

*This is a segment from a longer article that
appeared in PATHFINDER MAGAZINE
on February 3, 1940 (p. 1)*

OUR CHILDREN— Of America's 36 Million, Many Need Help ... Their Education

In respect to the educational field, judged on the basis of White House Conference reports, America is far from attaining its democratic ideal of equal opportunities for every child. Although school attendance is compulsory, hundreds of thousands are receiving no grade-school education whatever. Of all the children old enough to go to high school, 25 per cent do not go; and of all who do go, only 5 per cent later attend college. Other criticisms include these: (1) Many U. S. teachers are poorly trained, largely because teacher-pay is too low to attract able persons. (2) The educational opportunities of rural children are especially bad; their schools frequently are one-room buildings lacking the equipment needed for modern training, and millions of them have no access to adequate library facilities. And (3) many states are poor in tax income and cannot support sound school systems.

As a White House Conference report stated, it may be said that "this country is concentrating most of its educational effort on groups having the fewest children and least on groups that are replenishing its population." At any rate, some justification is seen for this view because America's educational statistics indicate that the poorer groups of the population—the groups with the highest birth rates—

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are receiving deficient schooling.

Child experts stress education because they believe that democracy cannot grow unless there is progressive development from year to year in scientific inquiry, technology and social organization. They also stress that education lacks an important essential when it lacks the cultivation of personal character and integrity. And according to some of those who were heard at the White House Conference, such cultivation cannot be realized unless education embraces religious instruction. But if there is to be any such thing, the American system will have to reshape itself somewhat, because it is a fact that some 50 per cent of the nation's youth today receive no formal training in any religion.

Ranging from religion and education to sociology and economics, the problem of America's children reveals itself in general terms as part of a *whole* problem in America—the whole problem of putting the entire nation to rights. As the White House Conference made clear, children are aided directly or indirectly whenever American families are aided either by public or private agencies. Thus it may be said that the nation's children—between eight and nine millions of them—have benefited through such broad government programs as housing, farm aid and work relief.