

Education is living and the classroom a laboratory where all the interactions of adult life are present. The teacher who has the skill to guide children in healthful, human relationships will contribute much to both their wel-

fare and to that of the community. Children who learn to work and play harmoniously with others will have gained the most substantial asset the school can provide in terms of sound mental, and emotional health.

## *Tools for Today's Problems*

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ROGER ALBRIGHT

When Roger Albright, director of educational services, Motion Picture Association of America, Inc., in Washington, D. C., spoke at the conference sponsored by the ASCD and the University of Nebraska during the summer of 1947, many felt that his remarks had significance for all those engaged in the work of providing good schools. In answer to our question, "What is a good environment for learning?" Mr. Albright says that one requirement is that it be stocked with tools that today's young citizens must learn to use with skill and effectiveness.

EDUCATION IS TODAY FACING new responsibilities. These have developed over the years from the transitions of a changing world. New forms of communication and transportation and new technological advances have created living adjustments which students must be prepared to meet as they develop into adult life.

### **Skill in a Machine Age**

A few generations ago a cobbler would sit at his bench and make a pair of shoes by hand. When his product was completed, he could hold it out before him and get real satisfaction in the excellence of his achievement. He could take it home to his family and say, "See what I've done. Aren't these

shoes beautiful?" The satisfaction in his work spurred him to more and better work, and he established for himself a prestige of excellent craftsmanship.

Today the man who tightens up screw 247 in an automotive factory loses some of the thrill of his craft. His attention tends not to be on the finished product, to which he has made an essential contribution, but rather on the dissatisfactions in his work—long hours, inadequate pay, poor working conditions.

As an individual in a great industrial organization, he is frustrated by the monotony of his task. He joins with his colleagues to employ others to fight his battles for him. He yields to agita-

tion and sometimes unreasoning action. He is resisted by management; and labor-management conflict, rather than labor-management cooperation, results.

How can a society be developed which will provide the equivalent to the cobbler's pride in his work? How can there be developed in each new generation a corresponding satisfaction in the achievements of labor performed in a machine age? How can the contribution of the individual be interpreted to each growing generation so that there may be proper emphasis placed on the glory of productiveness? Can there be engendered a desire to improve the results of daily work? In other words, *how can people be taught to get the most out of their work in a machine age. Education may be able to find the answer.*

#### **Educate for Wise Government**

Several generations ago the citizens of any state remote from the nation's capitol elected their Congressmen, sent them away to Washington in a stage coach, and hoped for the best. Pioneering newspapers reported on the acts of Congress and the parts which Congress played in determining those acts. These reports, of course, were subject to the editor's interpretation.

At the end of the Congressional session, in preparation for re-election, the people's representative returned and told them about it. His reports were also subject to his interpretation. The voters had either to re-elect him or to elect a successor. In either event, the determination of national policy was in the hands of their elected representatives, and remoteness of the voters from the legislative halls prevented their giv-

ing much guidance of a compelling nature.

Today it is different. Highly specialized news services print in the evening papers what Congress does in the morning. Radios are set up in committee rooms—even in Congress itself; and millions listen to what their representatives say. Taxicab drivers, waitresses, and elevator men join with lawyers and politicians in discussing national and international issues.

There is today a greater mass participation in government than at any time in our history. This participation is not always intelligent, and mass thinking is frequently affected by pressure groups or demagoguery. People crave a sound basis for their political thinking. They wonder who is right. They would prefer to be intelligent. *Perhaps education can do something about this in establishing sound thinking on governmental principles.*

#### **Proximity Revises World Thinking**

Another factor added to our new world is our closeness to other nations. Air travel has increased relationships which must affect our political and economical thinking. On-the-spot radio broadcasting gives an awareness of conditions on the other side of the world. Frequently, instead of simplifying our relations, this proximity merely confuses our thinking. We are discovering that other people have aspirations, national and social, which we cannot ignore. We discover that some of these aspirations are as justified as are our own.

We are astounded to discover that our white race is one of the minority groups of the world. We are outnum-

bered by large racial groups on other continents. Our conviction that our way of thinking must dominate world thinking is brought into question from unexpected sources. How can we reconcile our traditional viewpoints to these changed relationships? *What training do we need to prepare us to live most constructively in a world society? When does this training begin? With maturity? Or does education have a place in this picture at lower age levels?*

#### **New Objectives for Now.**

Emphases like these and doubtless many others provide problems which cannot be solved without some revision in standard classroom practice and traditional instructional objectives. There is still the time-consuming obligation to train in the mechanical skills of living—reading, writing, and figuring. There are still the cultural emphases to be placed on good music, good art, good literature. There is still basic scientific information which must be included in the curriculum.

The curriculum is already overcrowded in handling these elements of study. Finding time to meet new responsibilities, essential as they may be, constitutes a difficult problem.

The traditional solution, if the time problem were solved, would be in terms of new, much-needed textbooks and pamphlets. But variations in reading skills at any grade level make dependence on the printed page hazardous. There are problems of vocabulary, of concept, of attitude for which any tool of instruction can provide only a partial solution.

Whenever a teacher is confronted

with problems of learning, and especially with problems of attitude development, she needs to have at hand much more adequate equipment than many classrooms provide. Her own background and experience sometimes do not include sufficient preparation for the problems she must solve.

She has not, from personal encounter, an understanding of life in Iraq. She never felt the frustrated rebellion of an underpaid coal miner. She isn't sure herself whether the world should defy Russia, or should seek to reconcile Russia into an organization dominated by world friendship. She may have some opinions, but she needs some help to solve the problems of education which the changing world creates.

#### **Tools at Hand for a Changing World**

In other professional areas, this new world has provided new tools. Engineers no longer use hand spades, but steam shovels. Doctors don't guess at their diagnoses, but use X-ray. They are not content with prescribing a few standard medicines, but avail themselves of the miraculous action of newly developed penicillin, sulfa drugs, and other specifics.

The war specialist maintained large departments of research and development to solve the problems created by the invention of new weapons by potential enemies and used every technical resource to find solutions either in defense or in competing weapons. Railroads are improving their equipment and their motive power in their constant, vain struggle to overcome the asset of speed possessed by air travel.

Always alert, always taking advantage of each scientific discovery, always

using every facility at hand to solve the problems of their profession! This is the principle of operation uniformly applied to the problems of most professions.

The teaching profession has the most serious problems of all. These are problems of learning, problems of the development of people, of their viewpoints, of their usefulness in the world.

Shall we look at these problems and, recognizing their complexity, surrender to the difficulty; or assign them for solution to other social institutions like the church or the home. Or shall we recognize that for every problem there must be a way to solve it, and equipment, perhaps scientifically developed, which will be an indispensable tool in the instructional program?

#### **Learning Success through Many Tools**

Education has also shared in the invention and discovery of new equipment and new ways of using it. For generations there have been blackboards, maps, globes, and models. Teachers have commonly recognized the contribution which these tools make in the classroom. To them can now be added the motion picture, the slide film, transcriptions, radio, and tachistoscopes. Perhaps television is just around some corner.

If the problem is variation of reading skill so that all the members of the class group do not share an equal understanding of the text, perhaps they would all understand a motion picture.

If it is difficult to get an interested appreciation of a class group in Bach or in Shakespeare, perhaps transcriptions made by talented artists will contribute to a cultural objective.

The diagnosis of the problem and the selection of the teaching tool which will contribute effectively to the solution of it are very important to teaching—and learning—success. It is appropriate that we examine our concept of the curriculum. Traditionally, the mastery of a book—biology, rhetoric, Latin, algebra—has been the teaching objective. Unfortunately, many teachers still follow this tradition. The requirement of a successful test on the materials of a book encourages this viewpoint.

#### **Many Attacks on Problems**

There is, however, justification for those who believe that the basic objective of education must be expressed in human development. The teacher's work is one of problem solving. The solution of the problems must be in terms of complete learning outcome. The textbook is one of the tools, along with motion pictures, transcriptions, and other educational equipment, that the teacher will use in attaining this objective.

Only then, as educators view the modern school in terms of the age in which that school exists, will tools for learning be provided that truly reflect the needs of youngsters growing up in this modern age.



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