

From Our Readers

Intercultural Workshops*

This department will give our readers an opportunity to share with others their ideas on issues and problems of concern to ASCD and to the teaching profession at large. We invite you to send us your reactions to the points of view expressed in EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, the Association's program and policies, and issues faced by American education in these critical times. Let us hear from you.—AB, EW.

DEAR EDITOR: Dr. Shapiro is a well-qualified workshop observer. He is a nationally recognized authority on intergroup literature and has been a visitor and guest speaker at several workshops. No doubt many of the criticisms he has collected, "based exclusively on verbatim reports," represent some workshoppers' valid "gripes."

There is a difference, however, between the validity of hearsay accounts, of responses to such questions as "what is the matter with *this* workshop?" and the systematic evaluation of an *entire* workshop by its participants. The occasional dissatisfactions of individuals must be seen in the larger perspective of the *total* experience. Workshops usually carry along a few chronic complainers (sometimes encouraged by a staff member!) the majority of whom eventually succumb to the "therapy" administered by the group itself. To characterize or stereotype workshops—even partially—by statements of participants during *one* of the phases of group growth so clearly described by Herbert Thelen and Watson Dickerman in their article, "Stereotypes and the Growth of Groups" in the February, 1949, issue of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, is to disregard some well-established principles of group dynamics. Surely, workshoppers gripe at times—they are supposed to! Experienced staff members can recognize, interpret, and capitalize on these com-

plaints, since they are frequently symptoms of frustration or evidence of personality expansion.

Like Dr. Shapiro, I am not attempting to "whitewash" intergroup workshops. However, a systematic analysis of the comprehensive evaluations of five of them over an equal number of years indicates considerable improvement in the selection of participants and staff members, clarity of purpose, adequacy of procedures, and in the post-workshop behavior of teachers—the best test of a learning experience.

In the writer's opinion several fundamental changes, not mentioned in the article under discussion, might be considered by sponsoring institutions. In the first place, the practice of distributing agency-awarded "scholarships" (usually only inducement to attend) should be discontinued. Well-meaning donors should make gifts directly to the university or college, to be spent at its discretion as part of its total budget. Fellowships should be awarded by the institution—not by the donor—and administered according to a well-developed institutional policy. No obligation should be felt by a student to a particular agency-donor. (A participant once asked me, "I was the recipient of an agency scholarship—do I have to invite the donor to my school?")

In the second place, only competent representatives of educational institutions

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* Some comments on an article, "The Trouble With Intercultural Workshops," by Leo Shapiro, director, Department of Education of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Chicago, which appeared in the April, 1949, *Educational Leadership*.

cess, to find a post following his dismissal. His colleague looked about, frowned,



and carefully tore Professor Americus' last manuscript into a thousand pieces. If someone had been watching, his own attitude toward the eccentric and unreliable Professor Americus was thus made unmistakably clear. Thought Professor Americus' colleague—*you can't be too careful, you know.*

Three resource suggestions for

YOUR IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM WITH ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

For a child-study workshop: *These Are Your Children*, new professional book on child development by Jenkins, Shacter and Bauer. With some teacher groups you might wish to go through this entire book on a study and discussion basis (discussion guides are suggested for each chapter). Or you might wish to group your teachers of six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, etc., and concentrate on exploring how an understanding of the characteristics and needs of each age group (see corresponding chapters in *These Are Your Children*) can make everyday classroom teaching happier and more effective.

For study of modern methods in word perception: *On Their Own in Reading* by William S. Gray. With this professional book as a discussion take-off, the what, why and how of an up-to-date program in word perception can be investigated; teachers can be helped to see phonics and other word-attack aids as means to an important goal—good reading, but at the same time can discover how to guard against overemphasis on the mechanical aspects.

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or organizations should be invited to serve as staff members. A charming "world traveler" may not be an educator, and, while "minority group" leadership is desirable, even genuine interest in improving human relations is not necessarily sufficient qualification.

Space is running out—this is supposed to be a letter, not a thesis. I hope Dr. Shapiro observes many more workshops, over longer periods of time; we can profit greatly from his suggestions. Some day he may be able to contribute a second article entitled, "Some Good Things About Intergroup Workshops!"—Herbert K. Walther, University of Denver.

For exploring ways of choosing and using children's literature in the classroom: *Children and Books* by May Hill Arbuthnot. Selected chapters from Mrs. Arbuthnot's comprehensive survey should provide valuable workshop material. Your teachers might select poetry for intensive study; the comics, movies or radio and their relation to children's reading; or the place of literature in child development—how good books can help to meet basic needs.

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