

## ON EDUCATION

This fall, more than one million students will be attending public schools in New York City. Last year the opening of schools was delayed by a protracted teachers strike which set the tone for one of the most unstable school terms in recent memory. If you recall, the school system seemed to reel from one crisis to another. There were bitter confrontations between community groups, teachers, and the Board of Education at I.S.201 in Manhattan and in Ocean-Hill Brownsville, to mention only the most dramatic of the disturbances.

Then there was the spirited controversy which developed around the issue of school decentralization. The school system was attacked by some as a "rigid, bureaucracy" and hailed by others as a "creative institution." During all this turmoil, little concern was shown for the interrupted and chaotic educational climate which many children faced.

In this issue LATIN N.Y. is focusing on the educational system by presenting some provocative articles and commentaries. We have attempted to maintain a balanced approach because nothing is gained by denouncing everything. The article on Labor and Education raises some serious questions about the English program which is available for newly arrived youngsters from Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, and Cuba. We also mention some promising programs, such as the Teacher Exchange program between Puerto Rico and New York and the high school equivalency program sponsored by the Puerto Rican Community Development Project. LATIN N.Y. intends to cover the New York educational scene on a regular basis in an effort to provide both an outlet for community expression and to stimulate constructive thinking.

There are many questions which we as Latin parents and students should be asking each other and the educational system. Here are just a few of great importance:

Should we support school decentralization? What is meant by community participation? Would community control result in an improved education? How would Puerto Ricans and other Latins fare under a decentralized system?

How can Mr. Hector Vazquez the first Puerto Rican member of the Board of Education, develop lines of communication with our community which would make his appointment meaningful rather than just "window dressing"?

What is bilingual education? Do we really want to learn both Spanish and English in our schools? Can genuine bilingualism be established with competent teachers, adequate materials, and a meaningful curriculum? What ever happened to the experimental bilingual school at P.S. 25 in the Bronx?

Why are there so few teachers and supervisors of Latin background? Why do so many of our youngsters end up with general and vocational high school courses? Why are there so many Latin "drop outs" or "push outs"?

Why is so little done to get Puerto Rican young people into colleges and universities?

The questions are a lot easier to ask than finding the legitimate solutions. But we must not shirk our responsibilities to secure equal educational opportunities because of a reluctance to appear undignified and militant. The truth is that the answers probably lie in the same old-fashioned ingredients of any good program: skilled and dedicated principals and teachers, and educationally hungry students and parents.

LATIN N.Y. feels that education is our most important resource. It therefore extends a warm welcome to all the teachers, supervisors, students, and parents as the new term opens. Please, let's get down to the serious business of teaching and learning and leave the power plays to the politicians.

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