



THE issues confronting the American society in the 1960's will make this decade one of the most significant in the 20th Century. This decade may well be characterized as the time when the people comprising the various minority groups in our society demanded a voice in the decision-making processes affecting them.

Until the 1960's, groups such as the blacks, students, and teachers were generally willing to abide by the results of the decision-making process of the "Establishment." However, this process did not enable such groups to realize their goals to the extent they desired. Therefore, such groups began to demand more voice and more participation in the decisions affecting their future and their ability to reach their goals. Consequently, the 1960's may well become known as the age of "participatory democracy."

Seemingly the issues facing our society have become increasingly complex and chronic change has become a part of everyday life. As a consequence, the American people have placed additional responsibility upon education for attaining the goals of a democratic society. During this period, teachers and administrators were being better prepared than ever before. New and challenging standards were provided by men such as James B. Conant and others. Teachers in this period came to know more about how children learn as they became acquainted with the work of Piaget and Bruner.

This joint thrust by society and education caused the teacher great frustration since

much of the educational establishment itself was anachronistic. Teachers felt that if education was to assume greater responsibility, it must have the necessary resources to accomplish the task. Power and resources for educational change would not be given to education; rather, they would have to be won by education. Hence, teachers decided to become militant and directly influence the allocation of national resources. The main problem confronting education today is how best to institutionalize this militancy.

Professional Crisis

The decision on the part of the teachers to involve themselves deeply in the democratic process has too frequently been interpreted both inside and outside of education as primarily a means of improving the salaries and fringe benefits of teachers. This is too simplistic.

Teachers not only want better working conditions but also are committed to assuming more responsibility for the solution of the problems of society. Unlike the union movement in the 1930's and the 1940's, teachers are very concerned about and desire to be involved in decisions as to how children are educated. The professional education of teachers has made them concerned with the product of their efforts and how that product—the child—is educated.

Issues such as discipline, class size, better instructional materials, and involvement in curriculum decisions are basic to the ob-



MILITANCY?

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jectives of teachers and are a common thread in teacher militancy and concomitant professional negotiations. The exertion of teacher power in each of these issues is not so much for salary and fringe benefits, but to obtain better education. The More Effective Schools (M.E.S.) drive by the United Federation of Teachers in New York City is a specific case in point. Teachers desire to achieve true professional status even if it is through a form of trade unionism.

Until the 1960's, conflict in education was primarily between the profession and its external critics. Generally, education had been on the defensive, making its major gains through national alarm as in the era after Sputnik and on the coattails of friendly critics such as Dr. Conant. With the decision to use their inherent power to secure better education, teachers found themselves faced with a new crisis. By confronting the general society with their demands, teachers discovered that they were also confronting the group upon whose members they had previously relied for leadership not only at the local level, but also at the national level—the administrators.

The administrator was more closely allied with the public than was the teacher, due to his close affiliation with local boards of education. Up to this point of crisis, many administrators had maintained their position of leadership in school districts primarily by developing pleasant rapport among staff members. In many schools, staffs were characterized by being happy failures rather than

task oriented. Teachers now began to want to attain a better educational program in the classroom, rather than be marked by a convivial staff in the teachers' lounge.

Teacher militancy through professional negotiation forced for the first time an honest dialogue, albeit an acrimonious one, between administration and the local professional organization. For once, the educators began debating honestly the question of how successful they were in achieving educational and professional goals. When these issues were negotiated, teachers, administrators, and boards of education had to carry on a similar dialogue with the community which controlled the purse strings.

The important point is that the crisis—the turning point—forced honest discussion and evaluation of the educational program. This confrontation initially divided the previous educational power base of administration, teachers, and parents since old educational platitudes under which unity was achieved were found grievously wanting.

The New Process

Militancy on the part of teachers is here to stay. The acrimony will wear off, but the dynamic process of professional negotiation will become commonplace. Thus, a major

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problem confronts the teaching profession: namely, how to ensure that the process will be self-renewing and institutionalized in meeting the objectives of education as well as the profession. In order for this to occur, several changes should take place:

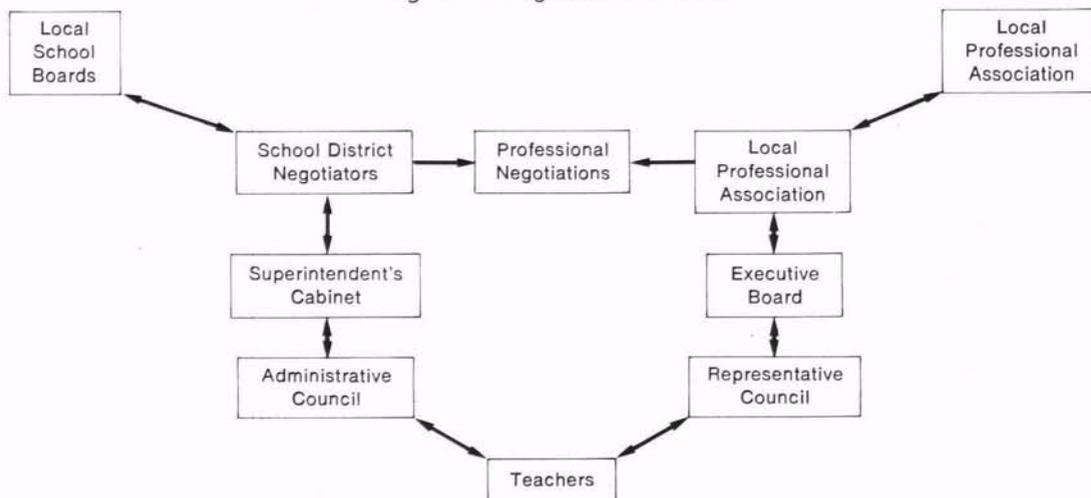
1. Teachers must be able to obtain information and effect change not only through the organization that represents them, but also through the school district by which they are employed. Thus, teachers will be able to gain their ends in areas such as curriculum through channels of the school district, and in areas such as salary improvement through their professional association. Such utilization of communication and decision-making channels will provide teachers with all relevant information rather than making them dependent upon one organization solely. Two advantages result: (a) teachers will understand and help to create the district position as well as their association position on all issues, and (b) professional organizations will be prevented from having to develop an administrative hierarchy that may become unresponsive to teacher needs. Furthermore, balance and competition between the two channels of communication and decision making will improve their mutual functioning.

2. Administration must represent the school district so that effective debate can take place on all issues. The fact that administrators must represent two factions is basic to this position; initially, they are members of the profession, yet in negotiation they must represent the school district. If teachers can accept this ambivalence, they not only will receive information from both the district and the association, but also will be able to affect the position of both. An organizational chart that might accomplish this is illustrated in Diagram 1.

In this organizational chart, the teachers are represented by both their building principal, who is a member of the Administrative Council, and by their elected building representative, who sits on the Representative Council. Therefore, depending upon the issue, teachers can obtain educational change by working through either school district or professional association channels.

The superintendent needs to receive information regarding the needs and objectives of the professional staff and, with this diagram, can obtain them through the district channel. In addition, the teachers need to know the position of the superintendent and the school district, and they can receive this information through their principal. This

Diagram 1. Organizational Chart.



organization not only will improve communication in a school district, but also should improve the negotiation process since the needs and objectives of all parties involved in professional negotiation will be better understood.

3. Administration must have autonomy from the professional association at the local level. At the state and national levels, there needs to be an umbrella organization that will include all educators, since the critical battles to be waged at those levels demand unification. This separation at the local level will permit principals to concentrate upon leadership of their staff toward tasks which have been mutually determined through negotiation. Principals will no longer be dependent upon their staffs for the determination of their salaries. These salaries will be negotiated with the board of education through the superintendent.

Supervision, which teachers have long demanded, now can take place, since school administrators are responsible primarily to the superintendent and not the local professional association.

Future Trends

There are many forces that have been set loose by teacher militancy that must be watched closely:

1. Teacher militancy as demonstrated through professional negotiation must be a means, not an end. It is a process that must serve the purpose of better education for the children and youth of America.

2. The profession must realize that power in a democracy comes ultimately from the people. Alone, the profession cannot achieve its goals of better working conditions and better education.

3. Professional negotiation is a dynamic process which must be institutionalized. As conditions change, this process must be able to change along with the changing roles it requires of its participants. Otherwise the process may harden just as the process of collective bargaining has hardened for labor management.

4. Provision must be made for the youth of today in the negotiation process. The lessons of campus unrest at the colleges and universities must not go unnoticed.

Teacher militancy will cause more resources to be allocated to education. Though some teachers and some members of the public are disturbed by teacher power, this movement is long overdue. To remain strong, a democracy must constantly challenge its fundamental beliefs. Teacher militancy will do this to gain better education for America's children and youth. □

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