

Education Only Weapon for Defense of Democracy

Democracy is a very fragile form of government and without widespread countermeasures on the part of society against those who attack it, it is bound to perish from the earth. Dr. William F. Russell, president of Teachers College Columbia University, said Saturday night.

Addressing the annual banquet at the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Toronto district at the Royal York Hotel, Dr. Russell stressed the fact that democracy has only one sure weapon, education, not only in schools and colleges, but all the agencies that form the human mind.

The U.S. educator ended a two-day visit in Toronto with his address. He was brought here by Toronto's Board of Education to speak to a special centennial meeting Friday night.

School courses in citizenship fall far short of the desired goal, Dr. Russell stated. "All too often," he said "we test content with lectures, discussions, reading books with very little practical results. We teachers know we cannot expect results from a correspondence course on swimming. Yet we tend to test content if we merely include courses on citizenship in our schools. We must go far beyond that."

Too much of the work in history and civics deals with mere factual description of how our government was formed, how it works, and what it looks like, Dr. Russell told the teachers.

The Communists, he continued, spare no effort on an equally strong basis to emphasize our record in slums, discrimination, intolerance, poverty, ill health, and unemployment during periodic depressions.

To counteract this, the speaker suggested, documenting the record of liberty and bringing it to children in the schools so that the future citizen may have a full knowledge of the high level of individual opportunity and well being which free societies have given to their people.

It seems likely if past experience is a guide, Dr. Russell predicted, that we may expect our descendents to go so very far to the left that we may take certain steps that will end in the destruction of their liberties.

The time when government may fall, he added, may not merely be in a period of war or national emergency, but may come as swings to the right and left increase in strength and intensity.

Properly to map a plan for the defense of democracy, therefore, we find ourselves faced with a three fold problem: What knowledge does a citizen have and how can he be helped to acquire it? And what are the duties of the citizen and how can he perform them?

Primarily, Dr. Russell explained an effective program of education for citizenship must to some degree penetrate the community itself, and not stop in the classroom.

The school should take the lead, he stated, but a great many citizens of the town should be at work on the same problem at the same time. The community must form a team and adults and children alike must participate.

Some sort of combined project of knowledge in school and action in life is a basic to the production of the kind of citizen who will defend his country from enemies within and without.

Dr. Russell reviewed for the teachers a program which has been taking shape at Teachers' College to tackle the problem, aided by a preliminary grant of \$30,000 from the Carnegie Foundation.

The problem of how to improve citizenship was discussed with the educators, historians, political scientists, and social workers and an exploratory plan was worked out, combining knowledge with action.

Dr. Russell announced the Carnegie Foundation has made the group a further grant of \$400,000 to expand the program over the next 18 months.

Our interest, he said, is that communities shall take a new devotion to the cause of bringing up good citizens. We hope that this new and vigorous and vital program can be started by communities all over North America.

Setting up a teacher board committee by the Toronto Board of Education is now being considered, D. Blair Laing, board chairman declared. Such a committee would be composed of public and secondary teachers trustees and board officials. The committee would discuss teacher problems and other broad education questions, Mr. Laing said.

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