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STUDYING *the* UN:

7 Points to Stress

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THE UNITED NATIONS and its specialized agencies constitute a vast, complicated system. Trying to study all of its many councils, commissions, sub-commissions, and agencies in the course of a few hours, or even a few days, can easily lead to superficiality or a sense of frustration.

Teachers need, therefore, to have in mind a few specific objectives as they launch any study of this great contemporary effort to create a peaceful and just world community. These objectives can be thought of as the concentric circles of a target for teaching. The bull's eye and the inner circles will need to be marked according to the needs of a particular group. Few teachers will try to hit all of the seven circles mentioned in this article. However, these seven points may prove helpful in planning any study of the UN system:

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Kenworthy offers specific suggestions for junior- and senior-high-school teachers on aims for any study of the United Nations system. He has served with Unesco as program specialist in education for international understanding. A former high-school social-studies teacher, he now is an instructor in the teaching of social studies at Brooklyn College. His recent books and pamphlets in the field of international understanding are: World Horizons for Teachers (Teachers College, Columbia), Twelve Citizens of the World (Doubleday), and Studying the U. N. (published and distributed by the author).

1. *The Purposes of the UN.* The Preamble to the Charter states the aims of the UN in simple and telling prose. In outline style they are: (a) To prevent war, (b) to foster human rights, (c) to promote justice and respect for international obligations, and (d) to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Each of these terms needs to be illustrated by concrete examples of action on the part of the UN, as teachers and pupils study these aims together.

2. *The Powers of the UN.* One of the current and most common misconceptions about the UN is that it is a world government with power to act. It is not. It is an intergovernmental organization whose resolutions are only *recommendations* to national governments. An understanding of that fact would do much to combat the idea that the UN is curbing national sovereignties.

3. *The Programs of the UN.* Most of the knowledge which students and adults have about the work of the UN is limited to the conflicts in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. Studies of the UN and its agencies need to stress the constructive, long-term projects of the Commissions and of such specialized agencies as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, as well as the more dramatic disputes in the Assembly and Council.

4. *The Progress of the UN.* Despite unforeseen difficulties, the UN has made much progress in its seven years of history. It has eased tensions in Indonesia, Palestine,

Kashmir, Iran, Syria and Lebanon, and Germany. It has fought against aggression in Korea. It has combatted yaws in Haiti, infantile paralysis in India, typhus in Afghanistan, cholera in Egypt, and malaria in Ceylon. It has launched pilot projects in fundamental education around the globe. It has tackled the problem of food and people. These and a host of other accomplishments can be credited to this very new world organization. Students need to know about these examples of concrete accomplishment.

5. *The Problems of the UN.* There are, of course, unsolved problems aplenty. There are the obvious ones of conflict in Korea, turmoil in the Union of South Africa, demands for independence in North Africa, and disputes over atomic energy. There are the continual struggles against poverty, disease, ignorance, illiteracy, and

low standards of living. And there are the problems of intercultural cooperation. All these need to be studied in any realistic program about the UN and today's world.

6. *Potentialities of the UN.* Trygve Lie has asserted that "the UN represents nothing less than an attempt to establish a new world order." Students ought to examine the potentialities of the UN, including the possibility of its becoming eventually a world government with power to act rather than merely to recommend.

7. *The People of the UN.* The UN is not merely structure, resolutions, activities. Basically it is PEOPLE, speaking through their governments. This concept should be central in any study of the UN system.

Taken together, these seven points might constitute a well-rounded program for any junior or senior high school studying the UN and its specialized agencies.