

**Widening Educational**

rary, where there is every probability of countless interruptions.

Not the library! she decides. Carrying her large notebook, one or two textbooks, from which she will later teach, a set of 35 schedule cards on which she intends to work during this "free" time, office records for her 35 home room pupils, ink eradicator and her purse, she enters the teachers' room, where she finds a place at the long narrow table. She may not spread out too much, for she must consider the convenience of others.

Before settling down to the job, she again reads the mimeographed instructions on procedure. She is apprehensive about the accuracy of her clerical work; she has been trained to teach. Clerical work to her is as arduous as teaching would be to the office worker. Finally, she starts, telling herself she should accomplish much in the 35 minutes now left to her. Ten minutes pass when, like Macbeth, she is disturbed by the sound of knocking on the opaque glass door.

"Yes, Joe?" she queries, the doorknob in her hand. "I'm here for the make-up test you said I could take. I was absent when you gave the test in class." The student's expression indicates the martyrdom he feels on such an occasion.

"Oh-h! Fine! Report to the library, will you? I'll be there in a few minutes." She returns to pack up her working materials and then spends the next 20 minutes giving a makeup test to Joe, an over-aged student, who, a few days later, decides to leave school.

When she is to do this clerical work? She may not do it after school, for the office records are not available after 3:30; besides, she is coaching a play after school. Her superiors know very well when she will do this work, but they wink at the fact.

**Closed Eyes**

Since they can offer no desirable solution, they close their eyes to the reality of her problem. Actually, it is not just her problem. It is their problem; it is the problem of the Board of Education; it is the problem of the community.

The clerical work must be done. Consequently, she gives her pupils something which will keep them busy and then frantically does the job at her desk, hoping no higher authority will choose this time to observe her teaching. Such an event does not happen, though, for it would be against the rules of the winking game.

Her pupils grow restless. With the insight of youth, they sense the situation and resent their teacher's concern with paper work

instead of with them. They want her attention. She's there to teach them, isn't she? So one by one, they go up to her desk to ask pointless, but legitimate questions. The teacher smiles, a Cheshire-cat smile, answers questions patiently, works inaccurately, and uses ink eradicator frequently.

"Teachers are the worst clerical workers in the world," says the administrator, who himself was a teacher not too long ago. (His classroom experience is a point which he emphasizes or de-emphasizes—whichever is to his advantage at the moment.) Given a sufficient and uninterrupted period of time and a proper environment in which to do the clerical work, a teacher can easily disprove this statement. But after all, the premise is that a teacher is employed to teach, is it not? Pathetic fallacy, I agree.

**Office Hours**

The layman should also know that a teacher has an entirely different attitude toward her job from that of the office worker. Because she does, she often checks in at the same time as the janitor. In order to prepare for an efficient day, she can do countless things in the early morning hour before the arrival of her pupils.

And so, a slave to habit, I arrived early in the office on the second day of my summer job to finish some typing that had been assigned to me the previous day. I had been typing almost a half-hour when my fellow-workers began to arrive at their desks a few minutes before nine o'clock. Not one began to type until the minute of nine.

Later in the day my supervisor tactfully hinted to me that I would get on better with my colleagues if I didn't appear too zealous about my work. Still later when my fellow-workers and I grew better acquainted, they described to me their amazement at finding me on the job so early that summer morning. The school janitor and I and many other teachers, however, are still checking in at the same time.

Then, too, in an office—and the routine is the same in a factory, I am told—one is entitled to a "break" in the morning and in the afternoon. In my summer job I didn't start work until the minute of nine; I took a "break" at 10:30. I paused at 11:45 to wash up for lunch. I dared not resumptyping until the stroke of one. I took a "break" at 3:00 and stopped at 4:45 to prepare for departure at five. And when I arrived home, I had the joy of a free evening.

How different is the teacher's routine! I check in about 7:30 a.m. I am on the job constantly—teaching, policing, or doing clerical work. My lunch period is 45 minutes in length, but few teachers devote this full time to eating and relaxing. We eat hurriedly and then run off to keep an appointment with a pupil who may need special help, or

to finish a clerical job, or to prepare for our next class, or to take care of some special duty if we are in charge of school attendance or employment or assemblies.

The Bell Doth Toll

Throughout the day our activities are regulated by bells. A good teacher keeps her lesson clock until the bell rings. She has three minutes to gather all her teaching materials, which she carries with her all day long (few teachers do all their teaching in the one classroom), to proceed with dignity through crowded halls—she must take care of any traffic snarl en route—to ascend or descend two, or sometimes four, flights of stairs, to arrive at the place or her next teaching assignment, to lay her burden of materials on the desk, to return to the hall in order to speed loitering pupils on their way.

When the bell rings, still somewhat breathless from the exertion of her recent journey, she enters the classroom to face some thirty-five youngsters who demand immediate attention. A good teacher begins her lesson promptly.

Our day does not end at three o'clock, a quitting time the layman usually associates with teachers. Rarely do I—and many other teachers like me—leave the school buildings before four o'clock, and often I have stayed after that time. We are detained by faculty meetings, department meetings, committee meetings; by conferences with pupils; by extra-curricular activities; by work which cannot be taken home.

It would be too difficult, for instance, to transport some 50 or 60 notebooks; therefore such checking must be done after school hours. At this time we also do that clerical work which can be done without the use of office records.

Janitors fret when teachers stay later than four o'clock. When I coached our senior show not so long ago, one of my biggest worries was pacifying the janitor, who had to remain in the building until five o'clock because of my rehearsals.

Evenings Free

A teacher's free evenings are not too many. If she is conscientious, she works on her preparations for the next day and checks student papers. Checking compositions is an endless task. If she is taking an extension course, as many are, she, like Chaucer's Oxford Scholar, is not only a teacher, but also a learner, and as such she must do her homework.

Toward the end of the week, another evening task is writing the record of what she intends to teach in each of her five classes during the week to come. This record must be submitted on Friday so that, if she is absent any day during the following week, a substitute may continue the regular class work. Then there are evening activities which she must attend nor can she relax at these functions. If she is coaching the activity, she is as tense as any director on the first night of a new play. If she is in the audience, she is responsible for the proper audience behaviour of any pupils sitting in her vicinity. Regardless of fatigue or tension, she must be gracious and smiling when she meets parents at these times, for she remembers the necessity of good public relations between the school and the community.

**Comparisons**

The office worker knows no such evening responsibilities as I have described. Office workers, moreover, do not live their jobs as teachers do. A layman would be convinced of this fact if he compared the dialogue in the washroom of an office building with that in the teachers' room. Sara and Marie, for instance, two girls who worked at desks near mine, spent every minute of their free time talking about Eddie.

"Did you see Eddie last night, Marie?" Sara asked, squirting liquid soap into her cupped hand.

Standing at a basin nearby, I couldn't help hearing their conversation; however, they had no wish to keep their romantic activities a secret.

Straining for a glamorous pose, Marie coolly blew the smoke from her nose and mouth, and rested her head against the screened window. "Yup!" she answered.

"So-o-o, what happened?" Sara could hardly contain her curiosity.

"So-o, I told him off! That's what happened!" Marie replied, biting her words.

"You did?" Sara was aching for the details.

I always wondered at Sara's keen interest because no new incident ever seemed to occur in Marie's romance. From what I heard daily in the washroom, Marie was always "telling Eddie off," but nevertheless intended "to see Eddie" that night—"just to tell him off some more."

Around a basin at the other end of the room several office girls were discussing the scores they had achieved in bowling on the previous evening. Men, recreations, gossip, and fashions—these items were most often discussed.

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by the girls during their "breaks" in the morning and afternoon. Never was work discussed. Work was something done at the desk; when you left the desk, the work stayed there. You didn't take it with you.

But in a teachers' room the conversation is very different. The reason for the difference, I think, is that the teacher takes her work with her, physically, mentally and spiritually. In the teachers' room, where can be heard sounds from the music room (the band is practicing) and from the typewriter rooms, are working a number of teachers. Miss Toole, who is checking papers at the long narrow table, looks up to find Mrs. Storm making out report cards and smoking a cigarette.

"I wish I were up to that point," says Mrs. Toole. "I haven't even started my cards yet!"

"I was caught in a dreadful rush last time," answers Mrs. Storm. "and I vowed I wouldn't let it happen this time."

Miss Toole sighs as she checks a particular paper. "Have you ever had Sam Barnes in class?" she asks, worriedly. "I've been trying so hard to get him over the hurdle. His I.Q. is average and his reading index is not too low. I don't know why he's not doing better."

"It's so difficult to decide what grade to give sometimes, isn't it?" Mrs. Storm agrees, sympathetically. "I wish we didn't have to dole out grades to these youngsters. I've never had Barnes, but I've had plenty like him. Maybe he works after school. So many of them do," she adds as she continues writing on her cards. "If Sally Richards keeps up the good

work," she says with a pleased nod at the particular card on which she's writing, "she'll surely get a scholarship!"

Teachers are always concerned about pupils like Sam and Sally. After all, Sam Barnes is their problem, their responsibility—not book inventories, registers, papers, reports. Their job is to help Sam Barnes and the other hundred and some odd students whom each teacher instructs daily.

**I Like Teaching, But—**

When I left the office that summer, it was not to return to an easy job. I felt I was leaving an easy job in order to teach pupils like Sam Barnes. For despite the splintered desk and the audio-visual aids that never fail to break down when in use, despite the "red tape" and maddening delay involved in securing books, paper, and a few pencils, despite the crippling burden of clerical work, despite the ostrich-like administrators who bury their heads in paper work instead of coming to grips with some of the real problems in today's schools, despite the scornful attitude of the servant with too many idle moments, and despite the injustice of the low wage—despite it all, I like teaching.

Teaching is much more vital, more stimulating than office work. The teacher may need a morning and afternoon "break," but not because of the monotony of her routine. There is nothing dull or humdrum in teaching high school English to 130-odd pupils a day; in fact, there is no job more inspiring than teaching boys and girls.

Teachers know that they do much more than convey a know-

ledge of subject matter; they know the importance of their work. No true teacher could forsake Sam Barnes for an easier job, a job that would permit her to forget her responsibilities at five in the evening until nine the next morning.

I like teaching, and so do most other teachers, but I want the lay-

man to know that teaching is not the "cliché" he sometimes thinks it is.

This column is conducted by the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation. Contributions are welcomed and should be sent to Estelle Bowness, 98 Prince Street, Charlottetown.

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