HEALTH EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

By Dr. C.-E. A. WINSLOW

Professor of Public Health, Yale School of Medicine

The Health Education Institute is a remarkable institution and it is a great pleasure to watch its progress from year to year. I take a certain vicarious pride in it on account of the large part that my colleague, Professor Hiscock, has played in its development in the past. It is fascinating to see its scope widen and deepen. Particularly this year, apparently, your stress has been not so much on what may properly be called propaganda—although propaganda is important and desirable—but on community organization. Such a tendency toward community organization is a practical application of your basic maxim of education by doing. Education by committee is far more effective than education by poster or bulletin or cinema. The whole trend, the inherent drive of your educational ideas has brought about the realization that community action is the most powerful educational force; it's the thing that works. While I was in this field many years ago I felt very strongly that while bulletins and posters and meetings and so on were helpful they were like the torchlight processions of those days and the rallies that were held during a political campaign. Those things were after all only the trimmings. They didn't win the election. What won the election was the ward committee and the ward chairman working 365 days in the year. The kind of permanent health organization that has been developed in many communities is not only educationally sound in that it involves the activity of self-educated members but it is also the potent way to develop community action.

1 This paper was presented before the Health Education Institute at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in St. Louis, October, 1942.
Editor's Summary

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