

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION
ON THE SOCIAL STUDIES
PART I

A CHARTER
FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN THE SCHOOLS

DRAFTED BY
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INVESTIGATION OF THE
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A CHARTER
FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN THE SCHOOLS

PREFACE

This charter of the social sciences, like many another document, is itself the product of history and of the social forces that shaped the thinking of the individuals who sign it. They have drawn upon their own age and upon the past in this effort to open up for teachers and for thoughtful men and women in every walk of life the prospect of an educational approach to an understanding of the world today and of the forces with which youth must reckon when it attempts to shape the world of tomorrow.

The chain of events which led to this investigation and the appointment of the present Commission to direct it is a long one and composed of many links. The detailed account of the progress of this study, and the list of distinguished scholars, educational administrators, men in public life, as well as class-room teachers, who were called upon to aid the Commission on one or several phases of its problem will more properly preface the volume of conclusions with which this investigation is to

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end its work in December, 1933. It must suffice here to summarize briefly the events which led to the appointment of the Commission and the formulation of this Charter.

The Charter is in a sense its own explanation. The careful reader will find both expressed and implied in it the conviction on the part of educators and social statesmen that there is need of wise readjustment in our thinking and our educational program to a world that has become urbanized, mechanized, and interlocked in its social, economic, political, and cultural interests. It is a tribute to the high sense of public responsibility held by educators and scholars in the social sciences that they were neither unconcerned about, nor indifferent to, the educational implications of these changes. As individuals, as local groups, and as national associations, they attacked the problem of curricular readjustment. By 1922, nearly all of the great national associations had published committee reports suggesting more or less extensive remedial measures.

An exploratory survey of the teaching of the social sciences in the schools during the year 1923-24

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underlined the need for constructive leadership. The report of this committee¹ described the curricula of social studies over the country as in a state of "chaos." Teachers and school administrators, forced to meet the immediate and daily demands of constantly increasing numbers of pupils as well as of changing social conditions, were reaching out for guidance. They were drawing from the several separate reports in varying combination and finding none of them adequate. In this uncertainty, the days, when the reports of the Committee of Seven for the Secondary School and of the Committee of Eight for the Elementary School served as a common standard, seemed like a golden age to the harassed administrators and teachers.

Such guidance as the school authorities and teachers desired, however, could only be afforded through the most cordial co-operation of all the groups most directly concerned in the problem. The Council of the American Historical Association which had sponsored both the Committee of Seven and the Committee of Eight was now asked to sponsor this undertaking. The Council

¹Dawson, Edgar: *The History Inquiry*, McKinley Pub. Co., Phila., 1924.

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appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of such a study. The report of this committee, in 1925, emphasized the three elements of extensive co-operation, intensive study and adequate resources as essential and briefly outlined some of the details. The cost of this undertaking was beyond the means of the Association. The authorities of the Commonwealth Fund expressed an interest in the proposal and appropriated a sum to cover the preparation of a definite plan for such an investigation. A planning committee was appointed composed of Messrs. John S. Bassett, Guy Stanton Ford, Ernest Horn, Henry Johnson, William E. Lingelbach, L. C. Marshall, C. E. Merriam, Jesse H. Newlon, with A. C. Krey, Chairman. This committee drafted a plan which was presented to the Council in December, 1926, and approved by that body.

In the fall of 1927 the Carnegie Corporation made an appropriation to permit the recasting of this plan into "working drawings." At the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, held in Washington, D. C., December, 1928, it was announced that the Carnegie Corporation had

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appropriated the funds necessary to undertake the investigation. The Council at the same time nominated the personnel of the Commission to direct this investigation. This Commission began its work in January, 1929. During its first year, the Commission had the assistance of Messrs. Evarts B. Greene and William E. Lingelbach. When other demands of the Association made it impossible for them to continue this work, Messrs. Avery O. Craven and Carleton J. H. Hayes were called upon to fill their places. With these exceptions, the personnel of the Commission has remained unchanged throughout this investigation.

The first task of the Commission when it began its work in 1929 was a consideration of objectives. Fortunately the membership of the Commission included some who had taken part in the deliberations of earlier committees of the several associations engaged on this problem. The Commission as a whole reflected a very wide range in points of view which the discussion of objectives had developed. There was, therefore, no easy ready-made solution which they could, or would, adopt. After prolonged discussion of this problem, the Com-

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mission decided to appoint a sub-committee to continue consideration of objectives. To the five members of the Commission—Messrs. Beard, Counts, Ford, Krey and Merriam—it added Messrs. Franklin A. Bobbitt, Boyd H. Bode and Harold O. Rugg, each of whom had developed a distinctive approach to the problem of objectives in education. This committee worked at its task over a period of nearly two years. It met with the Commission at Briarcliff and at Asheville and held two separate meetings at Chicago and at New York. It met once with the Committee on Tests at New York. Each of the members had an opportunity to present his views of the problem in writing as well as orally. Finally, the committee instructed Mr. Beard to draft a report embodying its collective views. This report was submitted for the consideration of the Commission at Briarcliff, October 15, 1930. Every member of the Commission was called upon to comment upon the report and did so. The discussion continued over two days and the committee was instructed to prepare a revised statement. This was done, and the revised statement was presented to the Commission

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at Washington, May 7, 1931. Again each member of the Commission was called upon for comment. At the conclusion of the discussion a motion to approve the report was made and carried unanimously.

This brief recital of the steps which have led to the formulation of this statement can only faintly suggest the thought and effort which it has involved. Every member of the committee and practically every member of the Commission contributed to its composition. The staff of the investigation analyzed courses of study and text-books and made summaries of the more extended pedagogical writings. All this material as well as the oral discussion, which was preserved in stenographic form, was drawn upon in the composition of the final report. Those who followed the discussion closely would have little difficulty in identifying the individual contributions. To Mr. Beard was given the task of gathering from the accumulated mass of written and oral material all the essential contributions and weaving them together into a coherent whole.

In printing this statement at this time, the Com-

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mission hopes to enlist the criticism and suggestions of a wider audience. The other activities of the investigation are expected to furnish help in translating this statement into practical ways and means for meeting the needs of successive school grades. Arrangements have been made with the publishers to issue the successive parts of the Commission's report as these are prepared. Any necessary modifications of the charter suggested by the other findings of the investigation or the criticisms of the wider audience can be incorporated in the volume of conclusions with which the Commission will end its work in December, 1933.

A. C. KREY, *Chairman.*

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A Charter for the Social Sciences in the Schools

Such is the unity of all things that the first sentence on instruction in the social studies in the schools strikes into a seamless web too large for any human eye.¹ Whether we consider the intrinsic nature of the various realities included under the head of social science, or the results that flow from the interpretation of them in the schools, or their place in the unfolding of history, we are in the presence of universality far beyond our grasp. This alone should give pause to those who fain would rush into the discussion of the issues before us with logical schemes, mild prophylactics, or final panaceas. After assembled wisdom has said its last word, the still small voice of discovery will be heard in unexpected and unofficial quarters, and new planets will swing within the ken of watchers. But while we must remain to the end keenly aware of limits on our grasp, we

¹ This beautiful symbol is borrowed from the opening sentence to the Introduction to the *History of English Law* by Pollock and Maitland.

may attempt to strike into the task somewhere near the center; or, to speak more modestly, we may begin by frankly setting up bench marks in the form of declarations of fact or material assumptions to serve as points of reference for our explorations.

Speaking generally, we may say at the outset that instruction in social studies in the schools is conditioned by the spirit and letter of scholarship, by the realities and ideas of the society in which it is carried on, and by the nature and limitations of the teaching and learning process at the various grade levels across which it is distributed. Admittedly, other stipulations are possible, but these seem to be stubborn and irreducible, to use favorite words of William James. They seem to set a certain inevitable framework for determining the content and applications of civic instruction. So much, therefore, we assume in the beginning.

Scholarship has its own imperatives. To say that science exists merely to serve the instant need of things, causes, or parties is to betray a fatal ignorance of inexorable movements in

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thought. Equally objectionable is the conclusion that in the selection, organization, and presentation of materials, science can ignore the requirements and demands of the society which sustains it, the society in which it flourishes—the requirements and demands of a world actually wrestling with problems and insisting upon answers, provisional, perhaps, but still answers of the highest conceivable validity. If somewhere in a land of utopia there could be effected among adults a perfect reconciliation between ever exploring social science and the immediate demands of the social order, still instruction in humanistic subjects in the schools would have to be refashioned at each grade level on the basis of widening horizons of thought. The necessities of scholarship, the realities of society, and the requirements of the teaching and learning process—these form inescapable covenants binding upon this Commission. The structure of ideas thus established seems to be more than a mere confession of faith; it appears to be so indubitable as to call for no justification, although we are far from thinking that it is simple in its nature and implications.