What Can We Learn from Emergency Teachers?

A SYMPOSIUM

Important as it is to lend a helping hand to emergency teachers, we believe the newcomers have a unique contribution of their own to make toward better schools. True, there is justified concern expressed by many persons regarding the insufficient qualifications of some emergency teachers. But we believe it would be unfair to the new teachers to see only their shortcomings. So, we hope you will not stop with the reading of the preceding discussion on helping the emergency teacher but will continue through the following statements which view the new people in the profession both with alarm and admiration.

IN THE Seattle district, married women are not employed as regular teachers. To meet present needs, however, women, who once were excellent teachers but who married and therefore left the service, are being called back into schoolrooms. In the interim, some have reared families of their own; some have participated widely in civic and community undertakings. All have had keen interests outside a classroom.

Principals and supervisors are saying of these emergency teachers:

Mrs. C. evidently understands children. Nothing they do appears to worry her, and she has no difficulty getting them to work with her.

Mrs. S. and the children sort of work things out together.

Mrs. D. comes to school each morning with fresh enthusiasm. Whatever petty problems or annoyances are left at the end of the day, she lays aside and forgets as though she has more important interests to absorb her attention.

Mrs. J. has a daughter of her own about the age of our upper-grade children. I have rarely worked with anyone who understands so readily what schools are trying to do with children and particularly the implications in children's social problems. If I were granted a part-time assistant principal, I would be glad to have a person like Mrs. J. in this capacity.

Mrs. T. genuinely enjoys children. She is very conscious of their out-of-school living—both present living and the community responsibilities into which they are growing.

Mrs. L. cooperates successfully with parents in regard to children's home and school problems.

Mrs. H. expects children to listen courteously when she talks with them and to respond promptly. They do it gladly, too.

Many of these teachers have been eager to visit other classrooms and are attending summer school to find out what progress has been made in educational methods since they left the

service, some of them nearly a generation ago.—*Elizabeth Neterer, Supervisor of Cadet Teachers, Seattle, Wash.*

DURING THE PAST summer many emergency teachers in Arkansas and elsewhere returned to school and workshop for brief preparation. From close association with them, one may gain some idea of practices and philosophy which will dominate our schools not only in wartime but for some time to come.

Among these teachers were those who returned after years of little contact with the schools. Many were "jittery" for numerous reasons and, therefore, gained little to help them meet the needs of children. They seemed to work constantly under the hounding fear that they would not be able to discipline the children or to satisfy the whims of parents.

Evidently, physical infirmities and mental peculiarities are not considered disqualifying factors for an emergency certificate. The eccentric persons, those experiencing nervous rigors at the mere mention of tests, the lame and halt who could not climb steps to the library, the stolid, and the hard of hearing, all seemed to have the one important qualification—time to spend at the school.

Some recent high school graduates showed promise as young teachers who in the future will take every opportunity to continue their preparation. Others with meager backgrounds could hardly read and write. They had no idea of ever making more preparation than is necessary to retain an emergency certificate.

Needs voiced by some emergency teachers should be given immediate consideration by understanding, capable supervisors, school and county superintendents, and principals. The teachers have asked these persons to provide helpful, regular teachers' meetings, to take active interest in building up the school library, to help with discipline problems, to encourage regular school attendance, to distribute the bonus rightfully due teachers, to give attention to making the school an interesting place, and to aid in carrying on the parent-teacher programs. Other needs voiced indicated how far these teachers are from achieving for themselves the major purposes of education.

After all, the most startling and significant facts in regard to the emergency teacher cannot be realized in these times. These facts will only be learned from what the children of today think and say of tomorrow's education.—*Verna Chrisler, Supervisor, Arkansas State Teachers College, Conway, Ark.*

THE TERM "emergency teacher" should be applied to all teachers in the Hampton, Va., locality who are teaching because of the war and defense activities. These teachers may be classed in two groups: first, wives of workers in defense industries and of army personnel; second, local housewives who are former teachers. Women in the first group filled thirty-three of the ninety-four positions in the elementary schools in this division last year. Fourteen positions were filled by former teachers living in the community.

The total number of emergency teachers was forty-seven, or 50 per cent of the people initially employed in elementary teaching last year. During the year twenty-six resignations occurred.

In some instances the same position was filled three or more times. The total number of emergency teachers during the year, then, was seventy-three, but an analysis of the original forty-seven teachers will give an indication of the quality of the whole group.

Of the forty-seven original emergency teachers employed, twelve held certificates which were not in force at the time and were taking steps to obtain local permits. Thirty-five of the emergency teachers, therefore, were qualified teachers. The movement of population into this defense area, raising the section's quota of teachers, placed this school division in a rather favored position for getting qualified teachers to fill vacancies caused by the resignation of regular elementary teachers to go into defense work and by expansion of the schools to care for the increased school population.

From the above statement of teacher turnover, it is obvious that some of the teachers did not remain in the division long enough to become acquainted or to make themselves known. Others remained for several months and a few taught the full year. Since the inmigrant teachers were from many States widely scattered over the country, they brought with them varied ways of doing things. Some of these ways were good and some poor, but they often caused the local teachers to re-think their own procedures while they were accepting or rejecting newcomers' ways of doing things.

A review of the approaches used by emergency teachers points to the conclusion that in every section of the United States there are some teachers who think of the school program as being static while others know that the school program should be planned in terms of needs of individuals. Teachers in this latter group from other localities who knew how to capitalize upon their experiences broadened the curriculum of the school through stimulation of interest in the education, industries, and resources of other parts of the United States. Geography and related subjects, then, took on a more personal meaning for many children. In several instances, the new teachers, because of their own experiences in moving, had a better-than-average understanding of the problems of children who had been uprooted and brought into a new, strange environment to live. These teachers were very helpful because of their special interest in making children feel at home.

The local housewives, too, have brought a challenge to other teachers. Most of the emergency teachers in this group have children in the schools of this division at present. In studying the reactions of their children to school, some of these teachers have arrived at an understanding of the kinds of school experiences and conditions which are helpful, and those which are harmful in developing children normally.

The concept of individual differences, for example, has become a reality to a mother who has had two or more children in school for several years. Each child has reacted differently to the same teachers and the same kind of teaching. This mother has become convinced that the child and his reactions must be studied and the work adjusted to his individual needs in order to foster normal development. She knows that school cannot consist of a set group

of activities or of the same predetermined subject matter for everybody. She knows that the teacher must be willing and able to make adjustment for individuals and groups and that the way the child feels about school is important.

A teacher thus convinced on such matters through both home and school experiences is a valuable asset to the school and a fine influence for other teachers who have seen children only at school. Such a teacher can be of inestimable value in helping other parents understand what the school is trying to do when it departs from the traditional program for everyone and makes provisions for a program based on child study. There are other teachers in this group, of course, who can point out experiences which have not been of the best kind for their own children but who have no constructive suggestions to make. In either case, the points of view expressed by teachers who are also parents are very helpful to those who wish to re-evaluate the school program and reconstruct it continuously on the basis of new information.

The induction of such a heterogeneous group of people into teaching points to the need for developing a way for teachers to exchange ideas about procedures and interpretation of procedures in terms of basic principles. In thus gathering values from everyone, it is possible to weld the varied experiences and backgrounds into a unified whole for the all-around, continuous development of children. Alert teachers and supervisors will see in emergency teachers a stimulation toward greater effort in developing ways of working out problems together. Schools which have profited in this manner should come out of the war emergency with a better program than when they went in.—*Marie E. Alexander, Supervisor of Elementary Education, Hampton, Va.*

Quislingites Go to College

LIFE AT THE NORWEGIAN universities and colleges has become more acute lately. Professors are subjected to systematic spying. All letters to university teachers are opened by Hird (Norwegian Storm Troopers). Professors have therefore limited their mail as much as possible. Many of them have also ceased using the telephone, since conversations have been tapped. Quislingites have, on the whole, gone in for outright gangster methods when it comes to "shadowing" professors. Hird boys now patrol the university halls to "maintain calm and order," i.e. listen to what the teachers say to each other. Oslo University today resembles a fortification captured by enemy troops.—From an article by Albert Brock-Utne in the Swedish *Dagens Nyheter* (Educational Services Division, Office of War Information).

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