

Front Lines in Education

Henry Harap, Editor

Curriculum Improvement in Maine. Under the leadership of William H. Burton of Harvard University the State Department of Education is stimulating an interest in the improvement of the elementary school curriculum. A workshop was conducted under his direction at the University of Maine from August 14 to September 2, 1944, which was attended by 114 elementary teachers, 27 principals and supervisors, 22 superintendents of schools, and 9 members of normal school faculties. The total enrollment was 172. This is being followed up by a series of regional meetings designed to give teachers of the state an opportunity to become familiar with the program and to plan the next steps.

Trends in Book Buying. The years before the war witnessed a new trend in book publishing—the mass production of inexpensive books which were put on sale at news stands, drug stores, and low-price chain stores. The output of books both for civilian and military consumption has increased rapidly during the war years. The Army and Navy are distributing 3½ million pocket-size books a month to the armed services. After the war the American people will become a greater book-buying, book-reading nation. The quality of the popular demand for books will depend, in part, upon the level of taste developed in the classrooms and libraries of our public schools.

California Curriculum Commission. The Education Code of the state of California provides for a Curriculum Commission, the members of which are nominated by the superintendent of public instruction and appointed by the State Board of Education. The term of office is four years. The superintendent of public instruction is chairman of the Commission. The Commission which is a part of the State Department of Education is headed by the superintendent. It is charged with the

responsibility of organizing and developing the curriculum for the public schools. Members of the Commission serve for a period of four years and are drawn from outstanding educators in the state. The law states that the various levels and areas in education must be represented. The Curriculum Commission meets at stated intervals and in extraordinary sessions if necessary. It forms a means of securing advice as well as service from highly competent persons in the field of education. California school men consider it a valuable agency.

Public Opinion. Out of every 100 Americans interviewed in a survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, 57 suggested no changes in the public schools as they are today. Of those who do make suggestions, almost half mention changes in curriculum and teaching methods. Persons with children of school age are more critical of public education than those with no sons or daughters attending school. Sectionally, residents of the Rocky Mountain and Pacific states are most critical, and Southerners least.

Bellingham Curriculum Laboratory. The curriculum laboratory of the Bellingham (Wash.) Schools was established to provide facilities for teachers to work on curricular problems. Over half the teachers are actively engaged in this work. Committees meet monthly to survey the needs of children and teachers; to organize a plan of action which will meet those needs. Where such plans require considerable time, the project

Readers are invited to send news of interesting activities in their schools to Henry Harap, George Peabody College, Nashville 4, Tenn., for possible inclusion in "Front Lines in Education."

is submitted to the curriculum director and after receiving his approval is referred to the curriculum laboratory. Teachers are reimbursed for all time spent in developing such projects. The curriculum laboratory is open each Saturday from 9 o'clock in the morning until noon. A number of work-rooms are available so that several different interest groups may be in session at the same time, all having access to library facilities.

—Randy Oberlatz, *Curriculum Director*.

Portland Program of Professional Study. A program of professional study has been planned to provide the teachers of the Portland Schools with opportunities to improve instruction. Arrangements have been made with the State System of Higher Education to recognize the program and grant credit for all of the work. No differentiation is made between requirements for university credit and in-service training credit so far as outside preparation and work are concerned. The instructors are members of the supervisory and administrative staff working in the fields which they teach. The program aims to provide close cooperation between the teaching and supervisory staff in developing the educational program.

General Education for Armed Forces. Because the educational programs for service men and women will probably demand new curricular patterns, a committee has recently developed twelve courses for general education. The report was prepared at the request of the United States Armed Forces Institute which will prepare instructional materials for use during the period following the end of hostilities. The committee feels that the courses developed for grades XI-XIV will also be of interest to schools and colleges which are planning programs for returning service men and women. Outlines are included for the following courses: health, communication, social adjustment, marriage, American institutions, international affairs, science, literature, art, music, philosophy and religion, vocational orientation. *A Design for General Education for the Armed Forces* sells for \$1.25 and may be ordered from the American Council on Education, 744 Jackson Place, Washington 6, D. C.

Michigan Program of Local Curriculum Development. How can local curriculum development be initiated and accelerated? How can information about successful or promising developments reach other schools? How can the numerous consultative resources of the state be coordinated and focused upon local school problems? These questions are currently being attacked in Michigan through a regional survey of local curriculum development. The survey is expected to uncover the specific needs for consultative help and the names of teachers or administrators who are especially interested in the various areas of curriculum development which need to be studied. Conferences have been called in four regions and plans are being made for five other regional conferences at which local school curriculum development will be explored.—Roland C. Faunce, *Chief, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education*.

Policy Making in Winona (Wis.) Public Schools. The elementary principals meet every Monday with the superintendent of schools and the elementary coordinator to formulate the policies and determine procedures. Everyone gets the benefit of the experience, the training, and the thinking of each person present. The principals meet their respective teachers in a group on Wednesday of each week to discuss and determine their activities. Elementary teachers meet with the elementary coordinator once a month in grade groups. At present, a philosophy for language arts is being formulated in each group, dealing with one area at a time such as creative poetry. Certain teachers will be invited to read articles and books on the topic to be considered and to lead the discussion. Specialists will be invited to talk whenever possible.—Myrtle E. Jensen, *Elementary Coordinator*.

Experience and the Law. Liberal educators will be interested in Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' theory of law which is discussed incidentally in Catherine Drinker Bowen's biography *Yankee from Olympus*. He opened his Lowell lectures in 1880 with a statement of his approach to the law: "The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience. The felt necessities of the time, the prevalent moral and political theories, intui-

tions of public policy, avowed or unconscious, even the prejudices which judges share with their fellow-men, have had a good deal more to do than the syllogism in determining the rules by which men should be governed." Justice Holmes was an intimate of Charles Peirce, the brilliant founder of pragmatism. He had the same attitude toward the law as his good friend William James had toward philosophy, as John Dewey had toward education. He was no worshipper of formalism and precedent; the test of the value of a law was its effect on community living.

Promoting the Art of Discussion. The Junior Town Meeting League is an organization to foster discussion of current affairs among youth. It provides for its members a weekly publication *Civic Training*, which outlines the topic of the week and makes available the services of a guest moderator for high school demonstration assemblies. The League has published a free pamphlet which gives detailed suggestions for adapting radio forum techniques to discussions by youth. For information write to the Secretary, Byron B. Williams, 400 South Front Street, Columbus 15, Ohio.

Secondary English. Ellen Geyer of the University of Pittsburgh directed the preparation of a course of study in junior and senior high school English in Butler, Pa. Dr. Geyer met with the English teachers and supervisors for a period of eighteen weeks. During this time a careful study was made of the objectives to be attained and the methods and materials to be used. Committees worked out units for the various grades and submitted them to the group for criticism. After careful refinement, the entire course was made available for use in all of the classrooms. This experience made a substantial contribution to the work of the high school.—Roy W. Wiley, *Superintendent*.

Understanding Canada Through Films. The National Film Board of Canada has produced a number of films which may be used by the children of the United States to help them understand their neighbors to the North. In addition to war films the titles deal with the people and natural resources

of the country. If the films measure up to Film Commissioner John Grierson's reputation as a producer of documentary films, they ought to be good. National headquarters for the non-theatrical distribution of Canadian productions in the United States is located in the International Relations Center, 84 East Randolph Street, Chicago, Ill. In general, the Canadian films are marketed in the United States through the facilities of national 16mm commercial distributors who contract for exclusive distribution rights.

Foreign Language. The Army method of teaching foreign languages has been widely publicized. Although some of the published claims have been exaggerated, it is the judgment of impartial and competent investigators that the procedure has had considerable success. It should, therefore, have some influence on foreign language teaching in the secondary schools. On the basis of our firsthand observation, the characteristics of the procedure are briefly as follows: the subject matter consists of the culture of the people whose language is studied; instruction is almost entirely in the language being studied; while most of the time is spent in speaking, reading is an integral part of the process and, therefore, is mastered; individual errors are corrected immediately as they are written or spoken; and everything that is spoken or written is fairly familiar and, at least, meaningful.

In Brief. Henry J. Otto of the University of Texas served as consultant to the Bonham (Tex.) elementary schools in the program of curriculum revision. A teachers' guide in the language arts was issued recently growing out of a study program. . . . Edgar M. Draper of the University of Washington will direct a curriculum survey of Hawaiian schools. Paul Grim of Western Washington College of Education will accompany Mr. Draper as his professional assistant. . . . A. E. Waters of the University of Tennessee directed a workshop last summer in Chattanooga which was sponsored by the Chattanooga Public Schools and the Hamilton County Public Schools. . . . Vernon Anderson, who for the past two years has been director of curriculum in the Washington State Department of Education, has become the di-

rector of curriculum of the Portland (Ore.) Public Schools. . . . Congressional action on compulsory military service in peacetime should be deferred until the war is over, 150 county and district school superintendents in the state of Washington agreed during annual meeting in Olympia, September 1944. . . . Wilbur Dutton, who has been curriculum director in the Eugene (Ore.) Public Schools for the past six years, is now on the staff of the Western Washington College of Education at Bellingham, Wash.

NEW CURRICULUM BULLETINS

Bonham Public Schools—*Teacher's Guide to Children's Development in the Language Arts*. Bonham, Tex.; Bonham Public Schools. 1944.
Vol. I: Grades 1-3, 68 p. \$1.25.
Vol. II: Grades 4-8, 127 p. \$1.25.

Cincinnati Public Schools—*Consumer Education, Grade 10*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Cincinnati Public Schools. 1944. 168 p. Mimeographed. 75 cents.

Fresno City Secondary Schools—*Physical Education Program for Boys*. Fresno, Calif.: Fresno City Schools. 1944. 17 p. Mimeographed. 15 cents.

Fresno Public Schools—*Social Studies and Related Fields*. Fresno, Calif.: Fresno Public Schools, 1944. 17 p. Mimeographed. 20 cents.

McNutt, Lila—*Counselling Program Junior and Senior High Schools*. El Paso, Tex.: El Paso Public Schools. 1944. 40 p. Free.

San Mateo County, California, Elementary Schools—*Travel by Air*. A Unit of Work, Grades 7-8. Redwood City, Calif.: San Mateo County, California Elementary Schools. 1944. 117 p. Mimeographed. \$2.

Keeping Up on Militraining

RESPONSE TO the October issue of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP on compulsory military training indicates that there is much interest in this significant issue. Worthy of adding to your list of source materials for reading and discussions dealing with this subject are the following:

Shall We Have Another Lost Generation? Summary of Jackson's Mill Conference.

Lots of twenty-five may be ordered for \$1 from Arthur J. Klein, College of Education, Ohio State University, Columbus 10, Ohio.

Peacetime Conscription . . . A Problem for Americans and Conscription and Conscience. Two of a series of pamphlets on conscription which may be ordered for 5 cents each from the Peace Section, American Friends Service Committee, 20 South Twelfth Street, Philadelphia 7, Pa.

Conscription . . . The Test of the Peace. May be ordered for 10 cents from Post-war World Council, 112 East Nineteenth Street, New York, N. Y.

"The Case For and the Case Against Peacetime Conscription" by Walter E. Myer, Civic Education Service, writing in the *Journal of the National Education Association*, November 1944. (An eight-page reprint of this and other articles appearing in the *Journal* on conscription may be obtained without cost from R. B. Marston, Director, NEA Legislative and Federal Relations Division.)

"Compulsory Youth Service" *Research Bulletin* 22, December 1944. May be purchased for 25 cents from National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

A Plan of National Service. Published by Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

"Labor Weighs Conscription," *The American Federationist*, September 1940, AF of L, Washington 1, D. C.

Additional sources will be listed next month.

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