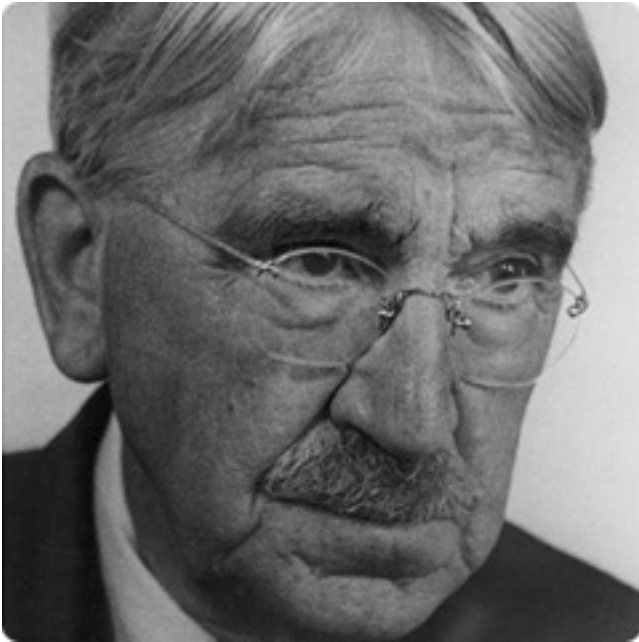


John Dewey's Plan to Dumb-Down America

As It Appeared in the FORUM,
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Preface to John Dewey's Plan to Dumb-Down America

By Samuel Blumenfeld

The dumbing-down of America is no accident. It is not the result of uncontrollable natural forces floating in the air we breathe or the water we drink. It is the result of a planned scheme launched in 1898 by Progressive-in-Chief John Dewey outlined in an article titled "The Primary-Education Fetich" (sic). Dewey was a diehard socialist with a deep hatred of capitalism, individualism, and orthodox Christianity. He, and his small army of academic followers, were determined to turn America into a humanist collectivist society and he figured out that the best way to separate Americans from their constitutional freedoms and individualism was to dumb them down.

And the easiest way to do this was to change the way children were taught to read in their primary schools. Get rid of intensive phonics, the foundation of language mastery and independent intelligence, and put in its place a "sight" or "look-say" method that teaches children to read English as if it were Chinese. Have them memorize a sight vocabulary so that they develop a whole-word reflex and cannot see the phonetic structure of our alphabetic words. Thus they will become reading disabled, dyslexic, or simply low-level readers.

Need proof? Look no further than what happened to the four Rockefeller boys back in the 1920s when John D. Rockefeller Jr. put his four sons—Nelson, Laurence, Winthrop, and David—in the Progressive Lincoln School in New York. As a misguided admirer of John Dewey, Rockefeller donated three million dollars to the school which then turned his four sons into dyslexics. Mr. Rockefeller's ignorance condemned his sons to lives of literary frustration. Yes, they had plenty of money, but their life-long reading handicap deprived them of the great pleasures of reading.

Dewey's vision of an egalitarian, socialist America was based on a novel written by Unitarian journalist Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*. The novel is a fantasy of America becoming a socialist paradise in the year 2000. Economic planning replaced free-market competition, and Americans became members of a regimented industrial army, all paid by the government.

Of course, Dewey knew that Americans would not voluntarily give

up their economic and individual freedoms, so he told his colleagues: “Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction.” And so, wholesale deception became the modus operandi of the progressive movement.

We are reprinting Dewey’s article because it is important for Americans to understand how they’ve been deceived by their so-called educators. The plan to deliberately dumb down the nation has been hidden from the public for almost 100 years. Reading it today is to become finally aware of the deceit and treachery behind this treasonous conspiracy to destroy the intellect of millions of Americans behind the benign façade of Progressive education.

When you consider the misery, frustration, despair and humiliation these teaching methods have caused in millions of American children, it becomes clear that the professional educators behind all of this were diabolically inspired.

Can we repair the damage done by Dewey’s plan? Only if the will is there and Americans are willing to face the fact that they have been betrayed by their educators.

Dewey, of course, is long dead, but his disciples control American public education, and whether they know it or not they are continuing to implement Dewey’s plan. And we see the results every day. In 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts released its report on the decline of American literacy. Its chairman, Dana Gioia stated:

“This is a massive social problem. We are losing the majority of the new generation. They will not achieve anything close to their potential because of poor reading.”

The only way to reverse this situation is to make sure that every child in every American school is taught to read with intensive, systematic phonics. We know how to restore high literacy to America. But is there the will to do it? Many parents are doing it by homeschooling their own children. But will it be done in the schools? It will be done only if there is enough of an outcry from concerned parents and citizens. That is why we urge readers of this article to distribute copies of it to as many people as possible. If this article is read by millions of Americans, it will have an impact that the educators and politicians will not be able to ignore.

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The Primary-Education Fetich

It is some years since the educational world was more or less agitated by an attack upon the place occupied by Greek in the educational scheme. If, however, Greek occupies the place of a fetich, its worshippers are comparatively few in number, and its influence is relatively slight. There is, however, a false educational god whose idolaters are legion, and whose cult influences the entire educational system. This is language-study--the study not of foreign language, but of English; not in higher, but in primary education. It is almost an unquestioned assumption, of educational theory and practice both, that the first three years of a child's school life shall be mainly taken up with learning to read and write his own language. If we add to this the learning or a certain amount of numerical combinations, we have the pivot about which primary education swings. Other subjects may be taught; but they are introduced in strict subordination.

The very fact that this procedure, as part of the natural and established course of education, is assumed as inevitable,--opposition being regarded as captious and revolutionary,--indicates that, historically, there are good reasons for the position assigned to these studies. It does not follow, however, that because this course was once wise it is so any longer. On the contrary, the fact, that this mode of education was adapted to past conditions, is in itself a reason why it should no longer hold supreme sway. The present has its claims. It is in education, if anywhere, that the claims of the present should be controlling.

To educate on the basis of past surroundings is like adapting an organism to an environment which no longer exists. The individual is stultified, if not disintegrated; and the course of progress is blocked. My proposition is, that conditions--social, industrial, and intellectual--have undergone such a radical change, that the time has come for a thoroughgoing examination of the emphasis put upon

linguistic work in elementary instruction.

The existing status was developed in a period when ability to read was practically the sole avenue to knowledge, when it was the only tool which insured control over the accumulated spiritual resources of civilization.

Scientific methods of observation, experimentation, and testing were either unknown or confined to a few specialists at the upper end of the educational ladder. Because these methods were not free, were not capable of anything like general use, it was not possible to permit the pupil to begin his school career in direct contact with the materials of nature and of life. The only guarantee, the only criterion of values, was found in the ways in which the great minds of the past had assimilated and interpreted such materials. To avoid intellectual chaos and confusion, it was necessary reverently to retrace the steps of the fathers. The régime of intellectual authority and tradition, in matters of politics, morals, and culture, was a necessity, where methods of scientific investigation and verification had not been developed, or were in the hands of the few. We often fail to see that the dominant position occupied by book-learning in school education is simply a corollary and relic of this epoch of intellectual development.

Ordinary social conditions were congruent with this intellectual status. While it cannot be said that, in the formative period of our educational system in America, authority and tradition were the ultimate sources of knowledge and belief, it must be remembered that the immediate surroundings of our ancestors were crude and undeveloped. Newspapers, magazines, libraries, art-galleries, and all the daily play of intellectual intercourse and reaction which is effective to-day were non-existent. If any escape existed from the poverty of the intellectual environment, or any road to richer and wider mental life, the exit was through the gateway of books. In presenting the attainments of the past, these maintained the bonds of spiritual continuity, and kept our forefathers from falling to the crude level of their material surroundings.

When ability to read and write marked the distinction between the educated and the uneducated man, not simply in the scholastic sense, but in the sense of one who is enslaved by his environment and one who is able to take advantage of and rise above it, corresponding importance attached to acquiring these capacities.

Reading and writing were obviously what they are still so often called--the open doors to learning and to success in life. All the

meaning that belongs to these ends naturally transferred itself to the means through which alone they could be realized. The intensity and ardor with which our forefathers set themselves to master reading and writing, the difficulties overcome, the interest attached in the ordinary routine of school-life to what now seems barren,—the curriculum of the three R's,—all testify to the motive-power these studies possessed. To learn to read and write was an interesting, even exciting, thing: it made such a difference in life.

It is hardly necessary to say that the conditions, intellectual as well as social, have changed. There are undoubtedly rural regions where the old state of things still persists. With reference to these, what I am saying has no particular meaning. But, upon the whole, the advent of quick and cheap mails, of easy and continuous travel and transportation, of the telegraph and telephone, the establishment of libraries, art-galleries, literary clubs, the universal diffusion of cheap reading-matter, newspapers and magazines of all kinds and grades,—all these have worked a tremendous change in the immediate intellectual environment. The values of life and of civilization, instead of being far away and correspondingly inaccessible, press upon the individual—at least in cities—with only too much urgency and stimulating force. We are more likely to be surfeited than starved: there is more congestion than lack of intellectual nutriment.

The capital handed down from past generations, and upon whose transmission the integrity of civilization depends, is no longer amassed in those banks termed books, but is in active and general circulation, at an extremely low rate of interest. It is futile to try to conceal from ourselves the fact that this great change in the intellectual atmosphere—this great change in the relation of the individual to accumulated knowledge—demands a corresponding educational readjustment. The significance attaching to reading and writing, as primary and fundamental instruments of culture, has shrunk proportionately as the immanent intellectual life of society has quickened and multiplied. The result is that these studies lose their motive and motor force. They have become mechanical and formal, and out of relation—when made dominant—to the rest of life.

They are regarded as more or less arbitrary tasks which must be submitted to because one is going to that mysterious thing called a school, or else are covered up and sugar-coated with all manner of pretty devices and tricks in order that the child may absorb them

unawares. The complaint made by some, that the school curriculum of today does not have the disciplinary value of the old-fashioned three R's, has a certain validity. But this is not because the old ideal has been abandoned. It is because it has been retained in spite of the change of conditions. Instead of frankly facing the situation, and asking ourselves what studies can be organized which shall do for today what language-study did for former generations, we have retained that as the centre and core of our course of study, and dressed it out with a variety of pretty pictures, objects, and games, and a smattering of science.

Along with this change in the relation of intellectual material and stimulus to the individual there has been an equally great change in the method and make-up of knowledge itself. Science and art have become free. The simplest processes and methods of knowing and doing have been worked out to such a point that they are no longer the monopolistic possessions of any class or guild. They are, in idea, and should be in deed, part of the social commonwealth. It is possible to initiate the child from the first in a direct, not abstract or symbolical, way, into the operations by which society maintains its existence, material and spiritual.

The processes of production, transportation, consumption, etc., by which society keeps up its material continuity, are conducted on such a large and public scale that they are obvious and objective. Their reproduction in embryonic form through a variety of modes of industrial training is entirely within the bounds of possibility. Moreover, methods of the discovery and communication of truth--upon which the spiritual unity of society depends--have become direct and independent, instead of remote and tied to the intervention of teacher or book.

It is not simply that children can acquire a certain amount of scientific information about things organic and inorganic: if that were all, the plea for the study of the history and literature of the past, as more humanistic, would be unanswerable. No; the significant thing is that it is possible for the child at an early day to become acquainted with, and to use, in a personal and yet relatively controlled fashion, the methods by which truth is discovered and communicated, and to make his own speech a channel for the expression and communication of truth; thus putting the linguistic side where it belongs--subordinate to the appropriation and conveyance of what is genuinely and personally experienced.

A similar modification, almost revolution, has taken place in the relation which the intellectual activities bear to the ordinary practical occupations of life. While the child of bygone days was getting an intellectual discipline whose significance he appreciated in the school, in his home life he was securing acquaintance in a direct fashion with the chief lines of social and industrial activity. Life was the main rural. The child came into contact with the scenes of nature, and was familiarized with the care of domestic animals, the cultivation of the soil, and the raising of crops. The factory system being undeveloped, the home was the centre of industry. Spinning, weaving, the making of clothes, etc., were all carried on there. As there was little accumulation of wealth, the child had to take part in these, as well as to participate in the usual rounds of household occupations. Only those who have passed through such training, and, later on, have seen children reared in city environments, can adequately realize the amount of training, mental and moral, involved in this extra-school life. That our successful men have come so largely from the country, is an indication of the educational value bound up with such participation in this practical life. It was not only an adequate substitute for what we now term manual training, in the development of the hand and eye, in the acquisition skill and deftness; but it was initiation into self-reliance, independence of judgment and action, and was the best stimulus to habits of regular and continuous work.

In the urban and suburban life of a child to-day this is simply a memory. The invention of machinery; the institution of the factory system; the division of labor; have changed the home from a workshop into a simple dwelling-place. The crowding into cities and the increase in servants have deprived the child of an opportunity to take part in those occupations which still remain. Just at the time when a child is subjected to a great increase in stimulus and pressure from his environment, he loses the practical and motor training necessary to balance his intellectual development. Facility in acquiring information is gained: the power of using it is lost. While need of the more formal intellectual training in the school has decreased, there arises an urgent demand for the introduction of methods of manual and industrial discipline which shall give the child what he formerly obtained in his home and social life.

Here we have at least a *prima facie* case for reconsideration of the whole question of the relative importance of learning to read and write in primary education. Hence the necessity of meeting the

question at closer quarters. What can be said against giving up the greater portion of the first two years of school life to the mastery of linguistic form? In the first place, physiologists are coming to believe that the sense organs and connected nerve and motor apparatus of the child are not at this period best adapted to the confining and analytic work of learning to read and write. There is an order in which sensory and motor centres develop,—an order expressed, in a general way, by saying that the line of progress is from the larger, coarser adjustments having to do with the bodily system as a whole (those nearest the trunk of the body) to the finer and accurate adjustments having to do with the periphery and extremities of the organism. The oculist tells us that the vision of the child is essentially that of the savage; being adapted to seeing large and somewhat remote objects in the mass—not near-by objects in detail. To violate this law means undue nervous strain: it means putting the greatest tension upon the centres least able to do the work. At the same time, the lines of activity which are hungering and thirsting for action are left, unused, to atrophy. The act of writing—especially in the barbarous fashion, long current in the school, of compelling the child to write on ruled lines in a small hand and with the utmost attainable degree of accuracy—involves a nicety and complexity of adjustments of muscular activity which can only be appreciated by the specialist. As the principal of a Chicago school has wittily remarked in this connection, “The pen is literally mightier than the sword.” Forcing children at a premature age to devote their entire attention to these refined and cramped adjustments has left behind a sad record of injured nervous systems and of muscular disorders and distortions. While there are undoubted exceptions, present physiological knowledge points to the age of about eight years as early enough for anything more than an incidental attention to visual and written language-form.

We must not forget that these forms are symbols. I am far from depreciating the value of symbols in our intellectual life. It is hardly too much to say that all progress in civilization upon the intellectual side has depended upon increasing invention and control of symbols of one sort or another. Nor do I join in the indiscriminating cry of those who condemn the study of language as having to do with mere words, not with realities. Such a position is one-sided, and is as crude as the view against which it is a reaction. But there is an important question here: Is the child of six or seven years ready for symbols to such an extent that the stress of educational life can be thrown upon

them? If we were to look at the question independently of the existing school system, in the light of the child's natural needs and interests at this period, I doubt if there could be found anyone who would say that the urgent call of the child of six and seven is for this sort of nutriment, instead of for more direct introduction into the wealth of natural and social forms that surrounds him. No doubt the skilful teacher often succeeds in awakening an interest in these matters; but the interest has to be excited in a more or less artificial way, and, when excited, is somewhat factitious, and independent of other-interests of child-life. At this point the wedge is introduced and driven in, which marks the growing divorce between school and outside interests and occupations.

We cannot recur too often in educational matters to the conception of John Fiske, that advance in civilization is an accompaniment of the prolongation of infancy. Anything which, at this period, develops to a high degree any set of organs and centres at the expense of others means premature specialization, and the arrest of an equable and all-around development. Many educators are already convinced that premature facility and glibness in the matter of numerical combinations tend toward an arrested development of certain higher spiritual capacities. The same thing is true in the matter of verbal symbols. Only the trained psychologist is aware of the amount of analysis and abstraction demanded by the visual recognition of a verbal form. Many suppose that abstraction is found only where more or less complex reasoning exists. But as a matter of fact the essence of abstraction is found in compelling attention to rest upon elements which are more or less cut off from direct channels of interest and action. To require a child to turn away from the rich material which is all about him, to which he spontaneously attends, and which is his natural, unconscious food, is to compel the premature use of analytic and abstract powers. It is willfully to deprive the child of that synthetic life, that unconscious union with his environment, which is his birthright and privilege.

There is every reason to suppose that a premature demand upon the abstract intellectual capacity stands in its own way. It cripples rather than furthers later intellectual development. We are not yet in a position to know how much of the inertia and seeming paralysis of mental powers in later periods is the direct outcome of excessive and too early to appeal to isolated intellectual capacity. We must trust to the development of physiology and psychology to make these matters so clear that school authorities and the public opinion which controls

them shall have no option. Only then can we hope to escape that deadening of the childish activities which led Jowett to call education “the grave of the mind.”

Were the matter not so serious it would be ludicrous, when we reflect all this time and effort to reach the end to which they are specially consecrated. It is a common saying among intelligent educators that they can go into a schoolroom and select the children who picked up reading at home: they read so much more naturally and intelligently. The stilted, mechanical, droning, and sing-song ways of reading which prevail in many of our schools are simply the reflex of the lack of motive. Reading is made an isolated accomplishment. There are no aims in the child’s mind which he feels he can serve by reading; there is no mental hunger to be satisfied; there are no conscious problems with reference to which he uses books. The book is a reading-lesson. He learns to read not for the sake of what he reads, but for the mere sake of reading. When the bare process of reading is thus made an end in itself, it is a psychological impossibility for reading to be other than lifeless.

It is quite true that all better teachers now claim that the formal act of reading should be made subordinate to the sense of what is read, that the child has first to grasp the idea, and then to express his mental realization. But, under present conditions, this profession cannot be carried out. The following paragraph from the report of the Committee of Fifteen on elementary education states clearly enough the reason why; though, as it seems to me, without any consciousness of the real inference which should be drawn from the facts set forth:- “The first three years’ work of the child is occupied mainly with the mastery of the printed and written forms of the words of his colloquial vocabulary,—words that he is already familiar enough with as sounds addressed to the ear. He has to become familiar with the new forms addressed to the eye; and it would be an unwise method to require him to learn many new words at the same time that he is learning to recognize his old words• in their new shape. But as soon as he has acquired (before three years) some facility in reading what is printed in the colloquial style, he may go on to selections from standard authors.”

The material of the reading-lesson is thus found wholly in the region of familiar words and ideas. It is out of the question for the child to find anything in the ideas themselves to arouse and hold attention. His mind is fixed upon the mere recognition and utterance

of the forms. Thus begins that fatal divorce between the substance and the form of expression, which, fatal to reading as an art, reduces it to a mechanical action. The utter triviality of the contents of our school "Primers" and "First Readers," shows the inevitable outcome of forcing the mastery of external language-forms upon the child at a premature period. Take up the first half-dozen or dozen such books you meet with, and ask yourself how much there is in the ideas presented worthy of respect from any intelligent child of six years.

Methods for learning to read come and go across the educational arena, like the march of supernumeraries upon the stage. Each is heralded as the final solution of the problem of learning to read; but each in turn gives way to some later discovery. The simple fact is--that they all lack the essential of any well-grounded method, namely, relevancy to the child's mental needs. No scheme for learning to read can supply this want. Only a new motive--putting the child into a vital relation to the materials to be read--can be of service here. It is evident that this condition cannot be met, unless learning to read be postponed to a period when the child's intellectual appetite is more consciously active, and when he is mature enough to deal more rapidly and effectively with the formal and mechanical difficulties.

The endless drill, with its continual repetitions, is another instance of the same evil. Even when the attempt is made to select material with some literary or historic worth of its own, the practical outcome is much like making *Paradise Lost* the basis of parsing-lessons, or Caesar's Gallic Wars an introduction to Latin syntax. So much attention has to be given to the formal side that the spiritual value evanesces. No one can estimate the benumbing and hardening effect of this continued drill upon mere form. Another even more serious evil is the consequent emptiness of mind induced. The mental room is swept and garnished--and that is all. The moral result is even more deplorable than the intellectual. At this plastic period, when images which take hold of the mind exercise such suggestive motor force, nothing but husks are provided. Under the circumstances, our schools are doing great things for the moral education of children; but all efforts in this direction must necessarily be hampered and discounted until the school-teacher shall be perfectly free to find the bulk of the material of instruction for the early school-years in something which has intrinsic value,--something whose introduction into consciousness is so vital as to be personal and reconstructive.

It should be obvious that what I have in mind is not a Philistine

attack upon books and reading. The question is not how to get rid of them, but how to get their value,—how to use them to their capacity as servants of the intellectual and moral life. The plea for the predominance of learning to read in early school-life because of the great importance attaching to literature seems to me a perversion. Just because literature is so important, it is desirable to postpone the child's introduction to printed speech until he is capable of appreciating and dealing with its genuine meaning. Now, the child learns to read as a mechanical tool, and gets very little conception of what is worth reading. The result is, that, after he has mastered the art and wishes to use it; he has no standard by which to direct it. He is about as likely to use it in one way as in another. It would be ungrateful not to recognize the faithfulness and relative success with which teachers, for the last ten or fifteen years, have devoted themselves to raising the general tone of reading with their pupils. But, after all, they are working against great odds. Our ideal should be that the child should have a personal interest in what is read, a personal hunger for it, and a personal power of satisfying this appetite. The adequate realization of this ideal is impossible until the child comes to the reading-material with a certain background of experience which makes him appreciate the difference between the trivial, the merely amusing and exciting, and that which has permanent and serious meaning. This is impossible so long as the child has not been trained in the habit of dealing with material outside of books, and has formed, through contact with the realities of experience, habits of recognizing and dealing with problems in the direct personal way. The isolation of material found in books from the material which the child experiences in life itself—the forcing of the former upon the child before he has well-organized powers of dealing with the latter—is an unnatural divorce which cannot have any other result than defective standards of appreciation, and a tendency to elevate the sensational and transiently interesting above the valuable and the permanent.

Two results of our wrong methods are so apparent in higher education that they are worth special mention. They are exhibited in the paradox of the combination of slavish dependence upon books with real inability to use them effectively.

The famous complaint of Agassiz—that students could not see for themselves—is still repeated by every teacher of science in our high schools and colleges. How many teachers of science will tell you, for example, that, when their students are instructed to find out

something about an object, their first demand is for a book in which they can read about it; their first reaction, one of helplessness, when they are told that they must go to the object itself and let it tell its own story? It is not exaggerating to say that the book habit is so firmly fixed that very many pupils, otherwise intelligent, have a positive aversion to directing their attention to things themselves,—it seems so much simpler to occupy the mind with what someone else has said about these things.

While it is mere stupidity not to make judicious use of the discoveries and attainments of others, the substitution of the seeing of others for the use of one's own eyes is such a self-contradictory principle as to require criticism. We only need recognize the extent to which it actually obtains.

On the other hand, we have the relative incapacity of students to use easily and economically these very tools—books—to which most of their energies have been directed. It is a common experience with, I will not say only the teachers of undergraduate students, but of graduate students,—candidates for advanced degrees,—to find that in every special subject a large amount of time and energy has to be spent in learning how to use the books. To take a book and present an adequate condensed synopsis of its points of view and course of argument is an exercise, not merely in reading; but in thinking. To know how to turn quickly to a number of books bearing upon a given topic, to choose what is needed, and to find what is characteristic of the author and important in the subject, are matters which the majority of even graduate students have to learn over again for themselves. If such be the case,—and yet attention to books has been the dominant note of all previous education,—we are surely within bounds in asking if there is not something radically wrong in the way in which books have been used. It is a truism to say that the value of books consists in their relation to life, in the keenness and range which they impart to powers of penetration and interpretation. It is no truism to say that the premature and unrelated use of books stands in the way. Our means defeat the very end to which they are used.

Just a word about the corresponding evils: We have to take into account not simply the results produced by forcing language-work unduly, but also the defects in development due to the crowding out of other objects. Every respectable authority insists that the period of childhood, lying between the years of four and eight or nine, is the plastic period in sense and emotional life. What are we doing to

shape these capacities? What are we doing to feed this hunger? If one compares the powers and needs of the child in these directions with what is actually supplied in the regimen of the three R's, the contrast is pitiful, tragic. This epoch is also the budding-time for the formation of efficient and orderly habits on the motor side: it is pre-eminently the time when the child wishes to do things, and when his interest in doing can be turned to educative account. No one can clearly set before himself the vivacity and persistency of the child's motor instincts at this period, and then call to mind the continued grind of reading and writing, without feeling that the justification of our present curriculum is psychologically impossible. It is simply a superstition: it is a remnant of an outgrown period of history.

All this might be true, and yet there might be no subject-matter sufficiently organized for introduction into the school curriculum, since this demands, above all things, a certain definiteness of presentation and of development. But we are not in this unfortunate plight. There are subjects which are as well fitted to meet the child's dominant needs as they are to prepare him for the civilization in which he has to play his part. There is art in a variety of modes--music, drawing, painting, modeling, etc. These media not only afford a regulated outlet in which the child may project his inner impulses and feelings in outward form, and come to consciousness of himself, but are necessities in existing social life. The child must be protected against some of the hard and over-utilitarian aspect of modern civilization: positively, they are needed, because some degree of artistic and creative power is necessary to take the future worker out of the ranks of unskilled labor, and to feed his consciousness in his hours of contact with purely mechanical things.

Those modes of simple scientific observation and experiment which go under the name of "nature-study" are calculated to appeal to and keep active the keenness of the child's interest in the world about him, and to introduce him gradually to those methods of discovery and verification which are the essential characteristics of modern intellectual life. On the social side, they give the child an acquaintance with his environment,--an acquaintance more and more necessary, under existing conditions, for the maintenance of personal and social health, for understanding and conducting business pursuits, and for the administration of civic affairs. What is crudely termed manual training--the variety of constructive activities, which, begun in the Kindergarten, ought never to be given up--is equally adapted

to the characteristic needs of the child and to the present demands of associated life. These activities afford discipline in continuous and orderly application of powers, strengthen habits of attention and industry, and beget self-reliant and ingenious judgment. As preparation for future social life, they furnish insight into the mechanical and industrial occupations upon which our civilization depends, and keep alive that sense of the dignity of work essential to democracy. History and literature, once more, provide food for the eager imagination of the child. While giving it worthy material, they may check its morbid and chaotic exercise. They present to the child typical conditions of social life, they exhibit the struggles which have brought it into being, and picture the spiritual which it has culminated.

Due place cannot be given to and history until the teacher is free to select them for their intrinsic value, and not from the standpoint of the child's ability to recognize written and printed verbal symbols. Here we have the controlling factors in the primary curriculum of the future,—manual training, science nature-study, art, and history. These keep alive the child's positive and creative impulses, and direct them in such ways as to discipline them into the habits of thought and action required for effective participation in community life.

Were the attempt suddenly made to throw out, or reduce to a minimum, language-work in the early grades, the last state of our schools would undoubtedly be worse than the first. Not immediate substitution is what is required, but consideration of the whole situation, and organization of the materials and methods of science, history, and the arts to make them adequate educational agencies. Many of our present evils are due to compromise and inconsistency. We have neither one thing nor the other,—neither the systematic, all-pervasive discipline of the three R's, nor a coherent training in constructive work, history, and nature-study. We have a mixture of the two.

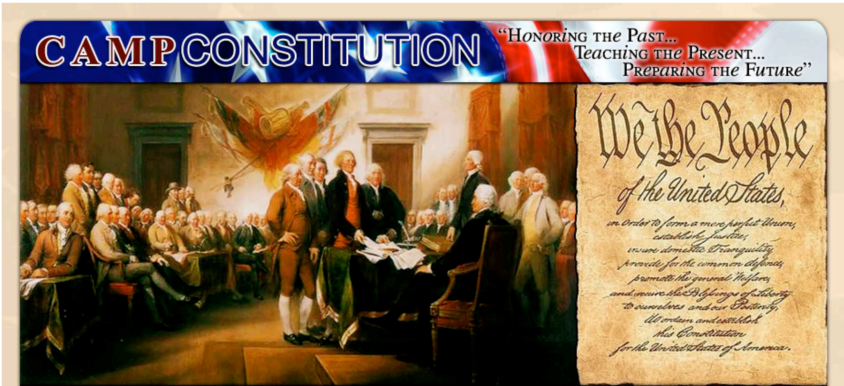
The former is supposed to furnish the element of discipline and to constitute the standard of success; while the latter supplies the factor of interest. What is needed is a thoroughgoing reconciliation of the ideals of thoroughness, definiteness, and order, summed up in the notion of discipline, with those of appeal to individual capacities and demands, summed up in the word "interest." This is the Educational Problem, as it relates to the elementary school.

Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise

its final success by favoring a violent reaction. What is needed in the first place is that there should be a full and frank statement of conviction with regard to the matter from physiologists and psychologists and from those school administrators who are conscious of the evils of the present régime. Educators should also frankly face the fact that the New Education, as it exists to-day, is a compromise and a transition: it employs new methods; but its controlling ideals are virtually those of the Old Education. Wherever movements looking to a solution of the problem are intelligently undertaken, they should receive encouragement, moral and financial, from the intellectual leaders of the community. There are already in existence a considerable number of educational "experiment stations," which represent the outposts of educational progress. If these schools can be adequately supported for a number of years they will perform a great vicarious service. After such schools have worked out carefully and definitely the subject matter of a new curriculum,—finding the right place for language-studies and placing them in their right perspective,—the problem of the more general educational reform will be immensely simplified and facilitated. There will be clear standards, well-arranged material, and coherent methods upon which to proceed. To build up and equip such schools is, therefore, the wisest and most economic policy, in avoiding the friction and waste consequent upon casual and spasmodic attempts at educational reform.

All this amounts to saying that school reform is dependent upon a collateral wider change in the public opinion which controls school board, superintendent, and teachers. There are certain minor changes; reforms in detail, which can be effected directly within the school system itself. But the school is not an isolated institution: it is one of an organism of social forces. To secure more scientific principles of work in the school, means, accordingly, clearer vision and wiser standards of thought and action in the community at large. The

Educational Problem is ultimately, that society shall see clearly its own conditions and needs, and set resolutely about meeting them. If the recognition be once secured, we need have no doubts about the consequent action. Let the community once realize that it is educating upon the basis of a life which it has left behind, and it will turn, with adequate intellectual and material resources, to meet the needs of the present hour.



Camp Constitution is an unincorporated association of Constitutionalists serving as volunteers to see that knowledge and blessings of liberty are passed on from generation to generation. Camp Constitution runs a week-long family summer camp program that is true to its motto “Honoring the Past...Teaching the Present...Preparing the Future...” The camp program includes classes on the U.S. Constitution, current events, and how to be a freedom activist.

Our instructors include authors, elected officials and experts in their fields. Camp attendees participate in field trips to historic sites like Lexington Battle Green and Concord Bridge and recreation activities which include swimming, hiking, volleyball, basketball, and rock climbing.

In addition to the summer camp program, Camp Constitution will be reprinting pamphlets and essays like “Republics and Democracies. The camp has channels on YouTube, Vimeo, Daily Motion and Metacafe that contain videos of classes, interviews, and other videos of importance. Please visit our web site campconstitution.net

Camp Constitution recommends visiting the camp book store AmericanistBookStore.com for many of the books we use at camp or written by our instructors.