THE SCHOOL AND
THE WORLD COMMUNITY SERIES

PAMPHLET NO. I

THE
TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY
IN RELATION TO THE
WORLD COMMUNITY

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GENERAL NOTE

The pamphlets in "The School and the World Community Series" are not intended to unloose yet another flood of advice and information upon teachers already overwhelmed by books "of the making of which there is no end". The series aims merely at suggesting a point of view. To many teachers this point of view may be new—to others it may be obvious.

But, from a long and varied experience of schools and teaching, the Editor is convinced that an occasional examination of motive is necessary in order to prevent the warm living flesh of wisdom being replaced by the dry lifeless bones of formal instruction.

The title "The School and World Community Series" almost explains itself. The purpose of the series is to suggest to teachers of every subject in the school curriculum how to think about that subject, firstly in its relation to the constructive contributions of different peoples to the world's culture in general, and secondly in association with the fact that the world is a community of peoples whose greatest need to-day is sympathetic understanding and co-operation.

Thus the booklets in this series attempt to set teachers thinking about their work in relation, not merely to their own country, but to the world community as well. The booklets do not provide working material: they are signposts not roads. They seek only to discuss in outline the way to give a world setting to certain of the workaday subjects of the school, and to refer to sources of information. Teachers, especially, have to realise that in the modern world we are members one of another and that we cannot afford in the schools to ignore this truth. The interdependence of the nations is a commonplace fact which is taken so much for granted that it is seldom realised and yet is so vital to the well-being of everyone that we cannot give it too much emphasis in any liberal system of education.

October 1933

FREDERIC EVANS
PREFATORY NOTE

BY H. J. FLEURE

Education is our preparation for life, and we are called upon to try to build up a vision of our world which shall have a good measure of reality and an appreciation of the forces that have made and are ever remaking us as we are and are becoming. This means that education must adapt itself from age to age, and that great changes in the world inevitably involve changing developments of education that may sometimes be revolutionary in magnitude. It is obvious that we are now in one of those times of revolution and that its bearing on education needs to be considered seriously. Without gleaning too widely, one may cite some western European examples of past modes of education and the crises involved as they met great world changes.

In what are called the Middle Ages western Europe was recovering from a phase of poverty and attendant disorder that came after the fall of the Roman Empire and the cutting of the old trade routes of the Mediterranean through the advance of Islam. Men in Europe were needing to learn to improve their craftsmanship in agriculture, building, furnishing, cooking, civic and regional life; and they were covering over a multitude of local traditions, that had furnished motives for action, with the teaching of the Christian Church. This furnished at any rate a bigger generalisation than any of the local mythologies and it was full of motive power for social life and organisation at any rate in the phase of the popular enthusiasm of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. That education in this period emphasised craftsmanship on the one hand and religion on the other is thus most natural. Further, one can trace the increasing effect of logical thought working upon the foundation of poetic enthusiasm as well as the growth of vested interests making obstacles to free adventure in thought and action. It is not necessary to enquire
whether mediaevalism would have died of itself: a crisis came and it passed away. Gutenberg, through the art of printing, brought ideas to a mass of people previously untouched, and led them first to enquire into the sources of the Christian tradition and those of the Roman order, the two largest elements of their spiritual heritage. Classical Greek culture thus came to have an immense influence among the learned, but, through the translation of the Bible, the vernaculars of the people acquired new value and became vehicles of education that was to make peoples speaking one language conscious of that which drew them together and separated them from the rest of mankind. Classical education, built up on leisure was for the privileged few, craftsmanship and religion, but now assisted with the mother tongue in many parts of Europe, for the many. The mother tongue became the binding force of nationality, the root of patriotism to blossom forth as nationalism in its extreme development in the treaties framed after November 1918 when world changes were already calling aloud for other ideas. Linguistic nationalism with a more or less religious background, however it was tempered by a classical education common to the leisureed few in the various nations, had long become inadequate ere the treaties of 1918–19 crowned it amid hymns of hate.

Already as Gutenberg’s work was beginning, another revolution of slower maturation was preparing itself. Copernicus showed that the blue sky was not a curtain separating us from the Judgment Throne but, rather, an effect of the unmeasured depths of space; and Henry the Navigator and Columbus superseded the mediaeval map with its little world centred around Jerusalem. There was a new vision of the universe and of a world to be filled in and new and distant sources of wealth to be brought into circulation.

The old patriotism might be of use so long as a people lived mainly to itself, deriving its sustenance from its own fields and its equipment from its own craftsmen working on home materials. Its limitations became painfully evident when contacts with Amerindians and Africans were multiplied and oppression and slavery stained once more the name of
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Christianity. The strength of the patriotic sentiment hindered the growth of any regulation of exchanges between peoples; and even now it is rarely realised that the acquisition of great fortunes through international trade is a serious difficulty, and one of the larger factors of the economic crisis which has been brewing for the last 40 years and is developing so seriously in 1933.

Out of the investigations which grew after Copernicus and Columbus had superannuated the mediaeval vision, came, in the end of the eighteenth century, the revolution due to the application of power on a scale hitherto unknown, perhaps the greatest economic change since the age of great inventions when agriculture was organising itself and the stone age was about to pass into that of copper and bronze. Printing and paper were cheapened and the vernacular literatures acquired new power, adding hot fuel to the nationalist fires fanned by newspaper polemics. Translations became widespread, and others besides the privileged few of the old grand tours came to know something of other peoples and too often to exploit that knowledge for ambitious ends. Our daily life came to depend on goods from the ends of the earth, and exchanges were so conducted as to lead some peoples into a debtor and others into a creditor position, with over-development of these features on both sides and consequent attempts at protection of the individuality of a group endangered by economic or other dependence.

In this complex situation, with the peoples of the world jostling one another day by day and irritating one another by their diversities of convention, and with financial ambitions almost beyond control, it is obvious that we must try to know all we can of one another, of our need of one another, of our relations with our various homelands, and of the supplements we need from other lands and peoples, in ideas as well as objects, if we are to maintain and develop the good life.

It is but too clear that laissez-faire failed as a theory and has joined the museum of social and economic fossils, but there is little skill and less experience in planning for social and economic welfare. The Russian exponents of the new art
admit that they are struggling with the catastrophic failure of the agricultural part of their plans. Germany, England and America are equally struggling with catastrophic failures of schemes of employment and of circulation of wealth.

A study of the peoples of the world is called for ever more insistently in school and university and also in the world’s chancelleries. We shall need much thought and patience and the casting away of many tawdry ambitions ere the peoples of the world, each living in appropriate numbers to a considerable extent on the resources of its own home, can exchange with other peoples without fear of economic or political subjection in such a way as to enrich its life.

Study will doubtless reveal that there is a strong case for specialisation of many peoples, and, while what we call geography can help here, it has to be left to other branches of study to work out how specialisation may in future be regulated to avoid the disproportionate accumulation of credits at one end and debits at the other.