

Curriculum News

Column Editor: Robert S. Harnack
School of Education
University of Buffalo
Buffalo, New York

BECAUSE of the large stacks of news releases and reports that might be digested and published, editing an initial "Curriculum News" column for this journal makes a difficult task almost impossible. Although all items seem valuable for curriculum workers, most have to be set aside. However, we hope that those items chosen will have considerable interest and significance for our readers. Please note, however, that printed releases and reports, although efficient, do not contain the personal touch of a note or letter describing the curriculum news from the local community. If you have news to share with other curriculum workers, please send it along to the editor of this column.

• Curriculum workers now and in the foreseeable future show concern for improving science education programs in elementary and secondary schools. *Tomorrow's Scientist*, publication of the National Science Teachers Association (a department of the NEA) for junior and senior high school students, illustrates the excellent articles available about such a topic as the International Geophysical Year (IGY), an 18 month "year" which started July 1, 1957. More than 5000 scientists of some 58 nations will work together during IGY. Each nation taking part in the IGY has set up a national committee to design its own program. In the United States, the program has been set up under the guidance of the National Academy of Science, the leading scientific body of the United

States. The U. S. committee's program includes projects in 13 areas. These areas are: Aurora and airglow, cosmic rays, geomagnetism, glaciology, gravity, the ionosphere, longitude and latitude determinations, meteorology, oceanography, seismology, solar activity, rocket and satellite studies of the upper atmosphere, and world days and communications.

• How effective is television as a teaching aid once its adaptability to the instructional program has been explored? This is the basic question that we hope will be answered in a nation-wide experiment in the use of television as an aid to classroom instruction. Milwaukee, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Louisville, Miami, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Toledo, and Wichita are the large cities that will participate. The Milwaukee experiment will be limited to two subject areas in each of two senior and junior high schools and to two elementary schools. Subjects treated will probably be biology and American history in the senior high schools, general science and social studies in the junior high schools, and an integrated offering of science and social studies in the elementary schools, possibly at the fifth grade level. Milwaukee's Superintendent Harold S. Vincent indicated in a memorandum to the Board of School Directors, "It is apparent, of course, that a nation-wide experiment of this nature has great possibility. The schools and the public generally are entitled to have objective evidence as to the effectiveness of this new instrument

as an aid to classroom instruction. If educational television can be used effectively in the teaching of larger groups, we should have unquestioned evidence of such fact. If it cannot be used, we should also have evidence of this fact." The Fund for the Advancement of Education will share costs with the local communities.

- A concern for professional education knowledge by personnel from another professional school was the topic for discussion at a conference this summer. The Project in Medical Education at the University of Buffalo, concerned with improving the teaching ability of medical professors, was discussed at the national meeting of the Cardiovascular Training Grant Coordinators at Sun Valley, Idaho, June 8 and 9. The project, financially assisted by the Commonwealth Fund, consists of a series of in-service seminars conducted throughout the year by personnel from the School of Education and Departments of Psychology and Sociology, University of Buffalo, School of Medicine instructors, as well as visiting staff members, study five areas: the teaching-learning process, the nature of the medical student, the evolution of higher education, evaluation, and communication and techniques of instruction.

- What could this mean for curriculum development and supervision? The March-April issue of the *NASSP Spotlight* reports on two-year junior high schools. Twenty-one percent of all junior high schools are two-year schools, they enroll over 350,000 pupils, they exist in 40 states, and there is little attention given the subject in professional literature or educational research. For twenty cents in stamps or coins a copy of a twenty page survey, "The Two-Year Junior High School," can be studied. Some pertinent facts: this is not a new

development; 33 per cent were purposely planned; 60 per cent plan no change; main adverse criticism—loss of one-half of the student body each year and difficulty in achieving continuity and guidance and feeling of security of pupils within the two-year span.

- Probably all of us are accustomed to pictures of classrooms which show bolted-down desks in straight rows with children "reciting." Quite contrary to this concept was the picture story of "The Pupil's Role in Unit Development" in *Strengthening Democracy* (February 1957). This story showed a fifth-grade class in New York City taught by Edna Christie studying the topic, "How We Opened Up the Middle West." Unit teaching was emphasized. Twenty-three pictures, plus captions, illustrate the initiation of the unit, selection of the problem, research activity, pooling information, reporting, and culminating activities. This picture story was the second such article published. The first was printed two years earlier and dealt with, "The Teacher's Role in Unit Teaching."

- Reports about atomic energy from early publications such as the U. S. Department of State publication of 1946, "The International Control of Atomic Energy: Growth of a Policy," to the present cannot be ignored by people in education. Knowledge of this area will help keep up to date the resource units on this topic developed since 1945 as well as give indications of change in basic school objectives. A recent study issued by the National Planning Association indicates that while nuclear energy is likely to be a significant factor in longer term economic development, it is by no means a panacea for underdeveloped countries and is likely to have only limited and specialized application during the next 15 to 20 years.

Copyright © 1957 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.