



N. E. A.—A PATTERN FOR THE PPSTA

by MARIA SERNAL

A few of the achievements of the National Education Association of the United States sound like the history of liberalism applied to teachers in America:

1. Desirous to improve the methods of teaching, Edward Sheldon of Oswego, New York, brought before the convention of the members of the association in 1863, the purposes and principles of the procedure expounded by Pestalozzi known to educators as "object teaching." The following year favorable reports were made by the committee and object teaching was a matter of discussion at the NEA conventions for a decade.

2. In an attempt to provide the high school with a curriculum which would accommodate the great number of pupils who might not attend college and at the same time a curriculum which would prepare any student to attend any particular college, the NEA decided to appoint a central executive committee of ten to study means of adjusting the curriculum to meet the demands of the time. On July 9, 1894, Dr. Eliot, chairman, submitted a report: "The ninety-nine teachers who constituted the committee of ten and its conferences said unanimously that uniformity should apply to the *method of teaching* and to the *selection of the topics in each subject taught at all in a secondary school*, but not to the *selection of subjects by the individual pupil* or to the *length of time that the individual pupil should pursue each subject*. The programmes laid down by the committee of ten provide the indispensable liberty." The curriculum was, therefore, modified in accordance with

this report after teachers and administrators had put their heads together and had concluded that the report was acceptable. Thus confusion and chaos gave way to order.

3. In 1875, the NEA organized a department of Vocational Education.

4. The Committee on Economy of time in Education played an important role in making tests and measurements an accepted part of the school program. As early as 1912 bureaus of research began to be established. World War I encouraged the use of intelligent tests. Universities offered courses in statistical method and the NEA established a Division of Research in 1922, thus, putting research on a professional basis.

5. In 1912, the NEA created a commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. The report of the committee on English "virtually set the pattern for the English course of study in high schools." The reviewing committee formulated the seven "cardinal principles" it believed would be most helpful in directing secondary education. Later these principles were thought to apply not only to high school but to all education. Adopted in 1927 by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers as its permanent platform, the principles were: health and safety; worthy home membership; mastery of the tools, technic, and spirit of learning; citizenship and world goodwill, vocational and economic effectiveness; wise use of leisure; ethical character.

6. After three years of study, the Commission published in 1944, *Education for all American Youth*, which is

a serviceable guide to planning for secondary schools after the war. This was to be followed by a similar study for elementary education.

7. Since 1921, the NEA has had a Department of Adult Education and in 1945 a Division of Adult Education Service was created. In February, 1945 the Work Conference on Educational Programs for Veterans was held at NEA headquarters to discuss and make plans about veteran's education with special emphasis on the noncollegiate.

8. In the spring of the same year (1945) a Division of Audio-Visual Instructional Service was established to lead and guide all audio-visual instruction aids—television, radar, radio, films, and movies.

9. To stop the alarming increase of accidental deaths due to traffic hazards, NEA Research Division's publications, bibliographies, and units of work, take the message of safety to all concerned—parents, teachers, and the general public.

10. Hand in hand with the campaigns launched by the NEA for higher salaries were efforts to raise the standards of qualification and certification of teachers in an effort to improve the quality of service they render. In 1920, it recommended that teacher education "should consist of four years' carefully-planned preparation beyond graduation from a four-year high school."

11. To acquaint prospective teachers with the two neglected phases of their three-fold citizenship — relationships with their profession and with the public—the NEA established in 1937 the organization called Future Teachers of America. It also arranges informal conferences where teachers attending summer school "meet with faculty members and representatives of professional organizations in forums devoted to teacher-teacher and citizen-teacher relationships." To help teachers grow professionally, committees were assigned to investigate and recommend in this field.

Membership in educational associations, "vitalized faculty meetings," leave of absence for study and travel, and summer conferences were recommended as instruments of professional growth. To answer the much-felt need for teacher ethics, the NEA officially adopted in July 1929 a code of ethics for teachers.

12. Reports of the activities of the different departments of the NEA have been published in the *Research Bulletin*, the journal of the NEA and in other periodicals published by the departments. New educational trends have become the object of attention of the NEA departments in one way or other. Among these educational innovations are the socialized recitation, supervised activities, the child-centered schools, the community-centered school, mental health, democratic supervision, and numerous other discoveries and inventions in the field of education.

13. The NEA, while doing much good for educational service, has not neglected the teacher. It has done much to raise the average salaries of teachers throughout the country. The NEA compiled facts about salaries they ought to get helped in effecting salary increases. As early as 1884 the association advocated "higher salaries and equal pay for equal training and experience." In 1903 the Chicago Teachers' Federation under the leadership of Margaret Haley sponsored a mass meeting in Boston and requested NEA attention to teachers' salaries and pensions and asked the board of directors to appropriate funds for an investigation to bring to light the economic condition of public-school teachers in the country. Results of investigations revealed that these were inadequate. These revelations resulted in increases in salaries.

After World War I when prices rose sky high and many of the best teachers left school for a higher paying job elsewhere, the NEA salary committee made further study of the matter. A questionnaire on salaries was sent to school superintendents thruout the country. A

report based on this questionnaire furnished valuable data and proposals for salary increases. Among other things, the committee raised and answered such questions as "How is the money to be obtained to pay adequate salaries to teachers?" "What constitutes a minimum wage and a fair wage for teachers?" To supplement data gained, the committee printed and broadcast messages to the nation such as "We must pay our teachers more money!" "We cannot hope to secure for service in our schools the choicest of our young men and our young women until we are willing to pay teachers a living wage and to make it possible for all to find in teaching a worthy life career..." The association attempted to seek federal aid to increase salaries and even if the education bills did not become law, the campaigns enlightened the people about the needs of the schools.

Since 1922 the Research Division of the NEA has conducted biennial survey of facts about teachers' salaries. These surveys published in the *Research Bulletin* have had influence in effecting better salaries for teachers. In 1935, the Committee on Economic Status of the Teacher prepared a questionnaire which provided for twelve monthly reports to be submitted by teachers in which were to be shown in detail "the source and amount of their incomes; nature of expenditures; data on borrowings and savings; number of dependents. The data obtained were used to influence influential individuals and organizations which might act to improve conditions for teachers... Between 1939-1944, in spite of steady increases in teachers' salaries, the rise in living costs made the actual purchasing power of the average teachers low. The NEA campaigned intensively to make the authorities and the public realize the "urgent necessity for adjustments in pay for teachers."

14. Another phase of teacher welfare for which the association has work-

ed is teacher retirement. It campaigned "that a profession would attract and hold those of intelligence, ability, and devotion only so far as they realized that the avenue of promotion was open to them and security afforded against the risks of life."

In 1919, a report on teacher pensions was widely recognized as valuable and became the basis for pension legislation. In 1924, the NEA committee published *The Fundamental Principles of a Teachers' Retirement System*. This became the guide of subsequent retirement studies. The NEA believed that "The objectives of teacher retirement plans are to improve the service of the schools and to provide sufficient retirement income to enable the retired teacher to live in dignified comfort as befits a professional person."

15. Believing that the attempt to stifle freedom of teaching was being crushed under dictatorship, the NEA appointed a Committee on Academic Freedom in 1935. The association was convinced of the fact "That schools should have full opportunity to present different points of view of controversial questions in order to aid students to adjust themselves to changing social conditions." In 1943 the association raised funds to support Miss Frank, a teacher of Muskogee, Oklahoma, during her fight for reinstatement. Miss Frank was dismissed from service because she dared make public professional and political activities against the wishes of a majority of the schoolboard. She was reappointed in 1945.

Teachers all over America know that the NEA is not a cure-all for all ills and problems that confront them and that it does not possess a magic wand, which can give them everything at a wave; but they do know that by working together thru united local, state, and national associations they can improve their own welfare, and in so doing strengthen the services of the school.