

THE VISITOR

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RESEARCH, THE TREND OF OUR TIMES AND COMMON LEARNINGS

(Summary of talk given by Dr. Wesley E. Peik, Dean of the College of Education, University of Minnesota, at the annual meeting of the Citizens Committee on Public Education, on Wednesday, June 7, 1950.)

I wish more than anything that I might say the right thing and say it well. In Minneapolis the educational waters have been muddied; things are being said about education that are not always true. It would be as if you said doctors were not as good today as they used to be when research shows that life has been lengthened twenty years in this century. People are saying schools are not as good as they used to be, but they don't know what they are saying. It is not true, and don't believe it! All the evidence shows that schools here today are better than they have ever been, and that American education has gone to the fore relatively faster than education elsewhere in the world. Today the world is studying American education. There is much research back of all that. Graduates of 1950 are better fitted for our kind of world than were the graduates of 1900 for theirs or for this.

The phrase "common learnings" takes us back a few hundred years. Then there were some reading schools and some calculating schools; reading and arithmetic were considered to be the only common learnings. When reading schools and calculating schools were joined into the same school, there was opposition. Those who opposed were vocal, but they are proved to have been wrong. They said the same teacher could not teach arithmetic and reading in the same school. Teachers today teach much more than reading, writing and arithmetic which were the three R's of the 18th century. Later on new subjects were added, always against opposition. Geography and history were opposed on the ground that only the few people who traveled and traded needed to know geography and history. The history of education shows continual progress in the face of such opposition; in the on-rush of democracy, education has had to move ahead also, and did. Our education satisfies basic principles of democracy, namely, that every individual is unique and is worth developing to the best of his ability. For him there must be an open outlook toward the top.

A hundred years ago many people opposed free tax supported schools in principle. "It is as logical for me to pay taxes for the support of education for my neighbors' children as for me to go out and plow his fields," said a legislator then. But free tax supported public grade schools won out. *One of the great mistakes of European education has been its failure to provide free secondary school education.* The courts finally determined the right of United States cities to tax the people for free high school education. The movement to give our boys and girls their democratic birthright in education has swept ahead because the people of the country wanted to give it to them. It was this education, including higher education, more than anything else in the world that enabled us to win the war. Hitler made the mistake of limiting the right to higher education to a selected few. He reduced university enrollment and had too few experts toward the end of his war.

So the change for the better swept on during the last century. The faculties in the classical languages opposed the introduction of modern languages into the curriculum, but modern languages won their way. Then the languages united to fight the introduction of the sciences; again the sciences won. And how important they have become in our technological age! Democracy also called for a way of life which needed sociology, political science, economics, etc. They were added. The pressures of democracy and business and the industrial revolution have won out. Later home economics and agricultural education were added in the face of such opposition within universities. *I helped establish one of the first agricultural high school departments of Minnesota in this century.*

To meet the needs of democracy, education must always move ahead. Since 1900, the spirit of research and investigation has entered education just as it has entered industry and business. Research is at the base of much that is being taught today in all higher education. Some of the things people

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are finding out about education today are being as flatly denied by the uninformed as was once the assertion that the earth was round, that it was not the center of the universe, that it is millions and billions of years old.

One thing that research has taught us is that the mind is not like a muscle. The idea that if you practiced memorizing material of one kind, it would transfer to other kinds of memorization is not supported by research. You can train people to memorize telephone numbers better, but the training does not transfer into remembering all other things well. It was once thought that it was good if things were studied just because they were hard, even if not useful. Once Latin and algebra were felt to be learnings needed by all because they trained the minds of all while being useful to a few only; that is no longer tenable. *Too many useful learnings are needed for anyone to spend time on what is not useful to him.* People said that those who took Latin did better in colleges, but now we have learned instead that those who took Latin were just the brightest people—naturally they did better. Others did not take Latin. All this information has been substantiated by research; some people find the conclusions hard to take.

Another finding of research is the discovery that you can drill and drill and drill, but unless a person is interested and motivated, he will quickly forget the subject of his drill. People who are motivated to learn, learn faster. Children learn better and faster when they have a purpose for their learning; children in school must be motivated if they are to learn well. Visitors are welcome to come over to Pattee Hall at the University and watch the children learn to read by motivated learning, by repetition through experience. We still need drill and repetition but it must be motivated experience. Again

research tells us we retain much better what we use in life. Our minds are like little cisterns with holes in the bottom where the water leaks out. Unused learning disappears like a dead tree that decays. We can never put into our minds all the things we shall need. We need to learn what we shall use. For example, study shows that some 4,000 words make up 98.6 per cent of the words we use in writing. Only those with specialized need have use for the other words; every occupation like farming, banking, and merchandising has its special list.

Many colleges used to have "entrance requirements". We have found by research that the same entrance requirements now mean little or nothing. We have found by research that the same patterns of learning are not the best measure of success in college for everyone. It is more important to know how well a person does and what he does than to require the same list of subjects for all. We have abolished certain entrance requirements at the University because they do not necessarily mean the student who has had them will succeed in college, and that those who have not had them, will not.

Another thing we have learned through research is the importance of going from the concrete to the abstract. Schools used to go from the abstract to the concrete. They used strictly logical instead of psychological beginnings in a subject. Valedictorians who knew the abstract did not always fit into concrete problems of life. Unless people know the meaning behind the words they use, they do not learn or understand well. Therefore, we emphasize the processes of getting facts when needed, of critical thinking on issues, of feeling interest in many things.

The findings on individual differences by research are tremendous also, and the schools must have an organization that permits adjustment of curricula to individual differences. We call this life adjustment for the pupil if he studies what he needs, wants, likes and can do. In a fifth grade, for example, you will find a reading ability range running from second grade to ninth grade for children of the same age group all called fifth graders. In the so-called "common learnings" program and in other modern forms of education, you find recognition of the principle that each person should go ahead at his own rate according to his ability toward the things he needs in common with others and for himself as a unique individual as well.

In the common learnings program, educators have brought together things which children need in living, in training for home life, in living with others, in ability to communicate, in ability to plan and evaluate,

and in training to think creatively and objectively about issues. Common learning is a natural development of all the research that has happened. *There is nothing in it as practiced now all over the United States and in many other places in the world which is not at least twenty-five years old.*

In conclusion, I want to repeat: Don't believe the people who say the schools of the nation are not as good as they used to be. Schools are suffering now, of course, from lack of financial support. But don't believe those who make a loud voice and try to scare you. Education has always had sincere and vocal opposition. Some always hark back to their past. Others can't take the findings of science and research. Others are afraid of thinking people who are educated. For 200 years most of these groups have been wrong. Don't believe that the principles back of common learning are wrong, nor that there is only one type of organization that can produce good results with the common learnings program, which I would prefer to call the core curriculum program. Mistakes will be made, as in all progress. Research has shown the basic principles to be true. We have much to learn yet, but we know much that should be put into practice. *Opposition to progress cannot win out in the long run even though good opposition is also an incentive to substantial progress.*

WALTER BJORAKER TO WISCONSIN

The University of Minnesota lost one of the most promising young men in Agricultural Education to the University of Wisconsin on September 1, 1950. Mr. Walter BJORAKER who has been a member of the staff at Minnesota for the past two years, accepted a position as Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin.

The Visitor wishes to congratulate both Mr. BJORAKER and University of Wisconsin on the culmination of this arrangement which will be for the improvement of Agricultural Education everywhere. Good luck, Walt.

THE G. I. AND GRADUATE WORK

W. M. KULSTAD

(Mr. Kulstad was formerly assistant to the Director of Veteran's Affairs, University of Minnesota.)

I am herewith interpreting the Veterans Administration ruling regarding continuous attendance after July 25, 1951, as it applies to teachers and specifically as it applies to teachers of agriculture under contract.

Such teachers (registered at the University in graduate level work) must be registered Summer Session I each year beginning 1951 in order to keep their eligibility valid, except for "reasons beyond their control", (call for active duty is one of those reasons). Attendance in both summer sessions is mandatory also if the pursued courses are available and the teaching contract will permit. Here a veteran-teacher ceases to be employed in or for any school year. He will not have satisfied the requirements for continuous pursuit of his course until completion. In this instance, he must be in continuous training fall, winter, and spring when not employed in order to be eligible for further benefits.

These regulations apply only to those veteran-teachers working for advanced degrees. According to the provisions as set forth in Carl R. Gray's memorandum of June 13, 1950, such provisions are applicable where a student is pursuing graduate study only, which would seem to imply that men who are teaching veterans farm training and who have not qualified for teaching vocational agriculture, might be prevented from using this plan to make up the requirements for vocational agriculture prior to doing graduate work in agricultural education, if such is ever their plan.

With cases which cannot be judged on the basis of the directive or this interpretation, they should no doubt be handled as special cases—each receiving consideration on its individual merits. This office stands ready to act as a clearing house for such cases.

Directory of Vocational Departments of Agriculture for the School Year 1950-51

Post Office	Teacher of Agriculture	Post Office	Teacher of Agriculture
Ada	Orville Eng	Barnesville	Clarence Ebert
Adams	Edwin Lentz	Barnum	S. E. Robinson
Aitkin	John Soderlund	Battle Lake	Gordon Ferguson
Akeley	Harry Peirce, Jr.	Baudette	Elwin Leverington
Albany	H. V. Gilboe	Belgrade	Carl Ziebarth
Angora	John Ketola	Bemidji	L. M. Johnson
Albert Lea	Donald Paulson, Lowell Ross	Bertha	Leslie Colby
Alexandria	Clarence Hemming, Raymond Ahlfors	Big Fork	Richard Anderson
Annandale	Elroy Homuth	Blackduck	A. M. Gorden
Austin	Leland Arneson,	Brainerd	E. A. Gray
Don Ritland, P. J. Holand		Brookston	John V. Reitz

Post Office	Teacher of Agriculture	Post Office	Teacher of Agriculture
Browerville	Vernon Linn	Madelia	R. E. Blackburn
Buffalo	Windsor Streiff	Madison	Dwight Quam
Cambridge	Willard Erickson	Mankato	Harold Sandhoff
Cannon Falls	Carl Ostrom	Marietta	Merton Aldrich
Canton	R. Abrahamson	Marshall	Loyal J. McCann
Chisago City	Alfred Heichel	McIntosh	Dean McNelly
Clarissa	E. M. Fragodt	Meadowlands	Elias Ogann
Clarkfield	J. W. Nelson	Melrose	Harold Sorknes, Robert Borchardt
Cleveland	James H. Dice	Milaca	Stan Sahlstrom, Eldon Madison
Climax	George Norness	Milan	C. Harvey Jones
Clinton	Donald Frederick	Minneapolis	Clifford Luke
Cloquet	M. C. Olson	Minnesota Lake	Marvin Thomsen
Cook	Anthony Grebenc	Montevideo	R. E. Hubbard
Cotton	Robert Stevenson	Montgomery	Edward Januschka
Cromwell	Martin Anderson	Moose Lake	E. Schwichert
Crosby	William Frey	Mora	Wallace E. Thoreson
Danube	Robert Hanson	Motley	Marvin Gentzkow
Dassel	Clarence Dowling	Mountain Lake	J. H. Tschetter
Dawson	A. M. Schwandt	Nevis	C. Perry Schenk
Deer River	Raymond Anderson	New Prague	Clarence Welter
Detroit Lakes	Clayton Grabow, M. Wayne Rowe	New Richmond	Ralph Palen
Eagle Bend	Euell E. Greer	New Ulm	Edward Fier
Elbow Lake	Arnt Aune	North Branch	Jack Steeves
Elk River	Rudolph Kezele	Northfield	Ruben Hoyland
Embarrass	Edwin Takala	Northome	C. W. Bray
Esko	George Saksa	Norwood	Clifford Thoreson
Eveleth	W. J. Ryan	Okabena	Emery Krech
Fairfax	Frank Dalke	Olivia	Odell Barduson
Faribault	R. Paul Marvin, Layton Hoysler	Ortonville	R. H. Hoberg
Farmington	H. Schmiesing	Owatonna	Thomas Raine
Felton	Wallace Berg	Park Rapids	A. C. O'Banion
Fergus Falls	E. J. Halverson	Paynesville	L. Hillbrand
Floodwood	William Fortman	Pelican Rapids	Harold Anderson
Foley	Ignatius Brady	Perham	T. R. Williams
Forest Lake	Lowell Doebbert, Lee Sandager	Pillager	Martin Klingenberg
Fosston	Martin Korsman	Pine City	A. A. Hoberg
Franklin	Kenneth Ingvalson	Pine Island	E. M. Phillips
Frazee	Lambert Schilling	Pipestone	R. J. Knutson
Freeborn	LeMar Ketelsleger	Plainview	Bruce Oxtom
Garden City	Verl Rollings	Preston	Loyal W. Joos
Glencoe	A. G. Sandahl	Princeton	R. L. Stende
Graceville	Walter Anderson	Proctor	Cyril Milbrath
Grand Rapids	G. Erickson	Red Lake	Roy Petrell
Granite Falls	J. G. Undlin	Red Wing	Deane Turner
Greenbush	Darrel Sand	Redwood Falls	Nate Bovee
Halstad	Ardee Johnson	Renville	L. B. Kodet
Harmony	Norman Brakken	Rochester	Glenn Scott
Hastings	Ernest Palmer	Rushford	Henrik Aune
Hawley	Truman Tillerias	St. Charles	Frank Tolmie
Hayfield	Lloyd Lofgren	St. Clair	Kayle Becker
Hector	W. E. Smith	St. Cloud	E. J. O'Connell
Hendrum	Ormond Johnson	Sanborn	Melvin Markwardt
Herman	Lavern Saphore	Sandstone	Leo Keskinen
Hibbing	Sulo Ojakangas	Sauk Centre	Russell Stende
Hills	Gerald Hafner	Sebek	Orville Thomas
Hinckley	Leslie Matts	Sleepy Eye	Olaf Kolari
Hitterdal	Jerome Specht	Springfield	Cecil Femling
Hopkins	H. W. Firmage	Spring Grove	Carmen Nohre
Houston	Milford Reed	Staples	Joe Raine
Hutchinson	R. Eberhart	Stephen	Richard Mitton
Iron	Charles Malovrh	Stewart	Ed Zeleznikar
Jackson	Donald Doll	Taylor Falls	Gunnar Berquist
Karlstad		Thief River Falls	H. F. Harrison
Kelliher	Charles Peterka	Tracy	Morrell Seeds, Richard Hoffman
Kennedy	C. Richard Forsline	Two Harbors	William House
Kenyon	Donald Moeller	Ulen	Peter Fog
Kimball	Russell Stansfield	Villard	L. C. House
Lake City	Harry J. Johnson	Wabasha	C. C. Hickman
Lake Crystal	Ernest Freier	Waconia	Vernon Bruhn
Lakefield	Lloyd Graham	Wadena	John Hill
Lakeville	Marvin Merbach	Warren	Eldon Senske
Lancaster	Delbert Sand	Watertown	David Anderson
Lanesboro	William Olson	Westbrook	Bernard Cranston
LeCenter	Roger Hamstreet	Wheaton	Selmer Kittleson
Lewiston	Gordan Jacobsen	Williams	LaVern Wagner
Lindstrom-Center City	Robert Rohner	Willmar	Michael Cullen
Litchfield	Joe Duncomb	Willow River	Irvin Prachar
Little Falls	Earl Rundgren, John Maier	Windom	Avison Francis
Littlefork	Peter Reuter	Winnebago	Harold A. Nelson
Long Prairie	Noel Hatie	Winona	Glenn M. Anderson
Luverne	Harry P. Franz	Winthrop	Amos Hayes
Mabel	L. D. Richards	Worthington	Kenneth Johnson, Walter E. Larson