

# Conant's "Shaping Educational Policy"

SHAPING EDUCATIONAL POLICY, by James Bryant Conant, McGrawHill, 138 pp., \$1.95.

By FAYE LEVINE, December 8, 1964

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One of the first things James Bryant Conant, does in his latest book, *Shaping Educational Policy*, is to admit to a grave moral defect in the first book he wrote about education, *The American High School Today*.

In that book, he outlined the comprehensive high school, which was to embody the cohesive heterogeneity of American society through its large size, its widely varied student body and its rich academic and vocational program. But Conant now admits that in his first work he purposely turned his back on the problem of racial segregation, and "said not a word to indicate that certain schools I visited were comprehensive only in so far as white youth were concerned."

## Conant Concrete

Since then (1957), the former president of Harvard seems to have had a profound change of heart. Besides himself, he bitterly blames the rest of the educational "establishment," notably the National Education Association, for actively silencing the discussion of segregated education. He blames them also for slighting the problems of metropolitan school system, for impeding legislation like that which would give teachers of academic subjects higher salaries, and for their generally conservative activity; but it is his charge on segregation that is the most vehement.

## Favors Commission

And to solve the problem of an unworthy ruling clique in a firmly entrenched position, one of whose most revealing misdeeds has been the perpetuation of a segregated school system, Conant proposes a revolutionary reorganization of power. The right to make educational policy should be taken away from teachers' groups, local school boards, and courts, he says, and given to strong boards of education. These boards would be composed of "lay citizens" (i.e., not educators) and would be responsible to the elected legislature.

This sudden, belated, change of heart, of course had "nothing" to do with seeing which way the winds of the time were blowing..politically, ...but were from the inward conviction of an innately moral person who just happened to have been a member of at least the ruling academic clique a generation ago...



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image (screenshot) filename: HarvardCrimsn 1964 Bk Review of Conant's Shaping Educatl Policy' admits he "forgot" the segregatn issue in his 1957 book (!) SShot 2017-04-28 at 2.41PM.png

