

most complete blackout of freedom to be found in the historical record? Not at all. Again it was the opponents of free discussion and inquiry. Democratic discussion was done to death. The professors now get their beliefs and directives for teaching, even in the precise sciences, from political commissars. The black shirts who marched on Rome, who assassinated any who disagreed with them, were not free inquiring spirits from the world of academic freedom!

Do those who deny the right of Americans to pursue facts and ideas wish to dictate the beliefs we must teach? While fighting infiltration from the left, let us not be blind to thought control from the right.

Freedom, whether of learning, of the press, of the market place, of political expression, or of religion, can never mean the irresponsible expression of capricious or prejudiced beliefs, the ruthless exploitation of men and resources. No responsible schoolman interprets academic freedom as a license

to "say what he pleases." He will fight, however, to maintain the ancient right to search for facts, to make systematically reasoned interpretations, and to present these without fear or hindrance. The exercise of academic freedom, moreover, inevitably includes respect for the reasoned conclusions of others. *Free interchange of beliefs and open discussion of differences is no mere "right" of the schoolman; it is a cornerstone and safeguard of democracy. Without it cultural decay is as inevitable as the night which it resembles.*

Schoolmen must stand firmly for free learning in a free society. Education is not confined to the simple business of training individuals in the simple skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Education is one of the fundamental institutions by which a society or civilization perpetuates itself, and through which the individual realizes to the fullest his unique capacities. —William H. Burton, director of apprenticeship, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University.

Curriculum Research

Column Editor: J. Bernard Everett

The ASCD Research Program—A Progress Report

IT IS a good thing to stop once in a while to take stock and assess progress. It seems particularly appropriate at this time that we try to assess the progress which has been made in the ASCD Research Program and to suggest what seem to be possible and desirable next steps.

The research coordinator met with a subcommittee of the ASCD Research Board shortly after his appointment to make plans for the year and reach agreements which would guide him in his work with the Association. The

major agreements reached in this meeting are restated since they provide a necessary background for the report which follows.

1. The chief function of the national ASCD should be to assist ASCD state and regional organizations in stimulating and carrying on research activities in their states or regions.

2. All initial contacts should be made through regular organizational channels, that is, the state and regional presidents.

3. The problems studied as well as

the specific means of attacking them should come out of the local situations.

4. The role of the national ASCD should be to stimulate interest in research, to assist in the development of workable approaches at local, state or regional levels, and to act as a clearing-house for projects under way.

5. The program should, whenever possible, take advantage of research activities already under way, assist the persons involved in securing consultative services, provide them with information about similar projects and in general help them to do better what they are already doing.

Acting in accordance with the agreements outlined above, the executive secretary sent letters to the presidents of all ASCD state and regional groups, and to contact persons in unaffiliated states informing them of the appointment of the research coordinator and making it clear that his services were available to them upon request. Therefore, a major portion of the coordinator's time and energy has been spent in providing consultative services to state and regional research committees, conferences, workshops and related projects. His activities during the summer included work with the New England Regional Conference and the Jackson's Mill Workshop sponsored by ASCD Regions II and III. Since September he has worked with groups in the states of Kentucky, New York, Connecticut, West Virginia, Indiana, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Iowa, Texas and Florida. Some individual conferences have been held and a considerable volume of correspondence has been carried on with ASCD officers in other states with regard to service at future conferences and committee meetings.

The research coordinator also assumed major responsibility for organizing the 1952 Research Conference. The

purpose of the conference was to bring together teams from ASCD state and regional organizations in order to assist them in organizing research activities in their respective groups. This conference, held in Chicago from December 4-6, 1952 was attended by 115 persons representing 29 state ASCD organizations. Participants spent the major portion of the three days in small groups working on research problems they had identified prior to the conference. General sessions were devoted to problems of research methodology and plans for future research activities in the state and regional ASCD organizations represented at the conference.

State and Regional Research Activities

Since the ASCD research program is an evolving one, depending primarily upon the development of interest and leadership within state and regional ASCD groups, it is more difficult to assess progress made than it would be in a more limited and highly structured program. Plans made by different state organizations vary greatly as does the progress made towards their realization. This seems both desirable and inevitable in the kind of program which has as its goal the development of continuing leadership at the regional, state and local school level.

Brief reports of progress in a few states in which the research coordinator has worked in 1952-53 will probably illustrate most effectively the evolving nature of the research program.

Projects are under way in West Virginia and Florida based on problems identified by the Southern States Work Conference. In both cases, the problem was one with which groups in these states were already concerned, but the main impetus towards development of a research approach has developed in meetings of the state committees with

the ASCD research coordinator.

In West Virginia, as a result of interest in research developed at the Jackson's Mill Workshop in August, the research coordinator was invited to work for two days in October with a representative committee concerned with the problems of studying and improving the supervisory services in the state. A smaller committee composed of supervisors had made a previous and rather unsuccessful attempt to determine the present status of supervision by means of an interview mailed to a random sampling of teachers selected from the state directory. The committee which met in October was a much more representative group composed of consultants from the state department of education, general supervisors, special supervisors, elementary principals, secondary principals, classroom teachers, teachers college and university personnel, county superintendents, and assistant superintendents. In the two days they met together, this group developed plans for a series of pilot research projects to be conducted at the county level and aimed primarily at the identification of promising supervisory practices and the eventual improvement of instruction through a better understanding of the problem on the part of all concerned.

Representative committees from the counties eventually involved will, with the assistance of the state steering committee, develop the actual design and methodology best suited to their needs. Consultants from the state departments of education, the state university, and the state teachers colleges will furnish continuing leadership as the studies progress. A more detailed description of this project as it is developing was included in the April issue of the journal.

The research coordinator met in November with a Florida committee com-

posed of ASCD members and also identified with the study of supervision through the Southern States Work Conference. After some consideration the committee limited the problem to a study of how supervisors and principals can work together to provide more effective instructional leadership. Though it is not possible to go into detail, a plan of action was developed which was very different from the one decided upon in West Virginia. The basic plan was to carry on the study through a series of research seminars involving principals and supervisors, to be conducted by the University of Miami, Florida State University, the University of Florida, Florida A. and M. College, and Stetson University. A planning meeting of representatives from each institution was held in December and some of the seminars will get under way during the spring semester of 1953. Other plans involved setting up a work group of principals and supervisors at the Annual Conference of County Supervisors. This group met with the research coordinator, the chairman of the ASCD Research Board, and members of the Florida Committee on January 19-20, and preliminary plans were developed for carrying on a series of studies at the county level. It is also hoped that this project will be further developed as a phase of the program of cooperative research being proposed for consideration by the Florida ASCD organization.

Another study of supervision is being conducted by two members of the staff of New Haven Teachers College in Connecticut. This study grew out of an interest developed at the Jackson's Mill Workshop and is devoted to a study of certain supervisory practices used in working with teachers recruited for the emergency training program in Connecticut.

As a result of a research conference

held in Iowa, on January 9-10, fifteen problems of general concern were identified, the nucleus of a state research committee was appointed, some commitments were made by teams from local school systems, and channels of communication were established between persons who wished to initiate research projects and the members of the state research committee. Future plans call for the enlargement of the research committee and identification of sources of consultative service which can be made available to local school systems. The chief distinguishing factor of the preliminary planning carried on in Iowa was the decision to encourage ASCD members to identify the problems of greatest concern in their local school systems and to develop research projects to solve them. The function of the Iowa Research Committee is to assist members from local school systems in locating and securing such consultative services as may be needed to coordinate problem-solving efforts which are similar in nature, and to provide necessary channels of communication so that all ASCD members in the state may be informed of progress.

Other states have made quite different initial plans. The Michigan ASCD is planning a publication which will draw together examples of research already being carried on throughout the state. The Illinois group has decided to coordinate its efforts with those of the Illinois Curriculum Program and will lead off with a series of joint conferences in the various state teachers colleges as a means of developing desirable next steps. In Minnesota, a Research Committee is undertaking a study of teacher load and its relationship to curriculum development. New Jersey has initiated a unique plan for canvassing the school systems of New Jersey, through personal interviews, to deter-

mine the curriculum problems which are of immediate concern. These problems will serve as the basis for organizing work groups at their spring meeting, and it is hoped will, in some instances, lead to future research projects.

Several states are in the process of planning research conferences. New York State is holding such a conference at Lake Placid in April. The Tri-State Region, including Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming, is placing a major emphasis on research in its meeting at Laramie, Wyoming, on April 24-25. In the Illinois ASCD meeting on April 16, 17 and 18 it is hoped that more detailed plans will be worked out for cooperation with the Illinois Curriculum Program. Ohio has already projected a series of planning meetings which will culminate in a research conference in the fall of 1953. Texas will include an interest group on curriculum research in its supervisory work conference sponsored each summer by the major teacher education institutions in the state. Texas and Oklahoma have also discussed the possibility of a cooperative research conference to be held in the fall of 1953.

The foregoing accounts are simply illustrative of the type of program which is evolving. No single pattern is being followed. Creativity and diversity rather than uniformity have been encouraged. In every instance, initiative is being taken at the state and local level. Ways are being worked out for providing consultative services to local projects. Representation on research committees is being determined on the basis of the problems identified and the resources available. However, as the research coordinator has worked with different state organizations, some tentative conclusions have been reached which may help to guide future research activities.

First of all, it seems desirable that there be some understanding of the purpose and potentialities of cooperative curriculum research and considerable interest in exploring the possibility of undertaking a state or regional program prior to the establishment of a plan of action in a state or region. One of the most successful ways of gaining understanding and interest has been the organization of state or regional conferences to consider the values of cooperative curriculum research as a means of improving instruction. Another approach has been through regular state or regional ASCD meetings in which one or more discussion groups in the area of curriculum research have been scheduled or in which the total conference has devoted a general session to a discussion of possibilities of initiating research activities. An interesting variation has been the organization of conferences around curriculum problems in the discussion of which the possible uses of the research approach are emphasized. Greater progress has been made when participants in such conferences have been provided in advance with bibliographies and available reprints on curriculum research so that they may approach the meeting with somewhat common understandings and expectations. Conferences have also been more successful when sufficient time has been provided within the conference schedule for a thorough consideration of the problem. Particularly important in this regard has been the provision of time for the consideration of evolving plans by the total conference membership.

Each state or regional ASCD group should set up the type of organization which seems most suitable to its needs. However, it is probable that such a step should not be taken until a representative group of people have dis-

cussed the matter carefully and have decided that the program has possibilities. If a research committee is selected it should be broadly representative, taking into consideration such factors as geographical coverage and membership from public schools, state departments of education, teacher-education institutions, and other active school improvement groups. The committee might be small at first and be expanded as the program develops. To provide continuity members should serve more than one year, and overlapping terms would also be desirable.

A research committee at the state or regional level can perform many valuable functions. It can assume responsibility for helping local groups carry on research projects and for assisting in the development of local leadership. State and regional leadership conferences will probably be necessary as the program develops. The committee can assist groups in identifying and making available both human and material resources to assist them in planning and developing cooperative research projects. Such a committee also can establish channels of communication to keep the membership of the state or region, as well as the national organization informed concerning the progress of local research projects under way.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that the foregoing statements are suggestive rather than prescriptive. Though they are based on the past year's experience, they do not necessarily represent the best ways of organizing research activities at the state or regional level. In the long run, greater progress will be made through the continued exploration of many and varied patterns of organization than through conformity to patterns already established.—*J. Bernard Everett*, coordinator of curriculum research, ASCD.

Copyright © 1953 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.