

Significant Books in Review

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American Pragmatism and Education.

By John L. Childs. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956.

"Dewey's pragmatism is now outmoded." "Pragmatism is not a philosophy." "Progressive education is dead." These and similar remarks are heard these days when teachers get together to discuss educational problems. The lie is given to these and similar notions by Professor John L. Childs in his most recent book, *American Pragmatism and Education*. In fact it is Child's conviction that "the pragmatists in their emphasis on education for the all-round growth of the child through purposeful activity have exerted a revolutionary influence on curriculum trends, not only in our own country but in many other lands." The crucial factors of this "revolutionary influence" include: (a) the idea that "democracy" be "viewed both as a way of life and as a form of government" and that children and youth be developed as "democratic citizens through responsible participation in real life situations"; (b) the "evolutionary view of behavior as a never-ending adjustment to surroundings"; and (c) the perception that learnings are not discrete, solitary occurrences . . . but rather that "habits, techniques, knowledge, meanings, life outlooks, and even underlying and pervasive intellectual and emotional dispositions are all acquired in one and the same process of experiencing."

Professor Childs has reviewed briefly the significant contributions of four pio-

neers in the American pragmatist movement: Charles S. Peirce, William James, George H. Mead, and John Dewey. In the main, the important ideas developed by these thinkers include: (a) "the methodology of experimental science which links thought with action and which gives ultimate authority to empirical procedures," (b) "the theory of organic evolution with its inescapable corollary that man and culture are emergents with a natural biosocial process," (c) their great concern over "democracy," and (d) "the emergence of an interdependent industrial order with its challenge to the premises of economic individualism and the self-sufficient nation state."

Then on the basis of his review of the pragmatist movement, Childs undertakes to present a critical analysis of the unique contributions to education of selected leading pragmatist-educators: Professors William H. Kilpatrick, George S. Counts, Boyd H. Bode, and a team of writers comprising R. Bruce Raup, chairman, George E. Axtelle, Kenneth D. Benne and B. Othanel Smith.

In addition to the major contributions to American education indicated above, Childs has noted that each of these men has developed certain unique emphases: Kilpatrick has stressed the basic conditions of learning—that "we learn what we live." He has also contributed the "project method" as the embodiment of Dewey's "complete act of thought." Then it is proposed that Counts' special empha-

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sis has been the idea that the study of "civilization" be made "the basic category in the enterprise of education." In his treatment of the work of Boyd H. Bode, Childs has stressed the former's concern that schools undertake to help our people deal with the fundamental conflicts in our culture: on the one hand the older "absolutistic and authoritarian elements" and, on the other hand, the emergent "empirical attitudes and the method of experimental inquiry." Special consideration has been given in this volume to the varying viewpoints of these three writers relative to the matter of "indoctrination."

It appears in this connection that Childs has been perhaps more critical of the recent book by R. Bruce Raup and associates: *The Improvement of Practical Intelligence* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950). He has quoted these writers to the effect that they claim to

have added a new dimension to what they claim was Dewey's complete reliance on "factual" or "experimental inquiry." He apparently questions this claim. He also labels as "Utopian" their faith in the possibility of setting up an "uncoerced common persuasion" leading to "consensus" as the criterion of democracy. These criticisms are sure to lead to new controversy, at least among the pragmatists.

In this book Childs has undertaken to clear up "certain ambiguities and difficulties" in the writings of eminent pragmatist educators. He concludes with a note of warning in respect to the rising strength of Catholic education and the increasing demands by "Roman Catholic leaders" that their schools should have "their proportionate share of public funds."

—Reviewed by MILES E. CARY, lecturer in education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

From School Program to School Plant.

By John H. Herrick, Ralph D. McCleary, Wilfred F. Clapp and Walter Bogner. *New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956.*

This book gives wholesome evidence throughout of its origins. The points of view of the local and of the state planning agencies are harmoniously blended with those of both the architect and the consultant. Itself the product of collaboration, the book develops out of past experience and principle the need for involving in school plant planning many persons who either are or will be affected by the physical facilities developed.

Considerable stress is placed upon the school survey as a means for doing necessary spade work in advance of any specific school plant planning. A number of criteria have been enunciated for judging the merits of a school survey and the recommendations found in the school survey report. Although the authors specify that these criteria are not mutually exclusive nor all inclusive in nature and that they are not to be considered as absolutes, the statement of these principles is bound to be helpful to many a practicing school administrator, school plant consultant, and graduate student in school administration.

Probably the outstanding feature of the volume is the consistency with which the authors have kept school plant planning subordinate to the program which is to be served by the plant. The reader will find inescapable the conclusion that the program of the school is the real key to the kind of school plant that should be developed. It is emphasized that the proposed construction of a new school provides additional stimulus for taking stock of the instructional situation.

The critical reader who has had some experience with the problems of school

plant planning will undoubtedly find himself at variance with the authors in a number of particulars. Even in these instances, the difference of opinion will generally highlight the fact that the area under consideration at the moment is one of opinion rather than one of knowledge. The difference can be made to serve as a valuable basis for thoughtful appraisal and for subsequent agreement or disagreement.

It may be expected that, whereas some readers will question the value for them of the formulas presented for calculating the index for subject areas and for the number of teaching stations needed, others will find the formula approach to be a convenient facilitating device. Also, while the authors cite a "trend" toward larger general classrooms—and by implication give their blessing thereto—there are bound to be those who hold the position that research as to what constitutes an optimum area for a classroom is more essential than letting practice dictate standards. Where the authors see the large classroom as an expression of function, even they would agree that there are many instances in which it represents nothing more than being in style.

The authors have performed a notable service in crystallizing much of what has been more or less in the atmosphere of school building planning, the expression of the need to have educators do the educational planning and the need to have architects and engineers do the planning for which their training has particularly qualified them. The educator's contribution to school plant planning is educational; the architect's contribution is architectural.

—Reviewed by JAMES A. VAN ZWOLL,
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