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EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

SPECULATIONS ON A LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS

In one of a series of articles prepared by William H. Stauffer, State tax economist, for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* the several paths which the General Assembly may follow at its present session are outlined and analyzed. With regard to public schools, Mr. Stauffer asserts, there are four lines of action:

"These are, first, to appropriate an amount equivalent to that actually given to the localities by the state in the 1933-34 school year, thus continuing the inequities and inadequacies which obtain at the moment; second, to appropriate that amount which was appropriated by the 1932 General Assembly for the 1933-34 session, which is to say, approximately \$2,000,000 more than is actually being received by the localities from the state; third, to adopt the minimum program sponsored by the State Board of Education and planned so as to place upon the state a cost of \$8,400,000 or \$2,905,000 more than is actually available to the localities in the present session; and fourth, to adopt the minimum program proposed by the author—a program which

would involve a state cost of \$8,295,000 or \$2,800,000 more than is actually available to the localities in the present session."

Confidence that the Legislature will not follow the first or second plan because both continue existing inequalities leads the writer to the conclusion that the choice will lie between the latter two solutions.

"It has been generally agreed," says Mr. Stauffer, "that a minimum educational program in Virginia should consist of an eight months school term, an average teacher's salary sufficient to insure a minimum instructional competence, a teacher load which will be economical and at the same time educationally sound, and an apportionment of the cost of such a program that will be equitable to the state as well as to each of the political subdivisions."

RESUSCITATION AFTER APPARENT GRADUATION

The college graduate of today has been "badly damaged by his education," according to Dr. Stephen Leacock, author and head of the department of Political Economy, McGill University, Montreal. Mr. Leacock, speaking before the National Council of Teachers of English in Detroit, went on to say: "In the first place, a great mass of what he has learned very soon turns into a heap of debris, without any apparent connection with anything else in life. His Latin subsides into a pile of prepositions, governing—something, but he doesn't remember what; fragments of a table of irregular verbs, and a list of nouns ending in *-is* which are not of the gender one would have expected them to be,—whatever that was. Mathematics fades away into such dim remembrances as that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal and if the equal sides be produced—very serious consequences follow, one wouldn't care to say just what.

"These damages, however, are merely negative. There are others which are posi-

tive and represent not only a loss but an active harm. This is especially the case with such a subject as literature. The graduate who has had to take one semester of Shakespeare will never open his plays again. Having been made to memorize a list of the six chief beauties of Shakespeare's style and the seven reasons why Falstaff is funny, he is fed up with all of them. Literature read at college for a college examination is forever despoiled of its real meaning.

"The basis of the trouble lies in the fact that education in nine cases out of ten, and in nine-tenths of its extent, is not pursued for its own sake. It is pursued as a legal condition for getting into a profession with which at first hand it has nothing to do. One cannot be a dentist without understanding (for three hours) quadratic equations. One cannot be admitted to the bar without conjugating, at least once and never again, *nolo, I don't want to*. The real meaning of education is lost in the use we put it to.

"Hence education turns into a vast machinery of tests and examinations, credits, units, and years. It is hard for a student to carry with him any love of learning for its own sake. If he does, he will spend too much time in foolishly reading what he wants to read and end by never being a dentist at all.

"I do not propose any remedy other than those of the spirit. The machine is necessary in the life we lead. Very few graduates end up as educated men, though the training makes them capable men. Educated people are those who think for themselves, inquire and wonder and reflect. Few graduates do this.

"All that is possible is to try to keep alive within the limitations that hedge it around and in the atmosphere that tries to stifle it, the ideal of learning for learning's sake, the beautiful and unending search for the unfindable, infinite reality."

MEANS OF TEACHING WORLD PEACE

Today, as perhaps never before in the history of civilization, there is need of teachers committed to a program of world peace and international friendship. Such teachers can make a very real contribution by beginning to stimulate in children mental and emotional attitudes which are absolutely vital for the success of a peace program.

To this end the educational department of the Women's International League is making a study of appropriate material, hoping eventually to organize it into some form which will be attractive and usable in the classroom. The aim is, as far as possible, to keep its suggestions so definite and specific that teachers may actually experiment with them in different school situations, perhaps evaluate them, and present their conclusions. Suggestions and constructive criticism from teachers would be both welcome and valuable aids in planning for future work, and teachers would have the satisfaction of knowing that they had done a real piece of service in this field.

The Women's International League is searching for stories, songs, plays, pictures, and suggestions for informal dramatization, posters, and projects—these to be adapted to the needs of the different age groups. A prize of \$25.00 will be given for the most valuable material sent in not later than April 1, 1934.

The results of the study will be in available form early in the spring; and after its publication, teachers will be sent free copies upon request to the Philadelphia office, (1924 Chestnut Street).

"Up to July 24, 1929, school teachers in the United States," according to P. P. Claxton, former U. S. Commissioner of Education, "had no legal justification for teaching anti-war doctrine to public school students. Since then they have no excuse for not doing so. Before then it might have been considered 'propaganda.' Since then they are

teaching the higher citizenship in compliance with the supreme law of the land."

VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

At the annual meeting of the Virginia Library Association, held in Richmond recently, officers for 1934 were elected as follows:

President—Mr. C. W. Dickinson, Jr., Director, Libraries and Textbooks, State Board of Education, Richmond.

First Vice-President—Miss J. M. Campbell, Librarian, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg,

Second Vice-President—Mr. Ralph M. Brown, Librarian, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg.

Secretary-Treasurer—Miss Mary Louise Dinwiddie, Assistant Librarian of University of Virginia, University.

RICHMOND LIBRARIAN WINS BOOK MENDING KIT

Miss Lalla Mayo, librarian at Bainbridge Junior High School, won a book mending kit in connection with the school library exhibit at the recent meeting of the Virginia Education Association. Miss Mayo was awarded the kit in competition with 147 state school librarians. It contains tools and materials for the repairing of old and damaged books, and was donated by Demco Library Supplies, Madison, Wisconsin.

THE RIGHT METHOD

We decry the prevalence of formalism in our schools but by far the most serious type of formalism is that which is based upon the assumption that any one teaching procedure can be made to fit all educational materials, all teachers, and all learners. I should like to plead for intelligent teachers in the choice of their teaching methods at least a small fraction of that freedom which our educational theorists would grant to children in choosing the lessons that they are to learn.—*W. C. Bagley.*

THE READING TABLE

MANAGEMENT AND TEACHING TECHNIQUES. By George A. Retan. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1933. Pp. 370.

This book sets forth in clear, direct style the most important characteristics of all phases of teaching with special emphasis on the activity program. The author's purpose in writing it is to aid beginning teachers in the training school and also in the field to get a better idea of what education is and how to aid pupils in attaining it.

While there is nothing original in the techniques described, the underlying principles of development of a complete personality—through social adjustments and participation; through use of present interests, capacities, and needs of the individual; and through a scientific or problem-solving approach to learning—show use of sound psychology. It is one of the few books of its type that emphasizes the Gestalt theory in learning. "Learning," the author states, "is a continuous process of readjustment to the environment; a growth and development of the child as a result of his on-reaching self-activity. The concern of the teacher, in her work with the child, is in his interests, capacities, and abilities." According to this philosophy child study becomes the basis of all method.

In a very practical discussion of the place of the school in the community and the relationship of parent and teacher, especially as it affects subsequent influence on the development of the child, the author says, "Once the teacher has won the confidence of the parent and has been able to help the child somewhat, she will be in a position to be of real service in guiding the future education of the child."

As a textbook for student teachers the book will probably find its greatest usefulness, since it is so clear, suggests many valuable exercises, and has an excellent bibliography. Beginners in the field and any teacher not familiar with the procedures in