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Citizenship training through problems courses in Massachusetts secondary schools.

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Citizenship Training Through Problems Courses
in Massachusetts Secondary Schools



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CITIZENSHIP TRAINING THROUGH
PROBLEMS COURSES IN
MASSACHUSETTS SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By
Robert Eugene Scott, Jr.

A problem presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of
Science Degree
University of Massachusetts
1948

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

U.S. TO BUY ITALIAN ELECTION. GOVERNOR DEWEY SHUT OUT IN WISCONSIN. LEWIS CITED IN CONTEMPT. WESTERN FENCING OFF OF REICH MOVING RAPIDLY TO SHOWDOWN. REDS TO VETO ITALY UN MEMBERSHIP. BOSTON JEWS HOLD PALESTINE PROTEST TODAY.

These are the headlines on the front page of the Boston Herald as this introduction is being written on April 8, 1948. They are typical of headlines appearing day after day in our newspapers, headlines which point up the multitude of omnipresent problems which we as citizens of America and sojourners in the world are called upon to face.

Does the average American citizen have the background and information necessary to cope intelligently with such problems? Does he understand the mechanisms of international politics which have caused ever-recurring crises and international wars of ever-increasing destructiveness? Is he abreast of current events so that headlines comprise not simply words but segments, pieces of a puzzle, falling together into the pattern of day-by-day national and international events? Does he know something of public opinion and the organs for the dissemination of information so that he has a basis for evaluating the newspaper and magazine

article? Does Mr. Average America know the composition of the United Nations, the strength and weaknesses of this latest great attempt to keep peace in the world through international action? Does he know the world in which he lives his life?

Further, does this average citizen know his own country and its place in the world of which it is a part? Does he know the stand of the United States in the sphere of international politics? Is he conversant with national politics, parties, personalities and elections, so that his exercise of the privilege of voting is intelligent and purposeful? Does he understand the economic problems confronting his nation: the causes of recurring panics and depressions, the reasons for the disputes of labor and capital, strikes and walkouts and the methods by which these problems are attacked - and with what success? Does Mr. Average Citizen understand the economic and financial function of his government in the field of taxation and public finance? Does he have the background of information necessary to intelligently perform the functions of consumer buying, credit and credit facilities, banking, and the problems of housing?

In short, does Mr. Average American Citizen have the background and understanding he needs to be a purposeful citizen of his country and of the world in which it exists?

It behooves us in our present era of change and unrest

to be able to answer "yes" to the question. America is today placed in the position of the leading world power in the struggle of the democratic nations to vindicate their way of life in the face of the threat of opposing ideologies. The vote of the average citizen exercising his right of franchise profoundly affects the manner in which the United States carries out its tremendous national and international obligations and responsibilities. The vote of Mr. Average Citizen multiplied many times over determines who represents the nation in the legislative and executive branches where national policy is made and carried out. And the legislature carries out the will of the people it represents. The average citizen must be an alert, informed, intelligent and purposeful voter if America is to live up to the responsibility thrust upon her, if America is to solve or attempt to solve, the multitude of national and international problems omnipresent today.

Yet a sober analysis of the average citizen of America will all too often require that the question be answered in the negative. He does not have a basis for understanding the obligations and responsibilities which face our nation in the post-war world. International affairs are matters which are beyond his comprehension; his attitude toward them is too often the result of emotionalism rather than clear-headed thinking. His exercise of the franchise is often a mere "straight party ticket" rather than an analysis

of the issues involved and the stand of the various candidates on those issues. His attitude on national economics too often extends only as far as his own pocketbook; he is not conversant with the fundamental problem of labor, management, and the consumer.

Why, in this country of almost unlimited opportunity, is this true? The burden of responsibility must be placed on our educational system, and, in particular, on the secondary school part of that system. For the great majority of the population the secondary school is terminal education. Therefore, if the population is to receive the basic information and training necessary to sound citizenship, that training must be part of the secondary-school program. Apparently, in the case of the older generations, this was not so. Their formal education is long past and cannot be retrieved and remodelled. If they are now to become an adequate citizenry, the knowledge and information must be gleaned through individual enterprise and individual intellectual curiosity. It would be extremely idealistic and sanguine to hope that such an outburst of intellectual activity, necessary though it may be, will take root and blossom in the older generations.

This is not, however, the case with regard to the present generation now being processed in our educational mill. The secondary school can and must graduate young people with the informational background necessary to

arrive at a basic understanding of contemporary problems, and with the intellectual curiosity to pursue that understanding further upon taking their places in the world. The fundamental mission of the secondary school today is the formation of an alert, informed and intelligent citizenry-of-the-future. To adequately fulfill this mission the secondary-school population must study international relations and politics, the United Nations, world trade, public opinion and the dissemination of information, consumer economics, labor and management problems, credit and taxation, and the multitude of social problems - crime, health, race relations - which cause unrest and strife in the body social. And they must keep abreast of current events to know what is happening constantly in all these lines. These are by no means all the problems which an alert, informed citizenry is called upon to understand.

This is an undertaking of no mean proportion but the responsibility of the secondary school is likewise as broad.

How well do the secondary schools of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts meet this obligation? This problem is an attempt to answer that question.

CHAPTER II

MATERIALS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

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MATERIALS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

To determine the extent to which the youth of Massachusetts are being prepared to assume their places as citizens of America and the world equipped to deal with the multitude of problems omnipresent today, all of the senior high schools in the state were contacted by means of a checklist-questionnaire. Copies of the checklist and its accompanying letter of transmittal are included as Appendix I and II.

As will be noted, the letter of transmittal was directed to the principal of each secondary school. That official was asked to submit the checklist to a member of the social studies department in the school who was qualified to answer the questions on the checklist. In most cases this operation was carried out by the head of the social studies department; in some cases one of the social-studies teachers completed the items.

The checklist was designed to answer three questions: first, the extent to which courses in modern or contemporary problems or problems of democracy are offered in the secondary schools of Massachusetts. To this end the teacher was asked to answer "Yes" or "No" to the question, "Does this school offer a specific course in contemporary problems or problems of democracy?"

Secondly, the checklist endeavored to determine the ex-

act nature of the course or courses in which the problems of modern living are taught. To this end it was first asked whether that course is elective or required. Further in this connection the schools were asked in what year the course is offered, elective or required. Then, to determine the content of such courses a series of twelve modern problems was listed and the person filling out the checklist was asked to indicate the approximate class hours devoted to each problem. In the great majority of instances the problems covered were simply checked with no indication of the number of hours devoted to them. An average number of hours per problem was worked out from the figures given by the approximately one third who did indicate the hours devoted to them. Provision was made for the teacher filling out the checklist to add other problems which the particular school included in the course. Some twenty other problems were indicated with varying frequency.

To determine whether those schools which do not teach a specific course in contemporary problems cover these problems in another course or in other courses this question next followed: "If the course in contemporary problems is not offered, does your school deal with these problems in another course or in other courses?" The responder was asked to indicate "Yes" or "No" to answer this question. The name of the other course or courses was requested to determine where the problems are covered if not in an actual

course. Then to ascertain the problems covered in this other course or courses the same twelve modern problems were listed with the same request for an indication of the approximate class hours devoted to each problem. Again in the majority of cases the problems covered were simply checked. Provision was again made for the addition of other problems covered in the other course or courses.

Thirdly, the checklist endeavored to sound out the opinion of those who deal with modern problems to determine the importance attached by them to such problems. First the teachers were asked to answer "Yes" or "No" to the statement, "The secondary-school population of Massachusetts should receive training in contemporary problems". Next they were asked how much importance they attached to a course of the contemporary problems nature. The responses were "None", "Some", "Considerable", "Great deal". Lastly the question was asked, "If the course is not offered in your school, do you consider it of sufficient importance to add it to the curriculum if such were possible other things being equal?" Those to whom this question applied were asked to respond "Yes" or "No". From these expressions of opinion some prediction, it was felt, might be made as to the future of such courses in the secondary schools of Massachusetts. Also, it was hoped, some indication of the qualifying conditions, if any, connected to such courses might be brought out.

Since every senior high school in the state was sent a

checklist, there were two hundred fifty-eight checklists distributed. As this paper is being written there are one hundred eighty-one returns on which it is based. This is a return of 70.16 per cent. This study of contemporary problems is, then, based on the work and achievements of over two thirds of all the senior high schools in the state of Massachusetts. Table I shows the overall results of the study.

TABLE I

Totals of Schools Reporting the Offering or Non-offering of Problems Courses and Percentage of Total Which These Schools Represent.

| | Number of schools | Percentage of returns |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Total returns | 181 | 100 |
| Schools offering course | 153 | 84.53 |
| Schools not offering course | 28 | 15.47 |

Of the one hundred eighty-one returns, one hundred fifty-three schools indicated that a course in contemporary problems or problems of democracy is offered. This is a percentage of 84.53; 84.53 per cent of the schools returning check-

lists, then, do offer such a course. Twenty-eight schools indicated that such a course is not offered; this is a percentage of 15.47.

CHAPTER III

WHERE PROBLEMS COURSES ARE OFFERED

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WHERE PROBLEMS COURSES ARE OFFERED

As was brought out in the last chapter, one hundred fifty-three or 84.53 per cent of the one hundred eighty-one schools returning the checklist do offer a problems course. This chapter will endeavor to discover the exact nature of courses such as are being offered in these schools.

(1) Elective or required. The first question to be answered in this connection is whether the courses which are offered are elective or required. Replies to that question on the checklist are tabulated here for convenience.

TABLE II

Number and Percentage of Elective Courses, Required Courses and Elective-Required Courses.

| | Number of schools | Percentage of total |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Total reporting | 151 | 100 |
| Elective courses | 85 | 56.3 |
| Required courses | 38 | 25.2 |
| Elective and required courses | 28 | 18.5 |

It is to be noted, then, that well over one half of the schools reporting the offering of problems courses give those courses as electives. About one fourth of these schools offer the courses as required for graduation. The remaining 18.5 per cent give the problems course as both elective and required depending on the student's program of study. In the majority of these cases the problems course is elective for college preparatory students and required for all others. Many of the schools reporting this split set-up indicated how it is operated dependent upon the student's program. Nine of these schools indicated the split, many of them simply noting that it depends on the student's program. Thirteen schools indicated that the problems course is elective for students in the college preparatory program. Six schools noted that this course is elective for the commercial program of study. In two schools the problems course is required for college preparatory students and apparently elective for all others. Two schools in the above group indicated that it was an elective course for college preparatory and commercial students and required of all others. The consensus would seem to be that the problems course is required in general in the schools having this split set-up of all programs of study save the college preparatory.

(2) The year in which the course is given. To further pursue the exact nature of problems courses where they are offered the checklist contained an item requesting the no-

tation of the year in which the course is offered. This applied to both elective and required courses. Table III shows this for schools giving the course as an elective and/or required subject of study.

TABLE III

Year in which Problems Course is Offered. Both
Elective and Required Status

| Year | Elective Number of schools | Required Number of schools |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| First year | 2 | 0 |
| Second year | 5 | 0 |
| Third year | 42 | 9 |
| Fourth year | 101 | 55 |

It is to be noted that the total number of schools in the above table is considerably more than the total of schools offering the problems course. This is due to the fact that in the case of a split set-up where the course is both elective and required there may be a fourth-year notation in both cases. Also many schools offer the problems course as an elective both in the third and fourth years; this is also true in several instances where it is required.

It is apparent from Table III that the great majority of schools offer the elective problems course in the fourth

year. It may also be noted that many schools offer the problems course as an elective in both the third and fourth years. In the case of required courses the fourth year far outweighs the third year as that in which the course is given.

(3) The problems covered. To determine the exact content of these problems courses twelve problems were given in the checklist to be checked if covered in the particular school's problems course. These twelve problems were picked more or less at random as representative of matters with which a problems course should deal. Mainly they were economic and political in nature. This is justified by the fact that the most pressing problems facing the nation and the world in the present stem from economics or international politics. To be an intelligent participant in the economic life of the times and to be an adequate aide in the shaping of the nation's international policy the citizen must have the informational background necessary to an understanding of the problems in these lines. It may, of course, be argued that pressing social problems were omitted. However, these problems received mention in many cases as other problems covered. In all over twenty other problems were mentioned beside the twelve listed.

One hundred forty-five schools checked the problems covered in their problems course. The results of this breakdown are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Coverage of Twelve Modern Problems Indicated on Checklist

| Problem | Number of Schools | Percentage of total |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Labor problems | 141 | 97.2 |
| Current events | 138 | 95.2 |
| International politics and relations | 135 | 93 |
| United Nations | 133 | 91.7 |
| Public opinion | 129 | 88.8 |
| Taxation and public finance | 122 | 84.2 |
| War and peace | 121 | 83.3 |
| Management problems | 112 | 77.2 |
| World trade | 100 | 68.9 |
| Consumer buying | 99 | 68.3 |
| Housing | 97 | 66.8 |
| Credit and credit facilities | 88 | 60.6 |
| Total schools reporting | | 145 |

An examination of Table IV brings out the limited nature of the problems listed. However, in the checklist space provided for other problems many more were indicated. These other problems greatly widen the range of problems covered in these courses. Table V shows the other problems.

TABLE V

Other Problems Indicated by Schools Offering Problems
Course

| Other Problem | Number of Schools Reporting the Problem |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Crime | 30 |
| Socialized medicine and health | 16 |
| Social security | 16 |
| Education | 16 |
| National government | 15 |
| Family | 14 |
| Race relations | 14 |
| Conservation | 13 |
| Massachusetts government | 10 |
| Use of leisure time | 9 |
| Safety | 8 |
| All governments | 8 |
| Transportation | 8 |
| Parties and elections | 7 |
| Vocational guidance | 5 |
| Poverty | 5 |
| Communications | 4 |
| Justice | 3 |
| Investments | 2 |
| Women's rights | 2 |
| Money and prices | 1 |

From Tables IV and V it is apparent that a wide range of contemporary problems are covered in these schools. It is also interesting and informative to state that fifty-two schools reporting the offering of problems courses also noted that such problems are covered by them in another or other courses. Such courses as Economics, Sociology, United States History, and Modern History were mentioned as these other courses.

(4) Class hours devoted to these problems. The request was made on the checklist for an indication of the approximate class hours devoted to each of the twelve problems listed. In the majority of instances the problems were simply checked. Many schools, however, did indicate the approximate hours. From all the schools so reporting an average has been worked out for each of the twelve problems. Table VI indicates these averages.

This table shows the number of schools reporting the approximate class hours devoted to each problem and the averages computed from the figures given by them. It is interesting to note that the average class hours devoted to current events is nearly three times the average class hours given over to the bulk of the remaining problems. Many of the responding teachers made statements to the effect that an approximation of the class hours devoted to each problem was extremely difficult or impossible. This is because the time depends on many factors: the

level of class ability, interest in the problem, availability of materials, etc.

TABLE VI

Averages of Approximate Class Hours Devoted to Twelve Modern Problems as Listed in the Checklist

| Problem | Number of schools reporting | Average class hours |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Labor problems | 54 | 9 |
| Management problems | 42 | 8 |
| Consumer buying | 38 | 8 |
| Housing | 41 | 6 |
| Credit and credit facilities | 34 | 8 |
| Taxation and public finance | 48 | 8 |
| Public opinion | 51 | 7 |
| War and peace | 40 | 10 |
| International politics and relations | 51 | 12 |
| World trade | 42 | 7 |
| United Nations | 50 | 10 |
| Current events | 51 | 26 |

This completes the analysis of the problems courses which are offered in Massachusetts secondary schools. A

perusal of Tables II, III, IV, V, and VI shows the exact nature and content of such courses at a glance. The final chapter will sum up these data.

CHAPTER IV

WHERE PROBLEMS COURSES ARE NOT OFFERED

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WHERE PROBLEMS COURSES ARE NOT OFFERED

Of the one hundred eighty-one schools reporting, twenty-eight schools or 15.47 per cent do not offer a course of the problems nature. The next task of this paper is to determine if, where, and how these schools deal with contemporary problems.

(1) Are contemporary problems covered? First it was asked of these schools if they deal with these problems in another course or in other courses. Table VII tabulates the result of this query.

TABLE VII

Number of Schools Not Offering a Problems Course
which Do and Do Not Deal with Modern Problems Elsewhere

| | Number of Schools | Percentage of total |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| Number of schools not offering problems course | 28 | 100 |
| Schools dealing with these prob- lems in other courses | 25 | 89.3 |
| Schools not dealing with these problems in any course | 3 | 10.7 |

Nearly 90 per cent of these schools as shown in

Table VII deal with modern problems in other courses.

(2) Other courses. These schools were then asked to name the course or courses in which this is accomplished. Table VIII shows the response to this request.

TABLE VIII

Other Courses in which Schools Not Offering Problems
Course Deal with such Problems

| Other course | Number of schools mentioning |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| United States History | 21 |
| Economics | 12 |
| Civics | 7 |
| Modern History | 4 |
| Consumer Education | 3 |
| World History | 3 |
| Economic Geography | 3 |
| Current Events Course | 3 |
| Sociology | 1 |
| English | 1 |
| United States Government | 1 |
| World Geography | 1 |
| Household Arts | 1 |
| Business Arithmetic | 1 |
| Junior Business Training | 1 |

Contemporary problems are treated in a wide variety of courses in these schools, United States History and Economics being the most commonly mentioned.

(3) The problems covered. The same twelve problems were given to be checked if covered in these other courses. Table IX shows these results.

TABLE IX

Problems Covered in Other Courses by Schools Not
Offering Problems Course

| Problem | Number of schools | Percentage of total |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Labor problems | 21 | 100 |
| War and peace | 20 | 95.2 |
| World trade | 20 | 95.2 |
| Public opinion | 19 | 90.5 |
| United Nations | 19 | 90.5 |
| Current events | 19 | 90.5 |
| International politics and relations | 18 | 85.7 |
| Management problems | 17 | 80.9 |
| Credit and credit facilities | 17 | 80.9 |
| Taxation and public finance | 17 | 80.9 |
| Consumer buying | 16 | 76.2 |
| Housing | 14 | 66.7 |

Total schools reporting 21

Provision was also made for the mention of other problems covered besides the twelve listed. Three other problems were mentioned, once in each case. These were Crime, Social Security, and Technological Trends.

(4) Class hours per problem. These schools were asked to note the approximate class hours spent on each of the twelve problems if covered in other courses. Table X gives the averages computed for the schools so indicating.

TABLE X

Averages of Approximate Class Hours Devoted to Twelve
Modern Problems in Other Courses. No Problems Course

| Problem | Average approximate class hours |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Labor problems | 9 |
| Management problems | 8 |
| Consumer buying | 16 |
| Housing | 6 |
| Credit and credit facilities | 11 |
| Taxation and public finance | 11 |
| Public opinion | 7 |
| War and peace | 19 |
| International politics and relations | 20 |
| World trade | 18 |
| United Nations | 15 |
| Current events | 36 |

This completes the analysis of where and in what manner the schools not offering a problems course treat with contemporary problems. Tables VII, VIII, IX and X show the entire picture.

(5) Type of school not offering problems course. At this point it may be of some interest to examine the schools not offering the problems course to attempt to arrive at some generalization regarding them. The obvious method of analysis is by enrollment. Table XI presents this data.

TABLE XI

Analysis by Enrollment of Schools not Offering Problems Course

| Enrollment | Number of schools | Percentage of total | Cumulative percentage |
|------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Under 100 | 5 | 18.6 | 18.6 |
| 100-200 | 8 | 29.6 | 48.2 |
| 200-300 | 2 | 7.4 | 55.6 |
| 300-500 | 3 | 11.1 | 66.7 |
| 500-1000 | 3 | 11.1 | 77.8 |
| 1000-1500 | 3 | 11.1 | 88.9 |
| 1500-2000 | 2 | 7.4 | 96.3 |
| Over 2000 | 1 | 3.7 | 100.0 |

Total schools 27

It is to be noted from Table XI that nearly half the schools not offering a problems course have enrollments of less than two hundred students. Well over one half the schools not offering the course have enrollments of less than three hundred students. Thus it appears that the size of the school is one of the factors which determine whether or not the problems course is offered. Such small schools necessarily have administrative problems not encountered by the larger schools; of necessity they must offer fewer courses.

It is also interesting to note that three of the larger secondary schools not offering a problems course are a technical high school and two classical high schools. These schools are of particular types, therefore, not concerned with the wide variety of course offering as is the regular secondary school.

CHAPTER V

THE OPINION OF RESPONDING TEACHERS

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Several questions on the checklist were designed to find out what opinions each teacher who filled out the checklist had concerning the matter of contemporary problems.

(1) Necessity of problems course. The first question of this type requested an affirmative or negative response to a query as to whether the secondary-school population should receive training in contemporary problems. Table XII gives the result of this canvas.

TABLE XII

Responses on Question Regarding Necessity of Problems Training in Secondary Schools of Massachusetts

| | Number of schools | Percentage of Total |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Schools reporting | 179 | 100 |
| Affirmative | 177 | 98.9 |
| Negative | 2 | 1.1 |

From this it is apparent that an overwhelming majority of schools contacted believe it necessary that the secondary school population receive training in contemporary problems.

(2) How much importance. The next question was asked

to ascertain the degree of importance attached to problems courses. The checklist responder was requested to indicate which of four responses registered his or her opinion on the question of the relative importance of such courses. Table XIII presents the result on this issue.

TABLE XIII

Importance Attached to Problems Courses by Responders to Checklist.

| Importance | Number of schools | Percentage of total | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Great deal | 125 | 70.6 | 70.6 |
| Considerable | 46 | 26 | 96.6 |
| Some | 6 | 3.4 | 100 |
| None | 0 | 0 | |
| Total schools reporting | | 177 | |

From this table it is seen that well over two-thirds of the schools contacted attach a "great deal" of importance to courses of the problems nature. An overwhelming majority attach a "considerable" or "great deal" of importance to such courses. All attach some importance; none, it appears, attach no importance to problems courses.

The results on these two questions are, perhaps, something of an anticlimax in view of the obvious extent, as

brought out in Chapters Three and Four, to which contemporary problems are taught. However, they do indicate the feeling of teachers of the social sciences in Massachusetts secondary schools. Principals did not complete the checklists; in most instances the teacher of the problems course was the person responding. This is not, then, the opinion of the administrator or supervisor but the feeling of the teachers who actually do the work of molding our future citizenry. As such, it has value.

(3) Importance among schools not offering a problems course. To further assess the importance attached to courses of the problems type in Massachusetts secondary schools those schools not offering such a course were asked if they would include such a course if it were possible. This, of course, presupposes the solution of such details as adequate teaching staff, wider course offering, and the like. The results of this query are contained in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV

Total and Percentage of Schools Not Offering Problems Course Which Indicate their Attitude toward such Courses

| | Number of schools | Percentage of total |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Schools reporting | 22 | 100 |
| Would offer course | 18 | 81.8 |
| Would not offer course | 4 | 18.2 |

Twenty-two of the twenty-eight schools not offering a problems course responded to this question. Approximately 82 per cent of these twenty-two schools indicate they would include such a course in their curriculum if such were possible. As a matter of fact, four of these schools noted that a problems course is to be instituted next year, the school year of 1948-49. From these results it is apparent that many of the schools not offering a problems course would do so if possible and perhaps may, as the four so noting, in the near future.

From these three opinion questions something of the importance attached to contemporary problems in Massachusetts can be ascertained. The final chapter will point out such conclusions as may be drawn from these results.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter will summarize the study and point out such conclusions as have been reached by the author through the material presented in the preceding chapters.

(1) Summary. To determine the manner in which the secondary schools of Massachusetts endeavor to train youth for adequate citizenship in the troubled world of today each senior high school in the state was contacted by means of a checklist-questionnaire. Of the two hundred fifty-eight secondary schools contacted, one hundred eighty-one, or 70.16 per cent responded.

The first issue in the study was the determination of the extent to which courses in Modern or Contemporary Problems or Problems of Democracy are offered in these schools. Nearly eighty-five per cent of the responding schools reported the offering of such courses.

The second issue was an attempt to discover the exact nature of the courses in which the schools deal with modern problems. This, of course, necessitated a study in two phases: the actual problems courses where they are offered, and the courses in which those schools not offering a specific problems course deal with such matters.

The following information details the nature and content of the problems courses offered by the eighty-five per

cent so reporting. Well over one half of these schools offer a problems course as an elective, fifty-six per cent to be exact. Twenty-five per cent require the problems course for graduation; nineteen per cent offer the course as both elective and required depending on the student's program of study. In the majority of latter instances the problems course is elective for students in the college preparatory program and required of all others.

The problems course is in general a fourth-year offering. The majority of both elective and required problems courses are offered in the fourth year; many elective problems courses, however, are given as elective in either the third or fourth year. In very few instances are problems courses offered in the first or second years; in no case is this true of required problems courses.

Twelve problems were listed in the checklist as representative of matters which a problems course should cover. One hundred forty-five of the schools reporting the offering of a problems course checked such of these problems as are covered. The percentage of coverage ranged from over ninety-seven per cent in the case of "labor problems" to over sixty per cent in the case of "credit and credit facilities", the latter being the problem least checked. Table IV on page 18 gives the coverage of these twelve problems.

Provision was made on the checklist for the inclusion of problems other than the twelve listed which are contained in these courses. Twenty-one problems were noted. Crime, socialized medicine and health, social security and education received the most mention. Government - nation, state and local - was mentioned in several instances.

The checklist requested the approximate class hours spent on each of the twelve problems noted. An average per problem for the schools so indicating was then worked out; these averages are contained in Table VI, page 21. Current events is given considerable more time than the other problems, twenty-six hours being the average for this field. The other averages range from six to twelve hours; a little over eight hours is the mean of all the averages, not including that for current events.

Fifteen per cent, twenty-eight schools, of those responding do not offer a specific problems course. Of this total twenty-five schools deal with modern problems in another course or courses; this is a percentage of eighty-nine. The course mentioned most often as that in which these schools deal with modern problems is United States History. Economics, Civics, and Modern History were mentioned in that order to round out the first four courses named. In all fifteen courses were mentioned in this respect.

The same twelve representative modern problems were listed to be checked if covered by these schools in the other courses. The coverage here ranged from one hundred per cent in the case of "labor problems" to sixty-seven per cent in that of "housing", the latter being the problem least checked. Table IX, on page 26 gives the coverage of these twelve problems by schools not offering a specific problems course. Although provision was made for the inclusion of other problems, very few were mentioned.

The approximate class hours spent on the twelve problems noted was requested of these schools as of those offering a specific problems course. Again current events receives more time than any other problem; thirty-six hours is the average for these schools, ten hours more than the average for schools dealing with current events in a problems course. The other averages ranged from six to twenty hours; nearly thirteen hours is the mean of all the averages, not including current events. This is five hours greater than the mean for actual problems courses.

An enrollment analysis of the schools not offering a problems course has been made. Nearly half the schools in this category have enrollments of less than two hundred. Well over one half of these schools have enrollments of less than three hundred. Size, it appears, is definitely a factor worthy of note. Also it is noteworthy that three of the larger high schools not offering a problems course are of special types, technical and classical.

The third issue with which the problem dealt was an attempt to assess the importance attached to problems training and problems courses in Massachusetts by sounding out the opinion of teachers of the courses where they are given and of the schools not offering a problems course. Ninety-nine per cent of the responding teachers indicated that the secondary-school population of Massachusetts should receive training in contemporary problems. Seventy-one per cent of these teachers indicated that they attach a "great deal" of importance to problems courses. Another twenty-six per cent attach "considerable" importance to such courses. Ninety-seven per cent attach from "considerable" to a "great deal" of importance to problems courses. None believe problems training of no importance.

The schools not offering a specific problems course were asked if they would offer such a course if it were possible. Eighty-two per cent of the schools in this category indicated that a problems course would be included if possible. Four of these schools are to institute a problems course in the coming school year.

(2) Conclusions. The first and most obvious conclusion to be reached is that the secondary schools of Massachusetts are doing an admirable job of attempting to train an adequate citizenry equipped to deal with the problems of modern living. Eighty-five per cent of the responding schools offer a problems

course and eighty-nine per cent of the schools not offering a specific problems course deal with such matters in other courses. In all over ninety-eight per cent of the responding schools give training in contemporary problems.

The problems courses which are offered cover a very wide range of contemporary problems. The twelve representative problems listed are all covered by at least sixty per cent of the schools offering a specific problems course and by sixty-seven per cent of the schools not offering such a course. Many other problems are covered besides the twelve listed.

This leads to the conclusion that the existing problems courses probably try to cover too much ground. Such courses can be a convenient dumping-ground where all sorts of loose ends can be caught up before the student escapes into the world. Problems courses are much too necessary and vital to receive such treatment. In fact, there is enough material to even justify two courses. In studying contemporary problems one is struck by the fact that economics plays a tremendously large part. Labor problems, management problems, housing, taxation and public finance, credit and credit facilities, world trade, social security - these are all economic problems. There are sufficient such economic problems to provide ample material for a separate course in modern economic problems. Such a course could be supplemented by a course in contemporary civil and governmental problems.

There are certainly problems enough to fill out two such courses. However, the curriculum of the secondary school cannot be overburdened with such courses and it is far better that a dozen or so of the major contemporary problems be treated in one problems course than not at all.

From this analysis of problems courses in Massachusetts secondary schools it is apparent that the majority of such courses are elective. This means that those students for whom the secondary school is terminal education can receive training in contemporary problems if they wish, or if they can fit it into their schedules. But they are not required to take the course. A tremendously fundamental and necessary training for intelligent and adequate citizenship is, therefore, not a required part of the education of those who need it most. Thus, although ninety-eight per cent of the schools deal with contemporary problems, this percentage does not indicate the percentage of students who receive the training, much less the percentage of terminal students who take such courses as deal with these problems. Training in contemporary problems received the overwhelming support of the teachers responding to the checklist. Yet problems training is not required of those students terminating their education with the secondary school. If these students do not receive training in contemporary problems in the secondary school, they will not gain it from any other source. Thus there can be a repetition among our future citizens of the inadequate,

unintelligent voting characteristic of far too large a proportion of the older generations of citizens. This the secondary school must guard against; the responsibility of the secondary school to train for citizenship will not be fulfilled if such a condition is allowed to continue.

Training in contemporary problems should be a required part of the curriculum for those students terminating their education in the secondary schools of Massachusetts. Although the schools of the state are doing an admirable job of offering training in contemporary problems, their task is not completed if they are content to rest at the mere offering of such training. Rather, they must insure that this training, so vital and fundamental, be a required portion of the secondary education of those who will pursue their formal education no further. Only when this is true can the secondary schools of Massachusetts pride themselves on a completely adequate fulfillment of their basic responsibility to the future of America and the world.

A final conclusion has to do with the teachers of contemporary problems. The role of the teacher in these courses is vital; they must be trained to assume that role. Teacher-training institutions must turn out graduates equipped in social studies to deal with the many and varied subjects contained in any study of contemporary problems. This necessitates a broad foundation in history, economics, sociology and political science. The present system of

majors in college and university overburdens the future teacher in one of these lines while inadequately preparing him in the other, equally necessary lines. Future social studies teachers, if they are to be adequately equipped to deal with vital contemporary problems, should major in the educational field with a minor distributed broadly on all the social studies. They will then have the professional training required plus the broad background of necessary social studies. The following quotation is most pertinent.

The teaching of the skills of straight thinking in connection with the study of main social problems is an important responsibility of social studies teachers. They must help pupils understand that in a democracy the final responsibility for all important questions of policy rests with the citizens of the country. In a truly functioning democracy it is impossible to delegate responsibility to a dictator, and it is disastrous to fail to keep informed about public affairs. ----

What the teacher can do is to stress the point of view that the solution of any social problem must be approached through inquiry, discussion, and experimentation, and that it is the duty of each citizen to make contributions along these lines. Those responsibilities must be accepted for life. The average citizen may never be in a position directly to propose a unique and effective solution for a major social problem. But, in every case where he accepts a point of view, or cooperates in a program initiated by someone else, he should be able to explain to himself and others why he made the choice he did and why he acted as he did. The approach to the development of such a sense of civic responsibility must be made in the schools and teachers of social studies must make a major contribution to this end.¹

¹ Anon. "Teaching About Public Affairs in the Schools" School Life XXIX (Nov., 1946) p. 27.

John W. Studebaker sums up problems courses and social studies in general in these words.

In the same way, I do not believe that we can leave to chance whether or not pupils learn about supply and demand, inflation and recession, taxation and governmental expenditures, how the great industries of this nation have developed, the relation of economic freedom to civil liberties, and what stake each of us has in the economic well-being of all of us. All pupils need to know about how our social institutions have developed, that institutions exist for man and not man for institutions, and that serious social problems arise only when institutions break down. Finally I believe that all pupils need to know more about our government - Federal, State, and local - and of the responsibilities each of us must assume for making these governments function efficiently and democratically.

Obviously all of this necessary social studies instruction adds up to more than two years of course work. We should do well if it is satisfactorily compassed in four years.²

The task of Massachusetts secondary schools and of the institutions which train the future teachers in those schools is not yet done. Admirable though the present conditions may be, the logical and final situation has not yet been reached.

² Studebaker, John W. "Communism's Challenge to American Education" School Life XXX (Feb., 1948) p.5.

APPENDICES

- (1) Letter of Transmittal
- (2) Checklist

Department of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts
March 8, 1948

Dear Sir:

Enclosed please find a checklist which has been sent to your office in the belief that the principal is best qualified to select a member of the social studies faculty equipped to answer the items contained therein. Your cooperation in passing the checklist to a member or members of the faculty who teach social studies in your secondary school will be appreciated.

It has increasingly been my belief that a study of the extent and nature of the courses in contemporary problems or problems of democracy as taught in Massachusetts secondary schools would be of considerable value. This is, perhaps, particularly true in the present era of change and unrest. I have determined to use this problem as a project for the Master's degree in Education at the University of Massachusetts.

The enclosed checklist is designed to determine the extent to which courses in contemporary problems or problems of democracy are taught in Massachusetts secondary schools, the nature of the course or courses in which these problems are taught, and the value attached to such courses with an eye to the prediction of their future in the secondary schools of the State.

It is anticipated that the analysis of the responses to this checklist will evidence interesting and informative results.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Scott, Jr.
Department of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

Name of secondary school _____ Enrollment _____

Does this school offer a specific course in contemporary problems or problems of democracy? Yes _____ No _____

If the school offers this course, is it elective or required? Elective _____ Required _____

If the course is elective, what year is it offered? First _____ Second _____ Third _____ Fourth _____

If the course is required, what year is it required? First _____ Second _____ Third _____ Fourth _____

If the course in contemporary problems is offered, check the problems or units which are used, noting the approximate class hours on each:

- Labor problems _____
- Management problems _____
- Consumer buying _____
- Marketing _____
- Others _____
- Credit and credit facilities _____
- Taxation and public finance _____
- Public opinion _____
- War and peace _____
- International politics and relations _____
- World trade _____
- United Nations _____
- Current events _____

If the course in contemporary problems is not offered, does your school deal with these problems in another course or in other courses? Yes _____ No _____

If these problems are taught in another course or other courses, what is that course or courses called? _____

Check the problems covered in that other course or courses with approximate class hours for each: _____

- Labor problems _____
- Management problems _____
- Consumer buying _____
- Marketing _____
- Others _____
- Credit and credit facilities _____
- Taxation and public finance _____
- Public opinion _____
- War and peace _____
- International politics and relations _____
- World trade _____
- United Nations _____
- Current events _____

Your opinion is invited on the following items:

The economic, school population of Massachusetts should receive training in contemporary problems. Yes _____ No _____

Should the State of Massachusetts have a course of this nature?

Yes _____ No _____

If the course is not offered in your school, do you consider it desirable to have such a course in the curriculum of your school? Yes _____ No _____

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Deserving of particular mention is the special February 1948 issue of School Life. This issue entitled "Zeal for American Democracy" contains a wealth of material: articles on the present-day challenge to American education, suggested reading lists, suggestions for teachers and administrators. The most pertinent article is by John W. Studebaker, entitled "Communism's Challenge to American Education", pp. 1-7.

Approved:

Albert W. Purvis

Advisor

Date May, 1948

