I

RACIAL PREJUDICES AMONGST SCHOOL CHILDREN

BY GEORGE H. GREEN

The development of aerial transit and of wireless means of communication are but the latest and most dramatic phases of a process which has been going on for centuries, tending towards the unification of the world. Already the world has shrunk to the dimensions of a small country. Who, taking into account the accelerated progress of mechanical invention, can say how little a space of time will be necessary for its conversion to a village?

With this development has necessarily gone an increasing dependence of any one part of the world on all the others. We, in Britain, depend upon all the countries of the earth for our food, our clothing, our materials for the provision of shelter, our fuel—our necessities and our luxuries. To the same extent, even if not in precisely the same way, the nations of the earth depend upon Britain and the British Empire for the means of life. Even if “world citizenship” is an ideal rather than a fact, it is nevertheless true that, wittingly or unwittingly, the nations of the world are co-operating with each other in every phase of the complex life of to-day. And it is very clear that the future of the world is bound up, for good or ill, with the development and conscious direction of international co-operation.

Recognition of this fact does not commit us to the approval of the means which have been devised up to the present for the organisation of international co-operation, or to whole-hearted support of existing institutions planned to direct international affairs. It does, however, make us realise that hatred, suspicion and fear of peoples of other races and nations place obstacles in the way of co-operation. Respect, candour
and confidence are essential to co-operation, whether of individuals or of nations.

Thus it appears to be of great importance to enquire what are the attitudes of young children—children of school age—towards the people of races and nationalities other than their own. The obvious reply to this is that children of school age know little or nothing of alien races and nations, and will therefore not feel towards them. This answer is, however, an expression of opinion, and no more. The question must be submitted to the test of investigation before we can be certain about the matter.

Children’s attitudes towards alien peoples have been investigated here and there by several enquirers. Varying techniques, of differing degrees of reliability, have been employed. Some of the experiments have been carried out with fairly large numbers of children, others with a few only. What can be said with confidence at the present moment is that large numbers of children of school age, in Britain and the United States of America, believe good and ill of peoples on the sole ground of membership of a racial or national group; and express opinions showing that they regard whole races and nations with suspicion, hatred or fear.

One investigation, which will have to be repeated in other parts of the world before wide generalisations can be based upon it, suggests that the attitudes of secondary school pupils of seventeen and eighteen years of age are not markedly different from those of school children of eight: the prejudices are exactly the same, but are defended with more ingenuity. It was found, in the course of the investigation referred to, that when preferences or prejudices were challenged, children made statements which they considered to justify their attitudes—statements which were traceable to the home, to books, to direct contacts with foreign people, to the school, to newspapers, to religious institutions and to the cinema. ¹

It is clear that we are here dealing with a matter which

¹ For a full report of this investigation, see The Welsh Outlook for March, April, May and June, 1930. (The Welsh Outlook Press: Newtown, Mid-Wales. Price 2s. for the four issues.)
deserves very full psychological investigation. The capacity to love, to fear, to suspect, to feel jealousy, to hate, would be regarded by many psychologists as parts of the child’s innate endowment. In all cases, probably, the child first displays these attitudes during infancy towards people in the home circle and towards strangers he meets. Often he shows fear and suspicion of people, merely because they behave “strangely”, i.e. differently from the people he loves and trusts. The question of the ways in which these tendencies are directed towards peoples of whom the child knows little or nothing is, in all probability, partly psychological and partly social: it is, in any case, one which urgently requires answering. Until we know the answer, we cannot hope to introduce any efficient means of control.¹

Meanwhile, it is worth remarking that in the statements made by children to justify their preferences for certain alien peoples above others, they referred frequently to the “kindness” of the people who grew bananas and other fruits, or who made toys for them. This appreciation of indebtedness is all to the good, though it may be questioned whether children should be encouraged to believe naively that the end and purpose of the existence of the people who inhabit the tropics is to provide the British table with luxuries. Nevertheless, the child who has learned of his dependence upon the negro cultivator of fruits and cotton and sugar and upon the continental toymaker is at the beginning of the realisation of the unity of mankind.

It is an educational commonplace that one cannot destroy an opinion by contradicting it. Contradiction by the teacher is likely to do little more than impress on the child that there are two kinds of truth—one right and proper for the classroom; the other for the outside world. The wrong opinion lives on in undiminished strength.

¹ The New Education Fellowship has appointed a world commission to deal with the whole question of Education for International Understanding, and to present at least an interim report to the World Conference of New Education in 1935. The commission will, as part of its work, initiate enquiries into this problem. Information regarding the commission and its work may be obtained from The Commissions Secretary, New Education Fellowship, 29 Tavistock Square, London, W.C. 1.
Meanwhile, much can be done in various ways in the school to show that international co-operation is a fact, without adding another subject to the curriculum or making special provision in the time-table. The study of the letters of the alphabet, for example, shows that we owe them eventually to the work of peoples of different races, co-operating with each other, unwittingly and over long periods of time. The same thing is true of the symbols we use in arithmetic and of arithmetical processes. The story of Algebra, if we accept its Arabic origin, is one of co-operation in which every nation of importance has taken a share.

The story of Science is a similar one. Indeed, there is no subject of the school curriculum which cannot be correctly interpreted as the outcome of international co-operation. In every instance we can point to this co-operation, at first unwitting and undirected, and only recently deliberate and organised. We can point, too, to the good results that follow from conscious direction.

We may contrast the slow progress of studies in periods of history when contacts between the peoples of the world were few and difficult, when development was at a standstill till new contacts were made. It is easy to show, for example, that in the last century more progress was made in the field of science than in all the centuries which preceded it; and this because the scientists of the world, during this period, increasingly organised themselves in ways which enabled them to know of the work of one another. For this reason we were able, in a comparatively short space of time, to solve the problems of wireless communication, of aerial transport, of sound recording and reproduction, and a host of others—not less important, though of less interest to school children.

The teacher of geography, too, may specially direct his teaching towards making his pupils conscious of the part played in the world of to-day by international co-operation, since he has to speak of the varied products of the earth and of the means of communication between the different parts of the world. And, as he speaks of the physical aspects of the natural regions, so he will be compelled to point out that
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these play their part in imposing upon the men who inhabit them a “way of life”—a “culture”, in the anthropological sense of the word. This “culture”, though an integral whole, is many-sided, presenting many aspects which, though they cannot exist in isolation, can nevertheless be studied separately. And thus, through intelligent treatment of the subject, the pupil comes to know that customs which appear strange—even revolting—to us have not originated in the love of queer and revolting things, but are capable of being understood. We do not approve of them because we understand them; but we realise that administrators of backward peoples are more likely to meet with success when they understand the object of customs which have to be changed—when they are able to discover, as has frequently been the case, new directions for the energies formerly expended in other ways. A precise parallel may be discovered in the way in which the energies of boys have been directed, in the case of Boy Scouts, through the understanding of the founder of the movement, away from channels of aimless “mischief” and turned towards purposeful activity.

Much may be done, then, without interference with the work of the school and without excessive demand upon those working within it, to make pupils realise the essential unity of mankind, to make them aware of the world as a single unit, and to lead them to regard the peoples of the world with understanding. Understanding does much to remove suspicion and fear and hatred, and thus contributes to the breaking down of the barriers which stand in the way of fruitful international co-operation. Further, the existing results of international co-operation can be so presented that a desire to co-operate is fostered, and this in itself becomes an incentive to knowledge of the peoples of the world.

A remark on the ways in which the peoples of the world are commonly presented to children seems called for. Parents, teachers and writers of text-books alike might be asked to consider the question—If you wished to present the children of England, Wales, Scotland or Ireland fairly to the children of Turkey, what material would you use? Would you select
all that was odd and queer and strange, and repress all that seemed ordinary and usual? Would you illustrate the life of the English child of to-day by reference to the Maypole and to country dances? Would you confine yourself to remarks applying to one social class only, or to a single occupation? Would your illustrations be limited to those showing children in costumes of a bygone age, or men and women wearing costumes which are rarely worn, on special occasions?

When all these questions have been answered, it might be well to enquire why people often persist in attempting to give children an idea of the Dutch people through the medium of an odd child in the odd costume of a Volendam fisherman, or why the German is still almost exclusively presented either as a Prussian guardsman or an obese peasant with a porcelain tobacco-pipe. True, satisfactory material dealing with the real lives of the people of other races and nations is urgently wanted. When it is urgently demanded, it will probably be forthcoming. But, until it is ready for the child, and until a desire to use it is fostered and stimulated, we can hardly wonder that his attitudes towards foreign peoples are wrong and stupid; and that he remains susceptible to any propaganda against alien peoples which may from time to time be organised by unscrupulous individuals, desirous of exploiting his credulity for their own ends.

II

GEOGRAPHY AND WORLD CITIZENSHIP

BY CELIA EVANS

The great war redirected the conscience and the consciousness of the world towards the problem of conciliation and co-operation. In this work it is perhaps the historians who have been most to the fore. The conception of history as a school subject has, within the last ten years or so, been slowly developing from a purely national to a world conception. This great change is manifest in books,