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THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND LIFE NEEDS

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When Dean Schwegler invited me to come here today, and Chairman O'Brien sent me the theme of the meeting, I was first pleased by the compliment, then appalled by the responsibility. If fifty were to be in attendance, some twenty-five collective hours of your conference time would be involved, time you couldn't afford to waste. That caused me misgivings. I am not a professional educator, even though my work seeks to influence life. And it is presumptuous to speak too confidently of life needs. Who knows all the needs of life? Who can say which are most important among those needs which he is sure he does identify?

My only reassurance was this. For over thirty years I have seen intimately, life forces in action, in a great American city. My department of the Chicago Park District is, I think, the best equipped recreation department in existence. We offer a wide variety of services to a participant attendance of over fifty million per year, not to mention uncounted casual strollers in our more than 130 parks. We operate in close to one hundred buildings, some of which cost a half million dollars. We invite people to consider those structures as centers for their community, social, and recreational life. Broadly speaking, the people of our city come to these parks to escape the monotony of work-a-day existence. Their coming testifies to their wishes. Apparently, they desire thrill and adventure. They wish to introduce challenge into life's humdrum. They seek novel experiences. They want kindred spirited companionship. They crave social status and recognition. They pursue sustained and sustaining interests, to lend life meaning and enthusiasm. They desire the sense of mastery, the joy of richer and more fruitful living, the satisfactions of creative accomplishment. They want

drama, color, poetry, movement, melody - they want secular life to have spiritual significance. They want it to be gayly gallant, to have dignity, but with a sense of humor lest its dignity be too solemn.

We have a peculiar opportunity to observe them in their most self-revealing postures - when they are most unstudied, when they are least posed, most spontaneous, when they are least self-conscious, most natural. We see them in their enthusiasms, in their devotion to causes, their loyalty to friends, to hobbies, to traditions, to the perfections of skill or achievement which they hold as ideals. We see them divested of the robes of ceremony, when they have taken off the armour they wear in earning a livelihood. We fraternize with them when they are relaxed, spontaneously concentrating on doing the things they choose to do because they like to do them.

But in that same off-duty relaxation, when forgetful of everything else, they are absorbed in the exciting pursuit of the objects of their enthusiasms. We see them still responding significantly to the codes of social conduct to which they are pledged. We see them sharing their skills with their neighbors, aiding, explaining, suggesting solutions to problems. We see them joining neighborhood associations, working on programs of neighborhood improvement in response to social ideals. We see the patterns of their sportsmanship, the texture of their sociability. If you are willing to concede that such unstudied responses as these indicate hungers which originate in and interpret essential needs of life, then perhaps we can offer something on our subject.

Out of years of such association, possibly I can bring you some observations which will supplement your own thinking, if only I can first select subject matter which is significant from your point of view, rather than my own. In this I may fail, although I shall try to do it. My other difficulty is to express my suggestions in terms which will translate themselves into the vernacular, the

thought associations common to your group. I suspect that it was when they got around to interpreting the art of the Tower of Babel, its architecture, its educational or its social significance, that the people discovered that each was speaking in an unknown tongue, incomprehensible to the others. Words are uncertain containers of meaning. Their cubic content differs with differing habits of thought and use. We become addicts of our own terminologies. The bridges of communication between one profession and another are of limited capacity. We have difficulty in getting the significant essence of our meanings across to each other.

I have chosen, therefore, to write out and mimeograph what I am going to say. If it happens to stimulate a responding vibration which calls for reflection on your part, you can get a copy after I'm through. That will enable you at your leisure to ferret out the more obscure meanings which seem to have possible significance to your own thinking. And you may then forgive me for following a manuscript.

There's one other consideration. I must speak with only a lay person's knowledge of modern education. Laymen as we are, we are proud of American education, of its freedom in a world of dictated ideologies. We take our hats off to its liberal spirit, its desire to make sound and healthy progress.

An outsider cannot look at all closely at education today without noting the unrest expressed in its experimental schools, its progressive education conferences, its adult education movements. Its exponents are engaged in critical self-analysis. Its Kilpatricks and Deweys, its army of research experimenters, give it almost the steam shovel and open ditch aspect of a W.P.A. field project. When volunteering comment or suggestion, an onlooker cannot be sure that the very thing he proposes may not already be going forward over in the next excavation.

In addressing you on this subject, I modestly hope to be helpful, even if mildly provocative. We outsiders don't envy the educator his task. It seems to us that it's a bewildering job; it involves integrating elements which to a degree appear mutually destructive of each other - things like fire and water. They appear irreconcilable. Education's problem is that society needs both fire and water. Fire suggests the Devil; water, the deep blue sea; and education is in the middle between the two. Any criticism we offer is, therefore, a sympathetic criticism. While we may question education's dividends, we wouldn't ourselves for a moment assume its liabilities. We may yell, "Get in there and fight," but we do it from the vantage point of a safe position on the sidelines, and we intend to stay there.

I'll admit that this is a lot of introduction, but when someone does get around to throwing me out the window, it may persuade him not to be too vigorous about it.

All right! Assuming that we have now a little bit more of common understanding, let's talk about the School Curriculum and Life Needs.

From what I have been saying, no doubt you have already located my professional point of view. You have its range, and can concentrate your firing on it. But if we are to shoot straight here, let's have no uncertainties. Let's get it definitely on the map. We think that in our thirty-five years of contact with the life of a typical American city, our recreation department of the Chicago Park District has seen people responding to Life Needs, even though they may have been themselves only dimly conscious of their impulses as Life Needs. But if we possess any perceptive sensitivity at all, we should be able to sense at least some of the significance of their social gropings. We should have learned something about what people want out of life. We think we have. We believe their gropings, when released from regimenting compulsions, do have significance.

We think those gropings betray hungers which, however inarticulate, are nevertheless eloquent in proclaiming the need of certain vitamins in the lives of men. We think there are Life Needs which are eternally imperative, and which still remain unsatisfied. And to our way of thinking, those needs make definite demands upon Education as the process whereby society purposes to prepare people for the business, or if one prefers, for the art of living.

The first need is a rather hazy one, in general terms. But we think it is basic. We think it is the understructure beneath almost every other need and particularly basic to treating the individual as a whole unit. Briefly, that is the need of better integrating an emotional with our intellectual culture. Let's see whether we can make that clear.

We think humanity still suffers from an ailment which might be called a sort of secular-spiritual Beri-beri. As you know, that is a disease caused by unbalanced diet. It comes to people subsisting mainly on rice, but rice which has been polished. Rice naturally is darker; polishing makes it colorless. It removes the life germ and robs it of its vitamine content. Beri-beri is a disease of hunger unsatisfied. It is a nervous irritation which causes pain, general debility, emaciation. We think our social Beri-beri is kin to this physical ailment. We believe that subsisting exclusively on an intellectual diet, divested by polishing of much of the color and of the life germ of emotional content, contributes to a loss in emotional discipline and cultivation. It only does half the job. When one considers that impulse rather than reason still continues to make most of our decisions for us, isn't one safe in saying that it even does less than half of its job?

It is true that you educators talk about motivation. But we think you conceive it more as intellectual concept than as emotional experience. Stephen

Leacock, in his "Too Much College" states it thus: "All that is best in education can only be acquired by spontaneous interest. Real education should be a wonderful beginning, a marvelous initiation --- and life will carry it on." To use his phrase again, to express what I am trying to emphasize here, it is "the difference between a spirit and a mechanism."

I want to make this perfectly clear. Let me offer you a concrete illustration. My youngest son attends an experimental school which is exploring educational methods. That school has been testing pupils lately to determine how much of detail they are getting out of their reading assignments. You know the techniques used. Did the hero come in from the right, the center, or the left of the stage? Questions like that. Solemn stuff. Scientific testing, and all that. Well, our lad had the flu lately. Our physician advised him to stay abed. Saturday came. Mrs. Brown had some shopping to do and was going downtown with me in the morning. Except for the maid, he would be alone in the house all day. When we went to his room before we started, he said, "Gee, it's going to be lonesome here. And I've run out of anything to read. Can't you get me something?" We went down to the family library. I brought up Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi," - Mrs. Brown, one of her girlhood classics. My selection he greeted with, "Aw, dad, that looks like biography, and I hate biography!" None too successfully I tried to interpret the book. He remained unconvinced. I didn't get far. I didn't carry my point.

That evening when we returned, Mark Twain was untouched, but he had almost finished reading the other book. School has taught him to read fast, and he does a lot of it. I asked him whether he enjoyed the book. Yes, he had. He was enthusiastic about it. "It's a fine book, Dad. Did ya' ever read it? A dandy book. Really, I liked it! All but one chapter. That almost spoiled it for me.

I almost quit. But I'm glad now I didn't. I suppose it's one of the best chapters in the book, too. It's the chapter we had in school, in reading assignment, and I hate that so that it almost spoiled the book for me!"

Now let's consider what might have happened if the intellectual had been supplemented by an emotional appeal, - if it had been "a spirit, and not a mechanism." If the school had made a game of close observation in school reading, if they had given it emotional meaning, do you think the result would have been the same? If the school reading course had sensed the emotional gulf between a test and a contest, would the result have been the same? His school made a contest of spelling. And he loves to spell. His spelling is three grades in advance of his class. He won the whole school's spelling bee, but that, you note, was sport. That had emotional validity. That tests accuracy of observation too, but his approach is a different one. He puts more of himself into observation of detail in spelling, as a sport, than he puts into observation of detail in reading as a study.

When the brilliant young President of the University of Chicago says that the purpose of education is to train students to think, one wonders whether that statement gets clearly into the open, the whole story. Doesn't education have to do more than just that? Doesn't it have to provide experience, as well as knowledge? Do children run adventuring to school as they do to a playground which operates as a really exploratory center? I'm not talking about all playgrounds now, nor all schools. Don't misunderstand that. I hasten to admit that many a playground, if not most of them, are no more vital than the tombs of the Pharaohs, and many a school no doubt is as electric with power as a crackling dynamo. I'm only saying that when either brings people to it with eagerness on their faces, the institution is summoning more than cold reason into conference. It is appealing to other drives and urges as well. It is issuing a call to the emotion. I

think the playground does that oftener than the school. But when either does so, it assumes a responsibility for affording those emotions a disciplining exercise, a living experience, just as it affords accuracy in spelling exercise and experience. The emotions can be consciously guided and disciplined. My impression is that education has scarcely started to explore the planning of emotional experience for the sake of developing emotional controls. It can be done. It has been started, especially in training for careers in drama, and to a lesser extent for careers in music and art. The feeling for the subject gets attention there. But it has been started, only. It is still embryonic.

Those of us who live close to the dykes against which tides of propaganda are gnawing while we sleep, realize that civilized security is everywhere endangered in our modern world. Even here where authoritarianism is not yet in control, we must protect imperiled social values with more than the loose fill of unconsolidated learnings. Cementing, emotional integration, is needed to lend cohesion to the facts we know, to bind them into a wearing surface, and thereby consolidate common knowledge into social wisdom. With sinister purposes, men who work in darkness are opening floodgates, releasing torrents to dash against those dykes. Those men wear a uniform and employ a technique like spiritual apostles, but the works by which they may be known are works of hatred, not of charity. They learned their process from the evangelists of religion. But instead of conviction of sin, they generate fear, suspicion, and hatred. Instead of repentance and deliverance from evil, they concentrate their efforts, artfully arousing fury against alien opponents of their ideologies, or against internal minorities, as scapegoats useful in diverting critical attention from themselves. Instead of entering the fold of the redeemed, they offer converts membership in the band, the party, or the organization. That is the art of propaganda. It isn't new. They haven't even originality to their credit. Their whole strategy

is brazenly appropriated from the altars they defile. But it makes cunning use of a weakness in our defenses which education has too long tolerated, and still continues to tolerate. It craftily exploits the fact that while we strive to make mature our reasoning processes, we give little attention to emotional discipline. We seem content in our educational system to let the emotions remain undisciplined, susceptible to any rabble rousing attack, their cultivation static on a six-year old level. That remains, in my opinion, at once the most damning indictment of our education, and the source of our greatest danger.

We have been forced to give this subject attention in public recreation. We have no compulsory attendance laws. Either we attract, or we don't get patrons. In their free time, people seek a larger freedom, not a lessened one. And that word lessen appears equally unappealing, whether it is spelled with an "en" or an "on." We simply have no market for sombre didacticism. It strikes no responsive chord at all. It has no emotional pull. We must use what we call the recreational approach. We have to sell our wares. We have to make participation adventurous, emotionally appealing.

This is not to say that we must make it easy. I doubt that people fundamentally want life to be too easy. It gets stale if it is too easy. The Youth Hostel movement - pedalling bikes up mountain sides, sleeping on hard bunks, cooking one's own meals, priding one's self that he can "take it" without whimpering - that isn't easy. It isn't soft. It isn't devoid of disciplines. But still it exerts a thrilling appeal. And the games people play when free to do as they please - haven't you noticed that by virtue of the restrictions the players voluntarily impose upon themselves, games always tend to become more difficult? Witness the lively ball, the forward pass, two-move restriction in checkers, 18-2 in billiards, bridge converted to contract, tennis moving off the

lawn onto the faster clay or hard surfaced courts. In every case, they are getting more difficult. People don't object to difficulty, so long as it interprets itself as challenge, rather than as drudgery.

I know it isn't one of the sacred cow subjects. I know that some academicians esteem it rather condescendingly. But as a looker-on in Venice, I venture the opinion that Physical Education in some of its aspects at least has apparently realized more of what I am trying to say than any other unit in the curriculum. With its physiology, its charts and instruments, it had its scientific but dull approaches. Where it is still obsessed with being scientific, it continues to be dull and uninspired in most of its health program, for example, or in its research experiments program, or its solemn body building program. I don't know why we should feel that we must leave adventure behind to be scientific. Scientific exploration has in it the essence of intellectual romance. But when we come into its august presence we seem to resign our sense of humor; we seem to become suspicious of inspiration. We seem fatally prone to make drudgery of it. And the moment we do that, the sense of adventure appears to fly out the window. We don't have to do that. It's only custom. Playing chess is scientific, but still it's fun. The physics department of the University of Chicago is doing some interesting exploring in this connection. They are scheduling their laboratories so students, even in other departments, can come in and perform interesting experiments for the fun of it. They are making the physics laboratory a sort of intellectual recreation center. They are staging scientific verities with something of dramatic art and appeal.

In part of its disciplines at least, Physical Education seems to the observer on the sidelines to have been the department which has taken the lead in changing to that approach. Years ago it had its calculated and exact calisthenics drills,

Its German apparatus work, its Swedish exercises. But they didn't catch the imagination, and they didn't click. However scientific they might be, with their progressive day's order, their symmetries, their provision for the whole body, the fact remained that the pupil went through them stolidly and stupidly. Physical education solemnly tried to be scientific and presently found itself dead. Thereupon it accomplished a resurrection. It began possibly to sacrifice science somewhat for the restoration of life. It began interpreting activity not in measurements, but in sensations - in the zests of living, the thrills of endurance, of combat and conquest. It stressed the exuberance of abounding vitality, rather than the facts of muscular development. It began to deal with things of the spirit - with progress in accomplishment more than abstract health or posture. Posture came alive only when it was interpreted in terms of beauty. Lately weight lifting is undergoing a revival, not to merely raise so many pounds, but symmetrically to develop the body beautiful. Physical education's curriculum began to stress running for the joy of it, sports and games for the tingle of intensity of living. It took to itself vital emotional motivations, and it came to life again.

Now, in doing that, it is doing more to provide emotional cultivation than any other subject in the curriculum, in my opinion. In the old formal physical education days, when I was a student, inter-school rivalries ran uncontrollably into hatreds in our football contests. Walter Eckersall was one of our detested contemporaries. We sang lustily, "Eckie, Eckie, break his neckie!" Out sportsmanship was deplorable. Our passions - we called them school spirit - were unrestrained. We had no emotional brakes. Today, I officiate in track athletics. Out on the field I see continuously, rivals offering helpful counsel and encouragement to each other. Student bodies applaud outstanding plays by their opponents.

Rabid partisanship is disapproved. Our rivalries are getting under control. We are growing up to become gentlemen emotionally as well as intellectually. I think the change in physical education has had a hand in bringing this about.

Now let's look at that from another angle, for a moment. With all the inquiries that your educational research has made into the Transfer of Training, I haven't stumbled onto one which involved subject matter having this emotional validity. Those which have come to my attention involved dry and dead skills which didn't go very deep into the barrel of living intensities. Results were negative, but the skills appeared to me to be superficial in themselves, and superficially taught. James Mursell observes that there out to be transfer. He says the lack of transfer is "not a fiat of the Almighty; it is a reproach to teaching." May it not be even an indictment of the degree of emotional involvement, the degree to which the learnings come to grips with the issues of life? There appears to be transfer enough in life itself. Its phobias induce general timidities. Its single worries or its momentary heroisms spread their effects to the very boundaries of later living. But notice that where there is such manifest transfer, there is always intense emotional involvement. The great crises, religious conversions, sudden exaltations of patriotism or devotion to causes which transform whole lives before our eyes - aren't they always emotionally charged experiences? And while mathematics may not affect logic, while study of composition may not visibly alter reading habits, have you ever known a coach who would be as well pleased on meeting incoming material in the fall to learn that in addition to knowing nothing about football, none of them had ever done any hard labor in their lives? He believes in transfer. His results prove it. The competitive spirit - what we call the heart of the athlete - is something an athlete brings with him out of his past life experience, even to a new athletic undertaking.

It is a capacity for living intensely, even dangerously, and that capacity isn't restricted solely to the area in which it has been developed. It is susceptible to other applications. It transfers; there's no doubt of it. But equally there's no doubt that it is an emotional hook-up.

Let me quote in illustration a news item from one of our park gymnasiums:

"An incident occurred in Grand Crossing Park that is worthy of recording," it reads. "It was near the end of the final game in the senior basketball league. The score, which had been see-sawing enough to have the audience hysterical, stood at one point from a tie. A forward, captain of the trailing team, stood under his goal with the ball in hand ready to throw the basket that would put his team in the lead again. Since there were no opposing players near at hand, he was as sure of the points as basketball players ever are. Just then, an opposing player, coming fast, stumbled to crash against a wall nearby, and fell, momentarily stunned. In a fine gesture of sportsmanship, the forward called time instead of shooting for the basket, and ran to the aid of his injured opponent. The crowd, catching the significance of the act, went into a frenzy of approval, and the event is still talked of in these parts."

Wasn't that transfer - from an abstract concept of sportsmanship to its application in a generous act in the heat of battle? It appears even a transfer in the face of resistance. In the intensities of combat, that player's fighting spirit was aroused. Determination to win was stimulating a flow from endocrines into his bloodstream, of elements toxic to calm and dispassionate reason. He was doubtless supercharged with adrenalin. His pulse was above normal; ruthless attitudes were dominant. And yet, at this most unfavorable moment, his sporting conscience broke through both these chemico-physical and counter-emotional barriers to lay an arresting hand upon his actions.

But the crowd reaction was even more significant. Experience proves that the hysteria of overwrought spectators, denied the player's outlets in action, to release and relieve the pressure, is more difficult to restrain within socially acceptable bounds than is the fighting intensity of the participant. But this play of super-sportsmanship on the floor - was its spiritual contagion due to shock? Were the galleries suddenly recalled from their frenzy of excitement, restored to calm in which something fine and generous within them might come to the surface again? Hardly that. Isn't it more probable that as they were absorbed in the play on the floor, tensed and participant in the ebb and flow of the battle there, they were carried along to be participant also in the player's gesture of self denial? His play, so closely were they following the game, had something of themselves in it; its generosity was a subtle compliment to their own sympathetically responding sense of rectitude, a sacrifice of self interest in loyalty to a sporting ideal. Wasn't the spiritual affinity in the incident something of that nature? Whatever the psychology of it, wasn't it a case of transfer - an abstract ideal, projecting itself, against resistance, into dynamic action? Wasn't it principle, put to work in application? And like every other case of transfer that we see in life itself, but which we still fail to get in education, like the phobia that induces a general cowardice, the patriotic or maternal sentiment that engenders an unwonted courage, the religious conviction that transforms a life, wasn't the significant vitalizing factor in both player and spectator the emotional intensity which was involved?

I've said enough on this theme - doubtless you are tired of it. Probably I'm overstating it in my desire to make it graphic. As I leave it, let me summarize in these terms. We all agree that we need better integrating of all the forces in the individual. That is one of the most fundamental of our life needs. The research of its own investigators admits that the present curriculum, taught under present motivations, still fails to get in full measure such integration. It isn't

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Among other life needs, people need inter-acquaintance, friendlier understanding in this troubled world. We need tolerance and benignity. We need appreciation for cultures other than our own. We need humor and relaxing - a bit of Will Rogers in our Hitlers. We need it as leaven in the dough of our solemnities - it might not come amiss even in our economics whose cockeyed gravity has been unconsciously funny for so long that a little honest gaiety would be a relief. In that same economics we need to discover that life isn't all bread and raiment and possessions, just as we are currently discovering that all the gold in the world and most of its comforts still doesn't make the possessors happy.

The Lord knows we need refinement, not spurious but genuine. And we need additionally to interpret Democracy as an attitude, not an act - an attitude of ungrudging loyalty to the will of the majority as expressed in the law of the land, much as we accept the rules of the game. With that, we adults might set a pattern of example in law observing instead of bewailing juvenile delinquency and attempting to cure it by hocus pocus and the easy magic of a ball and bat, while we ourselves continue to run the orange lights. We need to discover that one of the reasons why we have juvenile delinquency is that all delinquency isn't juvenile and we simply can't get away with expecting the kid to be the only law abiding member of society. We need to get the flesh and blood of life itself into more of our studies preparing for life and to learn that the uniform of the human spirit consists of more than a shirt, red or black, brown or silver. These are just a few life needs.

building study experience into effective action in later and differing situations. Old methods are discredited by the evidence of every test - they appear doomed to continuing futility. Life, on the other hand, does show integrations. But life is vital, not lethargic; it is intense, not superficial. It is instinct with emotional meanings and validity, rather than merely unobjectionable in either fact or logic. To bring the curriculum into relation to life needs seems to require a further transfusion of the life element into the study program. It implies vitalizing that program. It is a question of an approach that will make inert studies come alive. And in the curriculum itself is one subject which to some extent, at least, has been resurrected from the dead, and remains a living example of the process by which that can actually be done, in fact, and not in theory. To the bystander this constitutes one of the major challenges to education today. Despite the oft repeated proverb, knowledge of itself simply isn't power, until it is connected up with the driving forces, the life forces, that lend it power.

Other life needs, of course, come to mind as worthy of mention. There is the consciousness of selfhood, in the midst of all our educational standardization. The self respect, the confidence, that comes from individual achievement is an experience more stressed in the recreational than the educational curriculum. I suggest that some day you explore it. There is also the matter of a social consciousness, actual experience in cooperative living. That is a life need of the utmost importance. And the curriculum pretty generally passes by on the other side. You might think that over too.

But because it relates to a life need with which I am particularly concerned, I want you to think about one other problem in particular. Let me state it in this way. The millions who throng our parks demonstrate another need which concerns education. They seek adventurous variety, in novel experiences. And lest

recreation grow stale by repetition, lest it become itself a monotony, demanding still another escape, our trained leadership, the product of a special professional curriculum, must lend new inspiration endlessly. We must devise new challenges, fresh explorations, higher levels of achievement. Above all, our 300 leaders need a capacity for independent creative and contributive thinking. They must be inventive. They must generate novel ideas. They must be recreational producers. But our greatest difficulty is in discovering that ability. There are plenty who can teach the old stuff, but few seem able to think up new devices.

Why should this be so? There is surely more satisfaction in creating than in repeating. Capacity for original thought is of the essence of ability to do any thinking at all. Natively, the child appears to have a creative imagination. His varied use of the same playthings testifies to that. The broomstick which is a hobby-horse one minute, a sword the next, an airplane or the wall of a house a moment later, proves the fluid and flexible nature of the child's imagination. He even insists upon using his imagination. He flees from things which limit its freedom. In my home my daughter had a doll rejoicing in the name of Susy Polly. Susy Polly was a rag, without bone or hank of hair. To adult eyes she was graceless, a most unlovely domestic chattel. When the door bell rang we hurried to conceal her. My father visited us. He was shocked that his granddaughter should have no worthier object for her affections. He bought her a marvelous doll, beautiful to behold, real hair, articulated joints, eyes that closed, a complete and intriguing wardrobe. For a day or two the newcomer held sway. Then Susy Polly resumed her reign. Why? Possibly the perfect doll was too perfect. She left nothing to the imagination. She demanded nothing from her possessor. She was a picture completed and hung on the wall, while Susy Polly was an open window inviting the vagabond imagination to go wandering to remote and unexplored horizons. Whatever clouds of glory trailed after her were the contribution of an active fancy which her very poverty in attractions summoned into operation.

Susy Polly satisfied something of a creative urge. You child psychologists, wasn't the explanation something like that? And the wrecking of some of our elaborate toy gifts, may that not be explainable in some such terms? May they not be over-perfect, provoking a desire to change them so the imagination has something to work on?

Thousands of young children frequent our toy play centers. We provide no dominant directing leadership. We are experimenting with a situation rich in variety of playthings, offering their own suggestion. Both toys, and the rooms themselves are clean, bright colored, attractive. Vividly draped windows, appropriate murals, orderly cabinets and shelves, gayly painted furniture, clean floors and coverings, provide a stimulating atmosphere. We do not plan the experience for the children. The law of the jungle is not permitted to prevail. There is that much of supervision. But we are not assuming that we must determine just what experiences the children are to have for the good of their health, or mental growth, or socialization, or for the development of balanced personality. Rather, we permit the children to evolve their own patterns of activity, living their own lives, out of their own imaginations. We even have a specially designed, individual panel type of sectional playhouse which the children may set together in infinite variety, just as they do their varied building blocks - devices to encourage them in adapting to the changing impulses of the moment. We are watching to see what life itself does to them, without either parental or pedagogical interference, under guardianship which is democratic, rather than authoritarian.

Our toys lend themselves to constructive uses. They all give maximum freedom to the creative imagination. They are not so complicated as to challenge a child to discover what makes them tick, neither are they irritatingly stubborn in resisting adaptation to new purposes. We have no destructiveness at all, either intentional or passive. And incidentally, there is no theft. Even in one center with a large Gypsy attendance, there is no theft. But what I want to emphasize here

is our observation that children have, seemingly, a universal vividness of creative imagination. They make original patterns of play. They do it easily, natively, not laboriously. However difficult it may be for our mature leaders to develop original inspirations, the children in whom it is a living process, appear one and all to possess the creative faculty.

Now if that faculty is so universal in children, and so rare in our mature leaders, after they have completed their training, where was it lost along the line? Apparently, it disappeared during the years devoted to education. If early in life we employ the left arm of original creativeness, where do we become right handed? Does this left arm-originality-atrophy, through disuse, while we concentrate on appropriating the accumulated wisdom of mankind, the truths which others have discovered and recorded for us merely to perceive and commit to memory? As we reach out to grasp this recorded lore with the right, does the left hand lose its cunning? If so, how can education make us more nearly ambidexterous? How keep learning exact, faithful to the record, disciplined, without too much of untested and unscientific personal interpretation on the one hand, and on the other hand still preserve a vivid individualism which continues to explore and invent originally, and for itself?

Perhaps this isn't a fair indictment of education, stated thus badly. The laboratory method no doubt is an attempt to force the student's growing knowledge, creatively to grapple with life situations. One must admit that creative writing today is an improvement upon the themes we composed. Art is infinitely more spontaneous and original than the copying I did as a student. Some forms of improvising and transposing music are advances in the direction of creative training. But one must still maintain that there yet remains a vast amount of improvement to be accomplished before education can generally establish itself as an exercise effectively developing original inventiveness.

It retains still too many of those abominations - tests and examinations. My whole department's in-service training institute this year was taken over by Northwestern University. Our workers can get University credit for broadening the base of their professional competence, while working on the job as employees of the Park system. Sixty-eight percent of them already have degrees on the college level, but many of the staff of over 300 are working towards Masters or Doctors degrees. All are attending one course which attempts to combine into a working unity, as a practical scientific approach, with special reference to application to our community problems, the three social sciences - Psychology, Sociology, and Education. At the end of our specially adapted Psychology unit this winter, we were subject to a true or false examination. The results convinced me that that form of testing in other than purely factual studies closes the door upon possibility of cultivating any original thinking whatsoever. Those who are our most creative thinkers were conspicuously low in their grades. Our wax plates, on the other hand, set the needle, turned on the phonograph, and gave back just what the lecturer had said, and became thereby the honor students! Here was a premium placed on stupid memorizing - a penalty attached to the forming of independent judgments. Doesn't education today face a challenge to be more concerned than that in cultivating the ability to think for one's self?

As a layman, it seems to me that education ought to do more than it is doing currently in my daughter's case, in an Eastern college. In her senior year there, majoring in Philosophy, she wanted this year to write her honor thesis on the subject of the Philosophy of our current youth movements. Before finishing high school, she went on a Youth Hostel tour of Europe. Before entering College she took another hostelling trip to Japan. She was vastly interested in the attitude toward life of the youth she contacted abroad. Through her college years, she has attended the Youth Congresses, except for the recent one in Washington. She

has gathered the formulated statements of faith of all of the youth organizations. Now at twenty years of age she is still young enough herself to speak not as an onlooker, but as a participant in the upsurge of youth consciousness. She would be studying economics or some other kindred subject, rather than majoring in philosophy, if she were committed to radical views, and so could not be trusted to think straight. Her grades in her major subject have been exceptionally high. At the end of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years in college she has been elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Her thinking has been termed mature. Her proposed inquiry was in the field of ethics as youth movements interpret and apply ethics to their own problems. But the philosophy department refuses to permit her to think originally in a new field of philosophical exploration because no one has yet done so. There are no already existing authorities for her to quote! There are no predecessor's footprints for her to follow. So in the name of education she is denied the right to step out originally and think novelly on her own account!

Now I'm not a philosopher. Perhaps this explains why I find that attitude so maddeningly incomprehensible. It seems to me that it is polishing the very essence out of education, robbing it of essential vitamins. The world, above all things, needs new but sound and trustworthy thinking, and thinking in which there is a vital, a living interest. Our old approaches have certainly not saved us from ideational bankruptcy. Education assumes responsibility for preparing young minds to face an unpredictable future. That it should refuse to tolerate exploratory thought on the part of a student, however meagerly equipped such a student may be - (for the college is still there to inspire and guide, to criticize and influence that thinking) - that such an institution should refuse to permit such thinking on the sole ground that it is novel, that there are no already beaten paths for it to follow - well, it goes to prove there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in my philosophy at least! It

makes one think that "The Sabre Tooth Curriculum," even today, isn't entirely a mere figure of speech! We can't expect much of courageous intellectual independence unless the academic world is generally more liberal than that, and more concerned with intellectual pioneering. I trust it is.

The Life Needs of our day seem to me to entitle us to expect more than that from those who have in custody the training of youth to attack realistically the problems they will face during their life span. Those of us whose years are past the peak realize that we have lived in the most interesting single life span the world has yet seen. We have witnessed greater happenings in scientific discovery, mechanical invention, and social change, than were ever crowded into any single lifetime in history. More has occurred, before the eyes of our generation than whole civilizations of the past ever saw, from their origin to their decline. But the probability is that the rising generation will see so much more happen that they will think of our day as an Alice Set By The Fire period in which relatively nothing much occurred.

They start with the new 200-inch telescope doubling the knowable universe. They hit the take-off board when peoples and government are fluid with unrest, when the atom is being shattered, when capital is realizing that the worker must have an income to absorb its products, when leisure has been at last related to culture, when exploitation has been wedded to conservation, when chemistry has brought about soilless gardening. They start just as the last uncharted physical areas are being explored with flights over the poles, and the pioneering restlessness of man must perforce take new directions, seek new worlds to conquer, worlds where social experimenting has scarcely yet begun. They start where integration is implicit in the needs of every day, integration of our knowledge and discovery into the good, the satisfying life, into a synthesized composite of our intellectual with our spiritual forces, to produce a new plastic which will provide the

substance of a new society. They start when an outworn economic statesmanship has brought the world to an unholy mess which nothing short of a new type of spiritual and cultural statesmanship would appear able to redeem. They start when even mechanization and materialism are discovering that there is something spiritual about the very facts of substance and the laws of engineering, when our mastery of the mechanics of production is beginning to propel those same mechanics over the threshold of a social extension into the problems of just and civilization-saving distribution. It is a time when we are commencing to realize that the machine does not end in physical dynamics, but becomes involved inevitably in social dynamics as well - social dynamics on a planetary, not on a parish plane.

They start when religious faiths in the adequacy of personal and individual salvation are being rudely shaken, and we are beginning to realize that the inspired prayer given us as example was a collective prayer for a social redemption. That prayer is to Our Father, whose will, if it is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, involves not only forgiving Us our trespasses, but also giving us, collectively as a human family, our daily bread. It is a social, and not an individual plea, and the words me or mine are significantly absent from the text of it. Youth faces that emphasis, as a changing spiritual horizon.

They start just at the moment when Democracy has been revealed not as a thing accomplished, but as a thing prophetic, not as something guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, but as an animating spirit pervading the ranks of those on the march toward a still undiscovered but dimly pre-visioned social order. They start ~~with~~ their own set, both of tools and of problems, original problems, requiring original solutions.

And education must prepare them to think originally, to think vitally with a spiritual understanding and intensity, or it fails us, tragically, at the most critical point in human history. A scholarship which never needs to use the words

"Unquote" will be quite useless to them. Quite! The answers to their problems are not to be found in the old writings, the records of a past which endlessly repeated itself. They face conditions undreamed of in that past. The old thinking is increasing our social deficit every day. They will find it necessary to create their own adaptations to a changed, and still continuously changing world.

Whenever civilizations of the past, qualified only by the thinking of their past, reached such a critical point as this, to discover that they must think their way daringly, novelly, into a changed intellectual, economic, or spiritual order, they failed in the face of that challenge, and swiftly sank into decline. The thinking of the past will not save us now. Somehow we must find fresh inspiration, to face the new day which is upon us. Education confronts again the challenge to which it has never in the past successfully responded.

You who bear the proud title of Educators - I congratulate you on your privilege in days like these - the privilege of writing a new page in the history of inspiring the minds of youth, to develop their own original genius, and originally think their own way through their own problems. It is the privilege of responding painfully and laboriously perhaps to a challenge which will search your very souls, to their deepest foundations! But if you meet that challenge you can say at the end, "I lived through the Great Days in Education!"

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Mon 15 - Wed 17

April

10:15 AM

Prof W N Van Slycke

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