

Education for the Foreseeable Future

So we march into the present
And it's always rather pleasant
To speculate on what the years ahead of us
will see,
For our words and thoughts and attitudes,
All our novelties and platitudes,
Will be Rather Ancient History in 2033.¹

MUCH PREMIUM space these days is given to conjecture on the future. Radio and television, magazines, newspapers, even comic books (perhaps space comics were pioneers in this respect), have much to say about the future and about man's role in it. With this issue, our journal has its say upon a subject which, provided we stay around long enough, will be ours to face.

This is the beginning of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*'s fifteenth volume. Its first issue was published in October 1943, in the early stages of World War II. Even in those dark and uncertain days, contributors to this journal were looking to the future and were centering upon man's ability, especially through democratic educational processes, to shape the form and substance of the good life that they wanted for all when peace would return. Peace did return, but an uneasy peace.

Perhaps the unease of our time explains in some measure our need to conjecture about the future. Some elements in these days are similar to those that characterized the time of the launching of this journal.

Current literature concerning the future has apparently three points of general agreement. First of these is that the future

¹ "U.S.A." from *A Book of Americans*. New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc. Copyright ©, by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét. 1933, p. 114.

is rushing upon us at a greatly accelerating rate of speed. Progress in technology and mastery of communication media give modern man ever increasing control over the physical world. Man himself, however, is having trouble in adjusting to the changes he has made in his world.

Change is ever swifter, more drastic and far-reaching. Yet the complex organism that is man, impinging upon other complex organisms that are men, finds progressively less time for absorbing new ideas, for adjusting to his new inventions. A "safe" and leisurely rate for adapting to change seems to be more and more a precious relic of the past. Perhaps the relative slowness with which man had to adjust in the past helped him to forge the means for a better life which seems today to be so near the grasp of all peoples—and yet which for many of the world's peoples still seems so elusive. Time to adjust to change is a priceless asset; we must use well the time that we have, even in the face of the juggernaut of the future that is rushing at us.

A second characteristic of the literature about the future is the sharp contrasts it draws. On the one hand the promise of the age of the atom is one of all-embracing good for all mankind—longer life expectancy, increasing leisure time for recreational and cultural pursuits, plentiful food, limitless energy, and so on. The underdeveloped nations of the world, the literature seems to promise, will be emancipated from poverty, disease, famine and illiteracy. All nations and peoples will be "haves"—none need be "have-nots."

Not all literature about the future,

however, extends benevolent promise. The age of the atom carries with it the ultimate threat. The bright portrait of the future can in a twinkling reveal its other side—a threat of utter horror and desolation. This issue of the journal is published shortly after release of news that one powerful nation now has in its arsenal the intercontinental ballistic missile, capable of delivering almost instant and untold destruction to any part of the earth. This is another example of the seriousness of this consideration of the future and of what the future can mean to man.

A third characteristic of the literature about the future is that it says, either directly or by implication, that man has an important and vital function in shaping and molding his future. It is a cause for hope that man, who has created the future that is bearing down upon him with increasing velocity, does have, even at this late moment, the means for building into the future some of the qualities that will enhance living both for himself and his fellow man.

This issue points up some of the ways in which education can help in meeting the future. Knowing the urgency of our impending rendezvous, we as a profession must look to our objectives and our means, so that we can use to best advantage the resources we have.

Many forces are now converging upon education. The lines of conflicting philosophies are becoming more and more sharply drawn. An apparent surge backward toward the relatively limited instructional program of the past is noticeable. Some would arbitrarily limit the setting and content of learning to a pattern that scarcely met the needs even of

a privileged few in an earlier and simpler society. Such limitation would hardly result in an education flexible or adaptable enough to cope with the eventualities of the age that is upon us. Those who advocate such rigid control of what children shall learn seem to be quite vocal today. That they seem to be on the defensive may be deduced from the tone of some of their statements.

The contributors to this issue are not on the defensive. They speak confidently and clearly of the future and of education's part in it. They make a bold analysis of the future as it can be foreseen today. Agnes E. Meyer suggests a reconciliation of science and the humanities that could become a firm basis for an education suitable to modern man. S. E. Torsten Lund reviews current writing having to do with the growth of technology and the problems related to conservation of resources.

Constance and Harold Bischoff worked directly with children in determining the pupils' own concepts of the kind of education they need for their future. Alice Miel tackles the problem of how a teacher can help his pupils go beyond him in their learning and in their formation of values and concepts. Marie I. Rasey defines some of the important elements of a good "habitat for learning." Manuel Barkan concerns himself with projecting the kind of education that will help man to live up to his finest ideals and aspirations.

Now, welcome to Volume XV, Number 1, and to the contributors who will "have their say" on "Education for the Foreseeable Future."

—ROBERT R. LEEPER, *editor*, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

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