

Democracy's Challenge to Education



PREPARED UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF

Beulah Amidon

OF "SURVEY GRAPHIC"

GRAPHIC

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Foreword of the Series' Editor

This book is a logical one with which to begin the FARRAR & RINEHART SERIES IN EDUCATION. Its timeliness is evident. As few books have succeeded in doing, it deals with the fundamental problems of professional education, it presents different points of view that currently prevail in educational theory and practice, it is based on scholarship and experience in fields that go beyond pedagogy, and it stresses the need for education that is not only preparation for democratic living but is itself democratic.

Students looking forward to careers in teaching or other educational services will find here not only an introduction to the many problems that are likely to confront them; they will see, too, the varied opportunities that lie ahead. They may capture an enthusiasm for work in their chosen field that will serve as a drive to achieve those possible values from education which some educators even now regard as unattainable. Teachers and administrators in service will be stimulated by this volume to examine anew the educational purposes for which they are working and are likely to see even broader possibilities for service. Laymen—men and women in widely different occupational groups—will acquire a deeper understanding of the place and function of education in American life. In this critical examination of the present status and major issues of education in a

democracy there is substance for every thinking citizen, but the student of education above all cannot long ignore its implications.

In brief, the qualities of this book are those which the editor and the publishers hope will distinguish the entire series.

ALVIN C. EURICH

Stanford University
January, 1940

Preface

First of all, we hope that American teachers will find something quickening for themselves between the lines of this book—a sense of how much they matter in times like these. Their work has by no means been shunted off on a siding. They can count here and now in strengthening our own democracy at home.

And that holds for principals, superintendents, commissioners, deans, presidents, and the rest of the cast of characters in educational administration. That holds for teachers of teachers, for board members and trustees, for parents, for students, and for all of us who are alive to the fact that you can't buttress democracy by piling up bent twigs. Self-government springs only from the rootholds of individual life and growth under liberty.

Jane Addams put her finger on a living principle in evaluating "Education by the Current Event." We have applied that rule, turn about, to schooling itself. With Europe and Asia scotched by intolerance, aggression, war, we have made swift assessment of our educational system in the United States: where it thwarts, what it throws open to youth in a free land. Right here is the "challenge of democracy" to American education.

Except for the addition of the chapter, "One State Looks at Its Schools," by Everett Sackett and published in the

November *Survey Graphic*, this book is a reincarnation of a special number of *Survey Graphic*, our monthly magazine of social interpretation. This was published in October, 1939. The response has been extraordinary; orders from everywhere; calls from teachers, board members, educational associations; from schools, colleges, universities; sheafs of clippings that register the eager interest of radio commentators, columnists, news men, and editors. An initial edition of 42,000 copies was exhausted in a month.

We are glad that this new edition bears the imprint of Farrar & Rinehart. As a book these yeasty contributions to American thinking will win altogether new reaches of readers.

Opportune as it is, the project was six months in the making, beginning with a dinner meeting early last spring in which a score of educators and experts participated with board and staff. From then on, it took shape at the creative hands of Beulah Amidon, educational editor of *Survey Graphic*. Acknowledgment is due, also, to Victor Weybright, managing editor, and Florence Loeb Kellogg, art editor; to the Ruth Marshall Billikopf Memorial Fund and other generous contributors of time, money, ideas, and writings, and to the staff as a whole.

Every searching epoch in American history has been served by adventures in communication. Broad-sides, pamphlets, papers, tracts for the times have supplemented the basic work of the press. Today, with radio and screen added to our tools of intelligence, both the magazine and the book have disclosed new prowess in enabling minds to meet in a great crisis. The special numbers brought out by Survey Associates are an invention of this sort—output of a co-

operative society, country-wide in membership, which operates on the borderland of research and journalism in fields of social concern.

Our work in this instance might well be dedicated to a new generation of Americans. In essence, it is an overture to them and they will find themselves on every page.

PAUL KELLOGG

Editor, *Survey Graphic*

January, 1940

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Democracy's Challenge to Education



Miss Amidon brought to her editorial task a long career in journalism, and a firsthand knowledge of schools, teachers, educational problems and achievements, gathered as writer, researcher and parent.



Over Here



By Beulah Amidon

Look from the European headlines to the youth of America. Down village Main Streets and country lanes, on rural school buses and city streetcars, by bicycle and the family auto, the girls and boys of the United States are off to school today. Tonight, singing, whistling, laughing, chatting, they will swarm home again. They have never seen gas masks. You do not have to wave good-by to them, with such courage as you can muster, as they are "evacuated" to relative safety from air raid and bombardment. If a plane drones above them, that is only the over-night from the coast, the mail plane to Chicago, the desert doctor on an emergency case. While fear, horror, pain, hunger are today's teachers for so many children overseas, for thirty million young Americans, school goes on.

The dread fact of a world at war throws into relief the whole picture of education. Here is the source of present failure in our adult world and the sole hope of ultimate victory—not the sterile defeats and gains of war, but the infinitely slower and more difficult retreats and triumphs of man's struggle toward civilization. Education, only a

part of which goes on in the schoolroom, prepares us, well or badly, for the choices the generation must make.

By what failure in the educational process are young people turned out, so insecure and so indiscriminating that they flock to rabble-rousers? What educational gaps let in hate and prejudice? What quickens curiosity? Strengthens integrity? Distinguishes truth from propaganda? Encourages neighborliness and good will? Turns knowledge and training into the stuff of action?

The dictators have their answers. They have devised an education to warp young and old alike to their goals. In the long view—but the times obscure the long view.

What are the American answers? What are we trying to do through the schools we keep? What is our goal for the hugest system of public education in the world? What is the purpose of its enormous expenditures of time, effort, and money? Are the schools equal to their task—not to condition docile followers, but to educate free men?

With every month of 1939, these questions have taken on fresh urgency. We begin our exploration with major problems. First, a critique of inadequate aims and a resolute facing of democracy's goals. Second, the tragic failure—yours and mine—inherent in the fact of idle youth, four out of ten not in school, jobless, ready tinder for demagogues.

Next, the current school scene—the big-business totals of capital invested, operating budget, personnel, numbers enrolled; the gap between the scientific knowledge of children's needs and what we do for children; the old patterns and the new trends in the grades, in the high schools and

the colleges; adult education in terms of democratic opportunity.

Any such review reveals where we must take hold, if schools are to measure up to the responsibility we lay upon them. There are the millions of children condemned by the poverty of their families and their communities to inadequate schooling, or to no schooling at all. There are the children of the Negro minority, handicapped by racial as well as economic discrimination. The head of a school board shows how the problem of academic freedom is related to the problem of administrative efficiency. A great educator raises the "permanent question" of teachers—how to find and equip them, how to protect childhood and youth from mishandling by the inept and ill-trained.

Finally, there are the problems of how to teach the millions to think for themselves; the "next steps" needed in the schools; and the part which parents and the community at large should play in the process of education.

Here are concerns more enduring than military communiqués and diplomatic moves. For the strengths and the weaknesses of the democratic way of life lie within our borders, not outside. Mightier than armies with banners, the quiet, undramatic forces of education are the safeguards of freedom, tolerance, human growth.

What Is Education?



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