

coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Attendance zoomed. One event—a three-hour seminar on “Peace and the Emerging Societies”—was scheduled for 9 A.M. and despite the hour, drew an audience of several hundred. A late afternoon panel discussion on “Communications and the Cause of Peace” (featuring Edward R. Murrow, Francis Willis, U. S. Ambassador to Norway, and George Kistiakowsky, Presidential Assistant for Science and Technology), packed some 1,100 alumni, students, faculty, and friends into Strong Auditorium and necessitated the use of closed-circuit television to accommodate those who had to be turned away.

Less dramatic but perhaps equally important is the contribution being made by today's alumni publications. Alumni editors have learned that they do *not* have a captive audience, that they must compete for reader attention with the best of the country's “serious” magazines. Many have made a spirited effort to boost the intellectual level of their publications, some (Johns Hopkins, Barnard, St. John's, Emory) with conspicuous success. And recently Columbia University launched the Columbia University Forum, a “quarterly of fact and opinion,” that can hold its own with any “think” magazine in the business.

Alumni editors say their publications have—or can have—significant impact outside the alumni orbit. As an example, they cite a 1957 series of articles, “The Future of the State of Iowa,” which appeared in Iowa State's alumni publication. This hard-hitting analysis of regional problems sparked a let's-do-something-about-it movement that propelled the university's alumni secretary into a state-wide barnstorming tour and resulted in the appointment by the Governor of a 100-man Commission on Economic and Social Trends—with the alumni secretary among its officers.

To these evidences of the “new seriousness,” college and university officials should be—and usually are—responsive and encouraging. Most of them welcome the responsibility to help their alumni continue to grow intellectually, even if they are not always sure just how far and how fast their institutions should go in sponsoring such ventures.

Obviously, both alumni and institution have much to gain from these manifestations of a close, continuing, and progressively more adult relationship. Thus, on both sides of the Campus Curtain, the “new seriousness” of today's alumni is a welcome new look indeed—and one that, to educator and old grad alike, keeps looking better all the time.

## To Be Serious Is Not to Be Solemn

By FRANK G. JENNINGS

**I**T IS about time that we caught ourselves up short and asked ourselves some old-fashioned and impertinent questions. Education is a serious business; without it we are no better than the ants. But education is a means only, never the end for which we strive. We talk about the Good Life, we commission commissions to spell out our guiding principles. We enunciate our National Purposes. We celebrate our Abiding Values, and all the while children trudge off to school, rugged boys gleefully batter each other on the playing fields of autumn, pretty girls lift apple-red knees to the blatant off-key horns of eager bands, and kindergartens bloom across the land.

We used to be told that school days were the happiest times of our lives, and we believed it. Now we ask little children to sit with us in the solemn councils of the mighty and deliberate about educational efficacies. We beseech adolescents to understand that they are the last, best hope we have. We abjure the tots to consider that life is hard and uncertain—and they listen to us, and nobody laughs.

It is about time that we put a stop to this. We must not threaten children with adulthood. Tomorrow is an insurance agent, ready to dun us for the next premium, always promising an increased benefit on the unpaid balance. Tomorrow is adventure and frontier and horizon, but it is bought with thousands of days and almost as many nights. Tomorrow is another kind of beginning, like all the first days of school rolled into one. It is the ever-recurring, always elusive promise of what can happen when school is done—and this we know.

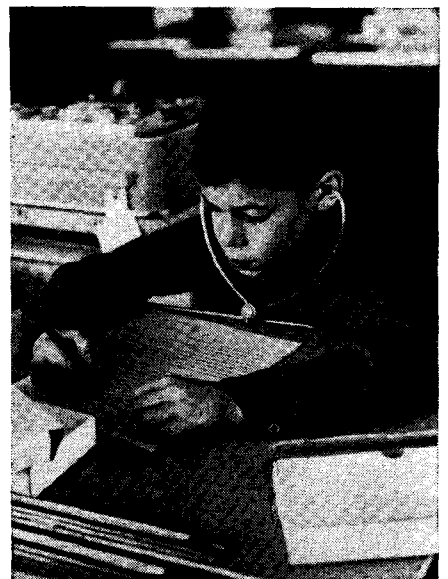
School will keep, there is no doubt about it. It has been keeping since long before a peptic old scribe whipped his charges into reluctant attention by the banks of the ancient Nile. We fall short of fond perfection but we seek and find more than we have had.

In a hundred thousand classrooms across this land, children of all ages are quickening to the pulse of the newborn year. They have already had enough adventures to have founded little knots of friendship among them. There have been the usual report-card terrors, and the shattering disasters of

misplaced homework. There have been the armed truces between teacher-ogres and the wily babes in our pedagogical woodlands, and out of the truces, the terrors, and the disasters, some things have been learned. And in the learning, these things were found to be good.

School is a part of life. Learning is a kind of work, and work is as serious as play. The magic of the universe melts before simple explanation, and commonplace things become as wonderful as sunrise. Words go together in strange new ways, and in the going they make new music. Numbers jump out of the rubbish heaps of addition with a life and a law of their own. Place names on maps make tom-tom sounds and rivers trace cartoons across the landscape. The buzz and boom of the far-off world suddenly becomes part of a great orchestra. Stars stand still and planets pirouette and leaf-mould nourishes the unborn spring—and this we understand.

**F**OR this is education, profoundly serious but never solemn. This is our world, working, growing, and changing as we change it. We change it with finger-paints and puppets. We change it with ordered thought. We change it with tamed atoms—and we change it with the gifts of love that we buy in school.



“Learning is a kind of work, and work is as serious as play.”

## J. W. Edgar of Texas

By Richard M. Morehead

**T**HE importance of the state commissioner of education varies greatly from state to state. In some states he plays a vital part in upholding standards, improving educational quality, and molding the educational patterns in all the schools; in others he does little more than collect statistics and disburse state funds. The difference results in part from constitutional and legislative provisions and in part from the weakness or strength of the man who holds the office.

James Winfred Edgar, commissioner of education in Texas, is one of the strong ones; he has done much to strengthen the office that he holds. In 1949, when he was superintendent of schools in Austin, Edgar served on a state-wide committee of educators and laymen which helped frame the Gilmer-Aiken Law that reorganized education in the state and provided financing by which every school-age child in Texas could attend school for nine months annually in a standard twelve-grade system. He was literally drafted to become State Commissioner of Education the following year.

Since 1950 Texas has moved a long way toward the elimination of weak or dormant school districts through consolidation and has provided education of a higher quality for the surviving districts. In-service training has been provided for teachers and school administrators following a "do-it-yourself" system of professionally-directed workshops and conferences; teacher training and recruitment have been accelerated through a program of televised instruction tied to courses available at near-by colleges. Hundreds of teachers—said by their administrators to be of above-average ability—have been recruited in this manner. And a revamping of the entire public school curriculum, which is now under way, has for its objective "finding the highest quality program possible" and applying it in Texas.

Mr. Edgar, a modest man, would be the last person to claim credit for all these improvements. Yet those who have seen him at work are convinced that his part has been an important one. While quietly keeping in motion a continuing study of Texas educational needs and proposed solutions, Edgar and his staff have attracted national attention in



J. W. Edgar—"a modest man."

other ways. One is the "early college" program for talented high school students that was started at the University of Texas in 1956. Twenty-eight high school students, each with at least a year to go before college, took a college course in chemistry. They made such splendid records that the program was broadened in 1957 to send students to five Texas colleges. The National Science Foundation has now taken over sponsorship of this program, and it has won nation-wide success.

Colleges of education in Texas now require a maximum of approximately one year in professional subjects; students devote the remainder of their four college years to the liberal arts and to the subjects they will teach. Previously, some colleges required future teachers to devote a much larger proportion of their time to education courses.

The first students graduated under the new certification program in 1959. A survey of superintendents in the spring of 1960, indicated that 71 per cent considered teachers educated under the new program superior to beginning teachers of former years. Only 3 per cent of the superintendents thought the new teachers were less competent than those of previous years.

Edgar has had nearly fifty years of experience as a pupil, teacher, and administrator of Texas schools. He was born in 1904 in the Central Texas ranching-farming hamlet of Briggs. His first teaching job was at Lake Victor School in Lampasas County, where he

taught all subjects in grades five, six, and seven. In 1929 he became an administrator in Mirando City, in South Texas, and later was superintendent at Victoria and Orange. Along the way he picked up a Ph.D. degree at the University of Texas. When World War II began, the development of shipyards boosted the population of Orange from 10,000 to 75,000, and Edgar's handling of the expansion of the schools brought him to national attention.

In 1947, when R. W. Byram, the school board president of Austin, telephoned Edgar to offer him the job of school superintendent in Austin, Edgar's reply was, "You're faded,"—a remark that any good Texan would understand. Three years later, when the State Board of Education tapped him for the first head of the revamped Texas State School Organization, Edgar was reluctant to leave the Austin superintendency but Robert B. Anderson, then president of the Texas Board of Education and later Secretary of the Treasury under President Eisenhower, prevailed on him to take the job. Ten years later, Anderson described Edgar as belonging to the really "dedicated" class of public servants. "In my judgment," he said, "Dr. Edgar has measured up to the kind of job we believed that he would do when he was elected. This really gives us an opportunity to look at more than ten years of performance, and not judge simply on the basis of what might be expected of one in the future."

**O**NE of the secrets of Edgar's success in a difficult job is good staff work. Many important responsibilities are delegated to such long-time associates as Lee Wilborn and J. Warren Hitt. Equally important is Edgar's ability to express himself well in speech and writing. Journalism was one of his interests in college and he has developed a gift—indeed almost a passion—for brief and simple expression.

These talents have been of great value to him in the difficult task of adjudicating local disputes over school administration. Next to the internal controversies of a church, nothing stirs so much local sentiment as a school fight. Under Texas law, the commissioner hears the appeals in such disputes, with further review available to the litigants by the state board and the courts. Most of the appeals end with Edgar. He frequently orders both warring factions—usually a superintendent and minority board groups at odds with the majority—to resign and let others take their place. The welfare of the students rather than political dominance of their elders is his guide.

Edgar is a great listener and needs to