

We have orders to start at 8:45, preferably 8:30, and I do not know whether we can make program in that time, or what mood you will be in to ask questions. The topic tonight is presented in the form of "The Challenge of Life Camps."

Now, as briefly as possible, I want to open up the field of camping in, I think, a little broader way than I have thought of it for a good many years and as it takes shape, and you follow that line, you may be able to help me out – tell me if we are headed in the right way in so far as this camping program is concerned. That will be fine – and if you can jar me loose from any ideas that you think are wrong, I am perfectly willing to be set on the right track. If you can convince me I am wrong and show me wherein I am wrong I will be very grateful to you. I can't put the challenge to you more strongly.

You are all interested in going to camps, or interested in going to schools – or just what your interest is. Now, very briefly, I think I will start it this way. There is today throughout the world the greatest furor and fever and unrest that, it seems to me, we have had for a very very long time. We look at the countries across the water, Germany, Italy, and Russia particularly, using the camping motive as a means of promoting their nationalist ideas, and leaning on the camping motive very heavily. They are solving the unemployment problem by requiring youth to go into various kinds of camps, by taking 3 or 4 years out of their own national ideas and use the camping motive to further their national ends. Now, in this country it seems to me that we are passing up a perfectly fine opportunity to use the same idea of camping as a means of promoting our national ends, and making this kind of camping gain a definite national end. But it is my feeling, which is shared with others who have presented this point of view, that we certainly face a precarious situation in this country. Even the premise that we may eventually be growing idle to the extent of the Romans of many years ago. – An attitude of laissez-faire in which we just let things ride and go – have more time on our hands, more unemployed and remain unconcerned; don't fight about the privileges and benefits that we enjoy in this country under a democracy. John Dewey said a long time ago that it was the fight for a democracy that founded our government, and it swung our country into a

nation. The trouble is now that the nation has nothing to fight for. So we are in great danger of becoming stagnated and lost and uncertain of where we are going or what a democracy stands for. What I am getting at is that I think the camping movement, it seems to me, should now be a far greater movement, one of much farther reaching ideas and proportions than is prevalent at the present time. What do I mean? I mean that there is coming a time when there will be a great reorganization within our educational systems, increasing control and regimentation within our educational systems in this country. What we are really doing is building up a net of school systems, increasing control and regimentation and really are getting our people ready for a totalitarian state rather than a democracy. Now, that is a pretty broad statement to make – about the challenge. For I believe that our system of Life Camps can help keep America democratic, and that is our challenge today.

How can the camp be organized – I am getting at this. I am not so sure but we will have to have a very large site, and a larger site than I fear is fashionable (?). Most camps at the present time are organized and directed somewhat on a similar basis to [blank area] in our public or private schools systems throughout the country.

Now, let us look at that a bit. Briefly, when education started in this country the first idea was of an independent people coming over the ocean, settling on the land, clearing it and starting to learn through experience. Finally they found themselves self-supporting – the neighbors worked together and they were independent and they prospered and got ahead and succeeded in living and starting a nation. And then the idea of children coming along, they had to learn how to do these things and lenders in education were needed and they got the children together in a little group and there the minister or somebody studied and gave the children instruction. The less severe the prairie winter, the larger the group became. And then we went into larger and larger schools, with more and more teachers. The greatest step, of course was taken when we accepted the thesis that education was the function of the state. And passed laws saying it was proper to pay taxes for the education of other people's children.

And so one down the line, the public school system has adopted this suggestion and that suggestion, changing it a bit before it works out. Lately the progressives school movement, dealing in this procedure has made quite an advance and jolted it into action here and there within the system, but the fact of the matter is that progress comes from within – the camp movement improvement too must come from within. What we really need is a democracy which will encourage this kind of camp.

The group subject matter fundamentally has come to the attention of educators. What is education if not the action of making a change – making an individual change his mind. Where people live differently, they act differently, and when they act differently – and this is the object of education – they begin to find out why as well as learning new ways of acting and living.

In analyzing this thing, we see all the difficulties, then endeavor to act in a different way. Or to bring it along – the schools, at least some of them, are now trying to relate their teachings to everyday problems. So we are trying to arrive at a camp which is more related to actual living in society.

All right. I think the camping movement anticipated a similar growth. The greatest camping movement in this country was in the pioneer days – it was started by the fellows and the – what do you call them, trappers – the real originals ones. They'd go out and set traps, come back to the settlement and get supplies. A settlement then was made up of only about 100 people and at that 100 people was a sizable number. Something like this is happening today.

Back in the early days, 1620 or thereabouts, I suspect the independent home was really a camp – and is now possibly. The members of the family had to spend most of their time on their own, camping that way, coming back to the home for food and supplies. So it continued down through the years. This camping revival of which I speak has been going on now for about 35 years in varying degrees, the private camping movement, I mean. Then there is the public school influence getting into the camping movement, too. School camps and camps in school. So that then we had this movement of a progressive camp coming in, progressive beginning with a capital "P", and just what makes a progressive camp I am not sure. That element

needs to be considerably defined. Generally speaking it has had a growth similar to the progressive school movement.

Our conception today of the entire camping movement is that many camps are modeled after various kinds of institutions. There is the school or educational institution, orphanage, high school and penitentiary and militaristic camps, and others (nor do I put it to you too strongly). It has been within my experience during the last ten years' time, I have been in various and many kinds of camps. I have seen the handling of boys and girls, and you can believe me – in a camp, that is just like penitentiary methods. At least to too far an extent to give me any confidence and too much like our orphanages – remember the orphanage days? They are mostly still chained to a set idea. Now if you don't believe it, you'll just have to study it some more. I don't want to dwell too long on that subject – but I have proof for my statements.

This sort of action and type of camp, if not militaristic at least partly – at least consist of a large borrowing from the rites and catchwords of the Army. Especially after the World War. We had a great many ex – soliders, just out of the Army, back with a great knowledge of army routine and habits of speech, order of the day, setting up exercises, routine – at 9:03 we do this, and at 9:10 we do that, so on through the day. Right down the line – dining room (which always seemed to me the most dignified name for it) became the mess hall, or revel y, and taps, and so on, until the vast majority, I regret to say it, is very militaristic today. I think changing but not changing fast enough, in my opinion. This militaristic, or semi-militaristic attitude is not good for the camp – it destroys just that the camp should stand for – the individual and his knowledge and greater freedom. And in part the fault can be traced to the school system.

Throughout America, in the U.S., the habit of teaching in large numbers has spread too far. Groups of 40 or 50 has been the habit, rather than individualized procedure. And I still haven't arrived at my point. Now, I think that in organizing our camps we should not follow this routinized procedure. From 1880 up to the present time cities, and citizied life, have grown by leaps and bounds. The population of the city has had less and less chance to follow independent modes of living – has

become more and more regimented. This is unfortunately true throughout the whole country. Now we have moved into a generation that has not even memories of the country – that is born and grows up without knowing what the country looks like. This generation has the city for a steady diet, I had to look twice to make sure that it was a child she had him on a leash like a little dog. The little boy started to go out towards the street and the mother pulled him back – away from the passing traffic. Then he started toward the alley – which probably looked worth exploring to the child – but a man was coming out with his arms full of old bottles, and the mother pulled the child that way – already that poor child was being the subject of outside conditioning influences that restricted his actions. How can these children have any part in the constructive and cooperative part of living, when the circumstances under which they grow up are so restricted? They have no chance of learning the elementary fundamentals of building a society – of contributing to cooperation with the neighbors. You say the school yard sandbox is the solution? Perhaps, but even there competition and close quarters intervene with exploration.

We have need in this country today to give the youth of our nation a chance at learning these fundamentals of cooperative society. But under the present system what can we do? Youth cannot be blamed for what is happening to them today, it is not their fault, in my opinion. I have full confidence in the youth of today. They are doing only what is natural to their responsibilities – some are rebellious – some are indifferent. There is only a limited number in the middle and that group is not getting the full individual development that is due them in a democratic system. What is there to do.

This fact is less true of the child who lives in a smaller city. The boy who lives in a suburb has a better chance for full development than the child living in a crowded, restless city. We should use our democracy to develop the individual. There are very few places left wherein the individual is not completely dominated and controlled by laws – we should make the most of our opportunity. In a democratic nation we have many opportunities.

Living in a camp may be once of those. I think that it is very fundamental and that it will complement our educational system in this country, and might even

change the approach of the whole system. When youngsters go to school they should be prepared for the life they will lead afterwards. Therefore I say that here in America we are passing up a perfectly fine chance to inculcate the democratic ideas in the children. Educate for democracy. When others make the most of every opportunity to further their ideas, we are passing it up ourselves. At the present time, camps could help in this by changing their programs. The camp is over routinized, over-militarized, too much patterned on other institutions. The expectations, are to be taken for granted. In my opinion there are very few expectations, but that of course is open for discussion.

The difference between saying this is a progressive camp and that is not is in saying whether or not the children are to take part in 5 or 6 activities. Whether the camp is based on some sort of organization. I have been in this kind of camp. Through all kinds of departments, this department, that department, you'd see the campers living in straight rows – building all on a line. You can't get away from that straight line – gives you a militaristic feeling. This kind of camp has plenty of leaders – other kinds has not. This leadership is what America must develop – leadership in democracy, as expressed in the way of living that real camping expresses.

But the other kind of camp is still with us. Let me illustrate – this is what happens. The Arts and Crafts teacher says to Johnny, "Wouldn't you like to make something, Johnny?" And Johnny says no. He wouldn't want to make anything. "Well, here are some of the things that last year's class did. Would you like to make a boat model? Or an ashtray?" No. Johnny would not like to make an ashtray for his Daddy. But sooner or later, Johnny shows a spark of interest in something displayed and winds up making something, gets himself involved in the use of some sort of tools and turns out something. The child cannot attend every department or class so some come in the morning for Arts and Crafts and do something else in the afternoon and attend departments all day. My question is, Are they camping? Or is it just another school transferred to the woods, showing this kind of interests. Isn't it just a summer school for some special activity? Furthermore – the woods make a very nice spot for it. Nice place to learn instrumental music, do you want to play the

saxophone, or the clarinet, or maybe you go in for asthetic dancing? This is the camp that we have today in great numbers. But is it camping?

I have here a book that tells what we think is camping, real camping. And it covers the camping period for a long time. This book was just one of the cap records – logs we have these. This is the one for 1937. We have had one for each season. And whatever my beliefs are and when I finish in just a moment our challenge has been evolved as a result of 1) trying to go through and find out what camping really is and trying to put it into words as ideally as possible. And changing our ideas each year according to our findings. This is sort of a statement of our aims, stated as ideally as possible, a device for measuring our results and checking our procedure. A process of setting down our objective. Objective in a very large sense of the word – but in Army tactics if you want to take Hill 733 that is the objective are stated, we discuss method. I consider method is very important if not more important than objective, And I consider method is very important if not more important than objective. And then your evaluation of your results. Mind you, that is a process that goes on continuously all through the summer and any part of the year that you may have your camp going on. And then the next – in the light of your measurements and light of world affairs. Changing conditions in the political life, all make a difference, have an effort. Nor by simply following this plan have we come to perfection. But we have improved. And it is not just a flash in the pan idea or something brilliant that we woke up with in the morning. For if an idea is sound it will live and will not if it is not sound.

One of our findings is that true camping involves exploration. Explorations blessed with good luck but endowed with real preparation and safety equipment. These activities which contain the elements of discovery, or real scientific aim, in the earth, in the skies all nature, and the laments – and do not think that everything has been discovered. Not at all. To the children just venturing into the woods, that hole in the side of the hill – where a woodchuck lives is adventurous to those who have only just discovered it. That woodchuck is a great discovery. All things that have been seen contain elements of surprise and explorer finds delight in their discovery. Which brings us to our second point.

Exploration. Perhaps you read about the four boys in a boat a few days ago, exploring on the Hudson River – two for them were lost. May we have the time when they would daringly things, find new paths, win fame, climb new mountains – see that your campers get this sense of exploration only arrange it safely. Let them take the right equipment. Remember that one of the greatest of modern camping trips – Byrd's expedition to the South Pole, was successful and daring, and adventurous, yes, but it was also perfectly and painstakingly prepared. When Byrd stayed down there by himself he was safe – reasonably safe at any rate.

Adventure. All of these are really part of the same thing. But you will know what I mean when I say I heard someone on the radio the other evening advertising – asking the government to stimulate travel in America. One of the things in this country is the value and extent of traveling in camp programs. We need to have more of the type of activity that includes traveling and sight seeing – going from one part of the country to another.

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Well, we have those three things that seem to me to suggest the essential of my program. I have seen that so many other things are important, but the central theme of camping seems to comprise these three things. I feel that these are the things that a camper should be given. And as I pointed out, I feel that in a democracy each camper should be entitled to an individualized approach to these three things. The best way to combat the citized life of the child is to treat him as a separate individual. Therefore I feel that this kind of procedure as we advocate is the right one and has progress all along or I wouldn't have the nerve to put it to you so strongly. I feel that all programs should have more exploration and adventure in them.

Now you can check it up, but most camps are arranged like this:

At blackboard – demonstration

Now, our arrangements is like this:

Circle – 7 campers

1 counselor



1 assistant counselor

Now in my opinion each camp should be different from the other. We have tried out this idea – we have a covered wagon, a tree house, a crooked house, etc. The campers in the covered wagon are out on the road most of the time, cooking all their own meals. That is really adventure, and exploration. Some of the lads live in the Teepee camp, like the Iroquis in long houses or in covered wagon, various kinds of shelter and we try to see that the boys get a large part in the work of construction and erection and entire responsibility for food – if they eat, they must cook, if they are going to cook, they must plan and by planning they learn practically and at first hand. This living together in a unit for which all and everyone is responsible also sponsors a spirit of cooperation which is most desirable. Their interests gradually lie in making the things for which they recognize need. They are not doing parrot like activity – a captivity. This procedure also places more responsibility on the individual and makes him responsible for more things. The boys also have a greater part in doing things. Isn't it true that only through experience do we really learn? And our contention is that they have more really useful actual experience by doing, and have a greater responsibility for all sorts of things.

This makes for complete welfare and happiness and dispenses with unnecessary discipline. We have rules and regulations only in so far as they are needed. I know there are many questions – we have until 9:45 we should stop a little sooner – I think rather than try to summarize I will leave it there. And I'm interested in your reactions.

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Q. In this type of camp, how do they live?

A. We have to be sensible about it. In every camp we have 6 or 7 youngsters. We have facilities of some kind of everybody. Naturally, everybody cannot live in the covered wagon. As a matter of fact, for instance, the long crooked houses do not last more than two years. We rebuild them about that often and then the campers stay at the main house. We always use the main building in case of emergency.

Q. How long do your campers stay with you?

A. A month or longer. They always wish they could stay longer and so do we. But 4 or 5 weeks is the longest we can keep them. Before the camper comes for the summer we review his record and take into consideration his home conditions and the needs for his adjustments. This has something to do with where we put each boy. Long histories of each child are taken. So if the child is unhappy somewhere, we take all this into consideration and talk the thing over with him. And straighten it out that way. Living in the covered wagon is not considered a special treat. It is an integral part of camping procedure just like the others – and the camper feels that way about it. The group living in the long house or the tree house, does not think of those in other houses – they are interested in their own community – they don't care about the others to a great extent – or to the extent of being unhappy about it. The covered wagon of course fits into our scheme of adventure. It has been a five year program. Now, as a matter of fact, I think it has increased to 10 years. We have fourteen individual camps. And the point is enjoyment of adventure. If I had time you'd see the very wide range of interests and the success we have had with it.

Q. Do you have a selected group of campers?

A. Our children are selected from welfare agencies of New York City. They are normally active children – not cripples or defectives. Nor do we specialize in the child that is held up as being “difficult” although as a matter of fact, when the “difficult” child gets to camp he is so busy building long houses and cooking, that he forgets to be particularly difficult.

Q. You said something about the government taking responsibility in organizing camps such as you mean. What type of organization do you mean?

A. I have in mind the extension of our type of camps but I do not know how it will be done. That matter and urgency of it must be recognized by America. When they do recognize it, I believe that the American way of doing it will be found. Camps should not be organized as our public education is organized. But the definite part that government help plays in education should be accorded camping also.

Q. How do you assign the campers to each individual camp? With 14 camps I should think it would be difficult to keep each bot satisfied.

A. No, it is not difficult. When the campers come in the summer, usually about 55% of them have been before and it's natural for them to divide up logically maybe this year they'll say – Chief next year I'd like a crack at the covered wagon, or say, I enjoyed the long house this yea. Can I go there this summers? I'll agree that our individualized procedure is based on very complicated record system. We follow up in the winter then we have a lot of information and we usually know just where the boys wants top go. Individual problems arise and we handle them. We straighten them out by trying to give them what they ask – in so far as possible.

Q. How does this type of camping take care of – say bathing and what about sanitary conditions? Can they get water for cooking, etc?

A. Well, the boys carry water on their trips. And of course, if they are building a house, they will think about building on a river. That was the pioneer method, you know. Find a river and camp. Well, the boys follow this. And as for me baths, well if the boys don't take a tube every night, I guess there isn't much harm done.

Q. What about the matter of health – inspection, etc.?

A. Well, let me tell you. Here on the porch, near the main building, sits the doctor in his white gown, and there sits the nurse with her little white cap. Waiting for campers to come to them and say they are hurt. And what happens? We find the doctor is now going to the camps rather than have the campers come to him. Incidentally, sometime there is very good reason for this. Naturally, visiting the various camps, the doctor finds out where the good cooking is on the menu.

Q. Don't you use the main building for any purpose?

A. We are finding less and less need of them. Of cours, the campers come in and get supplies, or mail. But we find that they much prefer to stay out in the woods.