

Training and Reorientation of Teachers

Panel IIB

How does a teacher teach a child whose basic reaction is to reject him?

That question in all of its ramifications cropped up repeatedly in panel IIB. Although there was some disagreement as to details, there was no question that teachers must be especially prepared for the tasks they face in dealing with alienated children. The group called not only for better original preparation, but for continuous inservice training.

As Larry Cuban, director of the Cardozo Project in Urban Teaching, Cardozo High School, Washington, D.C., pointed out, "Business has retraining programs going on all the time, but teacher education doesn't." Teacher internship, he said, must be a real marriage of academic work and classroom training.

Panelist Farmer commented that teachers have the most difficult and most critical jobs in our society at this time. "A teacher's empathy for students is vitally important," he said. "A sense of contempt on the part of the teacher rubs off very easily on pupils. The students themselves will become more involved with learning, have more confidence in themselves, if they believe the teacher thinks that they are important. And, the more identity there is between the teacher and the student, the easier it is for the teacher to teach."

Farmer touched off a heated reaction when he told the panel: "We are in a war. In a war, generals can't allow lieutenants to decide where they will fight. Teachers ought to be assigned to the places where they can do the best job."

There was no argument about the necessity of getting first-rate teachers into ghetto schools. There was general disagreement, however, with Farmer's proposal that they be assigned there, whether they like it or not.

Homer Cooper, director, Social Science Research Institute, University of Georgia, declared: "One of the few freedoms teachers have is that of mobility. They must be free to come and go, they shouldn't be trapped. We must find ways to motivate teachers to want difficult assignments, but we shouldn't let superintendents assign them there."

David Selden, assistant to the president, American Federation of Teachers, said: "Teachers will be reluc-

tant to enter the profession or stay in it if they fear they'll be assigned where they can't succeed. You can't keep them where they will be continually confronted by failure. Give them a decent school, where they can succeed, and they'll stay there. This is a long-range problem which can't be solved with gimmicky arrangements."

Panelist Zigler called the assignment of teachers to the slums, as proposed by Farmer, "self-defeating." "Psychologists have shown," he said, "that the most common reaction to frustration is aggression. In this case it would be aggression against the children, a most harmful thing to the youngsters in their charge. . . . We've got to retrain teachers to have different goals for different children. America doesn't run on Harvard and Yale graduates but on high school graduates. I would like to see teachers flock to these schools because they understand the disadvantaged children and their problems, and then they will find success."

Mr. Cuban pointed out, "The earlier you take the preservice student going into education and work with him, the better retention rate you will have."

In the Cardozo project in the District of Columbia, Cuban said, "four interns are assigned to one master teacher. With a constant dialogue between the interns and the master teachers, we are able to telescope some years of training."

Charles Benson wondered whether, since teachers "must live on success," we might try to redefine the criteria of success toward the end that it is measured less in academic performance of college-bound students, less on getting a certain number in a good college, and more in taking a class of children who are not performing well and trying to raise them substantially from that point.

Mr. Selden pointed out, "A basic problem of slum schools is the shortage of teachers, but there is a tendency to evade it. We can't substitute a collection of teacher aides."

Mr. Cuban suggested making "the inner-city school attractive—not with just more money and small classes—but by making it a professional institution, make it attractive professionally. We should make