

## From Our Readers

DEAR EDITOR: It is difficult to be critical of a letter that is as gracious as Mr. Walther's is. [See *Educational Leadership*, Oct., 1949, p. 71.] But I must confess that I find it almost as difficult to understand just what is bothering him.

Apparently, we have rather substantial areas of agreement. He seems to agree with me that the criticisms cited "represent some workshopers' valid 'gripes'"; that it is not worthwhile "attempting to 'whitewash' intergroup workshops"; that there is room for improvement in the way workshops are set up and organized.

Where, then, are our disagreements? Mr. Walther seems to feel that he is expressing his disagreement when he points out that "occasional dissatisfactions" must be seen in terms of the "total experience"; that it is dangerous to "stereotype workshops—even partially—by statements of participants during one of the phases of group growth"; that a "systematic analysis" of workshops over the years "indicates considerable improvement."

Does my article really question any of the above points? I must ask Mr. Walther to refer once more to the paragraph stating the purpose of my article. It reads: "The purpose of this account is *by no means* (italics in original) to question the value or utility of intercultural workshops. There is no doubt that intercultural workshops are of considerable value, and virtually all the teachers whose criticisms are cited agree. The purpose, rather, is to present the doubts and queries which teachers have raised so that we may refine our thinking about workshops, sharpen objectives, and improve methods."

If Mr. Walther will re-read the article in the context of its announced objectives, he will see that there was no attempt to stereotype workshops, "even partially" (whatever that means). What was attempted, rather, was to present the dis-

satisfactions and gripes of workshopers in their native tongue. I had had an excellent opportunity to hear such gripes, not merely, as Mr. Walther says, as "a visitor and guest speaker" at workshops, but also as a staff member. And it is as both "outsider" and "insider" that I have come to feel reluctantly that the gripes are not, as he alleges, merely "hearsay accounts," or "occasional dissatisfactions," or just "symptoms of frustration or evidences of personality expansion." He is being too kind to workshops and staffs. This is a typical misdemeanor. And he is being kind at the expense of workshopers. This also is typical.

Certainly, someone should contribute another article such as Mr. Walther suggests entitled "Some Good Things About Intergroup Workshops." I believe that I am as enthusiastic as he about the many good things which have resulted from workshops. But let's face it—we are a long, long way from anything like the "systematic analysis" which Mr. Walther cites as the desirable kind of evaluation which is needed in this field. And we won't get to systematic evaluation any sooner by giving cavalier treatment to criticism which we find distasteful for one subjective reason or another. As a person of critical acumen and objectivity, Mr. Walther should be the first to recognize this—and usually is.—*Leo Shapiro, director, Department of Education, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.*

P.S. There are, to be sure, two paragraphs in which Mr. Walther works up a profuse perspiration setting up and swinging away at some straw men of his own invention. Since these involve problems which, as Mr. Walther himself confesses, are "not mentioned in the article under discussion," I must allow Mr. Walther the luxury of fighting it out with his own straw men to his heart's content.

Copyright © 1949 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.