

Dr. Theobald Supports Most Of Allen Points

By ROBERT H. PRALL,

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Dr. John J. Theobald, superintendent of city schools, yesterday agreed with the bulk of the conclusions of reporter George N. Allen, who for two months served as a teacher in Brooklyn's John Marshall Junior High School.

This newspaper had invited Dr. Theobald to comment daily on each of the 15 articles in Mr. Allen's series which ended yesterday. Dr. Theobald declined, saying he would prefer to comment at the completion of the series.

The major points of Mr. Allen's findings were that a new type of "adjustment" school should be established for troublemakers to separate them from the willing but slow learners; that especially trained teachers be used for difficult pupils and that teachers in "adjustment" schools be paid bonuses.

Dr. Theobald asserted yesterday:

"Without commenting on the procedure which was used in connection with the George Allen articles, let me say that Mr. Allen has put his finger on one of the important problems which face our city system—the problem of a proper education program for the emotionally, mentally or socially maladjusted child.

"It seems clear to me that as we look ahead, we shall

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have to find teachers with special preparation to man our adjustment classes, just as we now require of teachers in our '600' schools. It also seems clear that if we are going to attract people to operate these additional schools and willingly undertake the obviously more difficult assignments, we shall have to pay them more money. Here again, we have precedent in the '600' schools. (These teachers receive a bonus.)

"It is also interesting to point out that we already have embarked on a concept not only of separate schools for maladjusted students in terms of '600' schools and special classes in each school but also in the establishment of special classes in one school serving several schools in a district. This last phase is in the experimental stage but it shows much promise."

Mr. Allen had urged that promotion policy now being revised should be further revised so that illiterates cannot reach the ninth grade.

Said Dr. Theobald: "As we have pointed out several times, it's a well known fact that the Board of Education is stiffening promotion policies. An important concept to remember is that basically a youngster should not be held back from promotion because of a lack of innate ability but rather because he does not show adequate effort in accomplishing that which is within his capacity. This calls for development of a variety of curricular opportunities for students ranging from retarded to the very bright."

Social Adjustment Problems.

"Present policies are such that a pupil may reach the age of 18 before leaving junior high school. Retardation to this extent does present additional problems in social adjustment."

Mr. Allen had pointed out in his series that partly trained teachers were being accepted into the city school system and he recommended that the Board of Education require all new teachers to have realistic training before they enter a classroom.

Said Dr. Theobald: "Mr. Allen's articles have pointed up one of the difficulties we face in terms of the shortage in teacher supply. Requirements for a substitute license are of necessity varied in order to meet the supply."

Long-Range Problem.

"This, of course, is not true of regular licensed teachers but until our teacher education institutions provide us with more fully qualified people, we will be constantly faced with the problem of

getting along with people who are only partially equipped.

"This calls for increased emphasis on our part in terms of early help in the years of substitute teaching."

Two other conclusions, by Mr. Allen were that the size of adjustment classes should be reduced and that the paper work imposed on a teacher should be cut back. Mr. Allen had pointed out that his official adjustment class had 30 students and that he was required to spend many hours of repetitious clerical work.

Size Not Only Answer.

Dr. Theobald emphasized that the problems of adjustment classes could not be solved by merely reducing the size of the classes. He added:

"Going back to special teachers in special schools, let me say that among the things learned in the operation of the '600' schools were that reduced class size, more special services and additional clerical help for teachers are all pertinent in these areas."

Mr. Allen had urged that there be stricter supervision of personnel. He had complained that he received virtually no help from the school's administrative officials and that his supervisor had never visited him in his classroom.

New Principal.

Said Dr. Theobald: "As to the lack of supervision, one of the problems in the supervision of the school concerns the fact that there is a new principal there. Coupled with this is the fact that Mr. Allen was a teacher there for only two months and there was an assumption that he knew more than he did. In the process of the reorganization of the school under the new principal and the rebuilding of teacher morale, this was overlooked."

AS to Mr. Allen's ninth conclusion that the law should be amended to lower the age for working papers in some cases, Dr. Theobald said he would prefer not to comment on this at the present time.

Dr. Theobald was asked by this writer:

"Do you take argument with any of the facts stated by Mr. Allen in his series?"

Dr. Theobald replied: "Mrs. Florence Hornung, the principal of John Marshall Junior High School, has taken exception to several statements by Mr. Allen."

"Would you care to specify any particular point?" he was asked.

Wore Long Pants.

Dr. Theobald replied: "Mr. Allen wrote that while he was waiting for a job interview with Mrs. Hornung, a gym teacher also looking for a job had walked out of her office

clothed in a T-shirt and shorts. Mrs. Hornung asserts the man was wearing long pants at the time."

Asked if he would like to cite any other "incidents" which he felt were reported inaccurately, Dr. Theobald declined and added: "I'm not pressing these points."

One of the most shocking disclosures of Mr. Allen's series was that a teacher actually gave phony lessons to his class of adjustment students at John Marshall. Mr. Allen told how the other instructor admitted he had his slow learning students copy in their notebooks questions and answers in hygiene that he had given his average students.

The adjustment students, Mr. Allen revealed, had not the faintest idea of the meaning of the Latin anatomy words they were writing. But it kept them busy, it filled their notebooks and there was a lesson on the blackboard in the event—a supervisor dropped in.

Mr. Allen charged that the practice of phony lessons was an outright fraud on the children in the classroom and on the taxpayers of New York City.

In his comment yesterday, Dr. Theobald said that if he received evidence that his practice is going on, he would "step in."

Felix Plea Delays Montefiore Strike

A threatened strike by 750 Montefiore Hospital employees will not materialize before midnight tomorrow night, according to officials of Local 1199, Retail Drug Employees Union.

Leon J. Davis, local president, made the announcement following a closed meeting of the local last night in its headquarters, 287 E. Gun Hill Rd., Bx. He said strike action would be withheld at least until then "in deference to a request by City Labor Commissioner Harold A. Felix."

The strike threat has grown from union efforts to obtain recognition for conducting wage negotiations for all the hospital's employees except doctors and nurses.