

# Corporate Executive

YOU ARE AN EXECUTIVE with a large and prosperous corporation. There are a lot of problems in the country, problems that pose serious challenges to public education. In your eyes, the schools have not been meeting these challenges very successfully. For example, before 1900, fewer than one out of every 10 kids between the ages of 14 and 17 was enrolled in high school. This is a real problem because people not in school become juvenile delinquents, turn to crime, or worse, join radical groups like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). And besides, there simply aren't enough jobs to go around for everyone who wants one.

Also, lots of those entering schools are immigrants. They don't speak much English and haven't learned anything of what it means to be an American. Instead of identifying themselves as Americans, these immigrants see themselves as Hungarians or Italians. Some identify with the working class against the owners, or even see themselves as radicals. In Lawrence, Mass., in 1912, a massive strike involving 30,000 workers—teenagers, men, women, almost all immigrants—led by IWW radicals, defeated the mill owners. In 1919, workers in Seattle staged the first citywide strike in U.S. history, and there were huge strikes in the steel, coal, and meatpacking industries. What is this country coming to? You need to make sure that the children of immigrants identify themselves as loyal, responsible Americans—and

that they don't identify with one social class against another.

Besides all the immigrants arriving in Central City, there are lots of people leaving the farms to come to the city. These immigrants and farmers aren't used to the factory ways of the city. They aren't used to being prompt, working by the clock, doing repetitive work, obeying orders from a boss, etc.—all skills and attitudes needed to succeed as a factory worker. Their children are not ready to meet the challenges of modern life. You want the schools to turn out good factory workers—but also serve the needs of your children, who are certainly not going to be factory workers. Up until now, the high schools in Central City have been “common schools” with one curriculum for all students. With few exceptions, everyone took the same subjects in the same classes: boys with girls, bright kids with dull kids. The problem is that in earlier times, very few people went to school, so if you had a high school diploma, it meant something—you could get a good job in the business world. These students tended to be from upper-class or middle-class families. But now, with all these farm kids and immigrants entering the schools, there's no way that all of them are going to get these high-paying jobs. You need to figure out a way for the school system to train the future bankers as well as the future factory hands in the same classrooms—or at least in the same schools.