School Dropouts Continue as Serious, Annoying Problem Among Youth

The school dropout "comes to be the most perplexing as well as one of the most serious problems with which we are faced concerning our entire youth population," according to a pith statement released by representatives of the Louisiana State Employment service and the State Department of Education.

E. E. McAllister, state supervisor of youth services for the Louisiana State Employment Service, said that unemployment among Louisiana's youth has reached "critical proportions" despite the moral vigor and efforts being brought to bear by all individuals and agencies directly engaged in the campaign to mitigate the school dropout problem.

He said the Louisiana State Employment Service takes a box 6,000 job applications a month from youths under 22 years of age, and this figure is "increasing constantly and at an alarming rate." Of these, 4,000 applicants among Louisiana's youth, Mr. McAllister said the State Employment service succeeds in placing about 1,000 a month in jobs, but added that "we are steadily losing ground."

Wallace L. Jones, Jr., assistant director of the school attendance section of the State Department of Education, had a recent study disclosed that among 15,000 typical Louisiana dropouts, the overwhelming reason given for leaving school was "to go to work."

Jones added that the study further revealed that the typical Louisiana school dropout of 1930 was a 16-year-old boy, who "left school in the ninth grade, was academically regarded at least one year, was below average intelligence, came from a home where the parents had from five to eight years of schooling, had brothers or sisters who had dropped out of school before him, took part in no extra-curricular activities, had received little or no counseling as to the seriousness of dropping out of school, and gave "to go to work" as his reason for dropping out of school.

Jones further pointed out the moral aspect of the problem.

In proportion to the educable population percentages, more than 3,000 Louisiana dropouts became dropouts. Numerically, by far the white dropouts exceeded Negroes.

"More boys than girls become dropouts," he said. The greatest number of dropouts occurred at age 16, grade 9. White female dropouts were greater at age 15, grade 10. The dropouts contributed to the welfare burden of the state.

Academic retardation is an influential factor in school dropouts. Non-participation in extra-curricular activities contributes to the dropout problem. Too many students are without the benefit of counseling in their schools.

While the greatest number of dropouts are of below average intelligence, too many students of average and above average intelligence become school dropouts.

The children of parents of little schooling are more likely to become dropouts. Abnormal stressors dropping out of school. Where there have been previous dropouts in the family, the child is more likely to become a dropout himself. While there are few employment opportunities for school-age youth and their prospect of obtaining a job is rather than improve, more youth in Louisiana who "go to school" do not have their reason for dropping out of school.

Educational personnel blame the lack of parental support and attitudes toward the dropout, rather than the school. Too often, important personnel data on students are not obtained or recorded by the school system.

When queried as to how a student and what could be done to further discourage the average youth from being given all the school, Jones said a point-by-point approach must be undertaken, embaying these steps:

That more, accurate, complete pupil personnel records be kept by the schools.

That only those students 16 years of age and over who express a desire to drop out of school be asked to work in a referral employment service. The completed referral cards and data sheets be furnished employment center.

That no child should be allowed to drop out and that a pleasant, constructive term be added to interview and counseling the professional school staff.

That more intensive work is the improvement of attendance be done by visiting teachers and all school personnel.

That remedial assistance be provided for the academically retarded students.

That a wide variety of extra-curricular activities be provided, and that strong encouragement be given to students to participate in one or more in the field work.

That full-time and adequate staff work by grade from one grade through the last is given all that strong, sympathetic, and understanding teachers be available for counsel with troubled youngsters and parents.

That slow learners and children with mental retardation be provided with special instructional assistance. That those who are encouraged to return to regular school be placed in gifted or special schools, or in adult education classes.

That all dropouts be encouraged to visit the schools and discuss the dangers of dropping out of school with potential dropouts, individually or in groups.

That more effort be expended in identifying potential dropouts in the early years.

That the cooperation of community agencies, businesses, industries, radio and television stations, newspapers — any and all groups and individuals be enlisted in a concerted campaign to hold all youth in school at least until high school graduation.

That the efforts be made to alter whatever conditions where they are that lead to the dropping out of school attendance by all youth.

McAllister said the inability to improve the dropout situation is "due to have a most serious and chaotic effect on the security and welfare of everyone throughout the entire nation as well as the state of Louisiana."

Getting back to the purpose of the study, Jones said it was intended to show the number of dropouts in the public, private, and parochial school systems of the state that no reasons for dropping out of school. It is intended, to each as much data as possible which might give a greater insight to the problem of the early dropout is an insight into the needs of society to identify the potential dropout and prevent the unnecessary loss of talent and abilities.

Stating that the study was limited to that decade — 1930-1939 — on the nationwide the nation's youth employment, Mr. McAllister said, and dropped out of school. A study on the part of interested organizations and individuals to combat the school dropout problem, the solution without question lies in the fact that the individual communities have to combine the greatest effort of the youth — employment problem.

"Every individual, every government agency, every private agency, civic group, fraternal group and, in essence, everyone must be the aware of the awful plight of our armed forces and our homes, youth, who have little or nothing to offer every one of us is able to rear our hands up. On the contrary, every single thing we can do to improve the lot of the young is a step toward the safety of our nation."

McAllister said.