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R. B. CORBETT

What Are Educators Doing?

What are New Mexicans going to say in September 1959, when their sons and daughters are turned away from the institutions of higher learning? These sons and daughters will be told, "There just isn't room for you."

There is abundant evidence that the above situation is no pipe dream of some cloistered educator. This space could be filled with tables of figures from authoritative sources on both the national and state levels, which support the position.

In recent months, I personally have brought this problem to the attention of more than twenty-five groups in the State of New Mexico. I have had the pleasure of having several of the officers of these organizations come to me and say something like: "That was good going." "It is a real problem." "Something must be done about it."

The educators should not try to give the answer to this problem. They can't. The leadership of the state must answer it. However the educators will be remiss and open to criticism if they have not done everything within their power to bring the problem to the attention of the leadership of the state.

New Mexico has done an outstanding job with its public schools. It is now rated as having one of the better programs in the nation, but it cannot be said with accuracy that its institutions of higher learning are prepared to serve the state adequately. For the time being, most of the attention needs to be focused on the enrollment problem and its attendant difficulties. To get closer to this problem, talk to the folks in your public schools. There are few high schools (only those in iso-

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lated areas that have been heavily hit by the drought) in the state where the answer will be other than that the class starting its junior year in the fall of 1957 is a much larger class than the senior class or any previous class. The junior class in the high schools is the first of the "war babies." Each year thereafter the classes are larger. In a number of New Mexico public school systems, beginning students number as many as ten times the high school seniors. The students are actually in our public schools. With New Mexico growing twice as fast as the nation; with New Mexico's economic position improving, which means that the percentage of young people who will want to go to college will be increasing faster than that in the nation as a whole, our problem is exceptional.

Unless action is taken immediately, the answer for many New Mexico students in the fall of 1959, the fall of 1960, and until we do something about it, must be: "There isn't room for you." On what basis will we accept or reject students? Will it be scholastic? Will it be location? Will it be financial? Whatever the basis, it is going to be a detriment to the future of our state and our nation if New Mexico does not maintain the standards of other states. For example: two years ago in Michigan the governor of the state and the president of a large university made flat statements that Michigan had already taken its position. Every boy and girl who is *qualified* will have an opportunity to take collegiate work in the state of Michigan. That was two years ago. Two years later in New Mexico we have not begun to think about the problem. If the decision is to let New Mexico boys and girls go without the opportunity for a college education within our state, for the sake of their future planning and that of their families, they should be informed. If the decision is the same as that of Michigan, we are already late in getting into action.

What are educators doing? Are they merely pointing with alarm? At New Mexico A & M, plans are being laid to begin classes at seven in the morning and not quit until ten at night. One of the bottlenecks is at the dining hall. Maybe three "shifts" for lunch, from 11:30 A.M. until after 1:00 P.M., replacing the present single shift, will relieve this limiting factor. There are many things that can be done and must be done to meet the problem with present facilities, but it seems clear that all of these will not be adequate.

A major economic depression is the one thing that could change this situation. If there were such a depression, it is almost certain that a Federal program of higher education would quickly go into action.

Much of this was done in the last depression. Surely much more will be done in any future depression. The facility problem might not be greatly changed by a depression.

In addition to the physical facilities, bricks and mortar are only a means to an end, the problem of teachers is fully as acute. New Mexico is preparing only one teacher out of every four that the state is employing in the public schools. The preparation of teachers for the institutions of higher education is extremely inadequate. The chances are that this will be a greater shortage than the facility shortage. If virtually all of the top young people go into business and the professions, leaving an ever-decreasing number of teachers, New Mexico and America have a major and ever-growing basic disease. If education is of prime importance in the advancement of our nation, where are we without trained teachers?

There are other problems. These two are enough to challenge the best ability we have. If these two can be met, many others will be solved along with them.

An important and practical sidelight of these problems is that the next Legislature will meet in January 1959. The enrollments up to that time will have been fairly "normal"—essentially in line with the past. It will be the following fall when the problem hits. Legislatures cannot do other than look primarily at the past. It is the usual, the conservative, and the accepted practice. Part of the problem from here on is to get as much "looking ahead" on the part of everyone as is possible.