

School Chief Speaks Out on Sputnik and Education

By TOM RISCHÉ
Herald Staff Writer

"How is education affected by the missiles' red glare and the threat of bombs bursting in air?"

With the country's schools under heavy fire in the excitement over the Russian Sputniks, the HERALD asked Dr. J. H. Hull, superintendent of schools, that question.

"We are equipped to compete with the Russians, said the educator. 'Our lever of training will hold its own and in time, move ahead of them.'"

No Inside Dope
"I have no private sources of information on what is happening inside Russia, but I understand the present missile and satellite program was developed by older men, many of whom were not Russians. I do not think that shows the super-

iority of their educational system, although it might affect the balance of world power."

Schools, he said, often become scapegoats in times of stress.

Sputnik, he believes, indicated that it was a good time for schools to take inventory of themselves.

Inventory Good
"A periodic inventory is a good thing," he declared. "It is a good time to look at our program and see where it can be improved. It is also a good time to look at our program in guiding youngsters into math and science."

One of the biggest factors, however, is interest of parents in the total program. Schools have most difficulty, he said, with children from homes where both parents work or are not interested in their children.

Children need to feel that someone cares what they do, and many of them don't have that feeling, he said. Schools do what they can in this direction, he said.

"Our schools are only what the public wants them to be," he declared. "The schools must follow the public. They can offer a certain amount of leadership, but if they get too far ahead, they look around and find no one is following."

Programs Cited
As an example, he cited several rather extensive junior college programs set up on a technical level to teach students various skills ranging from beauty operators to machinists.

Nonetheless, Hull said, only about 20 per cent of junior college enrollees take technical courses, while the remaining 80 per cent are in pre-college and university courses. Although educators feel the technical courses are needed, much of the equipment of the pro-

gram goes unused because students don't take the courses.

He blamed much of the trouble on a massive "let's go to college" complex.

Child-Centered
"We have set up our whole society so our children will do better than we have," the superintendent said. "We overprotect our children. The schools are what the people make them."

The schools attempt to counsel students into lines in which they are likely to succeed, he said, but run into two difficulties — parental opposition and the impossibility of 100 per cent accurate counseling.

"It is a mistake to think that the test and interview determines everything," he pointed out. "We try to counsel them into the right directions, however."

Parent Right
"The parent is always right. If the parent objects when we counsel a student into general math from algebra, the student can take algebra. If he fails algebra, I guess he's learned something then, too."

The Torrance schools operate strongly on the theory of teaching, recognizing individual differences in children, the superintendent pointed out.

"We need the full recognition with practical application that all men are created full and unequal, and individually different, and that even though there are some necessary common learnings, this is not an excuse for putting everyone through exactly the same process."

Difference Noted
He differentiated between "training" and "education" of students.

Training, he said, largely characterized the old American and many present European systems. It involved considerable memorizing and little

direct application of knowledge learned.

Education is teaching a child the attitudes needed to learn and think, understanding what he learns. It involves not only training, but an application of those principles.

Knew Everything
"There was a time when an educated man could learn everything there was to know," he said. "In recent years, the amount of knowledge has increased so much that today we must prepare people to live in a technical world we can't visualize."

He said the schools must maintain a balance between the pur scientific and human relations fields. The problems in the world today are not those of scientific discoveries, but teaching people how to get along with each other, he averred. That is what the schools are trying to teach young people, he said.

"We can make everybody take algebra and science in school," Hull reported, but that won't change the number who actually are qualified to take these subjects."

Not Flashy
He described education of children to think as "something that takes more time and is not as flashy" as reciting something which they have memorized, but not applied.

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Noting complaints that children today are not trained in basic subjects, Hull replied, "There are many today to whom the past is hazy and they remember it with a sort of happy nostalgia for the good old days. If we look back 200 years, we find people complaining that young people and schools are going to the dogs. I think they are better than ever."

He admitted that the general IQ level of school children may have been higher 50 years ago, but said that then only the richer or smarter children completed school. Today, he said, the rule and the law call for education of everybody under 18.

Gifted Children
Attention now is being given to the "gifted" or brilliant children. Some schools are trying to group children roughly by IQ levels, although this is not done in Torrance.

"The answer is not in grouping or not grouping, but of grouping the children by ability within a group," he reported.

Present weaknesses of

schools lie primarily in counseling a student correctly and in educating the public as to what the schools are trying to do, Hull believes.

He believes, however, that the acceptance of individualized instruction is gathering momentum and that this program is showing its worth.

Coeds from Narbonne Attend Weekend Camp

Some 25 lettergirls and GAA girls from Narbonne High School went to Clear Creek last week and where they camped, hiked, swam, and took part in other camping activities.

The camp is located in the Los Angeles National Forest and is operated by the Los Angeles Board of Education. The girls were accompanied by Miss Barbara Litchfield, Narbonne physical education teacher.

Guild Plans Festival

Mrs. Bette Thomas, 1213 Crenshaw Blvd., will participate in arrangements for the Guild's annual spring festival when the California Chapter of the Accordion Teachers' Guild meets Sunday.

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