

Private Schools for All

By OSCAR B. JOHANNSSEN

Increasingly, people are becoming disenchanted with education at the primary and secondary levels. For the most part, it is furnished through public schools, that is, socialized schools.

It is a peculiar fact that although America is the greatest exponent of private enterprise and the leading nation in the world because most of its wealth and services are provided by individuals seeking to attain a profit, education, probably the most important service of all, has been largely left out of the field of private enterprise.

While most Americans are opposed to socialized medicine, socialized industry, and socialized services, they simply do not realize that education below the college level has been, for all practical purposes, socialized.

Though the people are unaware of the faulty basis of our primary and secondary schools, the problem has been pressing upon them. They have to take notice, since the results of our socialized schooling are so deleterious that it is impossible not to see them. The constant deterioration in the quality of the training and the obviously inferior education of the children attending the socialized schools have forced a review of our educational practices.

America is a country whose education is partly governmental and partly private. Primary and secondary education has not been completely socialized as yet, so that people still have the opportunity to give their children in private and parochial schools the educational opportunities which they are capable of absorbing. Regrettably, however, the number of these schools is severely limited. Those parents who are willing and eager to make the necessary sacrifice of paying twice for the education of their children (once in taxes for the public schools, and then in fees for private schools) run up against the difficulty of getting the children into non-public schools. As our socialized schools get worse, more people are willing to submit to this double charge, but find that there are simply not enough private schools.

The tax situation and bureaucratic regulations make it difficult to start new schools to take care of the load. This could be overcome if an informed public demanded it. If the schools were given the same freedom to operate that most business enterprises have (which would mean, of course, the elimination of the state boards of education and their mass of rules and regulations), the number of private schools would certainly rise.

To aid in the growth of private schools, interested foundations, charities, and business corporations could make donations to them, at least until they were on their feet as going concerns. This might not require too much money, because schools do not have to be the elaborate factories that many are today. As a matter of fact, the primary schools, particularly the lower grades, probably should be conducted in what were formerly private homes. Little children, especially, coming from homes into an entirely new environment such as a school's, should be gradually inculcated into the spirit of working with one another in surroundings as much like home as possible.

Assistance in the form of scholarships or grants might also be set up by foundations and charities for the children of parents who cannot afford the fees, just as aid is given today to parents who are unable to feed and clothe their children properly.

As the number of private and parochial schools increases, the public schools can decrease, with a consequent lessening of excessive school taxes, which will make much easier the task of paying for the children's education. Eventually, as the demand for public schools reaches the zero point and the socialized schools are eliminated, the problem of schooling will again be accepted as what it actually is, one of the responsibilities of parenthood, no different from that of furnishing children with clothes, medical and dental services, or any other necessity. Parents will not think it any more unusual to pay for education than they do to pay for feeding their children.

The lack of spiritual tone in the secular public schools has created the most serious problem of all. As man is a religious animal, who cannot help looking up to some Superior Being, and since one of the primary functions of education is to help him satisfy that longing and acquire an understanding of his relationship to God, when he receives no help in that direction he is forced to look about for himself. The teacher in our socialized schools is restricted in what religious values he can present to the child. As the child does not receive the spiritual values he should get, and as he cannot help seeking to gratify the craving of looking up to the Almighty, he unconsciously attempts to put some other deity in the place of God. That deity may be some notorious scoundrel whom the child emulates, with disastrous results to himself and society.

Surely each child has a right to expect that he will be afforded every opportunity to mature as early as possible and to develop his talents, his desires, his aims, and his yearnings for an understanding of the Ultimate.

Is it not obvious that private enterprise, which is based on the freedom of the individual, has been the principal cause for raising America above all other civilizations? Is it not obvious that if private enterprise could result in the finest goods and services at the lowest possible costs, that the finest educational opportunities will also be created under the principle of private enterprise?

The American child is certainly entitled to the best and the finest education of which he is capable. Therefore, we must take education out of the hands of politicians and bureaucrats and return it to the people. After all, a child's education has always been, is today, and always will be the responsibility of parents.

It might also be pointed out that privately operated colleges and universities in America are actually not private enterprises in the true sense of the word. They partake of a hybrid character—partly private, partly eleemosynary. They sell their services at a loss and endeavor to make up the difference through endowments and contributions from outside sources. This would be an unsound practice in selling any of the ordinary services; it is equally unsound in selling the service of education. Colleges and universities should be run as any business is. The price of their services—tuition fees—should be high enough to cover all expenses plus a profit. Of course, at present, in view of inflated tuition costs, this recommendation may appear absurd, yet in the long run it would mean better educational services at the lowest possible cost.

Fundamentally, the issue is simple. Education must be placed on the basis of real private enterprise or it will be reduced in time to the status of a completely nationalized enterprise. Inadequate salaries, poor teachers, and poor equipment will act as a growing cancer which will erupt—is erupting—in a demand for increased federal aid, not only for primary and secondary schools, but also for higher educational institutions. And let there be no mistake about it. When Government enters the doors of our universities and colleges, education departs, and another propaganda organization arises, glorifying the omniscience and omnipotence of the State.