

EDUCATION

for

All American Youth

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Educational Policies Commission

*National Education Association of the United States
and the American Association of School Administrators
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The Educational Policies Commission

Appointed by the National Education Association of the United States
and the American Association of School Administrators

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WILLIAM G. CARR, *Secretary*
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Foreword

THIS VOLUME stems from a firm conviction on the part of the Educational Policies Commission that the extension, adaptation, and improvement of secondary education is essential both to the security of our American institutions and to the economic well-being of our people. Such a development in secondary education can and should be brought about within the framework of the local and state educational systems. If the federal government will help to finance and encourage such a development, and if the local and state leadership will do its part, it will be neither necessary nor desirable for the federal government itself to operate educational services for the youth of the nation.

In the nearly three years in which it has been developing these policies for secondary education, the Commission has tried to dig beneath statements of general principles and to suggest in some detail how approved principles can be carried out in practice. It should be emphasized, however, that the programs of education described in this volume are not intended to be blueprints for local school systems. On the contrary, they are merely samples of the many different possible solutions to the problem of meeting the educational needs of all American youth. These samples are offered in the hope that they will stimulate and aid the planning and action which are already under way in many states and communities and which soon must be undertaken in all.

Plans for postwar education are too complex to be improvised in a few months after the problems are already upon us. Now is the time, the one and the best time, for citizens and educators in thousands of American communities to join forces in planning the kinds of schools which America needs and must have.

Acknowledgment

SINCE FEBRUARY 1942, when the Educational Policies Commission voted to begin the preparation of this volume, many groups and individuals have contributed to its development as the document passed through a series of careful revisions. The Commission wishes to acknowledge here the valuable assistance that it has received in this process.

First, and above all, it wishes to thank GEORGE L. MAXWELL, assistant secretary of the Commission. Under the direction of the Commission, he has drafted the larger part of this volume including the chapters on American City and Farmville. Nothing that the Commission can say in appreciation of his skill and untiring effort could be a greater tribute to him than the unusual combination of broad vision and practical common sense revealed in every page of these chapters.

The opening and concluding chapters, constituting a framework around the document, were written by the secretary of the Commission, WILLIAM G. CARR, who has also been responsible for coordination of the efforts of the many individuals and groups who have contributed in one way or another to the development of this volume.

In November 1942, the secretary and the president of the American Vocational Association, L. H. DENNIS and JOHN J. SEIDEL, met with the Commission in Washington to assist in reviewing a prospectus of the document.

In January 1944, members of a committee of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals met to review the report. The membership of this committee included PAUL E. ELICKER, OSCAR GRANGER, E. P. GRIZZELL, E. R. JOBE, GALEN JONES, J. PAUL LEONARD, and HUGH H. STEWART.

In April 1944, a committee of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation met in New York

City to present the viewpoint of this group on the program in health and physical education. Members of the group were LAURENTINE COLLINS, WILLIAM L. HUGHES, BEN W. MILLER, JAY B. NASH, A. H. PRITZLAFF, C. H. McCLOY, JESSE F. WILLIAMS, and PAULINE B. WILLIAMSON.

A draft of several extensive sections of the "American City" chapter was prepared by PAUL T. RANKIN. AUBREY A. DOUGLASS wrote a draft of the chapter on "A State System of Youth Education." OLIVER H. BIMSON, C. L. CUSHMAN, F. F. ELLIOTT, PAUL L. ESSERT, and R. H. MATHEWSON reviewed certain sections of the manuscript.

The following persons reviewed the entire document in a preliminary form and prepared critical analyses of it for consideration by the Commission: WALTER F. DOWNEY, WILLIAM DUNCAN, CLAUDE FUESS, CLINTON S. GOLDEN, ALONZO GRACE, H. P. HAMMOND, DABNEY LANCASTER, JOHN L. LOUNSBURY, ALEXANDER MEIKLEJOHN, ERNEST O. MELBY, HOWARD PILLSBURY, MAURICE F. SEAY, JOHN J. SEIDEL, and HENRY M. WRISTON.

With the cooperation of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, a short digest and interpretation of this volume has been prepared by J. PAUL LEONARD. This will be issued soon as a publication of the Association.

Deeply grateful as we are to all the persons named above, the Commission assumes final responsibility for the document.

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CHAPTER I

Could It Happen?

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE is bound to come, and to come swiftly. Only the nature and direction of change may be controlled.

No one can surely foretell the future of American education, for no one knows what American educators, boards of education, and legislatures will do during this critical period. We can, however, foresee the alternatives. And, by a study of our past experience, we can predict the general consequences of each of the lines of action—or inaction—which the public schools may pursue.

The alternative possibilities, very briefly stated, are these:

1. A federalized system of secondary education may be created, at first to compete with and ultimately to replace the traditional American system of state and local control of education.
2. A wisely planned and vigorously implemented program for the improvement, adaptation, and extension of educational services to youth may be developed by the local and state educational authorities.

The Commission strongly and unanimously favors the second alternative and rejects the first.

Nevertheless, the Commission firmly believes that if local and state planning and action are lacking, a federal system of secondary education is scarcely less certain to occur than the succession of the seasons.

In order to compare and contrast the two possible lines of development, this volume contains two hypothetical histories. One "history," constituting most of the remainder of this chapter, is written on the assumption that the first alternative occurs. The other "history," presented in Chapter VI of this volume, relates what can happen if we follow the second alternative.

In order that the reader may be constantly aware that the two "histories" in this chapter and in Chapter VI are projections of the future, they have been printed in a type-face which sets them apart from the rest of this volume.

The remainder of this opening chapter, then, consists of quotations that may possibly be found in the concluding pages of some standard history of education *published some twenty years from now*. This is a sequence of events which the Commission fervently hopes will *not* happen. But they *will* happen unless effective planning and action occur to direct educational developments in more desirable directions.

Here, then, is:

THE HISTORY THAT SHOULD NOT HAPPEN

"The end of the second World War marked a turning point in the history of youth education in the United States.

"The complete victory of the United Nations, after a long and bitter struggle, was followed by the demobilization of our armies and the rapid conversion of the bulk of the war industries to the pursuits of peace. Although the United States government made strenuous and, on the whole, successful efforts to administer the process in an orderly fashion, the demobilization and readjustment of some 30,000,000 persons placed a severe strain upon economic, social, and educational institutions that had been geared for years to the demands of a total war.

Educational Needs Following the Second World War

"Many of the demobilized soldiers were in their late teens or early twenties. Their civilian education had been interrupted by military service; few of them had enjoyed extensive experience in normal community living or in earning a livelihood by civilian pursuits; all of them needed guidance and training in order that they might find a place in the ongoing life of the nation. They were grown men and women, yet they needed education in the attitudes and activities of civilian life.

"Similar educational needs were found among the men and women who had been employed in the war industries. In many cases their wartime vocational skills were no longer useful. For many of the younger workers, as for many soldiers, employment in a war industry had meant an interrupted educational career.

"The boys and girls in their middle teens who were still in school at the end of the war were greatly disturbed. They had been diligently preparing themselves, by means of preinduction training and vocational preparation, to take an active part in the armed forces or on the production fronts. With the end of the war, their vocational outlook was rendered profoundly different and difficult, their future status uncertain. While the war continued, their services had been desperately needed. They had been urged and assisted to prepare themselves as rapidly as possible for full-time employment in civilian or military pursuits. But now the opportunities for work in war industry were few, and the labor market was flooded with returning soldiers and displaced war industry workers, many of whom had priorities on jobs and previous working experience. Even the great program of P. W. P. W. (Postwar Public Works) at first gave preference to the war veterans and offered relatively little opportunity for youth employment.

"Youth were therefore urged to remain longer in school. This was certainly sound advice, not primarily because it was one method of limiting the labor supply, but chiefly because the vast and complicated responsibilities of adult citizenship in the postwar world clearly required extended civic, vocational, and cultural education.

"The secondary schools of the country, with the exception of those in a very few localities, had no comprehensive plan available to meet this situation. They had given little thought to what they ought to teach or how they ought to teach it, either to returning soldiers, to demobilized war industry workers, or to the young people already in their schools who now changed their objective from immediate wartime employment to extended preparation for living in a strenuous period of national and world reconstruction.

"The result of this situation, if we may compress the educational history of nearly a decade into a single phrase, was the establishment and entrenchment of our present National Bureau of Youth Service (N. B. Y. S.) as the only important agency of secondary education in this country.

"This development is so important that the next few pages will be devoted to a more careful review of its causes and consequences.

Why the Schools Were Unprepared

"We who live in the second half of the twentieth century may find it quite difficult to understand why the schools of an earlier day were so ill-prepared to meet the contingencies which must certainly have been ex-

pected, at least by the educational leaders of that time. But while we may be justified in regarding their failure with wonder, we should refrain from censure. Hindsight is always easier than foresight, and we must remember, as we review the history of those trying years, that there were at least four reasons for this apparent lethargy, this inability to cope with the new situation.

"For one thing, the secondary schools had devoted themselves with amazing energy to a series of highly successful efforts to help win the war. In view of the extremely narrow margin which, at the outset of the war, separated victory from defeat, we can certainly approve their industry and understand their anxiety.

"The schools made some far-reaching changes in the very midst of war. They showed themselves not only resourceful but flexible. The preinduction training for young men and the programs which trained over five million workers for the war industries are but two examples. The locally-controlled public-school systems showed that they could react promptly, vigorously, and effectively when confronted by a national war emergency. This ability of the local schools to react to a national wartime crisis was not equally evident with respect to the long-range planning for the peace.

"The published records of the professional meetings held in those years show us clearly how engrossed the schools were in the immediate war problems. Even a cursory examination reveals that while the records abound with eloquent references to postwar education and reconstruction, they are almost barren of specific suggestions as to how the educational system would be changed in order to accept the responsibilities which everyone knew would devolve upon it in the event of a victory for the United Nations. On the contrary, it seems to have been assumed that, when the war ended, the schools would simply collect the fragments of their prewar program which had been put in storage for the duration and fit these elements back into the familiar prewar pattern. No one seems to have noted that the pattern, too, was shattered and beyond repair; that the end of the war was the end of an epoch to which there could be no return, in education or in any other aspect of life.

"We must remember also that many secondary schools were poorly organized to meet a suddenly emerging national problem. There were at that time about 28,000 high schools in the United States. The median high school had only 140 students and six faculty members. Each of the thousands of smaller high schools was controlled by a local board of education which, within certain very general and broad requirements, acted as a law unto itself.

Many of the state departments of education were weak and not legally constituted to meet such a critical situation. Almost all of them were understaffed and overworked.

"In the third place, the local funds available to education, even when supplemented, as they were in a few states, by state school funds, were often quite inadequate to provide the buildings, equipment, and personnel necessary for complete educational service. The one agency that might have improved this fiscal situation, the government of the United States, failed to act effectively.

"It must be said on behalf of the educational leaders in that day, that they used their utmost talents of persuasion and strategy to secure the appropriation of federal funds (pitifully small requests they now seem to us, by comparison with our federal school expenditures) to equalize educational opportunities. They made vigorous representations before one Congress after another, both prior to and after the entry of the United States into the war. They called for action in the name of fair play and democracy; they engulfed the Congress in oceans of convincing statistics; they could summon to their support all the logic, the evidence, the common-sense reasoning, and the appeals to high motives. Their efforts were hampered, not only by the active opposition of certain influential minorities and the lack of vigorous support from the current national Administration, but also by the relative disunity and weakness of the professional organizations of teachers as compared with other occupational groups in the population. They were, therefore, unable to awaken the public from its apathy on the issue and to arouse widespread public support for federal aid to education.

"Still, they might have succeeded in obtaining federal funds had it not been for a formidable psychological obstacle. That barrier was the now almost incomprehensible fear that harmful federal control of education would inevitably follow federal aid to the states for education. These fears seem strange to us at present, not only because the federal government now controls practically all of our secondary education, but also because we see clearly that failure to strengthen the financial basis of local education inevitably led to federal operation and control of large segments of our school system. **It was the lack of federal assistance to the local and state school systems that created the necessity for our present system of federal control.** But that fact, so obvious now to the historian, was apparently quite invisible to the contemporary statesman.

"Meanwhile, the Congress and the Administration, hearing no strong demand for action from the American people as a whole, refused to grant

any funds whatever for education, except certain earmarked emergency funds for wartime vocational training and other special purposes.

"The fourth, and last, reason for the incapacity of education during post-war years was the tremendous pressure of the traditional educational program. We have seen in earlier chapters of this history that the American high school began as a means of preparing youth for college and for cultural pursuits. Although its enrolment doubled, redoubled, and redoubled again, during the first four decades of this century, and although its declared purposes had been broadened far beyond college preparation, equally fundamental changes in the secondary-school curriculum and in the preparation of teachers were not made. The heroic efforts and revolutionary changes in procedure which the secondary schools made in the national crisis of war could not be sustained in the peace that followed. The slow prewar processes of minor piecemeal adjustment were quite inadequate for a situation requiring extensive changes and prompt, unified action.

"In times of peace, this profound discordance between educational purpose and program, between promise and performance, meant that nearly half of the youth of secondary-school age left school before graduation and many of those less adventurous spirits who remained on the rolls were able to profit but little by the instruction afforded. Once a young man or young woman left school, the school ordinarily took no further substantial interest in him. It was generally supposed that any youth who was not absolutely feeble-minded could, if he would 'apply himself,' learn the information and skills which had for generations been the substance of precollegiate education. It was assumed that in some way, not clearly understood, this knowledge would be useful to him in later years. And it was taken for granted that, even if the knowledge so acquired should be valueless or forgotten, the process of acquiring it was, in itself, a wholesome experience. It followed, therefore, that any young person who 'dropped out' of school was so clearly at fault that the school could only wash its hands of further responsibility.

"This is a severe picture; too severe, no doubt—for even in those schools, there were multiplied thousands of devoted teachers who understood the needs of young people and who succeeded admirably in giving many of them an excellent education. Yet these and other adaptations, made by individual teachers or occasionally by an entire school system, were too slow and too 'spotty' in view of the heavy demands which a period of world reconstruction was bound to impose upon the secondary schools of the United States.

"The need for public education in the postwar period on the part of large groups of persons who could profit but little from the conventional 'courses' which were the chief peacetime offerings of most schools, together with the failure of the state and local school systems to meet the situation, led the federal government to move into the vacuum.

The National Bureau of Youth Service

"We have seen how the federal government experimented, in the decade 1933-1943, with various youth-serving and youth-educating agencies. None of these agencies survived during the war, but their experience and precedent made it easy and natural for similar programs to be revived on an expanded scale. The National Bureau of Youth Service was at first created to provide employment for youth, largely on public works projects. To move from work to work experience, from there to vocational training, and from there to related instruction was a series of easy steps. Within a year, so rapidly did the new influence expand, citizenship training, health education, family-life education, and other aspects of comprehensive developmental programs were taken over by the National Bureau. These new national institutions were, for the moment, relatively free from the dead hand of inertia. They announced themselves as ready and willing to provide an educational service to youth in terms of the demands of contemporary life. Being under federal control, these agencies enjoyed substantial federal support. This was an asset of no mean importance in the postwar years and, as we have seen, it was an asset stubbornly denied to the state and local school systems.

"The new N.B.Y.S. schools soon attracted many recruits to their wide-open doors. There were, besides young demobilized soldiers and war workers, many out-of-school youth, unable to find employment and often rejected or unwanted in their small local high schools. Even many of the 'regular' high-school boys and girls, especially those whose families had small incomes, shifted over to the new federal institutions. Meanwhile, the local taxpaying groups rejoiced to think (as they erroneously supposed) that the school tax burden was correspondingly reduced, 'because the federal government paid the bill.'

"For a short time, the local and state school systems did retain control of the remnants of the war production training program. This activity, which had successfully trained several million workers for the war industries, was converted, on a somewhat reduced scale, to retraining for the industries of peace and the vocational rehabilitation of wounded veterans. Two years after the end of the war, however, these two programs were transferred

by executive order to the N.B.Y.S., taking with them also the 'Smith-Hughes' program established in World War I.

"In vain the then leaders of secondary education pleaded that the establishment of these federal agencies resulted in the creation of class systems of education, that they involved federal control over curriculum, personnel, and teaching methods, and that they endangered the very existence of that system of universal secondary education which had so long been one of the characteristics of the American democratic way of life. They could point out all the defects of the new federal program, but they had, for the most part, nothing sufficiently definite to offer in place of it.

"The public psychology that permitted and even encouraged these developments would be a fruitful topic for extended discussion. There was a strange mixture of confusion, indifference, impatience with the slow adaptations of the local public schools, and inability to see the ultimate and inevitable result toward which public policy in education was moving. The ordinary 'average citizen' wanted better education for young people. A federal system seemed to be an easy way to obtain what he wanted, quickly and painlessly. It made little difference to him, he said, how this education was controlled or administered. He was most confused with reference to the effect of federal financial aid on the local and state school systems. He was inclined to accept uncritically the glib slogan that 'federal aid means federal domination of schools,' although, as we have already seen, just the opposite was really the case. He shrugged off the warnings of the educators by ascribing their opposition to simple professional jealousy. He wanted action in a hurry, and even though getting the job of educational change done with dispatch meant giving up things of great value, he was not inclined to protest. Indeed, he was not even able to see clearly just what the long-term values of local and state control of education were. Each added bit of federal activity in education seemed desirable and, taken by itself, quite harmless. He was beset by many economic and political problems which seemed, at first glance, far more important than the issues of educational control. When federalization of education had run its full course, many of these same people were amazed that a series of small concessions could add up to such great and fundamental changes in the whole purpose and conduct of education and in the American way of life itself.

Some Effects of Federal Control of Education

"It is too early as yet to appraise fully the results of the development that has been described in the preceding paragraphs. Some contemporary

students of education believe that great harm has been done to education and to democracy. These critics declare that, after the first short period of pioneering and flexibility, the federal youth program has assumed a rigidity of pattern and procedure that far exceeds the bad effects of traditionalism in the state and local system that it replaced. They say that the old system, with all its shortcomings, could be changed, improved, and adapted to local conditions by means of local experiments and local freedom to try out promising innovations. It is certainly true that local freedom cannot be permitted to exist within the vast and orderly reaches of a single federal educational system.

"These critics also declare that the present system has created unfortunate class distinctions with respect to the education of youth and that it offers a constant and open temptation to the invasion of youth education for partisan political purposes. They point to the alleged scandals of the presidential campaign of 1956 as one of many examples of this danger. They accuse the political party then in office of misusing the power which lay in its hands through control of the education of the majority of American youth. It is officially admitted that courses of study in all matters relating to history, government, and economics were quietly revised, immediately after the 1952 election, by the experts of the N.B.Y.S. in Washington. These new courses were prescribed for nationwide use in the federal secondary schools, junior colleges, and adult classes in 1954. Strict inspection was established by the Washington and regional offices of the N.B.Y.S. to see that all teachers and youth leaders followed the new teaching materials exactly. Critics of this procedure were curtly informed that the preparation and prescription of such material is an entirely legitimate function of our federal government. It has, of course, been impossible for the teachers themselves to combat the trend of the times when the federal government prescribes their qualifications, administers their eligibility examinations, and issues their pay checks.

"As the closing pages of this history are being written, this same group of critics is initiating a campaign to restore the former system of decentralized secondary education. It may not be the function of a historian to predict the future, but this writer believes that it is highly improbable that their endeavor will succeed. Great opportunities rarely return, and it would now require tremendous efforts to recover what the majority of educators, schoolboard members, and other citizens of that time let slip from their hands less than a generation ago. Furthermore, the few remaining local high schools of today have returned to their original function of preparing a selected minority of our youth for strictly cultural pursuits. The history of education,