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# Toys can be very important to the education of a child

(NEA) — Put this in your wasail cup and quaff it.

According to a survey among chemical and mechanical engineers, about half of those queried said that their childhood model train sets, chemistry sets, Erector sets and other toys were very important in their education.

Nearly one out of every four questioned said that structural, chemistry and train sets brought out or confirmed their mechanical aptitude in making things. Some of the engineers said that these childhood lay-outs were still played with by their children.

Of the 50 per cent who refused to acknowledge the vocational influence of toys, many explained sadly that in their youth such toys were either unavailable or too expensive.

Today, for parents who must face the terrible Christmas responsibility of giving their children vocational guidance in holiday wrapping, this survey tells an impressive story.

But what does it mean?

In the first place, the survey was made among 1,700 engineers. This means, according to the Engineers Joint Council, that 199,703 chemical and mechanical engineers never got a chance to see the questionnaire.

As a public service to both parents and engineer, an independent survey was made among some of the unasked scientists. And while the results differ only slightly from the original survey, these new answers may pinpoint the problem of Christmas toys more closely.

Of the five engineers ques-

tioned in the new survey, three of them — 60 per cent, in other words — said that their childhood toys seemed to have contributed little to their vocational choice. The remaining 40 per cent (the other two engineers) said their toys were very helpful and, in fact, said they still played with them.

Here is one of the typical answers.

Melville W. Ackerman, nuclear engineer: "When I was a boy the nucleus had not yet been invented, but my older brother had a chemistry set. He is now an automobile salesman. I hate chemistry."

But while surveys never pretend to be anything more than an indicator, one fact stands out clearly in both the first and the second survey: Every engineer

questioned admitted that he had attended high school.

The relationship between school and Christmas is not exactly clear. A spot check of several leading high schools shows that when Christmas is on, school is off.

Perhaps the best summary of the problem and its solution comes from A. C. Gilbert, Jr., head of a toy and appliance company in New Haven, Conn.

Said Gilbert: "If the need for engineers . . . is as great as we are told . . . this . . . should focus attention on the two beginnings of engineering training — the first being in high school, and the second, in the home, with play models of structural sets, with model train lay-outs, with backyard experiments in chemistry."