

own culture and to the world in the fields of science, art and architecture, music, language and literature, ideas, customs, traditions.

- Help students to understand the interdependence of the world—social, economic and political.

- Develop awareness of the common humanity which underlies all peoples of the earth, and of the basic needs common to all.

- Emphasize similarities rather than differences among cultural groups.

- Cooperate actively in United Nations Week, Brotherhood Week, etc.

- Sponsor Pan-American Day program, Cinco de Mayo program, Christmas program (Christmas carols in many languages, etc.).

- Sponsor assembly programs and school exhibits.

- Encourage correspondence with individuals or groups in foreign lands.

Space does not permit describing the work being done in many other school classes to further international understanding such as art, music, homemaking and industrial arts. However, numerous examples of such activities might be cited which would show that these subjects are also making valuable contributions. Therefore, every student by the time he or she has completed high school, will have had many opportunities both to deepen and to broaden in understanding and appreciation of international relations.

A Project in International Friendship

DOROTHY J. MIAL

Youths in New York State are participating in the Community Ambassador Project, which is described in this article. Dorothy J. Mial is supervisor in international education, Bureau of Adult Education, New York State Department of Education, Albany.

WHAT can I do to help build world peace? A search for an answer to this question led young adults of New York State four years ago to the Community Ambassador Project. The young people were members of the New York State Young Adult Civic Council, initially sponsored by the State Department of Education and supported by local boards of education. The Experiment in International Living of Putney, Vermont, cooperated with council members to give reality to their dream of working for international friendship. This

past summer twelve communities—nine in New York State and three in Vermont, Michigan and Connecticut—sent twenty young adults, most of them under twenty-five, to Europe and Latin America, not as tourists but as “community ambassadors” to live for two months as members of families and of communities. With The Experiment in International Living providing the machinery, any community willing to do so can send its own ambassadors abroad next summer. The villages of Van Hornesville and Hastings have not been

too small; the Bronx of a million people has not been too large.

Friendships Across the Sea

Mayor Lupton launched the "ambassador" campaign in Niagara Falls with these words, "Last year our community sent three fine young American citizens to live for six weeks with families in Sweden, Scotland, and France. Because of their vivid reports many thousands of us now have a feeling of friendship with the people of those nations and a deeper appreciation of their way of life . . . If this project were undertaken by a hundred communities throughout the United States, and continued for several years, I am sure that it would not take too long for the people of the world to acquire the attitudes and knowledge to completely transform international relations."

Similar feelings are found in every community that has taken part. What does the project offer? Why have the communities that launched the project in 1948—Jamestown, Glens Falls, Schenectady—sent two "ambassadors" abroad for four consecutive years, and already have plans under way for an expanded program in 1952? In each community the answer lies in the pleasure that has come with developing new friendships across the sea, in the interest that has come with getting the whole community to lend a hand to a project bigger than the concerns of any single group, in the fun of hard work for a big idea, in the deep satisfaction of concrete, positive action to promote peace. Many citizens are asking themselves what could happen in the minds and hearts of men—where it is agreed that wars begin—if hundreds of com-

munities throughout the country sent their ablest young people as community ambassadors to Europe, to Asia, to Latin America, and if in turn communities here welcomed into their homes young people from abroad. To kill a man in modern war we spend many thousands of dollars. To send one young person abroad as an "ambassador" of neighborly friendship costs less than a thousand dollars.

A small tool to chisel away the granite of international fear and suspicion? Oxie Reichler, Yonkers editor, doesn't think so. He wrote, when a citizens' committee decided to undertake the project for Yonkers, "The prospect of having one or more young 'ambassadors' from Yonkers to foreign nations is indeed exciting . . . Such an 'envoy' becomes a lamplighter.

"Such a program is directly in line with the modern concept of 'peoples talking to peoples' for peoples are but individuals. The idea itself incorporates the not-so-readily-approached fact that a single person can be an enormously important force for good (or evil, alas) and there is such a great need for candle-lighting and lamp-lighting among 'strangers' that even one or two are important, so much more than none."

This was addressed to the people of Yonkers the day the project was endorsed. Six months later Editor Reichler wrote,

"One can hardly look for, or reasonably expect, immediate tangible benefits to accrue from such assignments. The basic goal is long range and idealistic . . . Yet already, from the Yonkers part of the experiment, flows an almost amazing display of such special and par-

ticular interest in Yonkers on the part of a Brazilian, Dr. A. Penha Nunes of Sao Goncalo de Sapucahy.

"Dr. Nunes found himself so gratified by his discussions with our ambassador . . . that he transmitted this message . . . 'I extend to the people and the City of Yonkers the following invitation: Any student or students desiring to study in Brazil may use my home in Sao Goncalo de Sapucahy as their home during a year's study. Please accept in appreciation of the visit of James Herrion.'

"Here is a bid that is so genuinely from the heart, so broad and generous in word and spirit, so sincere in its people-to-people approach, so full of the feel of a friendly handshake, that it is bound to generate here in Yonkers a fine feeling in turn for the good people of our Latin American neighbor."

Letters Reflect Friendships

Through July and August letters from the "ambassadors" came also from France, Germany, England, Scotland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Spain, Colombia. Each reflected warm friendships like that of Dr. Nunes. Each gave a hint of what such friendships could do to iron out international misunderstanding.

The project as developed four years ago by young adults (defined in New York State as those between 18 and 30) brings world affairs to the doorsteps and front yards of communities. In brief, it works this way. A representative committee acting for the community (generally called together by the schools) selects one or more young persons as "community ambassadors." With help from school, from women's groups, from

church, from union, from the whole town, funds are raised (\$750-\$900 for each ambassador) to send the young persons abroad for two months. The money comes from interested organizations, from business, from organized labor, from individual citizens, and above all from a variety of ingenious money raising schemes. In Hudson, for instance, a benefit performance of "The State of the Union" by the amateur Claverack Players financed one "ambassador." In Endicott a book review raised a major portion of the funds.

Applicants Study Their Community

During the weeks before the "ambassadors" sail they find out what makes their community "go." What happens in our town when a man is down and out? What happens if an epidemic breaks out? What services does our government provide? How does the individual citizen take part in the affairs of his community? What is unique about our schools, our hospitals, our local government, our social agencies, our way of doing business? And what about racial equality in our town, and freedom, and opportunity? A special committee is charged with responsibility for seeing that the ambassadors go abroad able to answer such questions about their own community intelligently. In the process of arranging interviews, group discussions and field trips, the committee itself and all who lend a hand become better educated about their community. Ideally, all applicants for the ambassadorships take part in the community study so that a by-product of the project is a growing number of young adults who are literate about their community.

Thought is given, also, to questions outside the community. The State Department in Washington has been interested in the project, and in June the United States Mission to the United Nations cooperated with the New York Department of Education and The Experiment in International Living in an all-day briefing session in New York. A great deal was packed into a short time: a broadcast by the "ambassadors" to the world over Voice of America; a discussion of United States foreign policy with Ambassador Ernest Gross; a discussion of critical social issues with Porter McKeever, Chief of the Public Information Service of the Mission; lunch at the United Nations cafeteria; an interview with U.N. Personnel, a session of the Trusteeship Council; a visit to the new United Nations headquarters; and finally dinner at International House and a discussion of the writing of newsletters home with Dr. Benjamin Fine of the *New York Times*, a member of the Advisory Committee on the Ambassador Project to the New York State Education Department.

The letters to the local newspaper become an important part of the project. Through these, the country visited, the community observed, the family adopted all become real; and when the ambassadors come home, their community is eager to hear the full account of what two months in another country has meant to them. From there on the ambassadors complete their contract with their community, and to literally hundreds of community groups they tell the story of the families they came to know and to love. World affairs take on a human element as the people behind the headlines come to life, and a

dramatic means of increasing interest in international issues is thus provided.

Understanding Problems Abroad

The letters home suggest that the ambassadors go abroad not so much to instruct foreigners about American ways—though this follows inevitably—as to understand and appreciate ways and problems abroad. With a deep sense of responsibility to the community that sent them, the ambassadors plunge into two months of hard work—as well as a great deal of fun. The work began earlier when the ambassadors set out to learn about their own community. It continued aboard ship with several hours each day devoted to classes in such subjects as British and American foreign policy, contemporary European culture and languages. Overseas the experience is a healthy blend of domesticity, study, discussion, observation, and above all cementing bonds of friendship and affection. Sight-seeing is, of course, included, but when the ambassadors travel—usually on bicycle—it is with a group of young people, other ambassadors and "Experimenters" and an equal number of natives, the newly-found "brothers" and "sisters" of the host families.

Usually special assignments given by the folks at home—to convey greetings to local officials or organizations or to make a special study of some aspect of community life—give added purpose and direction to the experience. Shopping with their "mother" or helping with the dishes, along with interviews with businessmen, with government officials, with the "man on the street," together with visits to Parliament or the Bundestag combine to give the "am-

bassadors" a far more intimate glimpse into life than is accorded the usual tourist. The letters indicate that the host families and the entire communities make a real effort to see that this glimpse is meaningful. The families are carefully chosen, and The Experiment in International Living makes every effort to see that each is able to give the "ambassadors" lodged with them a good, representative experience.

The Community that decides to take international understanding as a personal responsibility by sending its own ambassadors abroad has in its hands the key to a number of questions. How to dramatize public affairs education? How to develop interest in studying one's own community—and then in relating it to other communities of the world? How to give young adults a re-

sponsible role in community life? How to achieve cooperative action among diverse groups? Finally, how to build even a single bridge over the fear and suspicion separating peoples?

Experience has shown that the project leads to other activities—home-giving to foreign students as developed in Jamestown, letter writing, exchange of books, sending packages abroad, organizing discussions, in short, a richly varied, active program of international education soundly based on a sympathetic and friendly interest in other people. No participating group is satisfied with what it is doing, but each feels that it has found a dramatic focus and an effective impetus for developing a good program. This is "education through the project" at its best and on a world-wide scale.

Grassroot Ambassadors

PAUL C. TAFF

Rural youth from the United States and from other lands are exchanged in a program designed to improve international understanding. Paul C. Taff, assistant director, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, last summer served as leader of the U. S. delegates and visited many of the countries participating in this program.

ACTING as "Grassroot Ambassadors" from the United States, 148 farm youth have visited foreign countries during the past four years. They went abroad under the auspices of the International Farm Youth Exchange program which in turn brought 123 foreign youth to the United States during the same period.

This two-way exchange of rural young people gave all of them an opportunity to live with farm families here and abroad. It has developed an understanding of the customs, problems, living conditions and philosophy of the families and the countries visited.

Getting this firsthand information on how people live, work and play in other

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