

## CLIO AND THE EDUCATORS\*

by Charles Berryman, University of Georgia

Multiple objectives and functions of public schools, demanded by the public, have disrupted the former primary objective of academic learning. By federal law, schools now must serve all students, regardless of academic talent, behavioral traits, and predispositions to value academic learning. Teacher ability to control classrooms has become more limited by lack of parental support and by court decisions; more time for management has taken time from instruction. School success in attaining social goals such as retention of students and racial harmony has gone largely unrecognized. Public schools are expected to be all things to all people, to the satisfaction of few.

Television, earlier sexual maturity, and an unrecognized revolution in frequency of working students are powerful distractions. Sports and other social functions of schools also distract; history in particular has been a victim of this trend. Wider opportunities for women have seriously affected quality of prospective teachers despite adoption of higher minimum standards. Salaries, working conditions, and public contempt for teachers inhibit recruitment, assure that the best and brightest leave teaching quickly, and cause low morale and much apathy among the remainder.

Contemporary educational problems are rooted deeply in conflicting social goals. Adequate resolution of the conflicts will require reasoned analysis within an historical perspective. For the sake of society and the future of their profession, historians should collaborate in convincing the public to restore academic learning as the primary objective of schools.

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\*Synopsis provided by Professor Berryman.