

The Listening Post

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State Leadership in Civil Defense

WHEN Congress enacted the "Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950," responsibility for civil defense was vested primarily in the several states. The Federal Civil Defense Administration was established to act as a coordinating agency for state activities and to supply such needed services and advice as would help the entire civil population meet an attack. All states have appointed Civil Defense Directors reporting to their Governors. State civil defense programs have enlisted and trained many thousands of volunteers. The school population has a great part to play, not only in its own protection, but in cooperating with state and local civil defense officials in carrying out a coordinated community program.

This reliance by Congress upon local action is in line with well-established American traditions. State school leaders, who are responsible for education within their states, will be able to work closely with civil defense state officials and to influence the defense activities of the many schools within their states through their regular channels. The entire civil defense program is conceived also as almost wholly a volunteer program utilizing as far as is possible the existing organizations and channels already operating in the communities.

Two Civil Defense Problems

We are today faced with two major civil defense problems: (a) how to meet emergencies which could occur at any time; and (b) the long time prob-

lem of educating students to live in the kind of world we have and the need for the closer effective community action that will be necessary for keeping our country strong.

State school officials will wish to have school administrators and teachers concerned about both these problems. The problem of meeting emergencies involves organized mass action for the protection of life and property, and the rapid education of the school population in those skills that will help them to care for themselves and each other. It would be well for school administrators throughout a state to agree on general policies and on some specific ways of acting should such emergencies arise.

Although the Federal Government can advise on these plans the actual state plans will need to be created by local and state leaders to meet their particular needs. Such programs for schools must fit closely into any over-all plan for the state and local communities. In addition to caring for the safety and movements of students, teachers and administrators together will wish to select those skills to be used in self-protection and to arrange a place in the present curriculum for teaching them. If school officials do not take such responsibility it can be anticipated that under emergencies civil defense officials may be forced to take action without the helpful advice of education.

The school's second problem, that of educating the students in the realities that they must face in the modern world

becomes a matter mainly of alerting teachers to their responsibility. School curriculums at present are designed to aid students to study practical appraisals and solutions of both national and international problems. The latest known facts in science are being taught by many good teachers in the schools. They need to have suggested to them, and to alert each other on, how these purposes are affected by the events of the day. As it is well agreed that participation in community services is one of the best ways of teaching, it is hoped that children and youth of our schools can study and participate in the most effective ways of meeting attack on their own community or serving other communities which have undergone attack.

The Federal Civil Defense Administration is working closely with The National Education Association, the Office of Education, and with other national

groups concerned, to help them to carry out their recognized responsibilities in this field. Certain technical information and guides for operating school programs are being prepared for national distribution by the Federal Civil Defense Administration.

This should result in a civil defense program for our state schools and colleges that will be best suited to our whole nation. When the large segment of our population, which is now in the schools, is well informed about the problems of civil defense and skilled in the actions to be taken during possible disaster-conditions this movement will be a deterrent to any potential enemy. School administrators and teachers are the qualified leaders to strengthen our defenses in this special area.—*Earl K. Peckham*, training and education officer, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Washington 25, D. C.

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