

GUIDANCE PROBLEMS IN WAR TIME

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The tasks of guidance to-day are largely set in the requirements of modern warfare for technical and professional services. Some of the most essential services can be performed only by those with the highest levels of intelligence and training, while many other services require abilities only slightly below these highest levels. Democracy has a strong tradition of equality, and there may be an aristocratic implication in the amendment, equality of opportunity, not equality of ability. Democracy must learn to recognize her leaders, for the decision between Nazism, Communism, and Democracy will rest in large part upon the relative capacities of these forms of government to identify and instruct those who are potential leaders.

Differential abilities among human beings are not hard for Nazi party men to recognize. Since World War I, German leaders have studied the reasons for the defeat of 1918, and much attention has been given to the psychological factors. The collapse of morale on the home front, the extreme fatigue of General Ludendorff, and the panic which developed in the army stimulated research upon related problems. These studies were not accepted with enthusiasm by the army leaders in the early days, but their value was increasingly appreciated. With the coming of the Nazis, such studies were held in higher repute. E. R. Jaensch, a psychologist of prominence, was an early member of the Nazi party, and his influence gave higher status to such work.

The results from these studies are a strange combination of bizarre racial theory and important psychological method. The Jew in psychology as in politics became the scapegoat. The pure Nordic became the ideal type. The rationalization of these prejudices in the name of science is parallel to similar results in anthropology.

There are other more significant results. A developmental record of each youth was preserved. His activities in

the youth movement and in school work were recorded, and by the time he reached the age of active army service, a cumulative record of growth was available. Promising young men were identified and additional tests were given. Officer candidates were given long series of tests, and work samples were developed for careful observation of results. Ratings were made by experienced raters, and the total personality was finally appraised as a unit. Decisions remained with military leaders, but the work of those responsible for the identification of leaders is impressive.

When America became involved in the war, the fundamental method for the creation of a large army was the draft and the national lottery. The local draft boards were given quotas which must be filled, and men were delivered to the army with little consideration of the needs for highly skilled and professional abilities in the national effort. College spokesmen emphasized the danger that colleges should be refuges for slackers rather than upon the need for trained leadership.

At the reception centers, tests were administered and interviews were held. An effort was made to place the men in position for maximum service in the war effort, but the extreme pressure under which the work was done and the brief period which could be given to the individual leaves some doubts about the adequacy of these efforts. The appraisal of results can only be made when much more information is at hand.

The schools were not in position to give military men much help. Few schools had cumulative records. The young man might be asked about school experiences, but this is hardly a safe basis for careful personnel work.

School records are often limited to grades and disciplinary procedures. Such records are not complete measures of student growth. Tests are often added.

These instruments are useful when the tests are adequately understood, administered, and interpreted. Many critics of testing procedures are criticizing tests for failing to do what they were never intended to accomplish.

The need of objective records in the crisis has stimulated the use of the cumulative records. Aggressive steps are now being taken to improve these instruments and extend their use. Some of these steps have the approval of our military leaders, and may represent a bridge between the school and the military services.

The outstanding development at the high school age is the High School Victory Corps. This is a voluntary program which unites the high school and the military forces in an effort to develop participation in the war by the future soldier or worker in accordance with his abilities. The publications which have outlined this program are important contributions to education and to military planning.

There are five major units, the Production Service Division, the Community Service Division, the Land Service Division, the Air Service Division, and the Sea Service Division. The high school student may join one of these divisions, or he may hold a general membership.

Guidance services are proposed to aid the student. A pupil inventory has been prepared, a brief but discriminating record. This program includes both the classroom and extracurricular activities, emphasizing physical fitness. How widely the program will be adopted is not yet apparent, although in Illinois the State Director gives an encouraging report.

Guidance at the college level has been confused. The college reserve programs have now largely served their purpose for the older students. These young men have been called to the colors. The chief problems of the future concern the younger men, the physically disabled, the young women, and the high school seniors. The central point of reference in working with these young people in college is service at maximum level within a reasonable time. Attention may be called to certain critical problems in this area.

The teacher shortage is a serious threat to the American school. Teaching should be regarded as highly patriotic service. Acceleration brings many problems to the campus, challenging the traditional sequence of courses and prerequisites. Provision for more rapid progress by the brighter student is now more important than ever. The transition from high school to college has stimulated much discussion. The wisdom of such acceleration probably depends upon the intelligence of the youth, his social maturity, and upon the need of the nation for his services. The training of young people will doubtless represent an increased emphasis upon the technical and a decreased emphasis upon the liberal arts.

The problems of mental hygiene are especially serious for a generation of young people who have never seen a stable world. All adults who live with young people today have an obligation to contribute. Young people need whatever solace the insights of the ages or the hopes of the future have to offer, and they need whatever poise the mature can spare from their own emotional strains.