

LAUREL N. TANNER\*  
DANIEL TANNER

# Educational Reform or Retrenchment?

THE National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, established through a \$200,000 grant from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, has issued a report recommending that "the formal school-leaving age should be dropped to age 14." Most of the 32 recommendations in the report are directed at relieving what the report calls the "beleaguered" condition of the schools and at instituting economy and efficiency measures. The crisis tone of the report is reflected in these words, extracted from the opening statement:

A petrel is usually defined as something whose coming portends trouble or strife. When the high school is examined as an institution from its point of origin to where it is, it is seen to be the stormiest of petrels. . . . Education is warped by the tension between a rapidly changing society and a slowly changing school.

A chapter of the report

entitled "The Crisis in School Security" recommends that all secondary school systems develop security plans "to safeguard students, faculty, equipment, and facilities," and that state legislation "be enacted to require principals to file a detailed report on all serious assaults within the schools." A section of the chapter is devoted to the schools' rest rooms, and recommends that, as a security measure, teachers' rest rooms be closed and that teachers be required to use the same rest rooms as the students.

Although the report makes constant comparisons between its recommendations and those of the NEA's 1918 report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education which produced the classical statement, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, the two reports bear little resemblance. Not only did the *Cardinal Principles* make no mention of rest rooms, but it advocated programs to

extend educational opportunities and to prevent youngsters from dropping out of high school. And where the *Cardinal Principles* viewed secondary education as fulfilling our democratic ideals, the Kettering report makes no mention of democracy in its statement of citizenship goals. In a section on student rights, the Kettering report states:

To the rights the courts have already secured for American students, the Commission would like to add another: the right not to be in formal school beyond the age of fourteen. Compulsory attendance laws are the dead hand on the high schools. The liberation of youth and the many freedoms which the courts have given to students within the last decade make it impossible for the school to continue as a custodial institution and also to perform effectively as a teaching institution.

While the first chapter of the Kettering report opens with the statement that, "Within the

\* Laurel N. Tanner, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Daniel Tanner, Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

past ten years the cost of the high school has doubled," no account is made of increased costs due to inflation and the enrollment increases during this period. Other efficiency recommendations of the report call for every secondary school to formulate student performance criteria to "be posted in a conspicuous place within the school building," that the College Level Examination Board expand its examination program to include a comparable Secondary Level Examination Program with tests routinely administered quarterly or monthly, that greater use be made of instructional television, and that the National Assessment of Educational Progress testing program "become the bulwark of educational accountability." Accordingly, "the findings of National Assessment should lead to various content revisions, curriculum reform, in-service efforts and improved competency-based instruction." (During the years when the National Assessment Program was first proposed, its sponsors repeatedly assured educators that the program in no way was designed to influence the curriculum.)

The Kettering report was prepared by a 24-member commission, chaired by B. Frank Brown, an employee of an affiliated agency of the foundation. In a dissenting statement at the end of the report, a member of the commission, John A. Stavanage, Executive Secretary of the Commission on Secondary Schools of the North Central Association, offers a number of dissenting remarks. Stavanage objects to the "indefensible statement" in the report which refers to a "rapidly changing society and a slowly

changing school," and notes that school problems reflect the problems of the larger society. He also points out that the report does not warn of the limitations of performance-based instruction and that the "quest for measurable objectives has resulted in too many cases in the trivialization of learning."

Stavanage also stresses that the report's emphasis on school security smacks of "irresponsible alarmism" in view of the fact that perhaps most schools are not confronted with the kinds of problems portrayed in the report. He expresses his reluctance concerning the lowering of the school leaving age. Stavanage points out that it was his initial impression that the Kettering Commission was intended to make an affirmative assessment of the American secondary school and to discern new directions, but that the report fails to reflect such an attitude. He concludes,

I object to the tone of the report which intimates that the standard high school has failed completely its educational and social mission. This is a serious misreading of the actual situation. Moreover, it is a mindless return to the tired rhetoric of the past decade when any pied-piper critic could muster a quick audience by hurling gratuitous and unfounded charges against the schools.

The report has been published by McGraw-Hill Book Company at \$2.95 a copy.

#### Changing Educational Perspectives

Three years ago, the Annual Education Review of *The New York Times* carried the lead caption "Reform Drive Now Key Issue in Education." This year's issue of the Review is captioned "Education '74:

Sober Realism and Cautious Hope."

Writing in the 1974 Review, Christopher Jencks, chief author of the controversial study *Inequality*, concedes that "by emphasizing the economic effects of schooling, we may have distracted attention from its social and cultural effects, which may be far more important," and that "by emphasizing the fact that education cannot do much to promote economic equality, we may have distracted attention from the possibility that education contributes to general affluence."

In the same issue of the Review, Alan C. Purves of the University of Illinois, who served as a member of the evaluation staff of the International Evaluation of Educational Achievement, writes that, "The first message for teachers is that, despite many of the slogans about schools not making a difference, the association's studies indicate that some schools do a better job than others" and, "All of the association's studies point to the conclusion that schools do indeed 'make a difference.'" In an apparent attack on the pursuit-of-academic-excellence and the disciplinary syndrome of the past two decades of curriculum reform, Purves concludes, "These curriculum-planners have for the last 20 years been on the as yet fruitless quest for some philosopher's stone that will give all children the skills and attitudes of an intelligentsia overnight or at least in six easy lessons. The association's studies uncover no philosopher's stone."

#### Teachers as Censors

When students at Hilliard Junior High School, near Columbus, Ohio, discovered that

four pages were missing from a book of poems they had purchased through the school (*Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters), they demanded to know who had removed the pages. It turned out that two teachers objected to four poems on these pages and, with the approval of the school principal, cut the pages from the book. Parents of one of the students have filed a class action suit on behalf of all students on the ground that their First Amendment rights were violated.

Since its publication in 1915, *Spoon River Anthology* has undergone 77 printings in nearly as many languages.

#### Texas Texts

The Texas Education Commissioner has reported receiving complaints against 142 of 316 textbooks proposed for use in Texas schools, with many of the complaints coming from the Texas Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution alleging that the books are not patriotic enough. The Continuing Task Force on Education for Women filed objections to *Snow White* in elementary schools on the ground that the tale had "oppressed young girls for countless generations." Other objections were directed at the teaching of evolution in science textbooks and various book illustrations.

#### Free Press

"Either you give this newspaper back to the kids, letting them write whatever they want to write without breaking the law, or you make it known your publication is a university publication and not a student publication." This

edict by a U.S. District Court judge was directed at the new president of Florida Atlantic University who had inherited a dispute which arose when his predecessor had ousted three editors of the student newspaper, *The Atlantic Sun*, alleging that the paper had "failed to exemplify the university standards for quality."

In compliance with a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, the Montgomery County (Maryland) Board of Education voted unanimously to eliminate censorship prior to publication of student newspapers and pamphlets. The ruling stemmed from a complaint against the board by parents of six students at Winston Churchill High School. In the words of the court, "While school authorities may ban obscenity and unprivileged libelous material, there is an intolerable danger, in the context of prior restraint, that under the guise of such vague labels, they may unconstitutionally choke off criticism, either of themselves, or of school policies."

#### School Telephone Broadcasts

The St. Louis Public Schools broadcast items of interest each day on an answering service line. This is a service of the school system's community relations division.

#### Career Education Catalogue

A 390-page bulletin, *Career Education: A Curriculum Design and Instructional Objectives Catalogue*, has been prepared by the American Institutes of Research for the Center for Occupational Education of the U.S. Office of Education. The purpose of the catalogue is "to present a suggested curriculum for career

education for kindergarten through ninth grade."

For further information, write to: American Institutes of Research in the Behavioral Sciences, P.O. Box 1113, Palo Alto, California 94302.

#### Survey of High School Seniors

A survey involving almost three-quarters of a million high school seniors (1972-73) conducted in conjunction with the College Board's Admissions Testing Program, found that the first choice of intended field of study for females was nursing (17%), followed by education and social science (15% each). Among the males, the fields with the highest percentage of choice were social science and biological science (15% each), followed by business (13%), and engineering (11%). Education ranked sixth among the males (5%). However, because the questionnaire did not connect various major fields (such as social science, biology, English, math, etc.) with teaching, many of the respondents who plan teaching careers in these fields were not counted as choosing education.

In the area of student activities, 43 percent of the girls reported that they participated in music including band, orchestra, and chorus in high school as compared with only 28 percent of the boys. The girls also outnumbered the boys in participation in school clubs—with 25 percent of the girls reporting participation as against only 11 percent of the boys. Among the nine areas of student activities in the survey, the percentage of participation for boys was higher than girls in only one area: athletics (including intramural and community). Although 74

percent of the boys reported participating in athletics, a surprisingly high proportion of the girls indicated such participation—56 percent.

### **Higher Education of Blacks**

*The Higher Education of Blacks in the United States* is a 50-page reprint, published by the Carnegie Corporation, of a lecture delivered by Alan Pifer (president of the foundation) last summer in Johannesburg under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. According to Pifer,

Throughout this century, education, and particularly the higher education of blacks, has been regarded by most Americans, black and white, as the key to black progress in every realm. Although voices have arisen recently which seem to challenge this assumption, there is no convincing evidence available to indicate that it does not remain valid. Indeed, there is much evidence which suggests that it is the education of black leadership, more than any other factor, which has been the critical element in the gains made by blacks.

Pifer cites a study by Herbert Katzenstein comparing the average earnings of black graduates of the City College of New York and of Howard University with the average earnings of comparable white graduates of City College during the period from 1962 to 1970. Katzenstein found that while the black graduates of 1962 earned less than whites, those of 1970 were actually averaging from \$1,600 to \$2,000 more annually than their white counterparts. While Pifer acknowledges that these data do not apply nationally, he sees a definite national trend in which blacks and whites will be receiving similar

incomes when they have comparable qualifications.

Among other topics discussed by Pifer is that of the place of black studies as a separate curricular area in the university. While reviewing various sides of this issue, Pifer notes that such leading blacks as Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., President of Michigan State University, W. Arthur Lewis of Princeton University, and Andrew Brimmer of the Federal Reserve Board have advocated that instead of black studies, black students study such subjects as science, mathematics, engineering, economics, business, law, and medicine.

For a copy of the reprint, write to Carnegie Corporation of New York, 437 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

### **Urban Education**

In St. Louis, all ninth graders take a course called urban studies. Included in the course are units on housing and land use, transportation, law and justice, urban social services, minorities, and urban problems.

### **College of Thematic Studies**

The University of Pennsylvania has a new undergraduate college—the College of Thematic Studies—designed to integrate the curriculum through broad themes, such as "Energy Management," "Health and Society," and "University Studies." The thematic courses include seminars, field trips, and a variety of projects. The "Energy Management" studies are capped by a three-week field study of federal agencies and a visit to the Tennessee Valley Authority. "University

Studies" focuses on a broad range of operations of the University. The thematic approach is intended to integrate the curriculum and to make the curriculum relevant to pervading problems and issues in society.

### **Per Pupil Expenditure and Teachers' Salaries**

Among the 50 states, New York State has the highest per pupil expenditure with \$1,584 as compared with \$590 for Alabama, according to an NEA survey. New York also has the highest average teacher salary—\$13,450, while Mississippi ranked lowest with \$7,145.

### **"Processed Glop"**

When two teachers wrote to the food column editor of *The New York Times* describing their efforts to wean ghetto children away from beans, rice, and greens with hog scraps in favor of macaroni and cheese, they received an unexpected reply. The editor informed the teachers that the "poor folks' food" was tastier and more nourishing than "the ubiquitous packaged macaroni and processed glop." And, he added, "As for pasta, there are a thousand better recipes than the invariably dull macaroni and cheese."

### **Remedial Reading in College**

Beginning this spring semester a mandatory remedial reading program was instituted at Brooklyn College for those students whose reading scores fall within the bottom quartile. Heretofore, the remedial reading program was voluntary and had attracted some 600 students each semester.

## New Newsletter

*EDC News* is a new publication of Education Development Center—the nonprofit corporation which sponsored such national curriculum projects as PSSC physics and "Man: A Course of Study." The first issue of *EDC News* is devoted to reviewing the various EDC projects in the social studies, sciences, and mathematics. Included in this issue is an article—"Piaget, Materials and Open Education"—which relates the research of Piaget to the uses of instructional materials in the open classroom environment.

For information about *EDC News*, write to: EDC Publications Office, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts 02160.

## Alternative High School Is "Old Hat" in California

Since 1919 California school districts have been required by law to offer an educational program for high school age youth whose special needs are not met by the regular mainstream school. The original purpose of the program was to provide for the education of youth between the ages of 16 and 18 who could not earn a high school diploma without part-time or full-time employment as a means of support.

In 1965, the legislature ordered that no student 16 years of age or older be suspended from school for more than 10 days in a school year unless he is first transferred to a continuation school. Thus many youths who could not or would not conform to the regular high school were provided with an alternative form of education.

American Legion High

School (enrollment 320) is one of two continuation high schools in the Sacramento City Unified School District. The classes range from 15 to 20 students. Because the program is individualized, students of above average ability are able to obtain more credits per semester than similar students in mainstream schools. The staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of the gifted student as well as the student with the most severe reading problem.

Interestingly, in addition to continuation students the school also enrolls over 100 pregnant minors between the ages of 14 and 18. Once the pregnant girls have their babies, and the babies reach three months of age, the babies may also participate in a program—the school's nursery. There are at present 40 babies enrolled in the school's infant-toddler program. (Continuation education offers many alternatives.)

## Atlanta Students Attack Environmental Problems

High school sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the Environmental Education Program of the Atlanta Public Schools are not only learning about national and global environmental concerns, but tackling local problems. Each student works for a quarter (Atlanta is on the quarter system) on his own environmental research.

Through the avenue of independent study, course credits may be received from one to four subject areas; those who wish to be admitted to the program draw up proposals for the problem they wish to study and negotiate course contracts for the credits which they will earn. Examples of such con-

tracts are a student having to learn microbiology in order to test water of the lake or stream he is studying, to learn photography to make a pictorial record of it, and/or to learn skills in journalism or composition in order to report what he has found.

The Environmental Education Program is available to any school whose faculty wishes to include it. A satellite teacher from the school is trained in special workshops and works with the students. Members of the school's Environmental Studies staff provide guidance on the conceptual framework for the project, resource materials, and continuing support.

## Lawyers Help with Urban Studies

Members of the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis are sharing their knowledge and experience with ninth graders in urban studies classes. In a typical session the attorney makes a presentation on a topic such as "The Role of Law in a Free Society." This is followed by a question and answer period with the students. Approaches to teaching about the law vary, however, and attorneys spend anywhere from a single class period to a full day in the classroom. (In some cases they return for additional sessions.)

Thus far, 150 men and women representing various areas of legal specialization are participating in the project.

## National Humanities Curriculum Program

August 1, 1974, is the next deadline for schools wishing to apply for the National Humanities Faculty's Individ-

ual Project Program. Schools involved in the program receive up to 20 days of visiting faculty time to help in the creation or revision of curriculum in humanities education or in disciplines within the humanities. Faculty are chosen from a master list of some 1,000 nationally recognized scholars and artists. For further information write Arleigh D. Richardson, III, Director, National Humanities Faculty, 1266 Main Street, Concord, Massachusetts 01742.

#### **Exploring Childhood**

Under a grant from the Office of Child Development of the U.S. Office of Education and the National Institute of Mental Health, Education Development Center (EDC) has produced multimedia curriculum materials to be used by junior and senior high school students in working with young children while learning about human development.

During the 1974-75 school year, EDC plans to test the program materials in over 200 sites around the country. Those interested in participating in the "Exploring Childhood" project, or those seeking additional information, should write to:

Kathleen Horani, Exploring Childhood, Education Development Center, 15 Mifflin Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

#### **Curriculum Exchange**

The Action Group on Curriculum and Instruction of the Massachusetts ASCD is now circulating more than 75 new curriculum and instructional ideas in microfiche and hard cover. A particularly intriguing aspect of this program is that the originators of the designs, manuals, and modules in the Curriculum Exchange serve as consultants for those who want to try the ideas.

For further information about the Curriculum Exchange, write to Gertrude Cunningham, 91 Belmont Street, Lowell, Massachusetts 01851.

#### **Physical Education for Handicapped Students**

San Francisco high school students who would most likely be non-active because of various physical disabilities are now getting an opportunity to actively participate in a well-rounded physical education

program. The school district's physical education department has initiated a program of adaptive physical education.

Class activities range from work on a treadmill and parallel bars to use of the universal gym where students use various muscle rehabilitating and strengthening equipment. Many of the students have serious physical handicaps.

By state law, the class maximum is 20 students. Participants in the program are referred by doctors, nurses, the counselor for the handicapped, and special education teachers.

#### **Scholarship Guide**

The Newspaper Fund, a nonprofit organization designed to encourage talented students to consider newspaper careers, has published its 1974 *Journalism Scholarship Guide*. The 100-page Guide is a directory of colleges and universities at which more than \$2 million in scholarships are available for college students who will be majoring in journalism or communications during the 1974-75 academic year. For a free copy of the Guide, write to: The Newspaper Fund, P.O. Box 300, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. □

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