

NEGOTIATION

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THE role of the teacher is changing; changing in two conflicting ways. First, teachers obviously are playing a more important part in decision making. Increasingly they are involved in curriculum work and consulted on policies—often on released time. Teachers are becoming more professional.

Second, teachers and their organizations are increasing their efforts to spell out in contract form the specifics necessary to a good teaching environment. Collective bargaining on these issues is becoming an established practice. Teachers are adopting the procedures of labor.

Background for Militance

These trends are antagonistic. It is most unlikely that teachers and administrators can work as a team to identify and solve problems *together* and at the same time be creating a labor-management bargaining climate which puts them poles *apart*.

What has precipitated these developments? The strikes in New York; Gary,

Indiana; and Hamtramck, Michigan; and the state-wide sanctions on Utah and Oklahoma all give testimony to the growing unrest and new-found militancy among teachers. In recognition of this fact the *New York Times* as early as 1964 stated:

There is mounting evidence that teachers are no longer content to rule only the classroom to which they are assigned. They want a hand in the assignment and a voice in the policy that controls their professional lives.¹

One of the major reasons for dissatisfaction and the move toward militant attitudes on the part of teachers is their resentment of autocratic and arbitrary administrators. In addition, teachers have been disappointed by the reticence of the public to support education so that items such as duty-free lunch hours and reasonable class size can be implemented. Thus the rise of "welfare" concerns of teachers and the attempts to write into contracts the guarantees that should be their professional right.

¹ *New York Times*, January 16, 1964.

On the other hand, it is a sobering thought to realize that most of the parents who have so little regard for education attended public schools. Perhaps it is an indictment of all in the profession that we have done such an ineffective job in teaching about the values of free public education and the necessary cost of good teaching.

Confrontation— A Key Concept

Unquestionably, the general climate of concern for civil rights and human rights, and the dramatic and successful demonstrations, have helped precipitate teachers' growing unrest. The late President Kennedy, in speaking to the NEA, stated:

Things don't happen. They are made to happen. And in the field of education, they are made to happen by you and your members.

The sociologists' prevailing view that confrontation is an essential part of the process of change is a disturbing idea to the typical educator who embraces concepts such as "readiness," "accepting people where they are," and "learning takes place best in a comfortable atmosphere."

Dan Dodson, Director of the Center for Human Relations and Community Studies, New York University, puts it this way:

There is a mind-set in America that significant change takes a long time. This is the argument for graduation, and for the plea for a longer time in change processes. It is here submitted that timing, but not time, is a dimension of change. The success of change depends upon the quality of the experience rather than the length of exposure. The real issue in social change is

how to bring people to significant confrontations.²

This confrontation is already taking place. Arthur Rice in *Nation's Schools* says:

The role of the school administrator in the NEA is being downgraded into "second class" membership. In fact, the representative assembly at its recent meeting in New York passed resolutions and adopted amendments that segregate the superintendent, the principal and other professional members of the administrative staff into a "de facto minority" group.³

The types of confrontation which may arise can be illustrated by a proposal from a Detroit teachers' group. They requested that when 50 percent of a building's teaching staff is dissatisfied with the principal's handling of discipline, the principal's supervisor will counsel him. If, in the opinion of the staff, there is not sufficient improvement in the principal's behavior, he would be transferred. This proposal lost out to some other concerns as the collective bargaining process took place, but it demonstrates the changing self-concept of teachers.

Not all the proposals made by teacher groups are so startling, but their proposals will, nonetheless, dramatically affect curriculum and administrator-teacher relations.

Recent legislation in several states now provides for recognition of teacher groups, the selection of a sole bargaining agent, and negotiations concerning conditions of work and other issues.

²Dan Dodson. "To Work Effectively as Agents of Change." *Social Action* 31 (6): 30-31; February 1965.

³Arthur H. Rice. "Looking Forward." *Nation's Schools* 76 (3): 38; September 1965. Quoted with permission. © 1965, McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Whether called "collective bargaining" or "professional negotiations," the process is the same and the outcomes just as full of impact on the curriculum.

Several state teacher organizations have supplied local groups with a "model contract." This agreement suggests that items such as the following be covered: released time for professional meetings, teaching hours, number of weekly teaching periods, teaching assignments, transfer and reassignment policies, pupil-teacher ratios, procedures for selection and use of educational tools, equipment and materials. These are obviously all curriculum issues.

The movement toward involving teachers in decisions that affect them existed long before negotiation came into view. Research has shown that better and more acceptable decisions are made when such procedures are used. Whether research supports involvement or not, teachers need and want to be consulted—and they deserve to be.

Irreconcilable Trends in NEA

The NEA sponsors a project titled "Time To Teach." The project calls for teacher participation in decision making at a professional level and also stresses welfare items. As Malcolm Provus, Project Director, states: "Time to teach problems necessarily deal with classroom instruction and conditions of work."⁴

Like the NEA itself, on one hand the project pushes for welfare items such as duty-free lunch hours and better salaries, to be gained through unified teacher action, and at the same time stresses the

necessity for teachers and administrators to act as a team. In the same article Provus comments:

School innovation requires a climate similar to that which supports a research team working in medicine or industry. Individual and group risk of failure must be tolerated to a considerable degree; the ideas of each member of the team must be honored as a contribution to the group effort to probe facts and discover new relationships that may have practical value; participants in inquiry must be encouraged to give freely of ideas and criticism on a team basis with no certain reward other than the esteem of their peers and the knowledge that a common problem is being attacked.⁵

Implications for the Curriculum

Can this climate for teamwork exist side by side with a division along labor-management lines? What will be the impact of these conflicting trends on the role of the curriculum person?

Ideally, the individual with curriculum responsibility works cooperatively with classroom teachers (and others) to identify needs and bring about instructional improvement. Such communication and sharing flourish in a climate of trust. (If you share your authority, you are taking a risk; and the more faith and understanding you have in the other individual or group, the less risk is involved.) In such a situation, the lines of authority become blurred and there is a feeling of teamwork rather than a division between the administrator and the classroom teacher. The forces which appear to be at work are creating a "we-

⁴ Malcolm Provus. "Project: Time To Teach." *The National Elementary Principal* XLIV (2): 54; November 1964.

⁵ Malcolm Provus. "Time To Teach." *The Journal of Teacher Education* XVI (1): 6; March 1965.

they" atmosphere which will make co-operation more difficult.

In addition, contractual arrangements are more frequently being made which involve items related to curriculum. The length of the school day, for instance, influences the time and duration of in-service activities. Some teacher groups have eyed the funds spent for speakers, substitute teachers, materials, and the cost to the school district for released time for in-service sessions. They may negotiate to have these dollars applied to salary improvement instead.

Once the length of the teacher's working day is set by contract, it is unlikely that many teachers will voluntarily put in time on curriculum activities, or work in the classroom after school, fixing up their rooms, making preparations, and correcting homework. Those who do may experience spoken or unspoken peer pressure to conform to the hard-won provisions of the contract.

Curriculum workers will have little opportunity to adjust class size, class

schedules, or class length once these become matters of contractual agreement. Innovation will apparently be curtailed. For example: If the class size is fixed, can team teaching be as easily initiated? When teacher assignments are formalized can an ungraded secondary program be inaugurated?

These are only illustrations of how the changing status of the teacher will have impact on the process of curriculum improvement. It may be that in your district you can have the improvement in teacher welfare these new trends foretell while maintaining the teamwork so necessary for curriculum change.

Of course, no contract, law, or national trend will have the same effect in all school districts. It is hoped that professional people of good will, working together, will continue to move toward more effective instruction. This will be more likely to happen if these trends are studied and if their impact on instruction is anticipated by those of us with curriculum responsibility. 

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