

# SCHOOLS AND THE CRISIS

by  
**REX  
DAVID**

*10c.*



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# SCHOOLS AND THE CRISIS

BY REX DAVID

THE crisis in American education has become catastrophic. According to a recent statement of the United States Commissioner of Education:

2,280,000 children of school age are not in school.

2,000 rural schools in 24 states failed to open in the fall of 1933.

16 colleges and 1,500 commercial schools have closed.

School terms in nearly every large city are one to two months shorter than they were 70 to 100 years ago.

900,000 children in 18,000 rural schools are going to school for less than six months in 1934.

One out of every five children was suffering from starvation, bad housing and lack of medical care in the spring of 1933. The situation is growing rapidly worse. (U. S. Children's Bureau.)

More than 200,000 certified teachers are permanently unemployed. Thousands have been fired. All are in danger; 33 out of every hundred teachers will be paid less than \$750 in the school year 1933-34, and at least 84,000 will receive less than \$450. For three years thousands of teachers have gone payless. All teachers are facing payless pay days to come. Many communities are carrying their teachers on the relief rolls.

\*This is no accidental situation. These attacks on the schools correspond to a directed plan published by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States and carried out by bankers and industrialists everywhere. They are an inevitable part of the economic system under which we live.

## *Little Chance for Workers' Children*

Workers' and farmers' children were forced out of school even before the present crisis. Yet even when the family could keep

them in school, they were crowded together in the cities or left alone far out on the farms where they had the poorest school buildings and teachers with the least training and experience.

Few working class children ever enter, and fewer still finish high school. College doors have always been practically closed to the rank and file workers. Only those children whose families could make great struggles and sacrifices for them, the children of labor "aristocrats," and a few who have been subsidized by the wealthy classes, have gone to college. The profit-makers point to these few workers' children who have graduated from college as proof that education in the United States is "free and equal" for all the children of all the people.

This is not true now and has never been true.

American children have never had equal chances to go to school.

Many thousands of Negro children and the mountain whites of the South have no schools at all, and few country districts, North or South, provide modern schools for their children. Opportunities for education have been greatest in the cities and in the North. But nowhere have we had genuinely *free* public schools with equal opportunities for rich and poor alike.

How rapidly workers' children are forced out of school can be seen by studying a typical complete city system of schools in an industrial area. The 1932 annual report of the superintendent of schools of Camden, N. J., shows that for every 100 children entered in the first grade in 1922, there were only 53 in the seventh grade and only three were graduating from high school. Even ten years later, 1932, no more than 77 out of 100 were reaching the seventh grade and 13 were graduating from high school.

The average situation in the United States as a whole shows that many sections are worse than Camden. The U. S. Bureau of Education reports in Bulletin No. 3, 1930, that:

- 10%—1 out of 10 children would not reach the 6th grade
- 14.2%—1 out of 7 children would not reach the 7th grade
- 25.2%—1 out of 4 children would not reach the 8th grade

The upper classes have boasted of our "free, democratic" schools providing universal education. Actually 3,326,152 children from 7 to 17 were not in school in April, 1930, at the time of the last

federal census. Professor John Dewey's assertion "that as education exists in America today it is not democratic," is simple fact.

### *High Schools and Colleges Are for the Well-To-Do*

Workers' children have still less opportunity to gain a high school or college education. Professor George Counts of Columbia University has shown that our public high schools are maintained almost entirely for the children of managers, professional people, proprietors, business men, and clerks. Some children of skilled workers have also gone to American high schools. Their fathers have worked in the printing, machine and building trades, and in public service and transportation. But only a very few of the children of unskilled laborers and farmers have ever gone to high school. Professor Counts analyzes this situation clearly and concludes:

The public high school is attended quite largely by the children of the more well-to-do classes. This affords us the spectacle of a privilege being extended at public expense to those very classes that already occupy the privileged positions in modern society. The poor are contributing to provide secondary education for the children of the rich. . . .

Why should we provide at public expense these advanced educational opportunities for X because his father is a banker and practically deny them to Y because his father cleans the streets of the city? We must distinguish between that education which is for all, and that which is for the few. . . . We . . . either open the doors of the high school to all children . . . or frankly close its doors to all but a select group.

With the class divisions in American society, the public high schools are in their practical operation unfair and undemocratic. In many sections they still provide free tuition, but without maintenance for the children of rank and file workers they cannot provide equality of educational opportunity. They are supported largely at the expense of the masses but actually they are used chiefly by the children of the middle class. The children of the very rich are sent to expensive private schools or given the class privilege of private tutors. At least 45% of all children of high school age, the great majority of them the children of workers, are not attending our high schools. One-fourth of the rural chil-

dren between the ages of 15 and 18 go to high school, compared to three-fourths of the city children of these ages entering high schools.

American educators have boasted of our fine system of public schools, free for the masses from kindergarten through the university. But less than 10% of our youth of college age were in college in 1930. Today increasing thousands of high school graduates who planned to go to college find their plans shattered by the crisis. They are condemned to ignorance and idleness.

Now even the so-called "equality of educational opportunity" in the United States is breaking down. College budgets for 1933-34 have been cut from 20% to more than 50% under 1931-32. Tuition and student fees are being sharply increased, enrollment restricted, and free city colleges are closing their doors. Sharper cuts will soon be made. The crisis of the whole outworn system of production is inevitably reflected in the nation's schools.

### *Jim Crow Education*

Negro children have far fewer educational opportunities than white children. Negro schools have always been neglected and now they are the first to bear the load of the crisis. Discrimination is systematically practiced North and South, as a part of the exploitation of the Negro people, but it is greater and more open in the 17 southern states and the District of Columbia where only Jim Crow schools exist for Negro children. In large sections, where Negroes are the majority of the population, for every \$100 spent on the education of each white child, only \$25 has been paid out for the education of each Negro child. The school term is generally shorter. In the South, it is usually from two to six months in Negro schools, and eight or nine months for white children. School buildings for Negro children are generally worn out and badly equipped. Their teachers are often poorly trained and always badly paid. Negro rural teachers averaged \$388 in 1930.

The Federal government also maintains Jim Crow normal schools and colleges in the South. In Mississippi where Negroes make up 52% of the population, 10% of the money appropriated

for the support of the Land Grant Colleges was for Negro schools.

In South Carolina, Article XI of the state constitution provides that "no child of either race shall ever be permitted to attend a school provided for children of the other race." Many southern states have such laws. Typical results of this Jim Crow act can be seen in Charleston county which leads the state in education. In 1928 the schools there enrolled 6,753 white and 9,581 Negro children. The white children attended 28 centralized, modern elementary schools for a nine-months term. The Negro children attended 101 small poorly organized elementary schools, the majority of them open six and seven months. Only four of these 101 Negro schools were open for nine months. Sixteen of them are held in old, privately owned buildings used as churches and Sunday schools; others are housed in dilapidated one-room shacks.

The Negro population in Charleston County is larger than the white. But out of a total of 2,195 high school pupils in the county, 1,916 were white and attended eight schools; 279 were Negroes and attended one industrial school in the city of Charleston. No opportunity whatsoever exists for Negro children who live in the county but outside the city of Charleston to go to high school. To understand the full force of these facts we must remember that throughout the South the elementary school ends with the seventh grade.

With such a double standard for school facilities, it is not surprising that nearly one third (30.4%) of the Negro population 10 years of age and over in this leading county were reported illiterate by the Federal Census of 1930, as compared with 26.6% in 1920. (Census of 1930.)

These are the conditions of the Negro children in the most advanced county of South Carolina. Thousands of counties in the South are giving their Negro children far less chance to learn. A few do better. In Norfolk, Va., the per capita appropriation in 1933 was \$68.42 for white and \$40.42 for Negro schools, about 58% of that for white schools. In her recent pamphlet, *Youth in Industry*, Grace Hutchins reports that in 1927 Alabama spent \$26.57 for white children and \$3.81 for Negro children. According to a recent study by the National Education Association:

In South Carolina, the annual expenditure for education is \$4.48 per child for Negro children and \$45.45 per child for white children. In Georgia, where the Negro population is 36.8% of the total, the figures are \$7.44 per year for the Negro child against \$35.34 for the white child. Mississippi spends \$9.34 for the Negro child and \$42.17 for the white child, while the figures for Florida are respectively \$11.41 and \$75.07.

The *Negro Year Book* for 1931-32, reports annual education expenditure for each child as follows:

Alabama	white	\$37.50	Negro	\$ 7.16
Virginia	white	47.46	Negro	13.30

Not only in the South, but throughout the United States it is the policy of the white rulers to keep the Negro workers in ignorance. In this and other ways they try to prevent the white workers from uniting with the Negro workers and so make it easier to exploit them.

### *Closing School Doors*

With the deepening of the crisis, added millions of our children both white and Negro, are threatened. The closing of schools follows closely upon the shutting down of factories, mills and mines. Education is a part of the system of private property that influences every action of our lives.

Hundreds of thousands of children, in practically every state, have been forced to stop learning since the autumn of 1932 by the closing of their schools. Some schools did not open at all in September, 1932. Others closed in December, January and February. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota were the first states where schools were closed.

By March 30, 1933, public schools in Alabama were closed in 50 counties, containing 81% of all the children enrolled in white rural schools in the state. As of April 1, 1933, Georgia reported 1,918 closed schools involving 170,790 pupils.

According to reports of the National Education Association Joint Commission on the Emergency in Education, April 15, 1933:



By February 20, 1933, 1,253 schools were closed in nine states . . . carrying complete denial of educational opportunities after that date to 119,969 children.

Since February 28, other schools have closed. . . . If the Georgia figures are added to those just now given we have an actual recorded total of 2,571 closed schools, involving 290,000 children as of April 1, 1933.

Later reports show that more than 2,200 schools, attended by half a million children, were forced to close before April 1, 1933. In Missouri, schools closed in entire districts before November 15, 1933.

George F. Zook, U. S. Commissioner of Education, has reported:

Nearly 2,000 rural schools in 24 states enrolling more than 100,000 children, have failed to open this fall (1933). Sixteen institutions of higher education have closed and 1,500 commercial schools and colleges. In many communities tuition is being charged in public schools. One in every four cities has shortened the school term and 715 rural schools, enrolling 35,750 children are running less than three months. Eighteen thousand rural schools, affecting nearly a million children, are operating for less than six months. In nearly every big city the school terms are now one to two months shorter than they were 70 to 100 years ago. (*Federated Press*, November 10, 1933.)

Here is indisputable proof that millions of children are being forced out of school to grow up in ignorance. Yet even before the crisis, the school year in the United States was shorter than in other countries. Our average term in 1930 was 173 days. France has a school term of at least 200 days; England and Sweden, 210; Germany and Denmark, 246 days. "In none" (of the chief countries of Europe), said Professor I. L. Kandel of Columbia University, "can there be found a parallel to (our) ruthless treatment of children, schools, and teachers; in none of them is there an instance of the wholesale dismissal of teachers, the non-payment of salaries; in none of them have the schools been closed for a single day to save money." (*School and Society*, September 9, 1933.)

The building of new schools has almost stopped. For the "prosperous" period 1927-30, annual costs of building, sites and equipment were about \$400,000,000. They dropped to \$154,000,000, about 63%, in 1933, and to \$97,000,000 in 1934. For cities the decrease was 80.1% since 1931. As one result, 250,000 children

went to school part time, and 150,000 were housed in portable shacks.

Sales of text books have dropped \$9,000,000, or over 30% since 1930. Worn-out books are not being replaced nor new books purchased.

Workers' children are not only forced to fight for a chance to go to school. The conditions in the schools themselves make learning hard and often impossible. For years the schools have been overcrowded. Many schoolrooms are packed to the doors and children are forced to sit in the aisles and on window ledges, or to study in unhealthy portables which the children call "doghouses."

The annual report, December 8, 1933, of the New Jersey State Board of Education, states that although "day school classes were larger by 12,936 pupils," the teaching staff was reduced by 1,265 teachers. In Hamtramck, Mich., the walls between some classrooms have been broken down and one unassisted teacher is forced to direct classes of 100 students. Such open direct attacks on the education of the children and the welfare of the teachers are being carried out by the same educational "leaders" who once directed the building up of the schools. They are now in charge of wrecking the schools. Men of the stamp of Dean Withers of New York University and Dr. Paul Klapper of City College assisted such business leaders as Peter Grimm, president of the Real Estate Board of New York City and Richard S. Childs of the American Cyanamid Co. in preparing a New York State report on education. The report declares that "Scientific studies show that increasing the size of classes does not necessarily decrease efficiency." It justifies overcrowded classrooms and overloaded teachers. Dr. Paul R. Mort, Columbia University expert in school finance, recommended the reduction of kindergartens and the increase of class size in his 1933 "economy" report on the schools of New Jersey.

### *Can Starving Children Learn?*

Children's health is suffering as a result of the present crisis. The U. S. Children's Bureau reports that even in the spring of

1933 about one-fifth of pre-school and school children were suffering from starvation, bad housing, and lack of medical care. The State Department of Health of Pennsylvania reports a sharp upward turn in the percent of starving children in a large majority of the counties of the state for 1932-33. Increase in malnutrition (slow starvation) between 1932 and 1933 was 100% in thirteen counties and for the state as a whole averaged "25%, or one out of every four children examined." (*New York Times*, November 26, 1933.)

Inside as well as outside the schools, the children's health is being attacked. The school health service of scores of cities all the way from Santa Monica, California, to New York City, has been cut. In Schenectady, N. Y., the classes for crippled and anaemic children were eliminated, and four dental hygiene teachers, six teachers of physical education, and an assistant medical supervisor were dropped. In Omaha, Neb., the swimming pools and the open-air school rooms were closed. These attacks are being carried out at a time when Grace Abbott, chief of the U. S. Children's Bureau, states that 6,000,000 children, more than one-seventh of all our children, are destitute because their fathers are unemployed. (*New York Times*, November 26, 1933.)

American bankers and businessmen are now directing powerful attacks on all schools from kindergarten to university. Libraries, physical education, music, manual training, home economics and the arts are being ruthlessly taken from the children while their teachers are added to the armies of the unemployed. These assaults on the social welfare of the people are demanded by our system of private business for personal profit. They will continue as long as the system of which they are a part.

William G. Carr, Director of Research for the National Education Association, declared in a feature article in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

Conservative estimates indicate that by the end of the school year (June, 1933) kindergartens will be reduced or eliminated in at least 170 cities, art instruction in 100 cities, music instruction in 160 cities, school nurses in 135 cities, home economics or manual training or both in 145 cities, and physical education in 160 cities.

Dr. John K. Norton, Chairman (N. E. A.) Joint Commission on the Emergency in Education, summarized the conditions in our schools as follows:

. . . The situation is rapidly becoming worse. In November, 1932, only 40 schools in the whole nation were actually closed. April 1, 1933, just after the bank moratorium, 5,825 schools had been closed. It is now estimated (November, 1933) on the basis of figures just received from country school superintendents in all parts of the nation that by April 1, 1934, there will be 20,300 schools closed enrolling 1,025,000 children.

### *What Happens to Children Who are Forced Out of Schools?*

Even during the so-called prosperous years of 1928, 1929 and 1930, the school door was shut tight in the faces of millions of children. The United States Census of 1930 listed 2,145,959 children between the ages of 10 and 17 years who were working for wages; 667,118 of these child laborers were between 10 and 15 years of age.

The profit makers practice merciless exploitation of children in their greed for dividends and use the millions of those who are not in school as a ready reservoir of helpless cheap labor. When the older children cannot find work many are forced to join the army's Civilian Conservation Corps. Thousands have joined the rapidly growing homeless army of wandering youth. This rich land now has its *bezprizorni* (homeless children) just as the Soviet Union had, before the Five-Year Plan. There is this difference: the *bezprizorni* of the U.S.S.R. were victims of the imperialist war, and of famine and civil war when the country was invaded by England, France, Germany, Japan and the United States. The Soviet government struggled to help these homeless, orphaned children with every resource at its command. Our own homeless youth are victims of the system of exploitation and the planlessness of the profit-making society.

The U. S. Children's Bureau reported in 1932 that "between 200,000 and 300,000 boys between the ages of 12 and 20 are 'on the road,' cut loose from their surroundings. . . . And the total is constantly increasing." Great numbers of these wandering

boys collect in the cities. The education editor of the *New York Times*, Dr. John H. Finley, admitted in a radio talk as early as January 4, 1932, that 20,000 boys between 16 and 20 were living like wild animals in New York City alone. Conditions are now far worse.

### *The Cost of Keeping a Child in School*

During the year 1932-33, the cost of educating a child in the United States was cut 10% below 1926 and 20% below 1930. In four years (1930-34) the average amount voted for educating a child in this country has been cut from \$90.22 to \$66.53.

TABLE I—PUBLIC SCHOOL STATISTICS, 1926-1934

Years ending June 30 (in thousands)	Total enrolment	Number of teachers, principals, and supervisors	Average salary of teachers, principals, and supervisors	Total expenditures <sup>1</sup> (in millions)	Capital outlay (in millions)	Cost per child enrolled
1926	24,741	831,078	\$1,277	\$2,026	\$411	\$81.90
1927	24,961	842,654	1,320	2,105	397	84.35
1928	25,180	854,230	1,364	2,184	383	86.75
1929	25,429	867,297	1,392	2,251	377	88.50
1930	25,678	880,365	1,420	2,317	371	90.22
1931	26,012	892,466	1,440	2,317	320	89.06
1932	26,275	897,000	1,368	2,188	237	83.28
1933	26,239	882,000	1,296	1,922	154	73.25
1934	26,353	840,000	1,050	1,753	98	66.53

<sup>1</sup> Includes current expenses, capital outlays, and interest. Excludes payments for bonds, short-term loans, and sinking funds.

This table means that from 1930 to 1934 the number of children in the schools of the United States *increased* about 675,000, the number of teachers *decreased* 40,000, and the money spent on each child was cut 26%. It does not show the length of the school term and the great loss in number of days of school. These figures summarize the record of one of the worst attacks ever made on education in the history of the world. They mean poverty, ignorance and decay for our nation and our people. They are the record of a great social crime committed for profits in the name of "economy."

Part of the total loss is shown in the following table:

TABLE 2—EXTENT TO WHICH SCHOOL PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN RETARDED

Educational items	Year to which 1934 figures have declined	Number of years of development lost
Number of teachers, principals, and super- visors .....	1927	6
Average salary of teachers, principals, and supervisors .....	1921	12
Total expenditures .....	1924	10
Capital outlay .....	1913	20
Cost per child enrolled .....	1922	11

Yet we are told on the authority of an officer of the United States Government that,

Ten cents per day paid by every person of voting age in the United States would pay the entire bill for public education. (*School Life*, October, 1932.)

In 1933, individual cities such as Douglas, Bisbee and Jerome, in Arizona, reported school budgetary decreases of 27%, 35%, and 27% respectively; San Antonio, Texas, a decrease of 36%; such Oklahoma cities as Ada, Ponca City and Oklahoma City, showed respective percentage cuts of 31, 27, and 22; in Arkansas, the cities of Warren, Helena, and Marianna made cuts of 29%, 30% and 31% respectively; Wahpeton, N. D., reported a cut of 27%; Canton, Ohio, 24%; and Flint and Grand Rapids, Mich., 23% and 22% respectively.

Workers, teachers, and parents everywhere must know these facts. Already the rulers of many cities and states are refusing to pay the cost of educating the children. In 25 states the city school budgets have suffered average cuts of more than 10%. In Mississippi the average cut was 29%; in Oklahoma, 20%; and in Michigan, New Mexico and Texas, 18%. Arkansas and Arizona cut their city school expenses 42%.

On April 22, 1933, F. Raymond Daniel wrote in the *New York Times*:

The state of Alabama is confronted with a financial crisis which threatens the very life of its free public schools. With 85% of its elementary and secondary schools closed already, the people of the state are facing the prospect of utter collapse of their educational system.

That conditions in the United States are depriving more than 9,000,000 children of school age of their right to learn, was announced even in 1932 by Professor Paul Mort of Teachers' College, Columbia, as a result of a nationwide survey.

Clearly, there are now important sections where as Dr. A. F. Harmon, State Superintendent of Education in Alabama, has pointed out, "The boasted free school is no more. . . . It must be maintained as a private or subscription school, the expenses falling heaviest upon those least able to pay, and from which those unable to pay are often excluded."

### *We Can Educate Our Children*

The United States can afford to educate all our children. We can pay far more than the \$2.74 out of every \$100 of the normal national income that was spent to make up our two-and-one-half billion dollar school costs in 1930. We spend \$13.98 per capita yearly on automobiles. Which is more important? For every \$1 of school costs, more than \$2.61 is spent for luxuries.

Still more important as a means of comparison is the cost of war. The total cost of war in human misery is beyond human thinking. In dollars, the U. S. bill for the World War alone had totalled more than 39 billions up to 1931, enough to pay all the costs of the schools for more than 17 years. But this is not the end. The cost of the World War to the United States for the year ending June 30, 1932, fourteen years after the armistice, was \$807,754,768.79. In addition, expenditures for the War Department were \$468,228,844.99, and for the Navy, \$357,820,860.41. Still further appropriations for the War and Navy departments have been made, bringing the total military and naval appropriations in 1933-34 well over one billion dollars.

A new world war is threatening. With the present war danger growing daily, we shall see still sharper cuts in education for the

people; more school doors will be closed; more salary slashes will hit the teachers. The people can demand *schools instead of battle-ships*. The time to stop the coming war is now—by daily struggles.

### *Propaganda in Our Schools*

The bankers and businessmen who decide how the school budgets are to be cut also direct and control what shall be taught. No public school in the United States dares to teach the truth about the struggle between workers and employers. The teaching of "civics" is required but no teacher dares to tell his children how crooked business and politics work in the town where he teaches. All teachers of history and civics whether they are intelligent enough to know the truth or not, are forced to teach lies to the children. If they will not, they are fired.

No American student or teacher has any real voice in deciding what his school shall teach. We know that telling the facts of science which concern religion is forbidden by law in many states. A famous example was the Scopes case in Tennessee, where a biology teacher was thrown out of his position and tried in court because he dared to teach the theory of evolution.

The teaching of lies is not limited to religion. Textbook writers are forced to write lies, to leave out the truth, to glorify war, to picture wealthy men as heroes, and even to prepare special editions of their books for certain sections of the country. No text book can be sold in the South that tells how the Negro is exploited or gives the facts about the Civil War. Such truth is taboo. Professor Counts declares "a text book in history must not offend the D. A. R., the K. of C., the American Legion, the K. K. K. and a host of other organizations." In Chicago, Mayor William Hale Thompson ordered the history books thrown out and new texts put in. He censored the library and made a bonfire in the street of forbidden books, exactly as Hitler has done in Fascist Germany. These acts were part of his attempts to mislead the teachers and other workers by posing as a patriot.

American schools do everything possible to glorify war and teach unthinking obedience. Troops of Boy Scouts are organized



by teachers and Scout meetings held in the schools. All this is made very exciting and interesting for the children, while the real purposes of the leaders are hidden from them. *Citizens' Organizations and the Civic Training of Youth* by Bessie Pierce explains the process in detail.

Later, in high school or college, R. O. T. C. units are organized by the government to help in this work of militarizing the youth. Tuition and uniforms are provided free and bands blare. In some schools units of girls are recruited, with lieutenants, captains and colonels appointed to drill their classmates and advertise the army by dress parades. Merchants offer prizes for the boys who have succeeded best in learning how to murder in war. When these lures fail many high schools and colleges force the boys to take military training as the price of attendance. If they refuse, they are expelled.

Children in American schools are taught to obey orders without question and have little voice in the management of the schools. Life is entirely different in the new schools of the Soviet Union. No teacher there would dare strike a child. Even John Dewey is forced to admit, "It is disconcerting to find Russian children much more democratically organized than are our own." And Dr. Lucy Wilson reports, "Nowhere else (except in private and experimental schools) have I ever seen as large a proportion of capable, happy and eager children."

In our own schools, such democracy as Professor Dewey has found, or such happy, eager children as Dr. Wilson has seen, are only possible if the parents and teachers direct the policies of the schools, as they do in the Soviet Union. But here the ruling capitalist class now openly declares that school work must be curtailed so that bankers may receive their interest on city loans. They insist only on the essential work of molding obedient young wage earners, and future soldiers. They are not concerned with what the youngsters feel and think, or what they learn.

Students who protest against school conditions are constantly attacked by police, beaten, and often jailed, as happened in 1933 in the case of the picketing students of Crane Junior College in Chicago who were protesting against the complete shut-down of the largest junior college in the world as an "economy" gesture.

Thirty students courageously struggling against military training and preparations for war in their college were suspended and expelled at the College of the City of New York in 1933. Many instances of such autocratic action by heads of institutions can be cited.

Teachers who have had the integrity and courage to defend and lead their students have been victimized by the authorities. At the College of the City of New York, Oakley Johnson was dismissed after he had repeatedly refused to resign as faculty adviser of the Social Problems Club. Donald Henderson of Columbia University was refused reappointment, in spite of the demands of his students, when he persisted in his radical activities and led student demonstrations for improved student conditions at the university.

### *Unemployment, Speed-Up and Stretch-Out*

The crisis in education and the smashing of educational standards in the United States has not struck the children alone. The Unemployed Teachers' Association of New York City estimates that there are at least 10,000 unemployed teachers in that city and 250,000 in the United States. All of these teachers could go to work tomorrow. Tax the great wealth of the United States to provide adequate education for all our children of school age and it could happen almost overnight.

Just as factory workers, miners and white collar workers have been forced into the growing ranks of the unemployed, so thousands of experienced, able teachers have been thrown out of their positions; thousands more are certain to be forced out soon. No one is safe while all are in danger. In the colleges and universities, the American Association of University Professors reported (1932) that nearly all the instructors and part-time assistants had been sacrificed to protect the places of professors. Professor S. H. Slichter announced (1933) that 87 higher institutions fired 1,500 instructors. There is no "share-the-work" among these intellectual aristocrats. At Ohio State University, 184 of the faculty were discharged, 57 instructors and 127 fellows and assistants; 73 were cut to part time. At the University of Michigan,

66 of the faculty were dismissed and 122 given part-time positions. Other dismissals from 1932 to 1934 include: Colorado, 18; Cornell, 44; Illinois, 27; Kansas, 31; Northwestern, 50; Oregon, 55; Utah, 8; Wyoming, 35.

The situation in the public schools is even more critical. Each year since 1926 there have been about 200,000 more children in the public schools than in the previous year. The United States Office of Education reports (1933) that,

For the nation as a whole, school enrollment increased during the year about 385,000 pupils. Most of this increase has come in the high schools, the most expensive portion of our public school system.

Yet we have seen that there has been a large reduction in the number of teachers. In Arkansas there are 45 pupils per teacher and in five other states including Georgia and North Carolina 40. An added load equal to that of 40,000 teachers is being carried this year by the teachers of the United States without extra salary and at three-fourths their 1930 salaries.

Newly-trained teachers are being turned out by our teachers' colleges by the thousand. But there are no jobs for them to fill. At the same time teachers in their prime are refused employment because they are "too old." The Educational Service Bureau of Teachers' College, Columbia University, sets 35 as the deadline and advises older teachers to stay in their positions until they are offered new places. Practically everywhere conditions are growing worse. As a part of their economy drive, New York City bankers have abolished 500 teaching positions and closed the teacher training schools in addition to cutting salaries. This is in the world's richest city, boasting 5,464 millionaires in 1931.

Chicago provides a classic example of how unemployment is increased, teachers overloaded and efficiency decreased. Practically no new high school teachers have been employed for nearly two years, although high school enrollment has increased by 7,432. Classes are broken up and distributed thus adding to the overload of unpaid teachers. The teaching load has been increased to six and seven periods a day, with study hall and home room or division work added. Junior high schools have been abolished and a thousand teachers fired. Crane Junior College,

the parental school, and all continuation schools except one, have been abolished. Kindergartens and physical education instruction has been reduced 50%. Such positions as assistant directors of music, orchestra and band leaders, elementary school teachers of physical education, printing, manual training and household arts are abolished. Teachers in charge of lunch rooms at a cost of \$65 a month were ordered replaced by political appointees at \$150. The staff of the Chicago Normal College, the training school for Chicago teachers, was cut from 79 to 45 in 1933. All but a few summer schools have been eliminated. Vocational schools have been closed and community centers abandoned. And 16 out of 22 evening schools have been closed.

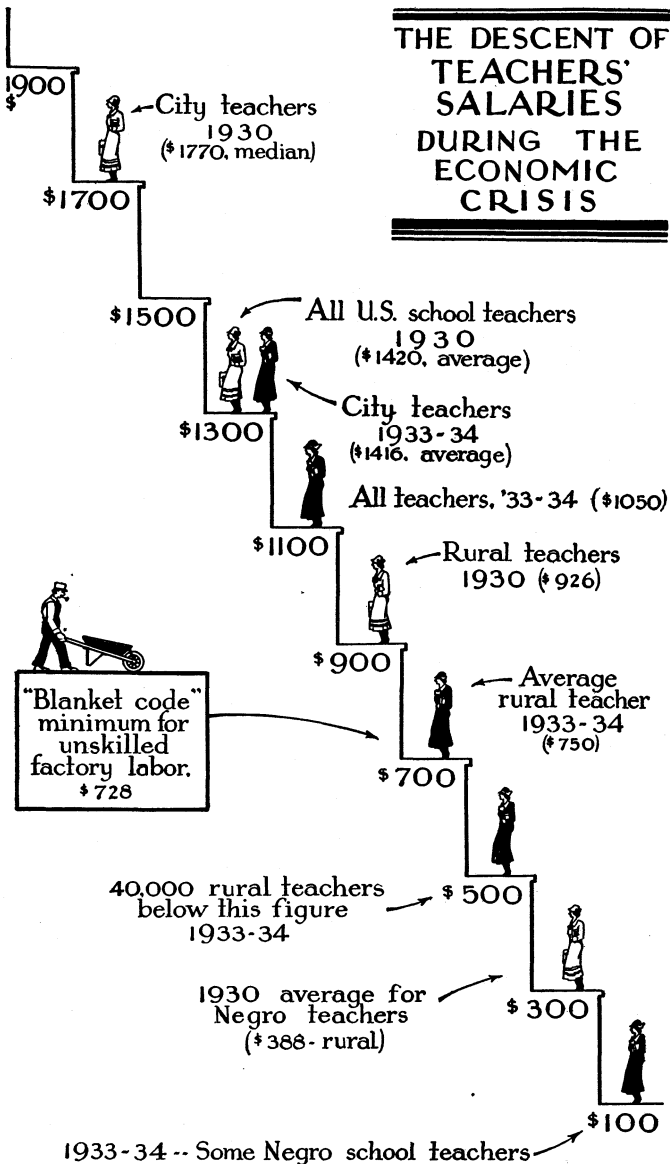
Tenure laws have been broken down in many places besides Chicago. Boards of education do this in California by firing the teachers at the end of the three-year probationary period and re-hiring others.

To unemployment, dismissals, insecurity, salary cuts, longer hours and unbearable teaching loads, must be added the pressure of added paper work. Cuts in the office force throw the heavy record work upon the teachers. This tremendous burden has meant broken health for many teachers. Even before the crisis, nervous diseases were common. In Chicago, more than 400 of the 14,000 teachers are reported to be in sanitariums. Numbers have died for lack of medical attention, and recently, Paul Schneider, penniless 44-year old teacher at the Washburne Continuation School, shot himself to death. He left a wife, three small children, and the taxes and interest on the mortgage of their house unpaid. His wife told reporters that the grocery stores had refused them further credit, and they were starving.

### *Teachers' Salaries*

In 1932-33, cuts in teachers' salary scales (not actual cash received) averaged about 9% and in 1934 at least 26%. They were made in 80% to 90% of all city systems. W. H. Gaunmitz shows in Circular No. 80 of the Federal Office of Education that the average reductions in rural schools have been greater.

# THE DESCENT OF TEACHERS' SALARIES DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS



—U. S. Office of Education

And even in a city like Toledo, Ohio, reductions amounted to 55%. But no figures yet collected show the widespread practice of returning to the school board a month or more in salary, nor forced contributions for relief, nor the fact that salaries due have not been paid in many cities and whole districts and sections. A survey made by the Illinois State Teachers Association in 1934 reported 59 Illinois cities, exclusive of Chicago, where salaries were from two months to three years overdue. In 24 Illinois cities, salaries were being paid in scrip, subject to discount of 10 to 50%.

### *Sub-Code Teachers*

Teachers in New York and California are the best paid; those in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia the worst. In North Carolina, teachers' salaries were cut 33% in 1933, and the state was forced to take over all schools. The Mississippi average for all teachers was only \$620 a year even in 1929-30. Average salaries for the country as a whole have been far below those of other professional groups.

It must be emphasized that salary schedules do not represent money actually paid, but only what boards of education agree to pay. More than \$40,000,000 in warrants (promises or pieces of paper in lieu of cash) given to teachers are still unpaid. No one has complete information today, and we may never know what the actual cuts in salary have been in these years as a result of "scrip," "gifts" and payless paydays for teachers.

Chicago teachers were the first to face these attacks, but the conditions there have since developed in hundreds of cities throughout the United States. The New York City administration, for example, has made an agreement with its bankers which in practice makes them virtual dictators over the expenditures of the city. Salaries of the teachers for the month of November, 1933, were paid only when the Teachers' Pension Board consented to reinvest \$4,500,000 in New York City ten-year bonds. This sum was used to complete the full payroll. Had the teachers' pension money not been returned to the city in this way, New York teachers would have experienced their first payless pay-

day; the bankers would have considered that the city had broken its agreement and refused to advance further money.

In Chicago, salaries were slashed 10.5% to 30% in 1932, and 15% more in 1933. The school year was shortened two weeks in 1932, and all holidays are without pay. By the spring of 1933, teachers' pay checks were almost a year in arrears, and in March, 1934, salaries were unpaid since May, 1933. Police and political appointees in the city government have been paid. Many teachers have been evicted from their homes while their classes have gone on strike in their defense.

In addition to being many months behind, salaries of Chicago teachers have, for more than two years, been paid in scrip or tax warrants with occasional dribbles of cash. The Board of Education promised to live within the budget of \$48,000,000, set up by a self-appointed "Citizens' Committee"; this reduction of 34.2% of the legal revenue for the schools was later cut \$5,000,000 more. These cuts are to be compared with a 10.3% reduction in other expenses of the city government. The result was a budget \$5,000,000 under the deadline set by the Columbia University Strayer Survey as the lowest cost possible for an efficient school system. Further reductions are threatened. These are the conditions in the second largest and richest city of the United States—the sixth city of the world.

How have the Chicago teachers endured in this drive of the money masters? They live from day to day. Their reserves are gone; they have borrowed from loan sharks, from friends and acquaintances, and on their life insurance. They are denied unemployment relief. Many are sick, hungry and ragged—all, except a few militants, are in despair at the ruin that faces them. In a radio address, May 6, 1933, Superintendent Bogan admitted:

Many teachers are in physical want. Nearly a year ago a well known charitable organization assisted 500 of the neediest teachers—and the situation is infinitely worse now.

Even in 1932, the Principals' Club found that 6,315 of the 14,000 teachers had unpaid bills, totaling \$3,316,608; they had borrowed \$3,472,047, and suspended payments of \$14,052,486 in property, life insurance, homes and household goods. Losses

through bank failures, depreciated assets, illness and other causes were found to be \$15,543,776. Bank failures had caused losses of \$2,367,003 to 3,177 Chicago teachers.

Eight hundred teachers were paying interest to loan sharks, some at the rate of 42% a year. More than 10,000 persons were wholly dependent on 3,175 of the teachers in the survey.

In December, 1932, one of them wrote:

I am tremendously despondent about the local financial situation. Personally I am "dead broke" and my credit is rapidly becoming exhausted. No salary payment seems to be in sight. Many of the teachers are in a worse position than I am.

Teachers' salary conditions throughout the United States are rapidly becoming desperate. One-third of the teachers this year will be paid less than \$750. Eighty-four thousand rural teachers are receiving less than \$450 this year. About 200,000 certificated teachers are jobless. (George F. Zook, Commissioner of Education, February, 1934.)

### *Discrimination*

Separate salary schedules or rates of pay for men and women teachers are common throughout the United States except in a few large cities. Women are generally paid 20 to 30% less for the same work. Rural teachers in some parts of the United States are working for their room and board. Negro teachers are systematically paid much less than white teachers throughout the South. There have been cases in sections of Virginia where white teachers received \$945 and Negro teachers \$200 yearly. Such favoritism is a customary part of the racial discrimination through which the Negro masses are exploited and unity between Negroes and whites prevented.

### *Enemies of the Schools*

The destruction of our educational system is being planned, organized and carried out by the very men into whose hands the advancement of education was entrusted. Boards of education,



organizations of leading citizens, Chambers of Commerce and professional patriotic societies as well as educators and local, state and federal governments are uniting to destroy the educational opportunities of the masses.

This work is an accepted part of the role of our educational misleaders. At a word or a hint from their masters, such "authorities" as Professor Henry Morrison of the University of Chicago are ready with hypocritical groans and tears to help boards of education destroy the schools. On December 29, 1931, before the Chicago Board of Education subcommittee, Professor Morrison and Director Charles Judd, with the cooperation of Superintendent Bogan, outlined item by item the vicious attack that has since been made on the Chicago schools. They advised cuts in salaries, buildings, physical education, janitor service, laboratories, the normal college, Crane Junior College, continuation schools, and the school year. They suggested the elimination of home economics, social activities, vocational education, the Bureau of Child Study, the Bureau of Compulsory Education, Visual Instruction, dental instruction, baths, transportation, vacation schools, adult education, home relief, and penny lunches, all involving a total cut of \$8,000,000. Trustee Savage thanked Morrison in these prophetic words: "I am sure that at the conclusion of our work [cutting the children's education] we will have benefited a great deal by the suggestions you have offered here today."

Boards of education usually represent the banking and financial interests of the community. This is not as true in villages and towns where they are elected as in the metropolitan centers such as Detroit and Chicago where they are political appointees. But everywhere their hands hold the patronage, hire and fire teachers, fix salaries, make the contracts for building and supplies, determine taxation and protect wealth.

In the past boards of education have served their money masters well, but during the crisis they have not been as efficient in their service to the capitalists. So special "committees of action" are springing up and operating, either openly or secretly, for the "protection" of taxpayers. They adopt various names. Some frankly call themselves "taxpayers' committees." In New York, they have formed the "Citizens' Budget Committee" and

in Chicago, the "Citizens' Committee." These self-appointed groups represent the real estate and utility interests, the railroads, the banks, and big business generally. Labor, the professions, the schools, the small taxpayers or the common man are not represented on such committees.

Twenty-nine members of the Chicago Citizen's Committee are known by name: Fred W. Sargent, the chairman, is president of the Northwestern Railway and a director of the Bell Telephone Co. of Illinois. (His railroad has borrowed heavily from the Reconstruction Finance Corp. Sargent's salary was \$61,000.) Other members such as Newton C. Farr, Graham Aldis, Ernest R. Graham, and D. F. Kelly are big businessmen. George W. Rossetter, the vice-chairman, is head of the Chamber of Commerce.

In New York City in 1932, 21 of the 51 directors of the self-appointed Citizens' Budget Committee were connected with the 25 leading banks; 12 represent real estate groups, and 5, public utilities. The Morgan-Rockefeller interests dominate.

Horace K. Corbin, vice-president of the Fidelity Union Trust Co., is also secretary of the Citizens' Advisory Finance Committee of Newark, which "advises" the administration on matters of retrenchment and economy.

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States is another powerful group striking at every public school and at every working class child from kindergarten to university. Here are its directions for the attack on the schools.\*

1. Shorten the school day one hour.
2. Reduce the high school curriculum from four to three years.
3. Reduce the elementary school curriculum from eight to seven years.
4. Transfer one-third the cost of all instruction above high school level from taxpayers to pupil.
5. Impose a fee on high school students.
6. Discontinue kindergartens.
7. Discontinue evening classes.
8. Shorten school year not to exceed 12%.
9. Reduction in teachers' salaries not to exceed 10%.
10. Increase teaching hours.
11. Suspend automatic increases in salaries.

\* *American Teacher*, April, 1933.

12. Increase size of classes.
13. Simplify overhead administration and centralize responsibility.
14. Simplify curriculum.
15. Postpone new capital outlay for buildings and replacements.
16. Repair and maintain physical plants.
17. Transfer supervisors to classrooms.
18. Economize on operation of physical plants.
19. Economize on purchase of supplies.
20. Reduce cost of collecting school funds and of debt service by consolidating and refunding of outstanding indebtedness where possible.

Chambers of Commerce all over the United States are joining this attack. The abolition of free public high schools and colleges was recommended to the New York City Board of Estimate by the Flatbush Chamber of Commerce as a part of its drive. (*New York World-Telegram*, January 27, 1934.)

This systematic attack of big business is well under way, but the extent and rapidity with which it is being carried out is known to only a few leaders.

The wealthy Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement (sic) of Teaching also fights to help the bankers curtail school facilities. The 1932 report of this organization strikes out viciously at our public schools.

President Henry Suzzallo of the Foundation, noted during his lifetime as a "liberal" professor, opened the attack with these words:

Within the last two years the suggestion has often been heard that partial relief from our educational tax burdens might be had if communities needing such relief were to impose a small tuition fee on high school students. Usually this is not possible. . . .

Yet the serious financial crisis which now confronts the country, if long persistent, may yet modify the prevalent point of view.

In the same report, President Emeritus Henry S. Pritchett urges:

First, the purchase of books by the state should cease. The American people are being made soft by this sort of coddling.

Second, the secondary school should carry a tuition fee as it does in Europe, and the standard of admission should be such as to exclude the manifestly unfit.

The Carnegie Foundation proposes to throw the burden of the economic crisis on the children of those least able to bear it: the working masses.

City and state governments, as well as the federal government, carry out the demands of the finance capitalists in attacking workers' education. They are particularly useful to tax dodgers. Low assessed valuations are placed on properties owned by public utilities and other great interests. How governments and the capitalists work together in another way is described in the *Monthly Bulletin* of the Men Teachers of Chicago, December, 9, 1932:

Facts brought out in the courts indicate that a large number of big Loop and adjacent properties have paid no taxes at all in the last three, four or even five years. Some buildings which are four or five years old have never paid any taxes. Such a condition makes us strongly suspect a tax-dodging racket. The procedure would seem to consist in the refusal of the large property owner, through filed suits to pay his taxes over long periods, when a large sum would be owing. He would then offer to compromise for a lump sum, always much less than the lawful bill, and the County Treasurer's office would make the compromise on the alleged theory that the public treasury really got more money that way than it would through the courts.

All this is according to "due process of law." Like the dominant Morgans and Rockefellers, and the once popular Wiggins and Mitchell, the men who do it are feted and praised as the heroes of our American civilization.

When the bankers cry, "The poor man can't pay his taxes," we know it is only the usual attempt to cover the truth. The poor man has paid his taxes. Hayden Bell, official tax attorney for Cook County (the Chicago area) was forced to report that "only 3% of tax bills under \$500 were unpaid." Everywhere the financial interests—the capitalists—are the tax delinquents.

Governments are also useful tools of wealth in other ways. Mayor La Guardia of New York City made specific pledges to protect education during his 1933 campaign, and broke them the day he took office. Mayor Kelly of Chicago appointed a Board of Education that promptly abolished the junior high schools and junior college. Governor Erinhaus of North Carolina took over all the schools of the state and cut the budget 33%.

The Washington government is likewise busy preparing the ground for increasing nationwide attacks on education, as a part of its struggle to force the workers to bear the burden of the crisis. Dr. William John Cooper, former Commissioner of Education of the United States, himself outlined the coming frontal attack on the nation's high schools. His leading article in the November, 1932, issue of *School Life*, official government monthly magazine, might well be entitled, "What American Capitalists May Learn from European Fascists for the Efficient Sabotaging of American Education."

Commissioner Cooper's travels in fascist Germany and Italy and "democratic" England were particularly instructive. As a result of what he found, he presented carefully cloaked educational proposals which would have these results:

1. Close one out of every five high schools.
2. Send four out of every five children out on the streets or into jobs now held by grown men and women.
3. Make the tuition rates so high that only children of the rich would be admitted.
4. Stop the mass movement into colleges.

If such fascist "lessons" are not to become a reality, they must be exposed now.

Commissioner Cooper and the Carnegie Foundation are in close agreement. Their plans fit the actions of reactionary Boards of Education, the proposals of Citizens' Committees and the program of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. If we allow them to carry out their plans, they will ruthlessly destroy every advantage the American working class has won in its struggle for education.

### *A Contrast—Education in the Soviet Union*

In sharp contrast to the fierce struggle in the U. S. A. and the growing attack on our schools by the wealthy, stands the record of the Soviet Union.

All education in the Soviet Union is for those who work for their living. Under the soviets, the workers are the rulers and

everything is done for their welfare. As a result, there is no other country where education is expanding and growing at such a rate.

The aim of Soviet education is to develop generations of children who will build a Communist society. The schools under capitalism force the children to believe in the system of profit making and exploitation under the open or masked rule of bankers and industrialists. The workers who control Soviet schools also have a definite viewpoint. They teach that exploitation for private profit is a criminal act. They believe that the community owes every child a complete education, and they recognize that child care is their first fundamental duty.

More than 80,000,000 people—half the total population—are enrolled in Soviet schools, taught by 1,300,000 educational workers. More than 26,000,000 children are regularly going to school in 1934. The advance of mass culture and education during the first Five-Year Plan was greater than during the centuries of Russia's entire history. From 1927 to 1932 the number of children in kindergartens and pre-schools increased 14 times. The number of children in primary schools doubled, the number in seven-year schools tripled, and the number in factory and shop schools increased eleven times. Illiteracy has been reduced from 70% in 1913 to less than 10% in 1933. Yet this great achievement is only a beginning in overcoming the backwardness in which the masses were forced to live by the tsarist rulers, and in raising their cultural level.

These tremendous advances of Soviet education are known to leaders in education everywhere. Even several years ago Professor Counts of Columbia University reported in *The Soviet Challenge to America*, "The educational achievements to date are stupendous." John Dewey wrote on his return from the U. S. S. R. in 1928:

One of the most stimulating experiences of my life. . . . It (Soviet education) is a going concern; a self-moving organization. . . .

Carleton Washburne, Superintendent of the widely known Winnetka School system, wrote in 1932:

As an example of what can be done in recreating human society through education, Russia is an inspiring example to the rest of the world.

Every possible help is given the students in Soviet schools. More than 80% of them in the higher schools receive allowances of 35 to 190 roubles a month, paid according to the quality of their work. They pay five roubles for lodging, including laundry, about 32 roubles for food, and are given reduced rates on the railroads, trolleys and at the theatre and movies. In addition they receive full workers' pay, insurance, and sick benefits when they alternate work with study in shops, mines and schools and factories during their practice periods. The rooms are well-lighted, large and airy, especially in the new schools. Dormitory buildings have separate sections for those who are married as well as for single young men and women. For each dormitory there is a nursery in which trained nursery school teachers take care of the children of married couples.

The most backward tsarist provinces are given special grants and are showing the greatest advances. In Balkaria in the Caucasus, there was only one school under the Tsar. In 1932 there were 73. Kabarda has 300 schools to compare with 12 under the Tsar. The number of teachers in the Soviet Union has doubled since 1925. By the August, 1932, decree, at the time when salaries were first being sharply cut in the United States, teachers' wages and standards of living were raised 33% in the Soviet Union, and they were given all the special advantages open to other workers. Instead of unemployment there is a rapidly growing demand for well-trained teachers. In the Moscow region alone in 1931 some 5,225 new teachers took up their work in 433 new schools.

In the Soviet Union, the overwhelming majority of teachers are members of the Education Workers Union, a branch of the world wide Education Workers International, which includes janitors, clerks and workers in every department of the school. This union has great power and guarantees working class democracy for students and teachers.

In addition to their other advantages, educational workers are given complete social benefits such as vacations with full pay, social insurance, maternity leave with pay, free health service,

rest homes, improved living conditions and pensions. Salaries are paid regularly and there is no unemployment or economic insecurity. The teachers have a real voice in educational legislation and in curriculum making; their teacher delegates represent them in making the laws. And they have the satisfaction of being accepted as citizens and people who are conscious that they are building a new social order.

### *Pretending to Fight*

Organizations do the work of the world. Without organization, society cannot even exist. Yet it is in their organizations that teachers and parents who wish to fight for education are weakest. The employers and bankers have their powerful organizations for the purpose of increasing their profits, and for attacking the support given to education. The teachers of the United States are now beginning to build their own organizations to fight in the interests of education. But they are hampered in this work by many who only pretend to fight.

The National Education Association is the largest, most inclusive national organization of teachers. It has been developed as a kind of company union and is controlled by superintendents and administrators who depend on the favor of employers for their jobs. In a crisis they always sacrifice education to the profits of employers. Proof of this was the recent action of the National Education Association in holding its summer meeting (1933) in Chicago. Chicago bankers (General Charles G. Dawes and the late Melvin Traylor) were boosting their private Century of "Progress" exposition and denying the teachers their overdue pay. By boldly taking the convention away from Chicago, leaders of the National Education Association could have registered a powerful protest against the bankers' attack on the Chicago schools with little or no risk. They refused.

The Journal of the N. E. A. has emphasized that "The attack on the schools is highly financed by greedy interests who wish to escape taxes or keep the people in ignorance." Yet throughout the crisis the National Education Association leaders have refused to act. They have refused to name the bankers and business men



who are the "greedy interests." They have not demanded that public officials pay the teachers before paying interest or principal on school bonds or bankers' loans.

In spite of the potential power of a nationwide organization with thousands of members, the N. E. A. leaders have not made the slightest effort to build a fighting front. They have not helped the membership to organize locally so that they can mobilize their full strength against those who are cutting wages and school services. They will not "stoop" to holding demonstrations or sending mass delegations with vigorous demands. The N. E. A. has limited its members to paper action, to telegrams and to being content with polite statements issued by its "leaders." Such conscious, planned inaction stifles and paralyzes defense of the schools.

State teachers' associations are loosely organized and even more futile than the N. E. A. Like it, they collect much useful information but will not act to defend education for the masses. They sit by idly and treacherously while the children are sacrificed.

The Progressive Education Association stands for all that is new and "progressive" in teaching. Their "liberal" leaders have made genuine advances in developing methods and materials to protect and develop the children in their care. But their support comes from private schools and wealthy communities. They are as weak and supine in the struggle against attacks on the public schools as the N. E. A. and the state associations.

Professional groups of teachers such as the Modern Language Association, National Council of Mathematics Teachers, National Council of Teachers of English, and the Rotarian-minded Phi Delta Kappa—live in an ivory tower remote from the real world. They are too much devoted to their narrow "scholarship" even to recognize the existence of the world crisis. By such shallow pretences they try to undermine and destroy the honest scholarship that faces the fundamental problems of life.

### *Teachers' Unions*

The American Federation of Teachers, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, is a union which once fought

vigorously in the interests of teachers and pupils. Since the war a marked change has taken place. Today the actions of its leaders are aimed to confuse its members and to prevent genuine defense of the schools.

They organize sham fights against employers' attacks just as the officials of other American Federation of Labor unions do. Their chief tactic is to refuse to prepare any real defense and to wait until the employers offer the teachers one of two evils. Then they accept the lesser one and call it a victory. This is what happened in December, 1932, in New York City when the bankers threatened to revoke mandatory protection of salaries, feeling certain that teachers would rather accept a wage-cut. Instead of leading the teachers in an uncompromising fight against both evils, instead of calling on teachers to mass before the legislature, with prepared demands that money be obtained from large incomes, they discouraged those militant members who wanted to go to Albany; and they promptly joined with the other organizations in accepting the cut. It is significant that Associate Superintendent Mandel of the Board of Education later congratulated Dr. A. Lefkowitz, the legislative representative of the union, on his fine spirit of cooperation in drawing up a "graded" salary cut which favors the highly paid supervisors at the expense of the classroom teachers.

Mrs. Johanna Lindlof of the Kindergarten-6B Teachers Association of New York City proposed a salary cut as an alternative to control by the New York City Board of Estimate. (New York *World-Telegram*, January 27, 1934.) In her apology for *La Guardia* she said, "I felt just broken hearted to see the man because he couldn't bear to hear me say he had broken his word." Such "leaders" also expel from the union militant members of the rank and file. The net result of their action is to weaken the fighting front and play into the hands of the wealthy enemies of the school and their puppets, the politicians.

In the New York City local of the American Federation of Teachers, Dr. Abraham Lefkowitz, by refusing to use mass tactics, helped the bankers make a 6% to 8% cut in teachers' salaries in 1933. He attempted to expel those militant leaders of the rank and file who opposed his policies. Earlier he brought a fellow member of the executive board, Isidore Begun, before Superin-

tendent O'Shea on charges. Mr. Begun has been the leader of the militants in the local. Dr. Henry Linville, President of the American Federation of Teachers, and President of the New York local, testified against Mr. Begun before Superintendent O'Shea.

Throughout the attack on the Chicago teachers, Linville has blocked all effective union aid for them. He is co-signer with Florence C. Hanson of Chicago of the weak and dangerous NRA code for education submitted by the American Federation of Teachers.

Agnes Clohesy, president of the Elementary Teachers' Union in Chicago, opposed the parades that won partial pay there (see pages 35-38). Miss Wilde, president of the Women High School Teachers Union, openly apologized for the bankers and excused them while they were refusing to pay the teachers. In describing the defeatist maneuvers of the American Federation of Teachers responsible for the disaster, a well-known Chicago teacher wrote of the struggles there:

The unions have insisted upon confining their activities to the school emergency alone, and have refused to see that the dictatorship which has been set up in the city of Chicago in the interests of the privileged groups is but part of a program to destroy whatever advantages the masses have managed to build up.

The American Federation of Teachers has little strength outside New York City, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Atlanta and a few other cities. The tactics of its union officials in these cities can be fought and changed by exposing them before the eyes of the honest rank and file members.

In Chicago, this work of exposing them has not yet been well organized. In New York, militant union members have formed a rank and file opposition against the misleaders and have carried out a persistent fight on the floor at membership meetings. In the face of resistance by the union officials, they have been able to rally the membership to support their program. Their resolutions for direct action on many issues have often been passed against the will of the officials. In the defense of the victimized teachers mentioned later, the opposition exposed the attempts within the union to sabotage the fight.

The beginnings of such opposition can be seen also in a number of state federations of teachers where dissatisfaction with the treacherous leadership is beginning to find expression through individual members. This opposition should be organized.

### *Honest Teachers*

But futile and insincere protests against the attacks of the bankers is not all. There have been some real fights made by teachers who see that only by meeting these capitalist forces with uncompromising hostility, will teachers be able to defend educational and living standards.

So sharp and true has been their fighting, so "dangerous" their leadership, that the forces of reaction took immediate steps to halt it. Isidore Blumberg, a New York teacher, was summarily discharged after a deliberate frame-up by the educational authorities to prove him incompetent. For the same reasons Isidore Begun and Mrs. Williana Burroughs, a Negro teacher, both leaders of the same fighting sort, were discharged. The New York Board of Education eagerly seized the chance to expel them when these two teachers led a militant group of fellow-teachers to defend Mr. Blumberg before a meeting of the Board. They were charged with bringing the Board into disrepute, and with conduct unbecoming a teacher!

These three cases do not stand alone. Throughout the country, hundreds of courageous teachers have been victimized in various ways for fighting the vicious drive against them and the children. They are transferred to schools distant from home; extra assignments and disagreeable duties are given them; their salary increments are suspended and teaching loads increased. These and many other measures are taken by the educational authorities to intimidate active and militant teachers.

Such attacks can be checked only if teachers learn to use the strength of their numbers. Boards will hesitate to victimize them when a vigorous reaction comes from thousands of teachers instead of from the few militants who have so far protested in New York.

## *Mass Action by Teachers*

Mass action is a new weapon for teachers. In the past they have been too polite—or too timid—to fight. But they are changing under the vicious attacks of the money classes. Many are learning through daily struggle, through victory and defeat, to fight beside their pupils and parents for bread and shelter. They are learning that their common interests are directly opposed to those of bankers and industrialists.

In the bitter Cuban mass struggles against Machado, the teachers organized widespread demonstrations. Police and soldiers attacked and broke up their parades on July 29, 1933, in Santa Clara, Camaguey, and Consolacion de Sur when they demanded their back pay. (*New York Times*, July 30, 1933.) Twelve of the many wounded with clubs and machetes were taken to the Emergency Hospital. In spite of such terror, the Cuban teachers are continuing their struggle.

Chicago teachers were also starved into revolt. Promises, delays, and treachery on the part of the school board, administration and their own leaders, finally forced them to fight for their overdue pay, and for the right to live. With their pay checks nearly a year in arrears, evictions, tax sales, foreclosures, sickness and hunger were robbing them of the bare right to exist. Faced by extermination, they took their struggle to the streets.

Saturday, April 22, 1933, and Monday, April 24, 35,000 teachers and parents demonstrated, and “raided” the banks. At the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Co., the teachers, 1,000 strong, paraded through the main banking floor. When President Leavell went into hiding, they searched his private office. (*Chicago American*, April 24, 1933.)

After half an hour of milling and shouting in the street before the closed doors of the City National Bank, the demonstrating teachers called for Dawes and the crowd began to chant:

All we want's our pay!  
All we want's our pay!  
Charley got \$90,000,000—but—  
All we want's our pay!

Brigadier-General Dawes, backed by a line of uniformed guards, finally, after an hour, opened the door and talked to 500 teachers. His only contribution was a flash of profanity: "To hell with troublemakers!"

"Raids" on the banks continued and on Wednesday, April 26, 1933, the same day on which the teachers of Ireland held their one-day strike against wage cuts, Chicago city and private police slugged and beat the marchers with their clubs and fists to give them a taste of ruling class "democracy."

Days of waiting passed while the teachers lived on the petty cash doled out to them on April 22, and a new upsurge developed. In spite of the treachery of their leaders, a great new mass demonstration was called for Saturday, May 13. The bankers cursed and Mayor Kelly telephoned Superintendent William J. Bogan to call off his "hell cats." Early Friday afternoon, May 12, the following mimeographed bulletin was distributed in all the schools:

Information has come to Mr. Bogan's office from high authority that bankers will refuse to provide the \$12,000,000 for salaries for October, November and December if the proposed demonstration or parade of teachers is held tomorrow.

Please pass this information on to teachers and other employees at once.

The effect was instantaneous. By the light of this reactionary torch flare even the dullest timid conservative saw the necessity for action. Saturday morning the teachers massed in Grant Park to march on the Loop banks. President Traylor sent for John Fewkes, a Tilden High School teacher-leader, sprung from the ranks. He promised him that three months' salaries would be paid the teachers if the demonstration were called off. The opening of the World's Fair—Chicago capitalists' private showing of a century of "progress"—must not be marred by disorder and bloodshed. Finance capital, unwilling, paid \$12,000,000 in teachers' salaries to protect its investment.

Chicago teachers had won a notable temporary victory against the bankers. Better—they had learned to fight and mobilize their organized forces against the enemies of the schools. That the teachers of the nation were watching and learning from their

successes is proved by such successful strikes against payless pay-days as that of the teachers of Old Forge, Pa., in September, 1933.

### *Mass Action by Students*

In Chicago it was the high school students who led the successful mass action in defense of their teachers. Aroused by the bankers' repeated refusals to pay their teachers, 20,000 students from Englewood, Calumet and Austin high schools, struck on April 6, 1933.

The next day their militant action spread to other sections of Chicago in spite of the strikebreaking activities of Principal Hiram B. Loomis of the Hyde Park High School, and of certain teachers. At Fenger, Sabin Junior High School, the 57th Branch of High Park High School, Franklin Junior High and Haynes Elementary School, thousands came out. Nearly 300 colored pupils of Burke Elementary School walked out. South Side police arrested 20 pickets from Calumet High School who had gone to arouse Bowen High School. Police sent to the Calumet High School and Morgan Park High School found the R.O.T.C. acting as strikebreaking guards. But the strike went on.

At Crane Junior College, Rudolph Lapp, organizer for the National Student League, and Yetta Brashofsky, a National Student League member, were expelled for addressing the students. Teachers joined the strike by telephoning requests to be put on "sick leave."

The National Student League, the Young Communist League and the Young People's Socialist League all endorsed the strike and helped to carry it forward. On April 8, the Young Communist League printed a broadside, the *Young Worker Supplement*, announcing that 30,000 elementary, junior and senior high school students were supporting the strike. The National Student League declared, "The students must continue the strike until the teachers get paid. Students must consolidate the strike movement in each school so that it can spread. Do not listen to the principals who attempt to discourage the strike. You have shown your spirit and militancy. Continue it."

The teachers learned quickly from their pupils. Four days of

spirited strikes and demonstrations had convinced them of the necessity of mass protest. The ferment stirred them to action.

On April 11, 1,500 teachers demonstrated in front of the Chicago City Hall. A few days later, 7,900, and on April 15 and 22, more than 25,000 teachers, parents and students joined great mass demonstrations. They marched in a united front with 20 bands and flying banners. Eager high school freshmen were there beside aged teachers ready for retirement. The Englewood High School had a banner in the parade a block long. Many principals joined with their teachers and pupils and some even urged that their schools come 100% strong. "The time to act is here," they said.

All the shop and art classes stopped their work to make banners for the demonstration. The town was aroused and the bankers gave in. As a direct result of these demonstrations, led by the students, the teachers received their first pay in six months, and thousands of quick-spirited boys and girls had their first lessons in direct mass action.

High school students at Kincaid, Ill., recently struck to support their fathers when the board of education purchased a load of scab coal. On December 12 and 13, 1933, many children in the Philadelphia public schools called a strike in protest against the Scottsboro verdicts. They proved their spirit in the face of intimidation and police terror. Here as elsewhere threats of dismissal, and the spies and stool pigeons universally found in American schools, were no longer able to suppress student protest. Direct police terror had to be used to quell the growing revolt. In Chicago, in September, 1933, the schools were patrolled daily by three to six policemen. When asked why they were there, they said, "To see the teachers don't start anything," or "To see the students don't start anything." They were aided by C. L. Vestal, president of the Men Teachers Union, who helped break the strike in a special broadcast over *WCFL*, September 19, 1933.

New York has set the example for the type of teacher leadership indispensable in our struggle, and Chicago has led the rest of the country in showing the power of student-teacher demonstrations. But the great potential strength of the drive to defeat the vicious onslaught on education lies in adding to these the



power of the masses of parents. Their basic interest in education is equal to that of teachers and students. Honest, militant teacher leadership, aroused masses of students and teachers—these must be united with the power of organized parents.

### *Parents, Teachers and Students Organizations*

Parent-Teacher Associations today are still mainly social clubs. They are not concerned with the pressing problems of the school. They do not organize struggles against over-crowding, starvation, unsanitary conditions, fire hazards, and closing schools. But they must be led to do this. Solid organizations must be built to unite parents, teachers and students into *one* closely knit group. It is the special business of teachers to learn to know the parents and to start these organizations by informing them of the needs of their children. When teachers show parents two children forced into one seat, bad lighting and stuffy rooms, and filthy toilets without soap or towels, parents will be stirred to action. Banded together into a community-wide organization they can prepare their demands at joint meetings of parents and teachers. These demands may then be presented by large mass delegations to the board of education and other officials concerned. Following up these meetings by publishing the demands in the local papers is as important as placing them before the school officers.

Delegations and parades have been organized and used effectively to popularize demands, and when students have acted with them, they have proved themselves valuable aids in the struggle to defend the schools. Parents' groups can be a powerful force in the struggle against the bankers' drive for cheaper education for the children. They can protest effectively against the victimization of such militant New York teachers as Isidore Blumberg, Isidore Begun and Williana Burroughs, as the New York City associations have done. Parent-teacher organizations joined the successful mass protests in Chicago that forced the bankers to pay the teachers at least a part of their overdue salaries.

Parents and teachers may learn how to secure the advantages they demand by studying the experiences of parents and teachers in other communities. At Brighton Beach, in New York City,

the parents held open-air meetings and parades, and sent repeated mass delegations to the School Board to protest overcrowded conditions. They won their demand for a new wing in an overcrowded school. Through similar action the Bronx Parent-Teacher Association of New York won the installation of electric lights in the school. At Brighton Beach two substitute teachers, Helen Weinstein and Ralph Fagan, were transferred for organizing a Parent-Teacher group. They were retained in the system as a result of mass protests to the Board of Education by militant parents.

### *Toward a Fighting Organization*

The captains of industry and finance who rule the United States are cutting the costs of the schools to protect their bonds and short term loans to city governments. They are denying education to the children of the masses, hiring fewer teachers and paying those that remain as low wages as possible in the interest of profits.

Who is to stop them? Certainly not the so-called "professional" teachers' organizations that have permanently settled in the clouds to study new approaches to pedagogy. Certainly not the teacher organizations that give lip service to the need for fighting for children and teachers, and then compromise and lead their members away from the fight when the critical moment approaches. Such organizations either cannot or will not see the clear division which is evident today throughout the capitalist world between those who rule and those who are ruled. The leaders of such organizations continue to feed the illusions of teachers and parents that the forces that dictate this country's educational system will themselves stop the onslaught. Such misleadership is worse than none at all. Such organizations are a menace to the successful fight that must now be carried on.

But within such organizations there is important work for militant teachers. Those who see the dangerous nature of the program laid down by their leaders must meet as a separate group to act on it. After serious discussion of the policies of their leaders they must prepare a list of demands, and a course of action to be adopted by their organization. These demands must

be presented at a membership meeting in the form of resolutions. Discussion at the membership meeting on these resolutions must be led by those who have prepared them. Nor is the battle over when the membership has passed on them. The misleaders will prepare fresh betrayals of the teachers, and these should be met in a similar, *organized* way.

Such organized rank and file opposition will have results. It will make the general membership understand how it is being misled by officials. It will rally the membership to a real program of action and force the "leaders" to adopt it or give way to others who will. It will defend the living standards of the teachers by substituting direct action for the policy of compromise with the teachers' enemies.

Already there are examples of such organized, correct, vigorous action. Such a fighting group is the Unemployed Teachers Association of New York City. It has carried on a series of demonstrations before the New York Board of Education to force through its demands for jobs for the unemployed teachers of New York. In December, 1933, it won a test case to force the Board of Education to appoint over 1,500 teachers on eligible lists who had been employed as substitutes. It has also organized effective parent-teacher groups that have gained results.

### *Teachers Organize Themselves*

Employed teachers too, are also realizing the necessity for effective, aggressive organization. From coast to coast they are forming classroom teachers' organizations. These classroom teachers see that their true fight must begin in the particular school in which they teach. They have begun to see clearly that the classroom teachers of each school must meet, without principals or supervisors present, to discuss their own problems and to form a group to carry out decisions. The next important step is to meet with the faculty of another school which has also discussed its problems and to decide with them how to gather strength in their common fight. In this way all the school faculties in a district can unite in a conference to work out demands and determine ways of tackling the fight. When a mass meeting

is not possible, delegates may be sent to the conference. Thus each school contributes to a set of demands for presentation to the parents' meetings called in each school.

Parents are being organized in the same group way, contributing criticisms and suggestions to the teachers. As one result of such work a collection of parent-teacher groups can be built up to elect delegates to a central executive body which will direct all the groups and to whom they are responsible. If the question of discharging teachers and crowding more children into a class comes up, the executive body decides on immediate protective action for all of the groups. Every school group is asked to send a resolution to the local board, to send delegates to the legislature, or to call a demonstration or mass meeting. In this way there is no let-down among the teachers and parents who as a rule become inactive when a small group of leaders constantly speak for them. Instead they grow and increase their strength because they are called into action, meeting daily in their own groups, in their own schools, under their own democratic classroom teacher leadership.

### *A Program for Action*

The demands listed below have come from American teachers, parents and children, from coast to coast. Some of them are peculiar to our country, but for the most part they are the demands of teachers, parents and children the whole world over. They can be adapted to local needs to serve as a platform for struggle.

1. Every child in school from 5 to 17. Severe penalties enforced by the Federal and State governments against all employers of child labor.
2. No decrease in school budgets anywhere. Immediate diversion of all war funds to education. Systematic yearly increase in state aid for all educational budgets. Increases in school budgets to keep pace with increasing enrollment. A moratorium on the payment of school bonded indebtedness. Scaling down of interest on all school loans and bonds. Continued Federal grants to operate schools in districts where funds cannot be obtained. A special educational tax on incomes above \$10,000

to support federal grants to schools. Graded income taxes and a federal capital levy of 25% on all private fortunes of \$1,000,000 or more, to maintain school budgets and decrease general tax rates on homes and farms. Federal and state aid for rural consolidation.

3. No cuts in teachers' or janitors' pay. Equal pay for qualified educational workers including school clerks and substitutes. Full pay in cash on pay day. One year maternity leave with full pay for married women working in schools. Sabbatical and sick leave with pay for all school employees; unemployment insurance for all employed and unemployed teachers. No restriction on place of residence. Appointment and promotion of all teachers and janitors by means of a merit system; regular annual salary increments.
4. No cuts in the school day or school year. Every school open for the full school year.
5. No overcrowding, and no increase in the teacher load. No class to have more than 32 pupils. A maximum five-hour teaching day. No overtime or extracurricular duties to be added to a normal teaching load until all unemployed teachers are at work.
6. Free schools from pre-school and kindergarten through the university. No tuition fees and no other fees. Scholarships or allowances to cover all food, clothing and lodging for students whose families cannot support them in school.
7. Complete free school health and recreation service for every child and adult in every community, country and city alike. Night schools; summer schools; kindergarten; pre-school or nursery schools; normal and teacher training schools; special classes for handicapped, blind, deaf and crippled children; full health service under the supervision of doctors, dentists and nurses; physical education under the direction of expert instructors; swimming pools open to day and evening classes; courses in music, art, science, home economics, crafts and industrial art for the grades, high school and college. Gymnasium supervision and athletic service at night. Free use of school buildings by all groups of citizens and youth groups on application. Free text books and work materials. Free milk and free hot school lunches; new clothes for children who need them to be furnished at school.
8. Immediate increase in the standards of rural schools to equal the best city standards. Compulsory school attendance in all rural areas and no exemption of farm children from child labor laws. Standard school services for migratory child laborers and

the children of migratory farm laborers. Free transportation for every child who needs it.

9. Full rights for teachers, school clerks, janitors, students and parents to organize under their own rank and file leaders. No compulsory membership in any organization. No police interference with meetings. No yellow dog contracts which forbid teachers' unions. The right to demonstrate and to strike.
10. Complete personal and academic freedom for teachers and students to teach and learn through independent thinking within and without the school. No discrimination against students or teachers because of race, color, belief or marital condition.
11. No censorship or control of the schools by vested interests—economic, political or religious. Boards of education to be elected by parents and teachers, not appointed by political bosses, church heads or bankers. No religious teaching or military training in the schools. Rank and file democracy from the classroom up. No administrative intimidation or coercion. No spy system. No transfers of teachers for disciplinary purposes.

### *How These Demands Will be Won*

The attack on the schools is unceasing as long as there is no opposition. The attackers are well organized—in the legislatures, in the boards of education, and among the teachers themselves. We must fight them there with every weapon we possess.

But organized legislative action must be supported in this crisis by organized mass action. The experiences in Cuba, Ireland, New York and Chicago have proved the basic value of direct mass mobilization of teachers, parents, children and workers in resisting the attacks of the bankers and the employing class. Student strikes and united mass demonstrations won the only pay the Chicago teachers received for 1932-33 salaries. As parents, teachers and children, we must organize strongly everywhere with well-laid plans both for defense and counter attack.

Teachers, research workers, and all who have a special interest in matters affecting the schools are invited to correspond with the authors and the staff of teachers and writers responsible for *Schools and the Crisis*.

Descriptive letters, official documents, handbills, local magazines and newspapers giving exact statements of fact on the conditions and struggles of children, teachers and parents are of great value to us in our work.

Address: Education Department  
Labor Research Association  
80 E. 11th Street  
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