youth attending secondary schools. It appears unfitting for a specialist in an academic discipline to infer that professors of education, school administrators, and members of state departments of public instruction operate as "an interlocking public school directorate."

Some constructive views have been presented by Bestor concerning: (1) teacher education as the responsibility of the college or university faculty as a whole, (2) the need to redesign opportunities in graduate study for teachers and school administrators, (3) a better coordinated program between general education and professional education, and (4) the role of a National Advisory Commission on Public Education. The ideas presented in Chapters 2, 11 and 12 indicate the assistance that an academic specialist can render in making a constructive appraisal of conditions and probable solutions of problems in public education and in teacher education.

It is urged that readers examine carefully the disadvantages which may be experienced if the steps advocated to obtain educational reform (as described by Bestor in Chapter 8) were to be adopted. Furthermore, the suggestions for reorganizing teacher edu-

cation presented in Chapter 9 may be interpreted as the effort to retreat to the academic past. Conversely, the author is to be commended for his thought-provoking and professional statement on freedom of teaching.

The University of Illinois had made available in *Educational Wastelands* a book that provides interesting reading with regard to its views on public education and teacher education. The author of this book holds that these are views held by many members of liberal arts faculties. The critical interpretation of the reader rather than the contents of a book should determine the change to be made in a person's philosophy of public education and teacher education.

—E. T. MC SWAIN, dean, School of Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

► Albery, Harold. *Reorganizing the High School Curriculum*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1953. 560 p.

This book is a revision of the author's volume of the same title issued in 1947. Although the organization of the second edition is quite similar to that of the original, the materials have been rewritten and the illustrations are new. More attention in the revised edition is given to illustrative material in the form of teaching units, to visual and auditory aids and to modern practices in curriculum development.

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

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

An important contribution has been made to the literature of comparative education and teacher status by *The Year Book of Education, 1953: Status and Position of Teachers* (World Book

Company, 1953). Edited by Robert K. Hall, N. Hans and J. A. Lauwerys, the *Year Book* is perhaps the best source of data regarding the teaching profession, in its world-wide setting, to appear since the 1930's. Crammed with information and well written, especially in view of the fact that manuscripts by 40 contributors are included, this volume is a thoroughly worth-while addition to the bookshelf. Chapters in the first section of the *Year Book* deal with the social position of teachers, their psychological traits—even such arcanal matters as the function of teachers in tribal communities.

Despite the fact that this reviewer missed Harold Spears' famous cartoons, his latest book, *Improving the Supervision of Instruction* (Prentice-Hall, 1953), is up to the usual level of excellence in expository writing for which Dr. Spears is noted. The 22 chapters included are particularly comprehensive and treat such commonly ignored matters as county school supervision and the role of the state in supervision.

Gertrude Noar's *The Junior High School* (Prentice-Hall, 1953) is both timely and successful in making the case that the junior high school can be effective in "changing the traditional school patterns of today into the modern patterns of tomorrow."

Two educationally important books of recent date have quite similar titles: Nathaniel Cantor's *The Teaching↔ Learning Process* (Dryden, 1953) and Ray H. Simpson's *Improving Teaching-Learning Processes* (Longmans, Green, 1953). Dr. Cantor builds his book around the concept that the learner must *want* to learn. Dr. Simpson places stress upon preparatory experiences for the student planning to enter junior-senior high school teaching.

A number of books received for re-

view in these columns deserve the 500 words allotted to featured resumes. While space limits do not permit reports on their contents, they must at least be called to the attention of the readers of *Educational Leadership*. The Department of Rural Education, NEA, has made a first-rate study in its 1953 Yearbook, *Pupil Transportation* . . . J. W. Menge and R. C. Faunce in *Working Together for Better Schools* (American Book Company, 1953) have developed a useful handbook for school-community planning . . . J. M. Scidman recently completed a carefully planned, ably selected group of readings (e. g., excerpts from Lewin, Zachry, Strang, Witty, Taba, Mead, Hollingshead, Benedict, Hartshorne and May) in *The Adolescent* (Dryden, 1953), a compilation destined to end up on many reading lists.

Edward G. Olsen has edited *The Modern Community School* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), an important product of the ASCD "Committee on the Community School." Many able members of the Association gave generously of their time to its development and to the actual writing, and the product bears testimony that the time and energy were well spent. A substantial and absorbing segment of the book describes actual practices in community schools that ". . . are moving ahead."

Two new editions of long-established and useful books appeared late in 1953. Longmans, Green brought out a fourth edition of H. E. Garrett's standard *Statistics in Psychology and Education* and a second edition of H. A. Greene, A. N. Jorgensen, and J. R. Gerberich, *Measurement and Evaluation in the Elementary School*.

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