

# EDUCATION AROUND THE WORLD



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## *White House Conference: Harbinger of Change*

THERE MAY have been some confusion about the purpose of last month's White House Conference on Education, but there is no doubt about what it accomplished. At the opening general session, Administration spokesmen defined the participants' assignment in such phrases as "an agenda for the nation's future course in education" and "a blueprint for action." But Conference Chairman John Gardner quickly set the record straight. "This conference is not designed to produce resolutions," he said. "It is not designed to recommend legislation. It is designed to tap the opinion of educational leadership and to make that opinion known to the President."

What this deliberately vague statement of purpose tended to obscure was that the conference had both a political and professional purpose. Politically, the conference was designed to provide a body of expert opinion to document the need for future legislative programs. Very likely this purpose was adequately served by the simple fact that the conference was held. Professionally, the conference was designed to expose the participants—in large part academic specialists—to the crucial issues with which education must grapple in the years immediately ahead, and to offer an opportunity for free and vigorous give and take on how these issues should be approached. On this score it appears that the conference was less successful. Although in a few cases the hoped-for presentation of daring ideas, vigorous challenge, and spirited defense did take place, it was not the rule. Unfortunately, education has only limited experience with this kind of free play of challenging ideas. Therefore, most discussions resembled a round of intellectual golf rather than a game of tennis—each man continued to hit his own ball instead of returning his opponent's.

Of far greater interest and importance, however, was what the conference actually did accomplish. For the program and the list of participants placed on the record, where all could see, the fact that the Old Educational Establishment is no longer providing the leadership for the nation's educational enterprise. Clear, too, was the fact that most of the ancient problems over which education's battles have been fought for a generation are no longer relevant. American education has reached a crossroads—and the new directions it will take in the future have already been charted.

Members of the Old Establishment have their philosophical roots in the issues and attitudes of the 1930s. They bear proudly their scars from the controversies of the 1950s. And they remain firm in their reluctance to accept change and innovation in the educational process. They have been by-passed by events.

The New Establishment is composed of men who have emerged during and since the 1950s. They are relatively young, flexible, and sensitively aware of the new problems that dominate a society for which education is no longer merely a generalized good but the touchstone of survival. They have reached their present eminence as a result of high professional competence rather than organizational regularity. They are largely uncommitted to philosophical strait jackets; change holds no terrors for them. But they have their own commitment—a pragmatic concern for what works.

The most striking evidence, however, that a crossroads has been reached

### EDITORIAL 45

THE GARDNER APPOINTMENT  
*By John Lear 46*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR 47

WHEN FOREIGN-STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS  
ARE MISUSED  
*By Crane Haussamen 48*

STUDENTS ABROAD: INDIA IS CENTURIES  
AWAY  
*By Mary Claire Vander Wal 51*

PERSONAL OPINION—FADDISHNESS IN  
EDUCATION  
*By Mortimer Smith 53*

SOVIET EDUCATION'S UNSOLVED  
PROBLEMS  
*By Harold J. Noah 54*

SCHOOLS MAKE NEWS 57

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR BRITISH  
EDUCATION?  
*By Maurice N. Hennessy 58*

BOOK REVIEW  
*"The Bright Key," by Monroe E.  
Spaght, reviewed by Alfred T. Hill 60*

NEW BOOKS 61

Next month's Education Supplement will appear in the second week, dated September 11. In October it will return to its usual spot in the third issue of the month.

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—and passed—was contained in the list of subject areas set up for the participants to consider and debate. The enormous impact of the civil rights movement on education, together with the national commitment to bring all citizens into full participation in our national life, was clear. Session titles such as “Jobs, Drop-outs, and Automation,” “Skill Obsolescence and Re-education,” “School Desegregation,” “Pre-school Education,” and “Education in the Urban Community,” give only a partial sense of the overriding influence of these issues. Their weight was felt also in discussions of such diverse subjects as “Educating the Talented” and “Innovations in Higher Education.” Manifestly, the nation’s growing concern for the disadvantaged has sparked wide-ranging reassessment of the entire educational enterprise. As a result, the central issues with which the conference was concerned were equal opportunity for all through education, innovation that puts new knowledge to work for the improvement of the educational process, and the necessity for measuring results to determine whether the large expenditures now being made—and the far larger sums that will be invested in the future—are justified. There appears to be little doubt, too, that these are the major educational concerns of the Great Society.

**T**HAT the new leadership in education has the wholehearted support of the Administration at the highest level is clearly indicated by the appointment of Conference Chairman John Gardner as Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare less than a week after the conclusion of the conference. President of the Carnegie Corporation, one of the largest private foundations with an active interest in education, Gardner has been a major force in the development and emergence of the New Establishment. Now he is being asked to provide national leadership for it.

In Washington Gardner will be the most education-oriented Secretary the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has had since it was formed in the 1950s. There he will join his longtime friend and colleague, U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel. In many respects Keppel typifies, more completely than any other man, the new leadership. He has gained a greater degree of respect and confidence on Capitol Hill than any commissioner in memory. And he has had major responsibility for developing the Administration’s education program and its successful presentation to Congress.

If President Johnson can attract men of this caliber to Washington—and prevail upon them to stay—he may yet achieve his desire to go down in history as the “Education President.” —J. C.

## The Gardner Appointment

WASHINGTON, D.C.

**J**OHAN W. GARDNER’s appointment as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Cabinet of President Lyndon B. Johnson signals the beginning of what certainly will be a fascinating and maybe a historic experiment in popular government.

Mr. Johnson is committed to transforming an affluent and flabby American nation into the Great Society of tomorrow.

His impatience of criticism has been widely noticed.

Mr. Gardner has declared his belief (SR/RESEARCH for January 1963) in the feasibility of perpetuating American democracy as an ever-renewing society.

Although no such society has ever existed, he speculates that one could be brought about principally through tolerance of criticism—a tolerance so positive that it would deliberately build into the society failproof mechanisms for protecting and encouraging critics.

Offhand, it might seem reasonable to predict either that Mr. Gardner will not last long in government or that Mr. Johnson will risk apoplexy.

Yet men sophisticated in the daily workings of the federal bureaucracy here are predicting instead that the new Secretary-designate of Health, Education, and Welfare will enjoy the President’s personal confidence to a greater degree than any other member of the Cabinet.

To have a social scientist of quality (Mr. Gardner is a psychologist who has made psychology work in public affairs), knowledgeable in avenues of international understanding, outrank the boss of the Pentagon (Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara being the current Presidential favorite in the Cabinet) may be too great an expectation. However, Mr. Gardner’s leave-taking from such a prestigious philanthropic foundation as the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the associated Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching makes no sense unless he is sure of a high priority for his ideas at the White House. For the executive department over which he will preside has been an arena of clashing political empires from its beginning, and the clashing now threatens the future of the nation too profoundly to be allowed to continue. It is assumed in higher echelons of the Johnson Administration that Mr. Gardner has accepted an assignment to bring out of today’s interlocking conflicts the sort of elastic order he prescribes for future “stability in motion.”

Several recombinations of bureaucracy are already being debated.

First and most obvious is a separation of HEW into two departments, one concerned with education and the other with health and welfare.

Second and somewhat more ambitious is the establishment of a new department of education, a new department of welfare, and a new department of science that might include public health and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Third and most far-reaching in terms of democratic process is a deeper fragmentation of HEW and a broader subsequent regrouping that would also encompass the National Science Foundation.

NSF has never seriously tried to do the toughest job contemplated for it by the Congress—set national goals and a relative scale of spending for basic scientific research leading toward those goals over a long span of time. Because this neglect has occurred over a decade and a half of steady expansion of the power of science as a social force, the need for a priority system is now acute. Because the prevalent method of granting the preponderant share of government subsidy to individual research projects—regardless of how the projects fit into institutional patterns—has knocked the universities lopsided, it is imperative that a central nervous system be focused at a point where the influence of the sciences can be assessed and balanced against the influence of the humanities. By bringing NSF, education, and the National Institutes of Health (research arms of the U.S. Public Health Service) into a single department, the head of that department would be able to apply a common measure to all the ingredients of the educational impetus.

Whichever approach Mr. Gardner chooses, it will be by habit modest. But how can his present status be stated modestly? He is now the key figure in the revolution of medical teaching and practice. He is a primary arbiter between “big” (expensive team) and “little” (individual thinker) science, between science and engineering, between the university as a cutting tool on the leading edge of knowledge and the university as a guardian of the great human traditions. He is involved in the “communications crisis” at its deepest level, and he must monitor the proliferation of computers in the area where they matter most—the clarification of thinking that must precede instruction of the machines for solution of problems assigned to them.

Mr. Gardner is human; hence his creative contribution to the human condition cannot be flawless. On those inevitable occasions when he judges wrongly, it may be convenient to recall that he is a Republican.

—JOHN LEAR.