

The School's Role in the Search for Peace

In spite of the great professional and public interest in international relations as a subject for attention in the elementary and secondary schools, the international aspects of American education have not been fully explored. Most studies show that the teaching now going forward in this area is tentative, spotty, and experimental. There is much concern with transient details; little attention to enduring issues and principles. Teachers who received most of their training in the first half of the twentieth century were not well equipped with either the information or the attitudes needed to do this job well. Other serious handicaps are national indifference, in some instances antagonism, and a lack of readily usable materials.

Experience tells us that important concepts and attitudes can be taught through the schools. For example, instruction in nutrition has made an important difference in the diet of the American people. Vocational education has been useful in developing a more highly productive economy. Respect for the American flag has been instilled through the schools. The work of the schools in safety education has undoubtedly saved the lives and limbs of many thousands of children. Such analogies must not be pushed too far. International relations are complex, controversial, and (in some respects) highly technical. However, systematic instruction in the schools could help bring about important differences in the international attitudes and behavior of children and their parents, just as it has in other fields.

As this issue of *Educational Leadership* points out, there are many promising practices in the field of education for international understanding. Yet the fact remains that no more than a handful of good instructional materials for the elementary schools exist, and while the volume of material at the secondary level is staggering, its effectiveness in the classroom leaves much to be desired. The task, therefore, falls again on the already heavily burdened shoulders of the teacher. Teachers alone will not, and can not, determine the fate of the world—but their influence can and must be the core of a steadfast, mature, and responsible public opinion.

The most important influence teachers can bring to bear on world relations will continue to be *the influence of example*.

We hope teachers will join the newly-created United Nations Education Service in working actively for a better world. (Write for details to 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.). The establishment of this Service is a concrete method by which the process of adapting American education in the elementary and secondary levels (with some attention also to the education of teachers) can be accelerated and made more immediately useful. The United Nations Education Service, operated by the National Education Association, will attempt to modify instruction so that international relations may become an accepted and significant part of the school program. As George Stoddard has said, "This new enterprise on the part of the Committee on International Relations of the National Education Association may prove to be a landmark in American education. The Service gives every teacher and pupil a chance to perform certain tasks at a level appropriate to his interest and energy. It calls for both individual and cooperative effort. As a plan, it is in itself educative. It is social science strengthened by its relation to the toughest problem of the modern world—the problem of how to establish peace without the terrible bloodshed that has always created as many problems as it solved."—*Robert H. Reid*, executive assistant, Committee on International Relations, National Education Association.

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