the question of federal aid to do away with illiteracy, the argument, I believe, is all in its favor. I am obliged to resort again to a few figures which indicate why such aid is needed if there is to be organized effort to eliminate illiteracy and its attendant evils. We are again in the presence of the vicious circle. The States and communities that most need funds to carry on the campaign both of prevention and of abolition are usually those least able to afford it. While, for example, the average of one-room schools for the country at large is 28 per cent., it varies in different States from less than 4 to 58 per cent.

The percentage of efficiency in providing school facilities for children under fourteen varies from 36 to 75 per cent. in different States, the highest percentage as a rule being found in Far Western States. To take a single example, children in South Carolina had a few years ago but 58 per cent. of the opportunity to attend school of those in New Jersey. If we took counties instead of States the variation would be enormously greater.

These differences are largely connected with a difference in financial resources. The per capita production of wealth in five States having the greatest educational efficiency was double that of the five States having the lowest rating.

The five richest States had, according to the census of 1920, an income per child of three and a half times that of the five poorest; the saving accounts of the gainfully employed increased in a ratio of seven to one, while the amount spent in the well-to-do States was fifty dollars per child annually, against eleven dollars per child in the poor ones.

While the evil is more or less concentrated in localities, it is nation-wide in its effects. Where one member suffers, the whole body suffers with it. Resources to cope with the evil are also unequally distributed.

It is a measure of justice as well as of generosity that those most able to help should cooperate with the weaker States in doing away once for all with the evil of illiteracy.

This cooperation can be brought about only through the medium of the federal government.

But the sole responsibility does not lie with it, nor should anything like the whole burden be put upon it. We must have organized endeavor all along the line.

How Much Freedom in New Schools?

It is not easy to take stock of the achievements of progressive schools in the last decade: these schools are too diverse both in aims and in mode of conduct. In one respect, this is as it should be: it indicates that there is no cut-and-dried program to follow, that schools are free to grow along the lines of special needs and conditions and so to express the variant ideas of innovating leaders. But there is more than is suggested by these considerations in the existing diversity. It testifies also to the fact that the underlying motivation is so largely a reaction against the traditional school that the watchwords of the progressive movement are capable of being translated into inconsistent practices.

The negative aspect of progressive education results from the conditions of its origin. Progressive schools are usually initiated by parents who are dissatisfied with existing schools and find teachers who agree with them. Often they express discontent with traditional education or locally available schools without embodying any well thought-out policies and aims. They are symptoms of reaction against formalism and mass regimentation; they are manifestations of a desire for an education at once freer and richer. In extreme cases they represent enthusiasm much more than understanding.

Their common creed is the belief in freedom, in aesthetic enjoyment and artistic expression, in opportunity for individual development, and in learning through activity rather than by passive absorption. Such aims give progressive schools a certain community of spirit and atmosphere. But they do not determine any common procedure in discipline or instruction; they do not fix the subject matter to be taught; they do not decide whether the

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That there was need for the reaction, indeed for a revolt, seems to me unquestionable. The evils of the traditional, conventional school room, its almost complete isolation from actual life, and the deadly depression of mind which the weight of formal material caused, all cried out for reform. But rebellion against formal studies and lessons can be effectively completed only through the development of a new subject matter, as well organized as was the old—indeed, better organized in any vital sense of the word organization—but having an intimate and developing relation to the experience of those in school. The relative failure to accomplish this result indicates the one-sidedness of the idea of the "child-centered" school.

I do not mean, of course, that education does not centre in the pupil. It obviously takes its start with him and terminates in him. But the child is not something isolated; he does not live inside himself, but in a world of nature and man. His experience is not complete in his impulses and emotions; these must reach out into a world of objects and persons. And until an experience has become relatively mature, the impulses do not even know what they are reaching out toward and for; they are blind and inchoate. To fail to assure them guidance and direction is not merely to permit them to operate in a blind and spasmodic fashion, but it promotes the formation of habits of immature, undeveloped and egotistical activity. Guidance and direction mean that the impulses and desires take effect through material that is impersonal and objective. And this subject matter can be provided in a way which will obtain ordered and consecutive development of experience only by means of the thoughtful selection and organization of material by those having the broadest experience—those who treat impulses and inchoate desires and plans as potentials of growth through interaction and not as finalities.

To be truly self-centered is not to be centered in one's feelings and desires. Such a center means dissipation, and the ultimate destruction of any centre whatever. Nor does it mean to be egotistically bent on the fulfillment of personal wishes and ambitions. It means rather to have a rich field of social and natural relations, which are at first external to the self, but now incorporated into personal experience so that they give it weight, balance and order. In some progressive schools the fear of adult imposition has become a veritable phobia. When the fear is ana-
lyzed, it means simply a preference for an immature and undeveloped experience over a ripened and thoughtful one; it erects into a standard something which by its nature provides no steady measure or tested criterion. In some recent articles in the New Republic I have argued that an adult cannot attain an integrated personality except by incorporating into himself the realities of the life-situations in which he finds himself. This operation is certainly even more necessary for the young; what is called “subject matter” represents simply the selected and organized material that is relevant to such incorporation at any given time. The neglect of it means arrest of growth at an immature level and ultimate disintegration of selfhood.

It is, of course, difficult to use words that are not open to misapprehension. There may be those who think that I am making a plea for return to some kind of adult imposition, or at least to ready-made and rather rigidly predetermined topics and sequences of study. But in fact many of the current interpretations of the child-centered school, of pupil initiative and pupil-purposing and planning, suffer from exactly the same fallacy as the adult-imposition method of the traditional school—only in an inverted form. That is, they are still obsessed by the personal factor; they conceive of no alternative to adult dictation save child dictation. What is wanted is to get away from every mode of personal dictation and merely personal control. When the emphasis falls upon having experiences that are educationally worth while, the center of gravity shifts from the personal factor, and is found within the developing experience in which pupils and teachers alike participate. The teacher, because of greater maturity and wider knowledge, is the natural leader in the shared activity, and is naturally accepted as such. The fundamental thing is to find the types of experience that are worth having, not merely for the moment, but because of what they lead to—the questions they raise, the problems they create, the demands for new information they suggest, the activities they provoke, the larger and expanding fields into which they continuously open.

In criticizing the progressive schools, as I have indicated already, it is difficult to make sweeping generalizations. But some of these schools indulge pupils in unrestrained freedom of action and speech, of manners and lack of manners. Schools farthest to the left (and there are many parents who share the fallacy) carry the thing they call freedom nearly to the point of anarchy. This license, however—this outer freedom in action—is but an included part of the larger question just touched upon. When there is genuine control and direction of experiences that are intrinsically worth while by objective subject matter, excessive liberty of outward action will also be naturally regulated. Ultimately it is the absence of intellectual control through significant subject matter which stimulates the deplorable egotism, cockiness, impertinence and disregard for the rights of others apparently considered by some persons to be the inevitable accompaniment, if not the essence, of freedom.

The fact that even the most extreme of the progressive schools do obtain for their pupils a degree of mental independence and power which stands them in good stead when they go to schools where formal methods prevail, is evidence of what might be done if the emphasis were put upon the rational freedom which is the fruit of objective knowledge and understanding. And thus we are brought to the nub of the matter. To conduct a progressive school is much more difficult than to conduct a formal one. Standards, materials, methods are already at hand for the latter; the teacher needs only to follow and conform. Upon the whole, it is not surprising that, in history, science, the arts and other school “studies,” there is still a lack of subject matter which has been organized upon the basis of connection with the pupils’ own growth in insight and power. The time-span of progressive schools has been too short to permit very much to be accomplished. What may rightfully be demanded, however, is that the progressive schools recognize their responsibility for accomplishing this task, so as not to be content with casual improvisation and living intellectually from hand to mouth.

Again one needs to guard against misunderstanding. There is no single body of subject matter which can be worked out, even in the course of years, which will be applicable all over the country. I am not arguing for any such outcome; I know of nothing that would so completely kill progressive schools and turn them into another kind of formal schools, differentiated only by having another set of conventions. Even in the same school, what will work with one group of children will not “take” with another group of the same age. Full recognition of the fact that subject matter must be always changing with locality, with the
situation and with the particular type of children is, however, quite consistent with equal recognition of the fact that it is possible to work out varied bodies of consecutive subject matter upon which teachers may draw, each in his own way, in conducting his own work. The older type of education could draw upon a body of information, of subject matter and skills which was arranged from the adult standpoint. Progressive education must have a much larger, more expansive and adaptable body of materials and activities, developed through constant study of the conditions and methods favorable to the consecutive development of power and understanding. The weakness of existing progressive education is due to the meager knowledge which anyone has regarding the conditions and laws of continuity which govern the development of mental power. To this extent its defects are inevitable and are not to be complained of. But if progressive schools become complacent with existing accomplishments, unaware of the slight foundation of knowledge upon which they rest, and careless regarding the amount of study of the laws of growth that remains to be done, a reaction against them is sure to take place.

Such reference as has been made to the subject matter of a worth-while and continuously developing experience is too general to be of value in actual guidance. The discovery of such subject matter, which induces growth of skill, understanding and rational freedom, is the main question to be worked upon cooperatively. The question may be raised, however, of whether the tendency of progressive schools has not been to put emphasis upon things that make schooling more immediately enjoyable to pupils rather than upon things that will give them the understanding and capacity that are relevant to contemporary social life. No one can justly deplore the value of any education which supplies additions to the resources of the inner life of pupils. But surely the problem of progressive education demands that this result be not effected in such a way as to ignore or obscure preparation for the social realities—including the evils—of industrial and political civilization.

Upon the whole, progressive schools have been most successful in furthering "creativeness" in the arts—in music, drawing and picture making, dramatics and literary composition, including poetry. This achievement is well worth while; it ought to assist in producing a generation esthetically more sensitive and alive than the older one. But it is not enough. Taken by itself it will do something to further the private appreciations of, say, the upper section of a middle class. But it will not serve to meet even the esthetic needs and shortcomings of contemporary industrial society in its prevailing external expressions. Again, while much has been achieved in teaching science as an addition to private resources in intellectual enjoyment, I do not find that as much has been done in bringing out the relation of science to industrial society, and its potentialities for a planned control of future developments.

Such criticisms as these are not met by introducing exercises and discussions based on what are called "current events." What is needed is something which may indeed connect intellectually in time with what currently happens, but which takes the mind back of the happenings to the understanding of basic causes. Without insight into operative conditions, there can be no education that contains the promise of improved social direction.

This fact brings us back again to the enormous difficulty involved in a truly progressive development of progressive education. This development cannot be secured by the study of children alone. It requires a searching study of society and its moving forces. That the traditional schools have almost wholly evaded consideration of the social potentialities of education is no reason why progressive schools should continue the evasion, even though it be sugared over with esthetic refinements. The time ought to come when no one will be judged to be an educated man or woman who does not have insight into the basic forces of industrial and urban civilization. Only schools which take the lead in bringing about this kind of education can claim to be progressive in any socially significant sense.