

Dr. John Rice's Report Was Met with *Resentment*...

1893

Kendall, Prof. Teacher College, Columbia University

I remember when the original surveyor of city schools, Dr. John Rice, was almost ostracized by this Department because he dared to criticise in a magazine certain school systems in the country.

Address delivered by Commissioner Kendall before Department of Superintendence of National Education Association, Chicago, February 26, 1919.

Nicholas M. Butler, President, Teacher College, Columbia University

After sketching the gist of Rice's findings, Butler concluded: "It is unfair to decry this book because Dr. Rice is unknown or because he has said and done some foolish things. His criticisms are honestly offered and must be considered on their merits. They are worth having if they do nothing more than check the national vice of vaingloriousness and the school-master's habit of exultant boasting."

The second is that school superintendents, principals, and teachers are to the last degree impatient of criticism and suggestion. They resent them as a reflection on their personal character. As one man they rush to the defense.

Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Progressive Movement in American Education: A Perspective*, Harvard Educational Review, 1957.

In 1950s, Vice Admiral H. G. Rickover complained that Americans are very impatient with critics of the America's education or culture. Then he added,

We were not quite so impatient of the critic as the ancient Locrians, mentioned by J. S. Mill in his *On Liberty*.¹ These people undoubtedly felt that they gave freedom of speech to all citizens though at a cost which many must have considered too high. At public meetings anyone could stand up and argue for changes in law or custom, on one condition. A rope was placed around his neck before he began to speak and if what he said did not meet with public approval, he was forthwith hanged. This, no doubt, prevented the frivolous and the crank from disturbing the even tenor of familiar customs and ways of life.

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