

## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: SOME THOUGHTS FOR TOMORROW\*

The challenging theme of this convention "Education--Dynamic of Democracy," points up the vital stake school administrators have in the full and continued development of the minds, bodies and spirits of America's young people. It is also a phrase which stands as a guidepost to the future for the U. S. Office of Education. I should like to discuss with you very briefly, these two important and related aspects of our convention theme.

Our stake in the American educational system is two-fold, for we are concerned both as educators and as citizens.

Under a democratic system, the individual citizen is the well-spring of power, with each of us sharing the responsibility for making critical decisions on matters of public policy. In order to make that system work, to give it motion and purpose, and to insure the validity of those decisions, it is essential that we maintain a high level of intelligence among all of our people. The primary means for achieving this goal is education, for it is in the Nation's schools that the citizen of tomorrow can be equipped with the knowledge, habits, skills and attitudes so fundamental to the strengthening and perpetuation of democratic ideals.

Paramount among our responsibilities in this regard, it seems to me, is the obligation which we, as educators, owe our fellow citizens by virtue of the position we hold in the community. The school ad-

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\*Address by Earl James McGrath, U. S. Commissioner of Education, Federal Security Agency, Washington 25, D. C., delivered at the 6th General Session of the Annual Meeting, American Association of School Administrators, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 8:30 p.m., February 28, 1950.

administrator is dedicated, by profession, to the job of planning and administering the Nation's educational system to fit the social, economic, political, physical and moral needs of our young people. Although he shares the school-planning function with many other community agencies, the school administrator, by his very position, is a principal civic leader.

All manner of groups and individuals look to him for wisdom and guidance on a never-ending series of local, State and national questions. The example we set, the road we follow, may--in large measure--be a deciding factor in the course chosen by our countrymen. It is for us, then, to lead the way in transforming our democratic beliefs into actions, to pioneer in bringing our deeds more closely in line with our creeds, to give real meaning to that word "citizenship".

If education is to be the dynamic of democracy we must strengthen our educational system. We are committed in principle to serve all of the young people of our country, not just some.

If we expect to perpetuate democratic ideals, we cannot afford not to provide equality of educational opportunity for all children, for a basic assumption of our democratic way of life is that educational equality is an inherent personal right and that democracy must guarantee that right to each individual.

At present we fall far short of this ideal. Educational opportunity varies widely from one community to another. I do not believe this situation can be corrected until the Federal Government assists

the States in the support of education. I think we educators together with all other citizens have a responsibility to work toward this end.

We need to take additional steps also in our own communities to improve school support. Our people need help in understanding what is involved in good schools--good teachers, equipment, facilities, and the services necessary to provide education--in order that they may see more clearly the true significance of good schools in the lives of their children, their communities, and our national life.

It is encouraging to observe the activities of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools in exciting the interest of laymen throughout the country in the need for better schools as a basis of a sound and prosperous democracy.

Also implicit in the theme of our convention, as I have said, is the touchstone for the future course of the United States Office of Education.

Historically, the Office was established for two specific purposes: to collect statistics and facts showing the condition and progress of education in America; and to publicize information concerning the organization and management of schools and methods of teaching. However, the Office of Education was founded for another reason: in its original legislation, Congress added that the Office should "otherwise promote the cause of education throughout the country."

It is in the direction envisaged by this latter clause that I

believe the Office of Education should now move. The Office should offer greater and more vigorous leadership and assistance to educators generally and to school administrators in particular. In the United States, education traditionally has been a local matter with constitutional responsibility in the various States. It should remain so. Now, however, many of our educational problems are regional, even national in scope. It seems to me, therefore, imperative that the Office of Education assume responsibility for leadership in meeting these larger problems. But the job to be done is, above all else, a cooperative one. The interests of the U. S. Office of Education in promoting the cause of education are identical with the interests of the school administrators and of each of the various other organizations represented at this great convention here in Atlantic City. Only by working together, can we hope to meet the challenge to education in the mid-century. We in the U. S. Office of Education know that we can count on the enthusiastic cooperation of the school administrators. In turn, we pledge to you our best effort in the attainment of our joint purpose to make education in a fuller sense the Dynamic of Democracy.