

Russia's Sputniks Affect Sales of 'Toys With Purpose'

NEW YORK — The Sputniks — like pebbles tossed in a pond — have cast ever-widening ripples now washing strongly on the shores of Toyland.

Those artificial satellites, orbiting around the earth, unwittingly swung American purchasing toward toys with a purpose rather than mere playthings, according to the Toy News bureau, industry information and reference service.

This trend to toys that teach, the bureau said, is sharply pinpointed in New York where for the next two weeks R. H. Macy & Co. has augmented its traditional Back-to-School merchandising program with the first major display and promotion of educational toys.

Obviously there is a correlation between the return to school and the purchase of any articles of educational value, the Toy News bureau said, especially if those purchases can make learning fun. But the increasing importance of educational toys can be related back to parents working actively but quietly in an estimated 25,000 communities across the nation; searching out weak spots in their schools, planning and developing programs with school officials and Boards of Education to correct those defects.

In Fort Wayne, Ind., citizens councils meet to consider county-wide school problems. Representatives of every organization in Minneapolis, Minn., met to determine how schools were teaching social sciences. Somewhat similar activities were in progress in Chattanooga, Tenn., and by a state committee in New York.

These, said the Toy News bureau, are some of the factors stimulating the interest and desire for educational toys.

Pioneer in this oft-overlooked area of the \$1,500,000,000 toy industry is the century-old Milton Bradley Co. of Springfield, Mass., one of the keystones of the current back-to-school promotional display at Macys. A superb new line of "teaching aids" actually are games used in schools to teach spelling, reading, arithmetic and even fractions. Used at home they build word power and knowledge, provide fun, and even the slowest

student can keep up with the class.

Joined with this elder statesman of the industry in the common bond of toys with a purpose, is an extraordinary brand new line of wooden toys by the Charles Wm. Manufacturing Co., of Cincinnati, Ohio. Two brothers, whose family produced the first scale-model trucks and road-building toys, studied their own and their friends' young families and developed a new concept in toys extending from crib to early school days. With them children learn to build, know colors, and learn to tell time, essential knowledge for first years of school.

Statistics from Russia have shown America's weakness in the subject of science. Every Russian student reaching high school years has received 1,353 hours of instruction. United States education systems in many instances teach no science or have it a subject elected by only a few students.

To parents in communities across the nation, these revelations have come as a shock and may in part offer an explanation to the increasing demand for chemistry sets, and professional-type star finders and microscopes from the plants of the A. C. Gilbert Co. in New Haven, Conn., that are featured in the Macy's back-to-school program.

For the future designer there is a most unusual line of the famous Revell models, precision-designed for the building of replicas of ancient frigates or the most modern planes and battlewagons. Again the child learns patience and the skillful use of hands while creating an object of true quality.

Among "firsts" in the group is the word-game Goomicus, currently one of the most talked of products that is making its debut in a major educational program. Playable by children or adults, Goomicus offers diversion, yet the unconscious building of vocabulary.

If nothing else, the Toy News bureau said, the New York debuts of teaching and learning toys offers visual proof that lessons need not be a hateful task but that the three "Rs" can be fun.

But the recent growth of this stable section of the normally volatile toy industry may indicate something deeper, the Toy News bureau said. If not fear among Americans it would seem to indicate concern and a desire for educational improvement. Recalling that Russia of 40 years ago was 70 percent illiterate, parents appear to be reaching for any true aid that will stimulate and increase their children's knowledge.

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