

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.