

MISSING: 115,000 TEACHERS

With thousands of teachers at war, the children suffer



A COMMON SCENE IN MANY STATES: PUPILS STAND IN CROWDED CLASS. THIS SCHOOL IS AT HINESVILLE, GA.

America's schools are in a sense one of the casualties of the war. In some localities the educational system is having extreme difficulties. Yet never before has education been so vital to our country's safety—now and in the critical years which lie ahead of us.

By **JOHN W. STUDEBAKER**

U. S. Commissioner of Education

War has disrupted family life and heightened emotional tensions—it has placed an added responsibility on schools to guide the younger generation toward self-reliant stability.

Yet, at a time when the nation must have more and better education, many teachers are missing. By "missing" I do not mean to cast unfavorable criticism. Every community can testify to the competent and unselfish job teachers have done both at their posts and in voluntary wartime tasks



TEACHER'S HOMEWORK LASTS UNTIL LATE—HEAVY SCHEDULE LEAVES HER LITTLE TIME FOR RECREATION

of rationing, salvage and bond sales. But the fact remains that at this critical time in our history between 20,000 and 25,000 positions have been abandoned and thousands of classes are overcrowded. Look at these figures: In October, 1939, there were practically no teaching jobs vacant. In October, 1943, there were 7,700—and in addition, about 57,000 more positions had to be filled by teachers who could not meet regular certification requirements. Conditions this year are much the same. Why have we suffered these losses?

Men and women in the teaching profession, over 65,000 of them, like millions of other citizens of the United States have left their jobs to fill the ranks of the armed forces. And school officials have been proud to see these teachers march

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NEW TEACHERS ARE SCARCE: NEARLY EMPTY HALL IN GEORGIA TEACHERS' COLLEGE HOLDS ENTIRE SENIOR CLASS

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IN RURAL COMMUNITIES TEACHER DEVOTES "SPARE" TIME TO INSTRUCTING MOTHERS IN SCIENTIFIC INFANT CARE

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But another cause for the teacher shortage is that more than 50,000 teachers have closed classroom doors behind them to take jobs in essential wartime industries, in civilian business offices, and in government agencies. In practically every instance they have left teaching for jobs with higher salaries. This may make teachers seem a mercenary lot but let me point out that *even in peace time teachers receive the lowest pay of any professional group*. And these are the men and women whom we are asking to assume the tremendous responsibility of training our nation for future success and happiness. Since 1939 teachers' salaries increased but the average increase is possibly under 15 per cent. Many have received no increases. And rising living costs have wiped out the meager gains of those who received the increases.

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And yet, income increases for other groups have been three or four times as great. Right now, in 1944, with the cost of living what it is, 30 teachers in every 100 are paid less than \$1,200 a year. Five in every 100 receive less than \$600. Is it any wonder that in the face of rising living costs, offers of jobs in essential industry and business at better pay have found teachers willing to leave the classroom?



NO TEACHER: kids are bored and restless. This condition is found all over the nation where classes have been left without teachers.



STUDENTS at Georgia State Teachers College like teaching but are pessimistic. 1. Richard Stark: "I expect a hard road ahead." 2. Margaret Strickland: "I love the country; it's a pity rural schools pay so little." 3. Sue Breen: "A teacher's private life is not her own." 4. Eldred Mann: "They ought to raise the pay."

Another important reason for the lack of qualified teachers will be found in the 57 per cent drop of civilian student enrollments in teachers' colleges and normal schools since the war began in Europe. Young people are naturally reluctant to spend four years and tuition fees on professional training when there is little return to look forward to. Since it takes years to train qualified teachers, *our children will feel the effects of this interruption of training for a long period after the war.*

School officials have worked hard to offset the shortage. To fill over 100,000 positions which were vacant before the school year opened last fall, about 57,000 men and women who could not meet the regular requirements for teachers' licenses were granted war emergency certificates. The number issued was 69,000 in 1943-44. Some had taught school previously and retired. But for the most part the persons who received these certificates had no experience.

They were employed so that Jimmy Brown and Susan Smith would have some instruction instead of finding "School

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Closed" written on the door. Then, classes were run together, creating oversized groups. Teachers who formerly specialized in one subject hurriedly tried to prepare themselves to teach two or three. And before school opened, 15,200 positions were wiped from the books, largely because there was no one to fill them.

With all this, thousands of classrooms are still empty.

One immediate danger to all Americans which arises out of this situation is the juvenile delinquency of unsupervised youngsters. Another is the relatively amateurish teaching of physical education, mathematics, and science, among the subjects most needed for the Army and Navy. Also important is the effect a lowering of education standards will have on the rising generation's ability to solve postwar problems.

Now then, what can we do about it?

First, we must realize the importance of the teacher's job—to make your life, and the nation's life, more secure.

Second, we must pay the teachers satisfactory salaries commensurate with the quality of teaching we desire.

Third, we must make every effort to bring back to the teaching profession those who have left it. Restrictions against married women teachers are breaking down, as are other rules and taboos.

Fourth, we must encourage competent young people to take up arms *by teaching* to protect America against harmful forces now and in the future.

Let there be no mistake about it—the danger is here. Ignorance is a field from which dictatorship can spring. A younger generation, growing up in ignorance, will weaken our democracy for, under certain conditions, it could be captured by demagoguery and fraud. Saving America's schools may mean saving our country twenty years from now.



NEW TEACHER takes over, the sixth this class has had in seven months. She is an Army wife, may have to leave at any moment.

