

Uniting Forces to Improve Education

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Story of the California Education Study Council

THE CALIFORNIA EDUCATION STUDY COUNCIL was formed at the request of representatives of a number of state-wide lay and professional organizations interested in education. These representatives were attending a three-day workshop on "Problems in Education" in July 1953 sponsored by the California Congress of Parents and Teachers and by Stanford University, held on the campus of that institution. This, however, was the culmination of events and earlier experiments which are significant in outlining the history of our Education Study Council.

For years there has been a Tax Committee in our state which has included, from time to time, representatives from business, agriculture, our legislature and education. Members of the group frequently had studied problems of the *financial* needs of education. Several men who were leaders in this group attended the Stanford Workshop and now serve on the California Education Study Council. From time to time attempts had been made to

promote an organization which would be more broadly representative and concerned with all *phases* of education. For more than a year, representatives of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers had urged the desirability of such a group, but while meeting with some encouragement had found little enthusiasm except from the California Farm Bureau Federation.

The present Education Study Council, however, was not the goal of the workshop from which it developed. The Stanford Workshop was planned as the result of two events in our state that affected education and which we hoped might be benefited by conference-type discussions.

California was plagued by attacks on the schools. These attacks apparently were based upon fear of Communism and upon little understood changes in curriculum content and methodology. In 1952 a constitutional amendment providing increased funds for public education was sponsored by educators' groups and passed by the voters, but in the process some serious differences of opinion developed between the supporters and the opponents of the measure. The latter included groups known to be sincerely interested in education, but who questioned the wisdom of the constitutional amendment. This seemed to

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the Board of Managers of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers to be another reason to seek ways to bring better understanding of our schools to more people and to provide a channel for constructive criticism.

A Workshop Convenes

The Stanford Workshop previously mentioned was then authorized and planned. With the complete cooperation of the dean and faculty of the School of Education, the plans were made to include as participants the representatives of state-wide organizations known to be interested in education, but whose opinions concerning it varied considerably. It was agreed, too, that conferees would be free to determine their topics for discussion. We were encouraged when Roy E. Simpson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, called a conference of similar representation to discuss the allocation of the funds made available by our newly passed constitutional amendment, and many of those present commented upon the value of such an exchange of ideas.

In late July the Stanford Workshop was convened. Delegates were told that there would be only two general sessions, but that an evening and two full days would be given to discussion of topics of their choosing in the three working groups into which they were divided. There was agreement on at least one thing, for each of the three sections came to the final general session with the same recommendation—namely, that there should be a continuing organization in which those present would be represented and others could be included if it seemed

desirable. In explaining their recommendations, the group said they felt much good would accrue to education if continuation of such an exchange of ideas and information as they had enjoyed could be insured at that time.

At their request, the California Congress of Parents and Teachers accepted the responsibility for appointing a planning committee and for calling the first meeting of that committee. This group met soon after and discussed purposes, membership and bylaws for a permanent organization. Subcommittees accepted responsibility for bringing proposals on each of these questions to the next meeting. Then invitations were sent to a number of organizations not previously represented, asking each to join the Council and to participate by sending two delegates to meetings. The following responded and thus became charter members of the California Education Study Council: American Association of University Women (State Branch), California Association of School Administrators, California Association of Secondary School Administrators, California Congress of Parents and Teachers, California Council of Architects, California Elementary School Administrators Association, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Federation of Women's Clubs, California Industrial Union Council, California Real Estate Association, California School Boards Association, California State Chamber of Commerce, State Federation of Labor, State Junior Chamber of Commerce, California Taxpayers Association, California Teachers Association, League of Women Voters, and National Associa-

tion of Manufacturers, Western Division. (The Junior Chamber of Commerce has since indicated that it is not permitted to affiliate.)

Representatives of these member groups adopted bylaws which declare the object of the Council "shall be to discuss major issues in public education; to promote research . . . ; and to consider possible lines of action of the constituent organizations, it being clearly understood that each member organization retains full freedom of . . . action." To be "eligible for membership, an organization must be broadly representative, state-wide in membership, without partisan affiliation, and have a strong interest in education." Applications for membership now must be approved by a two-thirds vote of members of the Council. (From action on recent requests, it is obvious that present members feel the membership should consist of more lay than professional educational groups.)

An Integrative Force

In less than a year of existence, the Council has had discussions on school finance led by representatives of our State Departments of Finance and Education; on school construction problems led by the same, plus representatives of schools boards, school administration, and all segments of the building industry. (Though the Education Study Council, true to its bylaws, took no action, our state later passed a bond issue giving building aid to distressed school districts, and this was supported by all of the organizations participating in the Council.)

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and discussion of facts concerning our state's teacher supply and demand, a Council recruitment committee was appointed. It is led by a businessman, and as a result of its efforts several member organizations have developed recruitment projects.

Members of the Council have been invited to share in a workshop of the California School Supervisors Association and in the conventions of the California School Boards and Administrators Associations. More recently, the Council was asked by the Governor of California to assume responsibility for the California Conference on Education. This opportunity was accepted and offers a challenge to the Council.

Devotion of the members is indicated by the fact that membership dues were kept low to permit organizations having limited incomes to participate. Representatives of these groups in many cases attend Council meetings at their own expense which is no small item in a state where meetings may be held several hundred miles from home. Expenses of the Council have been few, for meeting places, stationery, postage, and clerical help have been provided by member organizations.

The Council is privileged to have the services as continuing consultants of Roy E. Simpson and James C. Stone of the State Department of Education; School of Education deans, I. James Quillen of Stanford University and Irving R. Melbo of the University of Southern California; and Edgar L. Morphet and William R. Briscoe of the School of Education of the Uni-

versity of California, Berkeley, and the University of California at Los Angeles respectively.

All representatives of Council member organizations have shown concern that all points of view shall be represented by their officers and chairmen. During this first year, the officers and executive committee members have been drawn from the California Congress, School Boards Association, Teachers Association, Chamber of Commerce, Federated Women's Clubs, Federation of Labor, and Farm Bureau. Chairmen of standing committees include representatives of the Real Estate Association, Industrial Union Council, and School Administrators.

The Education Study Council is *not* an action group. Its value lies in having the participants get the same information; in the exchange of publications, information, and viewpoints; in the relaying of this material to member organizations; and in the mutual respect and confidence developed through sharing the work of the Council. It offers proof of a statement in Burroughs' "Our Common Neuroses" which says, "Despite society's drive toward conflict . . . there is a deeper tendency, cohesive and cooperative, in man which can be reactivated as an integral force in human relations. Education, the foundation of a free people and our hope for survival today, needs such an integrated force." Groups like the California Education Study Council can be small elements in such a force.



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