Illiteracy and Dropouts

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Editorial Comment

ILLITERACY AND DROP OUTS

There is a relationship between dropouts and their parental educational and income levels according to the director of population studies at the Census Bureau. He shows that among 16 year old boys whose family income is under $3,000:

One in three are dropouts if their parents did not complete grade school.

One in five are dropouts if their parents finished grade school but not high school.

One in ten are dropouts if their parents finished high school.

This study shows that millions of teenagers are cutting their education short in the precise pattern of their parents. It is reported that nearly half of today’s boys whose parents did not complete grade school are classified as “retarded scholastically.” Studies made at Western Michigan University show that parental attitudes toward the importance of reading, the development of language skills in the home and the fostering of an intellectual climate in the home are directly related to attainment in reading. One of the chief causes of failure to achieve scholastically is inability to read and inability to read has its beginning in the home. Edgar Dale reports that about half of the adults in the United States do not and probably cannot easily read *Time, Newsweek, Reader's Digest* and similar magazines.

Many parents read only comic books, “girlie” paperback books and other dubious and questionable literature. In this manner they set the reading patterns for their children. For some parents the radio and television have become a substitute for reading. Parents listen indiscriminately to loud, blatant music, the lyrics of which are devoid of ideas and made up of silly rhymes, such as moon, June, and spoon. Some mothers actually protest the substitution of news items for their “soap operas.” It is said that when Rome burned Nero fiddled. Today when we need informed and thinking people so badly, radio, the constant companion of so many, has so little to offer. Obviously children reflect the background, attitudes and interests of their parents. They apparently inherit their way of life, their lack of interest in books, and their illiteracy. What can these young people contribute to a modern society where competition is keen and is becoming more so? In our world today a high school diploma is required for even semi-skilled labor. These young folks and the society which produced them are being weighed in the balance and found wanting. Their loss is our loss and the loss of all mankind.

Homer L. J. Carter
Editor