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## Outside the Classroom

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### I

IT IS BECOMING increasingly evident that educators throughout the country are turning to a more realistic program in education to prepare American youth for present and post-war needs. More specifically, this means that a greater emphasis is being placed upon the teaching of a wider range of skills. It does not necessarily mean that philosophy and the arts are less important, but that increasingly more importance is placed upon skills and that real understanding and appreciation more logically follow experience. It is no doubt true that we learn very little except through direct experience and that a close relationship is needed between reading and experience. Obviously the motivation for this change in education today is brought about by the sudden and increased demand for people who know how to do specific jobs. To carry on successfully a world-wide, mechanized war, the range of technical skills needed is greater than ever before.

Already we are witnessing a great change in the present college and high school curricula, and to some extent in the elementary grades. The High School Victory Corps Program emphasizes training in the skills needed to carry on various types of community service and welfare work. It places much emphasis upon the training for mechanical skills using various types of machines in numerous fields. Also, it emphasizes vigor-

ously, and rightly so, man's relationship to earth and his dependence upon the products from the earth. Gardening, farming and other actual work is now a patriotic service and not thought of as mere work alone. Participation in the salvage program, emphasis on conservation of natural resources, organization in the community for the welfare and protection of citizens in case of danger or catastrophe may seem to be a strange emphasis in education, but thoroughly understood and endorsed by the average citizen.

We need not stretch our imaginations far to see in this new direction of education a sensible and practical program for a new type of community education for American youth in a world of peace. The greatest danger will be that a wave of returning to status quo is likely to sweep over the country as soon as hostilities cease. One of the greatest opportunities for American education is now ours if it can be crystallized into specific curriculum changes and administration leadership provided. The responsibility therefore rests primarily with school administrators and those responsible for the training of teachers in our schools.

While the war emergency necessarily forced these immediate changes in education, there were many conditions existing in our schools and country which alone would justify a modification of curriculum and procedures. One need only



review the history of American education from the time it was decided as a corner-stone in our democracy that every child should have a free education to see that our system of education has come to be considerably regimented and systematic, in spite of changing philosophy and noble leadership to prevent it. At the outset the school curriculum provided the 3 Rs—that was the practical thing to do. With rapidly changing social and economic conditions, new subjects were added to the curriculum, but the curriculum became crowded with subjects.

At this point there was a definite trend toward grouping certain subjects, as in the social sciences. Some call this expansion and change "integration." There was much pressure for standard curricula. Along with this was the movement for standard schools, and throughout the country today, in spite of some newer developments in the community type of school buildings, there is unfortunately little difference in the structure of our American school buildings and grounds. Undoubtedly, standardization in buildings has had its good points, but in the long view it has tended to systematize the program. Structure almost invariably determines program.

In the past twenty-five years there has been a great increase in our population and a definite shift of this population from rural areas to urban areas. This shift of population has been caused by the expansion of industrialism and progress in mechanical and labor-saving devices, as well as increased transportation facilities and means of communication. At one time it took one farm to maintain

itself and one family in the city, whereas now one farm can supply at least forty city families. Therefore, the migration to urban areas has been on the increase until more than 50% of our population live in urban, congested areas. The impact of this concentration of people has added to the problems of the school. Schools have had to build and operate more upon a mass production program than on an individualized program. The inevitable result, so far as individual children are concerned, tends to fit them into a pattern rather than prepare them as individuals. A prominent educator remarked that the range of experience of the average American child is so narrow he seldom understands what he studies in his school books. This and many other situations has caused educators to be concerned, and to declare that the time has arrived to inaugurate a more realistic program in our schools and to provide more opportunities for outdoor experiences as an integral part of school. The war has crystallized this need.

#### COMMUNITY SCHOOL

For evidence that this change of thought and procedure was already started before the war, we have but to examine the many successful ventures with the community school plan. This movement recognized the need for children, as a part of their education, to become more active in community affairs and study at first hand, rather than from books, life as it is carried on in their communities. Some carefully planned and executed field trips by school groups proved to be a valuable



adjunct to this new emphasis in the school curriculum. Studies have shown that children learn more and remember longer when they have had direct experience in an enterprise that is worthwhile educationally. In the educational plans for the future, as viewed by many leading educators and policy-forming committees, the need for work experience and far more education to be carried on in the out-of-doors is clearly indicated.

. . . The values of camping have long been recognized by leading educators. Charles W. Eliot described organized summer camping as "the most significant contribution to education that America has given the world." The present United States Commissioner of Education has said, "The summer camp is, or should be, an adjunct to the public or private school. . . ."

There is little question but that school boards have the power to conduct programs of recreational activities for their pupils during the summer, including playground and camp programs. The courts recognize that our conception of what constitutes a good education has expanded and must continue to expand. They have upheld the right of school authorities to conduct extra-classroom activities having educational value. There is no activity of this nature for which a better case can be made out than the school camp.\*

. . . The emphasis of the camps on the value of teaching young people the dignity and importance of work must be given immediate considerations by educator and laymen alike.†

\* From "Time on Their Hands" by G. Gilbert Wren and D. L. Harley, published by American Youth Commission.

† From "Work Camps for High School Youth" published by American Youth Commission.

‡ From an article by John Guy Fowlkes, published in *Journal of Educational Sociology*, September, 1942.

. . . Camping experience is needed as a regular part of the educational program throughout the country. Such camping experience should be recognized not as a thing apart nor as a substitute for other educational opportunity. Some of the benefits of camp life are physical hardening, work experience, rich opportunity for nature study. These physical experiences are just as essential in full human development as are the three R's and the arts.‡

#### OUTDOOR EDUCATION—CAMPING

The camping movement has for a long time demonstrated that children in favorable camping situations gain much in good education that the classrooms cannot provide. It is conservatively estimated that only about five per cent of our youth have a chance to secure the benefits of a camping experience. The educational values of camping are many, but chief among them are the realities of caring for oneself in the open, meeting adversities of weather and the problems of food and shelter, coming in direct contact with the many phenomena of nature, learning the social values of living in small groups and how to produce and cook the food needed. A camp that produces these results effectively points out that much of the changed behavior and educational good that accrues to each child takes place when the school doors are legally closed for the summer months. The potentialities of a far more realistic living as a means of education is open to our American schools by way of camping. Changes in the school curriculum would be made.

Camping Education presents the basis for this change in the simple thesis: *that which ought and can best be taught in-*



*side the schoolrooms should there be taught, and that which can best be learned through experience dealing directly with native materials and life situations outside the school should there be learned.* Camping Education is clearly an outdoor movement. This does not mean that it would all take the place of the school, but certainly it means that the school curriculum should be re-

studied and evaluated in terms of where is the best place to learn the things that are educationally worthwhile. A careful examination of subject matter and the curriculum on the basis of this simple thesis will unquestionably show that a far greater amount of the school time can more profitably be spent out-of-doors than is now the case with consequent gain to pupils.

## II

### LIFE CAMPS

For the past twelve years the Life Camps have carried on careful study and experimentation in the relationship of outdoor experience to the total education of the child. In the Life Camping program it was recognized that in order to gain a fuller realization of the educational opportunities in camp, the program and structure of the camp would have to be greatly changed. A careful study of the camping movement shows that, without realizing it, most camps have patterned their organization and program after the school method of organization. Most camps are organized on the basis of departments and activities. They divide the day into class or activity periods and employ counselors to teach these activities at stated times as subjects are taught in school.

This type of camp program could not utilize the full advantages offered by the opportunities of the out-of-doors. Therefore, the Life Camp program for many years has operated on an entirely different basis. The campers are divided into small, independent groups or families of six to eight in each group. Each small group, under competent leader-

ship, establishes its own home in the woods. It designs, builds or remodels its living quarters. The campers live in a wide variety of types of shelters; covered wagons, lean-tos, round-tos, tree houses and covered sleds. Each group has the responsibility of keeping its own shelter in repair and has the freedom to change and alter it as the interest or need arises.

The groups grow some of their own food, make out their own menus in consultation with a nutrition expert, protect their food by their own home-made devices for refrigeration, and cook most of their own meals. It is necessary for them to design and build their fireplaces and ovens for cooking and baking. The whole program of housekeeping is an essential part of living on their own. There is much work to be done, but when the motivation is providing their own comfort, welfare and happiness, the idea of work seems to disappear and merges into an exciting adventure.

These small groups co-operate in a community way. They undertake exploration trips together and carry on numerous community projects for the welfare of the larger group. Explora-



tion and camping trips are taken into the near and far areas around camp, and the lessons of history, geography and nature are many and exciting. In this program they come to grips with the realities of being on their own. This kind of experience, if all American youth could have it as an integral part of their school life, would certainly change for the better the background for future citizenship and service to our communities and nation.

As our country becomes more urbanized there is increasingly a need for this kind of experience as an essential part of education. It is perhaps true that we have tended to shelter youth too much in the experience they have in our schools. Recently a high-ranking Army official in Gaudalcanal made a most significant statement to show that a wider range of experience is needed to prepare the men for the tasks now before them.

. . . that the youth in the democracies has had too many years without worry over where the next meal or bed is coming from and has never had to battle for existence. It's not because our boys aren't good fighters, because they are. But it takes them time to learn it. They are still trying to fight the war by books, by what they have read about wars. Maybe they know too much about it. In any case, they have got to learn that Japs don't fight by any book.

This is the familiar thesis of experience. Resourcefulness and a certain amount of fending on your own is desirable education, be it for war or peace.

#### NATIONAL CAMP

As this program in Life Camps gained the attention of educators from various

parts of the country, many came to observe and study its operation and results. Thus came the need for the establishment of a new kind of outdoor school for the training of administrators and teachers interested in this new phase of education.

Early in the spring of 1940 plans were made to establish National Camp as a center for advanced leadership training in camping education. This unique camp was established on a one-thousand acre tract of wooded land in the Kittatinny Mountains of northern New Jersey. One of Life Camps is also located on this property and serves as a laboratory for study and observation by those attending National Camp. Twenty-five thousand acres of park and forest preserve land of High Point Park and Stokes State Forest surround this thousand acre tract of land.

The camp area abounds in various types of rare phenomena of nature. There is, for example, a large quaking bog. Here is evidence that a large wooded lake, left behind by the last glacier, is being slowly conquered by moss and vegetation. It is a natural place for rare plants, creating a scene more typical of Labrador than New Jersey. It is easy to see the zoning of vegetation and to recognize some plant species that were brought down from Labrador by the glacier. Many rare blooms can be found, and carnivorous plants which devour insects caught in their traps. The geology of the area is well suited for a camp of this type. The glacier has left its unmistakable traces. Within a few miles' radius along the Delaware River, Culver Wind Gap and the Delaware



Water Gap are found precarboniferous layers full of ancient fossils.

Those who come to National Camp live in small groups and solve together their problems of food, shelter and daily living, build their own kitchens, plan their own meals, so that they in turn can teach these things to American youth. A faculty of nationally known leaders in the fields of education and camping are available to help the students encounter those experiences which are basic to an understanding of camping education, and through them learn the self-reliant art of coping with the out-of-doors.

Through the co-operation of New York University, 6 points of graduate credit may be earned in one summer session. Each student may come for three summers, or for a total of 18 points' graduate credit, although credit is optional. Each graduate student comes to camp with a specific project in mind and during the summer session works out a practical plan of approach for a camping education project for his own community or area. One administrator of a large school system, a native of New Jersey, had his first experience in exploring and living on his own out in the mountains. At sunrise on an overnight camping trip he stood alone watching this beautiful sight and observed the heavy mist over the valley below, and he mused, "I never knew that New Jersey looked like this. It is right that every school child should have an opportunity, as a regular part of his education, to learn in this way what his own state really looks like, as well as to learn through direct ex-

perience the many things that we attempt to teach in the classroom but fail so miserably because we try to do it out of a book."

#### TEACHER TRAINING

If the future education in America is to turn more to out-of-doors and a camping education movement, certainly teachers must be trained in this new kind of experience. For the most part the training of teachers is a classroom procedure. It is strange but true that most of the material to be taught in school comes from outside the classroom; from the land, the country at large, and the adjacent community. This material is effectively arranged in books and by other devices spread before the child in the classroom. Teaching is accepted as a classroom job, and the teachers are prepared to teach in the classroom. If youth is to be educated more by experience outside the classroom, logically the teachers must be also trained in outdoor situations.

#### CAMPING EDUCATION INSTITUTE

A significant beginning in training of the teachers of the under-graduate level was made at National Camp last June. Through the forward-looking program of teacher training as seen by Dr. Robert H. Morrison, Director of Teacher Education, Department of Public Instruction of New Jersey, there was established, with the cooperation of National Camp, a beginning of this new kind of teacher education. This first Camping Education Institute produced gratifying results. Thirty-six future teachers participated in



this program at National Camp. These few quotations from the students will give some indication of what it meant to them:

This Institute in Camping Education has been an eye-opener for me. I think that the idea of linking camping and the out-of-doors with our present formalized education program had never occurred to most of us.

To me, as a prospective teacher, this course has helped bridge the gap that so often exists between camp and school work. I have learned that, by careful integration, camping can be made a vital and almost necessary part of the school work. Many children have practically memorized a textbook and yet when the time comes to use that knowledge under actual working conditions they are hopelessly lost.

I believe the evidence that finally convinced me was the trips to the tree stumps. We were given a problem which could not be answered by memorizing a book; it took logical, scientific thinking to figure out the life history of an oak tree. I remember that I sat down on the ground to think out the problem when it suddenly struck me that we were trying to help children to do just that. I could see that here was a vital factor in successful teaching.

Spiritually, this experience has made me a stronger person—given me a foundation for believing that there is a way to achieve a better civilization. I can visualize a healthier, less self-centered, more self-sufficient life, in which everyone will be too busy living to become entangled in the intrigues of today's way of living.

Other State Departments of Education have become interested and more Institutes will be conducted at National Camp. It is hoped that in future years other State Departments of Education and Teachers Colleges throughout the

land will become interested in the camping education movement and establish opportunities for this new kind of training.

#### COMMUNITY SCHOOL CAMP

A practical application of the camping education movement can be made in nearly every community in our land. Every community and its school board and teachers can turn to the out-of-doors for better education if it so decides. It is hoped that the time will soon come when every school will have its own campsite and operate it as an integral part of the total school program. Most of the expense involved would be borne by a reallocation of time of the teachers and students from in-school to outdoor activities.

In many places there are state and county parks available. The program of construction of shelter, reforestation, conservation of natural resources, farming, gardening and numerous kinds of experiences can be carried on in this new School Camp Community. Emphasis would be placed upon realistic and purposeful living as a part of education, and the need more clearly understood because it is recognized by the student. Every school should study its own program, qualifications of teachers and potentialities in the community and outside of the community to determine the nature of the camping education for itself. A number of communities have already made a beginning.

Emphasizing the importance of the movement, the March of Time has just completed a special motion picture on

camping education, and phrases the hopes and plans of this movement in these effective words.

For more than any generation of Americans since the nation's pioneering days, today's young people, in their world of to-

morrow, will need in fullest measure the kind of courage, self-reliance, and human understanding which alone can enable the United States to meet and master the grave problems—both national and international—which for years to come will inevitably contest man's right to a world of peace.

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