

Selected Articles

A NEW EMPHASIS IN EDUCATION

By Louise M. Wade Barnes.

We are living in a practical age in a time when the educational forces of our country are trying to bring our schools into closer relation to the everyday problems of our work-a-day world.

We are coming to see that:

1. We need to realize that changed conditions, socially and economically, demand a change in our curricula.

2. To do this we must choose a simpler curriculum, getting at the elements of things and adapting them to the elementary character of childhood.

3. To be able to meet this new demand, teachers must read the available literature on the subject and attend summer school courses. Financial aid should be extended teachers by local School Boards to enable them to do so.

Uniformity for each school is not desired nor advised, but each school must adapt its courses to meet its own local requirements. The severest critics of our present system are found among the teachers' ranks. Some years ago, in a series of educational lectures, President Eliot, of Harvard, scored the public schools severely. He noted the fact that there are many things which indicate failure in achievement, after a hundred years of free common school education in America. The masses of the people read Sunday newspapers and trashy literature and seem to have no desire for good reading. He indicted the lack of discriminatory judgment in the exercise of the franchise. He urged that our schools will never be what they should until we are willing to spend as much per capita on each child in the public schools as is now expended in the best private schools. We now average only \$17.46 per year on each child, while we should spend and can afford to spend \$100 per child.

The attitude of the layman business man toward the schools shows a desire to have a few practical usable things

well taught, and especially to have good habits of work and thought well established.

The attitude of the government is seen in the fact that, a few years ago, Roosevelt appointed a committee to study the conditions of rural life and its relation to rural education.

In New Jersey, an educational commission has been appointed to study the industrial life of the state with a view to adapting the curricula to it.

Recently, a Bankers' Association discussed the problem of the betterment of our rural schools. They said, "We loan money to farmers and we have a common problem in seeing that a greater degree of intelligence prevails among them, that the farms may be more valuable, and we are willing and glad to furnish money to back up any educational improvements to that end."

The great commercial firm of Sears, Roebuck & Co. of Chicago, has recently given a million dollars to pay teachers to teach the people how to make a closer and more vital connection with the right kind of education.

New Jersey is only waiting to find the right man to appoint an Industrial and Agricultural Commissioner to help in that state.

The North Dakota Schools have issued a circular which shows their determination to adjust their schools to their own peculiar needs.

Is this so-called "new education" merely another fad? "A fad is a good thing overworked." This subject is conceded by all thinking people to be too vital a thing to be considered a fad.

The question of retardation among pupils is receiving much needed attention. Studies of pupils three years behind the grade are being made, and special courses and schools arranged for them. Meantime, we are studying causes. Our high school attendance is dropping down; only one-sixth graduate and only one-third remain longer