IMPROVING EDUCATION

There seems to be a lot of talk in the educational world about raising the educational level of our country. Indeed, there are courses in many engineering fields. In order to enable everyone to obtain the additional knowledge necessary in a world of advanced civilization and technology, we feel the plan seems to be to lengthen education.

Yet no one seems to consider the possibility of revising our present educational system upward, so that more is learned in the present 12 or 16 years. The present secondary school system would be a good place to start, just judging from the example of Techncm. The biggest difficulty many of us have at Technology is that we have never learned how to study. We sit in class with books in front of us and kid ourselves that we have spent the time studying and are prepared. However, the art of proper studying, picking out the important information, and retaining it afford us the chance to learn twice as much in half the time. Yet why have we never mastered it?

The answer is that in high school we never had to apply ourselves. The high school system at present caters to the slowest and poorest student and as result most of the rest waste much of their time.

Not only could the average entering freshman be better trained in the method of learning, but he could have a more extensive background in his schooling which would ease his transition into college years or in turn allow him to be better trained at the completion of his college career.

We hear much about the advanced state of education in Europe—how the completion of high school there is equivalent to two years of college in the United States. Yet there is never a suggestion of remodeling our secondary school system along their lines. In parts of Europe at least the emphasis in secondary education is on separating the sheep from the goats as early as possible, or feasible. Students attend the same grade school for four years; then those interested in trades attend their own school for four more years, while those interested in more formal education go to high school for eight; then they can continue to college or university if they qualify and so desire.

The result is quite clear. There is a selection of students at the early age of 10 and the educational process from there on can be stepped up considerably. Languages and a serious consideration of the sciences can be started at this point. This system can of course be modified requiring everyone to attend school until the age of 16, and possibly including a further selection at 16 for those students interested in secretarial as compared to college work.

The objection to such a set-up seems to be that in this country limiting of opportunity for the individual so early in life goes against American principles. Everybody possible should have a chance at a college education. Yet the system has been quite successful in Europe without the use of the advanced tests—U.Q. in its present form—available now. It certainly seems more advisable to test and classify people at an early age rather than have them complete two years at the Institute whereupon they decide that they are not cut out to be engineers after all.

In short, it is better to toughen the easy spots in the present educational system and make it more selective rather than extending education. This will allow teachers to develop the full potentialities of each student as early as possible rather than letting him loaf for years and then swamping him in college. Also the premium attached to the college degree will be removed, not nearly as many students would want or need such a degree. This would reduce for them the cost of their education and would have the same effect as government sponsored college education. We think a system such as proposed worth considering when educators talk of revising the educational setup in this country.