

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., now in the Department of History at the University of Illinois, has also taught at Yale, Columbia, and Stanford. He is the author of numerous books and articles, mainly on American history.

This is a condensation of his "Aimlessness in Education," which first appeared in *The Scientific Monthly*, August, 1952. The problem of education is at the very heart of freedom in America, as elsewhere.

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EDUCATION FOR 1984



NO BELIEF is more firmly held in the United States than belief in education. But belief is not enough. We must understand education as well as believe in it. The thing that counts, after all, is not the number of schoolrooms we have, but what goes on in them.

Our civilization requires of every man and woman a variety of complex skills which rest upon the power to read, write, and calculate, and upon sound knowledge of science, history, economics, and other fundamental disciplines. Intellectual training is essential for the survival of our civilization, because civilization itself has been built by intellectual effort.

Consider how the disciplines of science and learning came into being. The world is first known to us—and was to mankind—as a great tangle of confused perceptions. Before man can deal with it at all, he must differentiate one experience from another, and he must discover relationships among them: similarity and diversity, cause and effect, and the like. Gradually he discovers that one kind of relationship can best be investigated in one way (by controlled experiment, it may be), and another in another