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HILL & STONE

Agents

Winnetka 1544

TEACHERS RETURN FROM EDUCATIONAL MEETING

(Continued from page 3)

facts and skills does not mean growth. Growth, evolution, depend, not on standardization, but on variation.

Every child has the right to vary from his fellows. Every child has the right to create, to express himself. Self expression and origination require freedom.

Traditional schools in all parts of the world confine themselves largely to an inefficient, unscientific, time-wasting attempt to give children fact-knowledge, and certain skills in calculation and writing.

Some new schools, in reacting from tradition, have left the mastery of knowledge and skill to chance, and have given themselves over largely to free expression.

Both kinds of schooling are one sided. The less benighted of the traditionalists will usually agree that it would be good to give children a chance for self-expression; but they say their school time table is already too crowded—it takes every minute of the day to teach the academic subjects.

The less extreme of the progressives will grant that some training in the tool subjects is desirable and that some information concerning Geography, History and other content subjects is of value to the child. But rather than sacrifice freedom for self-expression, they do slipshod teaching of this subject matter.

The way out of the dilemma lies, it seems to some of us, in a more efficient,

scientific organization of subject matter and method in the teaching of tool subjects and facts, so that time will be cleared for free activities.

This scientific organization of subject matter and method requires, first, a clear cut, specific statement of the exact units we expect each child to master—the degree of speed and comprehension in reading, the exact arithmetic processes and the degree of speed and accuracy in these processes, the spelling words, the language elements, the historical and geographical facts—in short the facts and skills which objective, scientific research shows to be of direct value to all normal people in the world today. It requires, next, an equally definite means of determining when a child has reached mastery of these goals and where he needs help in his attempt to achieve it—such means is found in complete diagnostic tests. And it requires materials of instruction so organized that a child may progress from step to step with the minimum of outside assistance—carefully planned, self-instructive textbooks, written directly to the child and providing varying amounts of drill for children of varying capacity: a great deal for the child who needs much in order to attain mastery, less for the child who reaches mastery quickly.

Such an organization of the curriculum and teaching materials on a scientific, efficient basis, makes it possible to give each individual child mastery of those facts and skills which he needs in order to function freely in society. But, what is of even more importance, it makes it possible to do this in much less time than is used by the traditional type of school—an hour and a half in the morning and an hour and a quarter in the afternoon is ample for the knowledge and skill subjects. Half the morning and the rest of the afternoon are therefore freed from academic teaching responsibility—space has been provided on our time tables for free work without sacrificing thorough work.

In this freed time we may now provide a wide range of activities—activities which have as their sole purposes the stimulation of creative work on the part of individuals and the socializing of these individuals. Both purposes are important. We want to encourage each child to express his differing interests and ideas, to originate, to create. But we also want him to take other children into consideration, to make his original contribution valuable to the group.

Haphazard free activity will not give us these results. The activities must be organized—organized with the help and co-operation of the children themselves, organized around their own interests and abilities, to be sure, but nevertheless rather definitely organized. Organization need not mean lack of freedom.

The activities may include such things as dramatizations, where the children select freely the subject to dramatize, where they write the play, create the costumes and scenery, and organize the production; they may include the writing, illustrating, printing, financing, and selling of a school newspaper or magazine; they may include the construction by the group of a play house, a model village, or any of a vast variety of

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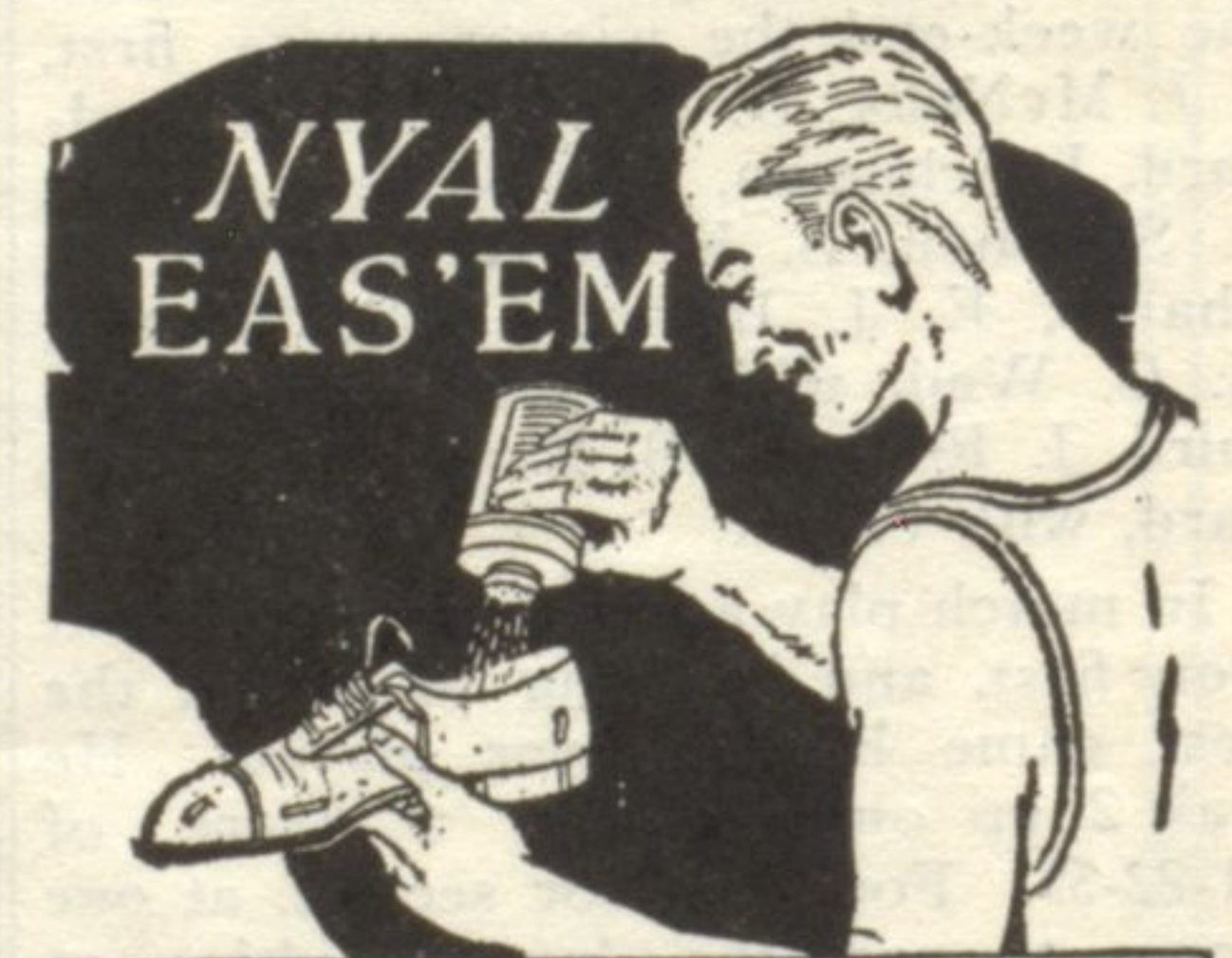
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