

The New—in Review

Alice Miel, Editor

OUR COUNTRY, our people, our children, our schools—these must any citizen of this democracy of ours understand. But for teachers to have scholarship and wisdom in these fields is essential. That is the thesis of *Teachers for Our Times*, a statement of purposes by the Commission on Teacher Education (Washington, D. C., American Council on Education, 1944. \$2).

It is left for later volumes of the report of the Commission on its five-year study of teacher education to consider *how* desirable qualities may be developed for teachers in our times. This volume, the actual writing of which was done by the director, Karl W. Bigelow, does a superb job of showing the size and nature of the task of the social education of teachers.

Some may feel that other more strictly professional aspects of the job should have been treated. Others may say that the book fails to show how the teacher would use his broad and deep understanding of the currents in our present-day society in the education of the young. Even so, we have needed something like Chapter II of this book to show the grave responsibility of teachers in times that "demand more social control, more social planning, more social action."

The next few years will be no picnic. We shall require teachers who believe in freedom and popular government, who have respect for personality, who

understand the social nature of man, who are committed to the methods of reason and reasonableness, and who have confidence in the possibility of self-improvement.

Mr. Bigelow has done well to make clear the social qualifications of teachers for our times.

CRITICS OF MODERN EDUCATION are having a field day. Some blame newer educational practices for all our ills. Others give credit for certain changes with which "no sensible and humane adult could disagree," but they find important lacks. Two representatives of the "yes-but" school are Jacques Maritain, author of *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1943, \$2) and Mark Van Doren, author of *Liberal Education* (New York, N. Y., Henry Holt, 1943, \$2.50).

Both men express a desire for an education that will lead to a higher level of democracy. Both seem to be searching for an appropriate general education. With this desire and this search we are in sympathy, for these are the common concerns of all who believe in the power of education. But what is the nature of the education which is advocated by these two authors? Van Doren writes (page 94), "Elementary education can do nothing better for a child than to store his memory with things deserving to be there."

And what things deserve to be there? The answer is not too clear. Van Doren treats the entire school period as elementary education and characterizes it as a preparatory period. He goes on to say with great assurance, "The three R's rightly recognize and state the studies which are proper in elementary education because they require no special knowledge or experience for their comprehension." (Page 91)

For the college and the university, it is urged by both writers that the medieval trivium and quadrivium serve as the basis of curriculum organization. As for the materials of instruction, the hundred great books of St. John's College fame are listed by Maritain as worthy of consideration.

The classics may seem to offer a secure retreat from the storms of the present and some people, even those in schools, may be tempted by the line of argument presented in these books. Education for Freedom, Inc. (See *The New*—in Review for March) is trading on this very possibility. For that reason, the books of the modern classicists warrant careful study by all those who desire to combat this form of reaction in education.

A CONFERENCE ROOM adjoining the McMichael Intermediate School library in Detroit, Mich., has been converted into what is known as the "Listening Room." It is equipped with a portable turntable, transcriptions, books, scripts, and pamphlets on radio. Students and faculty use this room for reading the scripts or for listening to the transcriptions. All the material, including the turntable, is available for classroom use. Students on duty in the library during

the day have been trained to operate the turntable and offer their services to those who visit the room. Most of the scripts and transcriptions are borrowed from the Detroit Schools Radio Department. Others are from local stations and from the U. S. Office of Education. This listening room promises to further aid in the vitalizing of the school curriculum.—Reported by Mildred W. Craig, Librarian, McMichael Intermediate School, Detroit, Mich.

SEVERAL BENCHMARKS have now been established in surveying the thinking and practice in curriculum development. This has been done by the 1944 Yearbook Committee, made up of fourteen members of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, under the co-chairmanship of Gordon N. Mackenzie and J. Cecil Parker. The book is entitled *Toward a New Curriculum: Extending Educational Opportunity of Children, Youth, and Adults*. The committee members have done this piece of educational surveying by means of descriptive accounts of the many ways in which education has already gone far beyond the four walls of the classroom, busy with the contents of textbooks.

These ways of education include the work of many agencies and activities among which are: home and community organizations, work experiences of the school population, parent and pupil discussions, camping experiences, recreational programs, clubs, community-wide planning, adult education, nursery and pre-schools, community cooperation, the youth council, the Vassar Euthenics Institute, the part-time care of children, nutrition study and care, the extension

of the school day and school year, and educational opportunity for all ages.

The book has a brief but thought-provoking and challenging introduction and a summary showing that the benchmarks which have been established constitute a line back of which curriculum thinking should not tarry. The summary includes further the evaluation of the yearbook by two prominent educators, one a sociologist and the other a psychologist.

We must now more consistently think not of the superintendent of schools but rather, as one of the committee put it, of "the superintendent of education for the community." We must think of living and learning, the learning coming through the experiences of the learner in living. We must think not of the course of study formerly set out to be taught but of the curriculum as continuously emergent. The yearbook stresses again and again that each curriculum is unique, fitted to the particular situation.

Can we thus mobilize education?—*Toward a New Curriculum* reviewed by Lois Coffey Mossman, Gladstone, N. J.

EXPERIENCE OF THOUSANDS of teachers is incorporated in the revision of the famous *Tentative Course of Study for Virginia Elementary Schools* which made its appearance in 1934. When consulted, teachers of the State suggested that 1) problems of children and community life should be included; 2) closer relationship between the less formal and practice activities should be shown; and 3) more definite suggestions for teaching procedures should be given. The 1943 version is the successful result of a cooperative effort of numbers

of representative Virginia educators to follow that advice. The suggested activities are indeed more appropriate for children and more closely related to real problems of communities. The discussion of abilities and skills in each subject field has been expanded and considerable attention is given to the relation of practice and meaning. A great many practical suggestions for teachers are included in this connection and also under the heading of "General Teaching Procedures."

A striking difference between the original and the revised course occurs in connection with the suggested use of the proposed centers of interest. In the old study (page 20) were these words, "The grade materials will aid the teacher in understanding the educational possibilities *within the limitations* of the centers of interest for the respective grades." In the new (page 522) we find, "The centers of interest and points of emphasis derived from the major social functions indicate, *but do not limit*, the scope of work for the respective grades." Again (page 460) we read, "It is not intended that the centers of interest should be prescriptive nor that they should hamper creative teaching." Yet one wonders whether or not individual teachers will be likely to use another basis of curriculum organization, especially when they may read (page 478) that teachers' plans are "based upon the problems of pupils and the community which are known to the teacher, *the scope of work for the grade as stated in this volume*, the aims of the school, and the local conditions in the school such as space, equipment, and teacher load." (Italics not in original.)

Perhaps the best guarantee that the new course will truly serve as guide and not prescription would be for faculties in local communities as a group to study the excellent materials gathered together in this volume and then to "use these materials creatively in relation to their local situation." For as we are told (page 12), the instructional program, "if it is to be effective, must originate in the school and community where it is being developed."

The newly published course of study for elementary schools completes a set of three useful publications for Virginia educators and patrons. In 1941 appeared a small *Handbook for Parents*, explaining the Virginia program for improving instruction.

1942 saw the publication of a forward-looking *Manual of Administration for the High Schools of Virginia*, prepared by a large group of administrators and teachers in the State. The manual is designed for the use of both groups, for there is good material on studying the pupils and the community and on implementing instruction as well as on such things as school laws, accrediting standards, and plant and equipment.

OTHER CURRICULUM materials of interest are *Curricular Guide Adaptable to Elementary Schools of Idaho*, *Guide to the Teaching of Oral and Written Language in the Primary Grades*, and *The Growth of Democracy in America*, a course of study for grades seven, eight, and nine, both of the latter produced by the Long Beach (Calif.) City Schools. These materials are mimeographed and bear the date 1943.

From Santa Barbara City comes an attractive volume, *Living: the Basis for*

Learning (Santa Barbara, Calif., Educational Factors Ltd., 1942, \$3). Illustrated with photographs showing active children at every grade level, the book tells how a developmental curriculum was planned for and made, and how it is functioning after five years of operation.

IT IS GRATIFYING to find a book such as Norman Fenton's *Mental Hygiene in School Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1943, \$4) that approaches the understanding of human behavior with breadth of vision and that gives practical suggestions for incorporating into school practice methods insuring more wholesome personality development.

Two of the five sections of the book deal with practical methods for instituting a mental hygiene program in the school. Instead of urging one approach, Fenton indicates various ways in which the existing personnel of a school system may be used in inaugurating a program of guidance.

The more theoretical sections of the book deal with the understanding of behavior. One chapter in this section is as sound and concise a statement of wholesome personality and its development as may be found in current literature on the subject. In Part IV, Fenton discusses mental hygiene and the teacher. This section should be read by every administrator and teacher, for Fenton presents through facts derived from a survey and through brief case studies of teachers an objective yet sympathetic analysis of mental health conditions prevalent among teachers.—*Mental Hygiene in School Practice* reviewed by Gertrude P. Driscoll, Teachers College, Columbia University.

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