

1950

# HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS AND WORLD-MINDEDNESS

by LEONARD S. KENWORTHY

Although much attention has been devoted to education for international understanding in recent years, a rationale for procedures and practices to be used in that type of education is still in the process of development. This article presents the findings of a study carried on by one educator and the implications he believes should be drawn. In 1940-41, the author was director of the Quaker International Center in Berlin which assisted Jewish refugees. More recently he has been program specialist in education for international understanding at UNESCO. At present he is a member of the Department of Education at Brooklyn College.



In planning programs for developing world-mindedness in high school students, the opinions of adolescents are seldom solicited. Yet their ideas can be one very helpful source in determining the type of experiences which the school should provide. With that thought in mind, a survey was made this past spring of over 1000 high school seniors in fifteen schools across the United States. For the most part these boys and girls had had a wider variety of experiences calculated to develop world-mindedness than most high school students, but they are typical of the better high schools across the country. Their comments should be of considerable value to persons interested in education for international understanding. Since their answers were given anonymously, they should represent frank replies to the questions put to them.

## RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questioned as to the experience or experiences any time during their lives, in or out of school, which were most important to them in "developing an understanding of other countries or in arousing interest in world affairs," the largest number cited contacts with adults and peers from abroad or with persons who had travelled in other parts of the world. In the two schools where young people from Scandinavia had visited before or after attending the Herald-Tribune Youth Forum, this event was most frequently cited. In another school where there had been an exchange teacher from England two

years ago, several of the students mentioned this fact as the most important experience to date. In two schools drawing from middle or lower-middle class urban areas, refugee classmates were frequently mentioned. In other cases it was a missionary who had spoken in their church, a visitor who had been entertained in their home, a parent or relative who had lived or travelled abroad.

Social studies classes were cited next in frequency as stimulating their interest in other lands and peoples. In most cases there was mention of the personality and interests of the teacher and in several instances references to special research studies on countries or problems.

Movies came next in importance, with almost all the films shown outside of school. Those most often cited were "Gentleman's Agreement," "Dragon Seed," "Open City," "Shoe Shine," "Wilson" and "The Iron Curtain." The only films used in schools which were remembered as having been influential were "The Search" and some of the Julian Bryant movies.

A great variety of reading matter appeared in answer to this question, with Pearl Buck's books clearly ahead in the number of times they were cited. Wendell Willkie's *One World* and John Fischer's *Why They Behave Like Russians* were frequently referred to, while other students mentioned everything from William James' essay on "A Moral Equivalent to War" to the *National Geographic*.



Other experiences frequently cited were World War II, living and travel abroad, correspondence, language classes, radio programs, school assembly programs, current events, contact with U.N., exchange teachers, service projects such as CARE and the Junior Red Cross, and school affiliation programs.

#### REACTIONS TO COUNTRIES AND PERSONS

Questioned as to the country they would like to visit if they could travel anywhere in the world in the next year or two, nearly forty countries were cited. However, France was the obvious favorite, with the U.S.S.R. and Germany top favorites. Sizeable numbers also mentioned England, Israel, Switzerland, China, and Italy. Enough students mentioned South America to raise a question as to whether they could not read the question or whether they thought of that region as a "country." Family background, curiosity, glamour and a desire to speak French or Spanish were the most often referred to as reasons for their choices.

According to these high school seniors, Franklin D. Roosevelt is without doubt the person who best embodied the ideals of a world citizen. Next in order came Churchill, then Wilson, Willkie, Gandhi, and Lincoln. Others receiving sizeable votes included Mrs. Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Truman, Franklin, and Jesus. Several score of persons were listed, but few from outside the United States and very few who were not contemporary figures.

Queried as to their chief sources of news, most of them replied "newspapers" and "radio," with the former leading by only a slight vote. Magazines were third, and classes and clubs fourth. In a few schools the use of current events papers written for high school students was an obvious influence upon them.

More than half of these seniors have carried on correspondence with persons abroad or are doing so now. An overwhelming majority of those who had had this experience said it had been "very interesting."

Girls mentioned this activity much more frequently than boys. The correspondence has been with many countries: with England, France, and Germany at the top of the list.

Clubs devoted to world affairs loomed very large in several of the schools where this questionnaire was given, and in those schools students seemed enthusiastic about them. However, very few students mentioned clubs outside of school as of any importance to them in this respect.

When asked to rank ten countries in the order of their importance for study in high schools today, over eighty per cent of the boys and girls put the U.S.S.R. at the top of the list. China was ranked second, Israel third, England fourth, and then India, Argentina, Brazil, Sweden, Turkey, and South Africa.

A similar type of question asked them to rank in order of importance ten major world problems. The causes and eradication of war was obviously first choice in their minds, with the strengthening of the United Nations second, but very few seemed to sense the importance of food and population, or health, or the development of industrially under-developed areas to the future peace of the world.

In every school but one the students said that the granting or extension of civil rights was the most important thing for us to work on in the United States in order to demonstrate to the world our belief in democracy. The one school which did not rank this first was in the deep south and even there it was ranked number two. Next in their minds came the extension and improvement of education, followed by improvement in our foreign relations, better government, control of atomic energy, better employer-employee relations, and several other topics. In this question they listed the topics themselves, rather than arranging a list given to them.

#### IMPLICATIONS

Space does not permit a lengthy summary of the many interesting revelations of this survey, but some of them are included in the following implications for curriculum planning in American high schools which the writer feels warranted in drawing from the study:

1. High schools should provide a much wider variety of experiences than they are giving at present in their programs of education for world-mindedness in order to touch all their pupils. It was obvious from this study that no one type of activity affected all boys and girls.

2. High schools should examine carefully ways in which to bring their students into contact with persons from abroad, not overlooking the availability of students from abroad who are studying in nearby colleges or adults in their communities who have lived or travelled abroad. Special attention should be given to contacts with young people. Such experiences should include much more personal contact than is ordinarily provided by a speech in assembly.



3. High schools should explore the possibility of trips to the U. N. headquarters, to International Houses, to conferences where there are students from abroad, and other "away-from-home" experiences of a special nature emotionally.

4. High schools should develop projects which involve the total school such as the Red Cross programs, and the School Affiliation projects of the Save the Children Federation and the American Friends Service Committee.

5. High schools should work more closely than heretofore with various community agencies such as church youth groups, libraries, theaters, and museums, integrating the programs of these various agencies in developing world-mindedness.

6. High schools should make much more use of audio-visual materials in this field with special attention to the many films now available on the U. N. and world problems, such as "Picture in Your Mind," "The World is Rich," "Boundary Lines," "Hungry Minds," "One World or None," and the United World series on various countries, particularly "Nomads of the Jungle."

7. High schools should re-examine their language programs and their science, art, and music programs to see how they can be strengthened as means of developing world-mindedness.

8. High schools should give consideration to the use of "symbols" in the development of world-mindedness, with special reference to such personalities as Jane Addams, Gandhi, Nehru, Nansen, Schweitzer, the Curies, Pasteur, and the great religious leaders of various religions as embodying the qualities of world-minded persons.

9. High schools should stress the examination of sources of news on world affairs, with particular attention to analyses of newspapers and radio programs.

10. High schools should examine their social studies and literature courses as to their world-wide coverage, with special attention to the U.S.S.R., China and India as world powers.

11. High schools should provide experiences in wrestling with *world* problems, looking towards the day when courses in World and National Problems will replace current courses in Problems of American Democracy.

12. High schools should help students

to realize how other parts of the world regard the United States, both favorably and unfavorably, and help them find the areas in our own nation which need strengthening in order for us to provide adequate leadership in today's world.

The writer has found the simple type of survey which he conducted in these fifteen schools full of possibilities for many high schools in helping them to determine the effectiveness of the experiences they are now providing to develop world-mindedness in their students. It is hoped that others will experiment with similar devices as one way of examining current curricular offerings calculated to develop world-minded citizens.

► A recently received bulletin is the *Progress Report of the Delinquency Control Institute* of the University of Southern California. This institute, which has now been in operation for eight terms, is providing specialized training for law enforcement officers and others who work with juvenile delinquents and children with problems. This type of specialized training over a 12-week period is not available elsewhere in the United States. Inquiries for information can be addressed to Delinquency Control Institute, 954 W. 37th St., Los Angeles, California.