

## Pressures on Teachers

DURING the past quarter of a century the American public has steadily increased its interest in education for youth. Even more concern for education appeared, however, after the Russians launched Sputnik. Teachers everywhere have felt the strong impact of an aroused public. As a result, education in the United States has begun to live in a glass house. The public is demanding the best possible educational program for children of all ages and is not satisfied with less than perfection.

This has caused some real forays into many problems of education. As solutions to problems have been reached through newer ways of handling subject matter, greater understanding of the behavior of youth, and improved teaching procedures, the teachers have had to increase their knowledge in all these areas. Staff members have had pressure placed upon them to return to school to increase their professional knowledge, or as individuals they have become interested in their own professional growth. Thus many hours are spent either in university extension courses or in summer school.

As teachers move forward to lessen the pressures on themselves in these areas, the pressure is often merely increased because school systems, too, must move to evaluate this new knowl-

edge, and teachers are expected to participate in school studies. As a result the teachers might seem to be going in two directions at once.

### Public Demands

Because of the explosion of knowledge, the public demands that greater evaluation of curricular offerings be made by teachers and administrators. This study should include what *is* in the curriculum and what *should* be in the curriculum for the advancement of learning. Pressure for curriculum change comes from within and from outside the profession. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult for teachers to know what will give the best background for youth. Many times the pressures for change are found to be from vested interest groups with no regard for the good of youth; yet teachers must take time to study these proposals.

When new programs such as Physical Science Study Committee physics, Chemical Education Materials Study chemistry, Chemical Bond Approach chemistry, modern mathematics, new basic reading approaches, audiolingual modern foreign language procedures, programmed instructional materials, educational tele-

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vision, and linguistics in English are introduced, teachers are under pressure from the public to accept such programs without any evaluation. However, time must be allowed to study these innovations thoroughly. Many questions must be answered, such as: Why is this program better than the one being used? What will this new program do for youth that is better than what is being done by the program now being used? What does it really replace in the curriculum offerings? After such questions have been answered, the recommendations by teachers must be weighed; and if the new program is accepted, it must then be implemented into the curriculum.

Due to the explosion of knowledge within the past decade, there is a greatly increased amount of information to be presented to pupils. Since this is far too much content to expect them to absorb, it is necessary for teachers to select wisely the subject matter to be presented and to find improved methods of assisting in the learning process. In order to help in this matter, teachers need to find out more about how people learn. More experimentation and research need to be done in this area, and teachers will be expected to become involved in these studies. This will invariably result in additional pressure upon teachers.

Since 1959 the federal government has assisted education, through the National Defense Education Act, in a number of curriculum areas. More recently the United States government has become concerned with a number of social problems which have a bearing upon education—such as integration of schools, culturally deprived youth, the dropout, the effect of poverty upon children, and rehabilitation and retraining of people put out of jobs by automation and scientific

discoveries. Each of these problems has placed additional stress upon teachers, since teachers should be ready to assist pupils in making thoughtful judgments in each of these areas. However, because most of these are highly controversial issues, it is necessary for teachers to be especially capable in helping pupils. Teachers know that as each situation is cleared up another issue or problem will take its place. Therefore, teachers should always make it clear that social problems of one kind or another will doubtless always exist.

### College Requirements

Teachers in secondary schools today face another problem—that of assisting pupils in getting into colleges and in obtaining college scholarships. Society today has demanded more stringent requirements for both of these and as a result many young people will not be considered for scholarships and a larger number will not qualify to enter college. In many communities the number of high school graduates who qualify for college entrance is the basis for judging the quality of teaching in the secondary school. This is a cause for concern among teachers.

In every classroom, teachers have many immediate concerns about the pupils they teach. Among these concerns are mental ability, physical health, emotional health, and social health.

Mental ability is quite often hampered due to physical limitations and emotional problems. Because of the advances made by medical science, many more children have survived infancy today than did a generation ago, and are members of the school group. A number of pupils have brain damage, are cardiacs or epileptics,

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9. L. Raths. "Power in Small Groups." *Journal of Educational Sociology* 28 (3): 97-103; November 1954.

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#### Pressures—Ackerman

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and some have nutrition problems. It is very difficult in some cases for pupils to be able to concentrate if they have physical problems. Teachers must know how pupils grow, develop, and what physical limitations each young person has in order to teach him.

#### Problems of Youth

Most teachers are disturbed when pupils do not make the proper progress in school. Thus teachers spend much time and effort in helping all pupils to learn as much as is possible for them to learn.

Emotional problems of youth are often almost impossible for teachers to cope with. Teachers know that a disturbed or broken home has a definite effect on pupils. Because classroom teachers are not trained to handle such emotional problems, specialists have been provided to help teachers. These are social workers, psychologists, and teachers for exceptional children. Even these are not reaching all those who need to be helped.

In modern living, adjustments to social environment are important. Teachers are concerned with many of the little prob-

lems which cause youth to have difficulty in making such adjustments. Teachers with a truly professional attitude become frustrated by their inability to help these pupils and this results in further pressure upon these teachers.

Ability to communicate to all parents about their children is limited. Teachers attempt continuously to inform parents of the progress and limitations of their children, but meet with limited success in this overture. Parents cannot always comprehend or accept the true picture of their children. Therefore, teachers again become frustrated.

Despite these and many additional pressures, today's teachers are performing a yeoman service for society. Society should assist and encourage the foresight of today's professional teacher.

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#### Editorial—Drummond

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ership for human change is to develop educational institutions which surround learners with love, patience, support, understanding, guidance toward responsible use of freedom, opportunity to make mistakes without loss of standing, and challenges commensurate with their maturity and abilities. Within such settings, commitment to basic human values will continue to be developed in succeeding generations of young Americans. Within such settings, human personality will be treasured, differences will be accepted and cherished, hard work will be willingly undertaken because of goals clearly perceived, and feelings of goodwill toward all men will naturally grow.

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