

which undergird all approaches described above. They are essential to any and all techniques in intergroup education. The four are these: (1) democratic methods must be used in planning and executing a program of intercultural education, with both teachers and children; (2) critical thinking must

be applied in all approaches; (3) each approach must proceed with full opportunity for honest and free discussion; and (4) each must be permeated with a keen "sense of society," in which a strong feeling of the oneness and interdependence of all humankind is the paramount objective.

Good Consumers in the Making

STEWART B. HAMBLÉN

Knowing the what and how of buying is often difficult for the average consumer. It is logical that a child who receives a sound basis in consumer economics during school years will be a sensible buyer. Stewart B. Hamblén, consultant, The American Association of Teachers Colleges, New York City, describes one program for a consumer-economic curriculum in the high schools. Mr. Hamblén points out that while these projects are still in the trial and error period, they are a good beginning toward the time when such a program will be included in schools for the entire period from elementary through the secondary level.

WHAT YEAR IS THIS? It isn't enough to think, 1946, and let it go at that. It is the year in which our society has reached a stage of technological knowledge undreamed of even a decade ago. Science has given us the "know how" to produce and distribute goods and services that can make it possible for everyone to enjoy an adequate level of living. Why then do we find so many substandard living conditions in every community in this vast country? The answer to this question is long and complex. A partial solution will be considered here.

Most people do not know how to spend their money income. They do not realize that this money income can be supplemented by income-producing activities around their own homes—activities that will make goods already purchased last longer; activities that will produce many goods and services other-

wise obtained only by the expenditure of cash needed for ever so many other purchases. The schools can do much to remedy the lack of this needed knowledge. In particular, consumer economics can take the lead in this responsibility by furnishing a rallying point around which our curriculum can work at making our boys and girls and the whole community economically literate.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Rather than speculate about an ideal Shangri-La consumer-economics curriculum that looks good but has not been put to a practical test, let's look at a real situation where this work is actually being done and where ten years of trial and error work has been going on to make it a real and functional course. It is not perfect, but where can you find perfection? It is an honest effort to help boys and girls improve their eco-

conomic status. It is looked upon with favor by the students and teachers who have experienced it, and by the community that has taken an active part in developing and carrying it on. It has filled a definite need of that community.

This particular consumer-economics course is geared to the needs and interests of students of the eleventh and twelfth grades in a suburban city eighteen miles from New York City. The leadership in setting up the curriculum was taken by the social science department, but long ago the pure science, English, home economics, mathematics, and industrial arts departments came in to take their place in the work. Call it a core curriculum if you will. This would be an exaggeration in my opinion, but it is the part of the total curriculum that has been most successful in breaking down subject barriers and correlating the work of several departments into one channel.

The basic idea back of this high-school course is that for the average person the earning and spending of an income are the most difficult economic problems that he faces. These basic activities involve, after the earning of an income, the spending of that income in procuring the food, clothing, shelter, security, recreation, and health so necessary for a full life. Besides practical information for the wise spending of money, another goal is to give students an understanding of the kind of community, state, and nation for which they must work so that all people may have a sufficient quantity of the economic goods and services for a high standard of living. It is sincerely believed by everyone concerned that individuals need to learn how to become intelligent consumers; it is not a gift with which

they are born. This knowledge can be acquired through a careful and thorough educational program.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

The year's work is divided into six parts or as some people would call them, units, but what is such a label worth except to make some teachers feel more comfortable and "at home"? The first week is spent in orienting the student to the general idea of consumer education and to the scope of consumer economics. This week's work is necessary because few students have even a hazy idea of what consumer economics is all about.

What Food Shall We Buy?

After this brief introduction, work is begun on the first section of the year's work. The topic is food and approximately one-fifth of the school year is used to cover this part. This apportionment is necessary because it is a very important subject and also because time spent in learning research methods, becoming familiar with materials, and just in learning to work with fellow students and the instructors, need not be repeated in working up the other five divisions.

There is not space here for a full explanation of what is done in the food unit. Therefore, only a few points will be highlighted. The question of an adequate diet is gone into fully. It is considered from both the mechanical structure and the factor of palatability. For what good is a balanced diet if no one will eat it? Marketing of food is studied. Food advertising is analyzed. The different types of retail stores are visited and their good and bad points ferreted out. Private ownership is compared with cooperative ownership. Rules of good buymanship for the specific food areas

such as meat, fresh fruits, and canned goods are placed high in this unit. Food grading and informative labels are studied. The old "scare you to death" type of early consumer information is played down; reason and firsthand experiences are played up. The consumer as an individual is not overemphasized to the detriment of the consumer as a citizen in a democracy. No textbook as such is used in this unit. Rather, many books, newspapers and magazines, the retail stores, the wholesale markets, the science laboratory, and the home-economics kitchen take the place of the "basic text." Learning by doing is not talked about with "tongue in cheek" at this school.

Can I Afford That Hat?

Clothing is the second unit studied. Comparison of the wardrobes of teachers, nurses, farmers, machinists, and bus drivers clearly show how clothing is a physical, social, and personal problem. Body comfort, personality requirements, and budgetary considerations must be examined in the light of practical life situations. The clothing budget is most important. Help on the buying, care, and upkeep of clothing is one of the principal goals of the unit. Factors that determine clothing costs are closely scrutinized. Consumer buying aids as exemplified in informative labels are sought for, and each student tries to set up individual guides for his own use. The national problem of adequate clothing for all people with emphasis upon the relation between production and consumption rounds out the study.

What Is a House For?

The third part of the course is about housing. The question "What is a house

for?" is of prime importance in this study. It is believed that a house must contribute to physical and mental well-being and therefore, must be healthful, comfortable, and provide happiness for its occupants. In this way a house becomes a home. To do this, housing is considered from both the individual and social angles. The students become familiar with housing conditions in their community by firsthand examination. The relationship of housing to health, fire, and crime hazards are clearly identified. Housing standards are examined and the community's houses are put to the test concerning their adequacy. Pupils learn the best way to finance house buying. With the help of local experts, insurance and taxes are studied. Building materials and ways of house construction are studied with the help of local contractors. The labor union can be introduced here and representatives of labor unions and management can help students think clearly about all questions involved. The purchase, care, and repair of homes and their furnishings and equipment are thoroughly studied. Most students report that this is the most practical part of the unit.

Is That My Job?

The fourth division of the year's work covers the problem of providing for the future. The health and happiness of a man and his family depend upon the degree of security that they will have against the uncertainties of life. Unemployment as a major hazard to security is carefully surveyed. Occupational choices to prevent it are given careful attention. Unemployment insurance to alleviate some of its results is investigated both from the angle of present practices and also future trends. Acci-

dent prevention in the home and on the job is given considerable attention. Surveys are made and findings summarized. The Social Security Act is investigated carefully. It is rated on its present status, and recommendations for future growth are carefully thought out and listed. Individual efforts for security are not forgotten in this study of collective ways of solving the problem. In fact the individual's choice of a life occupation is given considerable attention. For those who can afford it, a savings plan and a well-rounded insurance program are mapped out. The final topics cover personal budgets and a survey of why, when, and where to borrow money.

What'll I Do With Spare Time?

The use of leisure time is of major consequence in today's society. The lack of knowledge and even imagination that people have in regard to this commodity, is appalling. This, despite the fact that today the amount of leisure time is increasing for everyone and in this age of built-up tensions the right solutions must be found. Even a casual survey of leisure-time activities astounds the students. An evaluation of these findings clarifies the problem as it is considered by youth. An examination of the constructive and beneficial uses of leisure time broadens the horizons of students concerning this subject. The planning of recreational activities, individually and for family groups, and whenever possible, the actual carrying out of such plans, deliberately educate boys and girls for a better use of the time allocated for recreation. There is ample opportunity for long time and immediate planning for leisure time. The possibility of finding an occupation in this field is given serious attention. At the conclusion of

the unit the student should be better qualified to *do* something for himself and society as a whole.

Can I Keep Well?

The final division of the year's work is given to the study of health. As the cornerstone of life it is the unit that ties together all the work done throughout the rest of the year. All of the other units contribute their share to make a person healthy. Also because health is purchasable it certainly should be found in a course dealing with the buying of goods and services or in a study in general of consumer economics. The students not only study how they as individuals can acquire good health but also how as taxpayers they can get more health from tax money. Group methods of procuring health services are examined carefully. As it should be, more time is spent in learning how to prevent sickness than in getting cured. Among the high spots are studies of the money cost of sickness, the cost of medical aid, and the loss of income. The United States Public Health Service is scrutinized. A survey of the public health service of the local community is made. A set of daily, yearly, and lifelong health rules are formulated. The dangers of self medication and the use of patent medicines are not overlooked. The federal, state, and local health and drug laws are investigated.

ARE THE RESULTS GOOD?

This brief account of a course in Consumer Economics has many shortcomings that are recognized by the educators who are giving it. They are rooting out these bad features and substituting good ones as fast as they can. They also feel that this course is both

too little and too late to do an adequate job of consumer education. Some day there will be a well-coordinated program of consumer education beginning in the first grade to develop year by year throughout the whole school life of the child. Only then will the job be done in any adequacy. The present

course is, however, an excellent start. As a result, the boys and girls who experience it in the curriculum are better prepared to meet their daily life problems. It does affect their life and living and helps them to improve their economic status. In the final analysis what more can be expected from education?

THE EDITORIAL BOARD and the Editorial Staff of *Building America* announce the following eight titles for study units to be published during the school year 1946-47 at as nearly regular intervals as editorial and publishing limitations will permit: *Europe, Social Security, Weather, Food, Power, British Empire, Men and Machines, and Aviation.*

The selection of these particular titles is the result of several independent studies. The members of The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development submitted their suggestions for next year's titles to the Editorial Board. These suggestions, indicated where additional instructional materials of the *Building America* type are needed to round out the program of pupil materials already available. The study pamphlet entitled "Europe" is a result of such suggestions.

This selection also incorporates the suggestions of the publisher and distributor of *Building America*, The Americana Corporation. The publisher has developed extensive sales of bound volumes to homes and in state and local school textbook adoptions. They are in a position to know what titles are most in demand by these two groups of users. Such interest has been shown in a unit on the "British Empire".

In addition to these two sources for titles, the Editorial Board feels that several of the outstanding older titles of *Building America* need complete revision. For instance, when the study unit on "Food" was written in 1935, the problem had many aspects different from those which are most in our minds today. Consequently a new pamphlet on "Food" will present the current world and national food picture and will replace the older pamphlet.

A review of the list of titles will indicate a balance of study units among the various problems confronting the American people. The units range all the way from subjects like "Weather" or "Aviation" to the problems of "Social Security" and of "Power" including a discussion of atomic energy. Each of these units will be outlined, researched, written, and checked in the usual thorough manner which has proven so successful in the past twelve years in winning wide approval for *Building America* as interesting, objective, and useful instructional material.

Copyright © 1946 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.