

Uniting Forces to Improve Education

Column Editor: H. Gordon Hullfish

The Life Plans of Young People

WHATEVER may be done appropriately to help young people find a pathway into the future which challenges them to travel it with care, with enthusiasm, and with a progressively increasing understanding of themselves and of their world ought to be fostered by those responsible for their education. Thus, the publication, *Your Life Plans and the Armed Forces*, prepared under the direction of the Defense Committee of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, in cooperation with an impressive list of individuals and organizations (including the Department of Defense), and published by the American Council on Education, merits serious attention.¹ A brief Foreword concludes with the statement, "It is hoped that this publication will materially assist young men and women [note this] to plan for themselves and their nation, the future of which will become their responsibility." The planning, of course, as the title of the volume suggests, is to be in terms of the young person's opportunity for development within the Armed Forces, since, for many, "military service is just around the corner." (p. 11)

This book does with commendable simplicity what it sets out to do. This may be noted, first, quantitatively. Chapter 1, "Your Country," requires seven

pages, Chapter 11, "Your Life Plans," twenty. About six pages in Chapter 11 provide personal inventory and data sheets and career charts for the students' use. Between these chapters and a three-page Appendix, which summarizes the Reserve Forces Act of 1955, there are 113 pages which deal with the vocational and educational opportunities in the military service for men and women (three pages are devoted especially to women), military obligations and options, and educational opportunities available in the Armed Forces (such as the program of USAFI and on-duty and off-duty education in the differing branches). Part Two of the book is almost a catalogue presentation of the final topic.

The book, of course, frankly presents a unit of study to prepare high school students for their almost certain (as of this moment) participation in the Armed Forces. The materials were given a trial run in eleven selected high schools and, in consequence, the recommendation is made that they will be most successful, in all probability, when introduced "as a six-week unit in eleventh-grade English or social studies." It is recognized, however, that "there is no one best way to fit this unit into the program of studies" and the *Handbook* leaves nothing to chance. The teaching suggestions, including the number of hours to be given each topic, are specific enough to permit the unit to stand alone, wherever presented. In fact, a class and grade placement would only provide a vehicle to guarantee it "a definite place in the daily schedule."

¹ This "text-book" was published in 1955, with an accompanying *Teacher's Handbook*. This writer does not know how widely it is used. He knows only, negatively, that no superintendent he has asked about it (perhaps two dozen) has ever used it in his system. Several had not heard of it.

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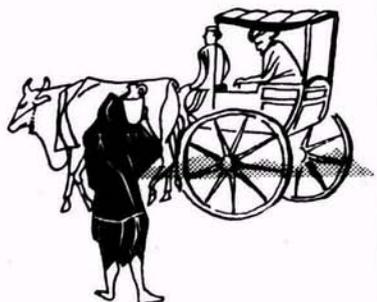
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If a school has adequate guidance services the introduction of this material will simply add a highlight for those who know they have a stint of military service ahead. A major purpose of the highlighting will be to get young men to look upon "their stint" as an opportunity, not as an interruption of their development. They should be helped to foresee ways in which to use the days of their service to gain knowledge and skills they may use later in civilian life. If the teaching were fully successful, perhaps more young men would include a career in the Armed Forces in their life plan. The same ends will be sought no doubt in schools that do not have adequate guidance services. The invitation to follow the completed teaching scheme the *Handbook* provides may, under these circumstances, reduce teaching to a formal-

ized routine. The forecast of what is ahead as the recruit enters this phase of his life plan, initiating his vocational interest or seeking stepping-stones to one, may lead to a generation of skeptics. A rose-tinted world is projected.

It is assumed, of course, that the unit will be used with boys and girls alike. There are vocational opportunities for women in the Armed Forces today; there may be more tomorrow. And, in any event, the girls "may well be called upon in the near future to help some young man reach a decision regarding military service" (*Handbook*, p. 3). One consequence of presenting the unit to the mixed class would be to bring a realistic consideration of the problems and responsibilities of marriage into many schools for the first time. A panel to consist of "a pastor or other community leader, parents and students to discuss the pros and cons of marriage prior to

service and after service" (*Handbook*, p. 14) is proposed as an activity (on the thirteenth day!) when the "effect of military service upon plans for marriage" is to be considered. If this particular topic were handled effectively, an interest that reaches far beyond the Armed Forces would be served.

This volume raises some disturbing questions. The *Handbook* warns teachers against the almost certain bias of attractive recruitment materials issued by the several services. They are urged to point out this bias should recruitment literature be brought into the class. Yet the authors have done their work so well that their own material may be thought by many not to be without bias. And while *one hour*, the second of the thirty involved, is planned for a consideration of "a workable plan for lasting world peace," the general emphasis is that military service for the young man, and per-

haps for the young woman, is here to stay. The text suggests that four constant factors—further formal educational training, additional informal educational training, marriage, military service—will need to enter the thinking of many who engage in the suggested activity of developing a life plan for the next ten years, whatever the individual slant of the plan may be. It is proper to help young people view their world realistically; and the need for military strength on the part of our country is a hard fact of the present. But so, too, is the need for peace; and vocational opportunity lies in this direction, also. If this material is used it should be used in a social studies class. The material may then be given ground and perspective that are presently lacking.

—H. GORDON HULLFISH, *professor of education, The Ohio State University, Columbus.*

SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

by ROBERT J. HAVIGHURST and BERNICE L. NEUGARTEN, both of the University of Chicago

Written by two members of the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago, this new text presents the results of fifteen years of research on such vital topics to educators as the social class structure of America and the relations of the school to the social structure; race relations; the effects of the peer group and youth-serving agencies such as the Scouts, YMCA, church organizations, comics, TV, upon the child and adolescent.

The book examines the educational system from two points of reference: first, how it acts as the agency of the society it serves; second, how the school influences the social development of the child. It includes chapters on new topics just now coming into the field—topics such as the social life-space of the child, increased heterogeneity in social origins of teachers, the career lines of teachers, and so on.

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