

## Our Readers Say

### GREAT MINDS PERISH IN CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLS

ROCKETS, JET PLANES, Bikini, Paris; fascism, communism, democracy; Jew, Negro, Indian; production, profits, employment, price control; log rolling, pork barrel, seniority, pressure groups; conservatism, reaction, liberalism; evolution, fundamentalism, pragmatism; capital, labor, management; bureaucrats, demagogues, special interests; delinquency, crime, peace or war. Such are the issues of society, of life. Each word is flooded with excitement, with the uncertainty of living, with the cry for an original solution. The problems they represent enlist the greatest minds—the inventors, the moral philosophers, the creative artists, the social, political, and economic architects.

Love, social acceptance, that strange feeling, sex; reputation, conscience, bad habits; etiquette, customs, tradition, mistakes, rules; home, family, school, independence; necking, dating, romancing, boy friend, girl friend; dancing, smoking, drinking, sin; a job, a career, right preparation, right college; finances, popularity, carelessness, criticisms, jealousy; headache, stomachache, heartache, underweight, overweight, the blues; religion, heaven and hell, lonesome, "wishing I were dead." Such are the concerns of youth, the dominating and haunting drives to study, thought, and action. These we leave largely to youthful ingenuity, to play friends, parents, and church leaders against one another for answers.

Grammar, algebra, history, language; gerunds, square root, Punic Wars, figures of speech; bells, schedule, recess, recitations, tests, neat rows of seats; Miss Jones, Mr. Brown, Dean Barrett, Principal Showers; 8:55, 10:02, lunch; 1:18, 3:47, go home; report cards, college-entrance requirements, grades. Such is the conventional school; each day the same, a con-

tinuous round of exactness and duplication; studying what is known, learning what others have done, avoiding the uncertain, the future, the issues of life. Thus the common conventional school through average teachers, ministers to conventional and average children, filling the brighter pupils with restlessness and wandering, to be saved only by the dribble of God-given creative teachers.

The issues of life; the concerns of youth; the routine of the school. Uncertainty, doubt, worry and fear; certainty and exactness—the world, the child, the school, still a long way apart. Such an institution does not enlist creative minds in either youth or adults. Youth chafe under it, seeking sublimation or forbearance, or ending in open rebellion. Adults leave the job to enter other professions more hospitable to creative endeavor.

Until our schools become more nearly related to the issues of life—social and personal—we shall still staff them with the non-creative, the non-ingenious, and let the better minds of youth wander away to other fields. Good minds in both pupils and teachers perish in conventional schools.—J. PAUL LEONARD.

CARING FOR THE maximum growth of individual pupils in a democratic situation is still a major concern of the school. Much progress is being made in the organization of introductory skills and in the provision for recreation and reference reading. There is much to be done at all levels in the organization of content so that each may make a contribution at his own level. This one idea could change the entire complexion of schools.—CHARLES E. GARNER.

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information. "Nothing doing," says he. "I don't trust those Russians. America might lose some of her security and prestige—and that comes first."

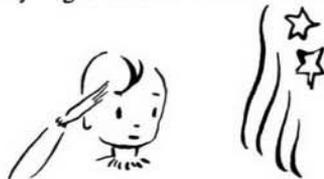
Little Tommy Smith grew up liking and getting along with almost everyone he knew. When in school and community he was taught that he should be loyal to his country, it wasn't hard for him to develop that loyalty. "After all," he reasoned, "I like all the people I know, and the people I know are all Americans, so I'll like all Americans." In school he learned that some people are not like Americans. Some wear funny wooden shoes. Some live in parts of the world where it is winter when it ought to be summer. Some eat birds' nest soup. But Americans are *right*. The teacher says so; the public speakers say so; the history books say so; the newspapers say so. So if there are people not like Americans, they must be wrong.

His teachers taught him mathematics to develop his reasoning, had him salute the flag to make him loyal, and gave him examinations in history to test his information. When he made high scores and had his name on the honor roll, they felt they'd done a good job.

Mr. Smith is an American, a 'patriot'. . . . "America takes care of *its* people. Let the other parts of the world take care of theirs. Be careful about this business of world cooperation. America might lose some of her security and prestige—and that comes first." . . . X marks the spot where he got stuck.

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Miss Bartlett is a wise teacher. She knows that youngsters must grow into ever widening loyalties and responsibilities; that unless there is careful guidance any youngster may "get stuck" at a low level of



*Pledge of allegiance*

development. She helps boys and girls learn to live with other youngsters in school with loyalty and good faith, without damaging their loyalties to their homes. Even as she teaches the pledge of allegiance to the flag, she teaches that one can be loyal to his world as well as to his nation,



*Our world*

just as one can be loyal to his community as well as to his family. She doesn't misuse some of our beautiful national ceremonies and customs or the history of our country as a means to teach a selfish patriotism or a narrow nationalism. Some do. For them, X marks the spot where they stunt the growth of a generation, letting it "get stuck" before its full development toward understanding that this is *our world*.

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THE CURE for the apathy and boredom which exists in the conventional school is the creative teacher who likes children and young people, is sensitive to their needs and interests, loves to teach, and is not afraid to deal with live issues in the classroom. But poor pay, long hours, big classes, and monotonous routine have not attracted or held such teachers. Creative teaching is a

great deal more difficult than textbook teaching. It requires smaller classes and more freedom for the teacher to plan with her students than most schools encourage. Until the American people are willing to pay for good education, they will continue to have schools staffed with the "non-creative, the non-ingenuous."—LAVONE A. HANNA.

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