

# The Curriculum Commentator

Column Editor: Isabel B. Lewis  
Contributors: Richard Barnes Kennan  
and J. Cecil Parker

*This year The Curriculum Commentator appears under the guidance of a new column editor, Isabel B. Lewis, of the School of Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Major purpose of the "Commentator" is that of helping our readers keep up to date on current happenings in supervision and curriculum development.*

*Guest contributors for this issue are: Richard Barnes Kennan, Secretary, National Commission for the Defense of Democracy through Education, NEA, who describes a current attack upon teachers in public schools; and J. Cecil Parker, associate professor, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, who comments on some helpful materials for planning in-service education.*

## "Is Your Doctor Your Friend?"

WHAT has been referred to by some individuals as a most shocking and violent attack of one profession upon another occurred on June 13 at the Atlantic City meeting of the American Medical Association. At that time a resolution was adopted<sup>1</sup> which contains the following statement: "Whereas, many of our educators and many of the organizations to which they belong have for many years conducted an active, aggressive campaign to indoctrinate their students in grammar school, high school, and college with the insidious and destructive tenets of the welfare state, this teaching of hatred and scorn for the American system of private enterprise having been so widespread and successful that as a result our voters are conditioned to accept all manner of totalitarian expedients in direct violation of economic law." This vicious charge was tied to the suggestion that the schools were promoting the cause of "socialized medicine." The resolution went on to endorse the so-called

"Bill of Grievances" of the Sons of the American Revolution and called for an investigation by Congress of the entire school system with particular reference to textbooks.

It is interesting to note that this action on the part of the American Medical Association came at approximately the same time that Allen Zoll, one of the most violent opponents of public education, had propagandized many of the doctors of the country, claiming that the schools were promoting socialized medicine and asking for support for the National Council for American Education and for Zoll's campaign of attack on the schools.

## Teachers Oppose Communism

The propriety and the wisdom of one profession's examining the working tools of another profession is in itself an interesting point to consider. A teacher might note, for example, that curare is being used in the treatment of lockjaw; he might even observe that physicians sometimes prescribe a medicine that contains nitroglycerin. He may be very well aware that curare is a deadly poison which is used on the

<sup>1</sup>Copies of this resolution may be obtained by writing to ASCD, NEA, 1201—16th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

tips of arrows and that nitroglycerin is a violent explosive.

The words, "Communism," "Fascism," "collectivism," et cetera, occur in some school textbooks and in some courses of study. Like the medicines mentioned above, these words might be used for sinister purposes or they might be used for benevolent and informative reasons. The great majority of public school teachers in this country are firmly and officially on record as favoring the teaching *about* Communism so that youngsters and future voting citizens may recognize the dangers of this totalitarian dictatorship now existent; but they are completely opposed to the advocacy of Communism in any classroom in this country or to the employment of any Communist as a teacher.

Would the medical profession secretly advocate the use of curare, for instance, as a means of wiping out proponents of socialized medicine? Such an idea is absurd. Yet it is just as fantastic for the doctors to infer that "many of our educators and many of the organizations to which they belong" are anything but loyal and sincere in their devotion to America.

### Spirit of Confidence

The most effective tool of the medical profession has never been its surgical instruments or its medicines, but rather the spirit of confidence between the doctor and the patient. This current attack on the great rank and file of American teachers may have its most damaging effect in the breaking down of the relationship between individual teachers across this country and their family doctors unless there is a complete and immediate abrogation on the part of the American Medical Association of the tactics which brought about this resolution. Otherwise this attack

will certainly cause a great deal of unhappiness and a very real loss to both professional groups.

The writer, a former hygiene teacher himself, in his nearly thirty years of experience in public education, has never heard any sentiments expressed by teachers or by teacher organizations along the line charged by the American Medical Association.

Dear reader, this A.M.A. resolution is not an attack on Mary Jones in Ponkapoag; because it makes no limitations in its charges, it is a direct smear on *you* and on every other member of the teaching profession. What are you going to do about it?

An outright national warfare between the teaching profession and the medical profession is unthinkable. The question is not that of whether or not we should have socialized medicine in this country. That question should be fought out on its merits and not in any name-calling, besmirching campaign. Certainly teachers never have and never will lower themselves to any such vilification of the medical profession as the resolution adopted by the A.M.A. House of Delegates directs toward the teaching profession.

### Time for Individual Action

The real answer in the last analysis will undoubtedly lie in the activities of individual doctors and teachers. Most of us have doctors in our families as well as doctors to whom we go for advice and treatment. Every teacher in this country now has a direct responsibility to go to every doctor with whom she is acquainted and ask him whether or not he really is suspicious of the teachers who are his patients and relatives. If he really has such suspicions, then he has a responsibility of first importance to name the individuals and the instances and produce the evidence

to be placed before the proper school authorities for action. If he does not have such evidence, and if he does not really suspect you and your colleagues, then he has just as great a responsibility to write to the American Medical Association, to the National Education Association and to "the President, the Vice President, the members of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives" to whom the original resolution was to be sent, stating that he does not know of any subversive teachers or activities in schools in his community.

The oldest joint committee in the National Education Association is that of the American Medical Association and the National Education Association. Out of it have come relationships and contributions of mutual value to these associations. Not at any time has the National Education Association or any other worthy educational organization, to the best of the writer's knowledge, ever attacked the American Medi-

cal Association or any other medical group. The shameful and unwarranted action of the A.M.A., in adopting the above-mentioned resolution, is the first case of mud-slinging to have occurred in the thirty-year relationship between the teachers and the doctors, or for that matter, in the centuries-long relationship between doctors and teachers.

*Note:* Word received since this article was sent to the printer states that the *A.M.A. Journal* is planning an editorial "clarifying" the above-mentioned resolution. There is rumor also that the A.M.A. Executive Board may take similar or stronger action. If school people and their friends are alert and will make a good approach to their doctors this "attack" may well turn into an opportunity for better understanding of and stronger support for the American public school system.

—*Richard Barnes Kennan*, Secretary, National Commission for the Defense of Democracy through Education, NEA.

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### Helpful Materials for Planning In-Service Education

"CHANGE and improvement in the curriculum will result only as there are changes in the values, understanding or skills of the school personnel. Participation in groups is one of the most effective means of providing school personnel with opportunities to share in decisions which affect them, and to learn the needed modifications in their values, understandings and skills."<sup>1</sup> We

have decided to label many of our efforts to provide such opportunities as in-service education. Most of us are busy trying to learn how to make in-service education activities more effective than they have been in the past.

We are learning that all enterprises intended to bring about change in school personnel must put sound principles of learning to work in real and vital contexts. Probably it is more accurate to say that we are about to learn and that we are seeking the under-

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<sup>1</sup>*Action for Curriculum Improvement*, A.S. C.D. Yearbook, 1951, p. 116.

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