

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS GROWING OUT OF MIGRATORY POPULATION MOVEMENTS

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Among the most obvious educational problems growing from migration are those affecting the administration of the schools. Rapid increases and decreases in school enrollments create an almost insoluble problem of providing new buildings and teachers, and of financing an expanding program. If new buildings are built they are often poorly constructed and equipped, not only because of financial difficulties, but because of the uncertain conditions which exist. Some Federal assistance is already being given, but more must come or many children will be given substandard education or none at all. Many communities find their financial resources strained to the maximum already by the heavy burden placed upon community facilities by the rapid increase in population.

Another distressing problem is the rapid turnover resulting from the entrance and departure of pupils. Some schools section their pupils on the basis of the probability that pupils will remain in school. Instances are recorded in which the average enrollment of a class has remained the same throughout a semester, yet the personnel of the class has changed entirely in the meantime. Retardation is a serious problem. The large majority of migrant pupils are retarded from a part of a grade to two or more grades. The problem of proper pupil classification is an almost insurmountable one. Many pupils come to the schools with no academic records. Much testing is necessary to fit the child into an approximately satisfactory classification.

The psychological effects of such conditions are extremely important. For many the constant shifting and changing means constant defeat, until in the end, the child's enthusiasm for education is dissipated and even his spirit is broken. The migrant child is commonly subdued and highly appreciative of whatever is done for him. The pupil is deprived of any permanency and continuity in his school life. He has no chance to form deep and abiding loyalties, nor to form cherished friendships; in fact he often fails to get more than casually acquainted with his fellow pupils. He has no school pride—no attachments to stabilize or provide controls.

He has no chance to experience continuity in learning. He becomes dissatisfied with school and ceases his efforts to achieve. Reports indicate that some of these pupils have had so little experience in cooperative activities that they have to be taught the techniques of cooperation in games.

The psychological effects extend to the teachers and non-migratory pupils. They are also influenced by the lack of stability. School activities and class work are disrupted by the entrance or departure of pupils. The instructional programs often become largely a matter of instructing the pupils in isolated segments of the fundamentals, and of trying to correct too obvious deficiencies of retarded pupils. Antipathies and prejudices are likely to create a barrier between groups.

The school more and more must act as a social service agency. One of the most distressing conditions is that of housing. A pitiful lack of

sanitary facilities or privacy means that the child is a potential conveyer of physical or moral deterioration. Concepts of family life and family activities must be entirely different for a child reared under such conditions than for a child reared in a home where permanent residence, stable occupation, and community ties are an integral part of living.

A curriculum suited to the needs of migrant children would have to be concerned with health, nutrition, recreation, family life, standards of workmanship, methods of satisfying needs for food, clothing, and shelter, budgeting, and cleanliness to a far greater degree than the present curriculum.