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An American university adapts itself in the modern world: [Review of the book Innovation and experiment at an American university by John Rowe Workman (Washington, D.C: Public Affairs Press)]

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BOOKS REVIEWED

in examinations or in games such as this charm recited by marble players,

"Roll, roll, tootsie roll,
Roll marble, in the hole."

Different schools have customs relating to initiation rites, special holidays, end of term, etc. But there are some curiosities which are almost universal, such as saying the same thing at once accidentally. Both children must instantly stop what they are doing, and follow a set ritual, such as holding little fingers and wishing, with or without a chant. The curing of warts by magic chants is widely practised with but little variation in method from 1627 to 1954 (Francis Bacon) or even back 2,000 years (Pliny). Among other curiosities is that of secret languages, popular with teen-age children. So that outsiders are unable to understand them they use slang, word-twistings, sign language, "back-slang" such as "uoy nac ees reh sreckin ginwosh", or rhyming-slang such as "almond rocks" for "socks", "going for a ball of chalk" for a walk etc.

There are many rhymes and superstitions as regards friendships, love tokens, tests of affection, fortune telling etc.

The book closes with the chapter on pranks played on pedestrians, such as setting booby traps across the pavement, and on householders such as window tapping, and especially door-knocking which is described in great detail and variety. This book should help to deepen any teacher's insight into the working of his pupils' minds, and it should be interesting to note how South African childrens' mores differ from or coincide with those of English children.

E.P.R.

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An American University adapts itself to the modern world —



Innovation and Experiment at an American University. New Horizons of Higher Education, by John Rowe Workman (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C.).

Lip-service is commonly paid at all levels to innovation and experiment in education, but too often in practice education goes on in the same old way, monotonous, boring, rutted. **New Horizons of Higher Education** is a description by the Associate Professor of Classics at Brown University (U.S.A. Founded in 1764) of an experimental scheme of instruction for first and second year undergraduates at that university college. The university authorities were concerned, as most university authorities are, about the attitude and performance of first year students fresh from high school — the job, as the writer puts it, of converting "the unco-ordinated collector of facts and impulses into a scholar." Orthodox instruction was leading to boredom and failure; text-books and survey lecturers were short-circuiting the educational process; large groups were hindering the proper development of personality; final examinations were holding the danger of being little more than an exaggerated demonstration, not of knowledge, but of what the student thought the professor wanted to know, and of fostering in the student the dogmatic belief that there is a final answer to everything.

These doubts about and criticism of higher education courses, with the implied criticism of high school instruction, are not confined to the United States, and for this reason this book has an interest for us in South Africa. Had Brown University then answers to these very real problems?

The first 'reforms' were made in a physical sense. Class groups were reduced in size. Groups of 7 to 10 were considered to be the most desirable size, but it was necessary to accept groups of 20 for economic reasons, and it was found in practice that a group of this size gave a larger field of impact. (In parenthesis, it may be noted that the Johannesburg College of Education for some years has followed a consistent policy of keeping groups small, with happy results. This policy, we may add, has not had the entire approval of the Educational Department, largely for economic reasons — or so we hope). The increase in staffing at Brown was underwritten by the Carnegie Corporation for five years.

In these smaller groups, instruction became participatory rather than expository — the traditional method of school and university. The latter method tends to make the student "become addicted to a black-white, hot-cold, way of examining evidence"; the former accepts no authoritarian agent — no lecturer or text-book is held up as a final authority. Classes, then, were conducted in an atmosphere of free discussion about ideas — their evolution, validity, and pertinence to other ideas. This was the first premise of the scheme.

The second was the intensive study of a central text. To name but a few: Aristotle's **Ethics** in Classics, Machiavelli's **Prince** in History, Darwin's **Origin of Species** in Biology, a book of the Bible in Religious Studies. As Prof. Workman says, 'We say that the impression made by a reading of the book of Job will have a greater impact upon the student than a book about the problem of evil." These intensive studies were designed to stimulate among the students 'intellectual curiosity', an overworked phrase, but one which describes the desired end. First-hand knowledge is always superior to second-hand predigested information. Brown University feels too that it was not only the students who benefited. Lecturers were shaken out of their ruts, however ancient and petrified these were.

All in all, the experiment was a success and is being continued, for, to quote Prof. Workman again, "The ability to examine critically what is set before the citizen must be at the heart of any educational system", and this aim the new methods were undoubtedly achieving.

H.H.