

To Get and Keep Good Teachers

by RAY C. MAUL, *assistant director, Research Division, National Educational Association.*

PERHAPS the most widely advertised shortage in American education today is the shortage of good elementary-school teachers. In Bronxville, N. Y., ninth-grade pupils are being used as junior teachers to alleviate the shortage and to help stimulate their own interest in teaching—which, it is hoped, will alleviate future shortages when they grow up. In 1951 the Kansas Commission on Teacher Education put on a Teacher Reserve Mobilization Program which resulted in the reemployment of 400 qualified elementary teachers in order to help out that state's shortage. In the District of Columbia, George Washington University is offering special teacher-training courses for housewives who have liberal arts degrees and who might be persuaded thereby to help out in the teacher shortage. There has been a great deal of talk about raising the pay (and the prestige) of teachers, about giving to male teachers dependency allowances as if they were in military service in order to attract more of them to the classrooms, about reducing the number of children who are given a public education (and thereby reducing the number of teachers needed), and about calling upon teachers to teach more hours than they now do.

Just how short is the supply of teachers? There are now about 690,000 elementary-school teachers in service, and of these approximately 60,000 quit each year. Some of these die or retire. Mainly, however, they leave their profession to take better-paying jobs in other fields of employment. But in any event the annual retention or replacement of this number is the first problem which we must face. Total elementary-school enrollments also are expanding at the rate of almost one million children per year. Even with the consolidation of small classes and improved arrangements to utilize the professional talents of every qualified teacher at least another 25,000 elementary-school teachers must also be added to the total corps each year for the next several years. This total annual need for 85,000 is the minimum. There are also other serious shortages

of teachers. A great number of classes are now overcrowded, and many children attend only half-day sessions. To relieve this situation there is a need for 30,000 elementary-school teachers. To give instruction in neglected subjects and to add needed educational services 10,000 more teachers are needed. And, finally, 40,000 persons with utterly inadequate qualifications should be replaced in the classroom: many schools have been forced to hire teachers with only emergency certificates to their credit in order to overcome the teacher shortages. Thus there is a need for 165,000 qualified elementary-school teachers right now to assure every child a fair educational opportunity.

In addition there are other sobering facts: High schools are at the threshold of a vast expansion. Already the shortage of teachers of science, mathematics, agriculture, and industrial arts is acute. The present corps of 375,000 teachers must be enlarged in the years just ahead. School officials seeking qualified teachers run head on into competitive offers from business, industry, and government for emerging college graduates—many of them paying higher starting salaries than teachers ever receive in their lives. The extent of the shortage of qualified high-school teachers right now, with all of the increases in enrollment yet to come, adds a complication to the chronic elementary-school shortage.

The supply of available qualified teachers to meet these needs is not easily measured because it comes from two sources. One source is the group of college graduates emerging annually, and for which we can account accurately in available reports. The other source consists of all college graduates eligible for teaching certificates but who are not now engaged in teaching and for whom we cannot account. Some of this group are former teachers. They may now be in military service, they may be employed in other occupations, they may

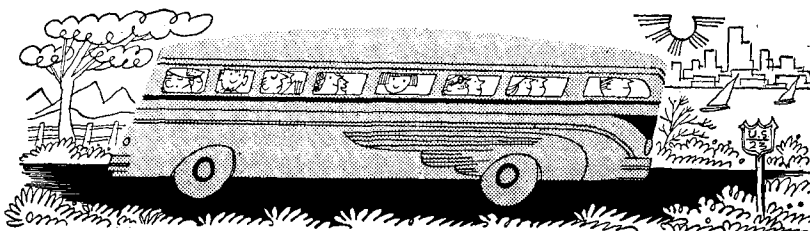
be pursuing advanced studies, or they may be at work as homemakers. The number of this group who at any time may decide to seek teaching positions is unknown, but they are the first reserve after the supply of current college graduates is exhausted. A young woman recently graduated and recently married may find herself in a strange city because her husband's work brings her there. She may be interested in a teaching position there, but she is not at all available in any other locality. Or, a highly successful teacher may retire to bear children; then, when her youngest child attains school age she may want to resume teaching. A man returning from military service or a man who has found another occupation not up to his expectations may enter teaching some years after college graduation.

THE point to be recognized is that every one of these latter cases is dictated by the changing circumstances of an individual. This potential supply of qualified teachers is thus most unstable—it cannot be measured and most of the persons comprising this supply sharply limit their availability for purely personal reasons. A given city may enjoy a plentiful supply while many other school districts in the same state are tragically without available candidates. So in reality the current group of college graduates is the only measurable source of supply. Therefore, these six issues must be examined:

How to increase the number of capable youth who attend college. Fewer than half of the top 25 per cent of high-school graduates enter colleges. Some cannot afford it, some do not understand the later values to be derived, and some just do not want to go to college in the face of other, more immediate goals. This problem, therefore, is twofold: how to aid the needy and how to motivate the uninterested.

Should more aid be given to the individual or should the concept of free public higher education be extended? Should aid go to those intending to enter a designated occupation? How can the attractions of immediate employment after high-school graduation be overcome?

How to increase the number of college students who prepare to teach.



Here the diverse nature of the teacher-education programs offered by some twelve hundred institutions is a factor to be examined. Are they realistic, functional, and devoid of needless duplications? Instructors in engineering schools are frequently practising engineers; doctors and lawyers teach in medical and law schools. How close are college instructors to the work their students will do when the latter become elementary and high-school teachers?

How to increase the number of prepared college graduates who actually become teachers. Recent studies show that almost one-third of the college graduates prepared to teach do not seek teaching positions as they finish their college work. Such a loss in law, pharmacy, engineering, or medicine, along with the other professions, would be unthinkable. How can this loss to teaching be reduced? Should special inducements be offered to qualified college graduates in the fields of greatest shortage, such as science just now?

How to increase the holding power of the teaching profession. Some 10 per cent of the total public-school teaching corps quits the classroom each year. Commonly known causes in addition to inadequate salary are: 1) unfavorable working conditions, including excessive loads; 2) lack of prestige; 3) lack of promotional opportunity; and 4) lack of freedom to exercise individual initiative. The presence or absence of these handicaps varies greatly among school districts. The major responsibility for eliminating them is thus a local one. The rate of turnover in the local teaching staff reflects not only the quality of educational leadership but also the attitude of a community toward its schools.

How to assure maximum professional use of each teacher's talents. Is any part of the teacher's time devoted to routine tasks that might be as well performed by a person with less preparation and general competence? Can we make more effective use of assistants not qualified to be teachers themselves? Can the qualified teacher's efforts be strengthened by greater use of visual and audio equipment? How can we make sure that all of the teacher's time is best used in truly educational activities?

How to provide adequate financial incentives to get and hold good teachers. Without question the really big issue in the teacher shortage is salary. Perhaps we have not yet faced up to these questions: Is the education of children, in truth, a "second level" job? Is it beyond the economic ability

of the American people to finance a first-rate educational program for all children? It is a truism that we get about what we pay for. Many dedicated teachers serve far beyond the call of duty because of their love for the work and their gratification in contributing to the growth of others. But have we any right to expect the

public-school program of America to be dependent upon such devotion. Surely such thinking is not in keeping with our democratic ideals and the remedies for the inefficiencies which have been caused by such thinking should be of utmost concern to the participants in the White House Conference.

Financing Our Schools

By EDGAR L. MORPHET, *professor of education, University of California at Berkeley.*

ONE of the major problems confronting Americans today is the problem of how much the nation's schools should cost and how these costs should be met. It will probably be one of the most controversial issues considered by the participants in the White House Conference. Today public schools are supported almost entirely by public tax funds—and taxes are already high. Can we afford the rapidly mounting costs for schools? Can we afford not to provide and finance an adequate program of education? These are the horns of the dilemma with which we seem to be confronted.

The evidence indicates that children in many communities in a large proportion of the states do not have adequate educational opportunities. Expenditures for schools in many of these areas are so limited that it is impossible to provide the services and facilities essential for a good school program.

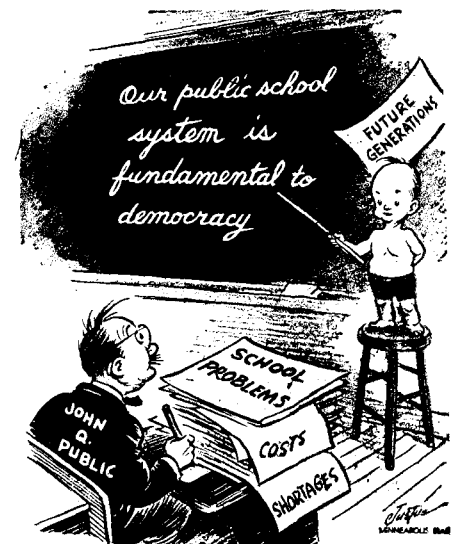
One reason for this unhappy situation is that most state programs for financing schools have developed largely on a patchwork basis. The traditional procedure has been for states to provide some sort of fund which is distributed to all districts on the basis of a fixed amount per pupil or some such other unit. Such a fund may be of some assistance to all districts but, unfortunately, it may enable the more wealthy district to maintain a good program with little effort, while the least wealthy districts are still not in position to provide satisfactory schools without excessive effort.

When states first began to face the problem created by this diversification in the ability of local districts to support schools several of them created a small fund for equalization purposes in order to provide some relief for the poorest districts. Usu-

ally these funds have been inadequate and yet many states have continued this scheme with the result that the poorer districts are still not in position to provide a satisfactory program.

In recent years the people in several states have developed a plan designed to make it possible for good schools to be provided throughout the state without excessive tax effort on the part of any district. Some of these plans are reasonably satisfactory. Others, however, are unrealistic: in some of these plans essential services are omitted, in other the level of support assured is entirely too low or the measure of local effort is based on assessed values which bear no relation to actual property values in the districts. As a result during the last quarter of a century the percentage of school support derived from property taxes has decreased from more than 80 to about 54 per cent. During the same period the percentage of funds provided from state sources has increased from a little less than 20 to approximately 42 per cent. There are today only

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—Justus in The Minneapolis Star.

"Something to Keep in Mind."