

# THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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## EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

### ARE TEACHERS FREE?

IT SEEMS that the teachers of Washington, D. C., never get through taking examinations. Only last summer the *Washington Post* published a set of questions submitted to the teachers by Mr. Thomas Blanton, Congressman representing the Seventeenth District of Texas. Mr. Blanton was a member of the House Committee on Appropriations and evidently wanted to search the minds of Washington teachers before voting to appropriate money for their salaries. The essential parts of his letter to the teachers were as follows:

As chairman of the sub-committee handling the District Appropriation Bill, to obviate a hearing and to save you the time and inconvenience of coming before us in person, I request that you kindly give us the following information, and return it promptly in the enclosed addressed envelope requiring no postage:

What is your present position? School? Salary? Do you believe in any of the doctrines of communism? If so, which? Do you approve of communism being given any favor or support in the schools?

Do you believe there is a God? Do you believe in some form of religion?

Are you a subscriber to the *Social Frontier*? Were you asked to subscribe? If so, by whom?

Are you a member of the N. E. A.? Since when? Who suggested joining? Have you a copy of *Conclusions and Recommendations*? Have you read same?

Have you a copy of Counts' *Dare the Schools*

*Build a New Social Order?* Have you read same? Do you approve of Dr. George S. Counts' writings? Do you approve of Dr. Charles A. Beard's writings? Have you been to Russia? Did you attend school there?

Have you read *Boy and Girl Tramps of America* by Thomas Minehan? Do you approve of it? Are you in favor of high-school girls reading it? Would you read it aloud? Have you read *Made in Russia*? Do you approve of it?

Do you approve of *Scholastic* as a school magazine for high-school students? Do you know why the School Committee's recommendation to eliminate it from the Washington public schools has been held up? If so, why?

After answering all these in blanks left for that purpose, the teacher must sign under a printed declaration saying: "My answers above are correct."

Mr. Blanton does not explain just what relation the replies to these questions are to his duty of "handling the District Appropriation Bill." Possibly he was just airing his antipathy for Counts, Beard, Minehan and the N. E. A., or merely parading his "patriotism." Or probably he was trying to intimidate the teachers of Washington into unthinking automatons. However, his Texas constituents evidently did not appreciate his patriotism or his valuable service to his country; for in the primary election last spring they elected him to stay at home during the sessions of the next Congress.

We respectfully recommend that Mr. Blanton and all teachers read the new book, *Are American Teachers Free?* It was written by Howard K. Beale, and is Volume XII of the Report of the Commission on the Social Studies, sponsored by the American Historical Association. It gives innumerable examples of dismissal of teachers or suppression of their expression and repression of their freedom beyond what would be borne by any other intelligent group. But Mr. Beale's chief concern is not for the teachers, but for the children and future society.

The real problem of those interested in freedom is not to prevent dismissal but to protect the teacher from innumerable repressions short of dismissal, which prevent his full self-expression or deny him the privilege of intellectual honesty. . . Ground may be found for defending the teacher's "right" to freedom, but the larger

social aspects are of more vital importance. The question of freedom and restraint of teachers vitally affects school children, the community, society itself, the future.

—R. C. MOORE,

in *The Illinois Teacher*, December, 1936.

#### A-C-E CONVENTION

WELL-KNOWN leaders in the field of childhood education and delegates representing the twenty-three thousand members will participate in the five-day session of the Association for Childhood Education meeting in San Antonio, Texas, March 30.

"Today's Trends in Childhood Education" will be the convention theme. Since significant changes have been and are taking place in the administration and practice of the elementary school, it is important to analyze as clearly and as critically as possible the trends that characterize these changes. Consequently, the program is planned to develop a clearer understanding of the direction of present trends in elementary education, to give information as to how these trends are affecting educational practices at the present time, and to make some evaluation of these trends.

Speakers invited for the evening programs include John W. Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education, "Trends in Cooperation Between Home, School and Community"; Paul Hanna, Leland Stanford University and author of *Youth Serves the Community*, "The Child and the Teacher in Today's Educational Trends"; B. F. Pittenger, Dean of the School of Education, Univ. of Texas, "Curriculum Changes in Response to the Demands of Everyday Living"; and T. V. Smith, Univ. of Chicago, who will speak at the dinner meeting.

One of the convention events will be a festival celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the kindergarten in Blankenburg, Germany, in 1837, by Friedrich Froebel.

#### BRIEF, SIMPLE SPEECH WINS ON RADIO

TO CATCH and hold the greatest number of listeners, a radio talk should be worded simply, phrased clearly, and delivered intimately, says E. R. Murrow, Director of Talks of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

"After all," he reminds us, "every radio speaker is a guest in somebody's house." Therefore, he concludes, microphone talks should be conversational, not oratorical, and should come from the quiet intimacy of a broadcasting studio rather than from a public hall.

"Radio," he tells potential aircasters, "is a peculiar sort of social medium, more powerful and more intimate than any social instrument developed since printing. Its microphone serves as a direct, personal contact between speaker and listener. In preparing a talk, therefore, select a subject that is interesting, important, and vital. Make it alive with things of homely interest, avoid statistics, and leave the audience wanting more.

"Harranguing, shouting, and oratory are not in the arts of conversation. The effectiveness of a radio talk depends largely on preparation and on the ability to be personal. Word the message simply, phrase it clearly, and deliver it as in an intimate conversation. If this is done, one may be certain of an effective, interesting, and convincing talk."

#### IS THE SMALL TOWN UNFAIR TO THE TEACHER?

Condensed by Wilfred Eberhart, of Ohio State University, from Bernard De Voto's essay, "Tyranny at Longfellow School," in *Harper's Magazine*, January, 1937.

IF Kitty Smith, who teaches at Longfellow School in Caribou, Nebraska, should take a sunbath in a backless bathing suit on the lawn in front of her rooming house, smoke a cigarette on the way to

school, drink a cocktail at the combination hot-dog stand and dance hall some miles out of town, or be seen necking with the Jones boy in a parked car under the cottonwoods, she would be discharged for unseemly behavior.

Are American teachers free? Nearly everyone knows that they are not, a realization confirmed by the recent, significant report of the Commission on Social Studies of the American Historical Association.

But let us meditate further on the case of Kitty Smith. Miss Robinson, who works in the Caribou bank, smokes in public without reproach. Stenographers neck without being penalized. The matron who is corresponding secretary for the Eastern Star sometimes takes a cocktail. Why should Caribou treat teachers as a special class and impose upon them a stricter moral code than it imposes even on its own daughters?

It looks pretty bad. But let us not too hastily denounce Caribou and its thousand sister villages and towns. Teachers are, in fact, a special class. For one thing, they are paid with public funds; for another, they are charged with the successful initiation of the young into the conventions and ideals of the community. Caribou requires its firemen to keep in athletic condition, a discriminatory special requirement intended to insure the community against social loss. It requires highly conventional behavior from its teachers for the same reason. You may call Caribou's treatment of Kitty illogical, repressive, and discriminatory; but if Kitty were allowed to flout conventions, the social integration that is the health of Caribou would be gone.

#### COMBATING CHEAP MAGAZINES

"'Pulp' magazines are less a menace to pupils' morals and English than to their minds," said Miss Anita P. Forbes of the Weaver High School, Hartford, Connecticut, at the Boston meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English. "There are three reasons for the appeal of the cheap

magazines: they afford thrills; they help while away idle minutes; and they require no mental effort from the reader.

"The third fact is of most concern, for good books demand the co-operation of the reader. How is that habit of active perception and appreciation to be formed in minds accustomed to finding entertainment without exercise? What chance of happiness will young people stand if they have no mental armor against a highly complex and utterly unpredictable world but the notions gained from sentimental stories with a conventional plot?

"Through the reading of good books, fiction and non-fiction alike, students may be led to face facts squarely and with courage. The best writers will show them the beauty of inner rather than outer victories, the value in defeat, and the challenges offered to man by the universe. By contrast with such literature, pulp stories will eventually become tasteless.

"To combat cheap magazines, make a magazine project part of the program for every year in senior high school; select different and more mature magazines each year; increase the school library fund for magazines. Lead young readers gradually and pleasantly up to non-fiction by offering reading that does not make too heavy demands at first, by calling attention to articles of interest, and by making use of material that is attractively illustrated."

#### BOOK ORDERS

Orders for books for public school libraries in the total amount of \$8,314.27 were recently forwarded to publishers by C. W. Dickinson, Jr., State Director of School Libraries and Textbooks. These orders from schools in thirty-four counties and five cities were received during a period of eight days; the \$1,000-a-day rate establishes a new "high," according to Mr. Dickinson, for the Division of School Libraries of the State Department of Education.