

Ferment in the Social Studies

In this report on innovations
in the social studies, the author sees hope for
much-needed revitalization.

By LEONARD S. KENWORTHY

THE role of the social studies in elementary and secondary schools is to prepare boys and girls to live effectively now and in the foreseeable future, drawing upon the long and varied experiences of the human race for illumination in that complex and multidimensional task. Yet, in a rapidly changing country and world, the social studies programs of most schools have remained static for at least two decades.

Consequently, we are preparing boys and girls and young people to live in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries rather than in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century world in which they are destined to function.

Fortunately, however, there is a ferment in the social studies field in the United States today. A growing number of classroom teachers, curriculum consultants, school administrators, college professors, members of boards of education, leaders of organizations, and other alert citizens are increasingly cognizant of this curriculum lag and are beginning to do something about it.

One senses this in the question periods after lectures such as this writer has given across the country this past year, hears about it in social studies conferences and workshops, and sees evidence of it in professional journals and curriculum bulletins. The dissatisfaction is apparent even

though the new directions in which this discontent will lead us are not so noticeable.

Some of the Dissatisfactions

The criticisms of existing social studies curricula are many and varied.

The most frequently voiced criticisms of programs in elementary schools concern the lack of depth and the restrictive nature of the emphasis upon the neighborhood, the community, and the community helpers; the failure to introduce children to the world early enough; the lack of effective teaching in geography; and the unrealistic nature of studies of United States history.

The most often cited complaints about the programs in secondary schools center on the repetition of United States history in two years (after an earlier introduction to this field in the elementary school), on the lack of time for the comprehensive world history and the U. S. history courses, on the economic and geographical illiteracy of pupils, on the neglect of the newer concepts coming from cultural anthropology and the behavioral sciences, on the lack of attention to the non-Western world; and on the failure to recognize the increasing importance of the metropolitan areas or larger communities of our day.

In some quarters there is concern over the unused talents of the gifted or of the hidden assets of pupils who are termed "slow" or "culturally deprived."

And some citizens, patriotic organizations, and concerned internationalists are disturbed by the lack of attention to communism as a potent factor in today's world.

Thinking individuals are even more distressed by the failure to spur students to think critically

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or to guide them in finding the major concepts or big ideas around which all teaching should center.

This is a lengthy list of dissatisfactions and it does not include all the comments one could assemble. One hopeful sign in the social studies is that teachers are engaging in such self-criticism and in complaints against the social studies curricula of our schools today. A cause for even greater hope is the fact that many individuals and groups are taking action to correct some of these faults and thereby strengthen social studies teaching.

Examinations of Overall Objectives

Several attempts have been made recently to determine the goals of social studies teaching in elementary and secondary schools and in junior colleges. *A Guide to Content in the Social Studies*¹ is the report of an ad hoc committee of the National Council for the Social Studies which proposes fourteen basic themes to be stressed from kindergarten through junior colleges. *Curriculum Planning in American Schools: The Social Studies* is the title of a report by a second ad hoc committee of the National Council, focusing on the gap between recent research in the social sciences and the content of most courses in the social studies in elementary and secondary schools.

More recently still, the National Council for the Social Studies and the American Council of Learned Societies have cooperated in a joint project to determine the major concepts or generalizations which should be stressed in the social studies. The results of this venture were reported at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies in Chicago in November, 1961, and will appear in book form this fall from the presses of Harcourt, Brace, and World.

Meanwhile, the National Association of Secondary School Principals adopted a statement on "Social Studies in the Comprehensive Secondary School" prepared by a committee of social studies specialists and leaders of the NASSP. It recommends a required six-year sequence in the social studies in junior and senior high schools, with considerable latitude for local systems and with emphasis upon controversial issues.²

The most ambitious research conducted along these lines by a state system has been the work done in California by college and university social scientists, curriculum workers, and social studies teachers. A summary was published last year under the title, *Report of the State Central Com-*

*mittee on Social Studies to the California State Curriculum Commission.*³ This report contains not only the generalizations to be highlighted in social studies teaching, drawn from the social sciences, but outlines a complete course of study in this field for California from kindergarten through junior college.

Several articles outlining the major goals of social studies teaching and/or proposals for curriculum revision have appeared in recent months in *Social Education*, the magazine of the National Council for the Social Studies. And this writer has drawn up a social studies curriculum from nursery school through grade twelve based on the six major segments of society, accenting different ones in two-year sequences but including aspects of all or almost all of them in each year.⁴

Action in World Affairs and Geography

Social studies personnel across the U. S. are gradually becoming aware of the new era in which we are all living. Many of them have tried to prepare pupils for this new age by an increased emphasis upon current events, inadequate as that is. But there are much more promising developments, fortunately, than that.

The most ambitious attempt to change the curriculum has been in Pennsylvania, where a course in world cultures has been mandated for all graduates, without specifying the grade in which it will be given. Some schools have merely changed the name of their world history course to conform to this requirement and many teachers are merely teaching about countries rather than cultures, but the state has recently begun a comprehensive in-service program to strengthen this new offering.

Several schools across the country have introduced a new course, usually at the ninth grade, on the non-Western world. This makes it possible to include this area of the social studies, largely unexplored in the United States, without disrupting the present world history course, which is largely centered on the Western world.

A few school systems have examined the entire social studies curriculum in relation to the emerging international community of our day. One of these is New York City, which in 1960 issued an outstanding bulletin, *Toward Better International Understanding: A Manual for Teachers.*⁵ How much this will actually affect classroom practices remains to be seen.

¹ National Council for the Social Studies, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 1958, 78 pp. \$1.25.

² Reported in an article titled "Social Studies in the Comprehensive Secondary School," *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, September, 1961, pp. 1-17.

³ Available from the California State Department of Public Instruction, Sacramento, California. 92 pp.

⁴ Available from Leonard S. Kenworthy, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

⁵ Available from the New York City Board of Education, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn 1, N.Y. for \$1.50. 253 pp.

In Glens Falls, New York, a city-wide project was started in 1957 under the joint sponsorship of the Glens Falls Board of Education and the National Council for the Social Studies. Called "The Program for Improving the Teaching of World Affairs," this project has attracted considerable attention in the state and in other parts of the country. Many school systems have taken cues from it, even though it has not come forth with a new curriculum for elementary and secondary schools. Its main contribution seems to have been in the field of in-service education of teachers.

As an outgrowth or extension of that project, a similar program has been launched in the state college at Plattsburgh, New York, with its emphasis upon the pre-service education of teachers in world affairs and upon the in-service education of teachers in a group of selected schools near that college.

A far more ambitious program was launched several years ago in the Middle West by the North Central Association, with special emphasis upon the high-school years. The outstanding contribution of this undertaking was the issuance of a series of foreign relations booklets⁶ for students, with individual titles on China, the Middle East, Western Europe, Southeast Asia, the U.S.S.R., Africa, Latin America, and the U.N.

Stimulation of study of the world in independent schools has been the object of the Leadership and World Society project of the Johnson and Johnson Foundation since 1960, with small grants of money to purchase resource materials, hold conferences in schools (with nearby public school representatives included), and to foster depth studies of various countries or regions of the world. The project so far has been limited to the eastern and southern sections of this country.

In New York State a comprehensive program is underway for the strengthening of the study of other parts of the world in schools and colleges, under the direction of Ward Morehouse, on leave from the Asia Society. The results have been less spectacular than in some other places, but the foundations seem to this writer much more firm. There have been surveys of library resources, a number of summer institutes for teachers, meetings of key curriculum workers and college professors, and an attempt to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive program in world affairs at all levels throughout the schools and colleges of the state.

The greatest impact upon social studies teaching about a given cultural area has undoubtedly

been on Asia, where work is spearheaded by the Japan Society and the Asia Society.⁷ These organizations sponsor summer workshops for teachers, provide kits for teachers, and produce teaching aids of many types.

Among the many other organizations which have had some influence on the schools in teaching about the world are the American Association for the United Nations, the Committee on International Relations of the National Education Association, the Foreign Policy Association, and the World Affairs Materials Center at Brooklyn College.

Action in the Field of Geography

The importance of geography is increasingly recognized by social studies teachers today, but with new emphases. The focus now is more and more on cultural areas rather than on natural areas such as continents; upon human geography more than upon physical geography; and upon major concepts, generalizations, and patterns rather than mere memorization. Many persons in the field are also concerned with the development of geographical skills as central to teaching of this subject.

The National Council for Geographic Education has issued a statement on geography in elementary and secondary schools which seems to many people perilously close to the programs of former days. But there are other more promising developments. One of these is a joint project of the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education to produce a high-school geography course on tape, for use on film and television, with accompanying resource materials. Another promising venture is an experimental course in geography in ten selected school systems across the country, at the high-school level, headed by Gilbert White of the University of Chicago and Clyde Kohn of the University of Iowa. The project is getting underway this year.⁸

Several schools have introduced courses in world geography at the ninth grade level and more schools are including geography than heretofore in the new world culture programs already mentioned.

Action in Economic Education

The drive for more and better economic education in our schools has been particularly effective. The forces and groups interested in this

⁶ Now sold by Laidlaw Brothers, River Forest, Illinois.

⁷ Both organizations are located at 112 East 64th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

⁸ See the article in the *Journal of Geography*, November, 1961, by Gilbert White and Clyde Kohn, titled "A Joint Effort To Improve High School Geography."

important aspect of the social studies curriculum have been well organized and well financed, with the joint Council for Economic Education⁹ acting as a catalytic agent. Further assistance comes from the Committee for Economic Development and the American Economic Association.

The most ambitious statement of the aims of this field has been the report of the National Task Force on Economic Education, published in 1961. This body recommended a required course in economics in all high schools of "substantial size," or an elective course where that was deemed impossible. In other instances they urged increased study of economics in problems of democracy courses as well as in United States history.

Meanwhile, the Joint Council has been active in promoting the establishment in universities of Centers of Economic Education, in the preparation of study materials, and in the distribution of kits on economics to 24,000 private, public, and parochial schools.

This fall a television program on economics began under the sponsorship of the American Economic Association and the Joint Council for Economic Education, with the National Task Force serving in an advisory capacity. This is primarily a course for college students and teachers, and is shown five days a week for a year. It is hoped that there will be a million viewers, since at least fifty educational television stations will beam it into their communities and several colleges and school systems will give credit for it.

The Joint Council has also been extremely active in promoting summer workshops on economic education for teachers. There were forty-five of these workshops, for example, in 1962, with over 2,000 persons in attendance.

As early as 1953 the National Association of Secondary Schools Principals established the Council for the Advancement of Secondary Education, whose first task involved the identification of key concepts in economics. Its second job was the preparation of unit texts for student use in this field. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the National Council for the Social Studies have also prepared such materials recently.

Action in Related Fields

Although action has been most noticeable in the fields of geography, economics, and world affairs, and in the identification of the major concepts to stress in the entire range of the social studies, there has been action in closely related fields as well.

In an effort to upgrade the background of teachers in history, the American Historical Association has recently established a Service Center for Teachers of History in Washington, D. C. Its chief contribution thus far has been the publication of a series of pamphlets, with forty-eight titles to date, on such topics as "New Interpretations in American Foreign Policy," "The Interpretation of Renaissance Humanism," and "Chinese History: A Bibliographic Review."¹⁰

In the field of civic education, the National Council for the Social Studies devoted its 30th yearbook in 1960 to the topic of *Citizenship and a Free Society: Education for the Future*,¹¹ edited by Franklin Patterson. In recent years the teaching of citizenship has been stimulated by the work of the Tufts Civic Education Center¹² with its issuance of pamphlets on many phases of civic education for pupils and teachers and its curriculum work with several states in the eastern part of the United States.

The political scientists and the anthropologists have been less active until recently, but the American Political Science Association and the American Anthropological Association now have committees of university scholars and social studies experts at work on the relation of their fields to the total social studies programs of elementary and secondary schools.

No action has been taken as yet by any group of social studies personnel on the issue of a national curriculum, but there is considerable discussion of this topic in official circles and the executive committee of the National Council for the Social Studies has the problem under consideration at this time.

There is also considerable pressure in various parts of the United States to introduce or to increase the study of communism in our schools. Most, but not all, of this pressure has come so far from right-wing groups. As a result, legislation has been passed in Florida and Louisiana requiring the study of communism in the high schools. Several other states have committees studying this question. A new section in New York state education law took effect this fall, permitting public schools to offer a course in "Communism and its methods and destructive effects."

A number of publications have been issued by various school systems and organizations on this topic, including "A Selected, Annotated Bibliography to Assist Teachers in Teaching About

¹⁰ For all the titles, write to the Service Center for Teachers of History, 400 A Street, S.E., Washington 3, D. C.

¹¹ 1960, 292 pp. Available from the National Council for the Social Studies, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington 6, D.C., for \$4 paperbound, \$5 clothbound.

¹² For further information, address the Tufts City Education Center, Tufts University, Medford 55, Massachusetts.

⁹ For further information, write the Joint Council on Economic Education, 2 West 46th St., New York 36, N.Y.

Communism," prepared by Merrill F. Hartshorn and T. Marcus Gillespie, officials of the National Council for the Social Studies, in 1962.¹³

Most experts in the social studies field are concerned that such teaching be as objective as possible and not merely propaganda. They are pressing for inclusion of such studies of communism in regular courses rather than as a new and separate offering in secondary schools.

A bulletin of the National Council, edited by Hall Bartlett and others, is scheduled to appear this fall or winter on "Teaching About Communism."

Conclusion

These, then, are the outstanding areas of the social studies in which there is ferment today, so

¹³ Available from the National Council for the Social Studies, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., for 25 cents.

far as this writer is aware. Some of them are so well extended that they represent trends in teaching across the country. Others are still at the experimental stage in individual schools, school systems, or states.

No one should be so foolish as to predict what form the social studies curriculum of most schools will take in the foreseeable future, but one can state categorically that there is more soul-searching in this field than there has been for many years. The soul-searching seems to this writer long overdue and extremely promising.

(Mr. Kenworthy wishes to acknowledge the assistance of many persons in the preparation of this article, including William F. Cartwright, Moe Frankel, T. Marcus Gillespie, Clyde Kohn, and Ward Morehouse.)

New Guide for Social Studies Teachers

► Leonard S. Kenworthy's *Guide to Social Studies Teaching*, published this year by the Wadsworth Publishing Company, provides the social studies teacher with a combined handbook, guide, and reference work exceptionally valuable because its suggestions are specific. Bibliographies, lists of appropriate methods, materials, agencies, and publications are up-to-date and well selected. This volume affords the essence of a complete course in the teaching of the social studies impressively organized for the teacher's use. Materials and methods useful in all of the social studies subjects are supplemented with specific plans and suggestions for each course separately. All of these practical aids are offered with appropriate attention to philosophy, psychology, and curriculum principles. This blending of the theoretical with the practical should make this an exceptionally useful reference work.

ETV Value Demonstrated

► Educational television, which is celebrating its ninth birthday, is currently supplying part of the education of nearly 3,000,000 school children. And according to a two-year audience survey among eight representative stations, ETV also attracts 10 to 24 per cent of the adult viewers in the communities where it is available. The study was made by Stanford University's Institute for Communication Research.

Adult viewers were found to be "better educated than the average citizen, more articulate, better informed, more upwardly mobile, culturally and civically the most active persons in the community," according to the study.

BSCS Biology Texts Available

► Publication plans for definitive editions of "BSCS High School Biology" texts and other instructional materials were announced in late August.

Arnold G. Grobman, Boulder, Colo., director of the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, announced letting of contracts for publication of hard-cover, generally available editions of BSCS materials in seven "packages" through different publishing houses. All were to be available "in a few weeks."

Heretofore, only experimental materials have been circulated on a limited basis to classroom teachers actively engaged in testing and evaluating the courses. The BSCS courses have been in the development stage for three years. They have now been tested by more than 600 teachers and 60,000 students.

The courses differ from conventional high-school biology in several ways. They stress laboratory study, with special emphasis on investigative exercises rather than illustrative laboratory procedures. All versions are complete year-long courses suitable for tenth-grade use and average students.

The books come in three versions. The "Blue Version: BSCS High School Biology," published by Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, emphasizes the molecular level; the "Yellow Version," published by Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, emphasizes the cellular level; and the "Green Version," published by Rand McNally, Chicago, emphasizes the community and ecological level. Core content is about 70 per cent common among all versions.

The BSCS has been supported primarily by grants from the National Science Foundation totaling more than \$4,000,000.