

## TEACHERS' CONVENTION

(Continued from page 1)

## THE PRINCIPAL

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the failures and the successes of school principals and their assistants and to show where the principal's interest and his attention to the problems in his school are a measure of those failures and successes and a criterion of the accomplishments of the school.

A principal's duties have been more clearly defined than have the requirements for the office of principalship. The legal regulation that "there shall be more than one teacher in any public school, one of them shall be designated by the Department as principal," has created more principals in name only than it will ever produce in efficient school managers.

In a large number of cases this legal designation indicates the only official distinction among the teachers at a school. All of the work is so similar in the school that with the exception of the necessary reports the regular school duties of each are almost indistinguishable.

Nevertheless, there is absolute need for one member in the school to be at the head or in command. Undoubtedly a plan would work out in print wherein the teachers could conduct their work independently of any attention from a principal. Pupils might be examined through some uniform system and the results might be made to measure the teachers' efforts.

With ideal teachers able to judge the essentials of the subject to be taught, and with conscientious teachers willing to devote attention to all subjects of the curriculum according to the scholastic demands of the mental development of the pupils, perhaps no principal would be required.

There are teachers who feel that the office of the principal as one of supervision is negligible and not of any value. Furthermore, it is contended that teachers are hampered on all sides by a system which permits no expression of individuality; that the teaching ability has been reduced to a questionable quantity and that the originality and initiative of teachers has been destroyed and ironed out by an exhaustive system which permits no suggestions nor listens to any criticisms. It is further claimed that the stereotyped daily plans, the periodical examinations, the type lessons and the continual inspections have taken away all possible opportunities from any teacher to be a successful instructor of youth.

Teachers, in some instances, have politely and feelingly told the supervisor of their work. They, as teachers, knew that the parents were pleased with their work and that before the end of the year their particular pupils would be so far advanced in the school work that the next grade might as well be skipped.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that an order was promulgated to the effect that the principal and the matter of organization and supervision were to become obsolete so far as the Department was concerned. Picture for yourselves, dear principals, the feeling of freedom in the hearts of those former restricted individuals who were not given the opportunity of using their own curricula and adapting their own methods. The new immigrant on the shores of a free and democratic country must feel less jubilant than the teacher who learns that the curricula of study has been shot to pieces and sunk in the sea of freedom. At last, school affairs are righting themselves, and mentally the unhampered teacher stretches herself, and breathes the air of freedom and individuality.

Our first freed teacher is a lover of nature study and her solution to the educational problem is simple. Botany and nature study are all that is emphasized, while in most instances, the pupils are better acquainted with nature than

she. Our second freed teacher was a prize winner in her class at the academy in mathematics and her proclivities in that direction could not be checked. She teaches arithmetic morning, noon and night, while the penmanship is illegible.

Our third freed teacher has been here long enough to hear the expressions of "been see" and "no can" and her solution to the educational problem is most simple, in fact, the strange part in it all is that some one else did not come to the same conclusion long ago. Her teaching is to be in grammar, dry, technical grammar is what is needed and the children learn to hate a language book and to never apply the innumerable rules.

Our fourth freed teacher is a firm believer in the pupils having freedom and being permitted to express themselves regardless of any sort of discipline. As you discuss with her the feasibility of punishing disturbing pupils you observe an ink bottle sailing through the window and you are politely informed that such expression is instinctive individuality being permitted to spontaneously burst into being and dodging another burst of individuality she continues that the physiological physiology of this form of education is fundamental in the pupils' development. She then dismisses the children to play about the yard and goes over to bother the school nurse and tell her what an ancient system the Department has and how inefficient its officers are in the performance of duties and methods of education.

Perhaps I have overdrawn and overemphasized my point in regard to an individual teacher's judgment; however, the fundamental point, which I have tried to make, remains, and that is that teachers will put into practice that which, to their individual judgment, they believe to be the best thing for their pupils.

However, it is not only desirable, but essential that the school work be systematically organized and directed. No capable teacher should be atrophied in her desire to make progress and improve the school work and none will be denied the opportunity to express ideas and methods for improvement.

A few teachers may complain that it is a one man's system; that they are not able to give their pupils the individual instruction they believe is necessary; and that they must adhere strictly to the course of study and the time allotments.

Consider for a moment please, the number of specialists in elementary education in the schools. How many of the teachers have specialized in child study? How many teachers have tried to find the reasons for retardation in the lower grades? Admitting that it would be ideal to have a few pupils and the possibility of organizing original work, of meeting the individual pupils' needs with individual instruction, of teaching what they cared to, when they cared to, and as long as they cared to; admitting that all this is ideal and what the school should represent, we are confronted with the sad state of affairs that a public school system is not and cannot be ideal. And furthermore, we teachers are not individual persons. In our profession we have fused our individuality with that of society. We have merged our aims and ideals into a common standard and we stand or fall collectively but such standards, youths, here today, teachers, become you are a lot of individual teachers but members of a profession which has organized its arts from generation to generation. On this our system founded.

The average school room is crowded with average school children, under an average school teacher. The public school child is not "the unique perfection and the public school system makes him and, therefore, our general organization must be for the average school

child under average conditions. It should be borne in mind that the public schools are run by human means and they frankly confess that they are human enough to make mistakes.

Teachers would soon tire of their freedom. Teaching is no mean task and the responsibility of getting results from pupils is so great that most teachers gladly respond to the assistance from the competent principal and are pleased that some one is behind them, officially with aid and advice. Take for example the case of a new teacher recently graduated from the Normal School who needs help in the classroom. She is timid and discouragement comes easily. Her principal has an excellent opportunity to direct her along the path of success. Now consider for a moment the discouraging effects that the indifferent principal must cause this new teacher who asks for assistance and advice in her school work and this principal merely informs her that she does not know—which means she does not really care—and that may be the supervising principal will visit her in the near future and help her, as that is his duty and he is being paid such an excess salary that such work really belongs to him.

Principals under this Department can do more in making successful teachers the first year that they are out of school than the Normal School faculty can make in four years. Undoubtedly the weakest link in our school system, in this Territory, is found in the ranks of the school principals. A weak teacher is generally poorly paid and is merely a fractional part of a large school. While on the other hand principals are the best paid of all school teachers and officials.

The effects of poor generalship from the principal is immeasurable. Immeasurable because, for merely, there was no accurate tests of his work and no standard measure of the results of his efforts. The best possible judgment was made by another, generally a superior and the many factors of personal interest, friendship or influence caused undue guidance in forming final judgment.

An efficient principal is absolutely necessary for successful school work. Good principals vary in their degree of perfection, but the excellence of their work is readily and clearly shown.

The measure of an efficient principal should be the results shown in harmonious management and productive educational accomplishments with the pupils. To measure is no mean task.

Principals have two fundamental problems to solve in their school work. First: ORGANIZATION. Second: SUPERVISION. These problems call for continuous thought and attention.

The general public and educators have for some time expressed opinions on the efficiency of the public schools. Any such opinions have been valuable to the degree with which the person making the judgment is, by experience, qualified to give an opinion. Should such opinion be made without applying accepted standards of measurement, such judgment remains simply an opinion.

The working principles of school organization should be judged by their adaptability to local conditions and by the efficiency of the schools which result from their application. The proper organization of the school is of the greatest importance and primary to all else which goes on in the school. Lack of so-called organization is more generally observable than the average citizen then is the methods in teaching arithmetic or Geography. It is soon noted around that a teacher cannot control and discipline a class, but whether or not the teacher can develop a lesson with the five-step method is of no concern to the lay mind.

Proper organization must exist before successful teaching can go on. The daily waste of time in the school lacking proper organi-

zation is apparent to any investigator. The systematic principal plans for each assistant and follows the work so that he knows what each should do each hour of the day.

The real success of the course of study depends largely on the efficiency of the principal of the school to develop it and to see that the work is properly carried out. The lack of this in the start causes the pitfalls and the failures later.

By means of correct organization and proper arrangement of classes and subject-matter, the occasions for disorder and inefficiency in the work are avoided. Such organization does not exist for the benefit of the teachers and principal as much as it does for the pupils. Although they may not be intelligible enough to be concerned, the waste of a child's time in the elementary school causes him to reflect on the value of his early education later in life.

Rural school supervision has been termed "the most neglected phase of public education." Undoubtedly this is generally true on the mainland where the rural conditions are such that infrequent inspections and changes in school positions tend to produce unfavorable results.

Principals have been lax in numerous instances in planning the work of their assistants and proportionately allotting the required time which is essential to get results. This has reflected on the success of the school to a greater extent than it has ever been previously possible to determine. Principals, in some instances, have been keener about promoting their own reputations through the social channels of the community than they have been in producing results in educating their pupils. All such action on their part may have won favor in the lay mind, while on the other hand no tangible evidence, that would convince a school board that such practice was inefficient and that such principals were not earning their money, could be brought to bear.

The enormous wastes of time and money caused by poor teaching through a lack of supervision is beyond computation. The unpardonable waste of pupils' time and the cost in government funds causes human disappointments and limitless losses. Errors in school teaching are not immediately apparent and the final tests are at such times that the responsibility for poor teaching cannot be placed.

A constant study of pupils must be made by the principal and a constant guard kept so that no opportunity is lost in producing results and getting the pupils along in their school work. A large share of the misdirected effort in teaching must be obvious to the wide-awake principal and the prevention of inefficient classroom work is worth many hours of cure.

To satisfactorily measure school results has been a problem which school men have not yet satisfactorily agreed on or solved. Hence, to safely fix the responsibility for results is a difficult task.

Poor teaching is cumulative and the results from such work is incalculable in time wasted by pupils. One great factor here in our islands is the amount of time necessary to "unreach" that which so many of our school children already have and use in every day conversation.

The principal, having the opportunity to study the pupils under him, has also the opportunity to suggest to his teachers the needs and methods necessary to get the pupils prepared. There is really no greater opportunity offered a principal in his work of efficient supervision.

Wonderful success has been accomplished and clearly shown in the school work with recent immigrants who, in the beginning, spoke no word of English. While those children who have had the chance to hear incorrect English expressions, it is extremely difficult to obtain results from them in a correct English vernacular. A

fair teacher with non-English speaking children will accomplish much more in her work than the most competent teacher with children who use "pidgin" English.

Thus, it is apparent that a large part of the teachers' efforts must be directed along a line of continual drill on the fundamental essentials of the lower grades. Children in the United States are in school less than 4% of their time from birth to 21 years of age and the average public school child in Hawaii is practically the same time in school. Hence, considering the disadvantages the public school teachers are laboring under, our accomplishments are wonderful, yet we must continue to bear in mind our problems and strive to solve them.

Visiting classes is of much more value to principals than it is to teachers. For this reason, conferences should be held with the assistants to discuss the successes and the failures in the class work.

The consciousness that the principal is familiar with the work of the assistant and willing to assist her and appreciative of her efforts is conducive of a fraternal spirit that harmonizes the work of principal and the assistant. The bond of common interest between the office of principal and that of the teacher in the classroom is such that it calls for special attention relative to the necessity of harmonious relationship between both.

The teachers should be helped and not policed by principals and supervising principals. The spirit in the work should be a mutual understanding between the teacher and the official. The report on the competency or incompetency of a teacher should be made only after careful and thorough investigation and thought.

Constant changes are needed in all school systems: Changes in the course of study, changes in organization, changes in the grading of pupils and changes in the methods of instruction. All these changes do not indicate any lack of purpose or a lack of organization, but rather progressive adaptation of our work to meet the changing social and educational needs. Principals and teachers are expected to assist in the development of the curriculum and they should never feel that the making of helpful suggestions will ever impair their standing in the Department.

Therefore, I think I must emphasize, in closing, that after all the public school system is balanced on the success of the principal.

It does not matter so much what occupation a man is engaged in as it does his attitude of mind and his devotion to his work. I have spoken to you before about the status of our profession and the fact that our teaching profession will never rise above the standards set by the most indifferent and most inefficient. When principals begin to learn that they are paid and paid well for their services as government school officials and that the Department reasonably expects results, we shall improve.

The enthusiasm that some school principals will put into some outside proposition assisted by government support is most striking and noticeable. Should but a portion of this effort be directed toward school organization and supervision, we would have a more efficient corps of teachers and higher standards in a short time. The business ventures indulged in by principals, who should feel certain of a long term of office with satisfactory work, are extremely numerous and generally such principals are the mediocre official.

The work of the office of principal calls for undivided attention and effort from the one who holds the position. When the Department obtains men and women who are willing to divorce their outside interests from their work and not use their office hours, their strength and their time for rest to solve the social, political and agricultural problems of the community, the Department will obtain the real school officials. It must not be inferred that no one is wanted

that must think and act some sort of school work 24 hours per day, nor is it meant that the Department means to say what teachers shall eat or what they shall wear. All that is asked is that service be efficiently rendered for the compensation given.

The public schools have made mistakes and to defend them would be worse than to make more mistakes. It should be borne in mind that the schools exist for the public good and because they are conducted by human means they are human enough to make mistakes. However, we are acknowledging more and more that the public schools are the public's business, and furthermore, that the schools are not yet perfect. We welcome any criticism that carries evidence of how to improve our work and make the schools serve the people and the pupils better.

Some of our orators have called the public schools of Hawaii the "melting pot of the races." We find our children, however, at that formative period of development which might be expressed in terms of the public schools the Anvil of Citizenship. If we ever succeed in hammering out and fusing a common stock from the many races and hammering in correct ideals for democracy in this territory, the success will not be due to the fond parents who find so much to offer adverse criticism while their own children attend private schools, nor to the harangues of the politician, but rather to the never ending efforts and to the religious attachment to their work of the efficient but much maligned public school teachers and principals.

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