group discussion with the principal, school nurse and the supervisor.

At 10:50 the children returned and seated themselves in a group on the floor. They talked of the fun they had had, told stories and sang songs.

Later in the morning, the class worked out a schedule for the next day. They also looked at the plan they had made the day before. They had not practiced their play, but there was still ample time to perfect this before the day of the pre-school children’s visit. They talked about some new things they had learned, some of their problems on the playground and how these might be handled better. They completed their plan for the next day and the teacher quickly drew up a chart from notes that had been made on the board throughout the day.

Perhaps strength of character, individual and group efficiency and stability are built incidentally through our life experiences from day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year. Perhaps these are built while we gain knowledge which has bearing on the solution of our problems, on the handling of our conflicts here and now, whether our developmental age be 6 or 8, 10, 12, 14, 50 or 60. Perhaps also the satisfactions, failures and understandings gained from this day-to-day struggle contribute to our growth into higher and higher levels of performance and service, into more satisfying levels of maturity.

The Teacher’s Role in Politics . . .

Do “special conditions” apply when a teacher participates in politics? What understandings and competencies do teachers bring to such participation? These questions are discussed in this symposium article by a school board member and by a teacher.

. . . As Viewed by a School Board Member

MAX J. RUBIN

The very need to discuss the role of the teacher in politics in itself indicates that the question has not been free of difficulty.

The fact is that boards of education, superintendents and others charged with the responsibility of maintaining public school systems strive for the support of all elements and factions in the community. Therefore they shy away from any area of controversy not connected with the school system in order to avoid offense to groups whose support of the public schools is so desired. Particularly in these days of mounting costs of education, increased taxes, criticism of the public school, boards recognize the need for strong
community support and very naturally prefer to eliminate any activity that may alienate groups of citizens and taxpayers whose support is needed for the schools.

As a result, there are some who feel that teachers should not engage in politics. The very nature of the activity is controversial. Antagonisms are created. Citizens who disapprove of the political views of a teacher may vent their resentment upon the school system, its budget, its efforts. Targets of resentment are not always accurately selected.

Additionally, objection to such activity by teachers is on the ground that citizens may fear that the teachers will become politically prejudiced in their teaching and instead of being disinterested and objective, may in effect propagandize politically in the classroom.

Those holding such views would concede that it is unfortunate at best to relegate the members of the teaching profession to an inferior status of citizenship, depriving them of one of the major responsibilities and privileges of American citizenship. They would be constrained to reply that, sad though this be, the evils and dangers that flow from teacher activity in politics exceed in importance the partial deprivation of citizens' rights and that one who undertakes the position of teacher accepts this deprivation as part of his bargain.

**Teachers Have Much To Contribute**

The obvious truth, of course, is that the teacher is a citizen and that to disenfranchise this citizen by forbidding an activity permitted to all other citizens is unjust to the teacher and unfair and harmful to the community and the country. Surely teachers have as much to contribute to sound political discussion and activity as any other group or profession. If, then, its members cannot function as all other citizens do, the teaching profession has been set apart and stigmatized. If teachers are deemed disqualified to act as ordinary citizens, the community viewpoint toward teachers has been distorted and a serious damage has been done to sound relationships between school and community.

Equally clear is the truth that the objectivity of the teacher in the classroom is not adversely affected by outside political activity. The good teacher, whether politically active or inactive, will teach without bias or prejudice. The bad teacher, whether politically active or inactive, will carry personal prejudices into the classroom. Indeed, perhaps the teacher who has been frustrated and suppressed as a citizen is more likely to promote personal convictions in the classroom than the teacher who has been afforded normal means for expression and activity on a parity with all other citizens.

How then reconcile these clear truths with the fears and misgivings we have mentioned? Surely not by yielding to those fears and establishing an inferior class of citizenship for the members of the teaching profession. On the contrary, every effort must be made to remove those misunderstand-

---

Max J. Rubin is a former member of the School Board, Public Schools, Great Neck, Long Island, New York. He is also an attorney at law and partner in the firm of Karelsen, Karelsen, Rubin and Rosenberg, New York, N. Y.
ings between the community and the teacher which create the unjustified fears. The effort must rather be to educate the community and the teaching profession to the responsibilities and rights of the teacher as a citizen and as a member of the community. The effort must be toward establishing that community climate which naturally accepts the right of the teacher to be and act like every other citizen.

This question is one single aspect of the larger problem of the teacher as a member of the community. Too often the teachers have viewed themselves as a group apart, and the lay community has joined in this viewpoint. In some districts, awareness of this unfortunate fact has led to affirmative contriving of artificial means and techniques to bridge the gap between the teaching group and the rest of the community. Much remains to be done in this direction and the effort must come from the teachers as well as from the community itself.

The answer dare not be surrender to a separate class of citizenship or a separate community status for teachers qua teachers.

... As Viewed by a Classroom Teacher

RACHEL ROYSTON KNUTSON

THE ROLE of the teacher, as an individual in politics, differs little from that of any other citizen. There are basic responsibilities in which all citizens share alike and in which the teacher is one with the butcher, the baker, the housewife, the business man. A teacher has, with all mature citizens, the responsibility for law observance, for unfailing exercise of the privilege and duty of voting, and for taking active part in politics at the community level to the extent which time will allow.

The teacher's responsibility is great but not compelling to exert direct influence on the political scene. He may give of time and energy to the selection of candidates at the local level. Many feel that educators should and must—whether they wish or no—take a more effective part in the selection of candidates for public office than they have done or are now doing. A teacher may be called upon to serve in political office, for a limited time. Some believe teachers should go actively into politics to seek financial support for public education. Others believe that this program might better be initiated by citizens who are not teachers but with teacher cooperation, making available their knowledge of government, of history and of human nature.

Thoughtful scrutiny brings two objections to the direct approach, the entrance of teachers actively into politics. First, teachers are relatively few in numbers. At best, their influence from the standpoint of numbers whether as voters or as office holders is

Rachel Royston (Mrs. Edwin E.) Knutson is a teacher, Public Schools, Seattle, Washington. She is a past president of the Seattle Association of Classroom Teachers, and at present is serving as a member of the Legislative Committee of this group.