# YOUTH SERVES THE COMMUNITY

BY

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INTRODUCTION BY

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# PREFACE

The conception of a survey to discover what children and youth were doing to improve social conditions in this country and abroad emerged in the first year of the depression. Philanthropic agencies were seeking ways of lessening the hardships of those most seriously affected by economic confusion. Under the leadership of social-service agencies, children and youth were organized to assist in the relief work. At that time leaders of such projects were asking: "What are some suitable projects? Where can we get help by studying what has been done in other places?" It seemed reasonable to assume that if the experiences from successful projects could be gathered together, printed, and distributed, they would be exceedingly suggestive and helpful.

I roughly sketched the purpose and plan for such a survey, but lacked the staff to undertake so extensive an investigation at that time. In the fall of 1934, when the Federal Government organized relief for "white-collared" and professional workers, I made a request for research workers and was fortunate in getting four research assistants to commence the survey.

A systematic canvass was made of possible sources. We eliminated most projects which had already been reported in print and were widely known; as an illustration, we have not reviewed such a project as that reported in Collings: *An Experiment with a Project Curriculum,* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1921). We attempted to go to sources which had not been studied and reported. Ap-

proximately a thousand letters went out in the preliminary search for the names of adult leaders who had successfully conducted socially-useful projects with children and youth. These letters went to the educational leaders in foreign countries, to our state and city superintendents of schools; they went to the heads of such state and national, and even such international groups dealing with youth as the Junior Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, etc.

As the responses to this preliminary search came in, the names of the suggested adult leaders were assigned to particular research assistants for continued investigation. To each name we sent a request for a complete report of the project undertaken. We asked that each report sketch the situation giving rise to the project, indicate who conceived of the project, who planned it, the steps involved in carrying through the project, and something of the contribution to the improvement of community life and to the young participating. We suggested how the report might be written, but carefully refrained from restricting or inhibiting the unique characteristics of each project by giving a questionnaire to be filled in.

As these reports were received in our research laboratory at the Lincoln School of Teachers College, Columbia University, they were read carefully to determine whether or not they would fit into the general plan of our projected publication. About one report out of every four received was considered sufficiently worth while to merit further research; thus three-quarters of the reports were discarded early in the survey.

Those reports selected for further study were turned back to the research worker assigned for the preliminary investigation, and he continued the correspondence or held interviews with the person making the initial report until we had rounded out the report as well as we could.

Some of the reports took a great deal of work and time to complete. Many leaders found it hard to recall details. Others stated that they didn't write reports frequently enough to do it easily and naturally. Often several adults had worked on a project, and we could not make contact with all who had vital information. More than a year was, therefore, consumed in completing these reports. Later, we added several translators to our research staff to work on foreign material.

With several hundred written reports before us we started to group them into classifications of common purpose—projects improving the health of the community, projects improving the agricultural practices in the community, etc. The final grouping is found in the chapter headings of this volume.

When the groupings had been completed, a chapter assignment was made to each research worker to select and correlate the reports into a chapter organization. When this task was completed, we found many of our reports had been shortened and others eliminated because of the similarity of two or more projects. In the Appendix the reader will find the titles of scores of projects which were originally reported but left out of the survey volume for the reasons stated.

As the first draft of each chapter was completed, a copy was sent to those persons who had originally reported the projects, and they were asked to check on our accuracy and interpretations. Nearly all the reports were returned, and the corrections made were few and of a minor character. A second and third request for a reaction failed to bring a response from some few of the reporters. Because of the high degree of accuracy of those reports on which we had had responses, we decided to use all the reports, whether or not we had a final check by our orig-

inal informant. In as much as more than 90 per cent of the reports were thus acknowledged as accurate, we feel fairly sure of the authenticity of all of them.

During the period of this survey many research workers came and went. Of those workers who participated in it from the beginning, only one was with it to the end. Some confusion naturally resulted by this turnover of personnel. We have tried to guard against inaccuracy which might easily creep into our work from this changing of personnel. How successful we have been in keeping our records and translations free from error will have to be determined by those who carried out the original projects. If mistakes are found, we pray for tolerance in the name of "coöperative research."

*The projects reported herein are not considered by the research staff nor, we believe, by those who conducted the projects to be examples of perfectly conceived and perfectly executed experiences with the young.* Many reports will indicate how trivial is even the better practice today. These are humbly and modestly presented by those who supplied the details and by those who wrote this volume as *suggestive* of work that might be done elsewhere. *To imitate any of the projects would be contrary to the philosophy of this volume.* Rather than study the details, therefore, *we urge the reader to catch the broad social and educational purposes for which such projects are conceived.* They spring from one source—not such books as this, but from the intimate knowledge of living in a community and knowing its strengths and weaknesses. The project *must* be indigenous to the community which sponsors it, or it will wither from lack of vitality. We urge creative use of whatever suggestions are found in this volume and warn against their imitative use.

Some of the projects reported describe practices of

which educational theory today does not approve. An illustration of such a practice is the presentation of rewards, medals, etc., for work done. We consider the work should be of such a nature that the satisfaction which comes from having done a task well and from approval from the social group will make unnecessary extrinsic rewards. Again we caution the reader to think through any project proposed in terms of the educational value to the individuals participating. The italicized material on page viii will give the spirit and meaning of this volume of projects.

Obviously such a survey as this *could* not be the labor of one person. The credit, if there be any, must be shared by a large group of contributors. A list of those persons who were kind enough to furnish us detailed reports of projects is to be found in the Appendix. To these we again express our appreciation.

To the group of research workers—under the chairmanship of Boris M. Joffe and including Mary Anderson, Gustavo E. Archilla, Matilda Burton, Hazel Chichester, Henrietta Deming, Arnold Lissance, Mae Mills, Margaret Morey, Esther Peik, Celia Thaew, Marion Wall, and Louis Zukofsky—goes the credit for the labor of collecting from near and far the basic information contained in this volume.

I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Kilpatrick for contributing the Introduction to this volume. A similar statement first appeared in the *Fourteenth Yearbook* of the Department of Elementary School Principals. Professor Kilpatrick's statement, revised for this volume, serves as the foundation and justification for the theme of the present publication.

Acknowledgment is made of the help and suggestions of Mr. L. Thomas Hopkins, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Cot-

trell, Mr. and Mrs. John Childs, Mr. Paul Drost, and Jean S. Hanna.

The contribution made by the Lincoln School of Teachers College under the administration of Mr. Jesse H. Newlon is a significant one. Without the facilities provided so generously there, this type of research would be extremely difficult.

The survey itself was made possible through the financial assistance given the research work by the Works Progress Administration, Project No. 65-97-295, Subproject No. 26.

It is fitting that this volume should be published by the Progressive Education Association. The philosophy of the book is one which has long been championed by the leaders in this Association. It is our hope that this volume will contribute to wider application of the theory to the reconstruction of educational and social institutions.

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# FOREWORD

With this book by Mr. Paul Hanna on youth and its service to the community, the Progressive Education Association begins a series of publications intended, so far as possible through concrete example and practical suggestion, to help teachers and other educational workers to do more thorough and effective work in the schools.

Recognition of the significance of the interplay between the individual and the community has more and more come to be regarded as one of the real needs. The fundamental importance of this for education has always been realized to some extent. A certain number of good schools have felt their roots in the life about them, have tried to help children and youth to make their place in the community, have stressed the social and civic opportunity represented in school-community relations. Actual utilization of the power behind youth participation, however, has seldom been invoked as part of the education of youth, least of all in the schools.

It is the special value of the present book that, against a necessary philosophical background, it presents an unusual array of real instances—not as the statement of an ideal in any case, but as an indication of what has been done in an authentic situation.

The Association is under obligation to Mr. Hanna for his generosity in placing this material so freely at our disposal, without conditions of any kind other than that it shall be used in the most helpful way for education, and to D. Appleton-Century Company for their coöpera-

tion in making *Youth Serves the Community* the first of what we hope may prove to be a distinctive and useful series.

W. CARSON RYAN, JR.,
Chairman, Publications Committee
Progressive Education Association

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# YOUTH SERVES THE COMMUNITY


Inglewood Smith

# INTRODUCTION

## THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY OF CO-OPERATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

WILLIAM H. KILPATRICK

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THE word *philosophy* as here used is merely a conscious application of plain common sense. All that is intended is to try to see more clearly why we wish coöperative activities for community improvement and how these must be run if they are to help us forward toward our proper social and educational goals.

*We begin from our historic democracy.* To be fair to the reader any discussion should state what it takes for granted. This discussion starts from the historic American position that democracy furnishes the most satisfactory basis on which to run society. Now the essence of democracy is to be concerned about each individual and his welfare. This is regard for individuality or personality, not a belief in individualism. In individualism there is too much of each man for himself regardless of others, or even at the expense of oth-

ers. Such an attitude true democracy cannot accept. On the contrary, democracy will test each social institution and program by whether in its working it makes for the welfare and happiness of each one of everybody, all together, on terms of substantial equality. Coöperative community activities educate as a positive step in this democratic direction.

Also this democratic outlook demands that the final decision on every problem of public interest must remain with all the people concerned. To be sure, we need experts, more and better of them, and we must study far more seriously than hitherto what these experts have to say, using also other experts to help us weigh their proposals, but the final decision must remain with all the people. History seems to show that this is the only safe rule. We of this country wish no sort of dictatorship. And here again do cooperative community activities educate toward the democracy we wish.

Still further, if we propose to develop and respect each individual and to keep public decisions in the hands of all the people, then we must encourage everybody to think. From this angle, democracy wishes every institution—each family, shop, factory, school system, university, and government, all—to be so run that each member or worker or citizen, from youngest and lowest to oldest and highest, is encouraged to suggest improvements with the full assurance that his suggestions will be considered and used on their mer-

its. Democracy wishes such encouragement to thought and suggestion from all, partly because without it the individual is not truly respected, partly because we never know in advance who will make the best suggestions, and partly because this plan has in it the surest basis of public education and intelligent coöperation, without which democracy cannot hope to succeed. We see now still more clearly why we wish "cooperative community activities." These furnish direct practice in the thinking-acting aspects of democracy.

The equality of opportunity and treatment, which democracy wishes, calls perhaps for a yet further word. We wish a classless society in fact as well as in theory. Individual psychological differences there will always be, and properly utilized these constitute a priceless social asset. But as far as we can reasonably effect it, each child shall start out in life not handicapped in comparison with others by what his parents may own or may not own, by what they may or may not have learned. We believe in an equality of opportunity as thoroughgoing as we can bring about. But new conditions give these words new meaning.

*Democracy and the new need for coöperative endeavor.* In recent decades the situation of democratic effort has been undergoing change. In the earlier American life the family was the principal economic unit. Each such family, in the main, produced what it would use or consume. Actual money played a minor part. Independence, then, because there was plenty of