

"AND SADLY TEACH"

*State Requirements that Discourage
Educated Persons from
Teaching*

AN ODD situation is developing in the teaching profession, caused by changes which are being made by various states in the requirements for licenses to teach. The general tendency seems to be to discourage educated persons from teaching in our public schools; to insure having in these vitally important posts, on the whole, the less educated members of the educated class.

Of course the readers of this magazine would all agree that it is of the utmost importance to our country to have the best possible teachers in our public schools—the best human beings we can produce, educated, wise, alive, interesting, with a gift for teaching and sympathetic understanding of young people.

Whether we attract such human beings to want to teach in our public schools, and are able to select the best from among our candidates, depends to a very considerable extent on the requirements set up by the various state authorities for licenses to teach in the public schools. Are these requirements now fairly good and getting better? On the contrary, they seem, on the whole, to be rather bad and to be getting worse. So that it looks as if it might become harder and harder to get educated persons to teach in the public schools.

This sounds so absurd that I must make it clearer by a concrete, imaginary example, to illustrate the tendency against which I am protesting.

But let me first assert as emphatically as I can that I am *not* attacking in particular the New York requirements, as some persons have assumed from my previous utterances. I am attacking not any one state, but a general tendency evident in many of

our states today. New York is by no means one of the worst in this respect. We have bright hopes that our State Education Department may soon make it even better. Perhaps I ought to explain also that my remarks apply for the most part rather more to high school than to elementary school requirements.

Suppose you are running a normal school in the small state of Blankdash, and have arranged your curriculum so that all your students take seven points of English composition, three points of hygiene, eleven points of American history and government, nine points of educational psychology, seven points of history and philosophy of education, fourteen points of practice teaching, five points of ethics—and so on through a mainly prescribed four-year curriculum. Then suppose that, convinced of the educational soundness of your particular curriculum as a training for teachers, you persuade the State Board of Education—or whatever its official name may be in the State of Blankdash—to pass a rule saying that all candidates for licenses to teach in the high schools of Blankdash must have had, in their college or normal school course, seven points of English composition, three points of hygiene, etc., etc.—enumerating all the courses prescribed for students in the Blankdash State Normal School, but not prescribed, or indeed offered, in just this form and amount, in Liberalia College in the State of Blankdash, or indeed in any other college or any other normal school in the United States.

Well, when there is an opening for a teacher in a local high school, obviously the only persons who can qualify will be the graduates of your own local normal school. Even if the most brilliant and promising member of the graduating class of Vassar should want to teach in that high school, she couldn't qualify—unless perhaps she should study somewhere for another year, and take two points of English and one point of hygiene, and two points of ethics

A quotation from *The American Scholar*.

and a lot of other fragmentary odds and ends that she hadn't happened to include in her undergraduate curriculum. She will not want to do that, but will turn her attention to some other field of work.

And obviously any young resident of the State of Blankdash who looks forward to teaching will probably go, not to the local college of Liberalia, or to Harvard or Radcliffe or Bryn Mawr, but to the State Normal School of Blankdash, which has what amounts to a stranglehold monopoly on the public school positions in that state.

If you protested to the State Board of Education of Blankdash they would probably say that they preferred their own local young people as teachers, anyway.

This case I have described is an imaginary one. I do not know of any actual instance quite so extreme. But it may exist; and the tendencies of the moment run in that direction.

The result is that *it seems to be rapidly becoming impossible for graduates of our best liberal arts colleges to teach in the public schools of this country*. This is a pity. These colleges, with all their faults, have many advantages. They are well endowed and equipped, they are rich in fine traditions, they attract many of the very best young men and women of the nation, and develop their minds and spirits so that when they graduate they are on the way to being unusually well-educated all-around human beings. Many of them want to teach. They can continue to find posts in the private schools; but apparently not in the public schools. Must we really shut out from our public school posts the best educated young men and women of the nation?

The causes of this situation are not quite as simple as my imaginary example implied. The increasing requirement of professional work—in theory and principles of education, in methods and in practice teaching—is due partly, no doubt, to the experience of school boards with incompetent young college graduates who lacked a command of

the technique of teaching. The boards have naturally wanted to insure some really professional equipment in their new teachers.

Unfortunately, however, this large prescription of technical training is likely either to bar out young bachelors of arts altogether, or to force them to include in their undergraduate course so much professional work as to prevent their learning very much about the subject or subjects they expect to teach. If a postgraduate year of professional training were required, the temptation to thrust the technical work into the college curriculum would be avoided. This postgraduate requirement is already in force in some places.

At a recent meeting of the Association of Colleges and Universities of the State of New York in Albany, there was some interesting discussion of this question. Some speakers stressed the great difficulty of providing satisfactorily in the usual college of liberal arts the professional requirements specified. They lamented the fact that in colleges, universities and normal schools the required "education courses," intended to fire the students with the beauty and significance of the profession, were so often dull and damping and drove the best young scholars to other fields of work. They pointed out vigorously that the requirement of "practice teaching"—so sound in theory—was often impossible to carry out well and became almost a farce.

Most emphatically of all, the speakers protested that it was impossible to thrust down into the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum all this heavy professional requirement without seriously interfering with the student's acquiring some mastery of the *subject* or *subjects* he was going to teach, and interfering also, and very gravely, with his general education. A representative of the State Teachers Association explained convincingly that the teachers of today, to teach the subjects in the way required today, and to answer the demands of their pupils for light on the problems of today,

felt acutely the need of much sound, fundamental, general education. The teachers urged the requirement of a "fifth year" of postgraduate work, following the bachelor's degree, to contain a considerable portion of the professional training. An informal, unofficial vote was taken at this Albany meeting to show the "sense" of the assemblage and it proved to be overwhelmingly in favor of the "fifth year."

There is another feature of the requirements for licenses which is very objectionable to the liberal arts college mind. I have illustrated it in my imaginary example, the State of Blankdash. This is the tendency to prescribe very definite subjects and numbers of points or hours covering a large part of the four years' college course.

We had an example of this in the New York City requirements for the license in commercial subjects announced a year or so ago. Barnard College and the School of Business of Columbia University discussed planning a joint program to meet these requirements. But it seemed too difficult. To meet them in her college course a student would have to know, from the moment she entered college as a freshman, that she wanted to teach commercial subjects in a high school. Of course it is generally quite impossible for a freshman to know what she will like best and be best able to do.

This very important truth is often overlooked by school authorities, who set up requirements so rigid and so extensive that to meet them satisfactorily the candidate ought to know almost from the cradle just where his destiny lies. By such a policy many of the most competent young people may be driven away from high school teaching.

Another example of the difficulty of meeting specific requirements is provided by the State of New Jersey, which recently demanded, among other things, that its high school teachers should have had *three points* of health education. Now it hap-

pens that Barnard College offers and requires of all its students as one of its two prescribed courses a two-point course in hygiene, and offers no more. It is a particularly good course, I think; I feel sure there is no better in all the country. But today a Barnard graduate who wants to teach in New Jersey will have to go to a summer session or elsewhere and acquire somehow one more point of hygiene.

If this sort of thing is multiplied by different states in different subjects, one can easily see what an intolerable situation results. Educational authorities often do not realize this, because they think of a college as having to meet only the requirements of the state in which it is located. They forget that in most of our best liberal arts colleges we have students from many states. That is one of our great educational advantages: we can offer our young people a chance to know friends from all over our own country and from nations beyond the seas. But we can't offer forty-eight, or even twenty-four, different courses in hygiene to meet detailed requirements of different states.

We inevitably differ in this respect from state normal schools and colleges with a purely local constituency. But surely it is unwise to drive away from our public schools all graduates of colleges of this national type by setting up detailed requirements which they cannot meet. Is it not unwise also to drive away individuals who by study abroad or in some other unusual way have acquired an education better even than that which our colleges can give?

The detailed requirements of the sort I am lamenting will not drive away *all* candidates, of course. They will not drive away many of the mediocre ones, who will take extra years of study to qualify for a post. It is the *best* candidates who are driven away by such "catch" requirements. They can easily find work in private schools or in other fields.

A strange thing about some of these state

requirements is that they seem to demand only "exposure" to so many hours of instruction. The college is sometimes merely to certify how many hundred hours the student has sat in the classroom, with no statement as to marks or evaluations of her own work or any other result of the exposure.

I said that if you complained to the authorities of some states that their requirements limited their candidates to their own state normal school, they would no doubt reply that they preferred their own young people, anyway. This is a real element in the present situation. In hard times authorities not unnaturally want to take care of their own people. Lots of local families are hard up. The officials, conceiving of teaching positions as a sort of "dole," sometimes tend to distribute them to those of their own people who most need the money rather than to the most competent teachers who can best serve the children of the state. It is a very natural instinct in bitter days of need but, alas, a very perilous one for the schools of the nation.

The requiring of a lot of specific points or hours in certain subjects for licenses to teach, this growing tendency against which I am protesting, is, curiously enough, just contrary to the newest and most approved educational practice of the time. Does not that seem rather quaint? The drift in college admission policies, for example, has been just the other way. Many of the best schools and colleges have been endeavoring to stop merely adding up hours of "exposure" to instruction, and have been trying instead to set up tests of power and of achievement. The psychological and scholastic aptitude tests for admission to college, the reduction in the number of prescribed subjects, the abolition of prescribed courses for the degree, the comprehensive examinations and special honors courses are striking examples of this tendency. It is seen also in various professional fields and recently in the enlightened effort of the United

States Civil Service Commission to set up a general test of power and qualification, without requiring specific subjects, for college graduates wishing to enter the government service.

It would seem reasonable to expect in the profession of education itself some similar effort to test the personality, the power, the general education and the professional aptitude of would-be teachers. There are indeed a few attempts of this sort, but on the whole the drift seems to be toward the strangely detailed, "catch" requirements that tend to discourage educated persons from trying to teach in our public schools.

The case is not going by default, however. A rising tide of protest is becoming evident. The great scholarly associations, for example, are lifting their voices, asserting that for a teacher of chemistry some really thorough knowledge of chemistry is primarily indispensable, or for a teacher of history some wide and sound knowledge of history.

VIRGINIA GILDERSLEEVE

WHY THE INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL FAILED

THE purpose of the earlier Indian schools was to civilize the Indian as rapidly as possible. The missionary and the military had found that the adult Indian clung tenaciously to his ways and his familiar haunts. If any marked change was to be brought about, it appeared that the children must be caught young, separated from their parents, and taught white ways.

Ignoring completely the tribal differences which have been discussed in earlier issues of *Indian Education*, the infant representatives of hundreds of tribes were thrown together indiscriminately. The better to encourage the learning of English, the speaking of tribal languages was forbidden. The ban was enforced through corporal punishment—occasionally of a brutal type. Little children barely seven years old were torn