

Adult Education in California

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IMMIGRANT EDUCATION in California has developed in much the same way as in other states of the union. It had the good fortune, however, to make its first bow to the public before the war hysteria concentrated the attention of people throughout the United State upon the aliens who could not speak our language. Plans already under way were given an impetus when the wave of enthusiasm for Americanization spread over the country.

Dr. Albert Shiels, now of Columbia, came to California to make a survey of the school system in Los Angeles. The State Commission of Immigration and Housing had for some time been aware that there was no weaker place in the public school system than the classes for foreign-born adults. The report made by Dr. Shiels and his associates emphasized the meagre quality of the classes for foreign adults and the Commission capitalized this report. When Dr. Shiels became Superintendent of Schools in Los Angeles, the State Commission of Immigration and Housing urged him to correct the weakness which he had so wisely pointed out. He did this by establishing the two important administrative measures which make for success in Immigrant Education; — he put in a trained director and set up teacher training classes. Where these two administrative arrangements are efficiently organized, Immigrant Education is bound to succeed.

After a Director of Immigrant Education was established in the State Department of Education, the example of Los Angeles was followed generally throughout the state. At the present time we have 103 communities where Immigrant Education is being carried on, with 895 classes and an enrollment of 39,908. (These figures are taken from our report for 1923 - 24, as this year's figures are not yet in.)

Whenever Immigrant Education is discussed the question is always raised as to how it is supported. California having a threefold system of school finance carries out that system in the financing of her classes for foreign adults. The state, the county and the school district support public education in California. The state and county make returns to the local district on a basis of average daily attendance. In order to encourage the establishment of evening schools, a bonus of \$2700.00 is given by the state and county on the first thirty units of average attendance. This insures the salary of a full-time director and makes it possible for a district to conduct a night school entirely on state and county funds.

California is particularly interested in three phases of her Adult Education work:

I. The emphasis on the importance of the adult in rural communities. Where the competition with commercial amusements is less keen, it is possible to make Immigrant Education a community enterprise which supplies not only English classes but a recreation program which can draw upon the rich cultural life of the foreign born and gives to the American a better understanding of other parts of the world. In California practically all of the secondary education outside of

cities is carried on in union high schools. The children who attend these high schools have come from small elementary schools reaching out from five to forty miles from the high school building. This union high school is made the unit for the Adult Education in our rural districts. The high school principal appoints a full-time director who organizes classes in any elementary school district where the number of foreign-born warrant it. It sometimes happens that a country school has a larger attendance at night school than in the day time. The director finds for these classes the best available teachers and prepares the lessons. Very often the director herself teaches classes for mothers in the afternoon in the various elementary school districts in order to keep herself in close touch with the communities.

II. The home teacher is another feature of the California program which has made for success. The home teacher meets the needs of the foreign mother and acts as an interpreter of the American school to the foreign community. She begins by organizing small classes in the homes of the foreign women. Later, when the timidities are overcome, these classes are consolidated into one class which meets at the school and more pioneer work can be done with mothers who have not yet been reached.

One of the problems which we have not yet been able to solve is the enormous burden which all of our full-time teachers in the field of Immigrant Education carry. It is not wholesome for young women, as most of these teachers are, to be occupied every evening as well as all day. No matter how carefully programs are planned at the beginning of the year, the State Director on her visits to the local communities finds the local director working all the time. It seems necessary for these teachers to supervise or teach every evening. Regular hours can be planned for the day, leaving a certain amount of freedom, and sooner or later a host of social service problems fill up all the free time. A few of our best teachers have had to drop out because they realized that they were getting completely out of touch with everything that was going on in the world. There was no leisure for reading, for going to the theatre, for hearing music or for any of the other normal recreations which a young person should have. Something must be done to correct this if our movement is to succeed.

It was pointed out at the beginning that the training of teachers is of equal importance with the establishment of specialists who shall direct the work. The University of California has supplied one person who spends all of her time in training of teachers. We find that the best training a teacher can have is while she is actually doing the teaching, so that in every case those who are taking the training are doing either cadet teaching or carrying on their own classes. The instructor from the University visits all of her student-teachers and makes her instruction absolutely practical. The lessons which were prepared through

(Continued on Page Forty-two)