

CONCLUSION: AN ESTIMATE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

From the standpoint of group dynamics the participants in the Institute comprised a relatively homogeneous body. Most of them were in responsible supervisory positions, indeed, several of the participants are among the country's outstanding practitioners in this field. Most of the group have been active in professional activities, in the American Association of School Librarians, the American Library Association, and in several state school library associations. Many of the participants have held high ranking offices in both state and national professional organizations.

The group were experienced conferrees. They brought with them an understanding of the limitations of the conference method, but also an appreciation of its possibilities. They were particularly adept in knowing how to exploit these possibilities to the fullest. The Institute's participants became a cohesive group very early in the three-day period. Their commonality of professional interest, the relative uniformity of their experience, and the seriousness of their intention, all contributed to this quick melding into a spirited but unified whole.

As has been said before in similar circumstances, the sponsors of the Institute had created a situation making it possible for a group of professional people with common interests and common problems to talk about them. The talking in this particular instance was fruitful and can be summarized as in the following paragraphs.

The first result was the affirmation of a group identity among school library supervisors generally as well as among those present. Such identity was obviously not new to this Institute, but its nature and dimensions as well as its positive character were seen more clearly and specifically as a result of the close association during the three-day session.

Secondly, and an extension of the first, the participants had an awareness of a common purpose as well as common problems in their work. They saw clearly that these purposes and problems were the same across the country, in Alabama and Oregon, in Arkansas as well as in New Jersey. They also became aware that the purposes, and the problems, were the same regardless of the size of the unit in which they work, whether it be state, or county, or consolidated school district, or small city.

The third result of the talking was a salutary sharing of experience. The exchange of successes and failures helped to answer specific questions and to remove particular doubts. There was a lively exchange of information

about techniques and aids. These bits of knowledge began to fit into the whole as the meeting progressed. In this connection the lack of printed material in this field was sharply underlined.

Fourth, the participants discovered that they were engaging cooperatively, in this Institute, in an experience in which they were teaching each other. In many ways, it was an example of an almost ideal democratic educational situation: each participant contributed according to his ability, and each gained according to his need.

Fifth, and last, recognizing that any educational experience will bring about a change in those so engaged, this particular experience changed the Institute members in at least three ways. Each went away with a strengthened purpose, going back to his job with somewhat clearer goals and stronger motivation. Each acquired an assurance that the supervisor's work is essential to the development of good library service in our public schools. Each also departed from the conference with greater confidence in his own ability to do the job, having discovered that not even the best of them knew all the answers, that what was bothering them was also bothering someone else, and, in the mutual exchange of opinions and ideas finding that their own were accepted and appreciated.

In summary, the papers bring out that the modern public school is becoming increasingly complex, not only in its services, but in its organizational pattern. This is a natural concomitant of the growth and complexity of our population and social patterns. One of the results of such complexity is a need for new personnel, specialists with particular skills and training. The multi-school organizational pattern calls for supervisory personnel for many of these specialist areas. Among these are school library supervisors.

School library supervisors are directly responsible for the proper organization of libraries in the schools under their supervision. The papers and the discussion point out clearly that it is up to the supervisor to establish the place of the library in the particular school system, to prove its need, to defend it when necessary, and to get the material support for its operation. The Institute sessions clearly indicated that supervisors are responsible for the selection and training of library personnel, for advisory and consultant service to the libraries in their charge, for the systematic and fruitful development of collections of materials, for the defense of the library against unreasonable censorship, and finally, for continuing evaluation of the several libraries' organization, housing, and services. Underlying all these was a continuing emphasis and importance attached to the way the supervisor supervises. It was recognized that while there is a science and a technique of supervision based on some fundamental principles of personnel administration, the conferrees also stressed art of supervision which is based on human and emotional responses to specific social

situations. The successful supervisor is skilled equally in both the science and the art.

It became increasingly clear during the Institute that the supervisor's work in the final analysis is directed toward the child. The measure of a supervisor's success is the way that the library contributes to the individual personality of each child. The final discussion period, centered on the necessity of developing evaluation procedures, was not so much concerned with such matters as foot candles of light, number of square feet per student, or per capita expenditures for books, as with what happened to the individual youngster. With this in mind, the Institute closed with a recollection of a phrase from Bertrand Russell, "Reverence for human personality is the beginning of wisdom, in every social question, but above all in education."