

Purposeless...

Last week an all-Teachers College conference considered the function of education in any community. Several speakers discussed various facets of the conference's theme: "Strengthening Community Life Through Education." Their consensus was that education should take upon itself the responsibility of setting up a group of community leaders, of civic-minded citizens, to consider ways of "strengthening community life."

Two days of thorough discussion raised this all-important question: What is the role of education in a changing society?

The conference recognized that education is only one of many social institutions. Teaching is one of five learned professions, each with its own specialized responsibility to society. Medicine safeguards and promotes human physical and mental well-being. Engineering applies the results of basic scientific research for human benefit and comfort. Religion is charged with ministering to man's spiritual ailments and maintaining the moral order. And law, or government, protects and regulates individuals in the manner willed by the majority of them. And education too has its function.

What is it?

Education has the primary and sole responsibility for passing on the race's accumulated wisdom and knowledge. An important and implicit duty is the development of the character of children and adolescents. But other social institutions also share this responsibility. Religion, medicine, and to some extent government play their parts. But above all it is the home which in any community has the primary duty of shaping young people's characters.

The development of that aspect of the young person's character regarded as rational, mental, or intellectual, is the sole function of education. Traditionally, the method of performing this function has been to pass on the cultural heritage of the civilization.

Former Chancellor Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago once observed that "since in a democracy all men are rulers, all men must have the education appropriate to rulers." Classical education was regarded as the most appropriate education for the rulers, the aristocrats. The founders of the American public school system, including the illustrious Horace Mann, contended that classical education was also the most appropriate one for all citizens. In the Twentieth Century, however, this concept has come into a tional disrepute. This fact has been bemoaned by many sincere and intelligent critics of current trends in public education. Albert Lynd deplored it vociferously. Mortimer Smith took professors of education to task for their "anti-intellectualism." And a University of Illinois professor of history, Dr. Arthur E. Bestor, traced the historical development of U.S. education and set forth his excellent educational philosophy in "Educational Wastelands."

These critics raise a highly fundamental question: What ought to be the role of public education in modern American communities?

As has been stated earlier, that role is to inculcate in the nation's children the knowledge, wisdom and cultural heritage accumulated over the years.

These critics, who are not lightly to be disregarded, contend that public education today is not doing nearly as effective a job as it should do, as it once did in the not-so-distant past. They charge that public education has lost a sense of unity and of singleness of purpose.

A clinic was recently held on "Religion and the Public Schools," sponsored by the department of philosophy. A professor of one of the humane letters asked a panel consisting of school superintendents, a professor secondary education, an American Legion official and a rabbi what they thought was the purpose of education. No one answered him; there was a long silence. The rabbi later confided to us that he had an answer but did not give it because he had just finished a lengthy presentation of his opposition to religion in public education.

That panel's failure to give the professor an answer is, to be sure, only one isolated instance, but nevertheless it is significant.

If it has no coherent sense of purpose, how can public education perform its function effectively?

Once public education becomes re-oriented to its proper function, it will be doing its part to strengthen community life. R. W.

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LITTLE MAN ON CAMPUS

by Dick Bibler



"Is it true that you recently gave a class a test over irrelevant unassigned material?"

The Changing Role Community Project New In Education

By KAY NOSKY

It has been astonishing to discover what lies behind doors of the summer session classes and behind the somewhat ordinary wording of summer sessions pamphlets. This week, it is the seminar on "methods and materials for Experimental Community Education Programs" designed to "study recommended nation-wide programs of community education and to develop methods and materials appropriate for use in Nebraska communities..."

But this is no ordinary project. The work being done in this seminar revolves around Community Education Project, the organization of which was set up in January. The purpose of the project is: 1. to provide resources for members of communities, so that they can improve their community (and the key words are "they" and "their"); and 2. to make a research report on progress in action and on the conceptual image people hold of the community and its needs.

The project was set up with Walter K. Beggs as Administrator and Dale Hayes as associate administrator. The project personnel includes the superintendent of schools in each of four communities to serve as co-ordinator and an associate co-ordinator jointly selected by the four boards of education and the administration organization of the project.

These four communities—York, Sidney, Mullen and Syracuse—were selected for the project at their own request when they heard that it was in existence. The personnel of project staff make up the summer workshop, and members of each community are working with the seminar for the purposes of orientation.

What business do educators have in something that should be handled through the mayor's office or across the city council table? What do the personnel have in mind for each of these communities? And why don't they stick to educating the kids?

These are the questions which the project personnel have faced. The project administrators stress that they do not have a specific design for any of the communities for they are not sure what the needs of an individual community are. But they are sure that each community has some needs and that community members can and should meet, discuss the problems and take action.

For example, perhaps the appearance of the community needs improving. Perhaps entertainment is available for only limited age groups. Or perhaps a cultural development program is needed in the community.

The program has a legitimate place within education, the administrators of the project feel, because to them education has broadened to mean much more than teachers, students and classrooms. The community school board is more fully representative of all citizens than the city council—particularly those outside the city limits.

The project personnel are facing many problems, some of which are being worked out in this summer's seminar. They must, first of all, impress it upon the minds of community members that the project has no design for specific action in each community. They must develop ways of getting citizens together to study problems and needs of the community. They must find a way to involve all age groups and to use all human resources, partly to achieve continuity of leadership. They must help people to recognize all resources that are available in the community, and in Nebraska.

Understanding of the project, which was set up for two years with the possibility of extension to five years, depends upon understanding of the broader meaning of education which is difficult to define and the realization that small communities can be strengthened and revitalized.

The well-being of the community depends on the efforts and well-being of the citizens. And a good community will improve the well-being of each of the citizens. Perhaps the purpose of the project is to start the ball rolling—from within.

From— The Editor's Desk

Undergraduate politicians and legal experts often react in a rather strange and unpredictable way to announcements issued by the University.

Several members of this particular species say that they will not pay the additional \$10 tuition which the Regents recently approved. These campus barristers say that they registered in the spring when the cost was \$80 and they will be standing on their Constitutional rights when they refuse to pay the added fee this fall.

The Square Dance Fun Roundup now in session at the University should be a success since all the participants are interested in the sport (I call it a sport since it could hardly be termed social, ballroom dancing) and there should be little problem in getting enough squares (groups of eight).

But, I wonder how many teachers or former phys ed. students remember the practice that is used in many high schools which is based upon Darwin's theory of natural selection.

The process involves two physical education classes, one boys group and one class of girls. The next step is to place a partition in the middle of the gym and then line the girls up on one side of the room and the boys on the other.

At the command "forward march" both groups march toward the partition and move in a 90-degree angle when they reach the obstacles. When the student reaches the end of the partition he, or she, sticks out his hand and there, sure enough, is his, or her, very own partner for the Dance. The first four couples compose the first square and so forth.

This process is very ingenious and almost foolproof. The couple is joined together for the remainder of the festivities and the students have a chance to become acquainted with the opposite sex which seems to be one of the aims of education these days, any way.

Probably the only other sure fire plan for selecting couples (this will also work at a YWCA dance, is to have what is known as "ladies' choice." This is really quite heartless since it eliminates the small element of chance that was contained in the natural selection process.

Excessive speed was the principal cause of traffic accidents in 1954.

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