

vocating. There is something wrong with the mind that justifies or excuses the murder of some men because other men of the same race have committed crimes of which the murdered men are innocent.

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THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CONTROVERSY IN CHICAGO.

There is much in the public school controversy now raging in Chicago (pp. 667, 697) which is so common in its characteristics as to be of importance for consideration wherever school officials and school teachers are inharmonious in their relations.

I.

The fundamental defects in the present administration of the Chicago public school system are fairly summed up in briefest form if we say that the system is despotic. We do not mean that the Superintendent or any other official is a despot, but that this is the character of the system irrespective of all questions of personality. If "one man power" or "business administration" be preferred to the term we use, then let it stand at that. The thing itself is the thing, not its name; and the essence of it all is this, that some one at the top makes arbitrary decrees which the others must obey without consultation or criticism.

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This is justified in the name of "business administration." The ethics of the counting room have crowded out democratic tendencies and educational ideals. High salaries for administration with low salaries for teaching, a small expense account and much display—such is the commercialistic ideal of the system. Its conception of authoritative sequence is a docile board of directors, a dictatorial superintendent, department managers, bureau chiefs, and a body of teachers responsive as a vast mechanism, like factory workmen, to orders transmitted from above.

Is the picture overdrawn? Read the editorials of the local papers that defend the present system and denounce "Mayor Dunne's school trustees" for trying to abolish it. Factory and military analogies flow into those editorials spontaneously. And if you go back of irresponsible editorials to the system itself, you find its despotic character in full process of development.

The teachers are in fact treated and regarded as "hands" in a factory or private soldiers in an army. When they are consulted, it is usually not as a body but in selected groups. An instance was the jury of teachers for recommending reading

text-books last summer. The Superintendent selected the jury. It sat in secret and its personality was a secret kept even from the Board. On special invitation other teachers had given written advisory opinions to this jury, but these opinions were suppressed; only the bare verdict of the jury ever came to the Board, on whom the final responsibility rested.

When the teaching body is consulted otherwise than in this selective and secret way, it is done under the influence in one manner or another of superiors in authority—the principals in some cases and the Superintendent in others. So far is this feature of the "business" or military system carried out, that the Superintendent appears as president of the principals' association and leader at teachers' conferences. Inasmuch as the career and the official life of the teachers and principals are practically at the Superintendent's mercy, it is absurd to regard their deliberations and conclusions, under such circumstances, as having much more than an echo value. In consequence of it all (and we are holding the system and not Superintendent Cooley responsible; in many things we are in hearty accord with his views), the teaching body is inarticulate. The Board has no means of learning its opinions except as the Superintendent interprets them. Power comes down from the Superintendent through the teaching body, and the teachers must not only obey but must obey in silence, on pain of being regarded as disloyal. Even advice and consultation take on an air of command.

It is proposed now to extend this despotic power upward as well as downward. Already it is claimed for the Superintendent that district superintendents ought to be no longer superintendents of districts, but the personal and confidential cabinet or staff of the Superintendent, and that in choosing them the Board should have no other function than perfunctory endorsement of the Superintendent's selections.

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Nor does this reach the climax of the "one man power" idea. Not only would the district superintendents be the Superintendent's staff, but the Board itself would be put into a similar category. The "business" interests of Chicago, which have squandered the magnificent inheritance of the public schools; which have starved the school funds by shielding big franchise grabbers and tax dodgers; which have slandered the Teachers' Federation and its indefatigable and patriotic leaders, because they uncovered some of these tax

dodgers and added a quarter of a million a year to the income of the Board; which have exhibited great sagacity in paring down educational expenditures, and a negligible degree of energy in augmenting income; and which for selfish purposes are committed to the one man power in educational affairs—these “business” interests are making marked progress in thrusting into the Charter Convention a proposal for fastening the one man power upon the schools of Chicago by partisan legislation at Springfield. And this they are doing, God save the mark, by way of establishing home rule!

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The pretense of it all is a demand plausibly urged, for “business methods” by “business men.” In view of the recent exposures of some business men and business methods throughout the country—men and methods theretofore exploited as of the highest type—and of the woful financial condition to which the Chicago schools have been brought by “business men” and methods, one might expect a little more modesty on the part of this self-assertive class. But that consideration may be passed for a more important one. However imperative despotic ideals may be in the military or the commercial sphere, they have no place in the pedagogical. School children are not pots and pans to be manufactured mechanically. Neither is there a military enemy to be fought with military precision. While it may be true enough that in warfare and in commerce there must be an able head to command and a mechanically responsive mass to obey, this is not and can not be true of the school.

In teaching, it is not the mass of teachers merely as a mass that counts; it is the individual teachers. And at the head, what is required is not mastership but leadership. Although there be some phases of a great school system to which the military or the commercial analogy may apply, neither applies to the regulation and exercise of the teaching function. The most important factors here, useful though all may be, are not the school board, nor the superintendent, nor subordinate superintendents, nor even the principal, but the individual teachers. Their individuality is of the utmost value.

This is a mere truism, too generally acknowledged in thoughtful educational circles to deserve mention except for the intrusion of despotic methods. A public school system which makes the teacher an automaton in a collection of automatons, all marking time in response to electric buttons at a central office, is a false system and must

inevitably be demoralizing. Yet this is the ideal of public school education which has prevailed in Chicago and which the so-called “Mayor Dunne members” of the Board of Education are trying to abolish. Its despotic character is disclosed by the absurdly autocratic marking methods, by the arbitrary salary-promotional device, by the silencing of the teaching body so that the Board is kept in ignorance of its views except as official superiors interpret them; by the irresponsible control which the Superintendent has over examinations for entrance, salary promotion and functional promotion; by the atmosphere of secrecy in which the system is immersed; and by the demand that the Superintendent be allowed complete control, either without supervision or under a Board with little other power than to register his decrees.

II.

Asked what we would substitute, we answer that for the despotic spirit and method we would substitute the democratic.

As the most important persons in the school system are the teachers, the teachers should hold a position of dignity with reference to the Board and its officers. They should be treated as men and women and not as children. Their opinions should be freely sought by their official superiors, and when obtained should be considered with sympathy and respect, as a consensus of the opinions of experts, and also as a storing up in the most economical and useful way of pedagogical experience and opinion. And this in the interest, not merely of the teachers themselves, but of the pupils; for you can not expect good results in teaching if you degrade your teachers to the level of mere teaching machines.

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The teaching body should be organized independently of supervisory employes, and in such manner as to facilitate direct official communication with the Board. We have been told that this would amount to surrendering the powers and duties of the Board to the dictation of the teachers, and that the Board has no right to delegate its authority. That criticism is not very intelligent. Neither is it true. Nobody has proposed to surrender the authority of the Board to the teachers. The only demand for any surrender of the power of the Board of which we are aware, is the demand of the “business” interests that it be surrendered to the Superintendent. What is proposed with reference to the direct relation of the teachers to the Board is that their advisory functions

should be analogous to those of the Superintendent.

There are three general departments on the educational side. These are the Board's, the Superintendent's, and that of the teaching force. The essential function of the Board is to legislate for the system; and in its legislative work it needs and ought to receive advice from the Superintendent and from the teaching force. The essential function of the Superintendent is to administer the system in accordance with the legislative policy of the Board; and in this work he ought to receive the advice of the teaching force and give advice to the teaching force and to the Board. The essential function of the teaching force is to carry on the work of teaching the pupils; and as a necessary incident of this function, and in order that the whole system may be harmonious and effective in its operation, the teaching force should be so organized and officially recognized as to enable it to express itself with official dignity. Its opinions might not and often perhaps ought not to be adopted by the Superintendent or the Board; but in such cases neither the Superintendent nor the Board could escape responsibility for mistakes made against the deliberate advice of the teachers. Neither could the teaching body escape responsibility for bad advice.

If such an organization of the teaching force were made and fostered in good faith, a different and better spirit would vitalize the school system from that which has been generated by the despotic "business" policy that has prevailed. It is not the only thing to do but it is the fundamental one.

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In addition, the power of appointment should be separated from the power of removal. No man is good enough to be trusted with the appointment and promotion of teachers, who also has practically the power of discipline and dismissal.

The percentage marking of teachers should be abolished. Records of marks without records of reasons for them, are useless for any legitimate purpose; and they tempt principals on the one hand to be domineering, and teachers on the other to be servile. When secrecy is added they generate distrust and discontent.

The so-called "promotionals" also ought to go. The idea has been sedulously cultivated that these are really promotions. They are nothing of the kind. The "promoted" teacher gets higher pay, but her teaching function remains the same. The "promotionals" therefore are only contests for money prizes. Even if they were not open to this

objection, they are now discovered to prove nothing as to the teacher's value as a teacher. Experience proves that many of the "promotional" and higher paid teachers are inferior to the non-promotional and lower paid—if the efficiency markings mean anything.

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But all these things are only details.

The essential principle involved is the democratic as opposed to the despotic spirit and policy in education.

Settle that issue against the despotic idea, and all details would soon settle themselves.

Make the teaching force officially articulate as a responsible advisory body, and the three departments of the system would fall into harmonious relations. Publicly advised by both teachers and Superintendent independently, the Board would be better qualified to co-operate sympathetically and to legislate wisely; advised by the teachers and supervised by the Board, the Superintendent would be better placed for administering judiciously; recognized as a responsible advisory department of the school system, the teaching force would be in better condition for teaching with good effect.

It may be conceded that this view of the matter is only prophetic. But it is rational, and a system which rests upon rationally optimistic prophecy is surely more worthy of approval than one which, like the present "business" system, rests upon irrational prophecy and demonstrated failure.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

THE DETROIT SITUATION.

Detroit, Mich., Nov. 8.—The proposition of the Detroit United Railway for a new franchise has been turned down by a vote of two to one (p. 751), the electors declining to tie up their streets with the eighteen year proposition. It is possible that if the D. U. R. should offer a three cent rate, it could get a franchise, but the longer the offer is delayed the poorer chance will even this proposition have.

A. B. du Pont and Tom L. Johnson have promised to make application for a revokable franchise, on the basis of three cent fares and universal transfers, the new corporation to take over the tracks of the present street car company as fast as its present franchises expire. In addition to this they will lay tracks in a number of streets where transportation is very much needed. This offer may not be accepted, but at least it will have the effect of preventing the aldermen giving a franchise to any other corporation on less desirable terms.

Mayor Codd, who championed the franchise, is defeated, and Wm. B. Thompson, who, while not a