FLACK, Bruce Clayton, 1938—
THE WORK OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION,
1935-1942.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1969
History, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

Copyright by
Bruce Clayton Flack
1970
THE WORK OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION,

1935-1942

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Bruce Clayton Flack, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of History
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Logan Wilson, president of the American Council on Education for permitting me to use the files of the American Youth Commission. I am grateful to Richard Young for allowing me to use the Owen D. Young Papers in Van Hornesville, New York and to Homer P. Rainey for opening to me his papers at the University of Missouri. The staffs of the National Archives and the Library of Congress were also very helpful.

My adviser, Robert H. Bremner, has given patient and understanding assistance. A final word of gratitude goes to my wife, Carol, who has helped in innumerable ways.
VITA

April 2, 1938 Born—Fremont, Ohio

1960 . . . . B.A., Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio

1962 . . . . M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1963-1965 . . High School Teacher, Berea City Schools, Berea, Ohio

1965-1969 . . Teaching Associate, Department of History, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1969 . . . . Appointment as Assistant Professor and Chairman of the Division of Social Sciences, Glenville State College, Glenville, West Virginia

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History

Political and Social History of the United States Since 1900. Professor Robert H. Bremner

Political and Social History of the United States, 1850-1900. Professor Francis Weisenburger

Political and Social History of the United States, 1789-1850. Professor Mary Young

Renaissance and Reformation. Professor Harold Grimm

English History Since 1815. Professor Philip Poirier

American Literature. Professor Julian Markels
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FINDING THE FACTS: THE SURVEY PROGRAM</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. GENERAL EDUCATION</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ECONOMIC SECURITY: VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE, WORK PROGRAMS, AND PLANNING</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. NEGRO YOUTH STUDIES AND THE END OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION

Youth is in a muddle. Out of school too young; they don't know what they want to do or why. They are in the midst of a great social and economic change.¹

This was how one of more than 13,000 Maryland boys and girls interviewed by the American Youth Commission in 1937 described the nation's youth problem. His statement raised questions which were troubling many Americans in the mid-thirties. Social and economic change in the early depression years had adversely affected youth. Unemployment among young people was higher than in any other age group, and education was hopelessly inadequate. These conditions were readily apparent, but to what extent they contributed to a youth problem no one was prepared to say. If the problem was elusive, solutions were more so. The only certainty was the urgency that something be done. In this troubled atmosphere in 1935 the American Youth Commission began its work. The proposal for the creation of the commission reflected the sense of urgency and called for immediate action. It began:

¹ Howard M. Bell, Youth Tell Their Story (Washington, 1938), 253.
Recent social and economic changes in the United States have given rise to difficulties in the care and education of young people with which existing institutions are quite unprepared to deal adequately. The changes not only have greatly intensified the problems which confront the schools, but also have created an urgent need of protection and further education for millions of youth whom the schools are not now reaching. Without some provision for basic planning to meet this situation, there is serious threat to the national welfare.²

The proposed commission was a creation of the General Education Board and the American Council on Education, two major agencies vitally concerned with American education. Both groups had been in education work long before the depression years. The General Education Board, a philanthropic foundation created in 1902 by John D. Rockefeller, had financed numerous educational programs. The American Council on Education, organized in 1918, had been largely concerned with problems of higher education. Though both organizations were interested in the welfare of secondary school-age youth, the former initiated the movement for the formation of a national youth commission.

The proposal for a national youth commission was part of an extensive general education program which the General

² A Proposal for the Development of a Comprehensive Program for the Care and Education of American Youth (Unpublished report presented to the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935). It is hereafter cited as A Proposal. This document and all other unpublished American Youth Commission reports cited in this dissertation are in the files of the American Council on Education in Washington, D. C.
Education Board began in 1933. This program continued until 1940, and was the Board's major activity during the depression decade. Altogether the Board gave 112 grants totaling $8,446,264 to national organizations, state and local agencies, graduate schools, colleges and universities, junior colleges, and high schools in its program of general education.\(^3\) The Board's earlier significant efforts had been programs for improving Southern education and medical education. Concerned with a lag in secondary education in the South, the GEB had contributed funds for Negro and white schools and for programs to improve Southern agriculture. It had also given extensive sums to medical schools for educational improvements.\(^4\)

But the depression caused the GEB to alter its approach. The Board's financial resources were limited, and no longer did it feel it could freely hand out monies to distressed educational institutions. Other factors also prompted the change. The Board was becoming alarmed at what was happening to youth. Cutbacks in industry resulted in job elimination for younger workers. This meant an increasing number of youth were remaining in school longer and placing

\(^3\) General Education Board Report, 1940, 53-59, 7.

heavier burdens on the schools. Even more frightening to the Board of trustees were the thousands of transient youth roaming the countryside in hope of finding a change from the grim conditions at home. By 1932 estimates of the number of these restless young people were as high as 300,000. These conditions illustrated to the Board that not only was the educational system inadequate in meeting youth needs, but the youth problem involved more than poor education.

The view of an impending national youth crisis was in no way new or unique. Educational leaders had been arguing that social and economic developments in the twentieth century, and especially after 1929, had overburdened the schools. President Hoover's Research Committee on Social Trends summarized the feeling of many educators by calling for "a kind of education radically different from that which was regarded adequate in earlier periods. . . ." By the early thirties vigorous attempts at educational

---

5 Ibid., 240; Interview with Robert J. Havighurst, October 25, 1968.

6 Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order (Boston, 1957), 251.

7 President's Research Committee on Social Trends, Recent Social Trends in the United States, I (New York, 1933), xlviii.
research were beginning, especially in the university
departments of education, the United States Office of
Education, bureaus of research of city and state school
systems, and the Research Division of the National Educa-
tion Association. These efforts were often hastily
conceived programs and reflected the feelings of panic
brought on by the depression. Since there had been little
integrated activity in the formulation of these studies,
results were incomplete and inconclusive. In some areas
of investigation the research was so sketchy that
necessary information for ameliorative action did not exist.

During this same period it became apparent to the
General Education Board that despite increasing interest
in research, no institutions or other philanthropic
organizations were capable or prepared to undertake a major
effort at finding ways to improve the condition and educa-
tion of secondary school age youth. Thus in 1931 the
General Education Board launched a two-year survey of
American education in an attempt to find the most important
needs and opportunities in education. A number of dis-

---

8 Charles H. Judd, Problems of Education in the United States (New York, 1933), 208.


10 Interview with Robert Havighurst, October 25, 1968.
tonguished scholars, including Edmund E. Day, Frank Lawrence, Rexford Tugwell, and Daniel Prescott, contributed 63 reports for the survey. A special committee of the Board's trustees concluded from the reports that the most important area to which the Board could contribute and the one which most urgently required fundamental reorganization was the field of general education at the secondary school and junior college levels. The Board then voted in 1933 to support a five-to-ten year general education program costing up to $10 million. This type of program was a departure from previous Board philanthropies, but a majority of the Board's officers believed a bold step was necessary.

In calling for a reorganization of American education, the Board posed questions which asked for an adequate definition of the basic functions of public education:

What major and subsidiary objectives are to be recognized in dealing with our youth? What organizations are to be charged with responsibility for the attainment of these objectives? What should the schools in particular be expected to accomplish? What limitations upon educational programs are likely to be forced by financial considerations? How may available funds be made to yield maximum results? What is the competence of existing organizations and personnel? At what point will remedial measures probably suffice? At what points will fundamental organization almost

certainly be required? In what order, after what preparation, and under what circumstances should needed changes be undertaken?\textsuperscript{12}

The Board was convinced that the answers to these questions meant some degree of reorganization of the nation's educational system. The underlying assumption was that reorganization, if it were to be effective, must be achieved through comprehensive social planning.

Edmund E. Day, former dean of the School of Business Administration at the University of Michigan, was chosen director of the program. Day's credentials were impressive. He had been chairman of the economics department at Harvard before he took the Michigan appointment. He was also director of social sciences for the Rockefeller Foundation during the same period he was with the GEB. In 1937 Day resigned to become president of Cornell University, and was succeeded by his assistant, Robert J. Havighurst, who before joining the Board, had taught at the Laboratory School of Ohio State University.\textsuperscript{13} Under Day's and later Havighurst's leadership, the program stressed both research and experimentation in looking toward improvements in general education. The Board carried

\textsuperscript{12} General Education Board Report, 1934-35, 19-20.

\textsuperscript{13} General Education Board Report, 1940, 7-8; Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, 214-243.
on no research or experimentation of its own, though it had considered such a possibility. Instead it confined its efforts to financial assistance to other agencies—universities, schools, institutes, and associations which in turn did the work. Grants were provided for six different types of activity:

1. General planning of educational reorganization
2. Experimentation with the curriculum and evaluation of the results of such experimentation
3. Preparation of new instructional materials, and experimentation with new methods of teaching
4. Recruiting, selection and education of teachers
5. Study of youth
6. Service to youth

Many agencies received GEB grants in this program, but several were especially significant. The Progressive Education Association, the most vital organization of professional educators in the early 1930's, received $1,622,000 from the GEB and created three commissions which conducted projects in the general education program. One commission, the Commission of the Relation of School and College, planned the famous Eight-Year Study, a project which led to a more flexible curriculum. The

---

14 Havighurst interview.
Commission on the Secondary School Curriculum conducted a study of adolescent behavior and made sweeping recommendations on curriculum reorganization. A third agency, the Commission on Human Relations, assembled materials for use by teachers and curriculum workers in the schools.16

The National Education Association, the largest teachers' organization in the country, also participated in the GEB program. In 1935 the NEA and its Department of Superintendence created the Educational Policies Commission. This influential commission, supported by GEB grants for a seven-year period, helped provide long range planning in basic educational policy formation. Its reports were widely acclaimed, especially Charles A. Beard's Unique Function of Education in a Democracy and William G. Carr's The Purposes of Education in a Democracy. A summary volume, Learning the Ways of Democracy, reflected the commission's dominant interest in education for living in a democracy.17

When the general education program was authorized by the Board in 1933, the officers anticipated that a substantial part of the work would be done through a national commission to be created by the American Council on Education.18

16 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, 248-250.
17 Ibid., 247-248.
18 Ibid., 244.
Edmund Day wanted this commission's work to take in the whole range of youth problems. It was to be a comprehensive and an ambitious project. He believed the commission should be composed of widely-respected Americans from various professions who would be free to determine the commission's course of action. Day hoped this kind of commission would permit an exchange of fresh ideas and the formulation of programs which would receive nationwide support. This phase of the Board's program was delayed, however, due to a reorganization of the American Council on Education. But by 1934 the Council had broadened its activities to include both secondary and higher education, and had chosen a new, dynamic president, George F. Zook. The changes opened the way for the establishment of a national commission under the American Council on Education—the American Youth Commission. This commission was one of the major parts of the Board's general education program and it received more than $1,350,000 from the Board over a seven-year period.  

The American Council on Education, like its benefactor, had been concerned with educational problems long before the depression years. In January 1918 leaders of eleven national educational organizations met to discuss the

---

19 Havighurst interview.

20 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, 244.
educational dislocation and needs brought on by United States entry into World War I. They decided to form a council of national education organizations, the American Council on Education, which would be a center for coordinating American educational policies, particularly in higher education. This council was to be independent of the federal government, and was to devote itself to scientific inquiry, to provide means for consultation, and to stimulate experimental activities by institutions and groups of institutions. It was to be financed by dues from the members and by grants from foundations and learned societies, and its work was to be carried out by its staff, commissions, and committees set up to perform special services. The Council soon realized that there was as great a need for cooperative educational action in peace as in war. By the end of 1918 colleges and universities were expressing interest in the Council's work. Thus the Council changed its constitution to admit accredited colleges, universities and technical schools as institutional members.  

The Council grew slowly during the 1920's and by 1934 when George F. Zook became the new Council president it had 269 members. The depression, however, had severely

---

hurt the Council. Its financial support dwindled as some institutions were temporarily forced to drop their membership, and foundation grants were not readily available. On March 6, 1933 the Council submitted a request to the General Education Board for a $50,000 per year operational support grant for fifteen years, but was turned down.\textsuperscript{22} The major reason for this refusal was the Council's limited range of activity. While the Board was concerned with college youth, its major interest was in young people at the secondary school age level. With monetary resources sufficient only to maintain limited activities, the Council considered expanding its functions in the hope of securing additional financial support. The Council's executive committee, at its April 20, 1933 meeting, proposed changing the constitution to permit such a reorganization, but the full Council at its meeting the following month rejected this change. The Council decided that while it had no serious objection to making the field of its activities as wide as the whole field of education, national and international, it believed the emphasis should remain on education at the higher levels. It's rejection of amendments to broaden its function beyond

the college and university field, as anticipated, deepened its financial crisis. William F. Russell, chairman of the American Council, called a special meeting of the Council February 10, 1934 to reconsider the issue. Russell told the representatives that unless additional funds were secured, the Council would have to curtail its budget. There were several possibilities to improve the financial situation. But each necessitated constitutional changes permitting an expansion of activities. By entering into programs for all education, rather than just higher education, more dues-paying members would be eligible to join the organization. But the prospect of attracting new, dues-paying members in 1934 was dim. A more promising approach was the possibility of attracting increased foundation support. Up to this time foundation grants had been used only for special programs and not for the Council's operational expenses. Russell informed the Council that substantial foundation financial support could be secured if the Council would make the constitutional changes to broaden Council functions. The support Russell had in mind were General Education Board grants. The Board had indicated it was willing to finance Council operations if they coincided with the aims of the Board's general education program. The Council, painfully aware of its economic distress, agreed at the special meeting to make the necessary constitutional changes. Shortly following this decision, the Council began to receive badly
needed financial assistance. The first of several major
GEB contributions was a $300,000 general grant for five
years beginning July 1, 1934.23

During the period the Council was altering its
constitution to qualify for GEB assistance, it also
changed its leadership. Charles R. Mann, director of the
Council since 1922, retired in August 1934. His succes­
sor was George F. Zook,24 the United States Commissioner
of Education, 1933-1934. Zook, former president of Akron
University was a dynamic and respected leader in education.
His ideas on youth and education were in accord with
Edmund Day, and he was willing to cooperate with him in
carrying out projects in the Board's general education
program. One of the major projects Day wanted was a
national commission to make a comprehensive investigation of
youth problems. Zook collaborated with Day in drawing

Educational Record, XXXII (October, 1951), 330; "Report of
the Executive Committee," Educational Record, XIV (July,
1933), 271; "Sixteenth Annual Meeting," Educational Record,
XIV (July, 1933), 264; "Special Meeting of the American
Council on Education," Educational Record, XV (April, 1934),
154-157; "The Director's Report," Educational Record, XV
(July, 1934), 261-262; "Report of the Executive Committee,"
Educational Record, XV (July, 1934), 247. Educational
Record is the journal of the American Council on Education.

24 Zook's title was director, but in 1935 the name of
the position was changed to president.
up a proposal for such a commission. In March 1935 Zook submitted a report to the GEB for financial support for a national youth commission which would "make an extensive inquiry into and formulate plans for the care and education of American youth." The Board accepted the request, and committed $100,000 annually for five years, beginning April 15, 1935, for general support of such a commission. In addition $300,000 was set aside for support of specific projects. This grant totaling $800,000 made possible the formulation of the American Youth Commission under the auspices of the American Council on Education—a commission which made the most extensive investigation of youth conditions and youth problems ever attempted.  

Zook's proposal was a 34-page document elaborating the reasons why a national youth commission was needed. It

---


The name American Youth Commission was selected at the organization's first meeting, September 16, 1935. Lotus Coffman, a member of the AYC, suggested the title so that the Commission would not be confused with the National Youth Administration. During the planning stages the Commission was referred to as the "national youth commission."

Subsequent use of the terms "Commission," "Youth Commission" and "AYC," unless otherwise designated, refers to the American Youth Commission.
began by detailing problems brought on by recent changes in American society. The statistics Zook assembled in this document gave ample grounds for panic. They indicated that economic and social changes had widened the gap between adequate education and that which the schools were providing. The depression brought an increase in enrollment in secondary school population, as employment opportunities for youth were becoming more limited. Zook estimated that 70% of the nation's 10,175,000 secondary school-age young people were in school.26 This was a marked increase from 1930 when only 51% of American youth were enrolled in secondary schools.27 Zook argued that schools must adopt a more flexible program to meet the needs of an enlarged enrollment. He believed educational programs should be revised to take account of more recent developments such as the increases in the leisure time of adults; the rapid

26 A Proposal, 1.

development of means of communication and transportation and the subsequent growing interdependence of people; the growing importance of radio and films in determining group and individual interests and standards of taste and conduct; the declining influence of the church and home; and the apparent increase in crime.28

Zook was aware the youth problem went beyond the schools. Depression conditions made it extremely difficult for the out-of-school young people, one-third of the high school-age group, to obtain suitable employment. But he saw other difficulties for these youth as well. He asserted that nearly 3,000,000 rural youth who would normally have followed the pattern of migration to cities and towns were remaining on the farm where they were not needed. Nearly half of the thousands of registered destitute transients in 1934 were under 25 years of age as were the greatest percentage of those arrested for crime. No social agencies were equipped to provide adequate supervision and protection for these youth. Their condition was an alarming symptom of a national youth problem—a problem the schools alone could not handle.29

Central to Zook's analysis of the youth problem was the

28 A Proposal, 1.
29 A Proposal, 3.
lack of adequate planning. He decried the fact that there was "... neither a consistent plan for dealing with the problems which the depression has brought to the fore, nor an agency equipped to develop such a plan and put it into effective action." Professional education groups had attempted to formulate programs prior to the depression. The plan most secondary schools used for a guide had been the one formulated by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1918. This commission's report, the important *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, pointed to the comprehensive role of the secondary school in its aim of educating for complete living in a democracy. Zook was in agreement with this, but believed the plan was no longer adequate as it did not envisage the problems created by large numbers of youth who were neither in school nor suitably employed. Efforts at basic

---

30 A Proposal, 4.


1. Health education
2. Command of fundamental processes (reading, writing, arithmetical computations, and elements of oral and written expression)
3. Worthy home membership
4. Vocational education
5. Civic education
6. Worthy use of leisure time
7. Ethical character.
educational planning in the early 1930's were hardly more relevant. Zook complained that study projects were poorly conceived, insufficiently financed and frequently duplicative.  

The national youth commission Zook proposed would provide adequate planning that earlier programs failed to supply. Its study would be, as Edmund Day had wanted, an inquiry into all youth needs, and not just educational ones. Unemployment, crime, and inadequate educational provisions all testified to the need for a broad-based inquiry into the youth problem. The most crucial time for youth, according to Zook's analysis, was when they acquired elementary tools of knowledge, represented approximately by the completion of the sixth grade, down to the time five or ten years later when usually they settled in a vocation and perhaps their own home. The Commission's task was to find ways for these young people to make this adjustment as smoothly and satisfactorily as possible.  

In doing this it was not only to evaluate

---

32 A Proposal, 4.

33 The Commission officially was concerned with youth from age 12 to about 24, roughly the period when youth finished formal schooling and found vocations. But most of the Commission's studies concentrated on youth 16 and over. This was understandable because young people were remaining in school longer than before. Therefore, those under 16 were much less likely to be seeking full-time employment.
previous youth studies and to initiate its own investigation, but also to formulate and promote basic programs for youth. Zook believed this latter goal would make the commission's work unique and a contribution to fundamental planning.34

Zook outlined a five-point program for the American Youth Commission. It would undertake:

a. To collect and coordinate important available data bearing on the protection, guidance and education of American youth.

b. To promote needed investigations in important fields thus far unexplored, or explored only partially.

c. To develop—and, as conditions might require, progressively to revise—basic plans for the education and protection of American youth, in agreement with the goals which seem best to fit American ideals, conditions and institutions.

d. To cooperate with all agencies and instrumentalities dealing with the youth problem, in order that a united front may be presented in attacking the common problems.

e. To encourage the translation of these plans into definite action.35

In elaborating this program Zook asserted that one of the Commission's primary responsibilities was to make a comprehensive analysis of characteristics of and influences on youth. Previous investigations into this subject were inconclusive, so Zook suggested the Commission should

34 A Proposal, 9-10.

35 A Proposal, 7-8.
begin its own investigation. There were numerous questions such an investigation might consider. One was the characteristics of American youth—Where did they live? What did they do? What institutions were responsible for their care and education? Another was the influences on them. Zook hoped the AYC could update and supplement the kind of data assembled in studies such as those conducted by President Hoover's Research Committee on Social Trends. Some of the more urgent areas to investigate were educational opportunities available to youth through schools, effectiveness of non-school agencies in providing for the care of youth, outside influence on youth by institutions not subject to extensive social control, and opportunities for employment. He believed studies in these areas would provide more knowledge about the effects on youth of schools, the home, the church, clubs, gangs, courts, penal institutions, CCC Camps, the press, books, films, radio and existing job opportunities. 36

Another task of the Commission was a continuing re-evaluation of the adequacy of commonly accepted goals in the care and education of youth. Admittedly this was a formidable obligation, but Zook believed the AYC must help determine general goals if there was to be any systematic or effective educational planning. The

Commission was to urge groups of leaders to determine the ideals of American society with respect to the care and education of youth. Specific studies the AYC might undertake were a definition of the "good life" in a democratic society and regional disparities over goals of education.  

A major responsibility for the American Youth Commission according to Zook's program was to conduct studies of what agencies and what methods could most constructively influence American youth. These studies were to be the basis for controlled experiments which could help implement findings of the investigations. As part of the implementation effort the Commission would also encourage other agencies to do similar work. Zook suggested three general areas of investigation where the AYC should coordinate its efforts with other agencies. It should help determine what activities and instructional materials, what teaching and counseling methods, and what organization and administrative forms were most effective in influencing American Youth.  

A final major area of activity was the promotion of Commission findings. The AYC would attempt to call

37 A Proposal, 13-16.
38 A Proposal, 16-18.
widespread attention to its work through publication of studies or other appropriate methods. According to Zook this would involve demonstration experiments and conferences with professional groups, as well as full usage of the news media. 39

Zook concluded his proposal with suggested studies the Commission might wish to consider as part of its initial program. The most important thing he believed the AYC could do would be to make a comprehensive investigation of the characteristics of all youth between the ages of 12 and 25 in a number of representative communities. This study should take into account educational level, economic status, vocation, recreational habits, and civic and social activities. It should also determine the differences between youth who completed their secondary school education and those who did not. Other studies Zook suggested for the Commission, in order of priority, were an exact and extended analysis of the outcomes of the various plans for vocational education then in use; a survey of the educational program and the possibility of vocational education in the Civilian Conservation Corps; an investigation of the problems of secondary and general education

in rural areas; and an analytical study of the results of various types of reorganization at the junior college level.40

Zook's proposal for a commission to search out ways to improve the care and education of America's youth was not very explicit, nor did he intend it to be. It was designed as a guide for the AYC, and was in no way to restrict the Commission's activities. The Commission was to function under the American Council on Education and to receive financial support from the General Education Board, but it was to be largely independent from both groups. Office space would be provided for the Commission's staff in the Council building in Washington, and the Council president was to be an ex officio member. The Commission, however, was free to determine its own policies and actions. It was also free to solicit financial support from other agencies besides the GEB.41

The Commission's work was to be comprehensive. Zook intended, as had Edmund Day in instituting this phase of the General Education Board's program, that the commission


41 Proceedings of the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935, 19-20. The Proceedings were stenographic reports of discussion at Commission meetings.
investigate all phases of the youth problem.\textsuperscript{42} Zook and Day believed that concern for youth was too often the prerogative of educators and that there was a serious need for a broader study of youth problems by a group including non-educators. This was a major reason for creating a national youth commission. It could attempt things in which educational organizations such as the Progressive Education Association or Educational Policies Commission had little interest or competence.

Essential to the Commission's work was adequate financial support for a reasonably long period of operation. The $800,000 grant for a five year period from the General Education Board was large enough to guarantee an extensive and carefully prepared study. Nor were there any restrictions on the Commission's seeking additional financial aid, either from the GEB or other foundations. All told the American Youth Commission received approximately $1,350,000 and an eighteen-month extension of its activity from the General Education Board.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} Zook was convinced the youth problem was basically an educational one. Yet he counseled the Commission to consider all issues it believed important. See. \textit{ibid.}, 20.

\textsuperscript{43} Fosdick, \textit{Adventure in Giving}, 244.
If the AYC's work was to have any significant effect, Zook also believed its membership should include not only respected educators but representative Americans from various professional backgrounds. Commission members should be able and widely respected in their professions. They should be prestigious and be representative of all geographical sections of the country. Such a membership would give the greatest possible weight to any commission recommendations and discourage charges that it represented partisan interests. The Commission was to consist of approximately fifteen members, and it should be responsible for formulating all plans and policies. It was also to appoint a full-time director who would be responsible for administering all aspects of the various projects and for appointing a professional staff to assist him.\footnote{A Proposal, 23.}

September 16, 1935 George Zook's proposal for a national youth commission became a reality. Newly chosen members\footnote{The members and the director were selected by Zook and a special committee of the American Council on Education. This was the same committee which helped write the Proposal for the creation of a national commission. See letter from Homer P. Rainey to author, December 13, 1968.} of the American Youth Commission assembled at the Carlton Hotel in Washington for the organization's first meeting. The opening session gave every indication that...
Zook and Edmund Day's idea for an independent agency to make a sweeping re-examination and to formulate a program for the improvement of American youth conditions would be successful. This was apparent by the attitudes of the participants. They were enthusiastic, serious, and able.

Nothing was more important to the success of the Commission than the capability of its membership. The AYC's work would be futile unless it could convince the American public of the desirability of its recommendations. This meant the necessity of not only sound policy decisions, but also the backing of decisions by people who were widely known and respected. Zook and Day were fortunate in being able to find this kind of membership, and they brought together an impressive list of talented people. The original members were Will. W. Alexander, Newton D. Baker, Ralph Budd, Lotus Coffman, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Willard Givens, Henry I. Harriman, Robert M. Hutchins, Chester Rowell, William F. Russell, Edith Stern, John W. Studebaker, Miriam Van Waters, Matthew Woll, and Owen D. Young. 46

The AYC was a representative group in every sense. Five members were professional educators. Lotus Coffman, president of the University of Minnesota, was perhaps

---

46 Owen D. Young did not join the Commission until January 1936.
the most highly regarded state university president; Willard Givens was the executive secretary of the National Education Association; Robert M. Hutchins was the youthful and controversial president of the University of Chicago; William F. Russell was dean of Teachers College of Columbia University; and John W. Studebaker was the United States Commissioner of Education.

Three were prominent leaders in American business. Ralph Budd was president of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad; Henry I. Harriman, former president of the United States Chamber of Commerce was chairman of the board of directors of the New England Power Association; and Owen D. Young was board chairman of the General Electric company.

Will W. Alexander, later head of the Farm Security Administration, was a leader in race relations; Newton D. Baker had been a spokesman for humanitarian causes during his lengthy political career; Dorothy Canfield Fisher was a popular writer; Chester Rowell was editor of the San Francisco Chronicle; Edith Stern was active in philanthropic work for education in the South; Miriam Van Waters was superintendent of the Massachusetts State Reformatory for Women; and Matthew Woll was vice-president of the American Federation of Labor.

All were well-known in their respective fields, but Newton D. Baker and Owen D. Young had the most extensive
reputations. The two had much in common. They had had distinguished careers which spanned most of the century; they had interests in international and humanitarian causes; and both had received serious consideration for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1932. The two men were able to bring to the American Youth Commission a very real sense of responsibility. Baker was chairman of the AYC until his death in 1937; Young subsequently was chosen as chairman.

In choosing the director of the Commission Zook and his committee exercised the same care as in the selection of members. They picked Homer P. Rainey, a young and vigorous administrator. Rainey, only 39, had been president of Bucknell University since 1931. He was respected in educational circles, and had attracted attention in the early thirties as an organizer of a study of Pennsylvania youth.

But talented leadership, dedication, and enthusiasm did not necessarily guarantee success for the Commission. The youth problem, which had never been defined, was awesome in any context, and the Commission's goals in dealing with it were exceedingly ambitious. By September 1935 it was not clear how well the Commission could function. Since the AYC was in part to be a deliberative body, it could accomplish little unless its members were willing to devote to it a great deal of time. Attendance
at three or four meetings each year would hardly be sufficient for the formulation of basic policies. It was understood that the director and his staff were to assist the Commission in policy formulation and to be responsible for administering the Commission's projects. But there was no clear demarcation of duties between the membership and staff. Such an arrangement called for a high degree of cooperation if the AYC was to function smoothly.

The most serious difficulty facing the Commission in 1935 lay in the thing that was supposed to give it strength—its divergent membership. As a deliberative body the Commission was soon to have problems. It was one thing to authorize an investigation, but quite another to interpret the result. Because of its members' variant opinions the AYC found it difficult to reach agreement on major issues. Not until nearly four years after its inception did the Commission issue the first of a series of official policy statements.

Yet this did not prevent the American Youth Commission from being an effective agency. Beginning in 1935 the Commission launched a number of investigations which added significantly to the knowledge about American youth. The Commission in its work did not clear up the youth muddle, nor did it accomplish all it intended to do. But its studies did much to alter the thinking (including its own)
about society's responsibility for the care and education of youth. That alone was a significant accomplishment.
CHAPTER II

THE MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION

The American Youth Commission was to be more than just another commission. By 1935 the youth problem was receiving a great deal of attention from many agencies. George Zook and his associates at the American Council on Education knew well the fate of most investigative bodies. Their reports were published, briefly noticed, and quickly forgotten. The president of the American Council in planning the Commission attempted to overcome these difficulties. Zook knew that a commission studying youth problems could not be successful unless it helped bring about improved conditions for American young people. This meant the AYC must do more than make investigations, even significant ones. It must translate its findings into positive programs of action, and it could only do so by convincing the public that its programs were necessary.

The Commission attempted to achieve good public relations in several ways. One of its major functions was to popularize its work through publications, news releases, a speakers' bureau, conferences, and demonstration experiments. But more important was the decision of the Commission's founders to select widely known and
respected members whose judgements were likely to influence a majority of Americans. Zook and his executive committee intended the Commission to be a representative lay group which would appeal to educators, professional people, businessmen, farmers, laborers, and housewives.

Members of the Commission had more than a ceremonial function. They were expected to do more than sign their names to a few reports or attend several meetings a year. They were to deliberate and to decide what kinds of activity to follow. The director and his staff, who were trained professional educators or social scientists, were to make the investigations and to assist the membership in identifying relevant areas of activity, but they were not props for an ornamental shell. Ideally the members and staff were to work together as a well knit unit which would find ways to improve the care and education of American youth.¹

¹ The dual composition of the American Youth Commission was not unusual. Many investigative agencies use this same method. Members meet at regular intervals to determine policy and to evaluate the work conducted by a professional staff. The members of the Commission attempted to maintain a distinction between the work of the staff and statements of the Commission. Most of the AYC publications were prepared by the staff. These reports included a disclaimer stating the material did not necessarily reflect the Commission's views. But these disclaimers meant little. The members discussed and suggested revision of staff studies before they were submitted for publication. With one exception, Joseph Folsom, Youth, Family and Education, the publications were generally in accord with Commission views. References in this paper to the work of the Commission, unless qualified otherwise, apply to the total activity of the Commission—membership and staff.
The purpose of this chapter is to examine briefly the background, experience and social attitudes of the people who made up the American Youth Commission. Since the Commission's work would obviously reflect to some extent the views of each of its members about youth needs, those views should be identified. This information gives an indication, though perhaps no more than that, of those types of activities the AYC would pursue. If this approach is to be valid, it must account for several qualifying factors. First, the Commission functioned as a unit. Its recommendations were formulated only after extensive deliberation, and they represented the collective views of the members. Secondly, because of the Commission's desire to achieve programs all its members could support, it was most active in those areas where the members were substantially in accord. When the members could not agree on an issue, which occasionally happened, they were reluctant to pursue it. A final factor was the degree of participation by the Commission's members. Some were considerably more active than others. Several had expert knowledge on youth problems.

Staff members, aside from the two directors, Homer Rainey and Floyd Reeves, are not discussed in this chapter, as their work, though important, pertained only to selective aspects of the Commission's work.
but were able to give little time to the AYC. Thus, despite their abilities, they had little effect on the Commission.

During the six-year history of the American Youth Commission there were twenty members (twelve served for the entire period) and two directors. These twenty-two persons who composed the AYC served with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Three distinct levels of participation on the Commission can be identified. First, was a small group which was very active in the Commission. With one exception they held major offices in the AYC. Seven other members were on the AYC for the full six years and regularly attended the Commission's meetings, but did not attempt to guide its activities. The remaining nine members exerted even less influence because their association with the Commission was minimal; they either were on the Commission for only a short time or attended meetings infrequently.

---

2 This does not include Robert E. Wood, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, who in June 1938 was requested to join the Commission as chairman. Wood refused the chairmanship, but stated he would consider joining the Commission the following year. During 1939 he was listed as a member, but he did not attend any meetings. He resigned from the Commission the same year. Wood's only contact with Commission activity was a letter he wrote the AYC in October 1939 urging the Commission oppose any involvement in the war in Europe. See George Zook to Owen D. Young, July 1, 1938 and Young to Zook, July 8, 1938 in Owen D. Young papers; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, April 15-16, 1940, 91; Proceedings of the American Youth Commission, October 9-10, 1939, 116.
The members who most influenced the Commission were George Zook, Homer Rainey, Floyd Reeves, Owen D. Young, Newton D. Baker and Dorothy Canfield Fisher. As president of the American Council on Education, Zook had played the major part in founding the Commission, but he was also a prominent figure in the AYC for the duration of its activities. Zook was born in Kansas and received his undergraduate degree from the state university at Lawrence. In 1914 he received the Ph.D. from Cornell in European history. After several years of university teaching, Zook became interested in the problems of education. As a member of the United States Office of Education from 1920-1925, he helped make numerous state educational surveys. He was then chosen president of the University of Akron where he served eight years, and in 1933 he was Franklin Roosevelt's choice as United States Commissioner of Education. He resigned from the latter position in 1934 to become the president of the American Council on Education.

By this time Zook was a major figure in policy making for secondary and higher education. An able and dynamic administrator, rather than a theorist, he was involved in most of the significant developments occurring in American

---

3 "New Commissioner Named," School Life, XVIII (June, 1933), 183; "The U.S. Commissioner of Education," School and Society, XXXVII (June 17, 1933), 773; "From A to Zook," Time, XXXXVIII (August 12, 1946), 43.
education. He was vice-chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Education appointed in 1936. He was a member of the Educational Policies Commission, the 1940 White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, and numerous other educational committees. This made his influence on the AYC that much greater. He was able to inform the Commission of the activities of other groups involved with youth problems. Although only an ex officio member of the American Youth Commission, Zook was a more active participant than the Commission records indicate. He attended meetings regularly, and the Commission readily solicited his viewpoints. He also worked closely with Homer Rainey, the AYC director until April 1939, in the administering of AYC programs. He was on the Commission’s executive committee, and was chairman from October 1937 until June 1940.  

Zook’s ideas on educational improvements were not new, but they had considerable merit. His major concern in the mid-thirties was that the crisis in education  

---

4 Zook took a more direct part in the activities of the American Youth Commission than he had originally intended. By 1937 some of the Commission members believed the AYC was not accomplishing what it should and the Commission staff needed additional leadership. At this point Zook agreed to become chairman of the executive committee and to assist Rainey in carrying out AYC activities. See correspondence in Owen D. Young papers: Robert M. Hutchins to Owen D. Young, May 27, 1937; Young to Raymond Fosdick, June 3, 1937; Young to Hutchins, July 2, 1937; Young to Newton D. Baker, July 29, 1937; and Young to Baker, October 1, 1937.
threatened the nation's whole social structure. He believed this crisis was the result of the failure of communities to support their schools. Cutbacks in education, he asserted, were short-sighted depression measures depriving children of skills and training necessary for responsible citizenship. Zook argued that new methods of school finance were required. Aware of the excessive tax burdens on local property owners, he favored increased state aid and the use of federal funds. Accompanying the wider use of state and federal monies he urged that school districts, especially in rural areas, be consolidated so they might offer better and more efficient educational opportunities.

Homer P. Rainey, a Texan, was director of the American Youth Commission from its inception until April 1939 when he resigned to become president of the University of Texas. After graduation from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, Rainey began a career in professional baseball. He pitched with Galveston in the Texas League, and had an opportunity to sign with the St. Louis Cardinals. Deciding,

---


instead, to go into education, he earned a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. After several years of teaching at the University of Oregon, he became president of Franklin College in Indiana. In 1931, at the age of 34, he accepted the presidency of Bucknell University, and in 1935 agreed to become director of the American Youth Commission. Rainey possessed the qualities Zook wanted for the director. An active and personable administrator who had a reputation for getting things done, Rainey was also an effective speaker. At Bucknell he had changed the curriculum to include courses in the arts.  

Like Zook, Rainey was more an organizer than a theorist. As AYC director his approach was to identify and study various aspects of the youth problem, such as education, employment, health, recreation, and character development with the intent of coordinating the data as a basis for formulation of programs. Rainey soon found this was exceedingly difficult. The Commission did not reach tentative conclusions as rapidly as it had wished. Perhaps this was inevitable. Rainey, his staff, and the members came to realize the youth problem was more complex than they

had at first believed. There were no ready solutions. Division of opinion within the membership also hindered progress. Rainey attempted to get the AYC to adopt a general report before he left the Commission. This was a lengthy document which dealt with specific areas of youth needs. But the Commission was not ready to accept it, and the project was dropped. 8

Floyd W. Reeves succeeded Rainey as AYC director in April 1939. Like his predecessor, he had an unusual background for a professional educator. Reeves was born on a South Dakota ranch and during his boyhood tended cattle. A self-taught youth, he began teaching in a country school at age 17. Three years later he enrolled in high school and finished the curriculum in one year. In another three years he received a bachelor's degree from Huron College, and subsequently obtained a Ph.D. in education from the University of Chicago. Later, as a member of the education faculty at Chicago, he conducted 400 surveys of school systems and colleges, and gained a wide reputation as an expert on school finance. In 1934 he was selected as

8 Homer P. Rainey, How Fare American Youth? (New York, 1939), v; Homer P. Rainey, "The Care and Education of American Youth," Educational Record, XVII (July 1936), 451-462; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, April 24-26, 1939, 82-84.
personnel director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and in 1936 was appointed by Roosevelt as chairman of the new Advisory Committee on Education.9

The Advisory Committee was a significant determinant of trends in education in the late thirties. The committee had originally been appointed to consider the need for an expanded program of federal aid for vocational education, but in April 1937 Roosevelt requested the committee to extend its study to the whole subject of federal relationship to state and local conduct of education. The committee's final report in 1938 recommended the continuation of existing grants for vocational education and extensive new federal grants to the states for various types of educational services.10 This report had a pronounced effect on other educational organizations, including the American Youth Commission.

When Reeves became director, the Commission had reached a crucial point in its work. Only one year remained for the Commission according to the provisions of the original GEB grant, and the Commission had not yet developed any


general program. The document Rainey's staff had been preparing was still being revised. Furthermore, the looming clouds of war in Europe were also disturbing the AYC. The first meeting in which Reeves served as the new director came one month after Germany's invasion of Poland. Reeves, a brusque, forceful leader, pressed the Commission to assert itself on the youth situation. The war in Europe was an added spur. Reeves urged the Commission to issue short, general statements in pamphlet form on the problem of unemployment, education, and health. Instead of issuing a lengthy general report, he suggested the Commission publish some of its findings as separate documents. Since the Commission at this time had agreed to request a two year extension (until June 30, 1942) for the Commission from the GEB, Reeves advised that work on a final report be delayed until the following summer. The Commission accepted Reeves' suggestions. By November 1939 the Commission had issued its first official policy statement, A Program of Action for American Youth. Other short policy statements and a number of study reports were soon in print.

As director of the Commission Reeves pursued his conviction that society must assume greater responsibility for the welfare of youth. He believed unemployment was likely to be a continuing problem for young people, even following the war, and society should provide adequate employment programs for all youth to the age of 21. He
asserted the basic need was for coordinated and long range planning for the care and education of youth.\textsuperscript{11}

Zook, Rainey, and Reeves had the most direct effect on the American Youth Commission's actions, as their positions required a daily concern with the Commission's affairs. The regular membership usually met only three times yearly. Yet several members gave considerable time to the Commission and were keenly interested in its work.

Newton D. Baker was chairman of the American Youth Commission until shortly before his death in December 1937. Baker's health was poor while he was on the Commission, and he was not as active as he would have liked to have been. But as chairman he did exert a substantial influence on the Commission. Baker had enjoyed a distinguished career by 1935 and his presence on the AYC enhanced its reputation. During his long public career he had been a reform mayor of Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of War. An idealist and internationalist, he was interested in promoting work for world peace. Baker was a Jeffersonian liberal who feared concentration of power, either in government or industry. This viewpoint appealed to a number of conservative Democrats who were

\textsuperscript{11} Floyd W. Reeves, "Planning for Youth--Past and Future," \textit{Educational Record}, XXI (July 1941), 341-344.
ready to support him as the party's presidential nominee should Roosevelt have failed to secure a commanding majority in the convention. 12

Aside from his law practice, Baker declared his two major interests were international affairs and education. He believed education was a necessary factor for life in a democracy and educational opportunities should be extended. Despite his interest in education, he had no definite thoughts on coping with the youth problem when he joined the AYC. He believed the Commission should seek ways to channel the spontaneity of youth into constructive group activity. 13

Baker was the most vocal opponent of federal aid to education on the AYC. But his conservatism was tempered with common sense. He came to support federal aid to education, as well as some New Deal measures because he saw no other suitable alternatives. The data the Commission assembled on educational finance in the United States pointed so clearly to the need for federal aid that Baker, though reluctantly and mournfully, acquiesced. 14


Baker's successor, Owen D. Young, the Commission's most active and effective lay member, was not on the Commission when it was organized. The AYC at its first meeting in September 1935 requested the American Council on Education to secure Young as the chairman for the Commission. Young agreed to join the AYC as vice-chairman (Baker was the temporary chairman) and chairman of the executive committee. Young was a logical choice for this position. Not only was he an influential industrialist and negotiator, but he knew something about education as well.

In the early thirties Young was one of the nation's most influential industrial leaders. He was board chairman of General Electric, and former chairman of the board of the Radio Corporation of America. He was also respected as a negotiator for his work on the Dawes and Young plans to stabilize the economic situation in Europe. By 1932 some of Young's associates were urging him to enter politics. He received more than passing attention from conservative Democrats as a possible presidential nominee.

---

15 Minutes of the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935, 4; George Zook to Owen D. Young, December 16, 1935, Owen D. Young papers.
in 1932. Young did not have, however, any serious interest in a political career. 16

During this same period Young was attracting acclaim for his interest in education. He had earlier given to several educational institutions and provided funds for the construction of the central school in his native Van Hornesville, New York. But more important was his commitment to the need for educational improvement throughout the country. He believed the nation's well being depended upon the education of all people and that a reassessment of the whole educational structure was necessary. He reasoned that education should stimulate children and encourage a fuller development of their individual capacities. Young wanted a broader secondary school curriculum where the student would be free to form his own opinions and impressions. He was also concerned about the schools' obligations to youth who had left school and were unable to find work. Young also realized the need for better methods of educational finance. As chairman of the New York Board of Regents Inquiry into the Cost of Public Education in the State of New York he favored consolidation of small school units. He became

convinced that federal aid to education, perhaps in large amounts, was a necessity.17

Young was important to the Commission for his active concern for youth and the respect he commanded—respect from educators as well as businessmen. He served concurrently on several important agencies which were working with youth problems. Among the more important were the New York Board of Regents, the 1940 White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, and the General Education Board.

Dorothy Canfield Fisher was never a Commission officer, but she was one of the most influential members. Though she was born in Kansas and educated at Ohio State University where her father was president, her family was rooted in New England. She lived most of her life in Vermont and combined the Yankee qualities of practicality and common sense with a pervasive optimism. Mrs. Fisher, best known as a popular author, wrote novels and other books about children and family life. She was a life-long campaigner for women's and children's rights. In 1921 she became the first woman elected to the Vermont Board of Education.

---

At Columbus, Ohio in 1934 she gave a speech at the Conference on the Crisis in Education which attracted the favorable attention of George Zook. As a member of the Commission she stimulated the enthusiasm of other members. Never failing in her belief in the essential goodness of young people, she repeatedly reminded the AYC that conditions would improve if opportunities were given youth. 18

Mrs. Fisher's major interest was in improving the quality of life. Most frightening to her were the apathy and idleness of American youth, conditions which the depression helped reinforce. In her 1934 talk in Columbus, her statements in AYC meetings, and the concluding chapter of the final report she wrote for the Commission, she urged that ways must be found to encourage the creativity of young people. They must learn good work habits and find constructive uses for the increased leisure time in modern society. Mrs. Fisher believed much of the education problem stemmed from ignorance—parent ignorance. She argued that the fundamental human instinct of the parent was to save the child from immediate physical harm. But

she was appalled that few people were aware of less direct, though equally crippling dangers of bad health and poor education. She hoped the Commission could appeal to Americans' enlightened self-interest—that education for every child was necessary for the preservation of society.  

A second group of members regularly attended meetings and served on the Commission for its full six years. Though they participated in discussion, their influence on the AYC was less pronounced than that of the five persons previously mentioned. It is more difficult to see any direct relationship between this second group of members and the determination of Commission activities. These members were Will W. Alexander, Willard E. Givens, Henry I. Harriman, George Johnson, Chester Rowell, William F. Russell and Miriam Van Waters.

Will W. Alexander was best known as a spokesman for racial justice. After six years as a Methodist preacher he became executive director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in 1919. In 1921, he vigorously attacked the Ku Klux Klan in his native Missouri. He was also a vice-president of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, and for a short

---

19 Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Our Young Folks (New York, 1913), xiii; Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Homer F. Rainey in Exhibit J, January 9-10, 1936 in American Youth Commission files; George Zook, "Child in the Educational Crisis," Bulletin of the State University of Iowa (No. 43, 1934), 5-7.
time was acting president of Dillard University in New Orleans. Alexander was often affectionately referred to as "Dr. Will," but as Mark Ethridge pointed out the nickname was deceptive. Alexander was not a benign leader, but "a Missouri guerrilla putting in nasty licks at injustice." Alexander was also concerned with the problem of farm tenancy. He favored supervised, long-range programs which would help tenant farmers become farm owners. Because of his interest in this issue, he was appointed to succeed Rexford Tugwell in 1936 as head of the Resettlement Administration. The following year Henry Wallace picked him as head of the Farm Security Administration.

As a member of the American Youth Commission Alexander helped develop a study project on the personality development of Negro youth and the projects on rural youth.  

The newly elected executive secretary of the National Education Association in 1935, Willard E. Givens helped establish a liaison between the NEA and the American Youth Commission. Originally from Indiana, Givens had later

been a superintendent of schools in San Diego and Oakland, and president of the California State Teachers Association. In 1935 Givens most immediate concern for youth was severe unemployment. He believed the Commission could attack this problem by helping sponsor a national youth Census and conducting a study of occupational trends which could aid the schools in providing more relevant placement programs for their students. He was also a proponent for federal aid to education.\textsuperscript{21}

Henry I. Harriman, a member of the executive committee, regularly attended Commission functions, but did not take an active part in policy formation for the AYC. His business connections, however, did provide the Commission some contacts with the business community. Harriman, a native New Yorker, was a prominent public utility executive and had been president of the United States Chamber of Commerce. At the time of his selection to the Commission he was chairman of the board of the New England Power Association. In 1935 he joined a group of U.S. Chamber of Commerce members in rejecting the Chamber's decision to oppose Roosevelt's New Deal policies. Instead, Harriman

and his associates, supporters of the concept of economic planning, advocated a two year extension of the National Recovery Administration.22

In October 1935 Reverend George Johnson, secretary of the Catholic Education Association and secretary of the American Council on Education, was named to the AYC. Johnson had an extensive educational background, and had experience as a school superintendent and an education professor. His major interest in the Commission's work was that spiritual needs of young people should not be neglected. He believed improved education was necessary for good government, but also vital were morality, knowledge, and above all, religion. Johnson believed that society had not failed America's youth, and he was skeptical of quick remedies for reform. Yet he was convinced that educational inequalities in the different parts of the country could only be overcome by federal financial assistance. He was opposed, however, to any federal government control in assistance programs.23


Chester Rowell was the senior member of the American Youth Commission. A long time progressive Republican, he claimed to have been a friend of every President since Grant. Rowell brought to the AYC a wide range of experience. In his youth he considered a law career. He taught high school in Fresno, California for a few years, and later for a year at the University of Illinois. But his major interest was journalism. From 1898 to 1920 he was editor of the Fresno Republican. He then joined the San Francisco Chronicle and became editor in 1932. Rowell had been a leading California progressive. He helped challenge the Southern Pacific railroad at the beginning of the century, supported Hiram Johnson for governor in 1911, and bolted to the Progressive party in 1912. A close friend and backer of Herbert Hoover, he was also a trustee of the World Peace Foundation and a crusader for internationalism. At AYC meetings Rowell was a frequent discussant, but his comments were seldom critical. He approved the Commission's activities, though he did not attempt to shape them.24

A member of the AYC executive committee was William F. Russell, dean of Teachers College of Columbia University. Russell, who had succeeded his father as dean at Teachers College in 1927 was one of the country's most prominent

educators. Quick tempered and conservative, Russell was fearful of a centralized national school system, and he believed federal action in education might bring centralization. But Russell believed there was a need for federal assistance to the schools on an emergency basis. He was convinced, however, the crisis in education was not primarily a financial one. Instead his major concern was the lack of direction in the schools' programs and the absence of any relevant plan of secondary education. Russell urged in 1935 that the American Council's Committee of Problems and Plans redefine the scope and purpose of secondary education. He emphasized the importance of defining the "good life" and of finding ways to prepare youth for responsible citizenship. As a Commission member he was most interested in citizenship education. He attempted unsuccessfully to organize a national citizenship conference in December 1937. It was cancelled because few of the invited representatives were able to attend. Though much of the Commission's work was concerned with the idea of responsible citizenship, the AYC never undertook a specific project in this area. 25

Miriam Van Waters, superintendent of the State Reformatory for Women at Framingham, Massachusetts, was the secretary of the American Youth Commission. A respected authority on penology, she was an advocate of rehabilitative measures in prisons. She was also a recognized authority on juvenile delinquency. She believed delinquents should be treated with science, religion, and understanding, and not with imprisonment and revenge. Van Waters was not, however, a dynamic figure in the Youth Commission. Juvenile delinquency, the area in which she was especially knowledgeable, was given little attention by the Commission.26

A third group of Commission members had less significant effect on decision making. They were either on the Commission for a short time or infrequent in their attendance at meetings. They were generally less active in AYC discussions. These members were Ralph Budd, Lotus D. Coffman, Clarence Dykstra, Robert M. Hutchins, Mordecai Johnson, Edith Stern, John W. Studebaker, Henry C. Taylor and Matthew Well.

Ralph Budd, one of the nation's most creative railroad executives, was on the American Youth Commission until 1939. Budd, a native Iowan, was president of the

---

Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroads. An innovator in railroad operation, he introduced the first diesel powered streamliner, the Burlington Zephyr, in 1934. Budd's concern in education was for a practical school program which would prepare students as responsible citizens. He emphasized that schools should develop the child's sense of values and formulate more useful vocational training programs. Concerned with the problems of farm youth, he hoped the AYC would study programs, especially the 4-H Clubs and Future Farmers of America, which were designed to improve the training of rural young people. Budd favored federal financial commitment to general education only on an emergency basis. In 1939 the Commission issued its first official policy statement, A Program of Action for American Youth which advocated a wider federal commitment to education. Budd was opposed to this statement and resigned in November 1939.\(^{27}\)

Perhaps the nation's most highly regarded state university president in the thirties was Lotus D. Coffman. His selection as the president of the University of Minnesota in 1921 came after a life-long career in education. Raised on an Indiana farm, Coffman later

\(^{27}\) New York Times, February 3, 1962, 21; Ralph Budd to Homer P. Rainey, December 5, 1935 in Exhibit J, January 9-10, 1936; Ralph Budd to Owen D. Young, November 27, 1939, Owen D. Young papers.
financed his way to a Columbia doctorate. He held a number of teaching and administrative positions before going to Minnesota. A spokesman for educational equalitarianism, he was upset with the large number of students who came to the university, floundered through several years work, and then left in disgust. He urged the establishment of a special two-year college program designed especially for those students who had difficulty with the regular college curriculum. The result was the creation in 1932 of the General College, an expanded form of the junior college, with its own general education program. When Coffman came to the AYC in 1935 he believed the first step was to define youth needs. He was wary of radical groups, both right and left, which he felt were willing to exploit youth, but actually had no program to offer. Coffman was also skeptical of federal involvement in education, as he feared government, like private groups, could indoctrinate youth. Thus, he stressed that communities and states take the initiative in providing for their schools. Coffman did not take a very active role while he was on the Commission. His death in September 1938 came before the AYC made any substantive recommendations.28

Clarence Dykstra, president of the University of Wisconsin, joined the American Youth Commission in April 1939. A replacement for Coffman, Dykstra had an unusual background for a state university president. Holding only a B.A. from the University of Iowa, he taught political science at several universities before becoming city manager of Cincinnati. Dykstra was an able municipal leader and attracted nationwide attention by his forceful efforts in handling a serious flood in January 1937. Two months later the able liberal who brought good government to Cincinnati was chosen as Wisconsin's president. While on the Commission Dykstra was appointed in 1940 as the first National Director of Selective Service. Dykstra infrequently attended Commission meetings and had only a minimal connection with the Commission's work. 29

Robert M. Hutchins, a member of the American Youth Commission for three years, is one of the more controversial figures in American education. Only thirty when he became president of the University of Chicago in 1929, Hutchins introduced many progressive features. The Chicago plan

---

which he instituted eliminated compulsory attendance, reduced residence requirements and replaced the credit system with general courses and examinations. Hutchins believed education should develop students' abilities to reason. He stressed the importance of a broad, liberal curriculum where the world's great writers and great ideas would be studied. He was uninterested in the Commission's attention to vocational education. Since Hutchins believed the Commission suffered from poor leadership and was accomplishing little, he resigned from the AYC in May 1938.  

The only Negro on the Commission, Mordecai W. Johnson, became a member in April 1940. Johnson held a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, and later studied for the ministry at the Harvard Divinity School. He took a pastorate at a Baptist church in Charleston, West Virginia, where he became interested in working conditions in the coal mines. In 1926 Johnson was selected as president of Howard University. His appointment to the Commission came at a time when it was conducting a study of Negro

---

youth. His interests on the AYC were largely those of race relations.\footnote{Benjamin Brawley, \textit{Negro Builders and Heroes} (Chapel Hill, 1937), 221-225.}

Edith Stern, the third woman on the AYC, took very little part in the Commission. She only attended several meetings, and resigned in May 1938. The daughter of Julius Rosenwald, founder of the Rosenwald Fund, and wife of Edgar B. Stern, a New Orleans philanthropist, she was active in efforts to improve education in the South. The Sterns organized Dillard University and supported other social and civic activities. She believed a major function of the Commission should be to stimulate other organizations, notably the National Youth Administration, to implement AYC recommendations.\footnote{Dykeman and Stokely, \textit{Seeds of Southern Change}, 176-177; Edith Stern to Homer P. Rainey, November 23, 1935 in Exhibit J, January 9-10, 1936.}

When George Zook resigned as United States Commissioner of Education in 1934 he was replaced by John W. Studebaker. The AYC hoped to work with the Office of Education, and to some extent the two organizations did cooperate. Studebaker was active in the Commission for several years, but after 1938 was not directly involved with the AYC. One of the early Commission programs was to assist the Office of Education in conducting
a national youth census, a project which never materialized. Studebaker's ideas on the youth problem were quite similar to Zook's. In 1934, he became alarmed at the schools' failure to meet youth needs. Dropping college enrollments, rising high school attendance and thousands of high school graduates returning to high school convinced him the schools had not done their job. He was further concerned that youth might become prey to totalitarian schemes unless education was improved. In this same year he began in the Office of Education a study of youth similar to some of the AYC projects. This study, supported by the General Education Board, resulted in six monographs which were published as Bulletins of the Office of Education in 1936.33

The American Youth Commission after its first year took an increasing interest in rural youth. One result of this was the selection in June 1937 of Henry C. Taylor, an agricultural economist and educator, as a member. Taylor, an Iowan, had a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. After a lengthy career in agricultural work he was appointed director of the newly-created Farm Foundation in 1935. The Foundation's major interests were problems of

land tenure, health of rural people and rural education. Taylor was not very active in Commission discussions, but he did help with a rural study project in the last two years of the AYC's operation.\footnote{Taylor, Farm Foundation: Its First Ten Years, 1933-1943 (Chicago, 1943), passim.}

Matthew Woll was organized labor's representative on the American Youth Commission. Woll was vice-president of the International Photo-Engravers' Union of North America and a vice-president of the American Federation of Labor. A strong supporter of the Republican party, he was one of organized labor's most conservative spokesmen in the thirties. Woll rarely attended Commission meetings and had little, if any, effect on the Commission.\footnote{New York Times, June 2, 1956, 19; "Peacemakers," Time, XXXIII (March 13, 1939), 16; James Morris, Conflict within the AFL (Ithaca, N.Y., 1958), 67-71.}

The members of the American Youth Commission met all of Zook's initial tests. They were a representative group, they were busy people who had many other obligations and demands on their time. They found, too, the youth problem was greater and more complex than they had at first believed. As the decade ended and the Commission was supposed to analyze its data and make recommendations, a world war was beginning to alter conditions of America's
youth and the nature of the youth problem. The threat of war made the Commission's work more difficult. Solutions aimed at improving conditions of the mid-thirties were less relevant by 1941. The Commission concluded its final report several weeks after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. This report, signed by all the members, summarized AYC recommendations, but it did not provide a comprehensive program for the care and education of America's youth. The members were hopeful the recommendations would lead to effective solutions to the problems of young people. Despite the uncertainties of war they believed their recommendations were valid, and would remain so once peace was restored. Yet, the members realized much work remained to be done, especially in the implementation of needed programs. Their hope was that Americans would respond to the challenge.36

36 Some of the more active AYC members served on a new committee formed by the American Council on Education in 1942 to attempt to implement the Commission's recommendations. This body, the Committee on Youth Problems, functioned on a small budget until 1947 when it disbanded.
CHAPTER III
FINDING THE FACTS: THE SURVEY PROGRAM

No other generation of youth ever approached maturity with greater expectations than the one which finished high school and college in the early 1920's. F. Scott Fitzgerald, describing the excitement this period had for youth, wrote, "May one offer in exhibit the year 1922! That was the peak year of the younger generation." The 1920's was a decade of conspicuous success, and youth expected to share in it. Magazines and newspapers reflected the optimism by exaggerating specific examples of astounding accomplishment. Ford, Barton, Coolidge, Hoover, Ruth, Dempsey, and Lindbergh provided young people success standards to follow. But within a few years the promise for youth had dimmed. Depression, coming at the end of the decade, shattered youthful confidence. Discussion centered not on youth opportunities, but on youth problems. By 1935 when the American Youth Commission

---

began its work, the term "youth problem" was an overworked expression.²

A major reason for the extensive interest in the youth problem in the 1930's was that the prospects for young people had fallen so rapidly. Depression struck the cult of success a severe blow. Confident, expectant youth of the twenties was followed by aimless, insecure youth of the thirties. The youth problem was the American Youth Commission's immediate interest. When the members convened in Washington on September 16, 1935 they considered first the definition of the "youth problem" They requested Homer Rainey to prepare a report on the nature of the youth problem for the Commission's next meeting.³ They were aware that youth problems were not new, but it was obvious the depression had made conditions worse. Rainey's report was intended to provide necessary data on youth so the Commission could begin its program.

Neither Rainey nor the AYC members were concerned with an exact definition of the term "youth problem." Rainey spoke for the Commission when he stated it was futile to


³ Minutes of the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935, 4.
argue whether or not the United States had a youth problem. He conceded the term was vague, but he asserted there was a youth problem in the same sense there was a farm problem or a labor problem. There were specific, identifiable difficulties for farmers, laboring men, and youth. The important thing according to Rainey was to remedy the defects, not to argue terminology. Rainey looked at the youth problem as essentially one of maturation. The basic concern was to induct youth into society. As each young person grew to adulthood he must find a place of adult responsibility in the community, and it was the duty of society to facilitate this adjustment and to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood as satisfactory as possible for both. Rainey further argued it was meaningless to study the youth problem apart from general social conditions. Any program designed for the care and education of youth must consider relevant social and economic factors. Thus, a study of the youth problems would call for a comprehensive approach involving more than physical conditions of the young.4

Rainey submitted the report the AYC had requested on the youth problem at the Commission's second meeting in

---

January 1936. This report underscored Rainey's belief that the Commission should consider youth difficulties as they related to social conditions. Rainey identified nine major factors for the Commission to consider: the population, health, employment, education, and recreation of youth, juvenile delinquency, rural youth, non-white youth, and environment as factors affecting young people. The report briefly outlined what information was available in these areas and what conditions needed further attention.\(^5\)

The Rainey report gave immediate priority to a fact finding study. If the Commission was to design effective programs to improve youth conditions, Rainey argued, reliable statistical data was necessary. The first step was to be a youth population study. Population figures on youth unemployment in 1935 were disturbing. Rainey estimated that 4,700,000 of the estimated 20,100,000 youth between ages 16 and 25 were unable to find work and 2,875,000 were on relief. Equally distressing was the fate of children enrolled in the nation's public schools. U.S. Office of Education estimates indicated approximately 60% of the secondary school age youth were in school, a much larger number than were enrolled at the beginning of

\(^5\) What Is the Youth Problem?, report presented to the American Youth Commission, January 9-10, 1936, 1-49.
the decade. Yet, it was readily apparent that industry could not absorb these young men and women into the labor market despite the higher educational attainments of the prospective employees.  

Population data on youth employment and school enrollment were based on estimates. These figures were generally reliable, but the Commission believed a nationwide youth census was essential to an adequate understanding of the youth problem. The Commission attempted to cooperate with the National Youth Administration and the U.S. Office of Education in making such a census. The AYC was prepared to contribute $52,000 to this effort. The project, however, ran into insurmountable difficulties, mainly financial, and was therefore abandoned. This census would have provided valuable information, but by the end of 1936 the Commission was involved in several other projects which promised to provide considerable knowledge about the characteristics of youth.  

With the abandonment of the youth census the Commission had to look elsewhere for information on the youth population. The Commission was able to aid the National

---

6 Ibid., 2, 4.
Resources Committee which was studying population problems. Newton Edwards, education professor from the University of Chicago and AYC staff member, was assigned to work with the National Resources Committee on a study of youth population. The purpose of Edwards' study was to determine the distribution of the youth population in relation to other factors such as employment, income, and schooling. The results of this study were published by the National Resources Committee in May 1938 in a report, *The Problems of a Changing Population*, and in a more extensive form in *Equal Educational Opportunity for Youth*, a monograph Edwards wrote for the Commission the following year. Edwards' work was a major influence on the Commission's viewpoints on educational finance. His study was a telling argument for federal aid to education and it served as a basis for later AYC recommendations.  

More important to the fact-finding program were the youth surveys. The survey work was two-fold. First, the Commission decided to compile a list of youth surveys done by other organizations and to analyze them; secondly, it would make its own surveys.

The study of youth surveys was made by Dudley L. Harley, a research assistant of the AYC and a former staff

---

8 Ibid., 2; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, October 12-13, 1936, 37-39.
member of the U.S. Office of Education. Harley's study was published by the American Council on Education in 1937 as *Surveys of Youth—Finding the Facts*. This study revealed that the youth problem was of considerable concern in the first half of the decade. From 1931 to 1937, 166 youth surveys were made, three-fourths of which were completed between 1934 and 1936; the year of greatest interest was 1935 when 59 studies were made. In 1937 only six surveys were conducted. The extensive interest in youth surveys in mid-decade indicated the widespread feeling that greater knowledge was needed about youth problems. Approximately one-half of these surveys were made by local school systems and by colleges and universities. Others were conducted by numerous groups including state departments of education and local government agencies. Harley pointed out that most of the surveys came about as a response to youth problems intensified or created by the depression. Community and governmental leaders found that when they attempted to improve the situation of youth they were hampered by a lack of information on the conditions young people were facing. Since comprehensive and detailed information on youth conditions did not exist, numerous agencies decided to collect their own information.⁹

The nature and extensiveness of these surveys varied greatly. Most common were general surveys of a representative body of young people. These surveys made an inquiry into various environmental factors such as economic background, employment, education, and recreational habits. The majority were brief, unpublished, and were usually intended as a basis for specific ameliorative action in a limited area. With the possible exception of the U.S. Office of Education survey, there was no intent to give a comprehensive picture of American youth. By assembling a list of the surveys conducted from 1930 to 1937 and by an analysis of them, the Commission through the Harley report provided those groups who were seeking information on youth a basis for action. The survey of surveys also helped the AYC in determining the type of activities needing further exploration.\(^\text{10}\)

The American Youth Commission planned from the first to do more than analyze the work of other agencies. The Commission's biggest project in its early years was a survey program to determine the nature of the youth problem.

The project, directed by Owen R. Lovejoy, sociologist and former secretary of the Children's Aid Society in New York City, lasted until 1938. As originally conceived, it was to consist of three carefully controlled surveys of representative samplings of youth: a state-wide study; a study of a middle-sized (250,000-300,000) city; and of a small (20,000-30,000) city. The objectives were to determine the characteristics of youth, to discover how effectively needs were being met, and to find information which would enable the Commission to recommend programs for youth. In each a distinct effort was to be made to find areas representative nationally.

The Commission picked Maryland for the state survey, in part, because the state was close to the Commission's headquarters in Washington which facilitated the Adminis-

---

11 Lovejoy's involvement in the survey project was minimal. As a prominent sociologist he brought to the staff a respected name. But he was 70 and did not provide the active leadership needed in the survey program. This was especially apparent in the Dallas survey, which was severely hampered by administrative problems. The Maryland project, the most important of the surveys, was largely the work of Howard M. Bell, director of the Maryland survey team. The Dallas and Muncie reports were written respectively by Jack Robertson and Raymond G. Fuller, AYC staff members. Lovejoy resigned from the Commission shortly after the completion of the survey program.

tration of the project. More important was the sectional
diversity in this small state. It was a microcosm of the
United States. It had one large city, Baltimore, and
suburban communities of Prince Georges county surrounding
Washington, D.C., which had the fundamental social and
economic problems confronting most of the nation's
metropolitan areas. The slightly rolling farmland of the
northern and central counties was similar to other agricul­tural regions in the Central Atlantic and Midwestern
states. Tobacco culture and heavy Negro population of the
southern counties were distinctly Southern. The western
part, with its scarred hillsides and played-out mines,
felt the poverty found throughout the Appalachian chain.
Across the Chesapeake Bay still another Maryland, the
Eastern Shore, abounded with truck farms, fishing fleets
and oyster houses.13

To add geographic balance to the survey projects the
Commission decided the two municipal surveys should be in
cities outside the East. Lovejoy's recommendation of
Muncie, Indiana for the small city survey was immediately
acceptable to the Commission. Robert and Helen Lynds' study of this small midwestern industrial center made the
city a likely choice. The Lynds were following up their

13 Howard M. Bell, Youth Tell Their Story (Washington, 1938), 8-10.
study of Middletown with a new investigation, and they had agreed to advise the Commission on its survey. Lovejoy recommended Columbus, Ohio for the survey of a middle-sized city. His primary reason was the presence of W. W. Charters, professor of education at Ohio State University. Charters, a prominent figure in educational research, was willing to help with the project. The Commission, however, rejected Columbus because of its closeness to Muncie. After considering several other locations, the Commission finally decided on Dallas. Dallas interested the AYC because it provided an opportunity to study a city with a fairly large percentage of young people from minority groups. Since Dallas had a considerable number of Negro and Mexican youth, a survey team could attempt to collect comparative data on the three racial groups.

At Homer Rainey's suggestion the Commission added a fourth study to the survey project. The AYC did not conduct this study, but it helped complete it. This project which began in 1934 was a state-sponsored study of youth in Pennsylvania schools. Its purpose was to determine the effectiveness of education in meeting youth needs.

---


The project, administered by the state Committee on Higher Education, had been terminated due to lack of funds. Rainey had been a member of this committee while he was president of Bucknell and he desired its completion. He persuaded the Commission to take over the project and provide funds for finishing the work. A grant of $6,200 was sufficient to compile the data and prepare a report. The final report, *Inventory of Youth in Pennsylvania*, was written by Harlan Updegraff of the AYC staff, and was mimeographed for limited distribution.16

The Maryland survey was unquestionably the most important of the four studies. The project was begun in early 1936 and was completed two years later with the publication of a final report, *Youth Tell Their Story*. This project called for a budget of nearly $80,000, a considerably larger sum than allotted for the other AYC surveys. The director for the Maryland project was Howard M. Bell, a young social work researcher and former social service consultant for the Texas Relief Commission. Bell's field staff of 35 interviewers conducted 13,528 personal interviews in a seven month period in 1936 and 1937. No claims were made that the Maryland youth

constituted a perfect sampling of the nation's 20,000,000 citizens between ages 16 and 24. Yet the AYC was convinced its data had important nationwide implications. The survey could not hope to reveal the comprehensive information that a youth census would, but with scrapping of the national youth census project, it was the best the Commission could do.\textsuperscript{17}

Bell's study was a remarkable piece of work which merited the acclaim it received. Controlled sampling in public opinion surveys was a relatively new procedure in 1936,\textsuperscript{18} and the AYC's Maryland survey was an example of this development. Care was taken in the interviewing procedure and compilation to assure accuracy of the data.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Minutes of the American Youth Commission, January 9-10, 1936, 8; Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 9.

\textsuperscript{18} The presidential polls of 1936 are a good example. The Gallup, Roper, and Crossley organizations, using similar sampling methods, revealed nearly 60 per cent of the American electorate favored Roosevelt. These polls received much less attention than the older Literary Digest poll which was based on faulty sampling techniques. After the Digest's classic blunder in predicting a Landon victory, pollsters and survey makers gave more attention to controlled, representative sampling than they did before November, 1936.

\textsuperscript{19} Interviewers were carefully selected and were given a training program prior to the field work. They conducted the interviews wherever they believed youth would talk freely. This was usually in the subject's home or neighborhood. The interviewers found that most of the young people contacted were eager to be asked about their views. On questions relating to factual information the field staff reported the youth were frank and honest in their answers. The staff was aware that the interviewees did not always
Though the AYC data in the Maryland and the municipal surveys was generally reliable, the Commission did not intend its work for a specialized, scholarly audience. Sampling was not so carefully controlled as it was in August Hollingshead's *Elmtown's Youth* of the early 1940's. But the Commission had not planned, nor did it have the time for an elaborate, extended sociological study. The survey reports, especially the Maryland one, were designed to reach a large audience and to convince the public of youth needs and to suggest ways to meet these needs.

With the Maryland report the Commission achieved considerable success. The publication of the report in 1938 attracted considerable attention and a flurry of interest.

Understand questions on their attitudes towards various issues. When the respondent was hesitant, the interviewer recorded a "no opinion" on the particular question. By exercising this care the Commission rightfully claimed that its data was generally reliable.

Sampling procedures in the survey were designed to conform to the total United States youth population. The Bell staff, using 1930 census figures as a base, selected the same percentages for selected groups in the Maryland sample. These groups were age, sex, marital status, race, farm or non-farm, native or foreign-born, and in-school or out-of-school. In all these groups except parentage, the Maryland sample differed little from the 1930 national average. Youth of foreign born parents were undersampled by 16.8%. This discrepancy, though it may have lent a slight WASPish glow to the findings, was minor. Other, more limited surveys of the same period tended to corroborate the data in the Maryland study. U.S. Office of Education estimates on school enrollment and the Enumerative Check of the 1937 unemployment census were also in line with Commission findings.

See Bell, *Youth Tell Their Story*, 1-13.
in youth problems. As a response to *Youth Tell Their Story*, the pictorial newsmagazine, *Life*, devoted an entire issue to a picture study of American youth. *Life's* editors declared the AYC report was the most important book to be published that year. The *March of Time*, a newsreel sponsored by the Luce Publications, featured the Maryland report in a film on youth problems. Numerous journals responded with articles on youth needs which elaborated on conditions described in the Bell study.\(^20\)

Survey projects in Dallas and Muncie were designed to supplement the Maryland data and to give a more complete picture of youth needs in the United States. The findings of the city surveys did little to alter the conclusions drawn from the larger state survey. The projects had small budgets ($15,500 and $10,000 respectively) and the surveys, particularly the Muncie project, were not very extensive. They were also hampered by administrative problems. Since the Maryland study gave the AYC the information it needed, the municipal surveys became less important. Thus the AYC did not publish the Dallas and Muncie reports, but it did mimeograph and release them for limited distribution. Since both reports included

\(^20\) "Youth Tell Their Story," *Life*, IV (June 6, 1938), 11-21; Report of the Acting Director, unpublished report presented to the American Youth Commission, November 11-12, 1940, 24.
sections on how the communities could meet their youths' needs, the Commission anticipated the reports could be used as guides for community agencies interested in improving youth conditions.  

By 1936 Dallas was becoming a mature city. Texas in the mid-thirties was just emerging from a period of chaotic growth and political turbulence of the Ferguson era. The rate of population growth stimulated by development of the oil fields was declining. Dallas possessed the characteristics the Commission wanted in the middle-sized city. It was a rapidly growing community with many of the problems found in other expanding urban areas. Its population in 1936 was approximately 275,000. The period of the greatest population increase had been in the twenties when it grew by over 100,000. The rate of increase in the thirties was only one-fifth of that in the previous decade. Because of this rapid growth prior to the depression, numerous social and economic problems had emerged which the city had been unable to handle. A number of Dallas social agencies concerned with these problems and eager for any assistance had invited the Commission to select Dallas as the site for one of its surveys. Another reason for the Commission's choice of

---

21 Minutes of the American Youth Commission, January 9-10, 1936, 8.
Dallas was the city's unique racial composition. Like other cities in the South, Dallas was segregated, but it was different in that there were two large minority groups—Negroes and Mexicans. This gave the Commission an opportunity to compare the needs of the three racial groups.  

The Dallas study, though on a smaller scale, was in most respects similar to the Maryland study. The sampling, based on known proportions of such factors as age, sex, marital status, relief, and religious affiliation, included 4,608 youth between 16 and 24. The data included information on home life, education, employment, health, leisure time, religious activities, and attitudes on social questions. This information, however, was assembled in such a way it made comparison with the Maryland data difficult, and in fact no attempt was made to compare the data.

The Muncie survey was not a survey at all. Due to budgetary limitation and community opposition, the AYC dropped the survey approach. Muncie's civic leaders told the Commission's investigators that local citizens were

22 Seth B. McKay and Odie Faulk, Texas after Spindletop (Austin, Texas, 1965), 136-139; Jack Robertson, A Study of Youth Needs and Services in Dallas, Texas, unpublished report of the American Youth Commission, 5-7.
"fed up" with being studied and they wanted to be left alone for awhile. The AYC in 1936 found Muncie, now with a population of nearly 50,000, little different than the Lynds had in their original study of Middletown.23

Since local civic leaders advised against a survey, the AYC decided to examine available services for youth and recommend methods of improving services. As in many communities, the Commission found that youth-serving agencies in Muncie were more geared for publicity than for performance. Most Muncie residents believed that if there was a youth problem it was an individual problem. They felt this difficulty was likely to be solved through the youth's individual initiative and character, rather than through programs of social action. This attitude made the Commission's task formidable. Yet the AYC was able to prepare a report emphasizing the need for community planning which could serve as a model for communities desiring to improve youth services.24

The survey projects revealed significant and disturbing information about the needs of American youth. The Maryland survey in particular provided quantitative

24 Ibid.
indications of the extent of youth problems. Later
the Commission used these materials as a basis for for­
mulation of youth programs. Since this fact-finding effort
was one of the important AYC activities, a summary of the
more significant findings is in order.

The most important Commission finding was persistent
evidence of widespread social and economic stratification
in American society. The Maryland and Dallas staffs found
a pattern where social and economic forces tended to freeze
social levels and groups into a sort of perennial status quo. Bell, director of the Maryland study, argued that
the problem was a vicious circle of economic determinism
which restricted upward movement of the economically
disadvantaged and the poorly educated. He described the
circle in the following manner. The beginning movement
around the circle was economic deprivation in the child's
formative years. Fathers in the lower occupational
groups, such as unskilled workers or farm laborers, had
low incomes, little education, and about twice as many
children as fathers in professional fields. Low income
and large families tended to force the child out of
school, into work, and into marriage at a relatively young
age. The youth soon found himself in the same kind of
social and economic vise that had gripped his father, and
he began the second dismal swing around the same vi-
cious circle. Knowledge of this pattern of regenerating 
poverty and frustration was not new. Social reformers for 
many years had been aware of the debilitating effects of 
poverty and that its eradication first meant improvement 
of the environment of the economically distressed members 
of society. But to many Americans in the mid-thirties 
who had been taught the virtues of free enterprise, low 
beginnings were believed to build strong character and to 
be springboards for eventual success. The problem was how 
to convince the public these notions were folly and of 
the necessity for social action programs.

After analyzing the findings of the Maryland report, 
the AYC formulated social action programs for education, 
vocational guidance, and employment—programs designed to 
achieve greater equality of opportunity for youth. By 
its attention to the problems of social and economic strati-
fication the Commission was reaching the same kind of 
conclusions in the 1930's that social scientists were 
finding a decade later. One of the best examples was 
August Hollingshead's famous sociological study of youth

25 Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 47; Robertson, Dallas, 199.
26 Robert H. Bremner, From the Depths (New York, 1956), 38.
in a midwestern community. Hollingshead, author of the widely publicized *Elmtown's Youth*, was seemingly unaware of the AYC survey work. His report, the most important of its kind in the 1940's revealed conditions very similar to those described in the Commission's studies. Though *Elmtown's Youth* dealt with other types of behavior than the Commission did, Hollingshead's findings on social stratification differed little from those of the AYC. Hollingshead concluded that the youth's home environment "conditioned in a very definite manner the way he [youth] behaved in his relations with the school, the church, the job, recreation, his peers and his family." Class position had the same effects on youth's job possibilities and economic opportunities in Elmtown as it did in Maryland or Dallas. Those from the lower class backgrounds received the less desirable jobs, performed poorly in school, and were likely to hand down these same traits to their children through the subtle processes of social learning in the family.28

27 *Elmtown's Youth* was a carefully controlled study of youth in a midwestern community in 1941 and 1942. The hypothesis tested was, "The social behavior of adolescents appears to be related functionally to the positions their families occupy in the social structure of the community." August Hollingshead, *Elmtown's Youth* (New York, 1949), 439-441.

28 Ibid., 281, 337.
Detrimental effects of a poor home environment were readily apparent to the AYC investigators. One significant factor showing the economic influence of home environment was family size. The Bell report tabulated family size in relation to area of residence, religion, race, relief status, and father's occupation. The median number of living children in each family in the Maryland sample was 4.7. Variation from this median followed a consistent pattern—the less affluent the family the greater the number of children.

Though the Bell staff did not collect data on parental income, it assumed that professional people, white collar workers and skilled laborers were better paid than domestics, unskilled workers and farm laborers. But the number of children born to farm labor families was nearly twice that born to professional ones. In these circumstances the insecure economic position of the low income father was intensified by the increased family burdens he had to meet. Conversely, the economic advantages of the father in the better paid occupations were augmented by a smaller family. To show the marked effect of family size on youth conditions Bell compared two extreme family groups—those with one child and those with nine or more. Children raised in the large family had one advantage. Their families were more stable in that their parents were less likely to be divorced, separated or to have deserted. But other factors favored the family with one child. The large family was
frequently one which had experienced various forms of discrimination. Parents who were immigrants or Negro tended to have larger families than native born whites. Thirty per cent of the children in families of nine or more were Negro, twice the percentage of blacks in the entire survey. School grade level achievement of Negro youth, while significantly below that of white children, varied considerably according to family size.²⁹

Forty-six per cent of Negro youth from one-child families did not go beyond the eighth grade, while almost twice as large a proportion (81 per cent) from the large families failed to continue beyond this grade level. A large family also hindered the educational opportunities of white youth. Ninety per cent from the single child families completed elementary school compared to 50 per cent for the large family. Economic value of schooling also varied with family size. Sixty-eight per cent of the children from one-child white families reported they believed their school training had considerable economic value, while only 43 per cent of those from larger families replied affirmatively. Youth from large families also begun work at an earlier age. Three times as many took jobs before age 16 as for youth from the small family (31.3 per cent to 11.8 per cent). For youth

²⁹ Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 24-25.
from the large Negro family the same probability was more than twice as great (46.4 per cent to 22.4 per cent).

Size of family influenced the child's desire for the number of children he wished to have. Youth from families of nine or more wanted one third as many children as their parents had, while those from single child homes wanted almost three times as many as their parents had. Of youth who wanted to leave home more than double the proportion came from large families. A big family increased the economic responsibility of the youth. Over 46 per cent of these young people reported their family needed their financial assistance compared to 16 per cent for youth in the small family. In determining the effects of home environment on youth, the Commission's staff did not gather any comprehensive data on health conditions. It did, however, collect information on dental care which was probably indicative of other forms of medical attention received. The staff checked the dental care received by youth in relation to father's occupation, race, and sex. Nearly 90 per cent of children with fathers in professional positions had gone to the dentist in the twelve months preceding the interview. This percentage gradually declined through the less prestigious occupational groups to a low of 26.3 per cent for children whose fathers were farm laborers. Whites were more than twice as likely to have received dental care, and a
slightly larger number of girls visited the dentist than the boys for each racial group.\textsuperscript{30}

A similar pattern was found for the number of home conveniences which the Commission defined as electricity, radio, bathroom, magazine subscriptions, automobile, and central heating. The more disadvantaged the youth the less conveniences he had in his home. Farm youth fared worse than their city counterparts; relief families worse than non-relief; and those with fathers in low paying jobs worse than those with fathers in better paying ones. The most significant factor was race. Only 1.2 per cent of white youth lived in homes with no conveniences, but 22.5 per cent of Negro boys and girls did. This was a much larger per cent than for any of the fathers' occupational groups, with the exception of farm laborers, where 35.7 per cent of the children lived without home conveniences.\textsuperscript{31}

Economic conditions were not the only limiting forces in the youth's home environment. The Maryland staff uncovered pertinent information on social factors and the home. Aware of the positive influence of parental guidance the Commission tabulated the percentage of youth who were living with both parents. Over one third of

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 25-31.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 31-32.
those interviewed lived in broken homes. Death of one or both parents was usually the cause, but divorce, desertion, or separation accounted for about one-fifth of the number. Race and religion had a significant effect on the number of broken homes. The number of homes of Negro children broken by parental death or separation was substantially higher than for whites. Seventy per cent of white youth lived with both parents compared to slightly more than fifty per cent for Negro youth. The Dallas survey showed an even greater disadvantage for its racial minorities. Two-thirds of the Negro youth and nearly half of the Mexicans came from broken homes. Bell also identified a striking relationship between religion and percentage of homes broken by separation. The variance of Jewish (4.6 per cent), Catholic (6.4 per cent), and Protestant (6.8 per cent) homes was slight, but there was a considerably higher rate in homes where parents were of different faith (15.2 per cent) or professed no religion (16.7 per cent).\(^{32}\)

Marriage was another influence on youth conditions. Educators in the depression years were concerned there were too many early marriages. Girls in the Maryland sampling tended to marry at a much younger age than boys. The

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 19-21; Robertson, Dallas, 19.
median marrying age for girls was less than 19 and slightly over 21 for boys. Eighteen per cent of the married girls were wed by age 16. A large portion of the married youth did not have economic independence, and nearly 43 per cent lived either with parents or relatives. Parents' income also had a direct relationship on marriage. Those whose fathers held low-paid, low prestige jobs, such as farm laborers, were twice as likely to marry before they were 25 as were those whose fathers were in professions (34.5 per cent compared to 15.8 per cent). 33

Many Maryland youth were dissatisfied with their area of residence. For them cities were more appealing than the countryside, villages, and towns. Greatest dissatisfaction was found among village dwellers, three-fourths of whom wished to move elsewhere, mostly to urban areas. Residents of towns (2,500 to 25,000) were nearly as unhappy, sixty-five per cent desiring to move, while 46 per cent of those living on farms wished to leave. If youth were free to live wherever they wished the population shift would be a 58.5 per cent decline for the villages, 14.5 per cent for the towns and 6.2 per cent for the farms. City and suburban population would increase 36.2 per cent. 34

---

33 Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 43-44.
34 Ibid., 36-40.
When the Maryland youth were asked what they believed to be the greatest problem for all young people in America, the overwhelming response was economic insecurity. In most cases this meant the difficulty of finding a job, but it referred also to dead-end jobs involving low pay, long hours, and little chance for advancement. The Maryland and Dallas data indicated youth were correct about the importance of economic insecurity. In every phase of the reports economic considerations were apparent. The Commission increasingly realized that youth problems were closely tied to economic issues, especially unemployment. No matter what fields the AYC investigated—secondary education, use of leisure time, marriage and the home, health and fitness, juvenile delinquency, citizenship, and the special problems of rural youth and of minority groups—it found the economic situation paramount.\textsuperscript{35}

Unemployment was the most ominous part of the economic problem. Bell's report revealed an alarming unemployment rate which tended to verify the Commission's early estimate of 4 million unemployed young people.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 250; American Youth Commission, \textit{Youth and the Future} (Washington, 1942), xii.
nationwide. Of the nearly 9,000 Maryland interviewees who were actively seeking jobs, 29.5 per cent were totally unemployed. If part-time workers are added, then 38.8 per cent were without full-time jobs.

Bell surveyed the unemployed in relation to residence, sex, race, and age. Except for the last category, the staff unearthed little that helped account for extensive unemployment. The unemployment rate for the cities was nearly twice as high as that for the farms (37.6 to 20 per cent). These figures were qualified by the fact that the

---

36 Unemployment figures for the mid-thirties are not reliable. The Commission was reluctant to use the Maryland data to estimate jobless youth in the United States. If the Commission's unemployment figures for Maryland were nationally representative, the number of totally unemployed youth aged 16-21 would be over 3.5 million. Using the Bell report as a guide the AYC estimated national youth unemployment between 2 and 4 million, and probably more than 3 million. The original AYC estimate of 4 million was probably closer to the truth. The most reliable index to unemployment in this period was the Enumerative Check of the 1937 Unemployment Census. The Census was conducted by mail, and was criticized for understating unemployment. The Enumerative Check which was conducted by a personal canvass of a representative sampling throughout the U.S., gave a more accurate picture of national unemployment. It revealed a youth unemployment rate that was slightly higher than the AYC figures for Maryland. It estimated there were 3.8 million unemployed in the 16-24 age group, and 4.3 million of those employed in emergency relief work were included.


37 Part-time work was defined as between 5 and 29 hours per week; full-time work as 30 hours or more.
majority of interviews were conducted during the summer months, the season when farm boys were most likely to find work. Though two-thirds of employed youth were male, the number of jobless was split nearly equally for boys and girls. Nor did race affect the unemployment figures. The number of jobless Negroes was 30.9 per cent, only one per cent larger than the rate of whites. There was one ironic twist in Negro unemployment. The well-educated Negro found it more difficult to get a job than one who had less education. Negroes with college education often could not get the professional jobs for which they were trained. In some cases Negro youth took menial labor and domestic jobs not only because they were available, but also because the wages were better than those in available professional jobs. This problem was especially apparent in the Dallas data. Unemployment rates were ten per cent higher for college level Negroes than for those with a high school education. Age was an important consideration. The rate of unemployment had a direct inverse relation to age. Over 56 per cent of 16 year olds were without work. The percentage of unemployed gradually decreased through the higher age brackets, and for the 24 year olds it was 19.8 per cent. Youth who had just emerged from their school experience were especially vulnerable when it came to finding a job. The percentage of out-of-school, employable youth who had not obtained
any full-time work at the expiration of a year after leaving school ranged from 40 to 46 per cent. The average period of delay between school and work for the unemployed Maryland youth was a year and eleven months. School grade level attainment was an important determinant of the length of unemployment. Those who dropped out of school before age 16 spent an average of three and a half years without work. Advanced education, however, did not assure a job. College students looking for full-time work were usually unsuccessful for nearly six months.\(^\text{38}\)

Such conditions did little to generate optimism among youth. One of them explained it bluntly to an AYC interviewer:

> Jobs play the biggest part in your life and they're so uncertain. When you've looked and looked, you get the feeling that nobody has any use for you. It takes away all your self-confidence.

The lag between school and job and the resulting blow it dealt to youthful optimism greatly disturbed the Commission. The AYC regarded involuntary idleness resulting from unemployment as breeding ground for apathy and despair. Young people continually turned down in their search for jobs not only would lose faith in their own abilities, but also in their communities' concern for

\(^{38}\) Robertson, Dallas, 49; Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, ii, 145-147.
them. Less than half the Maryland youth who wanted work had actively sought a job during the week preceding their interview, and only 36 per cent were registered with an employment agency.\(^3^9\)

The AYC was convinced youth unemployment resulted primarily from the lack of jobs available for youth. This was an obvious point, but it was not a simple one. It meant a severe economic plight that defied easy remedy. The implication was clear. Better education, better vocational training and better guidance, desirable as they were, were not enough. The Commission viewed profitable employment for young people as a necessity, and its concern was to find ways to accomplish that end.

The economic problem for youth involved more than unemployment. For a variety of reasons many jobs were not desirable. Low pay, long hours, poor working conditions and lack of opportunity for advancement contributed to economic insecurity. In studying this phase of the problem Bell analyzed wage levels in relation to hours worked, youth's occupational field, sex, locality of residence, race, age, and school grade completed. The average weekly wage for full-time workers was $15.48 for all youth, including part-time employees, was $12.96.\(^4^0\)

\(^3^9\) Bell, *Youth Tell Their Story*, 10th, 150-151.
\(^4^0\) Ibid., 108.
Factors most commonly associated with wages were the number of hours worked and type of job. Hours on the job was the major determinant, but only to a certain point. The highest weekly pay levels were for those who worked between 38 and 42 hours. White youth at this level averaged $17.10. But four per cent had worked more than 76 hours in the week preceding their interview, and brought home only $12.87. Excessive work hours were a special burden for Negroes. The Negro worker was on the job for a longer time (68.3 to 72.4 hours for whites), but received a much lower wage. Occupational field had a more direct bearing on wages. Professional and skilled workers fared considerably better than unskilled and domestic laborers. Average earnings of youth holding proprietary and managerial positions were two and a half times as large as the average earnings of the unskilled workers ($21.50 as against $8.53).41

Sex was a constant factor in determining wages. Males outearned females in every job classification, and averaged nearly $2.00 more per week in total payments received. Wage levels increased for each succeeding age group. The range was from $7.37 for the 16 year olds to $17.85 for the 24 year olds. These differences, however,

41 Ibid., 110-113.
were not exclusively from age. Older youth often had more training and could qualify for full-time, higher prestige jobs. Married workers received slightly higher wages than non-married ones. Since the average married male usually was supporting a wife and one child, his monetary needs were greater. Though his pay level of $17.06 was higher (he was usually older and worked longer hours), it was obviously inadequate to meet his family's needs. About the only significant difference in weekly wages for youth in various areas was between farm and non-farm groups. Farm youth averaged $8.44 per week, about $5.00 less than those in the cities, towns, and villages. This low figure resulted partly from the fact that many agricultural workers received supplementary compensation in the form of room and board, and that a large proportion of farm laborers were Negroes whose wages were considerably less than that of whites. Race was once again a major determining factor. Negro youth brought home an average of $7.98 a week compared to $14.33 for whites. The pattern was a sadly familiar one. Negro young people were born to poverty-stricken parents, had a more restricted home environment, were poorly-educated, held the less desirable jobs, and received grossly insufficient wages.
These were the familiar stops on a cycle of self-perpetuating poverty.\footnote{42}

Of direct factors affecting wage levels the AYC concluded occupational field was the major determinant. This conclusion was not surprising. What was significant were the determinants of occupational field. Once again the AYC bumped into what looked suspiciously like a vicious circle of economic determinism. School grade attainment determined to a considerable extent the type of occupation and the wage level a young person received. A boy or girl who had the advantage of a high school education earned an average of 50 per cent more than the youth who chose, or was forced to leave school before he

\footnote{42 The Dallas survey gave undeniable evidence of the special problems of youth from racial minorities. Both the Negro and Mexican youth were segregated—one legally and the other by tradition. Dallas Negroes were victims of the Jim Crow legislation common to most Southern cities. A whole separate set of institutions, schools, parks, and clinics were set aside for them. Mexicans were not legally excluded from the public school, but rigid social barriers were raised against them. The result was a segregation almost as binding as that confronting Negroes. The AYC staff quickly discovered that institutions and facilities open to minority groups were decidedly inferior. The staff found, too, that though the needs of the Negro and Mexican youth were similar, there was no comradery between them. Mutual suffering did not necessarily create rapport. Most of the Mexicans were relative newcomers to Dallas, and in many cases they were competing for jobs usually held by Negroes—a situation further accentuating mutual bitterness and distrust. See Robertson, Dallas, 5-6.}
finished the eighth grade. Over three-fourths of those who went only as far as the eighth grade were in semi-skilled, unskilled, and domestic labor fields, while the high school and college graduates were found chiefly in white collar and professional categories. The remaining part of the cycle affecting wages, type of occupation and school grade completed, hinged on the income level of the youth's father. The youth's occupational field was just as logically the result of the economic status of his parental home as it was the cause of his relatively high wages. It was apparent to the Commission that economic security for young people was something over which youth, or anyone for that matter, had had very little control.  

Youth in the Maryland sampling were unhappy with their jobs. Eighty-five per cent asserted their jobs offered little or no hope for future advancement. When asked what kind of jobs they preferred, nearly four out of ten wanted to work in one of the professional or technical occupations. Only 7.5 per cent were employed in this category. Nearly half of those who were employed held semi-skilled and skilled labor jobs. Yet only 8.8 per cent expressed a preference for them. These responses indicated a genuine dissatisfaction with the job situation. Of the ten specific occupations preferred by males in the

---

43 Bell, *Youth Tell Their Story*, 120-124.
sampling, none were in the ten occupations most frequently followed. Where boys wished to be engineers, mechanics, farm owners, aviators or physicians, they were more likely to be farm laborers, industrial laborers, sales clerks, unpaid family workers or textile operatives.

The AYC was aware that job dissatisfaction involved more than vocational maladjustment. In many cases discontent was a reflection of the desire to work in more socially and economically desirable occupations. Low wages coupled with the social stigma associated with various kinds of manual work were responsible for much of the problem. The Commission believed solutions must point to higher wage levels and a revived faith in the dignity of working with one's hands.

The most distressing aspect of the collected economic data was the persistent pattern of social stratification. Youth tended to stay in the same general occupational fields their fathers had. Bell, by breaking down jobs into three categories (white collar, skilled and semi-skilled, and unskilled), compared youth's occupations with their fathers'. Vertical mobility was minimal. Almost two-thirds of the children of white collar fathers held white collar jobs. Nearly 60 per cent of children

\[44\] Ibid., 131-136.
whose fathers were in unskilled work were similarly employed. Thus the economic power or frailties of the fathers were passed on to the next generation. It was also significant that only 15 per cent of the children of white collar workers dropped to the lowest occupational levels, and only 21 per cent whose fathers were unskilled found white collar employment. These facts repeatedly demonstrated to the Commission that any program to improve youth conditions must relate to economic needs of America's young people.45

A problem related to job dissatisfaction was the pressing need for better vocational guidance and training. The AYC staff asked the out-of-school youth if they would take vocational training if it were made available.46 Sixty per cent answered affirmatively. Those who desired vocational training expressed a distinct preference for work in the professions. Nearly 25 per cent wanted preparation for business and secretarial positions, and a similar number training for trades and crafts. Bell was aware that an element of wishful thinking was involved.


46 The AYC interviewers defined vocational training as training for any kind of job, including the professions and arts, as well as in business and trades.
in some of the responses. Farm youth provided a dramatic illustration. Only one of fourteen wanted training in agriculture. Vocations, like the grass that grows in pastures, often looked greener on the other side of the fence. Yet many of the responses indicated a practical need for certain forms of vocational training. Half of the 1,000 youth who were in unskilled jobs, work with low economic security, wanted training in some trade or craft.47

Another weakness in preparing youth for employment was the lack of vocational guidance. The chief source of guidance (93.3 per cent) was the schools, but schools were not doing an adequate job. Only 22.7 per cent of the young people had received any form of guidance. Once again inequality of economic opportunity was a factor. Those who could use guidance the most, such as children of low income fathers, were least likely to receive it. According to Maryland youth, vocational guidance in the school did pay. Nearly 70 per cent who had received help claimed it had aided them in finding a vocation. The Commission concluded that increased and more effective vocational training and guidance were laudable programs which would help improve the condition of young people.48

47 Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 70-71.
48 Ibid., 72-78.
A major AYC argument was for a thorough reorganization of general secondary education. Findings in the Maryland study confirmed the fact that secondary schools were not meeting the needs of a large percentage of youth attending them. Recognizing the trend toward universal public education through the senior high school, the Commission believed that the high school should provide education of a more general character. The Commission at this point in its activity had not advocated any specific program, but it was convinced that schools should be providing a common education designed to serve all youth. An indicator of the schools' failure to provide an adequate education was the large number of youth who withdrew from school.\textsuperscript{49} A large portion withdrew because their families could not afford to send them. But many students also quit because of unsatisfactory school adjustment--by which the AYC meant lack of interest, disciplinary problems, or too difficult subjects. Both reasons for withdrawal suggested that the schools were not offering the kind of practical education which could assure economic security and responsibilities of citizenship.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{49} The Maryland survey did not collect conclusive data on school dropouts (i.e., those who withdrew before graduation). Withdrawals also included those who were school graduates.

\textsuperscript{50} Bell, \textit{Youth Tell Their Story}, iii, 64-67.
Bell argued that the responses of Maryland youth showed the need for increased quantity and quality of education. The first need was more apparent. When quizzed on the economic value they believed schooling would provide, the young people responded in a way which showed the amount of schooling they had. Estimates of economic value varied in direct proportion to the school grade level attained. Those who were high school graduates or college students saw much more importance in formal education than those who dropped out of school in the elementary and secondary grades. Over 50 per cent of those who quit school by the sixth grade felt their education had little or no value, compared to 18 per cent for the senior high graduates. The fact that youth who had graduated were more likely to find their education a valuable experience indicated the desirability of more education for a greater number of people. But the fact that nearly 20 per cent of twelfth grade graduates believed their education was of little or no economic value was not encouraging. The Commission concluded from this that schools were not adequately preparing youth for adult responsibilities. The clear implication was that schools must offer a program geared to youths' immediate economic
needs, and one that would include an increased measure of vocational education. 51

With many youth facing an indefinite period of idleness after leaving school, a relatively new social problem, the constructive use of leisure time was reaching significant proportions. Industrial efficiency, and the time- and labor-saving devices that came with it, brought to Americans in the twentieth century something new—the element of leisure time. The problem was to find desirable ways to use this time. For youth the problem was especially severe. Heavy unemployment of the 1930's often meant a great deal of spare time. The Commission questioned Maryland boys and girls about their use of leisure time and ideas for improving recreation and leisure time activities. Though many of them reported their favorite activities were reading, sports, hobbies, and games, nearly one in ten stated loafing as their major pastime. The number who spent their time idling varied according to several factors. Boys loafed more than girls. Negroes, farm youth, and those who had received little schooling were more likely to be aimless. When the Marylanders were asked about the adequacy of their community recreation programs, nearly 70 per cent said

51 Ibid., 81-88.
they were inadequate. The Bell report emphasized the desirability of expanded community recreation programs. The AIC believed these kind of programs would not only provide creative opportunity for youth, but they would also help curb juvenile delinquency. It suggested that communities should consider establishing youth centers which would provide constructive recreational activities. A possible additional function of these centers would be to furnish vocational guidance and placement for those who could not find suitable employment.\textsuperscript{52}

In its effort to improve the situation of American youth the Commission did more than survey physical conditions of employment, schooling, and recreation. It asked Maryland and Dallas young their attitudes on the youth problem and a number of other social issues. These responses did not provide the hard, statistical evidence that factual questions elicited, but they did provide valid information. Knowing what youth were thinking was important in planning programs for them. The interviewers found that their subjects were eager to express their feelings. A significant aspect of the replies was that young people, regardless of sex, age, residence, race, or economic background were in substantial agreement on most questions. A large percentage (almost 60 per cent)
said that economic insecurity was the major youth problem. Most believed that the federal government should do more for youth than it had before. Declaring that wages were too low, three-fourths wanted federal minimum wage and maximum hours standards for business and industry. They were nearly unanimous in favoring government regulation of child labor, and almost half advocated its abolition. One disturbing aspect of youth attitudes was the expressed indifference to the suffrage and the political processes. Only 55 per cent of those between 22 and 24 had voted in the last election. The most common reason given for not voting was indifference. More than a third of the Maryland group believed candidates were elected for reasons other than merit. Most frequently mentioned were "political pull" and bribery. 53

With the completion of the Maryland, Dallas and Muncie reports in 1938 the AYC fact-finding program came to a close. The data collected in the surveys gave a basis for later activity in areas of general education, vocational education, and employment opportunities, but it did not suggest any easy solution to the youth problem. Social and economic stratification which limited youth's

53 Robertson, Dallas, 206-224; Fuller, Muncie, 89-99.
opportunities did not result from the depression, and the Commission knew it. It had been a persistent force in American society—a force that ran counter to the American creed of essential dignity of the individual, inalienable rights to freedom, and fair opportunity.

The type of solution the Commission suggested in the survey reports was concerted, planned community action. Later the AYC advocated other types of action as well, but it continually emphasized the need for each community to work out its own youth programs. The three AYC surveys were intended as guides for communities to follow. In fact the Dallas and Muncie reports concluded with specific recommendations for each city. But the American Youth Commission was aware that community planning would not succeed in improving youth conditions until members of the community were willing to give more than lip service to equality of opportunity for all youth.

---

54 Robertson, Dallas, 206-224; Fuller, Muncie, 89-99.
CHAPTER IV
GENERAL EDUCATION

During an American Youth Commission discussion on the formulation of a secondary education program, Owen Young remarked that Commission recommendations might have a greater impact on educational trends than programs from professional educational organizations.¹ He was right, but for the wrong reasons. The basis for Young's view was the lay character of the AYC membership. He believed the public would be more inclined to accept AYC suggestions, since the Commission could claim it represented no special group. This was a persistent Commission view, but there was little substance to it. Any importance connected with AYC programs resulted from their influence or merits, rather than the character of the organization making them. This was true with the Commission recommendations on education. They had tremendous impact on educational trends during the 1940's and 1950's, and they were a factor in the life and death of the progressive education movement.

The AYC underestimated the potential of its influence on general education, a broad preparation suitable for all youth. Since the Commission was not primarily an educational organization, it decided not to make any extensive studies or experiments in education. Aware of the study projects of such groups as the Educational Policies Commission, the American Association of School Administrators, the Progressive Education Association, and the U.S. Office of Education, it believed these organizations were better qualified to do the work of educational planning. Miriam Van Waters summarized the Commission's original view by stating that the Commission should stress to educators the kind of youth and the characteristics it wanted and let the educational groups determine what type of curriculum could achieve these goals. The AYC's activity would be in implementation. Commission members felt they could do the most for education in the United States by popularizing desirable programs through conferences, publications, and press releases. The AYC, however, did a great deal more. Compared with the voluminous publications of professional education organizations, the physical product, two monographs and several short policy statements, was unimpressive. But the reports had a great impact on what followed.

2 Ibid., 241.
The Commission's efforts in general education centered on two major areas—curriculum reorganization and educational finance. This activity to a large extent was the result of the Maryland youth survey. Data gathered by the Bell staff was available to the membership in early 1937, and it convinced the Commission more extensive action was necessary than had been anticipated. Bell's report showed several serious problems with the schools. Large numbers of Maryland youth believed the schools had little to offer and many quit due to disinterest or for economic reasons. Since the percentage of students attending school until age 18 was steadily increasing, the Commission believed school curriculum should be revised to meet the needs of all pupils. Rainey stressed what he called education for the common life. By this he meant that the traditional school curriculum, with its emphasis on college preparatory subjects, should be replaced by one which would be more satisfying to all youth. It was apparent, too, from the Maryland survey that culturally and economically deprived children received the poorest education. In searching for ways to equalize the educational opportunity of youth, the Commission realized that new methods of finance would have to be utilized to

---

3 Howard M. Bell, *Youth Tell Their Story* (Washington, 1938), 98, iii.
improve the schools in the poorer sections of the country. These two areas, school finance and curriculum change, had long been the concern of educators, and the origins were embedded in the movement for progressive education.

Progressive education began in the latter part of the nineteenth century as part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life—the ideal of government of, by, and for the people—to a new industrial civilization. It was a movement to improve the lives of individuals. According to one prominent scholar, this meant several things. It meant broadening the program and function of the school to include direct concern for health, vocation, and the quality of family and community life. It meant applying in the classroom the pedagogical principles derived from new scientific research in psychology and the social sciences. It also meant fashioning instruction to the different kinds and classes of children who were entering the schools. Finally, it implied that culture could be democratized without being vulgarized, and that all students could share in the benefits of the new sciences and the pursuit of the arts.

Under the influence of John Dewey and other educational philosophers, progressive education began to win

---

adherents after the turn of the century. By the end of
World War I the organized teaching profession had been
converted. Attacks on the traditional curriculum began in
earnest. The needs of youth in the expansive post-war
years were different from those of previous generations.
Course offerings had failed to keep pace with social and
technological change. The traditional curriculum was sub­
ject-centered rather than child-centered. It emphasized
a rigid set of courses, intended primarily for college-
bound students, and a catechetical method of instruction.
It was especially vulnerable because of the trend toward
compulsory education and the influx of a large number of
non-academic students. Change came slowly, however, and
many schools continued to offer the same courses they had
decades earlier. The depression in the 1930's caused even
greater dissatisfaction with the schools, but progressive
educators were not in agreement on what the schools should
do. A sizeable group advocated what was soon called the
life adjustment curriculum.

The American Youth Commission was a major force in
winning widespread acceptance for the life adjustment
concept. The origins of life adjustment, and the pro-
gressive education movement of which it was a part, could
be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. But it did
not emerge as a distinct, full-fledged movement until the
1940's when it became the dominant trend in curriculum
planning and achieved a kind of orthodoxy. The classic definition of life adjustment education was drawn in...
1947, five years after the AYC ended, by the Commission on Life Adjustment. It was the outgrowth of what other organizations, notably the American Youth Commission and Educational Policies Commission, had been urging for several years.

The most prominent underlying characteristic of life adjustment was that the curriculum and instruction should be geared to meet the needs of the child. Its major, though not exclusive concern, was for the student who would not enter college. It would prepare the pupil for responsibilities of citizenship and provide him knowledge and skills necessary for daily living. This concept can be traced back to Herbert Spencer. In an essay, "What Knowledge is of Most Worth," published in the United States in 1860, the English philosopher listed five categories of educational activities which were precursors of life adjustment. Though Spencer helped make American

It is education fashioned to achieve desired outcomes in terms of character and behavior. It is not education which follows convention for its own sake or holds any aspect of the school as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Above all, it recognizes the inherent dignity of the human personality.


1. Activities which directly minister to self-preservation;
2. Activities which, by securing the necessaries of life, indirectly minister to self-preservation;
educators more conscious of science, his five categories of activities had little impact on the traditional curriculum. The first effective blow against traditional secondary education came in 1918 with the publication of the report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. This report, perhaps the most influential pronouncement on public education in this century, began by stating that a reorganization of secondary education was imperative. This commission chided American educators for their conservatism and resistance to modification. Though it did not directly repudiate the subject-organized approach, it argued that secondary education should be determined by the needs of the society to be served, the character of the individuals to be educated, and the knowledge of educational theory and practice available. In discussion of the objectives secondary education should achieve, the commission listed seven major areas:

(1) Health, (2) Command of fundamental processes,

3. Activities which have for their end the rearing and disciplining of offspring;
4. Activities which are involved in the maintenance of proper social and political relations;
5. Activities which make up the leisure part of life, devoted to the gratification of the tastes and feelings.

(3) Worthy home membership, (4) Vocation, (5) Civic education, (6) Worthy use of leisure time, and (7) Ethical character. These objectives which stressed life functions rather than academic disciplines as educational objectives were similar to Spencer's categories. In contrast to Spencer's goals, the cardinal principles had a significant impact on education in the following decades.

The 1918 commission's report was prompted by changing social and economic conditions. The 1920's saw further upheavals in education. Modification of traditional entrance and graduation standards made it possible for non-academic pupils to enter and to graduate from the secondary school. These pupils who would not have gone through the schools in earlier decades found it difficult to adjust to the traditional curriculum. Many had neither the interest nor ability for such a course of study. By the mid-thirties with over 60 per cent of America's boys and girls in the secondary schools, educators were becoming

---


8 French, *American Secondary Education*, 153-158. French lists the following changes as being most responsible for the upheaval in education: psychological theories, research and experimentation, progressive education, anti-intellectualism, child labor legislation, compulsory attendance laws, increased earning power argument, better economic circumstances, complexity of American life, urbanization, and mechanization and automation.
increasingly aware of the problem of non-academic pupils. These students constituted what E.W. Butterfield called the "New Fifty Per Cent." In 1934 Butterfield, the state commissioner of education in Connecticut, urged that school curriculum should be modified to meet these pupils' needs. But he realized that increased vocational training was not a satisfactory solution. He was one of the first to argue effectively that many non-academic students could not master vocational education any more than they could traditional subjects. He pointed out, too, that vocational training was often too specific and that many automated jobs required virtually no training. Butterfield's formula was a curriculum which would offer professional preparation for 25 per cent of the students, vocational training for a similar number, and education "for the life of one who holds a job" for the remaining 50 per cent.9

Butterfield called his program for those who were not entering the professions or trades the Civic Curriculum. This curriculum would attempt to provide pupils the characteristics they needed for ordinary life. Butterfield identified three needs: social adaptation, many and broad interests, and the ideals and habits of good citizenship. School courses for his curriculum would include the

---

following: (1) The world goes on (Reading), (2) Our neighbors (Social Science), (3) The physical home (Science), (4) Satisfying ideals (Art), and (5) The joy of living (Recreation).10

A further boost to the life adjustment concept came with Charles A. Prosser's Inglis lecture at Harvard in 1939. Prosser, a prominent figure in the vocational education movement, declared that all students should spend at least half their time in the study of life-education subjects. Prosser, like Butterfield, was most concerned with non-academic students. But he believed there were more of them, 60 per cent compared to Butterfield's 50. In 1945 at a national conference on vocational education, Prosser introduced a resolution asking the U.S. Office of Education to call a conference which would consider the needs of the 60 per cent.11 Following a series of regional meetings and a national conference, John W. Studebaker, the Commissioner of Education, appointed the National Commission on Life Adjustment Education. This commission issued a report in 1947 (revised in 1951) which advocated an extensive life adjustment education curriculum 12 for

10 Ibid.
11 United States Office of Education, Life Adjustment for Every Youth, 16.
12 See footnote 5.
all secondary school youth, not just the 60 per cent mentioned in the Prosser resolution. It believed that all pupils, regardless of their future vocation could benefit from this course of study. A major reason for the all-inclusive curriculum was that distinct separate programs had too divisive an effect on the students. The commission was aware of Butterfield's difficulty in getting adoption of courses for the neglected 50 per cent. Students, not wanting to be identified with a group which might have a social stigma, were reluctant to take courses which might label them as less-gifted. By advocating life adjustment for all students, the commission hoped to find a curriculum suited to all youth and one which would provide a basis for common understanding.¹³

The American Youth Commission had a significant effect in shaping the life adjustment concept as defined by the Commission on Life Adjustment Education. The AYC was the first organization to argue extensively for life adjustment for all youth, and it was the first to urge work experience as part of the life adjustment program. This is ironic, because the Commission made no educational studies or experiments. It authorized only two short publications pertaining to curriculum, Harl Douglass, Secondary Educa-

tion for Youth in Modern America, and a committee report, What the High Schools Ought To Teach, but the publications had considerable impact.

A first serious attempt at formulating an educational program was begun in October 1937. Though most of the educators on the Commission, particularly Rainey and Douglass, advocated life adjustment, the AYC did not formulate a program at that time. The Commission feared that an official statement might be premature. It was, however, becoming increasingly sympathetic to work experience as part of the curriculum. This was implied in Henry Harriman's remarks that the overriding need in education was to provide economic security for the individual. He argued that education must first aid youth economically, if it were to succeed in improving health, citizenship, and leisure time opportunities.14

Harl Douglass' monograph on secondary education, a short work intended for general readers and the first AYC publication, appeared in 1937. Douglass, who in the 1940's and 1950's emerged as one of the more articulate advocates of life adjustment, in this book argued for such a curriculum for all youth. Though Secondary Education for Youth was one of the more important books of the

---

thirties to plead the case for life adjustment, there was little in it that was new. Douglass listed seven objectives for secondary education. Five of these were identical with Spencer's categories. To these he added education for mental health and education for continued learning. The distinct feature of the book was that Douglass did not concern himself with a neglected 50 or 60 per cent. He declared that life adjustment courses were valuable for all young people.

More important in the Commission's education work was a special report prepared in 1940, What the High Schools Ought To Teach. By this time the AYC was taking a more forceful stand on various issues. Spurred by the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and a new, vigorous director, Floyd Reeves, the AYC began to issue a series of brief policy statements. What the High Schools Ought To Teach, later officially endorsed by the Commission, outlined a specific program for secondary schools. This statement was

---


16 This did not mean that Douglass and other enthusiastic proponents of life adjustment would do away with college preparatory subjects or vocational education. These courses would remain. The core of the curriculum, however, would be life adjustment education.
written by a special committee appointed by the AYU.
The membership list, which read like a "Who's Who" of educators, included Thomas Briggs, Ralph Tyler, Francis Spaulding, and Charles Prosser. Since the report was the work of prominent educational leaders, it is not surprising that it received widespread favorable reception. Highly pleased by this reaction, the AYU used the report as the basis for its recommendation on school curriculum.17

What the High Schools Ought To Teach criticized the conventional subjects of the traditional curriculum as often being outmoded and unappealing to students. Subjects which came under fire were English, mathematics, foreign languages, history, and natural sciences. The report asserted that these courses were usually structured too rigidly and were taught unimaginatively. English composition often degenerated into trivial formal exercises. Algebra and geometry were too difficult for the average pupil and instilled many with feelings of failure. Foreign languages were of negligible use to most students, and occupied too large a space in the curriculum. History courses offerings were ordinarily narrow and dull. Natural

science subjects often involved only memorization of
cyclopedic lists of the findings of scientific research.18

The AYU offered a four-fold program of reform. This
program was one of the clearer statements of the life ad-
justment concept, and it offered specific suggestions for
improvement. It called for a reorganized curriculum
centering on reading, social studies, personal problems,
and work. Other groups had earlier proposed this kind
of instruction, but not to this extent. The AYU report
charged that teachers unwittingly caused children to dis-
like reading. Criticism was leveled not so much on those
who taught the child to read as it was on secondary school
teachers who assigned their pupils insipid books. Equally
unfortunate were situations where instructors required
their students to spend classtime over a period of
several months reciting and dissecting sentence-by-sentence
a single book. The AYU urged greater free reading and
wider use of various reading materials, including journals
and newspapers. By stimulating and encouraging reading,
and hopefully increasing reading fluency, teachers could
then help the children acquire interpretative skills.19

18 American Youth Commission, What the High Schools
Cought To Teach (Washington, 1940), 27-29.
19 Ibid., 12-14.
If youth were to receive an effective education for citizenship in a democracy, they needed a more thorough grounding in social studies. Basic to this Commission argument was the fact that students seldom received more than one or two dull history courses and a superficial offering in civics. The Commission reasoned that principles of economics, politics, and problems of community life needed a more prominent place in the curriculum. Social studies courses should include such diverse topics as housing, conservation of human and natural resources, community planning, cooperatives, pressure groups, stock exchanges, corporations, labor organizations, the industries of the nation, municipal governments, services of the President's cabinet, origin and nature of money and systems of exchange, international relations, consumers' needs and investments.  

In addition to instruction in social studies the Commission called for a course in personal problems. The most urgent of these problems was the maintenance of physical and mental health. Such a course would include material on personal hygiene, nutrition, and elementary psychology. Another topic needing investigation was family living. Instruction should be provided on respons-

---

20 Ibid., 21-23.
ibilities of parents, and though the Commission report scrupulously avoided the term, rudimentary sex education.21

Health and family life were of considerable interest to the Commission. Though the AYC conducted no general projects in either area, it authorized two brief studies. One of these was a report22 by Harold S. Diehl, dean of medical sciences at the University of Minnesota, and Charles E. Shepard, director of the men students' health service at Stanford University. This study, which the Commission published, detailed widespread health deficiencies among college students, and suggested ways to improve student health services. The AYC studies of Negro and rural youth revealed even more serious health problems. Since poor health and inadequate medical facilities were problems of nationwide scope, the Commission raised the question of the desirability of a national health insurance program. Realizing the political volatility of this latter subject, the AYC did not directly endorse such a program, but it did urge that the matter receive serious study.23

21 Ibid., 24-26.
23 Youth and the Future, 184-188.
Joseph Folsom, sociology professor at Vassar, prepared a monograph for the AYC on family living and marriage and the home. This was the only Commission publication which the members disliked. Folsom advocated sex education instruction. The AYC, particularly Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Miriam Van Waters, strongly opposed a direct approach to the subject. Mrs. Fisher argued that the Commission should endorse parent education rather than education for parenthood. Grudgingly the AYC conceded there was a place for sex education in the schools. Since the Maryland survey had indicated that many youth were woefully ignorant of sex and wanted sex education in the schools, the Commission reluctantly concluded that some sex hygiene and sex education problems could be taught, if delicately handled, in health and physical education courses. As for the more intimate aspects of sex education, books would be given the young people. There would, however, be no recitation, discussion or examination of the subject between teachers and pupils. The AYC reasoned that the

---

24 Joseph K. Folsom, Youth, Family, and Education (Washington, 1941).
The newest and most striking aspect of the AYC educational program was a strong emphasis on work experience as part of the curriculum. In 1947 the Commission on Life Adjustment Education in its official curriculum proclamation stressed the value of work experience, and by the end of the decade work was a common element in most life adjustment programs. The result was a flurry of interest in work as part of the school program. The AYC was in a large way responsible for it.

Work experience as an educational concept was not new in the United States. A small number of colleges and high schools had successfully instituted work-study programs in the early part of the century. These early experiments were an integral part of the vocational education movement. The AYC, however, was interested in more than a traditional vocational preparation. It advocated a program in which all students, regardless of their prospective occupations, could participate. The Commission

25 Floyd Reeves to Miriam Van Waters, June 4, 1940, Miriam Van Waters papers; George F. Zook to Homer P. Rainey, November 22, 1937, Zook file, American Youth Commission files; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, January 11-12, 1937, 52; Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 40-42; Youth and the Future, 174-175.

reached the conclusion that paid productive work, especially during the adolescent years, was not only a necessary preparation for work careers, but was an integral part of the broader educational process of preparation for life. Factors in this decision were the findings from the Maryland survey, a study of the Civilian Conservation Corps and National Youth Administration, and an experimental project on occupational adjustment. Though the Commission argued to the contrary, the basic reason for the emphasis on work experience was economic. No matter how much the Commission declared that youth must acquire desirable work habits, the fact remained that unemployment caused by the depression was the reason many juveniles were not developing them.

In *What the High Schools Ought To Teach* the AYC suggested several alternatives for work experience. Major emphasis was on programs involving part time schooling and part time employment, and on coordinating public work efforts between the federal work agencies and the schools. One immediate outcome of the latter suggestion was the creation of School Work Councils in 45 states. These

---

27 The Commission's studies of the CCC and NYA and the occupational adjustment project are discussed in Chapter 5.

councils were established through the cooperative effort of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the U.S. Office of Education, and the NYA. The purpose of the councils was to coordinate the out-of-school work projects of the NYA with the educational programs of the schools, and to ease the skepticism that many educators had for the federal youth work agencies. The impending demise of the NYA, however, cut short the effort.29

The final AYC recommendations on work experience called for a reorganization of the public school system. Thinking in terms of a unified school system, the Commission advocated beginning with nursery schools and kindergartens and continuing without special break through the fourteenth grade. Within the fourteen grades there would be a developing educational program with subject matter of appropriate difficulty and diversity to meet the needs of all youth. In the upper secondary grades every student would take some kind of wage employment as part of the standard curriculum. For many pupils the work experience would constitute one-half of the educational programs for the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth grades.30

29 What the High Schools Ought To Teach, 17-19; "Work Experience For Youth," The School Review, XLVIII (December, 1940), 721-723.

30 Youth and the Future, 120-124.
The curriculum recommendations of the American Youth Commission had far-reaching effects. They were a distinct force in shaping the progressive education movement in the 1930's. Professional journals, textbooks, and U.S. Office of Education reports imparted respectability to the general education approach of the AYC. The most significant pronouncements on curriculum and school organization came from the Educational Policies Commission, most notably Education for All American Youth (1944). The basic assumption was one made earlier by the AYC—every youth in the United States should experience a broad and balanced education. Thus in its emphasis on citizenship education, vocational preparation, and training for better health and family living, the AYC was a vital force in progressive education. But in the post-war period of the late forties, progressive education was coming under heavy attack. The AYC was, in part, responsible for what followed.

By its concern for the non-academic pupil and interest in work experience as a major part of the curriculum, the AYC helped shape one of the post-war refinements of progressive education, the life adjustment movement. When life adjustment emerged as an orthodox doctrine in

---

31 Educational Policies Commission, Education for All American Youth (Washington, 1944), 21.
1947, it had lost much of its reason for being. Though intended for all youth, it was geared primarily to the needs of students who were not academically inclined. But 1947 was not 1940. Public education faced new crises. Unemployment was no longer the major concern. Burgeoning enrollments, runaway inflation, and expanding industrial economy called for a highly trained and intelligent manpower. As a result criticism of child-centered instruction as defined by life adjustment advocates mounted. Not all of it was justified. Some of it in the early fifties, such as the demand for the return to McGuffey's readers, was part of the pseudo-patriotic fervor of the McCarthy era. But much of the criticism was well-founded. Too often life adjustment spokesmen were openly courting anti-intellectualism and graduating students who had little academic preparation. Reaction to this brought a gradual reorientation of education. With the challenge of Sputnik in 1957, educators talked increasingly of the importance of hard-core academic subjects. In fact, education had gone full circle. The major trend was toward the subject-centered approach of the old traditional curriculum. 32

It would not be fair to blame the AYC for the educa-

32 The best account of the crisis in progressive education is Cremin, The Transformation of the School, 328-353.
tional difficulties of the post-war years. It is true that the AYC helped formulate and popularize life adjustment concepts, but these concepts were suitable for the depression period. The stress on acquiring good work habits through work experience had distinct value in a period when youth had difficulty finding jobs. And courses dealing with citizenship, health, and family living, which merit a place in any curriculum, were especially timely in a world marked by fascist totalitarianism and a nation where many were ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-fed.

The Commission's other major activity involving general education was in educational finance. Finding ample funds to operate the public school system in the United States has always been a difficult problem, and never more so than in the 1930's. The depression severely burdened state and local governments in their attempts to support the schools. Heavy unemployment further hampered school districts by raising enrollments. The ten per cent increase of high school students between 1930 and 1935 was not the result of normal growth rates. It came largely because young people unable to find jobs had little alternative but to remain in school longer.

Financial difficulties of the schools became painfully apparent to the AYC in the survey of Maryland boys and girls. The basic fact the Maryland survey revealed was the social and economic stratification on American
What troubled the AYC was how to break this barrier and equalize educational opportunities for the nation's youth. The quality of schools in the United States varied sharply, not only by states but by small regional areas. An unfortunate, but expected pattern emerged. The poorest states and poorest regions usually had the heaviest school enrollment, and did the poorest job of educating their young. Since these economically deficient areas were unable to provide adequate educational programs, new methods of finance or new revenues had to be found. Every indication pointed in one direction—toward the federal government. An increasing number of educators believed the only way to equalize educational opportunities for youth was with extensive federal assistance. This was an alternative the AYC eyed with reluctance.

Another significant factor shaping the AYC attitudes on school finance was the population study of Newton Edwards, education professor at the University of Chicago. Edwards studied population change in the United States and its relation to the ability of states and localities to support public education. His work, which provided one of the strongest and most convincing arguments for federal aid to education ever made, came as a response to a request

---

33 Bell, *Youth Tell Their Story*, ii-iii.
from the AYC. When the Commission began investigating characteristics of youth in 1936, it believed a population study was mandatory. The original plan was to assist the HYA and the U. S. Office of Education in making a national youth census. With the abandoning of the census project, the AYC decided to authorize its own population study to supplement findings from the Commission-sponsored youth surveys. Rainey brought in Edwards to conduct the study and assigned him to work with the National Resources Committee in preparing a report which would be issued jointly by the National Resources Committee and the AYC. 34

Edwards reported his findings to the AYC in October 1936. 35 Most significant was the material on the ability of states and regions to finance education. To obtain an idea of the relative taxpaying ability of the states, Edwards borrowed formulas used in two previous studies of

34 Report of the Director to the American Youth Commission, May 4-5, 1936, 2.

educational finance. In both these studies the authors used a uniform model tax plan as a method of measuring what a state was able to do. Tax resources available under the model plan were divided among the number of children 5 to 17 years of age in the state to find the relative ability of the state to finance its educational program. In the two studies the differences among states were striking. Edwards argued that Paul Mort's formula would have provided an average tax income yield per child for all the states in 1930 of $155. Comparative figures for individual states ranged from $50 or less in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas to $200 or more in Delaware, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Nevada, and California. These figures, showing what were considerably more than minor regional disparities, took on further significance when compared to what states paid for education. Edwards pointed out that in 1930 the national average expenditure for education per child of school age was $58.


Using the Mort formula as reference, this meant that in eight states, all in the Southeast, more than 100 per cent of the available tax revenue would have been required to meet the national average. In eight other states, less than 30 per cent effort would have been sufficient. But ability to pay bore no relationship to the states' performance. States possessing the least ability to finance education were generally the ones putting forth the greatest effort. Edwards concluded that some states supported education at a relatively high level with comparative ease; other states provided relatively adequate support by exercising great effort; still others found it altogether impossible to provide adequate support although operating at maximum levels.  

Edwards also collected data on birth rates and migration. This information only added to an otherwise gloomy picture. The highest birth rates were in the poorest sections of the country. The reproduction rate in the predominantly rural Southeast was 25 per cent more than sufficient for maintaining the population level; in New England and the Middle Atlantic states it was deficient by 11 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively. These same variances could be found within states. Birth rates in rural, less prosperous regions were usually higher than in the urban

38 Ibid., 114-115, 119.
industrial centers. Growing mobility among the population suggested further problems for the schools. Edwards asserted that the continuing migration from the southern Appalachians, the old Cottonbelt of the Southeast, the cut-over lands of the Great Lakes states, and the Great Plains would bring a large number of poorly educated people to urban areas. This was more reason for attention to the quality of education in poorer regions of the country.  

Edwards' study confirmed an unpleasant fact about American education. Despite the traditional belief that the school should provide each individual, regardless of economic or social class, free opportunity for intellectual growth and cultural development, equality of educational opportunity was little more than a phrase. Edwards saw only one way to achieve balance: "The conclusion appears inescapable that the national interest in education can be met in no other way than by a policy of liberal federal aid to the states."  

The argument for federal aid to education was an old one. The first major attempt for general federal assistance to public education in the United States was in 1870 when

40 Ibid., 152.
George Hoar, a Massachusetts Republican, introduced a bill in the House of Representatives providing for the establishment of national schools in all states where the state governments failed to provide adequate public school instruction. The Hoar bill failed, as did all subsequent measures for general aid, for nearly a hundred years. In the early twentieth century a movement for federal support for vocational education finally achieved success in 1917 with the passage of the Smith-Hughes act, but efforts for broader action failed. In 1918 and again the following year Congress successfully resisted education groups by defeating bills which would have created a Federal Department of Education. In 1929 federal aid to education was given a boost when President Hoover directed Ray Lyman Wilbur, his Secretary of Interior, to appoint a committee to study the federal government's relations to education. This committee, the National Advisory Committee on Education, in 1931 published a report, *Federal Relations to Education*, which was favorable to the idea of general federal aid for education.41

In the depression years a large number of bills for emergency assistance to education were unsuccessfully

introduced, though many teachers were paid from federal relief funds. By this period, however, there was a growing tendency to regard childhood as a period to be devoted under proper care to the greatest possible physical and intellectual development. The child labor provisions of the legislative enactments during the depression, and the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration were conspicuous examples of an increased awareness of needs of young people. Yet by mid-decade Congress was no closer to federal aid to education than it had been in 1930.\textsuperscript{42}

After repeated failures to enact an emergency aid program, federal aid proponents in 1936 again turned to the idea of general aid. In the 74th Congress companion bills were introduced by senator Pat Harrison, a Mississippi Democrat, and Brooks Fletcher, Democrat from Ohio. The Harrison-Fletcher bill was the first in a series of measures providing for a permanent policy of federal grants in aid. By the latter half of the thirties educational organizations, armed with conclusive factual data, were becoming more vocal in their support for federal aid. Most important in amassing evidence for federal aid was a new National Advisory Committee on Edu-

ducation appointed by President Roosevelt in September 1936. Chairman of the Advisory Committee was a young University of Chicago educator and expert on school finance, Floyd Reeves. Roosevelt had originally appointed the Advisory Committee to study a possible expansion of federal vocational education programs, but under pressure from advocates for general aid, the following year enlarged the Committee's function to consider "the whole subject of federal relationship to state and local conduct of education and to prepare a report."^43

In 1938 the Advisory Committee completed its work and published its report and 19 staff studies. The report, plus the supporting monographs, made a strong case for federal aid. The Advisory Committee recommended a program of general federal aid to the states for public elementary and secondary education. Assistance, beginning in July 1939, would be in the form of yearly grants for a six year period. Amounts of aid would begin at $40 million in 1939 and would be increased $20 million per year to $140 million for the 1944-1945 fiscal year. The acknowledged purpose of the grants was to lessen inequality of educational opportunity. Except for minor provisions

and the requirement that states maintaining segregated school systems should distribute funds equitably among white and Negro schools, administration of the grants was left to the states.  

The Advisory Committee had considerable impact on the AYC. George Zook, the most influential person in the American Council on Education and the American Youth Commission, was vice-chairman of the Advisory Committee. Two other AYC members, George Johnson and Henry Taylor, were also on the Committee. When the AYC was discussing federal aid in May 1938, Reeves testified before the members. At the same meeting the AYC voted to endorse the report written by its future director, and added its support to educational organizations in favor of general federal aid to education.  

The AYC's decision to support federal aid to education was a difficult one. Central to discussion on federal aid was the degree of control the federal government should have in administering any program. The laymen on the AYC were especially fearful of states and localities losing control over the public schools. Newton D. Baker, chairman until shortly before his death in December 1937, was the

---

45 Minutes of the American Youth Commission, May 9-10 1938, 77.
leading opponent of federal aid on the AYC. A Jeffersonian liberal, Baker was distrustful of big government and big business. The educators on the Commission, with the exception of William Russell and Lotus Coffman, were less hesitant about the need for federal assistance. In the closing months of 1937 the Commission was becoming aware of the overwhelming need for federal financial participation. Confronted with the evidence from its own surveys and Newton Edwards population study, the Commission saw no other reasonable alternative. Even Baker declared there was no possible solution to the schools' problems without federal assistance. Following Reeves testimony, Henry Harriman reflecting the majority viewpoint in the AYC, moved that the AYC "reluctantly endorse" the program of federal aid in the Advisory Committee report. After prodding by Zook and Rainey, who were enthusiastic in their support of federal grants, Harriman rephrased his motion to omit the word "reluctantly." Thus the AYC took its first, though hesitant, step toward a more positive stand on the problems confronting America's schools. 46

In another year war in Europe evoked stronger responses from the AYC. A Program of Action for American Youth, the policy statement adopted at the October 1939 meeting, 46

---

called for improved conditions of youth as necessary for national security. The report stated that an immediate need was financial and administrative reorganization of the public schools. The first step was for the consolidation of small school units into larger central schools which could be more effectively and economically administered. Next, the AYC urged states to distribute tax revenues within the states in such a way as to provide for more equitable education. Finally, the AYC advocated a federal aid program to improve the quality of education in economically deprived areas. The Commission declared:

Equalization of economic opportunity should be regarded realistically, not as charity from wealthy states to their poorer brethren, but as a necessary provision for national security. The children born on poor land are as much citizens as those born in more fortunate circumstances. Many of the children in less prosperous areas will later live in states and cities far from their place of birth. Their education is a national concern which is in no way lessened because they happened to be born where real estate is of low assessed value.47

In a policy statement issued in 1941, Next Steps in National Policy for Youth, the Commission argued that the pending federal aid bill, which was based on the 1938 Advisory Committee report, had adequate safeguards against excessive federal control. Noting that it had debated

federal aid for five years, the AYC asserted it was fully aware of the danger of bringing the federal government into the general field of school support. 48

Following the issuance of the Advisory Committee report, federal aid measures incorporating the committee recommendations were brought before Congress in 1939, 1941, and 1943. AYC members testified before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in support of all three bills. 49 But it was to no avail. Federal aid failed passage not so much from organized opposition as from lack of support in key areas. Roosevelt did not regard federal aid as a priority measure, so the bills did not have determined administration backing. The United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and many Roman Catholic church leaders offered the only important opposition. Other organizations which later fought federal assistance, such as the American Legion and the American Farm Bureau, supported it in the 1940's. Ironically, Gallup polls

48 American Youth Commission, Next Steps in National Policy for Youth (Washington, 1941), 14.

49 See Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Hearings for Federal Aid to Education Act of 1939, March 2, 3 and 10, 1939, 76 Cong. 1 Sess.; Educational Finance Act of 1941, April 28-30, 1941, 77 Cong. 1 Sess.; Educational Finance Act of 1943, April 6-8, 1943, 78 Cong. 1 Sess.
revealed that 72 per cent of Americans in 1943 supported federal aid compared to 49 per cent in 1965 when the Elementary and Secondary Education act was passed.  

The struggle for federal support of general education in the first half of the century was a story of repeated failures. By the late 1930's the need for federal assistance was clearly demonstrated. Yet, Congress failed to act. Two more generations of youth would have to pass through the schools before any steps would be taken to lessen inequality of educational opportunity. Though at first reluctant, the AYC when confronted with incontrovertible evidence made a stand which had not been popular with its members. The Commission's support of federal aid to education indicated the maturation of its thinking about the problems of American education. Unfortunately, the AYC and the professional education organizations were unable to win sufficient support for their cause.

---

CHAPTER V
ECONOMIC SECURITY: VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE,
WORK PROGRAMS, AND PLANNING

Two of three Maryland youth told AYC interviewers in 1936 that their most urgent personal problem was economic security. This response was not entirely expected. The Commission knew that economic concerns were crucial, but it was not prepared for the degree of unrest among the nation's young. Until the completion of the Maryland survey the AYC had hoped that the general processes of recovery would reduce the economic problem to a more manageable size. Since this was not happening, the Commission in 1937 decided to focus its attention more directly on the problems confronting youth. Every issue the Commission had investigated to this time brought out some phase of the economic dilemma. The stark fact that emerged from the AYC activity by 1937 was that the basic need for youth was finding a suitable job. From this point every Commission activity was related to this central problem. Two previous areas of investigation, vocational guidance and federal youth work projects, were given increased attention as measures which would help develop economic security. As a result of the expanded
study of guidance and work programs, the AYC stressed a third factor, effective planning, as a means of improving the economic outlook for young people.¹

It was apparent from the early Commission studies, especially the Maryland survey, that employment difficulties involved more than finding jobs. Though the average unemployment rate for juveniles in the labor market was an alarming 30 per cent, it was only one indicator of economic unrest. Most of the employed youth were working on tasks that offered little in the way of desirable training or advancement. Far too many boys and girls, basing their job preferences on wishful thinking and daydreaming, wanted high prestige jobs for which they had little aptitude or training. In Maryland five times as many youth wanted to work in one or another of the professions as were employed in the professional field. Less than one-fourth of the persons surveyed had received any form of vocational guidance from the school or any other agency. When vocational guidance and placement was available, it was often inadequate.²

¹ Howard M. Bell, Youth Tell Their Story (Washington, 1938), 250; American Youth Commission, Youth and the Future (Washington, 1942), xi.

² Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, 6; Howard M. Bell, Matching Youth and Jobs (Washington, 1940), 6.
Weighing all these factors, the AYC concluded that the high unemployment rate for those under age 21 could not solely be attributed to depression conditions. It indicated rather a breakdown of the traditional ways by which young people in the past had been inducted into the working world. To study this problem the Commission initiated an extensive study of the procedures and organization of occupational adjustment (the term the AYC used for vocational guidance and placement). To the AYC occupational adjustment meant matching youth with suitable jobs. This is a difficult enough task for any period, but problems in employment, like those in education, posed a special challenge in the 1930's. The occupational adjustment project which began in 1937 was the largest, and most extended of the AYC's activities. Though it was far from a complete success, it contributed significantly to the shaping of the vocational guidance movement in the closing part of the decade.  

The origins of the vocational guidance movement in America are obscure. Beginning as a response to the economic and social unrest in the post-Civil War period, it emerged in the early twentieth century as an instrument of social idealism and reform. The movement, which was

---

3 Floyd W. Reeves, "After the Youth Surveys--What?" *Occupations*, XVIII (January, 1940), 244.
centered in the cities, was an attempt to adjust to rapid urbanization and industrialization. One of the movement's early major spokesmen was Frank Parsons, who in 1905 established the Breadwinners' College at Civic Service House, a Boston settlement house. At Breadwinners' College, Parsons instituted educational programs for employed young men and women, a type of activity paving the way for the development of an organized vocational guidance service. As the dominant figure in the movement in the early part of the century, Parsons was instrumental in the founding of the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1913. In the period prior to World War I, vocational guidance leaders were concerned with strident industrial growth and the accompanying problems of sweatshops, child labor, and struggles by labor for recognition and rights.\footnote{John M. Brewer, History of Vocational Guidance (New York, 1942), 55-59; Henry Borow, "Milestones: A Chronology of Notable Events in the History of Vocational Guidance," in Henry Borow, ed., Man in a World at Work (Boston, 1964), 46-49; Carroll H. Miller, "Vocational Guidance in the Perspective of Cultural Change," in Borow, Man in a World at Work, 6.}

In the post-war years vocational guidance became closely associated with the programs of the schools. It gradually came to be regarded as an important phase of general education. Vocational preparation, along with preparation for the ethical life, health, recreation,
citizenship, and the home, was one aspect of education for the common life. But similar to the other parts of the general education curriculum, few schools carried out any effective placement programs. Unemployment and economic insecurity of the depression years brought increased interest in vocational guidance for youth. The Civilian Conservation Corps created in 1933 and particularly the National Youth Administration founded in 1935 had as objectives the encouragement of job training, counseling, and placement services. An even more important activity of the federal government was the passage of the Wagner-Peyser act in 1933, establishing the United States Employment Service. The following year the USES began an Occupational Research Program to improve guidance and placement functions. This broad program, in which the AYC later played a significant part, had as its specific objectives the furnishing of public employment offices and other cooperating agencies with operating tools to facilitate the proper counseling, classification, and placement of workers.5

The American Youth Commission's interest in vocational guidance and placement was serious from the start. Rainey,

5 Miller, "Vocational Guidance in the Perspective of Cultural Change," 6-10; Borow, "Milestones," 54.
in assembling a list of proposed projects for the Commission to consider, suggested a study of occupational adjustment. He brought in Marion Trabue, a vocational guidance authority from the University of North Carolina, to advise the AYC on beginning a study. After hearing Trabue's preliminary report, the Commission requested him to propose a specific program. At the October 1936 meeting Trabue presented his report advocating occupational adjustment for all youth. There was little in the report that was new. Trabue pointed out that information needed by youth to make intelligent occupational adjustment was not available. Arguing that vocational maladjustment involved more than a lack of counseling, Trabue charged that placement agencies did not know what traits were necessary for particular jobs. The immediate need, he asserted, was for objective studies of job classifications and types of skills required for them.

The Commission, however, decided to defer definite action until a later date. At the January 1937 meeting Rainey, using Trabue's material as a basis, attempted to persuade the AYC to make specific recommendations on occupational adjustment. Rainey wanted the schools to assume

---

6 Minutes of the American Youth Commission, January 9-10, 1936, 8; Marion Trabue, Occupational Adjustment of American Youth, 15-27, report presented to the American Youth Commission, October 12-13, 1936.
a greater responsibility in guidance and placement func-
tions. He also urged increased federal support for voca-
tional guidance programs. The AYC was unwilling to accept
either suggestion. Edmund Day, director of the General
Education Board's general education projects, told the
members he believed the primary responsibility for guidance
should reside outside the school systems. Since this
position which was shared by most of the lay members
was counter to Rainey's suggestion, no action was taken
on the Rainey recommendation. At this time the AYC was
still quite fearful of federal support of educational pro-
grams. Though the Commission was not opposed to federal
grants to states for vocational education, it feared
federal support for guidance and placement activities in
the schools might lead to excessive federal control.
As a result of the rejection of the core of Rainey's
program, the AYC was no closer to an occupational adjust-
ment program than it had been a year earlier.\(^7\)

Following the compilation of the Maryland survey data
in early 1937, the American Youth Commission looked at
occupational adjustment with renewed interest. Since the
survey indicated that a considerable part of the employment
problem stemmed from inadequate vocational preparation

\(^7\) Proceedings of the American Youth Commission,
January 11-12, 1937, 221-225, 96-105.
and guidance, the AYC decided it should conduct some kind of experiments to improve guidance and placement functions. In carrying out such a program the AYC proposed to assist the United States Employment Service (USES) in its Occupational Research Program. This program originated by the USES in 1934, and financed in part by the Laura Spelman Foundation and the National Occupational Conference, had been gathering materials on procedures and methods in conducting guidance and placement activities. 8

The basic goal of the Commission's proposed experiment was to encourage mutually profitable relationships between the schools and public employment offices. The project, financed by a $150,000 grant from the AYC, was to be jointly conducted by the USES and AYC for an 18-month period in five demonstration centers throughout the country. In each of the centers a vigorous effort was to be made to improve occupational adjustment services encouraging cooperation between the schools and agencies concerned with guidance. The five communities selected for the project were Baltimore, St. Louis, Providence, Dallas, and Kenosha, Wisconsin. In addition, rural areas surrounding Baltimore and St. Louis were to be included. In choosing

---

the communities the AYC selected those which were using different methods of placement. In Providence the placement service was centered in the schools and financial assistance was provided by the public employment service. Placement service in St. Louis was centralized in the local employment office which received assistance from the schools and the NYA. In Baltimore and Dallas both the state employment service offices and local boards of education provided placement. The AYC community centers were opened in all of the cities, except Kenosha, in the autumn of 1937, and operated until 1939 when the USES was reorganized as the Employment Security Division of the Federal Security Agency.

The striking feature of the joint project was the development of a community action approach. Convinced that youth needs varied greatly in different parts of the country, the AYC consistently urged the desirability of community action. The Commission's surveys, publications,

9 Kenosha was not included due to budgetary considerations.

10 Statement of Proposed Community Experiment in Employment and Occupational Adjustment, report presented to the American Youth Commission, May 10-11, 1937; Supplement to Proposal for Community Experiments in Employment and Occupational Adjustment, undated manuscript in the Zook file, American Youth Commission files; Reeves, "After the Youth Surveys—What?" 245-246.
reports, and the whole implementation program, were designed in large part as guides for communities to improve conditions for their youth. In conducting the demonstration centers in the four metropolitan areas, the AYC staff attempted to coordinate guidance and placement services. The staff attempted diverse tasks as determining the size of the community labor market, assessing the manpower needs of the community, studying the job applications of thousands of youth to determine their occupational skills, and recommending procedural changes in placement offices to improve efficiency. The information collected by the project staff was then given to the local leaders to use as a basis for an improved guidance and placement program in the community.  

The joint project, however, was not a complete success. A number of public officials in the four cities were not receptive to outside advice. The Baltimore schools had had a reputation for conducting outstanding placement functions, but the AYC staff found the Baltimore program worked better on paper than it did in fact. In Dallas the AYC discovered that many community leaders had no real interest in improving placement functions for youth. The most persistent problem the AYC identified was what it called agency-mindedness. Too often community

\[\text{References:} \quad \text{Reeves, } "\text{After the Youth Survey--What?}," 246.\]
agencies had preconceived notions on operating their programs, and were unwilling to change their procedures to cooperate with other organizations. This same kind of difficulty confronted the AYC in working with the USES. William Stead, director of the USES Occupational Research Program, believed from the first that the placement function should be centered in the state employment offices, and that the schools' function would be a secondary one of supplying necessary information to the offices. Since the AYC had not endorsed any specific procedures for placement services, relations between the USES and AYC were not always cordial. 12

Despite the problems in the administration of the project, the Commission rightfully viewed its work in occupational adjustment as rewarding. The AYC took a more positive stand on the value of vocational guidance and placement. Where it had previously thought of the "gap between school and work" as simply a span of time between leaving school and finding a job, it identified a different kind of gap. This breach was the result of the failure of

12 A Counseling and Placement Service for Baltimore Youth, 295 (American Youth Commission files); A Counseling and Placement Service for Dallas Youth, 1 (American Youth Commission files); Stead and Masincup, Occupational Research Program, 11; Paul T. David, Report of the Acting Director, report presented to the American Youth Commission, November 11-12, 1940.
most communities to develop programs capable of providing integrated counseling, adjustment, and placement services. To aid communities in bridging the gap in services, the Commission in 1940 issued a policy statement of recommendations for establishing an occupational adjustment program.13

The statement, The Occupational Adjustment of Youth, based on the findings of the joint project, emphasized the importance of a vocational guidance and placement program for each community. Though recognizing that this would not end unemployment, the AYc believed it would provide youth a measurable degree of economic security. The Commission urged increased attention be given to vocational guidance by the home, community agencies, employers, labor unions, and particularly the schools and public employment services. Specific suggestions for the schools were increased counseling services and the keeping of cumulative student records. The AYC believed guidance was such a vital service that it should be added to the school program at the expense of dropping less important courses from the curriculum. For the public employment agencies the Commission asked for more attention to the specific

---

13 Reeves, "After the Youth Surveys--What?," 245.
problems of unemployed youth, and in some cases the creation of separate junior employment services.\textsuperscript{14}

Most important in providing community services according to the AYC was thorough cooperation between all agencies serving youth. The Commission, in contrast to its position three years earlier, declared that guidance and placement functions in a community could be centered in either the schools or the public employment office. Since the project revealed that either plan of operation could work successfully, the AYC reasoned that a cooperative effort was more important than any particular administrative plan. By carefully planning an occupational adjustment program, each community could avoid overlapping efforts and duplicate services resulting in waste, friction, and inferior service. The key to a successful program, the Commission argued, was continued community planning. In establishing a program civic, business and educational leaders should first conduct surveys of local employment opportunities and needed work skills, and then through a community agency assist the schools and public employment agency to find good jobs for youth.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} American Youth Commission, \textit{The Occupational Adjustment of Youth} (Washington, 1940), 3-5.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 6-13.
\end{flushright}
Aside from fostering the AYC's commitment to planned community occupational adjustment, the joint project did bring some changes in the vocational guidance movement. The reorganized USES in 1939 did expand its services for youth. By assisting the USES with its Occupational Research Program, the Commission contributed significantly to the preparation of the first edition of the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. The *Dictionary* titles coded and defined more than 18,000 occupations, and it soon became a basic reference book for vocational counselors and personnel workers throughout the United States. An indirect influence of the AYC was the organization in 1938 of the Occupational Information and Guidance Service under the Division of Vocational Education of the U.S. Office of Education. This service conducted conferences and distributed guidance manuals for use by the schools. Another important guidance service the AYC had recommended was the Occupational Outlook Service which was created in 1940 as an agency within the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. The Outlook Service compiled and distributed reports on occupational characteristics, trends, and opportunities.  

---

16 Reeves, "After the Youth Surveys--What?", 245; Borov, "Mile-Stones," 56; *Occupational Adjustment*, 14; Bell, *Matching Youth and Jobs*, 157.
Vocational guidance needs in the 1930's were changing because the nature of work was changing. Developing technology and social reform movements in the decades after 1900 brought an end to sweatshop labor and a gradual shortening of working hours. An increasing number, young and old alike, were employed in machine industries which required only minimum skills and expenditure of creative energy. The result was the gradual emergence of a new social problem, one closely related to occupational adjustment—the problem of the use of leisure time. The AYC did not conduct a project on leisure time problems, but it was concerned about finding creative outlets for youthful energy. One of the Commission monographs, C. Gilbert Wrenn and Dudley L. Harley, *Time on Their Hands* (1941), dealt with leisure time and recreation. Wrenn, the senior author, professor of educational psychology at the University of Minnesota from 1936 to 1964, and Harley, an AYC staff associate, stressed the necessity of meaningful recreation programs for youth and outlined procedures for community planning in implementing the programs. The Commission endorsed the authors' recommendations. Regarding recreation as one of the important parts of education for the common life, the AYC believed the creative use of leisure time was as important for the individual as adjustment to his vocation. With increasing numbers of young men entering the military service in 1941, the Commission
strengthened its stand on recreation programs. Urging recreation as a crucial factor in maintaining morale, the AYC urged communities to abandon the idea that leisure time programs were a frill and to expand their recreational activities. 17

Adequate guidance and placement in the community was a major way to help youth achieve occupational adjustment, but it was not sufficient for all boys and girls. A sound occupational program did not mean the local labor market could absorb all young job seekers. Some youth would remain unemployed and were likely to fail to develop good work habits. The fear that the next generation of adults might never acquire the discipline and sense of responsibility that comes from gainful work greatly disturbed the AYC. Its statements on education had repeatedly emphasized the value of work experience in the school curriculum as an economic restorative measure and as a means of developing good work habits. The AYC's attachment to the concept of work was not surprising, for work has for centuries been held in high esteem in Western society. William Menninger, of the Menninger Foundation, in a statement similar to the AYC viewpoint, writes that there are obvious, conscious reasons

17 C. Gilbert Wrenn and D. L. Harley, Time on Their Hands (Washington, 1941); American Youth Commission, Next Steps In National Policy for Youth (Washington, 1941), 11-12.
for work—the necessity for self-preservation and the desire to raise a family and to be able to support that family. In addition he asserts that work helps meet numerous psychological needs such as establishing satisfactory personal relationships with friends and finding outlets for aggressive energy. 18

Though the AYC had recommended work experience in the schools' educational programs, its greatest attention to this subject was in the youth programs of the federal government—the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration. The CCC, founded in 1933, and the NYA, in 1935 as part of the WPA, were primarily emergency relief projects, but they had educational functions as well. Some educators, and eventually the AYC, regarded the CCC and NYA projects as forms of general education addressed to the millions of young Americans who found themselves neither in school nor in private employment. One of the first projects the AYC considered was a study of the educational program of the CCC. Kenneth Holland, a young educator whom Rainey chose to draft a study proposal, outlined a project for the Commission in January 1936. But the Commission was not convinced the CCC camps were sufficiently permanent to merit a study,

so it deferred the project until the next meeting. In October the AYC approved Holland's project and a two year study of the CCC began. The basic purpose of the project was to determine the educational capabilities and interests of CCC enrollees and the most profitable types of education for them. Holland's staff, with the cooperation of numerous college researchers, administered batteries of tests to over 9,000 CCC boys in 2,000 camps scattered throughout the United States. ¹⁹

The study indicated that most CCC enrollees were ill-prepared to receive any immediate benefits from conventional academic instruction or job training. They were usually boys who had done poorly in school, and they were nearly unanimous in their dislike for formal education. They also had little work experience. The average enrollee had only held a job for 2.2 months before entering camp. In addition, most came from economically and culturally deprived home backgrounds, and over a third were from broken homes. Basing its conclusions on this information, the Holland staff declared that the major services the Corps could offer would be "to provide

¹⁹ Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York, 1964), 318; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, January 9-10, 1936, 6-7; The Experimental Program of the American Youth Commission in the Ten CCC Camps of the Fifth Corps Area, 2, (American Youth Commission files).
a work experience, a job training experience and an educational program designed to fit the enrollees to live and to make a living."

Shortly after the CCC began the agency added an education program, but only as a secondary function. Roosevelt was enthusiastic about adding education to the CCC program, but he did not regard this as the major purpose. Writing to his Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, he stated it was impossible for a CCC camp to ever become a school in the usual understanding of that term. Demand for education in the CCC had originated in the U.S. Office of Education in 1933, while George Zook was Commissioner. The Office of Education drew up education guidelines, but implementation of the program was left to the War Department, fearing radical and leftist infiltration were cool to the ideas of any expansion of educational activity, but the program, once implemented, did grow. In 1937 Congress, in renewing the CCC for another year, gave formal recognition to the educational program, and specifically authorized enrollees to devote ten hours a week to educational activity. By 1939 over 90 per cent of CCC boys had participated in the education program, either in some form

---

20 Study of the Civilian Conservation Corps by the American Youth Commission, 36, report presented to the American Youth Commission, October 31-November 1, 1938.
of job training or formal classwork. The program did make some notable achievements. Over 8,000 illiterates were taught to read and write; over 5,000 boys received eighth grade certificates and over 1,000 received high school diplomas.  

Despite these achievements there were fundamental weaknesses in CCC education. Since education occupied a secondary position, the educational advisers, who were in charge of education in the camps, had minimal authority. Friction between the military personnel and educational advisers was often intense. In addition, the latter were usually overworked and underpaid. More serious than the camp administrative problems were shortcomings in the educational programs. Formal course work, having no immediate relevancy to the daily work, had little appeal to most of the boys. Since the class sessions were usually scheduled in the late afternoon or evening so they would not conflict with the work projects, the enrollees were often too tired to participate enthusiastically. Furthermore, the job training in the education program was too often of negligible value. Skills the

boys learned usually had little relationship to later vocational needs. 22

Two major types of criticism were leveled against CCC education. 23 Some education leaders, notably, John Studebaker, the Commissioner of Education, argued that the education program should occupy a larger, though separate part of the CCC program. By expanding job training instruction and academic course work, Studebaker believed the CCC could become more effective in preparing enrollees for the future. The American Youth Commission staff following its study of CCC camps in 1938 suggested a different approach. The AYC argued that an educational program as a separate segment of camp administration tended to distract attention from the possibility of unifying the

22 Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 162-165.

23 One other criticism of CCC education was the argument of the Educational Policies Commission. The EPC feared that a strong federally directed education program in the CCC and NYA might lead to federal control of education in the United States. It argued that education functions in youth agencies be placed with state and local authorities. The AYC did not share this fear, though it might have, had the EPC statement been issued several years earlier. The AYC believed the federal government had the authority to conduct educational programs in youth agencies, and that the exercise of their authority was not a threat to the schools.

For a statement of the EPC and AYC positions see William G. Carr, "Educational Policy Toward Youth," Phi Delta Kappan, XXIV (February, 1942); Youth and the Future, 57-70.
enrollee's entire camp experience into meaningful preparation for life. Vocational aspects of the program, asserted the AYC, could be achieved through the development of work-centered training programs where the emphasis would be placed on relating training to the job and giving as much training on the job as possible. Thus, education should be an integral part of all CCC functions. According to AYC thinking the Corps should be an agency devoted to general education. The Commission concluded that the central purpose of the CCC "should be that of improving the health, skill, and efficiency of the boys who are enrolled, to help them become useful and successful citizens in whatever occupation they may afterwards enter."

After the completion of Holland's report in 1938, the Commission decided to prove the desirability of expanded job training in the CCC by organizing a demonstration experiment. The purpose, simply stated, was to show that the CCC, functioning as a work-centered agency, could offer more realistic vocational training to non-academic pupils. With Pechner's approval, Holland and his staff organized a demonstration project in the CCC camps of the Fifth Corps. This project, beginning in early 1939

---

and continuing until July 1940, included ten camps in West Virginia, Indiana, and Kentucky. 25

The response of the camp commanders to the AYC demonstration project was generally unfavorable. They regarded Holland as a naïve, young amateur and the entire project as misguided. This criticism, which did little more than reflect the intransigency of a number of War Department officials, was unfounded. A more honest appraisal came from Rufus Miles, head of the CCC Selection Division. Miles, who was assigned to evaluate the AYC reports, stated he was in agreement with most of the Commission's ideas, but he doubted whether they could be effectively implemented. On the latter point he was substantially correct, as the CCC Office of Education was opposed to any basic change in the education program. Though the CCC never gave any official acknowledgment to the Commission's recommendations, the demonstration project did make some achievements. The training programs in the ten camps improved the morale and cooperativeness of the boys participating in the educational activities, provided the new enrollees smoother induction into camp life, and lowered the desertion rate. Miles was not the only CCC official who saw merit in the Commission's views.

25 David, Report of the Acting Director, 28; Daniel Van Voorhis to Robert Fechner, February 8, 1939, Records of the CCC, Box 1976, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
By 1939 Fechner, was emphatically directing that more vocational education be included in camp programs. At the same time a policy of directing enrollees to selected camps where they could best profit from the training was instituted. Had the CCC not been placed on a noncombatant footing in 1940, it is likely that even more of the AYC recommendations would have been implemented.26

The other federal youth agency, the National Youth Administration, was of interest to the AYC, but was never the subject of any extensive investigation. Originally the NYA was a sort of junior WPA with work projects for out-of-school young people. With the NYA was merged a student aid program formerly under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. In 1939 the NYA expanded to include new types of projects for boys and girls not in school, and in 1940 added projects for defense work. The NYA was designed to provide services not found in the CCC. By providing work projects for young men and women living in the parental home, the NYA made possible employment opportuni-

26 G. J. Finley to Howard Oxley, director of CCC education, January 3, 1940; Ralph C. M. Flynt to Oxley, January 9, 1940; S. M. Ransopher to Oxley, January 2, 1940 in Records of the CCC, Office of Education file; Rufus Miles to Frank Persons, November 7, 1939, April 10, 1940, Records of the CCC, Box 1976; Salmond, Civilian Conservation Corps, 167.
ties at a relatively low cost of operation. As the functions of the NYA became more diverse, the objectives changed. In 1939 the NYA became independent from the WPA, and its emphasis switched from relief to vocational preparation. The emphasis on vocational preparation in the NYA fascinated the American Youth Commission, but it came too late for the Commission to attempt any major investigation.27

In September 1939 Aubrey Williams, administrator of the NYA, requested the AYC to study the student aid program. This program provided needed financial assistance to over 125,000 college students and over 325,000 high school boys and girls. Though the amount of work provided was small and the pay low, the program did enable many youth to remain in the secondary schools and colleges. The program was due again for Congressional renewal in July 1940, and Williams hoped an AYC study would help get a continuance. Williams, aware that many educators were skeptical of federal involvement in school affairs, hoped that AYC support for the student aid program would help win acceptance from school officials. The AYC voted to authorize the study. The General Education Board,

however, fearing the program might not be continued, refused to allocate the necessary funds, and the project was dropped. 28

The NYA had an extensive work program for out-of-school youth. In most cases these projects were small and were established in areas where the workers could live at home. In October 1940 the NYA organized an additional program, the resident work center projects, for boys and girls who were not in school. This program was not very large, but it provided services the AYC believed were important. The resident centers were primarily for unemployed youth in rural and sparsely settled areas. The centers were usually established in conjunction with the schools. They provided a general education emphasizing the acquiring of vocational skills and the learning of democratic procedures. They were the closest thing to the AYC ideal of work camps, as the major concern was for job training and vocational preparation. The AYC considered

28 A Proposal for a Study of the Student Aid Program of the National Youth Administration, report to the American Youth Commission, October 9-10, 1939; Robert Havighurst to Floyd Reeves, October 20, 1939, Miriam Van Waters papers, Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
the possibility of a study of the resident centers, but did not go further due to lack of time. 29

The importance of the American Youth Commission's study of the federal youth projects was not so much with any immediate effects it had on the CCC and NYA, as it was with the implications for work experience as an educative and economically desirable function. When the AYC began formulating its policies toward youth, work, and education in 1940, it was not clear what effects the war emergency would have on the work camps. But it was apparent the projects might be seriously altered or abandoned. Thus, the AYC recommendations on the work programs were concerned as much with long-range issues of the post-war period as they were with immediate problems. In formulating specific policy for the projects the Commission had two major aims. It believed the task ahead was to make youth work programs a part of a general plan for the education and care of youth, on the one hand, and of a program of social and economic advancement, on the other. 30

The basis for the Commission's policy on work projects

29 Preliminary Statement on the National Youth Administration Resident Centers, undated manuscript in the American Youth Commission files.

30 Lewis Lorwin, Youth Work Program (Washington, 1941), 148-149.
was the statement adopted October 1939 in *A Program of Action for American Youth*. The Commission declared:

In view of the crisis in world affairs and the necessarily slow adjustment of business to current conditions, the Commission concludes that in many states and communities the present gap between the number of jobs for youth and the number of youth who need and want jobs cannot be closed without the aid of the Federal Government. Every young person who does not desire to continue in school after 16, and who cannot get a job in private enterprise, should be provided under public auspices with employment in some form of service.

One obvious form of public service were the federal work projects. In arguing the desirability of continuation of these programs, the Commission urged an administrative reorganization of the CCC and NYA consolidating them into a single youth works progress administration. This single agency would maintain the diversity of projects found in the CCC and NYA. The advantages of consolidation were obvious. It could prevent duplication of efforts and conflict of administration, and it could make possible central planning to provide needed services for youth.

The effects of mobilization and industrial expansion resulting from the war emergency in 1941 did not alter the Commission's view on work programs for youth. The AYC


32 *Youth and the Future*, 41.
believed there would be a need for them for the duration of the war and in the post-war years. Though there was no certainty in late 1941 that the CCC and NYA would be continued, the Commission urged they be retained in some form to provide services for two distinct, but related problem groups. These were youth who were markedly substandard in their readiness for employment or war service and young people who were geographically isolated in rural areas lacking both educational and employment opportunities. In the first group were many who were ill-prepared for any kind of vocational training. Their immediate need was for medical and dental care, a diet to remedy their nutritional deficiencies, for a regimen of physical activity, recreation, and sleep. Only after improving their health and personal habits would they be ready for vocational training. The second group included many from the Appalachian region, the old cotton belt, and other depressed rural areas who had had little educational opportunities in the schools. The AYC, like social scientists several decades later advocating programs for a war on poverty, was convinced the problems of these groups were so intense that any effective solution would require many years. For them school-centered programs of vocational education were not sufficient answers. The best solution, the AYC believed, were the federal work-centered programs of the CCC and NYA.33

33 The job training programs recommended by the AYC
Another reason for the continuance of the work programs was the AYC conviction that unemployment problems would persist in the post-war period. The change from a war-time to a peace-time economy could conceivably result in a serious economic dislocation. If this were to occur, returning soldiers and young workers in defense industries would be the ones most likely to be without jobs. Public youth work programs could alleviate this problem. The Commission argued that future programs should be open to all youth between the ages of 16 and 21, regardless of financial need or economic status. This was consistent with the AYC idea that the public work agencies should provide both unemployment relief and work experience as a part of a desirable general education. In its ideas for work agencies in the future the Commission was basing its hopes on constructive long-range planning. The AYC believed that only by a concentrated planning effort, including federal, state, and local governments and non-governmental agencies could problems of employment and economic security be solved.34

The concept of planning in the depression decade was very popular, but at the same time controversial. To

were in many respects similar to the training programs for disadvantaged youth in the 1960's such as the Job Corps.

34 Youth and the Future, 166-50.
many conservatives planning was a red flag of regimentation heralding the dawn of collectivism and the twilight of free enterprise. But this was a wildly exaggerated view which overlooked the tradition of planning in the United States. The gradual development of railroad and public utility regulation in the late nineteenth century, the growth of the conservation movement, the evolution of city and regional planning, the steady accretion of various types of social legislation, and the rise of the industrial engineering movement indicated the tendency of Americans to plan their affairs. A fuller commitment to planning came during World War I in the industrial mobilization and the work of the government war-time agencies.35

Following the onset of the depression in 1929 planning received increased attention as a device for economic recovery. The President's Committee on Recent Social Trends in 1933 declared that economic planning was necessary to deal with the central problem of balance. The pertinence of planning to economic stability was recognized in the Roosevelt administration with the National Recovery Administration and the Public Works Administration. Within the latter agency Harold Ickes established the

35 George B. Galloway, Planning for America (New York, 1941), 4-5.
National Planning Board to prepare the public works program. This board and its successors, the National Resources Board, the National Resources Committee, and the National Resources Planning Board, were the major agencies in coordinating federal planning efforts in the New Deal. Planning in the federal government also stimulated state activity, and by 1934 thirty-two states had created planning agencies. Nor was the planning interest confined to government. A number of industrial leaders believed in the value of central economic planning. The trade association program formulated by Gerard Swope in 1931 and the NRA two years later were planning efforts favorable to industry. The fact that industrialists Owen D. Young and Henry Harriman were firm advocates of economic planning was no small reason in explaining the AYC's position.36

The AYC found nothing to fear in planning. It regarded planning as the opposite of improvising and as a method of bridging the gap between fact-finding and policy-making. The AYC commitment to planning came

gradually. In part it resulted from the Commission's conviction that unemployment and vocational maladjustment were such serious problems that they would require continuing attention. The emergency growing out of World War II also made the AYC realize that full attention to the economic problems of youth would have to be deferred until peace was restored.

The Commission emphasized the value of several levels of planning for youth. Its recommendations, however, were suggestive rather than explicit, and were intended as general guidelines. One type of planning repeatedly endorsed by the AYC was community action. This would involve a cooperative effort of local civic and governmental leaders, schools and interested agencies to provide services of vocational guidance, training, and job placement. A prominent aspect of state planning the Commission urged was the creation in every state of a department of education which would provide adequate leadership throughout the state. A desirable step suggested for some states was the consolidation of the state education department and the state institutions of higher and special education into one agency enabling it to develop an integrated state system of education at all levels for all children and youth of the state.\(^\text{37}\)

It was the federal government's duty, argued the AYC, to provide those services which the states and localities were unable to give, by appropriations for broad categories of service, including general education. For the post-war period the Commission believed the federal government must make a more forceful effort of comprehensive planning. Not only should it be willing to provide vocational training and work experience through work projects, but it must also attempt to achieve full employment through a program of planned industrial expansion. 38

38 David, "Employment Policy for Youth," 250.
CHAPTER VI
NEGRO YOUTH STUDIES AND
THE END OF THE AMERICAN YOUTH COMMISSION

Our American society creates around all youth (as every society does) a continual pressure of suggestion to try to live up to the ideals of the country—such ordinary, traditional, taken-for-granted American ideals as to fight injustice fearlessly, to cringe to no man; to choose one’s own life work; to resist with stout-hearted self-respect affronts to decent human dignity, whether one’s own or others’; to drive ahead toward honestly earned success, all sails spread to the old American wind blowing from the Declaration of Independence. But our society puts Negro youth in the situation of the animal in the psychological laboratory in which a neurosis is to be caused, by making it impossible for him to try to live up to those never-to-be-questioned national ideals, as other young Americans do.1

At first glance the dilemma of Negro youth Dorothy Canfield Fisher describes in this statement appears to be quite different from the American dilemma Gunnar Myrdal discusses in his monumental study of the Negro in the United States. But both are talking about the same problem. The difference is that the dilemma—the incongruity between the American creed and prevalent standards of values

---

1 Dorothy Canfield Fisher in preface of Richard Wright, Native Son (New York, 1940), x.
and behavior—affects black and white Americans in varying ways. Myrdal's primary concern in An American Dilemma, in contrast to Mrs. Fisher's statement, was the effect of race problems on the minds of white Americans.  

The critical awareness of racial problems expressed by Mrs. Fisher and Myrdal was the result of two important investigations of the Negro in the United States initiated in the late 1930's. These investigations, one financed by the American Youth Commission and the other by the Carnegie Corporation, were the most significant studies in a decade when social scientists for the first time were showing a serious interest in the Negro in American society. The most impressive work was the comprehensive study Myrdal wrote for the Carnegie Corporation. This project, lasting from 1938 to 1944, considered the whole range of Negro problems in the United States. The studies of the American Youth Commission, dealing with difficulties of personality adjustment of Negro youth, were more limited, but provided equally valuable knowledge about the debilitating effects of racial discrimination.

When the AYC began in 1935 a Negro youth study was on the list of tentative projects. Following the Commission's first meeting, George Zook and Homer Rainey appointed

---

a committee of Negro educators to consider the advisability of a special study of young Negroes in connection with the planned general survey of American youth. This committee, meeting in April 1936, recommended the Commission organize a project studying the effects of the Negro's minority racial status on his personality development. The committee believed this kind of study would be a significant contribution to the overall AYC goal of developing a comprehensive program for the care and education of the nation's young people. It was readily apparent that the adjustment of Negro adolescents to the total adult society was far more complicated than it was for white adolescents. Reasoning that this difficulty was related to the subordinate economic and social position of the Negro in the American social structure, the committee argued it was probable that the taboos associated with this subordinate position gave rise to an entirely unique set of problems in the social conditioning of the Negro adolescent. This belief was reinforced by the evidence of various forms of social maladjustment such as high rates of juvenile delinquency, school failure, and illegitimacy.3

Newton D. Baker, the AYC chairman, was convinced a personality development project would be a valuable one and in May 1937 recommended the Commission accept the committee's suggestions. The findings of the Maryland and Dallas surveys, which revealed widespread inequities for young Negroes, were available at this time and added a sense of immediacy to the project. For the May AYC meeting Rainey had prepared an outline for a study program running two and a half years and requiring a budget of $122,000. The AYC approved the project and requested Rainey to formulate a detailed program. To direct the project Rainey chose Robert L. Sutherland, sociology professor at Bucknell University. Sutherland submitted a report to the AYC in October 1937 suggesting six possible studies, with priority on the personality development project. The Commission instructed Sutherland to begin work on the latter project and appointed an advisory committee of

---

1 Baker was also extremely influential in persuading the Carnegie Corporation to initiate its study of the Negro in the United States.

5 Rainey's first choice for director was William Lloyd Warner, professor of anthropology and sociology at the University of Chicago. Warner, best known for his studies of social classes, refused the offer, but agreed to prepare one of the area studies.
Will Alexander and several prominent Negro scholars to assist him. 6

The project formulated by the Sutherland staff was nearly identical to the original study proposal of the previous year. The formal research problem "What are the effects, if any, upon the personality development of Negro youth of their minority racial status?" was the same, but the application was broader. The staff would attempt to determine the various reactions of Negro children and youth to different forms of subordination and discrimination. To accomplish this it would make separate investigations in representative geographic areas. In these investigations the AYC interest in race, focusing on the ways communities regarded Negro young people and how youth regarded themselves, was sociological. The only important biological fact for this study was visibility, either darker pigmentation, coarse hair texture, or other identifying Negroid characteristics.

In organizing the project Sutherland wisely decided to choose scholars of established reputation to administer the investigations. This decision was a major reason for

6 Negro Youth: A Review of the Problems, Summary of Research, and a Recommended Program, report presented to the American Youth Commission, October 18-19, 1937; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, October 18-19, 1937, 66-69.
the success of the project, as it resulted in seven published monographs\(^7\) producing a wealth of information of continuing value in the study of the Negro in America. Altogether there were four major studies which covered rural and urban areas in the North, the Middle states, and the South.\(^8\)

The most important study was Allison Davis' and John Dollard's investigation of Negro youth in New Orleans and Natchez, Mississippi. Both Davis and Dollard had been students of William Lloyd Warner at the University of Chicago and shared his interest in social class structure. Davis, an anthropology professor at Dillard University in New Orleans, had been collecting materials on the effects of social class of Negroes in the deep South. Dollard, a research associate at the Institute of Human Relations at Yale University, was the author of *Caste and Class in a


\(^8\) *Negro Youth*, October 18-19, 1937, 36; Sutherland, *Color, Class, and Personality*, xix-xx.
Southern Town, 1937. In preparing the Negro youth personality development study for the AYC, Davis and Dollard interviewed 277 young Negroes (including 76 intensive case studies). The published report, Children of Bondage, explored the relation between personality and social stratification. Employing sociological-psychoanalytical techniques in preparing the case studies, Davis and Dollard showed a high degree of awareness of the complexity of social background. The nine case histories described in Children of Bondage, as lucid as any of those prepared for more recent studies, made the book an immediate success.

E. Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, and William Lloyd Warner conducted the other three major investigations. Frazier, Negro Youth at the Crossways, was a study of Negro boys and girls in Washington, D.C. and Louisville, Kentucky. Frazier, chairman of the sociology department

---

9 Davis and Dollard, Children of Bondage, xii-xiii.

10 Robert Coles, research psychiatrist at Harvard University, has written perceptively on Negro children in the South. Coles regards Children of Bondage as a classic study on personality development of Negro youth. He describes it as a "scientific study . . . done with unashamed care and reported with uncommon grace." See Robert Coles, Children of Crisis (Boston, 1964), 390, note 4. Children of Bondage is the only AYC study which has been continuously in print.
at Howard University, was widely known for his studies of
the Negro family. In his commission monograph, he examined
the effects of the family, neighborhood contacts, the
school, and the church on personality development.
Johnson, sociology professor at Fisk University was direc­
tor of the AYC project on Negro youth in the rural South.
Basing his report, Growing up in the Black Belt, on a pre­
vious study of more than 1,000 rural counties, he surveyed
eight Southern counties in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi,
North Carolina, and Tennessee. Color and Human Nature,
W. Lloyd Warner's contribution to the AYC project was an
investigation of Negroes in Chicago. Warner's volume was
the outgrowth of work he had done with Horace Cayton for a
WPA project. This study, which was not confined to young
people, examined the relationship between color and social
class.\footnote{Sutherland, Color, Class, and Personality, xx1-xxii."

Three shorter volumes completed the list of publica­
tions in the AYC Negro youth project. J. Howell Atwood,
et. al., Thus Be Their Destiny was a report of brief studies
in Milton, Pennsylvania; Greensboro, North Carolina; and
Galesburg, Illinois. In a Minor Key, by Ira DeA. Reid
presented in compact form a summary of much of the available
information about Negro youth. Robert Sutherland, Color,
Class, and Personality was a summary of the entire Commission Negro study project.

As the study progressed, the importance of social caste and class relationships on personality development became increasingly apparent. The Commission staff defined a caste society as one where persons were born into one group or another, and, by virtue of being so placed they had certain rights, privileges, and limitations. A class system also had a social hierarchy where those up above felt superior to those down below. The principal difference between the two stratified social structures was that the caste system was more rigid and less mobile. The Commission staff concluded from its area studies that Negroes were victims of castelike discrimination. This castelike relationship was maintained by physical marks of Negro identity, darker color and differing hair texture. The AYC Negro youth study was the first to explore fully the concept that social caste and class formed the underlying structure of southern society and were major

---

12 Myrdal believed in 1944 that the Commission studies overemphasized the concept of caste. The Commission, however, did not use a strict definition of "caste." It never stated that the Negro Americans were victims of a crystallized, unchangeable caste system, nor did it imply that long range progress in race relations was impossible. By using the terms "caste" and "castelike" (the latter is more accurate), the AYC was trying to show the immense difficulties that those with Negroid features, especially color, had in sharing the American dream.

See Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 1375, 1377, notes 2 and 5.
determinants in personality development of Negro young people in all parts of the country. This concept, first stated by Davis and Dollard in separate studies, was the basis for the joint work, *Children of Bondage*. Directors of the other studies, using research techniques similar to those employed by Davis and Dollard, also considered, though less intensively, the relation between social caste and class and personality development.\(^{13}\)

Since color was a distinct mark of caste, the AYC staff more easily identified castelike discrimination. Davis and Dollard in their study of urban Negro youth in the South found that Negroes and whites alike were aware of the unbending caste relationship. The only way for a Negro to change his caste position, and this was possible for only a small minority, was passing the color line. Though caste distinctions were more readily apparent in the South, all the AYC studies uncovered this form of discrimination. Even in the Northern liberal communities of Milton, Pennsylvania and Galesburg, Illinois, where the Negro population was small, social and economic opportunities were lacking for the black minority. Though discrimination was less overt than in the South, the Atwood staff believed that the Negro's position in the communities

\(^{13}\) Sutherland, *Color, Class, and Personality*, xvii-xix.
was steadily worsening. The pervasiveness of discrimination based on color, one of the most disheartening discoveries in the Negro project, was the reason for the AYC emphasis on the concept of caste. Though some might quibble with the term "caste," there was no denying the fact that possession of Negroid physical characteristics meant limited opportunities and special social conditioning problems for all black Americans. Nor has there been any decisive change since the publishing of the Commission studies. One of the mothers Robert Coles interviewed in his study of Negroes in the South in the early 1960's points out clearly the problem that generations of Negro mothers have faced in raising their children:

The first thing a colored mother has to do when her kids get old enough to leave the house and play in the street is teach them about the white man and what he expects... In the North... it's worse, because there a mother can't just lay it on the line. It takes time for the boy to get the full pitch, and realize it's the same show, just a little dressed up; and until he makes that discovery he's liable to be confused.15

Discrimination resulting from caste had obvious detrimental effects on the personality development of young Negroes, but the AYC staff found it was less frustrat-

---

14 Davis and Dollard, Children of Bondage, 19-20; Atwood, et al., Thus Be Their Destiny, 93-95.
15 Coles, Children of Crisis, 339.
ing than the anxiety that came from class differentials within the caste. This was probably the most important discovery in the Negro study project. Davis and Dollard, arguing that universal experience of caste frustrations cannot be construed as inevitably marking all Negroes with similarly learned psychological responses because of intervening class factors, made the clearest statement of this position. The authors of *Children of Bondage*, and the other study directors as well, quickly realized it was meaningless to speak of "the Negro." There was a wide diversity and range of individuality and personality development among Negroes—diversity of color, of physiognomy, of economic competence and income, of educational accomplishments, and of cultural habits. These differences, upsetting common notions of Negro stereotypes, pointed to the existence of a distinct social class system.16

Davis and Dollard, employing the techniques used by Warner in his Yankee City study, found that Negroes, regardless of their background, were aware of class distinctions. Using Warner's definition of social class as a group of people who freely associate with each other, they identified three classes among southern urban Negroes—upper, middle, and lower, and three subdivisions in each

of the two lower classes. Comments on class structure by the Negroes interviewed varied according to the social class of the respondent. Those from lower-middle and lower class backgrounds readily admitted they belonged to a subordinate color group, but were reluctant to admit they could not associate intimately with Negroes of the higher class. Upper and upper-middle class Negroes, on the other hand, were quick to point up class distinctions. A standard upper class evaluation was "the best families" (upper class); "the very nice people" (upper-middle class); "nice people" (Middle-middle class); "poor but respectable people" (lower-middle class); and "loud, ignorant, common people" (lower class).18

Over three-fourths of the Negroes in the urban South were in the lower class.19 These Negroes exhibited strikingly different modes of behavior than those in the upper


18 Davis and Dollard, Children of Bondage, 256-262.

19 Directors of the other AYC Negro studies did not stress class distinctions to this extent, and did not assign any percentage figures to class levels. There is no evidence, however, to indicate that class differentials were substantially different among any of the areas studied.
classes. In fact there was a virtual chasm between the lower and lower-middle classes. Social expectations and available goal responses between the "respectable," status-bound lower-middle class and the impulsive, physically aggressive lower class varied considerably. Lower class children, who were less likely to be upward striving, had entirely different standards regarding sex, education, recreation, and aggression than those in higher classes. Sexual promiscuity, school failure, and fighting, frowned on by the middle and upper classes, were acceptable forms of behavior. Training for lower class children was also more likely to be in the form of punishment rather than rewards. With so many Negro children brought up in a lower class environment, it is not surprising that the lazy, improvident, impudent Negro stereotype was so persistent. The Negro youth raised in upper and middle classes, facing a different set of problems, was likely to experience status anxiety. No matter how much he grew in economic, educational, and cultural attainment he was unable to free himself from discrimination. In fact, the more he acquired acceptable middle and upper class behavior traits, the more important color became in determining his place in society.

20 Davis and Dollard, Children of Bondage, 256-262; Warner, Color and Human Nature, 1-30.
The AYC Negro youth study project revealed that the combined effects of caste and class discrimination had serious debilitating effects on the personality development of youth. The case studies indicated a variety of ways Negro youth responded as they became aware of their castelike status. Some, especially upper and middle class young people, tried to overcome their status by demonstration of competence, high achievement and cultivated bearing; others attempted to escape by crossing the color line, by self-segregation and avoidance of contact, and by clowning; still others reacted with bitter aggressiveness and pugnacity. 21

Though the project's emphasis on castelike discrimination indicated the prospects for Negro youth were dim, it did not mean the situation was hopeless. The distinction between the terms "caste" and "castelike" was an important one. No AYC investigator felt that the United States had developed a complete or uniform caste system based on color. Charles S. Johnson, in particular, in his study on the rural South pointed to upward striving within the Negro groups and what he believed to be changes in attitude and behavior among whites. Besides, the AYC had

sponsored the project with the hope that it would contribute to improved race relations.  

The project, however, did not have the immediate effects the Commission desired. In part this was the result of the project's late completion date. Originally the AYC had planned a three year demonstration program to implement the findings of the Negro study. The program, which would have developed new types of experimental guidance centers for Negroes in all parts of the country, received AYC approval in 1939. The GEB, however, delayed funding until the study project was complete. Since the major Negro project was not completed until 1941, the AYC was unable to begin the demonstration program. Nor did the Commission have time to formulate any specific policy recommendations based on the Negro study. With the AYC's approval, Sutherland prepared a list of twelve recommendations for his summary volume, *Color, Class, and Personality*. These recommendations, which were exceedingly bland, added little to the study. Basically what Sutherland was calling for was for greater public education about the plight of Negro youth. He advocated such general measures as the formation of discussion groups, the holding

---

of youth conferences, inviting Negro specialists to talk before community groups, and improved educational facilities for Negroes. But it would be unfair to criticize Sutherland for his failure to suggest specific social remedies. The major purpose of the study had been to show what it meant to be a Negro in the United States, and this the study had accomplished exceedingly well. 23

The AYC Negro youth study did have a significant effect on the developing concern for civil rights in America after World War II. By focusing attention on racial discrimination as a negative influence on the personality development of children, the AYC studies contributed to the thinking which made possible the Brown v. Board of Education decision declaring the unconstitutionality of segregation in the public schools, the Court cited a report Kenneth B. Clark, then a psychology professor at the City College of New York, prepared for the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth in 1950. This report, "The Effects of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development in Children," pointed out the same kind of harmful effects of discrimi-

---

23 A Recommendation for a Demonstration Project in the Personality Adjustment of Negro Youth, report presented to the American Youth Commission, October 9-10, 1939, 1-3; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, October 9-10, 1939, 87-89; Sutherland, Color, Class, and Personality, 87-129.
nation on personality development the Commission studies had described ten years earlier.24

Students of race relations in recent years have expanded considerably the AYC's pioneering interest in Negro personality development. Elizabeth W. Miller in her bibliography on the Negro in the United States cites 113 books and articles on the Negro personality written between 1951 and 1965. One of the better known recent studies, John S. Rohrer and Munro S. Edmonson, The Eighth Generation, was a direct result of the work of the AYC. Rohrer and Edmonson in 1960, using the New Orleans case histories of Davis and Dollard, studied the same people the authors of Children of Bondage had investigated twenty years earlier to find how the Negro youth had adjusted to adult society.25 Though the Commission's work on personality development of Negro boys and girls was a pioneering effort, it has not been outdated. These publications of 1940 and 1941, which pointed out dangers of discrimination, also demonstrated widespread personality differences among Negro youth and in many the will to overcome obstacles. There were no

24 Kenneth B. Clark, Prejudice and Your Child (Boston, 1955), Foreword.

such things as "the Negro" and "the Negro problem" when the Commission made its investigation, nor are there thirty years after. Perhaps as Robert Coles indicates, individuality is an encouraging factor:

   Even their [the Negroes'] common suffering, a suffering that has cursed all Americans since the beginning of this country and has yet to be ended, fails to bind them together sufficiently to cause them to lose their individuality, a fact that may be sad for zealous social scientists but is ultimately hopeful for America.  

   With the completion of the Negro youth study in 1941, the investigatory phase of the Commission's activity came to an end. During its last year the Commission turned most of its attention to disseminating the information it had collected about youth. Since one of the original objectives had been to implement the findings of investigations, the AYC intensified its public information activities. The dissemination work took many forms. Most important were thirty-one published monographs reporting AYC investigations and seven official policy statements. Since all these materials were published by the American Council on Education, the AYC was able to distribute the monographs at minimal cost and the policy statements free. The Commission maintained a large, carefully organized mailing list, and by the end of 1940 had circulated nearly one-half mil-

---

26 Coles, *Children in Crisis*, 349.
lion of the AYC statements. Its public information service also included news releases, a monthly bulletin, and a speaker bureau. In addition some of the Commission projects, particularly the experiments in work training in the CCC and in occupational adjustment, were primarily implementation programs. In the occupational adjustment project the Commission prepared written manuals and a series of five radio programs broadcast over the National Broadcasting Company in 1940, beginning with "Our Town's Asleep" and concluding with "Our Town Wakes Up," as guides for communities to implement their own vocational guidance and placement activities.

As the Commission approached the end of its fourth year in the Spring of 1935, it realized it would be unable to finish its investigations and dissemination activity within the five year limit of the original GEB grant. The work camp projects, the occupational adjustment experiments, and Negro study were still in progress. With only several study reports completed at this time, the AYC was struggling to finish a lengthy final report summarizing its investigations. At the April meeting Rainey presented a draft of this report. This document, hurriedly prepared

---

27 Paul David, Report of the Acting Director, November 11-12, 1940, 16-23; "Youth Tells Its Story," radio scripts in the American Youth Commission files.
by different staff members, was not suitable for publication. While the Commission was considering the revision of the report, two events occurred affecting future activities of the AYC. Floyd Reeves replaced Rainey as director and the world war began in Europe. In October the Commission, at Reeves suggestion, decided to set aside temporarily the final report and to revise its publication policy by issuing short policy statements on crucial issues and authorizing a greater number of monographs summarizing the AYC investigations. To bring its work to a satisfactory completion, the AYC at this time requested from the GEB a two year extension to June 30, 1942 and an increased operating budget. The GEB approved the request in part by providing funds for a one year extension, but stipulated that the AYC could request another extension at a later date.28

Two projects the AYC hoped to complete in the extended time period were studies of unemployment and problems of rural youth. The unemployment study was to survey general economic conditions and to suggest ways for preventing future youth unemployment. But the director of this study, Thomas Horton, economist at the University of Buffalo,

28 Minutes of the American Youth Commission, April 24-26, 1939, 82-88; Minutes of the American Youth Commission, October 9-10, 1939, 86-89; Floyd Reeves to Miriam Van Waters, Miriam Van Waters papers.
left in December 1940 to take a position with the National Defense Advisory Commission. Paul David, the associate director of the AYC, took charge of the project, but due to time limitations had to scale it down. The problems of the war emergency and increased employment in the war industries also made the project less of a priority measure. David eventually was able to write two brief reports giving a general summary of preliminary findings. The rural youth project was even less successful. Concerned with the dim vocational prospects for youth in rural areas, the Commission in January 1940 began a two and one-half year demonstration project to improve vocational opportunities for farm youth in selected communities. Due to administrative problems and lack of time, the project lagged. As in the case of the unemployment study the AYC did not officially abandon the project, but this time it did not issue a summary report.

In November 1940, Reeves, Henry Harriman and George Zook met with Raymond Fosdick and Robert Havighurst, representatives of the GEB, to request an extension to June 30, 1942 and additional funds. Reeves presented the AYC view

---

29 Barriers to Youth Employment (1942) and Postwar Youth Employment (1943).

30 Reeves to Van Waters, January 31, 1941, Miriam Van Waters papers; Proceedings of the American Youth Commission, September 19-20, 1941, 3-7.
that an extension would give the Commission ample time to complete its projects and to prepare a suitable final report. The GEB, however, was unwilling to accept the request. Fosdick stated the GEB would finance the Commission until December 31, 1941, and he urged that a substantial general report be completed by the AYC without additional funds if humanly possible. The GEB refusal was not the result of any dissatisfaction with the AYC, but came because the GEB in 1940 was discontinuing its support of general education activities. The trustees of the GEB, believing the major goals of the extensive general education program had been achieved, decided to confine its activities to its original area of interest—education in the Southern states. In face of pressing concrete needs like the development of Negro education in the South and the immediate financial needs of educational institutions, the GEB felt it could no longer justify the heavy expenditures the general education program required. An additional factor in the Board’s decision was the uncertainty of the war situation. Since World War II was markedly changing the nature of youth problems, the GEB believed a general education program was no longer relevant.31

31 Reeves to Van Waters, January 31, 1941, Miriam Van Waters papers; Raymond Fosdick, Adventure in Giving (New York, 1962), 255-256, 309.
The GEB decision to drop its general education activities was a disappointment to the AYC. The Commission believed there was a definite need for some agency to attempt to implement the AYC recommendations, particularly those relating to community action. George Zook made a serious attempt to find new funds to continue the operation of the Commission. He secured a $25,000 pledge from the Marshall Field Foundation for one year, providing he could raise $35,000 from some other source. Since additional funds were not forthcoming, the AYC had no alternative but to bring its work to a close. Seven members of the Commission, William Alexander, Willard Givens, Henry Harriman, George Johnson, Mordecai Johnson, William Russell and Floyd Reeves agreed to join with Zook in forming a new agency, the Committee on Youth Problems, in the American Council on Education. This committee, created in October 1942 and operating on a small budget until 1947, attempted to implement the AYC recommendations through public information activities.32

When the GEB refused to extend the Commission's life beyond December 31, 1941, the AYC gave priority to preparing a final report. This report, Youth and the Future,

32 George Zook to Owen D. Young, January 31, 1942, Owen D. Young papers; Bulletin of the Committee on Youth Problems (October, 1942), 2.
considerably abbreviated from the version two years before, was largely a summary of recommendations from the Commission monographs and policy statements. At its final meeting in October 1941, the Commission approved the report as its major policy statement. With the publication of *Youth and the Future* in 1942, the work of the American Youth Commission came to an end.33

33 Minutes of the American Youth Commission, October 8-9, 1941, 109-112.
CONCLUSION

The American Youth Commission was a casualty of World War II. The immediate reason for the end of the AYC was that its sponsoring foundation had decided there were more pressing needs than financing programs for general education. Had it not been for the war, it is almost certain that some educational foundation would have backed the Commission for an additional period. The chaos of war, however, brought a major reordering of priorities. Measures for social and economic reform, which seemed so vital in the late 1930's, were of secondary importance to a nation concerned with winning a war.

It is probably meaningless to try to determine whether a success label should be applied to an agency like the Commission. The AYC attempted to give direction to social change in a decade when marked social and economic change was common. How one agency, among others trying to do the same kind of things, affected social trends is impossible to ascertain. The founders of the AYC created it to meet an immediate need--determining what the youth problems were and doing something about them. In its six and one-half years the Commission did much of what it
was expected to do. It compiled information and made recommendations which were relevant to the problems of the 1930's and to a significant degree suggested approaches which are still of value.

The activity of the Commission showed how little adult Americans understood their young people. The survey work conducted by the Commission from 1936 to 1938 revealed an immense generation gap. Reaction to the publication of Youth Tell Their Story was one of shock. The discovery of a generation of alienated, apathetic youth who held little faith in the democratic processes and felt society cared little for them was deeply disturbing. But the surveys also showed there were legitimate reasons for youths' unrest. The majority of young people, due to circumstances of birth, poor schooling, and inadequate vocational preparation, had limited economic opportunities. As a result of the findings from the survey work the AYC concluded that society must assume full responsibility for the care and education of youth up to age 21.

This decision had wide implications for the schools, government, and institutions concerned with youth. The Commission's enthusiastic endorsement of general education, and particularly the life adjustment concept, was one result. Life adjustment education was suited to conditions of the thirties. More young people (nearly 70 per
cent by the end of the decade) were in the secondary schools than ever before. Many were boys and girls who could not find jobs and who had little interest in traditional academic subjects. Since it was clear that the fundamental need for most youth was finding a good job, it was imperative that the schools assist them. By suggesting ways schools could improve vocational education, vocational guidance, and placement, the AYC provided a realistic program for the schools. Crucial to any program in general education, according to the Commission, was work experience. The AYC believed the schools could supply some work training, but that federal youth work programs would also be necessary. The Commission supported an expanded work training program in the CCC and NYA, and believed these or similar agencies should be maintained for an indefinite period. Future programs of public works for youth could serve a double purpose. They could instill good work habits and provide skills for young people leading to profitable and rewarding vocations, and they could ease the unemployment rate.

The Commission's special concern was for the disadvantaged youth--those who were poorly educated and least likely to find jobs. No group experienced more severe and systematic deprivation than Negro youth. To determine the nature of problems for Negro boys and girls, the AYC conducted a project on the influence of minority racial
status on personality development. This project revealed important information about the debilitating effects of racial discrimination on the Negro adolescent, and helped stimulate the movement toward civil rights in the years after World War II.

Other long range influences of the Commission are more difficult to pin down. Economic and social conditions of the post-war period were vastly different from those of the 1930's, and so were the needs of youth. The economic boom and the demands of a technological and scientifically-oriented society required highly trained, intelligent manpower. Life adjustment education, relevant in a period of heavy unemployment, was clearly out-of-date. This did not mean, however, that general education was totally inappropriate. For many youth, especially the economically disadvantaged, vocational education, occupational guidance, and placement activities through the schools and federal job programs remain important. In all its recommendations the Commission was assuming that society had the ability and the duty to effect desirable social and economic change. This commitment to concerted, planned action from governmental and non-governmental agencies is perhaps of more value in the complex, chaotic decade of the sixties than it was a generation ago.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

American Youth Commission Files, American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.


Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Washington, D.C.

Homer P. Rainey Papers, University of Missouri Library, Columbia, Missouri.

Miriam Van Waters Papers, Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Owen D. Young Papers, Van Hornesville, New York.

Interviews

Merritt M. Chambers, August 10, 1968, Bloomington, Indiana.


Publications of the American Youth Commission

American Youth Commission. What the High Schools Ought To Teach. 1940.


Atwood, J. Howell, et. al. Thus Be Their Destiny: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in Three Communities. 1941.

Bell, Howard M. Matching Youth and Jobs: A Study of Occupational Adjustment. 1940.
Brunner, Edmund DeS. Working with Rural Youth. 1942.
Chambers, M. M. The Community and Its Young People. 1940.
Chambers, M. M. and Bell, Howard M. How to Make a Community Youth Survey. 1939.
David, Paul T. Barriers to Youth Employment. 1942.
David, Paul T. Postwar Youth Employment. 1943.
Davis, Allison and Dollard, John. Children of Bondage: The Personality Development of Negro Youth in the Urban South. 1940.
Douglass, Harl R. Secondary Education for Youth in Modern America. 1937.
Folsom, Joseph K. Youth, Family, and Education. 1941.
Frazier, E. Franklin. Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States. 1940.
Holland, Kenneth. Work Camps for High School Youth. 1941.
Holland, Kenneth and Hill, Frank E. Youth in European Labor Camps. 1939.
Holland, Kenneth and Hill, Frank E. Youth in the CCC. 1942.
Johnson, Charles S. Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South. 1941.
Kirkpatrick, E. L. *Guideposts for Rural Youth*. 1940.


Reiney, Homer P. *How Fare American Youth?* 1937.

Reid, Irad. A. In a Minor Key: *Negro Youth in Story and Fact*. 1940.

Sutherland, Robert S. *Color, Class, and Personality*. 1942.


Policy Statements of the American Youth Commission

The *Civilian Conservation Corps*. 1940.

*Community Responsibility for Youth*. 1940.

*Next Steps in National Policy for Youth*. 1941.

The *Occupational Adjustment of Youth*. 1940.

*A Program of Action for American Youth*. 1939.

*Should Youth Organize?* 1940.


Records and Reports of the American Youth Commission

Minutes of the Meetings of the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935-October 9, 1941. *American Youth Commission Files*.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee of the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935-October 9, 1941. *American Youth Commission Files*. 

Reports presented to the American Youth Commission, September 16, 1935-October 9, 1941. American Youth Commission Files.

Public Documents


Newspapers

New York Times

Unpublished Material


Books


Bakke, E. Wight. The Unemployed Worker. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940.


Counts, George S. *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order.* New York: John Day Co., 1932.


Education for All American Youth. Washington: NEA, 1944.


Articles


"Dallas Youth and Their Occupational Adjustment," Occupations, XVII (November 1938), 163-165.


"Dykstra to Wisconsin," Time, XXIX (March 27, 1937), 28.

"1600,000 Commission," Time, XXVI (September 30, 1935), 23.


"From a to Zook," Time, XXXVIII (August 12, 1946), 43.

General Education Board. Reports, 1933-1940.


Hutchins, Robert M. "In the Thirties We Were Prisoners of Our Illusions. Are We Prisoners in the Sixties?", New York Times Magazine (September 6, 1968), 44-59.

———. "Uncle Sam's Children," Saturday Evening Post, CCX (January 29, 1939), 76-79.


Judd, Charles H. "Our Concern for Youth," Phi Delta Kappan, XX (February 1942), 241-242.


Maryland Youth Surveyed," Occupations, XVI (June 1938), 880-883.


"Peacemakers," Time, XXXIII (March 13, 1939), 16.


———. "Guidance and Placement for America's Youth," Occupations, XV (June 1937), 838-841.


Reeves, Floyd W. "After the Youth Surveys--What?" in *Occupations*, XVII (January 1940), 243-248.


"Youth and the Future," in *Phi Delta Kappan*, XXIV (February 1943), 211-216.


"Federal Aid--Boon or Bane?" in *School and Society*, XXXIX, 289-286.

"Shape of Things," in *Nation*, CXXXIV (March 20, 1937), 309.


"Votes for 18?," in *Time*, XXXIII (May 29, 1939), 58-59.

Young, Owen D. "As We Explore New Frontiers," Occupations, XIX (November 1940), 83-86.


Young, Owen D. "A First Step in New York School Advance," New York State Education, XXVI (November 1938), 138-141.