

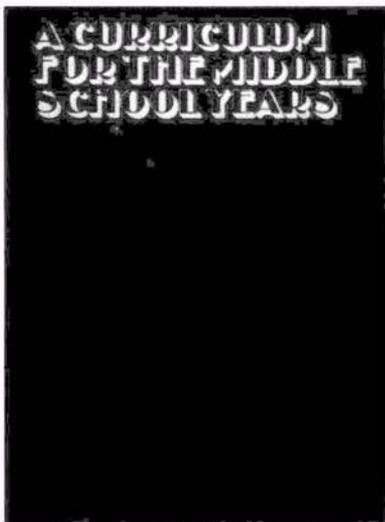
# Reviews

**A Curriculum for the Middle School Years.** John H. Lounsbury and Gordon F. Vars. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978. 138 pp. —Reviewed by Thomas E. Curtis, Associate Professor of Education, State University of New York at Albany.

A new book by two of the outstanding scholars in the field of emerging adolescent education is always an event to be anticipated. To make the event even more noteworthy, they have focused on the crucial aspects of every educational effort, instruction, and the curriculum. Philosophy, psychology, and history have been included only to an extent necessary to give a scholarly base to the pragmatic models suggested in this book. The keynote of their efforts seems to be cited in a quotation from the preface, "To achieve such a school involves undoing much of current practice rather than adding still another 'innovative' program or content package." This exhortation is one that should be stated and practiced in school curricula much more frequently.

The curricular guidelines stated in this work have been developed through decades of theory building and concomitant practice in middle schools. They form a basis upon which effective emerging adolescent education is founded, and without which such education is next to impossible. The authors then present a recommended curriculum organization based upon three components, a core, a continuous progress segment, and a variable organization. By noting previous work suggesting similar organizations done by Moss, Alexander and associates, and Eichhorn, they lend critical support to their basic thesis.

For one who would "pick at nits," a minor disappointment in the organization of the book seems noteworthy. The authors recommend core approaches to the general curriculum. It would have been a pure delight to have seen this book organized in a pre-planned core approach to the material rather than the didactic out-



lined approach utilized. This is a minor point and should not dissuade those concerned with middle school education from reading one of the better sources for curriculum information published in the last few years.

**Radical Education: A Critique of Reschooling and Deschooling.** Robin Barrow. New York: Halstead Press, 1978. 207 pp. —Reviewed by Michael W. Apple, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Reading Robin Barrow's new book is very much like taking a trip back to the educational climate of the mid-1960s and early 1970s in the United States. The book is an analysis of and sometimes an angry but hard-nosed and justifiable attack on the notions of free-schooling and deschooling that pervaded educational debate a number of years ago. The

book seems a bit out of date in places, but this could be due to the many-changing bandwagons educators ride upon or the writers Barrow chooses to focus on.

Barrow analyzes and compares the positions of Rousseau, Neill, Goodman, Reimer and Illich, and Postman and Weingarten. Given his training in philosophical analysis and his conservative political posture, his focus is on the logical, psychological, political, and pedagogical strengths and, especially, weaknesses of these individuals.

Even though Barrow and I would probably be in strong disagreement politically, there were times when I found myself smiling at his comments about such things as the vulgar individualism that dominated education and the simplistic assertions of the deschooling people. One can be on the American left and still agree with a number of his criticisms.

There are weaknesses in the book that should be noted. Barrow seems to place too many people in the same camp. He links all current "radical" criticism with the romantics. In his mind, all radical beliefs probably embody a romantic individualism in how we approach children. This is simply incorrect. The raising of political and economic questions and a romantic vision of giving students total freedom need not go hand in hand. Many "radical" educators dismissed overly romantic ideas of total individualism years ago, and still do, just as much as Barrow does.

This tendency to lump people together is coupled with another tendency. There are times when the author's own assertions and values emerge in the guise of analytic statements. Thus, he is apt to overstate his own (though again sometimes quite correct) objections to some of

the arguments of those critics he examines.

Hopefully, we have come further in our educational and political sophistication and commitments than the coy positions advocated a decade ago. If one reads *Radical Education* perhaps not as it was intended but as something of a history of our recent past, it may prove of some value in reminding us not to accept every new idea that comes down the road.

**How the Cold War is Taught: Six American History Textbooks Examined.** Martin F. Herz. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1978. 76 pp.; **Values in an American Government Textbook: Three Appraisals.** Ernest F. Lefever, editor. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1978. 52 pp. — Reviewed by John Pare, doctoral student in curriculum and instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Coordinator of the Social Studies Teacher Education Program, University of Wisconsin/

Madison Metropolitan School District.

In the introduction to these books, Lefever, the director of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, tells us that the center "seeks to assess how well widely used social science textbooks transmit the core values of our American heritage." This aim cannot be taken seriously since the editor fails to discuss in any systematic way the nature of these core values. Nonetheless, these two books stand on their own merits apart from the center's goal.

Martin Herz conducts a thorough and systematic examination of six high school American history texts. His sample, chosen on the basis of popularity, includes *History of a Free People*, *Rise of the American Nation*, *The American Experience*, *A New History of the United States—An Inquiry Approach*, *The People Make a Nation*, and *Discovering American History*.

Chapter 1 describes how the sample was drawn, the author's rationale for examining the treatment given to the Cold War, the choice of topics within the broader heading, and the method of analysis and standard of evaluation. Chapter 2 de-

tails the treatment of 16 selected topics. These range from the origins of the Cold War to the Korean War and the Cuban missile crisis. Herz tries to determine whether certain facts and connecting explanations are included in each book. His effort is explicit, fair, and comprehensive and stands as a model of textbook analysis. In Chapter 3 he tries to avoid naming the best and worst example in his sample, but the reader is left with little doubt. *The American Experience* by Madgic, Seaberg, Stopsky, and Winks gives the most balanced treatment, while *Discovering American History* by Kownslar and Frizzle distorts history with its biased selection of documents.

The price of this book and the careful analysis that it offers make it attractive to school people engaged in textbook adoption and analysis. A few minor cautions should not detract from the book's strengths. First, the reader should remember that the book only examines the treatment given to the Cold War. Second, the books in the sample may be dated. Third, Herz purports to examine "how well the topic is taught." (p. 6) Finally, Herz discredits the inquiry approach.

In *Values in an American Government Textbook*, we are not told

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685. Title 39. United States Code). 1. Title of publication: Educational Leadership. 2. Date of Filing: November 6, 1979. 3. Frequency of issue: Eight times a year, October through May. 3a. Number of issues published annually: Eight. 3b. Annual subscription price: \$15.00. 4. Location of known office of publication: 225 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. 5. Location of headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: Same address. 6. Names and complete addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314; Editor, Ronald Brandt, 225 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314; Managing Editor, Patricia C. Carpenter, 225 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. 7. Owner: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (Section 132.122, PSM): The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months. 10. Extent and nature of circulation: (A) Total number of copies printed (net press run): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 42,250; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 45,000; (B) Paid circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and car-

riers, street vendors, and counter sales; Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 42; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: -0-; Mail subscriptions: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 39,224; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 40,934; (C) Total paid circulation (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 39,266; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 40,934; (D) Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means—samples, complimentary, and other free copies: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 381; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 415; (E) Total distribution (Sum of C and D): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 39,654; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 41,349; (F) Copies not distributed: 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 2,596; actual number of copies each single issue published nearest to filing date, 3,651; 2. Returns from news agents: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, none; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, none; (G) Total (Sum of E, F1 and 2): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 42,250; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 45,000.

I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete. (Signed) John H. Bralove, Business Manager.

how the book was chosen except that "it trails the two current front-runners" (p. 3); we are not told why the third most popular government textbook was chosen for intense examination instead of the other two; we are not told why a single book was chosen instead of several; we are not told why and how the six selected chapters were chosen from among the 20 or more in the text; and finally, we are not told how the three appraisers were chosen by the editor although their rather lengthy biographical notes imply that the editor believes that their expertise is self-evident.

The book has five sections: "Introduction: Values, Textbooks, and American Democracy," by the editor; "American Government Glamorized" by Michael Novak; "The Trivialization of Government" by Jeanne Kirkpatrick; "Government as Social Worker" by Anne Crutcher; and "Response of the Authors of American Government in Action" by Miriam Resnick and Lillian Nerenberg.

The appraisers criticize the text because it presents an uncritical view of big government, because it promotes government usurpation of individual initiative, because it obscures

the moral responsibility of the individual which forms the basis of civil society, because it lacks intellectual rigor, and because the textbook is one-sided. These criticisms seem warranted. However, the criticism is seriously undermined when the editor and the appraisers direct their criticisms at the textbook writers themselves. Lefever says in his introduction, "The book and the response of the authors makes it clear that Resnick and Nerenberg are authentic voices for American liberalism as it was expressed in the 1940s and 1950s." (p. 5) Kirkpatrick takes her turn by saying, "When top-ranking political scientists write textbooks for the high schools, there will be top-flight textbooks." (p. 27)

The authors respond to their critics in the final section, making clear several points about the time frame of publication and revision which deflate some of the criticism. Basically the book is a slug-fest between six people representing two different ideological positions on the role of the government. Unfortunately, one side controls the debate because it is the side that the editor is on. If *Government in Action* lacks intellectual rigor, it has company in *Values in an American Government Textbook: Three Appraisals*.

#### Reviewers



Thomas E. Curtis



Michael W. Apple



John Pare

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