

No. 81

A BRIEF FOR THE EXTENSION  
PLANS OF THE UNITED  
STATES BUREAU OF  
EDUCATION



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There is no one way in which the real interests of the people can be better promoted than by increasing the amount and improving the kind of education which the people get. The Federal Government can promote this improved education more effectively than can any other body; and the way in which it can help is by securing and disseminating accurate, pertinent information, according to the plan herein proposed.

### I. THE PLAN

The Commissioner of Education has included in his appropriation estimates now being considered by Congress, items aggregating \$75,000 for the establishment and maintenance of a field force of consulting specialists in ten branches of educational work. Of this sum \$30,000 is for salaries of the ten specialists, \$20,000 for travelling and contingent expenses, and \$25,000 for additional clerical and editorial force in the central office.

The ten specialists provided for in the estimates are in the following subjects:

- School Administration
- Industrial Education
- Education for Housekeeping
- Statistics and Accounting
- Rural Education
- School Hygiene
- School Architecture
- Commercial Education
- Secondary Education
- Wider Use of School Plants.

These men would study, investigate and collect information in these several fields. This information would be collated and

organized and printed in pamphlet and book form, but the work of writing and preparing matter for publication would not constitute the chief function of the new force.

Their principal duties would be to consult with local educational authorities who are constantly seeking information, counsel and assistance in these fields and who at present have no source from which they can get this sort of help. In short, the new force would constitute a national clearing house of educational information. It would gather facts from all possible sources and render available to each locality the experience of all. It would not interfere with any existing state or local agency; it would duplicate no work now being done. Its aim would be service, not power.

## II. PRESENT STATUS OF THE APPROPRIATION ESTIMATES

The estimates of the Commissioner of Education providing for this increase in the Bureau received the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, despite the great reduction made in the estimates of practically every other bureau in the Department, and the general and severe pruning of estimates throughout all branches of the government. Furthermore, they were approved by the Secretary of the Treasury and forwarded to Congress as estimates of the administration. Presumably they had the endorsement of the President, for his attention had been specifically called to them.

When they came before the House Committee on the legislative appropriation bill the estimates for two of the specialists were retained and those for the other eight dropped, despite the fact that the sub-committee which considered these particular items was in favor of retaining the entire ten.

The matter came up for discussion in the House Committee of the Whole on January 7th. Full discussion was had extending over nearly the entire afternoon with the result that the bill was amended to provide for study and investigation in the fields of rural education, school hygiene, and industrial education. Moreover, the amendment was so worded as to include work in higher education in which the Bureau already has a specialist with a salary of \$3,000. For work in these four fields \$9,000

was appropriated. This is the present status of the matter and it is an unsatisfactory one, first, because the amount of money provided is so small as to be entirely insufficient for satisfactory work in four fields; and secondly, because the money so provided could not, under the law of 1882, be expended for salaries in Washington where at least a part of it should be expended to secure satisfactory results.

### III. WHY A FIELD FORCE IS ESSENTIAL

When the Southern Education Board planned the campaign which has been so brilliantly successful in bringing education in the Southern States to a higher level of efficiency, they first of all secured the services of able men and put them at work in the field. These men did not merely study the educational needs and conditions of the South. They presented the facts to those who created public opinion and guided community action. It was the force and wisdom of this field force in personal contact with the leaders of the South which secured the adoption of the far-sighted plans which they proposed.

This policy of placing able men actually in the field in order to get definite results has been adopted by practically all agencies that have been successful in securing enlightened public action. The trustees of the Peabody Fund have attacked one problem at a time by this same means. Life insurance companies have all discovered that the publication of documents was not adequate in getting results. They have depended upon the services of able men in the field.

The Playground Association of America has discovered that increase in the number of cities maintaining playgrounds and the efficiency with which these playgrounds were administered was definitely related to the extent to which it was possible to have their field secretaries visit these communities. In fact, playgrounds have nearly always been established where personal visits could be made, and rarely where such visits were impossible.

The National Child Labor Committee and the Rockefeller-Sanitary Hookworm Commission have had like experience. The Russell Sage Foundation has been effective in getting cities to

co-ordinate their philanthropic work so as to avoid duplication and increase efficiency just to the extent to which it could place an agent in the community who should personally secure the needed interest and co-operation of the several organizations involved.

New demands are being made on our schools, new aims and methods are needed. The demand for leadership is as great as the need. Men—able men—who know what is needed and how to get it are demanded all over this country. Documents alone, no matter how ably written, are inadequate. Personal leadership is essential.

#### IV. DUTIES OF THE FIELD FORCE

It will be the duty of the specialist on *School Administration* to discover whether large boards of education like those in Pittsburg and New York do their work more efficiently than do small boards, such as are found in Boston, Chicago and Detroit. Should power be centralized in one man, making him responsible for his subordinates, or should such responsibility be divided? Should subordinates be appointed by the superintendent or elected by the board? Is power most efficiently administered by individual men or by boards and committees? Does or does not life tenure of office by teachers and principals make for or against efficiency? Should promotion and increase of salary depend on duration of service, examination, or on some combination of these? Does standardization of courses of study and unification of methods increase or decrease efficiency? Does such standardization discourage and crush out individual initiative on the part of teachers and principals to an undesirable extent? We do not know the answer to any of these questions. They cannot be answered by opinion or authority. We need to know the facts. What light is thrown on these questions by actual experience? These are real problems. Every one of them has back of it a large body of experience. It is at present nobody's business to study the effects of experience along each line of *school administration*.

The specialist in *Industrial Education* would find out how Menomonic, Wisconsin, trains its boys and girls to make a living, at the same time it is teaching them the three R's. He

would be able to tell what it cost and whether or not it is really effective. Similarly he should find out all about how Cincinnati is training boys, who are working at regular trades, in arithmetic, drawing, and specification reading of those trades.

In fact he should put together all available facts and experiences bearing on the whole subject of how boys and girls are to be taught to earn a living. What is going to take the place of the apprenticeship system which is now dead? Is it the business of the school to do this? If so, how?

Specialist in *Education for Housekeeping*. We are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in teaching girls to keep house. We are spending nothing to find out whether or not the instruction so given is effective, or even to find out whether or not it is needed. If the schools are really to undertake the task of training girls how to keep house we ought to know just what is being done, how it is being done, what it costs, and what the results are. At present we know none of these things.

The specialist in *School Hygiene* would find out how to educate children and at the same time increase their vitality. How to prevent the 16 per cent. loss which now occurs from ill-health and removable physical defects. Sixty-nine cities have vacuum cleaning systems for their schools. Does it pay? Twenty cities have open-air schools. It is either a fad or all should have them. Is it cheaper to care for the teeth of school children than it is to pay for the six months' extra schooling that it takes children with decayed teeth to complete their elementary school course? People want, as well as need, these facts. The specialist in *school hygiene* would find the answers for us.

The specialist in *Rural Schools* would find out the real needs of the 12,000,000 children now in them and would show how some schools have work which fits the children to love the country as well as to live in it. Most rural schools are now patterned after city schools. There are twice as many rural school children as there are city school children.

The specialist in *Statistics and Accounting* would find out ways of making and keeping school records so that we could find out how many children attend school, how many are promoted, how much money and life is wasted by unnecessarily compelling children to do the work of the year over again. Absurd as it

may sound we know none of these things now, and the records of cities and states are made in such a way as to make them well nigh useless for purposes of study and comparison. We fail to discover the effects of most of the things we do because we do not have the adequate records uniformly taken. Until this is done we shall fail to make much real school progress.

A specialist in *School Architecture* would have prevented the Collingwood disaster in which hundreds of children were burned to death. The one billion dollars now invested in school buildings in America could have been spent with far greater efficiency if the services of a specialist in *school architecture* had been available.

A specialist in *Commercial Education* would tell us why most of the training for business is done by private "colleges" and badly done at that, and what experience shows we ought to do about it.

The High School is the people's college. There are over ten kinds of them. A specialist in *Secondary Education* would find out what each kind does.

Many communities are using their school plants for evening lectures, club houses, evening schools. How successful are these plans? Which are the best? How are they managed? What do they cost? A specialist in the *Wider Use* would find out and tell those who wanted to know.

The specialists to be employed would be men familiar with educational theory and practice and having special knowledge and recognized standing in their special fields. It would be their duty to master the past and current literature in their specific lines, and each man would acquaint himself with what has been and is being accomplished everywhere in his particular line of work, and with what measure of success.

## V. THE SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED MEASURE

In the Congressional Record for January 16th, pages 948 to 951 are filled with short extracts from letters of educators, manufacturers, university presidents, secretaries of boards of trade and chambers of commerce endorsing in unstinted terms this proposal to put the Bureau of Education in position to

supply them with the information they need and cannot now get.

These are not perfunctory letters written to please friends, or mere form letters originating in some educational association and sent broadcast for signatures. They are expressions of genuine, spontaneous appreciation of the immense value of such work as is proposed. They are samples taken from thousands of similar letters which have come from all parts of the country since the first news of the Commissioner's estimates was printed in the educational press. They are representative of endorsements which have been sent to the Secretary of the Interior, the Commissioner of Education and to Senators and Representatives from every state in the Union, and from nearly every important city and association interested in educational advance.

#### VI. WHERE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND IN OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

The account of the hearing before the sub-committee can be found in the printed report of the hearings before the House Committee on the Bill making appropriations for legislative, executive and judicial expenses for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1911.

The account of the discussion of the Committee's report and the amendments proposed thereto can be found in the Congressional Record of January 7th.

The speech of the Honorable Herbert Parsons, of New York, in support of the measure, together with an appendix giving quotations from letters bearing on it, is printed in the Congressional Record of January 16, 1911, pages 942 to 951.



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