

Leadership for Human Change

Harold D. Drummond

AS THIS is written, the American people are being bombarded through our marvelous communication media with myriad appeals made by candidates of our two major parties. The political struggle is being waged to determine which of the parties shall provide leadership for the next four years. Long before this is published the political decision will have been made in typical American fashion by each interested person voting his own convictions. This experiment has worked well for us as a people and as a nation for 175 years—not perfectly by any conceivable yardstick—but well. Through the technique of the ballot box and the voting machine we have chosen our leaders. They have, in the main, provided leadership for human change.

Educational leadership even more than political leadership *must* be oriented to human change. The basic goal of education is change—human change—in desirable directions. We welcome young children, most of whom cannot read, or write, or figure, into our elementary schools. About twenty years later some of these same individuals will have a hood, signifying the doctorate, placed upon their shoulders—symbol of high academic achievement and superior scholarship. What enormous changes have taken place in these individuals between these two points in time! The frightened, mother-oriented kindergartners have become the poised, confident,

effective scholars. Not all of the credit for the changes can be assumed by the schools the scholars attended; but the schools are the social agencies specifically charged in our culture to accomplish such miracles. That such changes do occur regularly in our society is a tribute to parents, to teachers, and to our political and cultural systems.

Unfortunately, undesirable changes also frequently occur as young people move through our system. Some youngsters never seem to develop the aspirations, the drives, and the skills needed to achieve at a level near their potential. Some of them become the well-advertised dropouts. A few will undoubtedly repudiate authority and acceptable norms of behavior to become the beatniks, the juvenile delinquents, the rapists, and the gangsters of tomorrow. Not all of the blame for such changes should be placed upon the schools these individuals attend; but, as the social agencies specifically charged in our culture to accomplish other changes, schools must accept considerable responsibility for such failures.

Changing People

This issue of *Educational Leadership* focuses attention upon the school as a change-agent—and the specific focus is on changing *people*. Quite generally, the adults in this nation accept behavior

change as an important function of the schools. Not all adults agree, however, on the specific behaviors desired. Clearly, one of the major responsibilities of educational leaders in such a situation is, therefore, *to help build sounder understandings of what constitutes desirable behavior* at every step in the educational process.

Certainly, we can all agree that behavior deemed acceptable for a five-year-old is not acceptable for a high school senior. A major problem is that well-meaning parents and teachers sometimes expect adult-like behavior from youngsters, and build such pressures on them that undesirable behavior is almost sure to occur. Contrast such leadership with that described in the ASCD yearbook *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming*:¹

Perhaps the one over-all implication for education drawn from the discussion of fully functioning people by our four authors is that education must value change. As people are ever-moving and ever-becoming, education needs to move into the future with them. We need to de-emphasize tradition and the past and devote more energy to the present and the future. Schools should be places where students can grow and change as total personalities. Most of the suggestions in the preceding paragraphs call for change—for the valuing of change. Educators can no longer afford to deplore and resist change. Too many teachers are still insisting that things must be done the “right” way. In such an atmosphere, goodness becomes synonymous with conformity. Messiness, noise, confusion and mistakes, out of which may come originality, creativity and genius, are suppressed in favor of neatness, quiet, order and “being right,” out of which can come conservatism, cowardice, rigidity and smugness.

¹ Arthur W. Combs, Chairman. *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1962. p. 207.

We have spoken of the importance of teachers who value change. It is even more important in supervisors and administrators. If administrators desire courageous and creative teachers who are forward moving and open to experience, they must welcome, value and encourage change. Experimentation must be facilitated and even, sometimes, protected. Differences in teachers must be appreciated and encouraged, not just tolerated. To do this, supervisors, administrators and teachers will, themselves, need to overcome their fear of making mistakes. Change will only occur in an atmosphere where change is valued, difference is warmly appreciated and mistakes, which are the inevitable concomitant of trying, are accepted as a normal part of the price of growing. Each person can only behave in terms of what seems to him important. To induce values in others, then, administrators and supervisors need to be sure that they really hold the values they say they do and that this message is getting through to those they supervise.

Limitless Possibilities

Effective leadership for desirable human change comes from those persons who themselves are open to life, growing, and fully functioning. They see ahead limitless possibilities for man—a world of peace, justice, harmony, plenty—and they face that future with hope, with joy, with commitment. Leaders with such vision and commitments provide settings within which young people can grow in confidence and competence; can learn to accept the hard knocks of defeat and discouragement as well as the thrilling experiences of success and achievement; and can develop self concepts which will enable them to face the world as secure, free, creative, courageous persons.

The basic and continuing task of lead-

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Organization." *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 34; No. 3; Summer 1964.

8. L. Polansky. "Group Social Climate and the Teacher's Supportiveness of Group Status Systems." *Journal of Education Sociology* 28 (3): 115-23; November 1954.

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

—JAMES RATHS, *Assistant Director, Bureau of Educational Research and Field Services, University of Maryland, College Park.*

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.

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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