CHAPTER XIII

THE PART-TIME SCHOOL

Wisconsin shares with Ohio the honor of pioneering in one field of education—the part-time school.

In the year 1906 Dean Herman Schneider started a part-time course in the College of Engineering of the University of Cincinnati. Twenty-eight young men entered this course of one week at work and one week in school. Today the entire College of Commerce and Engineering, sixteen hundred men and women, are on a “cooperative” basis, spending alternately four weeks in school and four weeks at work. They work not only in Cincinnati, but as far away as Chicago, Detroit, Nashville, and Philadelphia. More than that, numerous colleges in the United States have followed the example of the University of Cincinnati, and have established cooperative courses: Northwestern College in Boston; the Georgia School of Technology; the Municipal University of Akron, Ohio; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Marquette University in Milwaukee; Drexel Institute; Ohio Mechanics Institute; the Harvard Engineering School; the Newark Technical School; Antioch College at Yellow Springs, Ohio, and others.

As soon as this plan for giving young people an education while they work was seen to be successful, people began to ask Dean Schneider how it would do for high school pupils. Would it not be a good thing for them to go out and work part of the time for the sake of experience? Why not have boys getting trade experience and going to high school at the same time?
The idea was considered so good that it was tried out, first in Cincinnati, and then in other cities. Today there are cooperative courses in the high schools of Wilmington, Delaware; Rossville, Georgia (a textile course); Rumford, Maine (a pulp and paper course); Beverly, Boston, and Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Paterson, New Jersey; New York City; Cincinnati, Dayton, and other cities of Ohio; numerous cities of Pennsylvania including Pittsburgh, and in Rhode Island, South Carolina and Vermont.

But these courses help only the boy or girl who goes to high school. What about the young person who does not go to high school, but goes to work instead? Does he not need training just as badly as those in high school?

This is where Wisconsin comes in as a pioneer. For Wisconsin said: "We are interested in the young people now in school. We are also interested in those who are not in school. It is important that all young people shall be trained to produce and to earn as much as possible. It is important that they be able to buy the goods which others produce. It is important that, as producers and consumers, they shall all have good taste. It is important that they learn to be intelligent citizens. The community cannot afford to let a large per cent of its pupils lose all contact with school just at the time when they most need training for earning and consuming and living."

Realizing that it would be impossible within any reasonable time to persuade employers and parents and the young people themselves that it would be better for all to mingle education with work, the state took the matter into its own hands in 1911 and said that cities of 5,000 or over—the ones where the most young people work, must maintain part-time schools and that every young person not in school, between the ages of 14 and 16, must be permitted by his employer and his parents to go to school for five hours every week. In 1917 the law was amended so as to provide schooling for eight hours a week, up to 17 years of age. In 1921 it was again amended to provide for half-time to the end of the school term in which pupils are 16 years old and after that eight hours a week until they are 18 years old. Meanwhile the full time school law has been amended to require full time attendance to the age of fourteen and completion of the eighth grade or nine years in school.

Wisconsin's full time school law goes further than that of any state except Ohio, which requires full time attendance to 16. Its part-time school law goes further than that of any state, although most of the states of the Union have followed Wisconsin's example and have established some form of part-time education.

The Legislature of 1911, when it provided for part-time education to 16, set up a program of apprentice training for all over 16 who were willing to take advantage of it. The legislature said that henceforth the state would see to it that all who were bound out to an employer to receive apprentice training, were under the special protection of the state. The state, through the Industrial Commission with the help of employers and employees in each trade or occupation, was to plan the training, supervise the making of the contract, and see to it that the youth received the training agreed upon. In addition every apprentice was to attend the part-time school five hours a week to the age of 18. This was changed in 1923 to four hours a week during the first two years of apprenticeship.

No other state has yet copied this apprentice plan, but many eastern cities maintain part-time schools for apprentices. In some trades attendance of apprentices is required by the trade union, or by agreement between the union and employers. Apprentice schools and requirement of attendance are common in Europe. We find them in Sweden, France, Holland, Switzerland and Germany. The state of New South Wales, Australia, has a law very similar to ours.
In order to make its part-time school contract well worth while, Wisconsin has had to do another piece of pioneering. Those who go to the part-time school need a good general education. They also need and want vocational training which will help them to be promoted into more and more difficult and advanced work, or help them to do better the work on which they are engaged. This means in every city a great variety of trade, commercial and other training. In some cases only one person or a very few persons want a certain type of training. The city cannot afford to employ a full time teacher for each branch of training. The school system has therefore arranged in many cases for the employment by neighboring schools of itinerant teachers in certain trades. In each of the cities which employ such a teacher, he spends one day a week with the young people who want instruction from him, and the evening with the adult workers of that trade. In cities which are too far from others to form a partnership of this kind, the school may employ for an hour or two a day or week people who work in the industries of that city.

Wisconsin is also a pioneer in the method of managing the part-time schools. On the theory that since they deal with young workers who are at work most of the time, the schools, in order to succeed, must have the approval and cooperation of employers and of labor, the legislature of Wisconsin has given those two groups large responsibility in their management. The State Board of Vocational Education is made up of three representatives of employers, three of labor, three farmers, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and a member of the Industrial Commission. The local boards are made up of two representatives of employers, two of employees, and the City Superintendent of Schools. When the federal government in 1917 made a large appropriation to the states for agricultural and vocational education, it embodied the Wisconsin scheme of representation of the interests involved by putting on the board one representative of labor and one of employers. Thus, there is provided from top to bottom, cooperation between employers and employees in the administration of the institution in which both are deeply interested.

In no other state is there such complete representation of the interested groups, although some states have a mild form of it. The representative part of the state board consists in Georgia, of "one representative of the manufacturing and commercial interests, one of the agricultural interests, and one representative of labor;" in Indiana of "three persons interested in and of known sympathy with vocational education, one of whom shall be a representative of employer and one of employees;" in Kentucky of one member "engaged in farming or other business;" in Missouri, of an advisory committee of six members, one representing agriculture, one employers, one labor, one person of experience in home economics, one person of experience in commerce, and the State Superintendent of Schools.

The Wisconsin system shows more careful planning than that of any other state. It did not just happen. It was not an accident. Someone, or more than one, looked ahead and saw how hard it would be for the school and teacher to please both employers and labor, and decided that the easiest way for the teacher and the school was to put employers and labor together on the administrative board, and to let them work out their problems together. The person most responsible for this arrangement was Dr. Charles McCarthy, who must be listed with Dean Schneider as one of the founders of the part-time school in this country, and who worked for its improvement as long as he lived.

Dr. McCarthy and Dean Schneider came at the problem from different angles. Dr. Schneider wanted to take the pupil attending school and put him to work for the
The LaCrosse vocational school.
sake of the educational value of the work. Dr. McCarthy wanted to take the child already at work and put him in school.

Herman Schneider came to believe in the educational value of work properly directed through his own early experience. As a child he was put to work in the mines of Pennsylvania. He would have been a breaker boy had not an emergency made him "helper" to the one-armed mine carpenter. The carpenter proved to be a real "helper" to the boy. Through the encouragement of the carpenter, the boy took up his studies again and worked his way through high school and college. It was while he was working his way through college that he met his second piece of good fortune. He had an employer who continually led him to connect his school work with his daily employment. Under this employer he worked his way through college, finishing in the regular time, but with years of valuable industrial experience, a good job, and money saved in addition to his college training.

Then he began to think. If he could get a college education in the regular time, and work to pay for it, why could not others? They could, he thought, if they were as fortunate as he had been in finding people who would encourage them and help them to make the most out of their employment and to find use for the education in their employment. Why should not the school supply such men? So he made his plans for training men while they worked, and for supplying the "coordinator" who would connect school and work.

Charles McCarthy was the product of a different experience. His parents came over from Ireland. His father worked in a shoe factory in Brockton, Massachusetts, and his mother kept a boarding house. They were willing and able to keep their son in school as long as he wanted to go.

Charles was a very quiet boy; according to his father, not brilliant like the brother who died, and who at eight had been a phenomenal checker player. Charles at first attracted little attention at school. But one day his teacher came to his mother with this story about him:

"Yesterday the Superintendent of Schools came to visit our room. He was making a speech, and everybody was very quiet. Suddenly a piping voice interrupted him. 'Oh, no, that isn't the way it is. It is this way.' I looked over in the direction from which the voice came, and I could hardly believe my eyes. There was Charles on his feet, earnestly contradicting the Superintendent! And I had always thought him so timid! He was really right, too, and the superintendent was wrong."

The boy was starting on his career of independent thought. He continued to refuse to accept a thing as right just because some one in authority said it. He became intensely eager to learn, to experience, and to understand people and their actions. When he finished high school he went to sea. But the desire to learn drew him in after one summer. He came to Providence, Rhode Island, where he attended Brown University, and won a nation-wide reputation as a football player. As a scene shifter and stage hand he earned money on the side.

He came to the University of Wisconsin on a fellowship to continue his study. He acted as a football coach while he was working for the degree of doctor of philosophy in political science. About the time he received his degree the legislature provided for a new service—a library and bill drafting department for its own use. He was made chief of the department.

The development of the Legislative Reference Library gave him the sort of an opportunity he wanted. It was an opportunity to keep on educating himself on all the problems confronting the people of the state. He made it his duty to study the farmer,
to study the industrial worker, to study the manufacturer. He tried to gather in his library the experience of all parts of the world in successful farming and industrial life, and especially sought to find how government in the various countries had helped to increase prosperity and to protect those who needed protection. He kept his eye on all the pioneering activities of the governments of the world. He watched for pioneers in farming, in industry and in commerce, and called the attention of others to them. He was not in a hurry, however, to have Wisconsin rush into experiments. He liked to watch the lawmakers studying and planning their next steps very carefully, so that no backward steps need be taken. It was his duty to furnish them, so far as possible, with all sides of every disputed project.

He had the sort of a job where he could be learning all the time himself. He went over to the Library School and learned the mechanical side of library work. He studied law. He read constantly. But he learned as much from people as from papers and books. He talked eagerly with farmers, with tradesmen, with manufacturers, with whomever he met, learning what they had to give him.

He was growing in knowledge all the time himself, and he wanted everyone else to grow. To let them stop growing mentally at fourteen or to leave continued mental growth to accident, seemed to him wrong. School contact should be extended until young people had the fixed habit of mental growth. The school should connect with their work, and show them how to get the most out of their work. He wanted everyone rich or poor, to share with him the satisfaction of keeping in touch with progress, and

The Madison vocational school ready for evening classes.
of developing and helping the world to develop. He worked to establish or improve institutions which would never let a child or an adult stop growing—part-time schools, evening schools, correspondence courses, apprentice training.

In establishing the part-time school by law Dr. McCarthy worked with legislators like George P. Hambrecht, later to become State Director with supervision over these schools; with employers like H. E. Miles of Racine, the first president of the State Board of Industrial Education; with labor leaders like Frank Weber, J. J. Handley and Henry Ohl, of the State Federation of Labor, and with many others in private and public life who believed in giving everyone a chance.

Dr. McCarthy had great faith in people. He believed that the doors of advancement should be open to all regardless of how little they had done in the past. He would not quibble about how far people had already gone. What he was interested in was how far and fast they could and would develop. He would rather take a scrub team and coach it to develop into the best, than to start with a fine team. It was growth which he wanted to see. He thought of the part-time school as an institution to help people to grow. That is the real aim of the part-time school we have today in Wisconsin: to help people to continue to grow.
Charles McCarthy

Founder of the part-time school in Wisconsin.