The AMERICAN ROAD to CULTURE

A Social Interpretation of Education in the United States

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I. CONTROLLING IDEAS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

II. FAITH IN EDUCATION

III. GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

IV. LOCAL INITIATIVE

V. INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS

PAGE

3

II

23

41

60

1. Popular Faith in the Individual
2. Popular Faith in the School
3. The American System of Schools

1. Control by the Political Power
2. A Secularized Program of Instruction
3. Tolerance of Private Enterprise
4. Dominant Forces in American Society

1. The Weakness of the Federal Government
2. The Central Role of the Local Community
3. Control of Education by the People
4. Administrative Decentralization
5. Institutional Autonomy

1. The Origin of the Worship of Individual Success
2. Free Schools
3. The Educational Ladder
4. Belief in the Money Value of Schooling
5. The Opposition to Specialization in the High School
CONTENTS

VI. DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

1. The Single System
2. The Comprehensive Secondary School
3. Social Relationships Among Pupils
4. Social Relationships Between Teacher and Pupil
5. Social Relationships Among Teachers
6. Coeducation of the Sexes

VII. NATIONAL SOLIDARITY

1. Conditions Fostering Concern Over Solidarity
2. Intolerance of Cultural and Racial Diversity
3. Compulsory Education
4. The Basic Common Education
5. Emphasis on Civic Training
6. The Cult of Patriotism

VIII. SOCIAL CONFORMITY

1. The Standardization of Life
2. Methods of Curriculum-Making
3. The Conception of Learning
4. Reliance Upon the Textbook
5. The Social Position of the Teacher
6. The Conservatism of the American People

IX. MECHANICAL EFFICIENCY

1. The Program of Mass Education
2. Flexible Classification and Promotion Arrangements
3. The Platoon Plan
4. The Measurement of School Products
CONTENTS

CHAPTER

5. Scientific Management
6. The Hierarchical Administrative Organization
7. Interest in the Tangible Symbols of Education

X. PRACTICAL UTILITY

1. Control of Education by Practical Men
2. The Low Regard for Intellectual Achievement
3. The Sensitivity of the School to Social Demand
4. The Doctrine of Specific Training
5. Interest in the Scientific Study of Education
6. Educational Instrumentalism

XI. PHILOSOPHIC UNCERTAINTY

1. The Absence of Social Planning
2. The Play of Social Forces
3. The Separation of Education and Politics
4. The Fear of Indoctrination
5. The Doctrine of Academic Freedom
6. The Principle of Philosophic Uncertainty
CHAPTER VIII

SOCIAL CONFORMITY

The American interest in group solidarity may at first appear to be subsumed under the broader principle of social conformity. Although this relationship may exist at certain times and places, it is not a necessary relationship. Thus group solidarity may be exacted for the purpose of propagating some radical political ideal or of promoting some vast program of social reconstruction. The former seems to have provided the inspiration for that solidarity which characterized the American people during the early days of the republic, while the latter appears to be the driving force behind the solidarity which features life in Soviet Russia to-day. However, since the interest in solidarity in the United States has lost its earlier ideal content and has become essentially conservative, in its present form it may therefore be regarded as a phase of the general American concern over social conformity.

It should of course not be assumed that the American people are conformists in all directions.
Indeed in certain spheres they have always placed a premium upon initiative and creative endeavor. Thus in the realm of industrial technique they perhaps surpass all other peoples in their readiness to discard old and adopt new devices and processes. In fact they spend enormous sums of money every year in the conscious and directed search for mechanical improvements, and in this world of practical affairs they never show the slightest desire to cling to anything merely because it was used by their grandfathers. Here they even seem to be predisposed to doubt the utility of any tool or procedure hallowed with age.

In the wide areas of politics, economics, morals, and religion, however, they exhibit a decidedly different mentality. In these departments of experience they seem to place no premium whatsoever upon invention and originality; rather do they seek to discourage bold speculation and radical experimentation of every kind. Thus, while they regard the application of thought to industrial processes as highly desirable and beneficent, they tend to view searching inquiry into the sphere of social and human relations as fraught with great danger. Although, since the coming of the Puritans, there has been a powerful conformist strain in American life, this concern over conformity has
not always been as strong or as widely prevalent as it is to-day. At one time, as the entire world knows, America was a land of new experiments in politics and economics; and in the nineteenth century she bore a numerous progeny of sects, cults, and movements in the field of religion and morals. Moreover, she extended the hospitality of her shores to dissenting persons and groups from all over the world. The extent of the contrast between the old and the new America is found in the fact that to-day a prospective citizen seeking admission must first submit to an examination of the ideas which he proposes to bring into the country. And if his ideas are not sound, according to the standards set by conservative forces, he is asked to go elsewhere.

The reader may feel that two of the principles suggested in the present outline, the principle of individual success and the principle of social conformity, are mutually incompatible. Such, however, is not the case. There would no doubt be a complete and irreconcilable conflict between a thoroughgoing individualism, on the one hand, and an insistence upon social conformity, on the other. But concern over promoting individual success and the organization of society about the principle of individualism are two very different things. In
fact the emphasis in America on individual success, since society must after all define the goals to be striven for and the standards by which individual performance is to be judged, constitutes a most emphatic denial of genuine individualism. Under such conditions, particularly if such ideals and standards are narrow, as they are in America, the individual must of necessity feel himself driven by hostile social forces and thwarted at a hundred points. Thus, the urge to success may prove to be the most austere and merciless of masters. The Americans, however, because of their pioneering past and their former life of agrarian isolation, are fond of calling themselves individualists and of singing the praises of individualism. Nevertheless the individualistic tradition, except as it finds expression in the narrow sphere of competition for pecuniary success, is out of accord with present-day conditions in America and serves to obscure the real nature of the contemporary social order.

The Standardization of Life

This tendency towards the enforcement of social conformity has been accelerated in certain ways by the coming of industrial civilization. In fact this civilization seems to be providing the instruments
for the thorough standardization of life. The development of modern means of transportation and communication, which has gone farther in America than in any other part of the world, has destroyed the isolation of the agrarian order and has closely integrated the various sections of this vast country. The rise of distinct cultures in different parts of the nation is thus rendered extremely difficult and improbable. Their 25,000,000 automobiles alone have given the American people a mobility that is entirely without precedent in history. Moreover, gigantic manufacturing establishments produce standardized goods for nation-wide consumption, and equally gigantic commercial enterprises dispense the same products from one end of the country to the other. Whether it be neckties or sermons, pickles or concerts, baked beans or moving pictures, underwear or sports, automobiles or news articles, silk stockings or poetry, the American people increasingly wear the same clothes, eat the same food, play the same games, see the same sights, discuss the same subjects, listen to the same music, think the same thoughts, and laugh over the same jokes. Apparently industrialism has made possible, and some think inevitable, the fashioning of an entire people after a single pattern.

There is, however, another side to this picture
which should be examined. The new civilization is undoubtedly freeing the individual from the coercive influence of the small family or community group. In the past the individual ordinarily has been compelled to live under the very eyes of his parents and his grandparents and his brothers and his sisters and his cousins and his uncles and his aunts, as well as within the immediate presence of his neighbors and Mrs. Grundy. To-day he may at his pleasure withdraw from this group, lose his identity in the great city, and become a different person. He may in fact choose his companions as he would choose his clothes and thus order a society according to his own tastes. Almost regardless of his ideas on politics, economics, religion, or morals, he can find others of congenial mind and associate himself with them. It is altogether possible therefore that these standardizing tendencies of industrial civilization are superficial and that contrary forces of a more fundamental character are at work. Perhaps the new culture will embrace a wide geographical area and thus appear to produce uniformity, but within this area there may be a complexity, a variety, and a richness of life which was impossible in the small agrarian community. But whatever the future may hold in store, the immediate result in America seems to be widespread
standardization of taste and a general regimentation of thought.

Methods of Curriculum-making

The way in which the principle of social conformity finds expression in American education is perhaps best illustrated by the methods of curriculum-making which have come into vogue in recent years. For various reasons that need not be examined here educational leaders have become interested in the general task of selecting and organizing the materials of instruction to be employed in the school. Since this interest in curriculum-making happened to be very intimately associated with the movement for the application of the scientific method to the study of education, there was a natural insistence that the problem be attacked in a scientific manner. As a result the emphasis almost everywhere has been placed on objective and even mechanical methods of analysis and measurement. Of the various procedures suggested the method of social analysis and the method of consensus of opinion have been most widely used.

Both of these methods suffer from the same disability. They both tend to begin and end with the
present social situation. According to the method of social analysis, the activities in which people engage in contemporary American life should be objectively studied and the desirable activities which are inadequately or imperfectly performed should receive attention in the school. Investigators who have employed this method, however, have become well aware of its limitations. They have discovered that no amount of purely objective study of life activities will produce standards whereby the good may be distinguished from the bad, or the better from the worse. They have discovered furthermore that this process of evaluation is the very essence of curriculum-making. The way out of the dilemma which they have proposed is to apply to the results of social analysis the method of consensus of opinion. Thus they would approach their most worthy citizens and derive from collective judgments standards for the evaluation of the various activities which might be introduced into the school.

The almost certain outcome under the American social and political system of the application of these methods to curriculum-making is obvious. It is apparent that the crucial point in the procedure is the selection of the judges; and it is equally apparent that with rare exceptions the persons
asked to serve in this capacity will be those who have been successful according to the standards inherent in American civilization. Moreover, in passing judgment upon the tasks of the school they will undoubtedly for the most part give expression to these standards. The inevitable consequence is that the school will become an instrument for the perpetuation of the existing social order rather than a creative force in society.

This attack on the curriculum has revealed a fundamental and irreconcilable difference of opinion among American educational theorists. On the one side are ranged those who believe that the function of the school is essentially conservative, and on the other those who like to think of the school as an agency of social reconstruction. At present the first theory is supported, either consciously or unwittingly, by the great body of practical people, teachers as well as laymen, while the second position is defended by a much smaller group of sociologists, philosophers, and idealists. The weakness of these champions of social change lies in the fact that they make no practical proposals of ways and means for the conversion of the school into a great creative force in society. They confine their efforts very largely to the assertion that it should be so; the question of prac-
tical realization they leave to others; and others are not interested. As a consequence the probability is that the new curriculum, when completed, will enforce the principle of social conformity.

The Conception of Learning

The conception of learning which prevails most widely in the American school is the conception which has generally prevailed in the schools of the world. According to the tradition which has dominated formal education in the United States throughout its history learning is fundamentally a process of absorption. Through the centuries, according to this view, the race has accumulated a vast store of knowledge, the precipitate of experience, which must be passed on from generation to generation; and the major function of the school is to make certain that the child acquire in passive fashion this immensely valuable social heritage. He must learn the native language, the number system, the findings of the scientists, and the wise sayings of the prophets and sages, not through living but from the records of mankind. Thus learning becomes primarily an acceptance by the child of an externally imposed order and consequently an instrument of social conformity.
Against this conception of learning many of America's most able educational theorists have waged a vigorous warfare. These critics have argued that learning should not be regarded as the passive acquisition by the child of a body of skills, knowledges, and attitudes fixed by adult society, but that learning should be one aspect of an active process of living during which the child pursues ends immediately significant to him and thus gains a sense of mastery over rather than of submission to the social heritage. This means that the learner is brought squarely into the center of the picture.

At this point, however, the reformers break into two opposing camps. While both groups agree that economical and genuine learning is impossible without the interest and the active participation of the child, they differ radically on the question of the rôle which interest should play in the educative process. The more conservative group maintains that the good teacher so arranges the learning situation that the child will become interested in those things in which from the standpoint of society he should be interested; whereas the more radical group argues that the good teacher respects the spontaneous interests of the child and allows those interests to determine the direction which the process takes. At present the theory that
learning is after all a matter of imposition, whether it is skillfully and efficiently or crudely and wastefully done, seems to be generally accepted in practice. Those who advocate the unqualified recognition of the interests of the learner have failed to show that they are not really defending a species of social anarchy. Moreover, except in a few private schools scattered here and there through the country, the more extreme theory has received little practical support.

Reliance upon the Textbook

One of the most characteristic features of American school procedure is reliance upon the textbook. This practice of course is in complete harmony with the traditional theory of learning. The textbook contains in condensed form the experience of the race in a particular department of knowledge. In times past the major task of the pupil was to memorize the contents of the textbook and that of the teacher was to determine the measure of success which had attended the pupil's efforts. To-day of course quite different methods for using the textbook generally prevail. There is much less emphasis on memoriter work than formerly and more time is devoted to discussion, sup-
lementary reading, individual projects, group enterprises, and laboratory work. Yet the textbook remains an essential part of the American educational technique and the work of the school is still closely identified with book learning.

That the wide use of the textbook tends to promote social conformity may not be altogether apparent at first. A brief examination of the practice, however, will show this to be true. In the first place, the textbooks employed in a particular school or school system are ordinarily selected locally. While this task is customarily performed by teachers or committees of teachers, their selections are of course subject to review by representatives of the citizens serving on the board of education. As a result no textbook is likely to be chosen which offends the sensibilities of any group in the community that is sufficiently well organized to register a protest. In the second place, the publication of textbooks is very largely in the hands of private publishing companies which are conducted as business enterprises. Since these companies are interested in getting their own books adopted as widely as possible, they very commonly bring pressure to bear upon the authors to eliminate everything that might be objectionable to any important body of citizens in the nation. Moreover, the authors them-
selves have no doubt in many instances been easily convinced of the wisdom of leaving contentious matters out of their works. Thus a textbook in American history must not offend the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Knights of Columbus, the English Speaking Union, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the American Federation of Labor, the Grand Army of the Republic, the Order of Confederate Veterans, the American Legion, the Ku Klux Klan, and a host of other organizations. There have been numerous instances of the modification of textbooks at the request of some powerful group. Moreover, the same textbook has been issued in different editions to meet the demands of different sections of the country. Under these conditions the textbook tends to become a perfectly innocuous and colorless compendium of non-controversial knowledge and consequently an instrument of social conformity.

*The Social Position of the Teacher*

As a general rule the American teacher has not been an active force in the community. This is due largely to the fact that the financial compensation of the calling has been low and the consequent fact that the teacher has commonly been untrained and
immature. To-day, moreover, practically all of the teachers in the elementary school and two-thirds of the teachers in the secondary school are women. Since woman has generally occupied a position of inferiority in the economic, political, and intellectual life of America, the profession has as a consequence lacked prestige. Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive and thorough organization of teachers has made the individual more or less helpless in the face of popular criticism. As a result of all of these conditions the teacher, in the elementary and secondary schools at any rate, has ordinarily been content to confine his activities to the work of the classroom. In the colleges and universities, to be sure, the situation is somewhat different, but even here the influence of social pressure may on occasion be keenly felt.

The American teacher is thus forced to resemble the textbook. He is expected to lead a perfectly exemplary life in order that he may set the proper pattern for his pupils. But such a life, at least in the smaller communities and the lower schools, can only be the largest common factor of the various groups which make up the population. Since the controlling forces in society and the publicly expressed convictions of citizens tend to be conservative, this means that the teacher must be es-
sentially conservative in his behavior and opinions. Thus, in many of the smaller communities in the Middle West and South a teacher must not smoke, dance, or play cards, and, if he fails to attend church, he may be regarded with suspicion. Even such matters as the length of the dress, the bobbing of the hair, and the use of rouge have been known to disqualify a woman for teaching. And a shrewd observer of university life in America has said that there are three subjects on which the university professor is expected to be orthodox, that is, in accord with the powers which control higher education—economics, religion, and sex. According to this observer the professor may without greatly endangering his position overstep the bounds of propriety in one of these fields, but if he does so in a second, he is almost certain to be asked to seek employment elsewhere. While there may be some exaggeration in this statement, it contains sufficient truth to indicate that here is another factor which tends to make the school in America serve the interests of social conformity.

The Conservatism of the American People

In conclusion the point should be made that the school in America to-day is conservative because
the American people are essentially conservative. The explanation of this situation is apparently to be found in the fact that the creative impulses which launched the republic on its course a century and a half ago have largely spent themselves. This does not mean that America has become the scene of rest and repose and quiet. The contrary is in fact the case. The concentration of power and energy in the United States to-day exceeds anything that the world has ever seen in the past. But this power and this energy are flowing in political channels and for social purposes which were fashioned in earlier generations. Moreover, interest in modifying the social structure is at a low ebb for the very reason that the present social structure has been successful according to the standards by which the American people pass judgment upon it. It has achieved material prosperity.

Although critics quite properly point to the great inequalities of wealth in the United States and to the existence of dire poverty in certain elements of the population, the fact remains that the American economic system has succeeded to an unprecedented degree in diffusing the goods and services of this world among the people. In the existing order those who have sufficient initiative and ability to organize and make their desires articu-
late are able to secure a share in the general prosperity. Those who lack this initiative and ability may experience severe physical privation, but, being unable to register effective protest, they are incapable of endangering the stability of the social structure. Moreover, many who are not prosperous to-day expect prosperity to-morrow and are therefore content. As a consequence, there is little organized unrest in contemporary America. The great masses of the people are therefore in no mood for radical political or economic doctrine. They firmly believe that, while crooks and scoundrels may find their way into high places from time to time, the American social system is fundamentally sound. Under these conditions, in spite of the demands of educational theorists that the school should serve as an agency of continuous social reconstruction, the forces of formal education tend to throw their weight on the side of social conformity.
CHAPTER IX

MECHANICAL EFFICIENCY

The American people take great pride in their efficiency. Although this trait is to a very large degree a product of the new industrial civilization, it had its origin in the period of the pioneer. Under the hard conditions of life which accompanied the material conquest of Indians, forests, rivers, and mountains the formalities and leisurely ways of the Old World were perforce abandoned. The frontier nurtured simple and direct methods of work and of social procedure. Moreover, the abundance of natural resources of every kind and the sparseness of population placed a premium upon human labor, stimulated mechanical invention, and encouraged the utilization of non-human forms of power. Thus the large size of the farm in America and the scarcity of workers created an attitude of mind among the people which favored the rapid spread and universal adoption of farm machinery.

Building upon this foundation the new industrial order has provided in amazing abundance the
tools of a certain type of efficiency. We say a certain type of efficiency, because it is often an efficiency without purpose, an efficiency of motion. To the Americans mechanical perfection is in itself something to admire and to strive for. If an organization or a machine works without undue friction or dissipation of energy, they would seem almost to be satisfied. America today consequently possesses a technique for the exploitation of natural resources, for the conservation of human power, for the fabrication of commodities, for the construction of bridges and skyscrapers, for the exchange of goods and services, for the raising of hogs and grain, for the transmission of thought and sound, and for the movement of huge populations to and fro; which surpasses anything of the kind that the world has seen. America is the land of locomotives, automobiles, telephones, labor-saving devices and gigantic industrial enterprise; she is also the land of wrist watches, time tables, electric bells, steam whistles, and cafeterias. The natural expectation is that this vast technique would guarantee leisure and tranquillity to all, but it seems rather to bring hurry and bustle and anxiety. To what humane ends therefore it will eventually be directed remains a mystery. For the moment the American people seem to be con-
tent with the mechanics of the accomplishment. That this idolatry of efficiency should impress itself upon the schools is entirely to be expected. In fact, in those parts of the country which have come under the particular sway of the machine culture, the entire educational system and the accompanying educational theory have been greatly influenced by the ideals of business enterprise. Particularly in the great city systems education is thought of in terms of the construction of buildings, the floating of bonds, the keeping of records, the differentiation of function, and the evolution of a form of pupil management which makes possible the rapid and easy movement of great masses of children through the schools. And the ambitious school administrator covets a reputation for efficiency and feels complimented if he is mistaken for a banker, or the director of some large corporation. Provided the ends are worthy there can of course be no objection to efficiency; but an efficiency of management should never be the ideal of education.

The Program of Mass Education

Perhaps the most characteristic expression of the concern of the Americans over efficiency is found
in their program of mass education. This program of course is a product of the new industrial era. In the days of the agrarian civilization there was little mass education for the simple reason that schools and classes were necessarily small, the school year was short, attendance was irregular, and the program of studies was meager. Indeed before the coming of the great population centers and a closely integrated society, America never seriously undertook the task of providing schooling for the masses. Educational leaders, moreover, commonly contend that practically all of the progressive educational measures which have found their way into the schools during the past century appeared first in the cities. Only in the urban community with its concentration of children and its superior material resources could the problems of education be faced on a large scale.

Various obvious improvements in school practice, however, have been inevitably attended by methods of regimentation designed to deal with children in the mass. Thus the ordinary city system of education consists of a series of schools distributed over the city in accordance with the density of population and provided with comparatively little space for play and out-of-door activities. The buildings themselves are commonly huge
structures equipped to take care of a thousand or more children. In the large cities schools housing several thousands of pupils are not uncommon, and at the secondary level the enrollment in a single school may reach the enormous figure of five, six, or even seven thousand. Under these conditions there is grave danger that the individual child will be lost and that the machinery of administration will obscure the process of education itself. That such results have appeared to a considerable degree in the American schools is clearly indicated by the numerous protests raised by educational theorists. But the momentum of the system, the demands of economy, and the resistance of vested interests within the school usually succeed in smothering criticism.

The controversy over size of class well illustrates the difficulties in the situation. In the elementary school forty and fifty children will be crowded into a single room and taught by a single teacher, and in the universities several hundred students will attend the same course of lectures. Although the cry has been raised again and again that genuine education is impossible under these conditions, the growth of the school population, the lag of the building program behind the need, and the cost of employing additional teachers
make reform extremely difficult. Recently tradition has received unexpected support from scientific investigation. Studies have been made which purport to show that the results of instruction tend to sustain no relationship to the size of class and that children learn quite as well in large as in small groups. The researches have of necessity been limited to those educational products for the measurement of which objective tests and scales have been constructed. There is nevertheless a tendency in certain circles to assume either that the things measured are after all the central concern of the school or that they are intimately correlated with the less tangible, though perhaps even more desirable, educational products. But the theoretical battle over this issue is by no means concluded.

Flexible Classification and Promotion Arrangements

One of the first criticisms launched against the program of mass education was that it failed to make adequate provision for individual differences. In order to meet this criticism numerous schemes have been proposed and introduced into the schools. The American people, however, have
been much more hospitable towards those mechanical devices of classification and promotion which make possible the easy manipulation of large numbers of pupils rather than towards those more fundamental reforms which center attention on the learning process. The suggestion therefore that instruction be adjusted to individual differences by making the individual the center of attention has usually fallen on deaf ears. On the other hand, schemes providing for a refinement of the methods of classification and the handling of children in groups have been readily accepted. Such schemes seem to be in harmony with the spirit which animates education in America. In the large cities now the pupils in a particular grade are often classified into a number of groups, commonly three, on the basis of ability, and then the materials of instruction and the rate of progress are adjusted to the several levels. This practice has the merit of recognizing to some extent differences in ability and of preserving the economies of mass production. It is also a reform that can be introduced rather easily from a central office without resorting to the laborious process of reeducating the teaching staff.

Perhaps, however, the methods which have been developed in the high schools and colleges for
dealing with the great multitudes of young people who have poured into these institutions during the last generation are the most extreme illustrations of the application of the principle of mechanical efficiency to the processes of education. In both the secondary and higher schools the entire curriculum is organized into relatively minute units of work. Although efforts are always made to insure the pursuit on the part of the student of certain sequences and of a unified program, the result is all too often a mere collection of points or credits. Moreover, as the student remains in the institution from semester to semester his successes and failures in accumulating these precious credits are meticulously recorded even to fractions of percentages in some office or bureau. After he has acquired the appropriate number of such disparate units, with but little provision for the integration of his knowledge, he receives either his certificate of graduation from high school or his college degree. Even the granting of their highest academic honor, the degree of doctor of philosophy, has been reduced in certain of the large universities almost to a matter of meeting routine requirements. While this entire system has been the subject of severe criticism for some years and while numerous experiments in other direc-
tions are under way, it tends to remain because it is so well adapted to the demands of quantity production.

The Platoon Plan

Another interesting application of the principle of efficiency is found in the so-called platoon plan, which is designed for the elementary school, which has been very widely discussed in America, and which seems to be gaining ground in the great cities. In its essence the plan calls for an organization of the program that will make possible the continuous use throughout the day of the entire school plant. Under the traditional arrangement all children move simultaneously from the classroom to the playground, to the shops, or to the auditorium. As a consequence important parts of the school plant are always idle. Under the platoon plan, on the other hand, the pupils are divided into two shifts, and while the one is in the classrooms the other is in the shops, in the auditorium, and on the playground. The reform also provides for a modification of the program of instruction by placing larger emphasis upon play, manual, group, and various other activities. As a consequence certain of its proponents have called it the work-
study-play plan. But undoubtedly the feature of the scheme which has appealed to those practical men who control public education in America is its provision for an efficient use of school resources.

In this connection the point should be made that the platoon plan is but one of several reforms which have made this particular appeal. For years numerous campaigns have been waged for the wider use of the school plant. At one time there has been a demand for converting the school into a community center for the benefit of the general population after the school day is over, at another for placing the school on Saturdays and even on Sundays at the disposal of any interested group of citizens, and again for maintaining a regular session of the school during the long summer vacation. All of these movements have met with some response, but boards of education have generally objected to incurring the extra expense which radical departures from tradition might entail. They have also hesitated to open the schools to religious gatherings or to partisan political meetings on the grounds that such practices are contrary to the purposes for which public schools are established.
The Measurement of School Products

During the past twenty-five or thirty years interest in the accurate measurement of school products has probably absorbed more energy and first-rate ability among students of education in America than any other single activity. Inspired by the technique which had been perfected in the natural sciences those engaged in this work have sought to standardize procedures and to improve instruments of testing so that the personal equation of the tester may be eliminated entirely. Beginning with the fundamental processes of arithmetic, reading, and spelling they have moved from discipline to discipline until they have produced objective tests for practically all subjects taught in the elementary and secondary schools. Even the curriculum of the college has not escaped altogether. And to-day efforts are being made to measure certain of the more subtle products of the educative process, such as attitudes and character traits. The guiding principle of this attempt to apply the quantitative method to education has thus been formulated by the recognized leader of the movement: Whatever exists at all exists in some amount. And the natural inference is that whatever exists in some amount can be measured.
Although the development of instruments for the measurement of school products has had a scientific as well as a practical motive, its major claim for popular support has been made in the name of efficiency. When the movement was in its first flush of youth its champions advanced the most extreme claims regarding its practical utility. Many school administrators and students of education apparently believed that measurement held the key to the solution of all educational problems. Through the use of standardized tests they argued that systems, schools, teachers, and methods could be appraised. An era of rapid and uninterrupted educational advance consequently seemed immediately ahead. The result was an orgy of testing that swept through the entire country.

While it is yet too early to appraise this movement in its entirety, certain conclusions may be drawn with confidence. As aids in the process of education and in the advancement of knowledge in the whole field of learning, instruments of measurement have proved their value and are certain to remain. On the other hand the feverish and uncritical fashioning of tests in terms of the existing curriculum and in the name of efficiency has undoubtedly served to fasten upon the schools an archaic program of instruction and a false
theory of the nature of learning. There is also evidence to indicate that interest in standardized testing procedures has tended to stimulate the competitive impulses, to enforce social conformity, to mechanize the teaching process, and to center attention on the less important products of the school.

*Scientific Management*

The interest in the measurement of school products may be regarded as part of a more general concern over scientific management. And here students of education have borrowed directly from the field of industry. Impressed by the extraordinary increase in productive efficiency made possible by the analytical and objective study of factory processes and working methods, they concluded that the operations of a school or a school system might be approached in the same way and with the same beneficial results. As a consequence, with a view to eliminating waste of motion and duplication of effort, the functions of the different workers participating in the conduct of a great system of education have been carefully studied. Thus, the activities of janitors, classroom teachers, heads of departments, deans of girls, athletic di-
rectors, elementary school principals, secondary school principals, superintendents of schools, and members of school boards have all been made the subject of inquiry. While these investigations have brought many interesting facts to light, they have been too largely concerned with the machinery and the externals of education. They seem to have been betrayed by the analogy between school and industry from which they received their inspiration. In education there can never be that separation of process and product which is characteristic of manufacturing enterprise.

The method of scientific management has also been applied to the erection of school buildings, the making of equipment, the keeping of records, and the administration of finance. An elaborate technique for the selection of building sites in the light of probable population increases and movements has been evolved; standards with regard to lighting, ventilation, seating arrangements, corridor space, stairway provisions, and toilet facilities have been developed; and numerous studies of building materials, school supplies, and classroom equipment have been conducted. The process of record keeping has likewise been examined with great care, and efforts to perfect and standardize forms, blanks, and office devices have been made in
great abundance. Also in quite recent years the entire field of school finance has been subjected to thorough scrutiny. And here the Americans have derived formulas which purport to reveal in an entirely objective fashion exactly how much money a community can afford to devote to educational purposes. Methods of apportioning funds, of financing various school projects, and other related problems have all been measured by the rod of efficiency. Even the costs per student hour of instruction in different subjects have been compared, and methods of equating various forms of educational service performed by teachers have been proposed. Certainly in their attack upon the material and routine aspects of school administration the Americans have shown great industry and ingenuity. Unfortunately, however, the same estimate cannot be passed upon their researches into the more fundamental relationships between school and society. The ideal of a narrow type of efficiency seems to have blinded them to wide areas of inquiry.

The Hierarchical Administrative Organization

The American interest in efficiency is well illustrated in the theory of administrative organi-
zation as it has developed in the cities. With few exceptions, the great population centers have repudiated directly and completely the principle of decentralization which has generally characterized the administration of education in the past. This is due largely to the fact that the system of public education in a community destined to become a great metropolis, keeping pace with the growth of population, becomes by imperceptible stages an undertaking of gigantic proportions. Moreover, with its thousands of teachers, its hundreds of thousands of pupils, and its millions of dollars worth of property, it takes on a superficial resemblance to big business. And since the efficiency of big business is generally praised in America, and since the board of education is commonly dominated by businessmen, the school system naturally adopts the administrative organization of business enterprise.

The organization which generally prevails in American cities is fundamentally hierarchical in form. In general charge of the school system, and responsible to the people precisely as the board of directors of a great corporation is responsible to the stockholders, is the board of education. And in the educational system, as in the corporate enterprise, below the controlling board is a systematically descending series of officers and workers.
Crowning this series is the official representative and executive of the board—the superintendent of schools. There then follow in order the assistant superintendents, the school principals, the heads of departments, the classroom teachers, and the pupils. Under this organization each individual in the system is responsible to the officer immediately over him and for all persons under him. The arrangement is thus perfectly logical in character and makes possible the definite placing of responsibility. Although certain liberal-minded theorists have criticized the theory underlying this system of administration on the grounds that it is undemocratic and tends to dwarf the personality of the teacher, the great majority of American students of the question maintain that it is the only system that will guarantee efficiency.

In this connection the exalted position of the administrator in the American scheme of education should be noted. Under the form of organization just outlined, which is generally found in the larger school systems and in the great universities, the superintendent of schools or the university president is far removed from the ordinary teacher. Moreover, being the immediate representative of the governing body in which teachers ordinarily have no voice, he wields enormous
power. As a consequence, the more able young men in the service of public education are ambitious to become principals and superintendents, and a college professor who passes to a deanship or a presidency feels that he has been promoted. The status of teaching, on the contrary, tends to lose its traditional dignity and prestige; and the ordinary teacher comes to regard himself more and more in the nature of an employee and to view his work as lacking in creative opportunity. If these tendencies should continue, the Americans may expect that the profession increasingly will attract persons of little spirit and initiative.

*Interest in the Tangible Symbols of Education*

The natural fruit of this general absorption in the principle of efficiency divorced from a thoroughgoing inquiry into the purposes of human institutions is the glorification of the tangible symbols of education. Thus when the American people speak of the conditions of education in their country they commonly refer to figures of attendance, the number of degrees granted, the dollars spent on education, the size of school buildings, and even the exploits of the athletic teams rather than to the quality of the educative process and the
excellence of the instruction. Their readiness to lavish money on school equipment and architecture and their reluctance to increase the compensation of teachers are to be understood in the same way. In a word they center the attention on the machinery and forms rather than on the substance of education. While this may be an inevitable product of the rapid expansion of the system of schools which has gone forward during the last generation, it is greatly hampering the fundamental reformulation of educational theory which the coming of industrialism has made imperative.