

The American Teacher

Democracy in Education; Education for Democracy

OFFICIAL ORGAN, THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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ONE DOLLAR A YEAR



THE MARVELOUS REVOLUTIONIST!

MEN fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth—more than ruin, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible; thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habits; thought is anarchic and lawless, indifferent to authority, careless of the well-tried wisdom of the ages. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. It sees man, a feeble speck, surrounded by unfathomable depths of silence; yet it bears itself proudly, as unmoved as if it were lord of the universe. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man.

Bertrand Russell

BUSINESS AND EDUCATION

J. EDWARD MAYMAN

WHEN the hospitals of a town are suspected of inefficiency the advice of expert physicians is sought. When the legal machinery is in need of renovation the prominent lawyers are called in. When transportation facilities are inadequate the advice of the engineer is solicited. But when the educational system is maladjusted (and no one denies that it is), the advice and experience of the teachers, the ones who know, is not only not sought, but is in most cases actually suppressed. Hence the omniscient butcher, baker, and candle-stick maker, prompted as he readily admits by a spirit of social obligation, is "compelled to volunteer" his humble services. Hence, too, his sweeping and amateurish report.

The public prints have recently given prominent notice to a preliminary report of the Committee on Commercial Education of the New York Chamber of Commerce.

The committee set out to investigate commercial education. Very soon it discovered that in order to understand this comparatively narrow field and its limitations it had to study the much broader field of general elementary education. It is because of this that the report is largely a condemnation of the elementary schools and their teachers, rather than an investigation of commercial education. As a result of "numerous conferences with teachers, principals, superintendents, and members of the Board, as well as with outside organizations of citizens and visits to the schools," the committee discovered the following startling conditions:

- 1 The mass of graduates do not have a working knowledge of the subjects taught and have lost or never acquired those traits of personal habit and character that are essential to all business, and without which education must fail.

- 2 The teachers seem to deserve the "grave charge of incompetency, inefficiency, and indifference to the individual welfare of pupils."

- 3 The number of forty-six Board Mem-

bers is "unwieldy for effective work . . . and can only at best accomplish a small result at enormous outlay of time and labor."

These are the main charges against the system. The causes that are largely responsible for this deplorable state of affairs are, in the opinion of the committee:

- 1 Overcrowding of the curriculum, and wholesale promotion from grade to grade regardless of proven merit.

- 2 "The power of removal (of teachers), which is essential to all efficient management, is absolutely nil."

- 3 The Board Member who is appointed by the mayor "must be truly altruistic and high-minded if, resisting the temptations of political influence, he avoids also, in the face of enormous difficulties, the easy and well-trodden path of personal irresponsibility for errors and mistakes."

Now that we have the evils and their causes clearly pointed out to us, the natural question is, "What is the remedy?" The committee has no hesitation in presenting the following:

- 1 "The Gary system is a marked improvement on the old-fashioned methods of teaching."

- 2 Remove or modify those sections of the law which protect the teacher in her tenure of office.

- 3 Reduce the number of board members from forty-six to seven, and have them appointed by the mayor.

No sane teacher will flatly deny the charges that are so clearly made, grave tho they be. But as to the causes and remedies that are proposed, there is ample reason for emphatic disagreement. In justice to the committee it must be said that they recognize the fact that the teachers are "the victims of a system which is discouraging and enervating to the best and strongest of them."

To the charge that the school does not prepare its graduates for the business world we plead guilty. And we should be ready and willing to take our share of opprobrium, if we admitted that it is our purpose to prepare our boys and girls for the business office. But we make no such admission. The present course of study, bad tho it be, does not provide for such narrow education. On the con-

trary, by identifying a rich racial inheritance with the growing child we are attempting to give him a rich and varied background which is supposed to aid him later in the choice of some specialty that fits his peculiar aptitudes. In other words, the elementary school as it is at present constituted does not attempt to turn out specialists for business, commerce, industry, science, or anything in particular. It is satisfied to leave specialized training to the specialized school. But the business man does not seem to realize this. It may be true that we ought to prepare the youngsters for business. But the fact is that we consciously do not. The business man, in accepting a young elementary school graduate, should feel that he is dealing with raw material, so far as his business is concerned; and that he is in fact taking the place of the vocational school so far as that particular boy or girl is concerned. The employer has no right to expect twenty or twenty-five dollar specialized service and ability for a six or seven dollar wage.

A further question that arises in this connection is the doubtful ability of the business man to pass upon the product of the elementary school. Isn't it a fact that he actually tests for what the boy does not know rather than for what he is supposed to know? We may admit that the course of study is antiquated. But so long as it is the life line of the school the teacher dare not neglect it. And no one has a moral right to hold her responsible for what she is not supposed to teach.

It might be urged that the teachers themselves be allowed to take a hand in the framing of the curriculum. Some of us are already discerning a quickened conscience and a nascent professional spirit which is seeking to assert itself in behalf of a modern school curriculum. Those who have the interests of society at heart will put no obstacles in the path of progress.

If we were to consult the business man we might come to some agreement as to

subject matter to be taught. But what particular stratum in the business world shall be our ideal in the inculcation of "personal habit and character that are essential to all business?" The business men have not as yet disclosed to each other their standards of "truthfulness, accuracy, thoroughness, etc." How then can they expect the unsuspecting teacher to do what they can't do? What business man will have the temerity to demand the teaching of his brand of truthfulness or accuracy or thoroughness?

The business man, if given a free hand in the revision of the curriculum, would remove unceremoniously the so-called fads and frills. There are in our midst some drill masters who long to go back to the three R's. But the modern progressive teacher, responsive to the demands of a modern and complex society, will insist upon these very fads and frills and seek to broaden their influence. But the ready retort is that the curriculum is already overcrowded. That is true. The remedy then is not the wholesale deletion of subjects, but a careful elision of parts that are antiquated and useless. Work of that nature requires an expertness that is rare and not easily discovered. A source of ability that has not yet been tapped is among the teachers themselves.

Another reason for poor work, according to the report of the committee, is forced promotions due to overcrowding. It ill becomes the business man to make this complaint. Is it not he who protests against many of the improvements in the educational scheme on account of alleged exorbitant costs? Business, on the one hand, and landlordism on the other, are largely responsible for the parsimony that the Board of Estimate has practised in recent years. The teachers demanded and are still demanding better educational facilities. They have not forgotten the cry "A seat for every child." But business is not interested in such trifles. Its interest is aroused only when it comes to a question of dollars.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Board of Estimate, the fiscal agent of

business, swallowing the much advertised "Gary" scheme in toto, because its sponsors made out a specious case of economy. It is interesting to note that economy is no longer the watchword of the Garyites. Instead of that we hear much of an enriched curriculum.

So far as the sane and conscientious teacher is concerned, the Gary plan represents an experiment in education similar to other experiments which he welcomes in the hope that some improvement may follow. He likes to view the procedure in a scientific spirit. He does not like to prejudge one way or the other. He is perfectly willing and anxious to give the Gary idea, or any other idea, a square chance to prove its worth. And when its worth is scientifically proven, and not before, he is ready to make the best use of it.

The Gary scheme which the Chamber of Commerce Committee hastens to indorse aroused tremendous opposition not so much because of its intrinsic worth or lack of it, as because of the autocratic methods that were used, and are still being used, in forcing it upon the people. Need we express surprise at the quiet rebellion of the teachers and the public at large? Admitting, as we do, that there are many commendable features in the scheme, what reaction may be expected from an overburdened teaching body when the wholesale promulgation of the scheme means increased hours of labor without a corresponding increase in pay, and a sudden disorganization of professional habits? The expected did happen and is happening right along. The net result is that no one, including the original promoters, is satisfied. On the other hand, if tact and common consideration for professional standards had tempered the ardor of the prime movers, we would now witness the harmonious development of the most gigantic experiment in education that the world has ever seen. As matters stand now, the pro and anti-Garyites are at each other's throats; and in the meantime the children suffer from an incongruous combination of educa-

tional practices against which our friends, the business men, will soon protest in much louder voice than they use now.

Inasmuch as the Wirt idea is still a lamentably disorganized experiment, and inasmuch as there is no proof of the superiority of the Gary plan, is it not fair to ask why the committee gives it its unqualified indorsement? The committee itself mentions Dr. Flexner's pamphlet on *The Modern School*. This reminds one of the "sinister influences behind the Gary scheme" that one hears so much about. But let us not be so uncharitable as to establish the connecting links that are suggested by Gary, Indiana, Judge Gary, Steel Trust, Flexner, Rockefeller, General Education Board.

In the opinion of the Committee of the Chamber of Commerce the law protecting the teacher in her tenure of office is a great obstacle to efficiency. That there are inefficient teachers in spite of severe tests and sifting processes we will readily admit. But we deny absolutely that this inefficiency is due to the protection of tenure of office laws. The experience of the entire world for more than a generation is behind these laws and similar laws dealing with the civil service. Surely, no one will be foolish enough to argue for a spoils system in education.

Presumably the committee is very anxious to rid the system of the inefficient. The teachers who respect their profession are also anxious to reduce inefficiency. But their method is different. They cannot indorse the cruel, inhuman, and foolish principle of "hiring and firing" that the committee recommends. We quote:

"... reports from the teaching staff . . . show that conditions are pretty well known and understood. Thruout the school system there is a small but courageous body of individuals, which is laboring strenuously to better conditions under existing law."

The committee fails, however, to point out who that "courageous body" is; nor does it indicate its method of strenuous labor. Those who are sufficiently interested can, without much trouble, easily discover an ever-growing number of

teachers who, inspired with the idealism of their profession, are strenuously working to improve conditions. Instead of abolishing tenure of office laws, they want to abolish silly ratings and stupid supervision which tend to sap the life and vigor of the teachers and to reduce teaching to a craft. These teachers know, be it understood, that inefficiency exists, and that it is not at all limited to the teacher in the class room. The methods for improvement which they propose are not novel by any means. They justly set up the claim that teaching is a profession very much like any other recognized profession such as law or medicine. And as members of a profession they claim the same rights and privileges that members in other professions enjoy. No one knows the merits or shortcomings of the lawyer or physician better than the members of his own profession, and should he be guilty of misconduct no one metes out swifter punishment than the Medical or Bar Associations. These associations know full well that only by holding their members strictly accountable for their conduct can they maintain the dignity of their respective professions. The same is true of teachers, or rather would be true, if they were given the opportunity to live their professional lives in their own way. In order to maintain the dignity and honor of their profession it would devolve upon them to work with might and main for efficiency, and ruthlessly to annihilate everything that makes for inefficiency.

In the first place the high minded teacher demands that the preparation for teaching shall be longer and much more thoro than it now is. Thus there would be better teaching material to begin with. Secondly, he demands the professional right to judge, and be judged by, his peers. This implies a responsible power and a democratic control which would not only purge the system of inefficient and inefficiency, but would also build up a strong professional spirit which could not tolerate low standards. In short, the teachers ask to be treated as responsible

men and women. Such treatment throws the burden of an efficiently conducted school system squarely upon them, and avoids the constant shifting of responsibility of which the committee complains. That they will prove equal to the task can be demonstrated only after they are given an honest chance.

The committee would bring the educational millenium about by reducing the present Board of Education of forty-six members to seven. These seven are still to be the political appointees of the mayor and they are to serve without pay. It may be admitted that it is much easier to hand pick seven than to control forty-six members. But if the committee's chief concern in matters educational is fighting for efficiency, we fail to see how such board will be of material help. If the 22,000 teachers and the public at large were to make any recommendation here, it would be something like this: a, a small board; b, a paid board; c, an elective board; d, a board upon which the teaching body is represented. Everybody admits that the present board is unwieldy, and that a smaller board would be more businesslike in its dealings. By providing a salary for the board members, the public will procure ability that might otherwise be shut out. Service will then be rendered as a matter of duty rather than as a matter of charity. To insure responsiveness to the body politic the board should be elected at large and be subject to recall. A representative of the teachers on the board will not only enhance the dignity of the teaching profession but will also bring to the board councils the invaluable experience and professional opinion of 22,000 trained men and women. Well might we profit by the example of England and Switzerland. In England teachers are not only represented on administrative boards, but also in political bodies. In Switzerland the teachers even elect their principal for a definite term.

As was stated at the outset the report of the Chamber of Commerce contains several charges which right minded

teachers will not deny. But the spirit of it is such that one cannot escape the conviction that these charges are made not so much out of an intense desire to improve the educational system as out of a misguided attempt to impose certain theories and practices which would work

untold harm. The teacher who is imbued with the spirit of social service does not claim perfection. He welcomes criticism. But he must make sure that the criticism is honest and unselfish, and that it is prompted by unquestionable motives.

THE TEACHERS' UNION: PAST AND FUTURE

A. LEFKOWITZ

De Witt Clinton High School, New York

IN March, 1916, a few forward looking teachers organized The Teachers Union of the City of New York. Possibly they themselves did not fully realize that this step would tend to transport them from the narrow confines of the classroom to the world of humanity by bringing them into close relation with the agencies engaged in the political, social, and economic betterment of mankind. But they did definitely realize that their professional and legal interests could be protected and that their efficiency could be improved by altering the conditions under which their work is done.

There are those who are primarily interested in the formulation of ideals of social movements as such. But the practical minds of the average teachers are impatient for facts. They ask, "What has your organization done?" It is to the latter group that this article is addressed.

Stimulated by its affiliation with the labor unions, the Teachers Union has assisted in the defeat of bills before the New York State Legislature which would have nullified the laws protecting the labor of adults, and would have made it possible for children to be taken from the schools and put to work in factories. Thru its true conception of patriotism the Union assisted in giving a backset to the interests that are wont to capitalize their patriotism during the time of war. The Union further assisted labor to defeat a bill that would have made legal the employment of women 12 to 14 hours a day. At all times the Union thru its

delegates to the Central Federated Union of New York has kept its finger on the pulse of labor and the problems confronting labor.

Along with the Union's success in assisting the labor movement to obtain its rights, the newer work of improving the working conditions of teachers has been started. A campaign to abolish the system of rating teachers is under way. A bill to eliminate the provision of "superior merit," applying to high school teachers, from the educational section of the charter of the City of New York, was introduced in the Legislature by another organization, but brought to final passage by the Union. This bill would have abolished a vicious system of trying to improve the teaching by fining the teachers thru withholding advances in salary. The Mayor by his veto finally defeated the bill.

The Union promulgated a body of sound pension principles which it later embodied in a bill in co-operation with the Pension Committee of Brooklyn. The pension bill that was finally passed was not the bill thus framed, but the leaders in the pension fight for the Union were able to force the adoption of certain provisions which brought about the adoption of a better pension system than could otherwise have been obtained. The Union proposes to inaugurate a campaign to amend the bill to make it acceptable to the majority of the poorer paid teachers in the service against whom the law discriminates.

The Teachers Union has agreed to the principle of dismissing incompetent

teachers, but it has insisted upon the right of teachers to participate in determining what constitutes incompetence. In the final judgment of a teacher's incompetence the Union demands a public trial as against the method of star-chamber proceedings.

The Union has defended several teachers thru its legal staff against oppression and inhuman supervision. It has brought charges against a principal for abusing her powers, and has been instrumental in placing abused teachers in schools where they are treated with courtesy and respect. Thru its able lawyer, Mr. John E. O'Brien, whose services are free to the members of the Union, the Union is preparing to question by legal procedure certain policies of the Department of Education which are regarded as detrimental to the welfare of the teachers and to the progress of the schools.

The Union has aided the Chicago teachers in their splendid fight for the right to organize. It stands ready to support any other body of teachers that is struggling for its professional rights. In the struggle of any individual teacher against unfavorable conditions and against invasions of professional privilege the Union card bids fair soon to be a "don't-worry" insurance worth having.

A long struggle is being made against the imminence of an increase to a 210-day year, and against the lengthening of the school day. This activity of the Union is in line with its purpose of improving the conditions under which teaching is done.

The Union has inaugurated a fight to counteract the declining purchasing power of the dollar. Incidental to this fight the Union has shown that prices began to rise in the year 1900, and not, as many believe, with the outbreak of the European War. Teachers with stationary salaries have suffered more than have most other salaried workers. The Union has shown that by practising economy in expenditures and by preventing criminal waste the municipal government could save enough to restore the

full purchasing power of the teacher's salary, without adding anything to the annual budget of the city. The Union has submitted an able brief on the salary question to the Board of Education, and has demanded that that body take positive and immediate action to relieve the growing pressure on the diminishing financial resources of the teaching staff. The struggle for economic justice will be continued as long as necessary.

As a special aspect of its efficiency campaign the Union has emphasized and contended for the substitution of democracy for autocracy in the schools. The teachers are expected to instill democratic ideals into the pupils and to train them for citizenship in a democracy. And yet, while voting for the highest office in the gift of the people, the teachers are mere cogs in the educational machine with no voice in school administration. How can teachers teach democracy when they are not permitted to live it? The Union practises its democratic creed by managing its business and demanding a part in the business of the system thru the principles of initiative, referendum and recall. It has condemned the action of the Board of Education when it interfered with the right of freedom of speech and action on the part of teachers. It has also urged upon the Mayor and the presidents of the boroughs the inauguration of a policy of appointing teachers in the service to membership in the Board of Education and upon the local school boards. The Union has urged repeatedly the election of the members of the Board of Education by the voters, as against their appointment by the Mayor. The Union further has insisted continuously upon the organization of councils of teachers in the several schools. It has urged the continuous revision of the course of study, so that the subject matter as well as the methods of presenting facts and principles may fit the needs of the children of 1917 instead of those of 1719. As an incidental result of this fight the teachers were permitted

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THRU THE FLUOROSCOPE

Experienced supervisors have frequently observed that the first reaction of a teacher to adverse criticism is one of resentment. The wise person is one who has learned to ask "What is there in this criticism that corresponds to a real defect in my work or character?" It is true that the critic is quite as unlikely to be unbiased and objective as is the person criticized; but however unjust the critic may be, it is fair to assume that there is *something* corresponding to his observations.

The Fluoroscope cannot be held responsible for what the observer thinks he sees, nor for the inferences drawn from the observations. The wise ones among us will be concerned to inquire just what the conditions are that can bring about in the observer the sensations and impressions recorded in the following laboratory memorandum.

VI

If you met the gentleman face to face you would adjudge him eminently fit to be the State's electrocutioner. He looks like a dignified pugilist. The unspeakable smirk that disfigures his face is half-obscured by a thick umgrabeous moustache. Cruel, unsmiling eyes like agates rolling are set malignantly in that big, hard, round head. He looks formidable. To the children (including 175 teachers) he is, alas, too formidable. A stern, unsweet face, bedecking a powerful, unswerving head, in turn hinged on to a tight, little prussianized body, confronts six thousand innocent human beings day in and day out. And there's no relief in sight! America has at least one counterfeit presentment of Herr Von Ludendorff!

We, the incorrigibly credulous, have been half-persuaded into believing that Personality is the precious quintessence of educational efficiency. Teachers are yearly,—in truth, daily,—rated and berated on personality. Lectures without number have been blown (on state occa-

sions) into the brains of teachers, lectures raining down precepts on the value of personality. If personality means anything vital, it means the fine talent, ceaselessly evolving, for creating in the hearts and minds of surrounding personalities an intensified desire to express to the fullest whatever compelling inspirations lie latent in their souls. A teacher's personality may be humanly gauged by the depth and the power of vivid self-expression created in the pupils under his sincerely affectionate guidance. A principal's personality may be measured by his ability to tap and wisely to exploit the funds of vital energy, intellectual and spiritual, often copiously welling up in the minds of teachers and students. A principal whose very presence is repressive and nihilatory, conducive to nothing more creative than sullen silence, suspicion and cold detachment, is not fit to continue in his high office. Fit or unfit, this species of assassin (who murders our most generous impulses) is not checked in his meanly uneventful career. The triumphing brute reigns unperturbed.

How long would a teacher,—the ordinary, *uninfluential* sort,—be permitted by official superiors to survive so drastic a criticism as the following:

(a) He barks viciously at the pupils and, in his meaner moods, at the teachers.

(b) He has an uncontrollably brutish temper.

(c) He arouses suspicion and discontent among 98 per cent. of the teachers.

(d) The conferences he conducts are an unmitigated bore; that is, a series of deadly monologues.

(e) He lacks personality; he is neither courteous nor humane nor inspiring nor likeable nor meaningful.

(f) He is hopeless and utterly useless as an Educational Expert. His influence on teaching, on technic, or on the philos-

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The

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GABRIEL R. MASON.....President
CHARLOTTE E. LEE.....Vice-President
JAY D. LESTER.....Treasurer

Edited by

HENRY R. LINVILLE
Editor-in-Chief

BENJAMIN C. GRUENBERG
Managing Editor

Benjamin Glassberg Sam Schmalhausen

J. EDWARD MAYMAN
Business Manager

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Officers of the American Federation of Teachers

(Affiliated with American Federation of Labor)

CHAS. B. STILLMAN, President
1620 Lake Ave., Wilmette, Ill.

IDA L. M. FURSMAN, Vice-President
4465 N. Kildare Ave., Chicago.

MARY F. DWYER, Rec. Secretary
2817 Cambridge Ave., Chicago

MARGARET SNODGRASS, Corr. Sec.
1061 Dakin St., Chicago

F. G. STECKER, Financial Sec.
1618 Lake Ave., Wilmette, Ill.

JAMES A. MEADE, Treasurer
2628 Sayre Ave., Chicago

MARGARET A. HALEY, Nat'l Organizer
1331 Unity Building, Chicago

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THE BATTLE FOR BETTER TEACHING

THE "Superior Merit" provision of the educational section of the Charter of the City of New York has been referred to before in these columns. On May 21 a bill to abolish the provision having passed the Legislature of the State of New York came up for a hearing before the Mayor. Arguments for the bill were presented by Associate City Superintendent Tildsley, Principal Wolfson of the High School of Commerce, and by the representatives of several teachers' organizations. Arguments against the bill were prepared by the Board of Examiners under whose direction the superior merit provision has been carried out for the past five years. Mr. William G. Willcox, President of the Board of Education, and Mr. John Martin, member of the Board, spoke in opposition to the bill. The Mayor later disapproved the bill, and thus closed the first skirmish for the destruction of an artificial system of rating teachers.

There have been many hearings before the Mayor in which members of the Board of Education appeared on one side and teachers appeared on the other, but never before in the memory of those present who discussed the situation have members of the supervising staff appeared in opposition to representatives of the Board of Education. This fact in itself made the hearing a memorable occasion. And it was more memorable because of the fact that the issue as recognized by both sides was purely a professional one of improving the quality of the teaching. The only doubt was as to the proper method of attaining the desired end.

Superintendents, high school principals, and teachers know that a rating system based on the principle of subjecting a considerable number of high school teachers to artificial standards and fining those who do not measure up to these standards has been a flat failure. The withholding of money guaranteed according to a fixed salary schedule is not likely to serve well as a means of stimulating professional endeavor, or of lead-

ing to confidence in the fair-mindedness of those who by little less than a "fluke" of legislation have the power to determine superior merit.

Not only has the method of the Board of Examiners been characterized by a poor understanding of professional psychology; it has even been doomed to failure from the beginning because of the fact that this board was without the official power to control the judgment or the standards set up by the superintendents, or the principals, or the teachers. All they could do was to punish and thus square accounts. Being out of touch also with the teachers in their work, the Board of Examiners has had no experience out of which they might have developed their own standards.

Without question we must have better teaching, but there must be no one standing by to punish if things do not go according to mechanical methods of procedure. Cooperation is the lodestone that must draw the supervising staff and the teachers together. We are confident that President Willcox himself favors experiments along this line.

THE PLAY'S THE THING

FOR several years the editorial staff of THE AMERICAN TEACHER has had in mind the presentation of a satire in the form of a play, or even of a comic opera, for the purpose of giving publicity to the foibles of the "largest educational system in the world." The long cherished idea is now about to take shape and substance.

In order that all our readers who are acquainted with the necessary facts may participate on the usual democratic basis in this hilarious assault on the stronghold of autocracy, we desire now to invite all who are interested to send in preferably signed stories that portray truthfully as well as humorously characteristic situations and events. There is need also for suggestions regarding characters to be typified, scenes to be planned, and

phases of the educational system to be satirized.

The talent for the playwright's task has already been conscripted, and the actors themselves are waiting anxiously and enthusiastically for their lines. But we must have a wealth of material for the hands of the playwrights. Here is where everyone interested will have a chance to come in and to help the good work along.

Send material to the Editors of THE AMERICAN TEACHER, 70 Fifth Ave., New York. The plan is to prepare the play in the coming summer, and to present it if possible in celebration of the second anniversary of the organization of Teachers Union, in March, 1918.

POSTPONING PURCHASES UNTIL AFTER THE WAR

A SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT COMPANY in this country has recently sent to its customers a circular, the purpose of which is to induce them to "buy now." The reasoning is unusual for a business firm in that the important statements read like those of dignified and scholarly economists. Possibly one was subsidized for the occasion. The circular reads in part,

"There can be no economy in delaying the erection of school buildings or the purchase of necessary equipment until 'after the war.' . . . Prices in general, especially of manufactures, will continue to advance, rather than to recede. The reasons are obvious. Labor is the main cost in practically all manufactured products; it is almost the entire cost of distribution. War destroys labor and the results of labor; it enhances the cost of labor. War increases taxation, ultimately paid by labor, and for this reason also advances the cost of labor. These conditions do not disappear with the cessation of war; destruction has to be made good and interrupted development caught up.

"It is futile to say that the destruction of American labor may be a small percentage of our total labor. The destruction in Europe of man and material has affected, and will affect us. In this age of specialized construction and world wide distribution the cost of labor and material moves as a whole, not by countries nor by continents."

A SYMPOSIUM ON THE AMERICAN TEACHER

A RECENT CONFERENCE was held in New York to consider the situation in which THE AMERICAN TEACHER finds itself after nearly six years of fighting for the improvement of educational conditions. Like all other periodicals that take up causes and fight for them, the paper has always been obliged to fight of its own existence also.

Incidental to the financial question of whether the paper will be able further to pay its way as it prints, a proposition was presented at the conference that THE AMERICAN TEACHER change its name, enlarge the paper, and modify its policy and emphasis, and be made "an educational journal preaching a vivid social philosophy in tune with the creative aspirations of modernity." The suggested change would if adopted transform a professional magazine, endeavoring to improve the conditions under which teaching is done and trying to elevate the standing and the influence of teachers into a periodical that would occupy the field with such periodicals as *The Survey*, *The New Republic*, and *The Public*.

After considerable discussion the ponderating judgment appeared to be that the paper should be enlarged for the purpose of more adequately presenting the point of view that has made the paper unique in the field of education. Considerable criticism of the paper developed at the conference. In order that whatever criticism may exist in the minds of our readers may find the opportunity for expression, a *Symposium on The American Teacher* is hereby announced for the September number. Everyone who feels that some kind of an organ should be encouraged to work out the professional and social destiny of teachers is urged to write us within five hundred words his otherwise free and unrestricted judgment of THE AMERICAN TEACHER, after re-reading

his file and knowing what the paper has done.

All this is assuming that there will be a September number. Many at the conference referred to made substantial promises to assist in the financial support of the paper. It is hoped that still others will be persuaded to help. But we want helpful letters unaccompanied with cash also. Write while the spirit moves you. It may be too late if you let thoughts of vacation intervene. Address Editors, THE AMERICAN TEACHER, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York.

THE CHICAGO TEACHERS' FEDERATION WITHDRAWS

IN OBEDIENCE to the implied mandate of the Supreme Court of Illinois, the Chicago Teachers' Federation has severed its connection with all organizations affiliated with labor. This act is of great significance to teachers as well as to the members of the trade unions.

Nearly fifteen years ago, John Fitzpatrick, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, wrote his famous letter to the Chicago Teachers' Federation inviting that organization to become affiliated with labor. On May 20, 1917, under authority he writes advising the withdrawal of all labor affiliations. Both letters are able documents, and with Fitzpatrick's Report should be obtained from the Chicago Federation of Labor and read by all undismayed lovers of human liberty.

As the May 20th letter states, "final responsibility must rest on the people, not on the teachers, to determine whether public employees may exercise the fundamental rights of freedom of association and freedom of assemblage under threat of dismissal from the public service." In order to test the reaction of the people on this issue, House Bill 940, the Anti Discrimination Bill, forbidding public officials from discriminating against public employees because of their affiliation with labor unions is now before the Illinois Legislature.

INITIATIVE AMONG TEACHERS

WILLIAM WIENER,

Principal Central Commercial and Manual Training High School, Newark.

I HAVE always made it my policy to show that I believe my teachers to be duly qualified and well-worthy of confidence as to their respective abilities and preparation. This has psychologically resulted in a happy atmosphere and a further desire on the part of the teachers to better school conditions at all points.

I encourage my teachers to be independent of traditional methods and plans of teaching, and in place of them to invent and apply more efficient methods of accomplishing the ideals of the course of study, as well as to be constantly mindful of school experiences which might suggest modifications of present inefficient methods.

I wish the pupils to be considered not as mere material which is to be exposed to set courses of study, but as human beings of varying abilities and capacities.

I depend upon the personal and direct experience gained by each teacher in his special subject to guide him humanely and sanely in his work.

I encourage independent thought and freedom in the exploitation of the courses of study.

I am constantly on the firing line with my teachers, helping, encouraging, and urging them to work for the general welfare.

This represents my creed and policy.

TEACHERS' UNION, PAST AND FUTURE

(Continued from page 87)

in the Fall term of 1917 to elect a pension committee of 150 for the purpose of framing a pension law. Teachers councils are being formed here and there, where interest among the teachers has developed, and the opposition of principals has not been manifested.

As a recent indication of official good will President Willcox of the Board of Education said to the president of the Teachers Union and to the writer that

he believed a system of co-operation between the Board of Superintendents, the principal of the several schools, and committees of teachers could work out on practical lines the problem of improving the teaching. This is democracy of the kind the Union wants. Thus, the battle for professional rights is far from being hopeless. Victory will crown our efforts if the teachers will come to the support of the Union in such numbers as will give conviction of the importance of our demands.

The Union proposes under any circumstances to continue its fight for the protection of teachers against injustice of all kinds, to fight for the elimination of the rating system, to fight for sound and just pension principles, for scientific salary adjustment, for the democratization of schools, for the reform of the psychophysical examination of children, for a scientific evaluation of the Gary and other special administrative experiments, for a modern course of study, for making the Board of Superintendents a body of specialists, for a small, paid and elective Board of Education, and for the general and fundamental improvement of the schools and their government.

The members of the Union, united in their opposition to attempts to curtail the intellectual freedom of the teachers, are fighting for the maintenance of the ideals of democracy, for the principles which our glorious flag symbolizes. They, as other teachers of the embryonic citizens, realize that they must continue their struggle if democracy is to triumph and autocracy to perish. You teachers, in a sense, are the last line of trenches between fighting democracy and fortified autocracy. Whether you realize it or not, on you the fate of the worker and the nation depends. Great is your responsibility, and glorious the burden you are called upon to shoulder. Do you feel yourself ready for the battle as the champion of humanity and democracy? If so, join us and help us to win a glorious victory.

THRU THE FLUOROSCOPE

(Continued from page 88)

ophy of education, is exactly equal to zero.

(g) A referendum vote of all the teachers would be overwhelmingly against his continuance in office.

(h) He is narrow-minded, vindictive, selfish, autocratic.

Will someone equipped with a mordant sense of irony kindly explain why a vicious official occupying *superior* status (under our New York school regime) cannot be ousted from his privileged position? Who commits the greater mischief: the insignificant subordinate, liable to quick transfer and expulsion or the too powerful chief, liable to no disciplinary restraint? In all likelihood there isn't a single member of the clique of superintendents or of the Board of Education with sufficient *moral* courage to recommend the dismissal of an inhuman (and, therefore, incompetent) high school principal. It requires a vigorous social morality, a genuine affection for the larger human welfare to bestir oneself in behalf of a radical revision of the educational *status quo*. Superintendents are profoundly moved by one passion: the instinct of privileged self-preservation.

Against the Triumphant Brute I bring these more specific charges:

One: In the midst of an assembly of 2,500 students he will not scruple to humiliate the first offender (in the presence of his fellows) whose crime against civilization consists in the act of chewing gum! Every principal is possessed of a few pet idiocies all his very own.

Two: One of his malicious pastimes is to "catch" boys whose recitation is not as formally accurate as it might be. The Brute never enters a classroom but to mar and minimize and misinterpret. He is a born killjoy.

Three: He is sponsor for a system of discipline which thrives by the employ of a mean, degrading and wholly demor-

alizing procedure well known as "the Third Degree." Justice is the last thing aimed at. Vindictiveness is the life blood of the process. The morale of the school is inevitably lowered to the "spy level." Thomas Mott Osborne would condemn the system as inhuman and (as compared with the ethics of supervision at Sing Sing) woefully out of date.

Four: He has been dictatorial and unjust to many teachers (the cases are too detailed for fragmentary treatment here. They speak powerfully against the principal of the high school in question).

Five: He has made it increasingly difficult to discuss vital subjects at the conferences and assemblies. Outside of his own self-aggrandizement, he has no appealing interest. Freedom of thought and frankness of speech are alien to his bulldogmatic, mediævalist creed. He is a living nightmare, an ever walking ghost, a sinister influence. He radiates, not good, but evil.

Six: He hasn't known how to enlist the friendship of the teaching body. A marvelous force for good is thus shamefully wasted.

Seven: Education in the new sense in which John Dewey employs the concept can never flourish under his domination; he lacks inspiration and contemptuously spurns the new education. He is an intellectual standpatter, tho not too intellectual.

The unhappiest reflection of all is this: The reasons which to us are all-sufficient for the damnation of The Triumphant Brute are startling evidences of worth in the eyes of Messieurs les Bureaucrates who rule our purposeless educational system. Narrow-souled (high school) principals are retained in office because they represent the survival of ideals no longer tenable in our evolving social democracy. They will be chased out of office when the teachers as a moral collectivity succeed in obtaining a powerful voice in the selection of official "superiors." We have the numbers. We have the power and the vision and the means-

to-realization. Why do we dilly-dally? Why do we futilely complain? Why do we surrender our self-pride? Why are we acquiescent? Why do we not build the dream of *Democracy-in-Education*? Come, let us take ourselves and our aspirations more seriously!

(Signed) AN OBSERVER.

ANNUAL ELECTION OF TEACHERS' UNION, NEW YORK

By virtue of a change in the Constitution of the Teachers' Union of the City of New York candidates for the offices were nominated at a Convention of the school representatives held in April. The nominations up to the limit of five for each office were then submitted to the members on a printed ballot. The ballots were returned to the office of the Union early in May, and the votes were counted by the official teller, Miss Clara Friedman, P. S. 55, Brooklyn.

The officers chosen for the coming year are: *President*, Henry R. Linville, Jamaica High School; *Vice-Presidents*—for Manhattan, Mrs. Johanna M. Lindlof, P. S. 183;—for Bronx, Max Schonberg, Evander Childs High School;—for Brooklyn, Jacob A. Rubel, P. S. 156;—for Queens, Nathan Abraham, Bryant High School; *Recording Secretary*, Mary T. Eaton, P. S. 11, Brooklyn; *Secretary-Treasurer*, J. Edward Mayman, P. S. 64, Manhattan.

PLATFORM OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS ADOPTED AT THE FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION, CHICAGO, DEC. 29 AND 30, 1916.

1 The American Federation of Teachers favors a small, elective, Board of Education, subject to recall, the members of which shall be paid.

2 At least one member of the Board of Education should be a teacher.

3 We urge the enactment of laws securing to teachers and supervisory officers tenure of position during efficiency.

4 We protest against present systems of rating the efficiency of teachers, as based on personal caprice, bias, or prejudice. We favor an objective system of rating, based on scientific standards, to be applied during the teacher's probationary period. After the permanent appointment of a teacher, rating should be discontinued, but provision should be made for the discharge of inefficient teachers upon preferred charges and in accordance with civil service principles.

5 We condemn the appointment and promotion of teachers and other school officers thru political or personal influence, and insist on efficiency as the sole basis of promotion.

6 We favor the rating of supervisory officers by teachers in accordance with the standards by which teachers themselves are rated.

7 We demand the legal establishment of self-governing school and district councils of teachers for the purpose of utilizing the experience and initiative of the teaching body in the conduct of the schools, the recommendations of such councils to be made a matter of official public record.

8 We believe in the necessity for higher standards of admission to the teaching profession and favor a minimum requirement of four years' training after graduation from high school or its equivalent, such training to include professional study.

9 The increasingly high cost of living makes a commensurate increase in teachers' salaries a social necessity.

10 We urge provision for adequate pensions for teachers.

11 We recommend the establishment of a legal sabbatical year for teachers in the belief that the physical and professional rejuvenation which would result therefrom would amply compensate the school system for the expenditure involved.

12 We favor the extension of the practise of some cities in exchanging

teachers for the sake of mutual improvement of the teachers and of the school systems they represent.

13 We endorse all honest efforts of experimental pedagogy in seeking to establish a scientific basis for education.

14 We recommend the policy of releasing teachers without loss of pay to engage in educational research, the results to accrue to the public.

15 We approve of applying scientific measurements in education, provided that such measurements be not confined solely to results but take into consideration methods of obtaining results, conditions surrounding the application of tests, and the nature and environment of the child material under observation.

16 We recommend the extension of the free text-book system to those states in which it has not been adopted.

17 We protest against the overcrowded conditions almost universal in the public schools of the country, as making effective teaching impossible, and demand a decrease in the size of classes and in the number of children assigned to each teacher.

18 We regard with satisfaction the increasing care for subnormal children but we urge the need of greater attention to supernormal children than is now being given them.

19 We seek the abolition of the system by which the promotion of pupils from grade to grade is based on written examinations only.

20 We urge increased public facilities for recreation and physical education of children.

21 We favor the widest possible use of the school plant for social, civic, and educational purposes.

22 We endorse the extension of vocational, prevocational, and industrial training as an integral part of the present educational system.

23 We wish to encourage all movements having for their object the modernization of the school curriculum to bring it into harmony with social and economic progress.

24 We register our opposition to state or national laws for compulsory military training.

25 We favor the creation of a national Department of Education, coordinate with the other departments of the Federal Government and the appointment, as the head of this department, of a Secretary of Education, who should be a member of the cabinet of the President of the United States.

26 We demand nation-wide, adult suffrage as a fundamental principle of democracy.

27 We endorse the principles of the Initiative, Referendum, and the Recall in the conduct of political and educational affairs.

THERE IS
POETRY, ART and JOY

THERE IS
**COURAGE, VISION and
STRENGTH**

IN
SLATE

A MAGAZINE FOR TEACHERS WHO ARE
NOT DEAD, AND FOR THEIR FRIENDS

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A Preamble to Progress

(For Teachers)

In a simple environment, the wicked man is he who thinks.

In a complex environment, the wicked man is he who does not think.

The teacher does not seem to sense poignantly the pathos of his predicament.

To rule in a complex milieu and to champion pinched ideals suited to a simple milieu is the very miscarriage of reason itself.

Our preliminary labor is to know comprehensively the vast chaotic age in which we live.

Instead of repeating the ancient blunder of provincialism which attempted to ignore the world at large in order to conserve its local precarious habitat, we must be on our guard against nativism.

Today it is true beyond cavil that he who would serve man must know mankind; that he who would cherish the state must cherish the world. Paine was our prophet. He foresaw what we apprehend, but gropingly in our day. The World is our country.

Are teachers conscious of the marvelous changes that are re-creating the world all about them?

