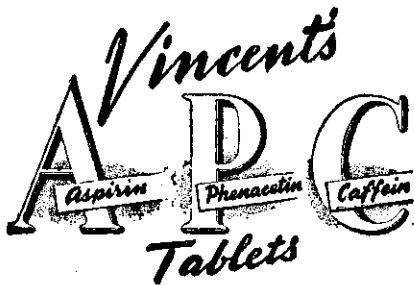


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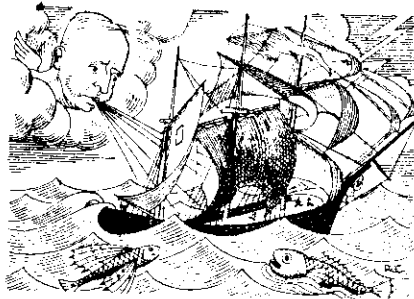
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WHEN I began teaching in Wellington 47 years ago there was no training college. During a time of depression and "cuts" it had been "cut to the bone." On a wage of £26 a year pupil teachers turned for guidance to school method books. These books gave four-fifths of their space to expounding ways of teaching the various subjects. They dwelt long and with a care the reverse of tender on arithmetic.

With my fellow apprentices I took these method books in good faith. You may have seen a grocer bagging up sevens of sugar and twelves of flour against a rush of trade. In much the same way it was for the teacher to bag up Arithmetic, Spelling, Geography, etc., his fifty to ninety pupils being the bags. The rush he prepared for was a rather rhadamanthine annual examination.

I am forced to admit that I made this bagging-up business my main concern for nearly 20 years. I taught Arithmetic really well. There were thousands of primary teachers who could do this.

When I was in my thirties I was still unaware that education was a part and a supremely important one of the external scheme of things, one to which so great a poet as Wordsworth had given inspired and inspiring attention.

But the sturdy barque Education (or say rather Instruction) had sprung a leak and ideas were beginning to seep in. Sir John Adams in his pithy, humorous way had hinted that as necessary to a teacher as knowing the subject he was to impart to multifarious Johns was the knowing of those Johns.

Then the *Dominie's Log* began to sell in tens of thousands. I remember how, on reading it nearly 30 years ago, I was

diverted. Its author was certainly amusing but this was because he was so absurd. Such nonsense to propound to tradesmen who had learned how to "control" a class! It outraged commonsense. It took long, slow years for my generation to realise that it was a hide-bound system of subject instruction that outraged commonsense, and that Mr. O'Neill was very sensibly trying to

Written for "The Listener"  
by F. L. COMBS

abolish the wooden values and mechanical virtues of the classroom and to relate schooling to the life needs of the school's human material.

### Worthwhile Advances

To-day the sturdy barque Instruction, though not sunk, lies waterlogged and something of a menace to an emancipated cult of education which centres its attention on the building of personalities and the growth of souls. Teachers, on the whole, are in advance of the general public in a desire to subordinate instruction to an awakening of mind and spirit in each and all of their charges, but the public as well as the teachers have in recent years made a worth-while advance in their outlook on the physical well-being of the young.

This brings me to the main point. Education is not the processing of young minds with the subjects of instruction. It is as large as life and for good or harm inter-penetrates every fibre of its human material. For its sagacious imparting it therefore requires a philosophy of life. It must answer the question: How (historically) have we come to be where we are? What road should we travel now we are here? And, hardest of all, What is the supreme goal of a well-lived life and how can the educator aid both his pupils and the society whose servant he is to achieve it?

Economics, a formidable if not a great science, has never, except in the case of Ruskin, set about answering this last question; maybe it cannot, but an Education which seeks to get anywhere both can and must.

### Humans Are Not Termites

This is why the indispensable basis of Education is a Philosophy of Life, idealistic in its purpose, for human beings are not termites able to remain 40 million years without changing, realistic in its insight, for thought which does not face up to life's realities is the nightmare "Life in Death" which haunted the poet Coleridge in his opium trances.

Can a School of Education do, anything to instil, and, quite as important,

to broadcast the philosophy of life on which, in and out of school, education must be based if it is to perform a vital and wholesome function? Not, I think, if Education remains in too academic trammels, not if it is a matter merely of instructing so that students, having passed examinations, shall receive credits or diplomas. The sorry fate of a Theology of the Schools which did not get much beyond this is a standing warning to educationists. A School of Education which merely did this would tend rather to divorce its graduates from current realities than to equip them to cope with them.

Education is an art and a science which cannot be confined to specialised practitioners. Parents from an angle of their own need to know as much about it as teachers, and there is no branch of trade or industry and no phase of social activity that does not interlock with it.

### Fruit of Maturity

One therefore sees thronging to the school students of all ages drawn from every walk of life—teachers, of course—members of educational governing bodies, commercial men, trade union leaders, women officially connected with socio-cultural work, a minister of education who wishes to set his course by a main bearing, etc., etc.

Most of these people will be 30 plus; some will be 50. I cannot imagine the real mastery of a philosophy of life beginning before the former age. It is a fruit of maturity. Teachers of that age will, it is assumed, have been rightly guided in their previous practice and prepared therefore on entering the School to see the parts converge into a whole.

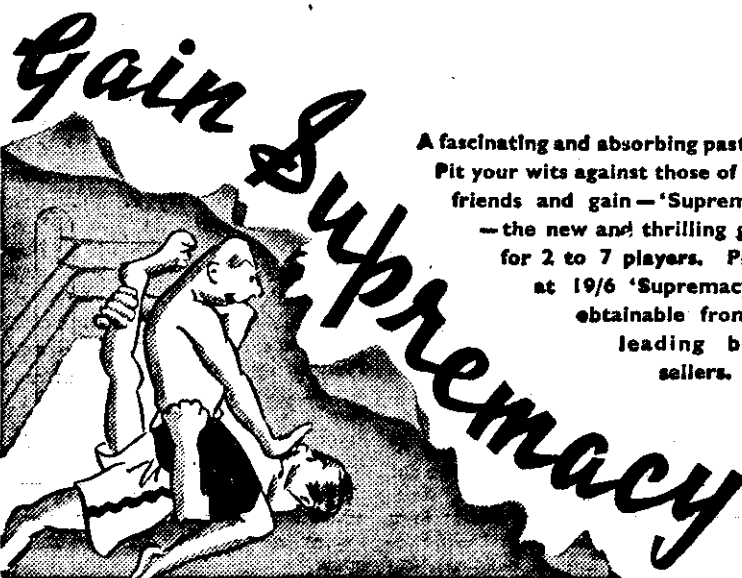
There will be a variety of courses, all of them organised so as to become discussion courses in which there can be a pooling of ideas and a swapping of experiences. Occasional inspirational lectures will, one takes it, be an important function of the School's teaching staff. Theory and practice will be kept as close together as the two sides of a shilling.

A variety of research work will be embarked upon by students who have a bias in that direction but "pure" studies will be kept in wholesome disciplinary contact with applied ones. That the teaching will lead on to the free and full use of a well-stocked library goes without saying. Fortunately in all Universities there is an increasing tendency in that direction to-day.

### School with a Mission

But the School will not be a stay-at-home. Its functional relationship to Democracy being so comprehensive and so close, it cannot do that. It will be a

(continued on next page)



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