

Working Together Through Professional Organizations

The Committee on International Relations, NEA, cooperates with many professional groups as it pioneers new ways for improving understanding among school people in our own and in other lands.

THE DAY WHEN nations, or people, can live alone, or work alone effectively is a thing of the past.

Today it is through professional organizations that the individual makes his views known, and through joining with others that he accomplishes his purposes. The organization is a unique yet natural product of our crowded, hurried and complex life. It is a multiple-purpose and effective instrument, for it serves as a line of communication between people, and as a clearinghouse of information. It also serves as a cross-fertilizer of ideas and helps to create a sense of identity of purpose among its members.

The new close quarters in which nations now live have been built up so quickly that they have not been able adequately to prepare for them, and if nations are to live in peace, this new interdependence needs to be more fully understood. Understanding is, of course, the offspring of education, hence the teaching profession has an important role to play in helping to

bring about a clear and accurate comprehension of the world as it really exists.

Working With International Organizations

The purpose of the Committee on International Relations, as stated in the National Education Association platform, is to "help develop the knowledge, skills, ideals, and attitudes which encourage friendly relations among nations . . . and educate youth in international understanding so they may have a basic preparation to face the problems of living in an interdependent world." The Committee, functioning as an international arm of the NEA, carries out this purpose largely by working through organizations—international, national and of course educational. It acts as a representative of the teaching profession in the international world, and forms a link between that world and the world of education. And it also maintains a continuing survey of materials—publications, films and other informational resources—that are produced by these organizations and might be useful as instructional aids.

Its planning group is a five-member

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committee of leaders in professional, secondary and primary education,¹ meeting twice a year to review activities and plan new programs. It has an NEA headquarters staff, directed by an executive assistant, and more than 600 consultants, members of local international organizations in the 48 states and the territories.

The value of what the Committee can do for the teaching profession is in large measure determined by what it does with the national and international groups, therefore a large part of the everyday life of the Committee is spent in working with these organizations. The Committee works with NEA's Representatives on the U. S. National Commission for UNESCO. It is an accredited observer to the United Nations, and a member of the Educational Committee of the American Association for the United Nations. It works with U. S. government agencies such as the U. S. Office of Education and the Department of State, and acts in an advisory capacity on the exchange teacher and Fulbright foreign study programs which these agencies administer. It also cooperates with nonschool and nongovernment organizations such as the U. S. Committee for the United Nations and the American Association for the United Nations in such projects as sponsorship of the observance of UN Day and Week. It is from its work with these groups, that the Committee obtains the raw materials for many of its services to educators.

The principal channels of communication between the Committee and

the teaching profession are, of course, the professional organizations, and its own consultants, and in working through them the Committee employs the conventional means of attending their conferences and participating in their seminars and workshops. It furnishes materials — displays, printed items, posters—for these meetings, and articles and source material for their publications, and performs many services from providing kits of material for classroom use on a regular basis to giving assistance in the development of teaching aids. Its executive secretary makes speeches before many of these groups, and it also serves as a clearinghouse of information answering more than 6,000 questions each year on topics ranging from teaching opportunities overseas to school life in Pakistan.

A good illustration of how the Committee functions as a link between groups is demonstrated by the role it played in the UNESCO—Food and Agriculture Organization "Food and People" project. The Committee on International Relations, in cooperation with the Department of Elementary School Principals selected the sixth grade class of Liberty School in Baltimore, Maryland, for a role in that segment of the program relating to teaching. It then helped bring out a discussion guide, *Food for All*, from the experiment. This booklet is available upon request from the Committee headquarters in Washington.

Bringing together people of like aim for the exchange of information and ideas, and the stimulation of new programs, was the Committee's purpose in sponsoring the 1950 Lindenwood

¹ Earl J. McGrath, *chairman*, Eleanor Bly, W. Linwood Chase, Wm. J. Haggerty, and Louise Owen.

Conference on International Relations at Lindenwood College, Lindenwood, Missouri. More than 400 educators from 18 countries along with representatives of the government and of private organizations attended this three-day meeting. It dealt with a wide range of topics—U. S. foreign policy, international organizations, nuclear energy, food and people, human rights, teaching of international understanding—and its seminars and discussion groups were addressed by specialists in these fields, as well as by leaders in the educational field. The work done at the conference was brought together by the Committee in a 175-page printed report, entitled *The Lindenwood Conference on International Relations*, which has had wide distribution and use in many schools as a source book.

Another operating program of the Committee which resulted in a useful publication was its administration of the Overseas Teacher Fund. The story of this fund of more than \$600,000 which the teachers of the United States spent for aid to foreign educators in war devastated areas, is briefly told in the pamphlet *Teacher to Teacher*.

Probably the most "popular" item that the Committee has prepared is its *Box Score on the UN*, an easy-to-read chart of UN official actions, which has had a readership in 1954 of more than 2½ million.

Curriculum Review and International Relations Teaching

Extensive curriculum review of the teaching of international relations was carried out in many states and cities during World War II, and has con-

tinued apace since that time. The Committee hopes it has played a valuable role in providing stimulation, materials and special assistance to furthering the teaching of international relations, and it looks forward to expanding that role.

In the elementary schools of our country, the problem of teaching about international relations is largely one of helping the child acquire an attitude of acceptance of differences—in people and in cultures—and an understanding of why these exist. A good example of how this can be done is demonstrated by a social studies course in the CLEVELAND, OHIO, schools. Built around the differing racial and national background of the pupils, it brings home their differences, at the same time that it demonstrates their interdependence. A resource unit for second graders in ITHACA, NEW YORK, public schools uses the device of an imaginary trip to a foreign city—where it is, how far, how one gets there, what the people wear, etc.—for stimulating interest in differentness, and laying the foundation for comprehension of it.

At secondary level the DALLAS, TEXAS, public schools are completing curriculum revision which provides for a marked increase in studies designed to improve international understanding, and new social studies courses in KANSAS and NEBRASKA recommend a year's study in world geography for ninth grade students. The CLEVELAND, OHIO, Board of Education sponsors an International Relations Curriculum Center for the development of instructional materials. Emphasis is on the social and physical sciences, English and music, but the Center is part of a broad program that includes the use

of community resources such as the American Junior Red Cross, and the American Friends Service Committee.

The path of organizational work is no freer of problems than any other. In spite of great cooperation between educational organizations there is room for improvement. Lack of funds, of time and of staff, and the failure of the teaching profession to fully understand this great challenge to their profession are contributing factors.

Some departments of the NEA have excellent programs, among them that of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development which provides instructional materials to schools of other lands. The American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation has a program which ranges from sending footballs to foreign countries, to sponsoring an international conference of health, recreation and physical education teachers, and the National Council for the Social Studies has recently issued its twenty-fifth yearbook *World Affairs*, which is an invaluable source book for teachers of international relations.

The failure of the teaching profession to maintain a fulltime observer at the United Nations and at UNESCO, is a major one, in the view of the Committee. The word "education" was written into the original UN charter only after long and persistent effort on the part of educators and lay leaders, and with charter review due this year, it is a matter of high importance.

Work of the Committee

The unique qualifications which the Committee on International Relations

possesses for the promotion of the teaching of world affairs lie in its relationship to the international organizations, and in the background of its experience. These enable the Committee to act as consultant in the development of school and school-community programs, in setting up an international correspondence program, or planning a visit to the UN. It can assist local groups in planning a conference on international relations, furnish a speaker from the international field, and printed materials for its sessions. It can advise on teaching opportunities overseas, and help plan the itineraries of visiting foreign educators. It can furnish articles and source material to professional journals, and help keep educators informed as to what is new in teaching aids.

It helps to break ground in ways of doing things, as it did in the program it developed for the NEA-UN 1954 Convention. With a small staff and a modest budget, the Committee on International Relations² is the catalytic agent of the NEA's program for the promotion of international understanding through education, and its record serves to point up the fact that by working together through professional organizations we can make the best use of the creativeness, the productivity and the energy of the teaching profession. Let us support the belief that "a man should have his feet firmly planted in his country with his eyes on the world."

² A brochure, "... eyes on the world," describing the Committee's work is available upon request from the Washington office of the Committee.

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