

guides to students, and their whole apparatus of accompanying materials. Generations of teachers have been trained to use these materials, and will be reluctant to adopt a new methodology.

It is doubtful that the situation will be quite that bad. True, this is an attack on the "establishment," just as "Why Johnny Can't Read" was. But the vested interests are not all or always opposed to change. In fact, the method proposed in "Let's Read" would, it seems, assure the greater and more efficient use of existing materials and lead to the production of new, and, it is to be hoped, more interesting reading matter for children.

Reading is too precious to be made into a catspaw. It is too powerful a tool to be used on trivial matters. It is too important for its great uses to be deferred as long as they now are in many schools. As Paul Woodring has pointed out in his editorial on page 39 of this issue, most thoughtful educators agree that there is no *one* best method of teaching children to read, and that teachers should be given freedom to experiment with various methods. We want the children to have the keys to our intellectual kingdoms. Perhaps "Let's Read" can help to provide them.

## New Books



**A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT SPEAKS OUT: On Current Education.** By Carroll V. Newsom. Harper. 118 pp. \$2.95. The retiring president of New York University discusses current questions of educational philosophy and practice.

**CHARLES W. ELIOT AND POPULAR EDUCATION.** Edited by Edward A. Krug. Teachers College, Columbia University (Bureau of Publications). 166 pp. Paperback. \$1.50. Essays, written some fifty years ago, by a former president of Harvard and a leading educational spokesman.

**THE PSYCHOLOGY AND TEACHING OF READING.** By Fred J. Schonell. Philosophical Library. 254 pp. \$6. The psychology of the child, the methods and materials of the teacher, and the organization of the classroom are discussed in the light of recent research.

**THE SCHOOL RECORD: Its Use and Abuse in College Admissions.** By Wilma Morrison. College Entrance Examination Board (c/o Educational Testing Service, Box 592, Princeton, N.J.) 15 pp. Paperback. \$1. (See WHILE SCHOOL KEEPS).

**THE EDUCATOR'S ENCYCLOPEDIA.** By Edward Smith, Stanley Krouse, Jr., and Mark Atkinson. Prentice-Hall. 914 pp. \$19.50. A comprehensive guide and source book containing the what and how of modern education.

**THE NEW AMERICAN GUIDE TO SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND LOANS.** By John Bradley. New American Library. 240 pp. Paperback. \$.75. Gives complete, up-to-date facts and figures on the more than \$400,000,000 available annually for financial assistance to the American college student.

**DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION.** By Matthew Arnold. Edited by R. H. Super. Univ. of Michigan Press. 422 pp. \$8.50. A series of essays on European education in the 19th century.

**THE TEACHING OF SCIENCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.** By June E. Lewis and Irene C. Potter. Prentice-Hall. 381 pp. \$10. Describes practical techniques of problem solving, and methods for helping children develop an understanding of science.

**LITERATURE WITH CHILDREN.** Association for Childhood Education International. (3615 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington 16, D.C.) 56 pp. \$.75. Twelve brief readings that describe methods of introducing children to literature.

**CORPORATE SOCIETY AND EDUCATION.** By George Barnett and Jack Otis. Univ. of Michigan Press. 297 pp. \$7.50. The authors discuss the crisis of modern society and propose a radically revised idea of man, institution and state.

**THE STORY OF SPELMAN COLLEGE.** By Florence Matilda Read. United Negro College Fund. (22 East 54th St., New York, N.Y.) 399 pp. \$.5.

**THE AMERICAN COLLEGE.** Edited by Nevitt Sanford. John Wiley. 1084 pp. \$10. (To be reviewed next month.)

## Paperbacks from Barron's

### **GUIDANCE**

**87 WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL.** William H. Armstrong. The Parents' Common-Sense Guide to Sound Elementary Education. Eye-opening, very workable advice to parents on helping elementary graders acquire better, more productive attitudes towards study. \$1.95



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# Albany State

Continued from page 43

mobility. The majority of students come from small towns or the country, and there was one bucolic maid who couldn't sleep at first because she was used to a glass of warm cow's milk at bedtime. Generally, they come from families of modest means in which, according to one study, the parents have approximately ten years of schooling. They are, in other words, first-generation college students with all the nervous circumspection, status-seeking, and marginality that this implies. Significant, too, is the fact that the mothers in most of these families, according to sociologist Paul F. Wheeler, tend to be better educated than the fathers and are regarded as the dominant parent. Any cursory view of the college's student culture shows a startling domination by girls even though 40 per cent of the student body is male.

THE typical Albany State student is from a small town, and his ambition is to live and teach in a somewhat larger town but not in a big, overwhelming city. He is conservative politically, somewhat passive, and conformist. ("There has to be more surface conformity for teachers than for other groups," a dean remarked.)

Many of the boys have an ambivalent attitude toward teaching. It represents a realistic and attainable goal—a sure way up the social ladder—but they have assimilated some of society's condescension toward the male school teacher. "You tell people you go to Albany State, and they ask, 'What for?' You answer that you're going to be a teacher, and they say, 'Why don't you become an engineer?'"

"In my home town," another boy said sulkily, "there are three categories of men—executives, workers, and teachers."

The yea-sayers point to the security and respectability of teaching. They envision a better life than their parents had, but their goals are neither personally nor intellectually adventurous. "There's one thing," a boy said, "you're always assured a comfortable salary, even if you'll never be a millionaire." And some young men lecherously contemplate the double salary they will enjoy if they marry teachers. Still others yearn to become school administrators—an unimpeachably masculine job—or even college teachers.

The education they receive at Albany is by all available measures a good one. The habits of work are vigorous, the students are pressed hard, and an academic commitment—

though not bookishness—is part of the value system of the students. "I was undecided between elementary and secondary education," a girl said, "but what made me decide is that you can get a real liberal arts education at Albany."

The faculty expresses affection for the students but can hardly resist the usual litany about student apathy and nonintellectualism: "They come in conservative and go out conservative. . . . They answer hesitantly as if nothing of value could come from them. . . . It's a job prying them loose from their provincial rut and getting them excited and concerned. . . . The good ones get flattened down intellectually. There's the kid who comes from high school and has his hand up all the time. But he is accused of breaking the curve, so he takes on the coloring of his peers."

"When I first came here," a professor said, "I quickly saw that the students are a passive lot. I had previously taught in men's colleges where the boys didn't do any work but challenged you all the time." A woman on the faculty told me, "You can tell the kids the world will end at 12 noon, and they would write it in their notebooks. I suppose the kind of person who is aggressive will not make high school teaching a first choice. On the other hand, the students are a fine lot. You never get an exam paper from them that's really sloppy."

Another professor compared the students with those at the University of Chicago: "They're better prepared in a systematic way, but they're terribly uncreative. You have to tell them exactly what to do. If I give them a paper to do and a list of topics but make it clear that they can do other topics if they're interested, they'll never do the others. At Chicago, they'll strike out on their own, even if they can't spell or punctuate."

Still another professor was outraged at their lack of academic passion: "Few have any sense of purpose. They virtually pick their major at random. When I went to college, I didn't like psychology. I loved it."

To be sure, professors in all but the very best schools—and sometimes even there—deplore the intellectual flaccidity of their students and in the next breath extol their industry and good nature. The classes I visited confirmed the dour rather than the hopeful view of students. The tone of the classes was set by the girls, who tend to be dutiful rather than impassioned, conscientious rather than creative. In a survey of English literature, the instructor asked: "What genre is 'Dover Beach'?" There was dead silence. "Come now, we just had Browning," he urged. The Pavlovian students all murmured:

"Dramatic monologue." The students are assiduous note-takers, and one girl sitting near me wrote her *obiter dicta* modestly in pencil, while her professor's remarks were dignified by meticulous notations in ink. Next to the phrase "sea of faith" in "Dover Beach" she wrote "Religion" and in the margin next to "Ah love, let us be true to one another," she jotted excitedly, "Fabulous for Peter" (her boy friend). About John Keats, she set the following factual nuggets neatly underneath each other:

1. Keats was not a gentleman.
2. five feet tall—pugnacious
3. Had the ability to empathize.
4. Fanny Brawne—his lover.

If this is no worse than the notes of most students from coast to coast, neither is it better.

The library (62,000 volumes) is cramped but friendly and reflects the ambivalent character of the college, torn between its role as a teacher training institution and a college of liberal arts. There are few highbrow quarterlies—no *Partisan Review* or *Kenyon Review*—and a display of books ("Read for knowledge, entertainment, profit") featured such a mixed bag of biographies of Sean O'Casey and Lou Gehrig, with Robert Graves's translation of Homer rubbing jackets with an expendable travel book about San Francisco.

Though the intellectual life on campus is low-voltage, Albany State's extracurricular activity has as much

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hustle and bustle as one can find anywhere. This is surprising since the students see their college as a wan compromise with exigent circumstance. Or perhaps it's precisely because they couldn't go to Cornell or Michigan that they shape their school in the image of the more glamorous campus schools. Whatever the motivations, the students hurtle breathlessly from freshman-sophomore Rivalry ("Penalties shall be of a humorous and constructive nature"), to Homecoming (the usual debauch of nostalgia), Winterlude (formal dance), Christmas Sing, State Fair, College Revue, and Moving Up Day, in which each class moves into the seats of the class preceding it. There are dances, dances, dances. And not to be denied their membership in the guild of American students, Albany State's young men and women repair to local drinking places with as much zeal and about the same consequences as students elsewhere.

Though they are superficially indistinguishable from college students everywhere—the hegemony of Ivy League garb prevails here too—there are some local differences. Albany State is clearly a matriarchy; the majority of student leaders are girls. (Last year the editor of *State College News* was a boy, but he did not last the year and was succeeded by a girl.) The most prestigious activity, by common consent, is dramatics—hardly a masculine precinct. (One person reported that baseball practice suffers when there are tryouts for a dramatic production.) In the light of this, there may be some significance in the "collapses" that male students enact—i.e., they pretend to be dead—in bars or in front of parked cars. Is it amiss to suggest that they may be symbolically acting out their role in the college community?

Sororities outnumber fraternities seven to three. The Greek-letter men at Albany are solid citizens rather than playboys. When I visited a fraternity house, the boys emphasized their scrupulousness in observing social regulations. (A minimum of three girls must be on hand at any time on the assumption that the fall from innocence is rarely a group activity.) There was about the fraternity men little of the sexual bravado or puerile braggadocio about drinking I have encountered on other campuses.

Albany itself is rather a dreary place, although spring bursts into leaf as gloriously here as on any college campus. The winter is relentless, and students find they have only themselves to fall back on. The male-female confrontation on campus is interesting. The ratio favors the boys, but adolescent harem fantasies are hard to fulfill. For

one thing, as a boy pointed out, "when you whittle them down to the good-looking girls, there's no surplus." Moreover, the local morality tends to be immaculate. ("You must remember," a boy said piously, "that the girls are here to be teachers; that makes a difference.") A sharp-eyed girl observed: "If a girl's going to have an affair, she'll do it at home. Here it would be snapped up like a bone by an angry dog." In addition, the boys at Albany State have to meet the competition of marauding amorists from R.P.I., Union, and Siena, who maintain a barrage of propaganda against State boys. (An R.P.I. student smugly distinguished between R.P.I. men and State boys.) This is all very titillating to the girls thus happily besieged, but most in the end return to the tested and homely virtues of the local boys.

"R.P.I. does a good snow job on the freshman," a girl said, "but the snow melts. I discovered that they were helpless without their slide rules. With the local boys you have more in common."

**T**HERE are pretty girls at Albany State and some stunning ones, but most tend to be open-faced, short-haired types without the trappings of glamour. The boys, despite the animadversions of rival collegians, are sturdy and well-nourished and do quite well in competitive athletics (15 wins and 3 losses in basketball in 1960-61, and 8-2 in soccer in 1961).

A dormitory counselor, who went to high school in Queens, characterized his charges: "In my high school, there were three groups—the hoods, the kids with the briefcases, and those in the middle. Here they're all in the middle."

Or so it would seem. But there are also—happily for the climate of the school—those at the fringes. There is, allegedly, a beat enclave whose headquarters is the Cave in the cafeteria. ("Gloomy people, gloomy place," one boy snapped.) But beatnik appurtenances are not always in evidence. One professor suggested that since

the beatniks are all student teaching now, they are wearing ties. And many in the beat fringe live off campus—the grand symbol at State of liberation.

Any touch of female flamboyance provokes gasps of terror and delight. A good-looking girl who had quite obscurely studied dance at New York's High School of Performing Arts found herself pegged a New York sophisticate at Albany State. "I came up here," she said with some amusement, "dragging my fat Greenwich Village behind which I wouldn't dare wear at Performing Arts. Here they think it's a big thing."

The school newspaper, *State College News*, provides reflections of the student mentality. It is nicely turned out but tame and unimaginative. Hardly intellectual, it takes the line that intellect is a good thing and painstakingly reports the speeches of such visiting luminaries as Eleanor Roosevelt, Thomas Bergin, Harrison Salisbury, Harry Levin, and others. It is peevish about school regulations rather than critical. Its characteristic posture is to urge students to work for the school and improve themselves ("Although the main facet of your college life should be academic, you will never be educated unless you also learn socially"). It favors fraternities and sororities but deplores their excesses. The faculty members are brightly portrayed as cheerful, enthusiastic types loaded with interests and hobbies. ("I like teaching at State College because the students are faithful, pleasant, and intelligent," one professor was quoted.) Occasionally, textbook attitudes creep in as when an editorial petulantly asked: "Why isn't State College fulfilling individual needs?" Lacking Harvard's urbanity and Swarthmore's verve, *State College News* has an unredeemably square flavor. But far more serious was its whitewashing of discrimination in the selection of students for the Milne School, the model high school attached to the college. A few months after a student reporter cheerfully reported that there was no evidence of discrimination, the State Department of Education found grounds for the charge. There is something very disturbing about such student complacency. Albany State's young people don't even have the usual student impulse toward patricide with respect to those in authority. It may well be the female influence.

It is possible, too, that the sheer friendliness of the place muffles dissent. The literary magazine functions without a faculty advisor. Compare that with the carnage that ensues elsewhere at the literary barricades. When books had to be moved to a new library,





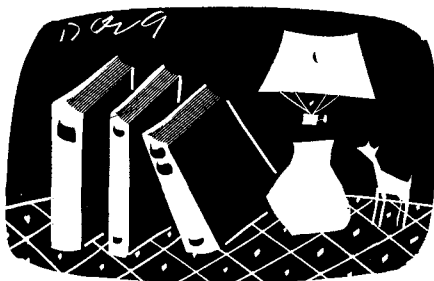
everybody—students *and* faculty—pitched in and carried armloads. It is the President's proud boast that a student loan can be processed in fifteen minutes, which may well be a national record. And though the new breed of brisk, bland administrators is coming into the school, their IBM fervor is mitigated by the school's persistent small-town amiability.

Albany State's faculty is a good, solid teaching corps. Almost 200 strong, they work against tough odds: teaching loads are heavy (as high as fifteen hours a week, an average of around twelve), little office space ("We have conferences on intimate matters in a Grand Central atmosphere"), and unattractive salaries, which have, however, improved a good deal recently. Instructors range from \$5,750 to \$6,302, assistant professors from \$6,470 to \$8,392, associate professors from \$7,510 to \$9,628, and full professors from \$8,680 to \$15,164. By all the usual criteria, the faculty looks good: 52 per cent have doctorates, they work hard, and many publish. A high proportion of the faculty is young and brimful of ideas, but as one of them said, "People are so darned busy that when you get an interesting discussion going in the lunchroom, you soon have to run off."

Albany State does not provide a research climate. "There is more encouragement than pressure to publish" is the way one professor expressed it. Another man, a productive scholar, took a harsher view: "There's no real acknowledgment of scholarship here." Much of the publication is first-rate and appears in big-league scholarly journals, but some of it is the kind of boondoggling one often finds in schools of education; e.g., "The Role of the Custodian in the Total School Program."

Like the students, faculty members have some difficulty maintaining their self-esteem. They complain that they are treated like high school teachers—with phone calls only in the hall and no real secretarial help ("If it weren't for student assistants, we would have to cut our own stencils"). They wryly congratulate themselves that the Milne School teachers are also technically on the faculty ("It saves us from being second-class citizens"). But their animosity is chiefly directed against the vast, faceless bureaucracy of the State University located only a few blocks away on a tranquil, tree-shaded street.

"The State University decides we're to have a graduate school—a graduate school by fiat!" a professor said indignantly. "This is madness!" A young instructor said irritably: "I sometimes think I ought to go over there to State University headquarters, present my-



self, and say, 'I'm a faculty. Look at me. I'm a faculty.' They've probably never seen one."

But many of these disaffections probably derive from the school's essential ambiguity. Albany State is somewhat more than a teachers college but a little less than a liberal arts school and a good deal less than a state university. It is a school in transition, and transitions are notoriously troublesome.

The philosophy of the college is governed by John Stuart Mill's dictum: "Men are men before they are lawyers, or physicians, or manufacturers: and if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers and physicians." Albany State doesn't quite trust this do-it-yourself vocational training and insists upon twenty-two credits in education.

It is, of course, fashionable for students everywhere to heap contumely on education courses and those at Albany are no exception. Many were highly critical. I found, however, that despite the required education courses, the neophyte teachers still are inadequately informed about what is really going on in education. Only a handful of the many students I interviewed knew what programmed instruction is, and none had read—only a few had heard of—Martin Mayer's "The Schools," one of the decade's most important books.

The conflict between academic professors and professional educators is no less acute at Albany than in liberal arts colleges and universities. The guardians of the traditional disciplines often show a disdain for courses in education. One defined the motif of the Education Department as "how to teach though ignorant." Others deplore what they consider the school's tendency to limit offerings and soft-pedal academic rigor, "since we're only training high school teachers." An unhappy consequence of all this is that the traditional disciplines refuse to contaminate their purity by coordinating their activities with education courses. (It might, for example, be a good idea to coordinate a Shakespeare course with one in methods to determine just what scholarly material could be used in high school English and how.) And it is not unusual for

professors to infect their better students with their own contempt for high school teaching and incite them to go on to graduate school and college teaching.

Professor Edwin P. Adkins, chairman of the Education Department and a Ph.D. in history, has some peppery retorts to the usual strictures against education. "I'm not satisfied with the ed courses," he snapped, "but then I'm not satisfied with some history or science courses either. The liberal arts people don't recognize that you have to understand the child before you can teach him. Our student teachers realize that they have to handle *all* kids. The average liberal arts professor, if he encounters a dull student, says, 'the hell with him,' but you can't do this in a high school."

Another member of the faculty presented this view of the controversy: "One of the ways in which good teachers are made is by example. If you have professors who have ardor and enthusiasm, students become imbued with their spirit. I don't think subject matter ought to be compromised with methodology. Part of the trouble is that teachers of education have nothing to say. They still talk about the whole child and the equivalence of all subject matter. They have to construct some rationale for this big business of education, and so they build an elaborate curriculum."

Under the leadership of Dr. Evan R. Collins, Albany State is entering a golden era of expansion. A large tract of land on what was a country club outside of Albany will become the new site of the college. ("We'll lay out a dorm along the fairway," President Collins said.) Target date is 1965, and by 1970 there may be as many as 7,000 students. And as an omen of things to come, Albany State has officially deleted the word "Education" from the name of the college. It has also begun to admit a limited number of straight liberal arts students. This, to be sure, is what is happening to teachers colleges throughout the country.

Albany State has a distinguished history. As liberal arts colleges go, it is a good one. As teachers colleges go, it is superb. If we think of high school teachers as those who have the job of acculturating the young, then Albany State's students are well prepared for their mission. But if we consider the job of the teacher that of stimulating a creative and responsible criticism of American life—"to discredit superstition and prejudice, and inspire courage to accept truth in every form" in the words of the catalogue—then Albany State, with its cautious mentality, doesn't fulfill its noblest possibilities. But then how many colleges do?

# Case Against Merit Pay

*Continued from page 44*

granted through job promotion, as any teacher can be promoted to principal, supervisor, or superintendent.

I cite these contradictions, not to dispute the theoretical virtues of merit rating (they are unarguable), but to suggest that special conditions prevail in all occupations that deny absolute justice. It is an understatement to say that teaching, especially in a public school, where all children must be accepted and where the teacher has no choice in the pupils assigned to him, and where teamwork and morale are as important as individual excellence—it is an understatement to say that teaching is not comparable with other occupations. Add to this the fact that it is all but impossible to apply objective yardsticks to a creative process, and it is little wonder that teachers, including the best, are unalterably opposed to merit pay.

But let us look more deeply into this matter of teacher rating. What is it exactly that the merit raters propose to rate? The teacher's knowledge of his subject? The skill in imparting the knowledge he possesses? His disciplinary control of children? His personality? His popularity with pupils? His rating with parents? His rapport with fellow staff members? Mr. Blaine Cooke, in his *Saturday Review* companion piece with Arthur Myers, answers the question with telling effect. "We all evaluate teachers," he says. "... Parents can do it, newspaper columnists can do it—but somehow school principals and superintendents lack the widely distributed talent."

Exactly!

Here we get to the nub of the matter in all rating of teachers. Everyone can do it except those specifically trained by experience for the job. In other words, we have an illustration of Mark Twain's classical solution to the submarine menace, in which he proposed to bring the oceans to a boil. It's the other fellow's job to boil the water. Everyone can, and does, evaluate teachers. But if you find two people who are confident of their evaluations and agree on them they probably are not school administrators.

How, except in the broadest terms of subjective judgment, can anyone make valid evaluations of teachers? Mr. Jones has excellent group control compared with Mr. Smith, but Mr. Smith offers his students a rich variety of learning experiences. Miss Williams prepares thorough and detailed lesson plans, but Miss Walters presents her work in a more organized manner. Mr.

Fox is loved by his pupils and parents and is a decided asset to public relations; but Mr. Barton, gruff old chap that he is, insists upon a high standard of achievement and is one of those teachers remembered in later years with reverence. And on and on it goes. There is the teacher with histrionic skill who rises to a great performance during a classroom visitation, and the teacher who virtually collapses under surveillance. There is the teacher who is at his best with gifted pupils, and the teacher who is at his best with slow learners. How do we put a dollar sign on these varying talents?

As a teacher and administrator for over a quarter of a century, I have encountered great teachers whose greatness could not be measured short of astronomical figures. I have also met my share of teachers who by no stretch of the imagination deserved the honorable title of teacher. As an administrator, it has been my odious,



but necessary, job to eliminate some of these latter from the profession. It is a responsibility that I have not shirked. Yet I must admit that in all my experience, I have yet to find one teacher, aside from those guilty of sexual deviation, who could understand a single reason why he was being dismissed, and who could not point to areas of teaching excellence. Every court action on record, where a teacher contests his dismissal, bears out my own experience. There is no teacher so bad that some people do not consider him excellent. Contrariwise, there is seldom a teacher so good that some people do not consider him poor. I have had parents implore that I dismiss teachers whom I would rate in the upper 1 per cent of those on a staff.

But the problems of teacher rating do not end here. I have suggested that rating is largely a matter of personal judgment, that somebody must play God; but it is often forgotten that the only person capable of making a sound judgment is the school principal. But

principals vary widely in their judgments as well as their capacities for making fair evaluations. It is not uncommon for one principal to prize highly a teacher whom another principal finds only fair or even inadequate. Like parents who can idolize or deplore an individual teacher, principals within a single district make different evaluations of teachers.

In the final analysis, there are only two objectives of merit rating—to obtain justice for teachers and to encourage better teaching. There is no evidence that merit rating does encourage better teaching; indeed, there is a strong suspicion, of which I shall speak in a moment, that it does just the opposite. But what about justice? Can justice be achieved within a school district when principals vary in their judgments? Is justice achieved when the subtle "apple polisher" is rewarded above the reserved but conscientious teacher? Is it just that a first-grade teacher be rated against a sixth-grade teacher? Or the music teacher? Or the popular coach? Or for that matter, against the first-grade teacher next door with a more fortunate room assignment?

Let's face it: what actually happens when a merit rating system is imposed upon a staff? I say *imposed*, because we have yet to hear of a staff that has gone begging to the superintendent or a board of education for merit rating. Generally what happens is that the powers above announce that merit rating is to be imposed and ask the teaching staff to help develop criteria for evaluation, the ground rules, so to speak. Sometimes, but not often, the rules are imposed along with the announcement that rating is to follow. In either event, a set of criteria, long or short, are put down in writing. What items are included? Again, they may be brief or endless, but they include, along with such subjectively measured items as "teaching effectiveness," "integrity" and "personality," a list of items lending themselves to objective measurement: "Neatness of room," "attire," "use of supplementary books," "community service," "bulletin board management," etc.

Now what happens? The best teachers, revolted by the childish attempt to measure teaching success, will make no attempt at all to meet these superficial, objective criteria; yet others, less capable of good classroom instruction, will bend every effort to meet these standards. Bulletin boards will become flamboyant and changed daily; supplementary books by the score will be dragged into the classroom, counted, and thrust into the hands of pupils regardless of need or interest; the classroom will become as neat and

antiseptic as a hospital ward. In short, the able teacher retires from the fray; the less able teacher sparkles and shines.

Perhaps it is the nature of the beast. People are not generally attracted to teaching by promise of high financial rewards, as people are attracted to business, industry, and the more remunerative professions. This does not imply that teachers are indifferent to income. They expect salaries comparable with people of similar university background and professional training; but beyond that, they are content to let others seek the fat rewards of the market place. A few hundred dollars of merit differential are not worth the concomitant distrust, disagreement, and injustices that inevitably result from rating.

Certainly, as Mr. Cooke and his fellow board members and citizens realize, all of us have a reasonably good notion who are the more questionable teachers on a staff. Yet each is questionable for different reasons. I shall be honest enough to admit that if I were compelled to put into writing why these people are weak I could be no more precise than this: "You fail to generate the enthusiasm for your efforts that marks the majority of this staff. More parents resent having their children under your tutelage. You lack the sparkle and brilliance we associate with our best teachers." If asked to give specific suggestions for improvement, I could do no more than say with Delphic wisdom, "Know thyself."

What the merit raters fail to realize, among other things, is that we are dealing with human beings engaged in an art as well as a skill, all of whom have passed rather rigid hurdles: college admission and graduation; certification requirements; selective employment; and tenure probation. Presumably, the misfits and incompetents have been screened before they arrive at the stage of merit evaluation. Indeed, such a presumption must necessarily be made; for if administrators cannot screen the unqualified through employment and years of trial teaching, they can surely not be trusted to differentiate between the superior, the excellent, the good, and the fair. Inevitably, it must be an assumption of teacher merit rating that we are differentiating not between sheep and goats, but sheep of a different color. It is a proposition to tax the wisdom of Solomon!

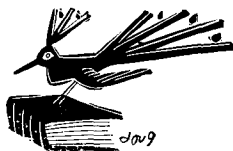
I do not believe, as some teachers seem to, that merit raters are nefarious artificers scheming to undermine the teaching profession and the foundations of the American public school. Their intentions are honorable and good.

They base their arguments on logic that is superficially sound and reasonable. But in the long pull, they are like the man who would use a sledge hammer to kill a gnat. They would destroy morale, individuality, and freedom of expression to obtain a questionable kind of justice and initiative.

Besides, I have often wondered if those who clamor loudest for teacher merit rating would generously consent to the implications of their demands? Unavoidably, we should have A and D teachers. Would a merit rater obligingly accept a teacher labeled D for his child while his neighbor's child is assigned to an A teacher? From an administrator's point of view, it is an arduous enough task to assign pupils to teachers with supposedly equal talents. Knowing something of the nature of taxpaying parents, I quaver at the prospect of assigning children to anything other than equally acceptable teachers.

Furthermore, as an administrator dedicated to the proposition that all children are entitled to the best that a school district's budget can afford, I expect that all teachers are acceptable. I expect that the weak grow in strength and learn from the strong. I expect an atmosphere in a school where teachers want to and *can* learn from each other, an atmosphere devoid of suspicion, envy, distrust, and petty jealousies. If merit rating achieved its desired goals—justice and better teaching—there would be no question of its value; and the nation's teachers would have long since recognized its virtues. But teachers have never recognized its virtues. Explained one brilliant teacher, who joined a new staff after three consecutive years as the highest rated teacher under a rigid merit rating system: "I want to teach in an environment where excellence and creativity are admired for their own sake—not as bucking for an extra award!"

The problem in teaching is not one of satisfying citizens that teachers are paid according to merit. Few people would accept administrators' judgments in any event. Neither is the problem one of attracting a few prima donnas into the profession, who under any circumstances would be attracted to the more fruitful fields of commerce. The problem in teaching is one of making salaries and conditions of the *teaching profession* attractive to large numbers of competent, conscientious, and dedicated people.



## What Are the Sixties Offering First-Graders In Reading?



Shouldn't it be the best opportunity possible to learn what reading is—and how to do it?

That's what thousands of dedicated school administrators and first-grade teachers—and the parents of first-graders—are wanting for their boys and girls.

A child finds out what reading is when he feels inside himself the meanings that the black type on the white page were intended to convey. He discovers what reading is when he can hear the characters in a story talking, when he can enter into their feelings of delight or dismay, when laughter or surprise breaks through at a story's end. He discovers what reading is when he learns something new and interesting from a book.

Of course a child doesn't learn to read all at once. (He doesn't learn to talk all at once, either.) How a child gets over the first hurdles in reading makes a lot of difference in his lifelong attitude toward reading and in the uses he makes of the tremendous resources of printed language.

He needs to seek for and find and experience meaning in what he reads from the very first day he holds a book in his hands and is asked to read.

He needs to seek for and find meaning in printed words from the start. Teaching children how to perceive printed words plays a large part in early reading instruction, of course. The faces of words must become as familiar to children as the faces of their friends—each with its name, and each carrying a specific meaning in a specific context. Letters—their names, the sounds they stand for—must gradually become familiar, too. For these sounds or phonemes, as the linguists call them, make a difference in meaning, too. Always, the emphasis must be on meaning, if meaning is what we want children to get out of what they read.

And from the meanings they get, values should emerge—the values we cherish as Americans, as human beings.

The authors and editors of *The New Basic Readers for the Sixties* invite teachers—and through teachers, parents—to learn more about how these readers are precision-tooled to do the job in reading that teachers and parents want done in America, in the Sixties, now.

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# Letters to the Education Editor

*Continued from page 41*

of Washington, D.C. [SR, Dec. 16]. It is a great comfort to me to see that some of our educational leaders who are making such valiant efforts are getting the kind of recognition that they deserve. In the long run such articles as those of Mr. Koerner will give the educational leaders who are working under great handicaps the courage to continue. Why not an entire series on the superintendents of the large cities, which usually have the greatest and most difficult problems?

JOSEPH MERSAND,  
Chairman, English Department,  
Jamaica High School.  
Jamaica, N.Y.

CARL F. HANSEN may feel that to describe his Amidon system as "a sop to all the reactionary forces afloat" is most incorrect and unfair but how anyone educated in this century could possibly come to any other conclusion after reading James D. Koerner's article on the Washington school system is beyond me.

Only one item is missing from the subject-centered, textbook-centered instructional program. If only Mr. Hansen would issue a specific time schedule for each subject he could look at his watch at any time during the day and know for a certainty that 138 teachers in 138 classrooms in 138 schools at that precise moment were saying in unison, "Take out your arithmetic books, boys and girls, and turn to page 56."

SOL DISNER, Principal,  
Pitcher Elementary School.  
Detroit, Mich.

## MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

WE NOTED WITH interest John M. Stalnaker's evaluation of the National Merit Program [SR, Dec. 16], but we felt that two statements showed a lack of proper perspective.

First, Mr. Stalnaker states: "The serious, able youngster who devoted himself to scholarly work received no public acclaim in the days before 1955. . . ." Quite to the contrary, in Nebraska, as well as in a number of other states, scholarship programs have been conducted for many years by the state university (or cooperatively) for the purpose of identifying students of college caliber and of encouraging these students to attend the college of their choice. The University of Nebraska program began in 1923.

## SR Anisfield-Wolf Awards

February 15 is the closing date for publishers to submit books for SR's next annual Anisfield-Wolf Awards, to be presented to the authors of the works issued during 1961 that, in the opinion of the judges, contribute the most to better inter-group relations. Copies should be sent to each of the following committee members: Ashley Montagu, chairman, Cherry Hill Road, Princeton, N.J.; Pearl Buck, Route 3, Perkasi, Pa.; Lillian Smith, Clayton, Ga.; and Oscar Handlin, Department of Sociology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. The judges' decision will be announced in *Saturday Review* this spring.

Secondly, Mr. Stalnaker says: "Most of that money [provided by college scholarship funds] is spent attracting the talented student from one college to another. The Merit Program . . . would find able students . . . and help them attend any college. . . ." The fact is that better than 95 per cent of the students awarded Merit Scholarships would have gone to college anyway. The thing the awards have done is to encourage the winners to concentrate within a few colleges—in other words, "to attract the talented students from one college to another."

HENRY M. COX, Director,  
Examination Service,  
AUBREY FORREST, Director,  
Scholarships & Financial Aids,  
University of Nebraska.  
Lincoln, Neb.

## COLLEGE MANNERS

I HAVE READ "The College's Responsibility" [SR, Nov. 18] and found it most interesting. However, I take exception to the photo of a young man in Harvard's Widener Library who has his feet on the table. What has become of college manners?

BURNS M. KATTENBERG.  
Bronxville, N.Y.

I SINCERELY HOPE that our students do not see the picture of students at Harvard's Widener Library, shown on page 50 of the November 18 issue.

NORMA SLEIGHT, Head,  
Department of Mathematics,  
New Trier Township High School.  
Winnetka, Ill.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR'S SECRETARY:  
*The Education Editor had his feet on his desk when I showed him these letters and he was too embarrassed to comment.*

## FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 964

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 964 will be found in the next issue.*

FOLD Q XQD'G APE  
WKHDG QEQBDGW OBX  
BW BG WBXL CPH Q  
FBCL WP RQZM OLH  
WHKDM QDA EP OPXL  
WP XQXQ.

XQHM WFQBD.

## Answer to Literary Crypt No. 963

When you have got an elephant by the hind leg, and he is trying to run away, it's best to let him run.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

# While School Keeps

*Continued from page 54*

in cooperation with five other national organizations, has published, "The School Record: Its Use and Abuse in College Admissions." Prepared by Wilma Morrison, assistant professor of Journalism at Portland State College and former education editor of the *Portland Oregonian*, the report is available from the CEEB (c/o Educational Testing Service, Box 592, Princeton, N.J., \$1).

Recommendations for reform include more detailed information about the content of high school courses, more clearly defined reports of student achievement, and more specific subjective judgments on student personality and ability.

**ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**, both elementary and secondary, are about to get a thorough study of their educational requirements and resources. Under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation detailed inquiry will be made into parochial school curriculum, administration, teachers, academic achievement, goals, and facilities. The project will be based at the University of Notre Dame and will be under the guidance of George N. Shuster, former president of Hunter College, and Monsignor Frederick G. Hochwalt, executive secretary of the National Catholic Education Association.

Announcements of the project have described it as a "factual study." Less well known is the fact that it also aims to evaluate the degree to which parochial schools are achieving their stated aims. An authoritative inventory of Catholic parochial education will no doubt be most useful. But far more important is the knowledge and understanding that may come from a careful, realistic analysis of the degree to which parochial schools are achieving both their scholastic and their spiritual objectives. Comparisons of academic and later professional achievement of Catholic students who attended parochial schools with other Catholics who attended public schools—as well as comparisons of students who attended both parochial and public schools at different ages—would be revealing.

Conclusions that might be drawn from the identification of major differences among the various groups of Catholic students would be most significant for both public and parochial schools—almost as significant, in fact, as the conclusions that would be reached if no major differences could be identified.

—JAMES CASS.