

John, boastfully to playmates: "Catholics are better 'n everybody!"

Joe: "Why?"

John: "Catholics learn better."

Some children feel deprived because of their group.

During conversation period: "My father bought two Christmas trees. One for the office and one for Benjy and me. They're only little trees on account of we're Jewish."

### What Will You Do?

These are the children next door, across the tracks, on the hill. They are not extraordinary children. They possess no particular qualities or experiences that make them different from millions of others in the kindergartens and early grades of our public schools. Their everyday impressions, wonderings, worries, and convictions pose a problem for education.

## Can the Schools Teach International Understanding?

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HOWARD R. ANDERSON

The frequency with which the title of this article enters into professional discussions is evidence of general agreement on its importance in educational programs for boys and girls. In the diversity of answers resulting, however, disagreement creeps in. Howard R. Anderson, specialist for social sciences in the Secondary Division of the U. S. Office of Education and member of a commission which studied the social studies program in German schools early in 1947, gives one answer to this question of the moment.

IN DISCUSSING any question it is important to determine carefully what is being considered. In reference to the question stated above many will claim that the schools have long taught international understanding. And in one sense they have. Pupils have read about other lands: their peoples, their ways of living, and their contacts with our country—culturally, economically, politically. Certainly pupils have had occasion to study treaties and alliances, agencies for achieving international cooperation and the techniques of power politics, the piling-up of tensions which

lead to war, and the difficulties of building a satisfying and lasting peace.

But such teaching, alone, cannot achieve the goal sought. That goal is a world in which all peoples (1) know as much as possible about other peoples and why they live as they do, (2) keep informed about problems and issues tending to divide peoples and use their influence to settle those issues in accordance with universal values and through appeals to reason rather than emotion, (3) are sincerely interested in helping other peoples live the good life and are willing to make sacrifices to

that end, (4) realistically appraise national goals and the extent to which these can be modified to conciliate other peoples (and also the point at which yielding in the face of pressure achieves no lasting good), and (5) consider carefully what responsibilities under present conditions can reasonably be assigned to agencies for international cooperation and which must be provided for in some other way. Having stated rather dogmatically the goals to be achieved, it is desirable to elaborate these points lest the reader decide that the stated purposes are too idealistic, or too reactionary, or too confused!

#### **What's Happening Today?**

The schools must help youth keep informed about current affairs. To keep informed about current affairs youth must become skilled in obtaining information through various channels, in evaluating information, and in focusing knowledge and opinions on issues under discussion. Above all else, youth must realize the importance of keeping informed after the years of formal schooling are over and when the influence of pressure groups on his thinking becomes more pronounced. The late Carl Becker spoke truly when he said, "It is what we don't know that hurts us most; not the other way around!"

#### **Where Is the Information?**

There is a great need to teach youth better how to get information from reading, from listening to the radio and other forms of oral presentation, from viewing films, through travel, and through conversation and participation in discussion. Research shows the dif-

ficulty persons have in recalling accurately what they have heard or seen and in remembering it long. There is evidence also that persons tend to remember conclusions rather than reasons, to react to emotional appeals rather than to arguments, and to accept claims to authority without raising questions about competence.

Obviously the best approach to helping pupils develop the abilities mentioned is not through isolated drill on skills or through the use of skill-building materials which are not directly related to problems recognized as significant. If pupils sense the importance of a given problem and see good reasons for becoming informed about it, the need for certain skills becomes obvious and opportunities for functional skill-building are provided.

#### **How Does Peter Feel?**

In learning about other peoples and their cultures pupils and their teachers may well consider the advantage of using the type of analysis developed in cultural anthropology. Such an approach makes it easier to see how a people develops ways of living to meet needs, and that these ways of doing things, though they may seem strange from an outside point of reference, "make sense" when viewed through the eyes of the home folk. To further international understanding it is necessary to do more than to provide abundant and reliable information about other peoples. Indeed, if persons who are relatively well informed about another people interpret what they see, hear, or know about this people solely in terms of values which they themselves accept, they may well feel greater antag-

onism toward this people than if they were relatively less well informed. In other words, it is necessary not only to know how other people live and what they cherish, but also to know why they feel and live as they do.

To make this sort of identification the pupil must become skilled in putting himself in the shoes of other people—to see things from their point of view. When the pupil practices role-taking it does not follow that he concludes that the other person or another people are necessarily right. For an American youngster the question of right or wrong ultimately depends on whether the indicated behavior squares with democratic values. But the fact remains that even in a situation where the pupil must decide that other persons or people are wrong, he still is able to understand what motives prompted them to act as they did, and for that reason does not feel that their behavior is merely savage or unpredictable.

#### **Wherein Lies America's Responsibility?**

American youth must realize that he is living in a country whose technological potential is so great that it, in effect, is equal to that of the rest of the world. This knowledge should help him understand why some peoples regard the United States with admiration tinged with envy, and hope tinged with fear. Today many peoples who have long lived at a low technological level are seeking to change themselves into modern industrial nations. Though they have made a beginning, the transformation can be achieved only through long and arduous effort. During this period of transformation the United States can do more than any other nation to ad-

vance or retard this progress. If the United States does not choose to do the former, these countries may well decide that they must adopt a pattern of living different from ours.

The gradual transformation of densely populated countries into modern industrial nations need not threaten the safety or prosperity of the United States. Such a transformation would make those countries better markets for American products and would lead to an increase in the flow of world trade. A world in which there are many powers permits the grouping and re-grouping of states in the process of power-balancing, and is less likely to produce an impasse than a world in which there is a bi-polar distribution of power. This statement is made without any reference to the obvious desirability and very real possibility of working out improved procedures for international cooperation.

#### **What About Germany?**

Thus far the discussion has been carried on in general terms. Some specific examples may well serve to illustrate the kind of thinking and action which should characterize democratic citizenship. In Germany nearly 70,000,000 persons are living on less than 170,000 square miles of territory. Those who are living in the American Zone are supposed to have a daily diet of 1550 calories, but they do not always get it. If Germany were united, and if German agriculture were producing at pre-war efficiency, Germany would still need to import about forty percent of its food. To pay for such imports, Germany would need to export about \$2,000,000,000 of products annually.

*Under the circumstances, what attitude should an American citizen take toward the revival of German industry and the opening of markets to German trade? What specifically can the citizen do about the one and the other?*

In the Paris Conference where representatives from countries in Western Europe met to do the preliminary economic planning necessary to any implementation of the Marshall Plan, France spoke out strongly against the revival of German heavy industry. The French held that it would be a mistake to increase greatly the production of steel in the Anglo-American Zones of Occupation when French production was only about 6,000,000 tons annually.<sup>1</sup> To understand French opinion, the American citizen needs to recall that France has been invaded by Germany three times since 1870, that the French favored a separate Rhineland in 1918 and gave up the idea because they were promised an alliance with Great Britain and the United States, and that the French favored a stronger League of Nations and were willing to act to prevent German rearmament. *Under these conditions, how should an American regard the French point of view? Should he change his mind about the need for reviving German industry? Can anything be done to cause the French to modify their views? Specifically what can the citizens do about this situation?*

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<sup>1</sup> Since this article was written, the French have accepted an increase in German steel production to 10,700,000 tons annually in return for a greater share of the coal mined in the Ruhr. With increased coal imports the French hope to double their production of steel.

### **And There's Russia?**

American policy seeks to facilitate the recovery of war-devastated countries, but on the condition that those countries do all they can to help themselves and to help each other. It also seeks to curtail the extension of Russian influence by providing assistance to threatened countries. To implement these policies it will be necessary to set aside credits, increase exports, and maintain a large military establishment. In a sense, the frontiers of the United States have been extended in the west to Korea, Japan, and the former Japanese-mandated islands, and in the east to Germany, Austria, Greece, and Turkey. This expansion of frontiers resulted from American participation in a war which threatened our national existence, and is likely to continue as long as we feel our security is threatened.

On the other hand, the U.S.S.R., which is greatly inferior technologically to the United States, is doing its utmost, *we believe*, to infiltrate countries along its frontiers. The invasion is ideological and not military—a strategy dictated by the human misery in the countries “invaded,” by Russia’s need for repairing the devastation caused by war, and by the technological inferiority of the U.S.S.R. If this ideological invasion is successful, the U.S.S.R. will soon command the technological “know how” of Western Europe and the manpower of the densely populated areas of Asia in programs of its own choosing. *What would be the implications of such a development for the United States and the other Western democracies? Is Russia’s aggressive present-day foreign policy really motivated by fear?*

*Does this fear, in part, arise from a U. S. foreign policy which, in turn, is inspired by fear of Russian aggression? If so, is there anything either country can do to allay these fears without sacrificing vital advantages? What can the United States do to prevent the world from crystallizing in a mold characterized by a bi-polar distribution of power?*

#### **How Shall We Use the UN?**

In thinking about these and other questions American youth must take into account the UN and other agencies for international cooperation. It is important for him to realize that the United Nations organization recognizes national sovereignty and is based on the principle that the "great powers" must be in agreement if any decisive action is to be undertaken. Under these conditions the sphere of action open to the UN is limited, and no country would be justified in putting its sole trust in the UN for the maintenance of peace and security. On the other hand, it is equally important for pupils to know what the UN can do and for them to ponder what additional powers are needed by this international organization if it is to be more effective.

Clearly the policy of the United States includes cooperation with the UN, direct dealing with other nations in situations where effective UN action would be difficult, and "keeping our powder dry." The citizen may well feel that a greater measure of international cooperation would do much to insure a happier world. But this goal cannot be achieved by thrusting heavier responsibilities on the UN than that organization currently can accept.

#### **Are These the Goals?**

In recent discussions of the teaching of international relations some persons have presented the point of view that what is done in the United States must depend on what is being done in other countries. This point of view is substantially correct if the assumption is made that American schools should propagandize for unlimited international cooperation and for peace at any price. The point of view expressed in this article does not rest on such an assumption but on the assumption that American youth *should accept democratic values, keep informed on current affairs, think straight, and stand ready to act in the light of their convictions.*

#### **ASCD MEMBERS—NOTICE**

**You will be asked to vote on the proposed constitutional changes as they now stand on pages 59-64 of this issue. Please read these pages carefully, preparing to vote on the amended constitution when ballots are sent out later.**

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