

Latin and High School Organization

Consideration of a course of study in Latin for the High School opens up at once the whole question of organization of the High School to meet modern demands. The reason is that a right adjustment of the claims of Latin involves a survey of the whole transition from the aristocratic conditions in which the Grammar School worked to the democratic conditions that have to be faced today. Now, many pupils must be provided for in the High School for whom no case can be made out for the study of Latin. Those who do study it will have a somewhat different interest and different needs from those which were operative in the old Grammar School tradition. Nor will they all pursue the study with the same intensity, and over the same range.

No stable solution seems possible, apart from a survey of the whole field of Secondary Education in terms of modern needs. I say advisedly "Secondary Education" rather than "High School" Education, since the use of the latter term, especially in Quebec, is apt to carry with it purely local and traditional implications which obstruct the view, and conceal the nature of the problem as one which all modern countries are compelled to face in the same essential form.

The problem arises just because modern needs are such that systematic education must now be carried on well into the years of adolescence, not for a select few, but for the whole population. Such education, since its function is to take account of the needs and capacities of adolescence, is properly termed "Secondary Education", whatever its form and content, and in whatever institution it may be given.

This "Secondary Education for All" is no longer a visionary aspiration; it is an urgent practical necessity calling for radical new thinking and comprehensive efforts of construction, for which there is no parallel in the past. Not only are new types of schools, and new forms of school organization called for - the question will have to be asked, granting the need for systematic education for all adolescents, whether school, as ordinarily understood, is the best place of education for all of them. It may be found that, for many, education can be provided in more relevant and effective form through some other type of social activity, such as farm or workshop, with only part-time attendance at school in the conventional sense. A strong and growing body of opinion in England is insisting on this view, and that not for reasons of class jealousy or financial economy, but for sound reasons of educational principle that refuse to treat "Schooling" and "Education" as necessarily identical.

It is against some such comprehensive background as this that we must project our problem of Latin. Three main groups of pupils are to be distinguished in this regard:-

1. Those who, will do no Latin.
2. Those who take Latin as part of a general education in the old, and still relevant, "cultural" sense. This will mean a school course of four or five years, followed by a course of at least one year at the University.