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ABSTRACT

The six articles contained in this document review the implications for education of the ideas of the group known as the social reconstructionists. In "Social Reconstructionism: A Critical Look," Robert Koole briefly discusses the contributions of social reconstructionists to the issue of the role of schooling and their influence on educational thought. In "Social Reconstructionism and Education," Denise Stocco reviews the philosophy of Harold Rugg, George Counts, Theodore Brameld, and the proponents of social reconstructionism in the 1970s. Kirk Charron traces the impact of the journal published by the advocates of social reconstructionism led by George Counts in "The Depression and the Emergence of Social Reconstructionist Theory." In "Social Reconstructionism and the Communal Movement of the Sixties" Barbara Maheu relates the communal movement of the 1960s and 1970s to the theory of social reconstructionism and discusses its impact on education. In "Social Reconstructionism and Its Application to the 1971 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum" Sheila Mawson examines the major tenets of reconstructionism and its application to the Alberta (Canada) curriculum. Finally, using specific examples, Gordon R. Thomas discusses the opportunities and restrictions of the 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum in "Opportunities and Limitations: Applying Social Reconstructionism to Alberta Social Studies." (SY)

SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE ALBERTA SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

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CHAPTER 1

SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONISTS: A CRITICAL LOOK

Introduction

Since the seventeenth century there have been many debates and several revolutions fought for the ideals of freedom and equality. The American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) both stated that all people are created equal and have the inalienable rights of life, liberty, property, and happiness. In both countries, a revolution overthrew the existing order and the declaration documents were used as a basis for developing a new society.

During the following years much was written in an attempt to describe the most useful, fruitful organization for a democratic society. One critical question was how free and equal people in a democratic society should be. A concomitant development occurred in economics. There was a tremendous growth in capitalism and a revolution in industry. These developments promised to provide the economic fulfillment of equality and freedom for all. What better way to achieve economic freedom for all than by making it possible for each person to earn his or her own living and to provide for his or her own needs!

But, as capitalism expanded, an increasing number of people asserted that this ideology did not lead the way to economic and social equality. Individual ownership of re-

sources and production led to exploitation and oppression. Despite promises, no one got "trickled down" on. Rather than individual ownership, collective ownership seemed to promise more equality in meeting human needs. In collective ownership, the fruits of an expanding economy could be used for the benefit of all.

Broadly stated, there were two main choices about the type of society that should be developed to help promote human freedom and equality. One could choose a capitalist society or a socialist society. Both choices held the common belief that industrialization and economic growth would liberate mankind from misery and ignorance; but they differed as to the method of reaching this goal.

The United States essentially developed along capitalist lines. By the 1920's the United States had a well-developed political and economic system which placed the ideals of private gain, competition, and property rights above the ideals of public gain, cooperation, and human rights. It was with this society that the social reconstructionists found themselves in disagreement.

Social Reconstructionists and Education

In order to understand why the reconstructionists held such a radically different view of education, it is important to recognize that they disagreed with the dominant economic system operating in their country. Bowers (1969, p. 98)

states that this economic system:

> "was predicated on the profit motive, (which) produces and distributes goods essentially for the sake of private gain and not for the more laudable purpose of serving the needs of all the people."

Reconstructionists asserted that the United States needed a collective ownership of the means of production. Collective ownership would enable the people to work together for the common good and would promote an emphasis on public welfare. With this historical background in mind, it is easier to understand the social reconstructionist's view of education.

For social reconstructionists a central political issue involved the roles of the school and of the educators. Counts (1969, p. 37) states it concisely "if the schools are to be really effective, they must become centers for the building . . . of our civilization." Rugg and Withers (1955, p. 621) elaborated:

> "The people and their leaders must now learn to use the school, in cooperation with all other educative institutions in furthering the building of that life of physical and spiritual abundance and democratic behavior that is potentially within their grasp."

Social reconstructionists clearly believed that education could and should create a more ideal social order. They believed that the democratic ideals on which their society was based were not being fulfilled. Furthermore, they believed that schools were supporting the status quo and continuing to promote the inequalities caused by capita-

lism. According to the reconstructionists, teachers should not represent the interests of any special class but should protect and further the common and abiding interests of the people.

The Role of Schools

Should schools be used to transform society? Should they change the existing order and work toward establishing a society based on new ideals? Or, should schools enable young persons to adopt the ways and standards of the existing culture and develop their lives in conformity to the status quo? These two positions are the positions most often taken in discussions about the role of the school in society. Critics of a particular society usually adopt the former view. Supporters of a particular society adopt the latter.

The beliefs that people hold are influenced by their view of the society as a whole. For example, Freire (1972), having experienced oppression in Latin America, promotes education as a practice of freedom. By freedom, Freire means the ability by humans to deal critically and creatively with their reality. This educating action will in turn lead to a discovery of and a participation in a transformation of their world. The social reconstructionists believed that their country was drifting away from its foundational democratic principles. They saw that schools were being used to sustain an existing order that promoted inequality and hindered freedom. They envisioned that the school was a means to

change the society because they believed that universal schooling would guarantee everyone political economic equality.

The Social Reconstructionists: Their Contribution

Given the cultural milieu of the 1920's and 1930's in North America, the social reconstructionists made a valuable contribution to the discussion of the role of a school. If a society does not live up to its founding ideals and if those founding ideals promote the development of human life, there probably isn't a better place to begin change than in the schools of that culture. Teachers, of all people, should be the least interested in continuing a bankrupt existing order. Instead, teachers should be the most interested in promoting the development of genuine human values. If one accepts the democratic ideals of equality and freedom, how can one sit idly by and teach acceptance of the status quo? Instead, as Silberman (1970, p. 374) states, teachers should be

> "equipped with a firm sense of direction and commitment to the preservation and enlargement of human values, as well as with the ability to transmit that commitment and sense of direction to their students."

George Counts (1969, p. 41) describes such values well. These values suggest that teachers are to:

> ". . . combat all forces tending to produce social distinctions and classes; repress every form of privilege and economic parasitism; manifest a tender regard for the weak, the ignorant, and the unfortunate; place heavier and more onerous social burdens on the backs of the strong; . . . strive for genuine equality of opportunity among all races, sects, and occu-

pations; direct the powers of government to the elevation and refinement of the life of (every) man; . . . ."

A second area of concern for the social reconstructionist was indoctrination. In recent years, indoctrination has been a concern of social studies. For example, 1971 Alberta Social Studies curriculum placed great emphasis on free, open inquiry. Several other value approaches also emerged that emphasized the belief that values should not be inculcated but that students should arrive at their own values. The 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum was much more prescriptive than the 1971 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum and, therefore, less supportive of free and open inquiry.

Social Studies should be relevant. Humans cannot develop a view of life without reference points which connect them with their native culture. Also, Social Studies should be creative. Humans cannot become more fully developed without being allowed to make their own decisions. The social reconstructionists said (Bowers, 1969) that teachers should consciously develop their own views of society and should be able to determine what social values were to be introduced to the student.

A third area of critique by social reconstructionists involves a more fundamental question than the two discussed previously. The social reconstructionists rejected the idea that individual freedom should be the highest goal of education. They refused to accept the child-centered view of progressive education. They believed that an exaggerated

emphasis on individual freedom had resulted in a society corrupted by materialism and capitalism.

However, they reacted to the opposite extreme. They developed the view that people become whole and self-directing only when they submit their thoughts and actions to the demands of the group. Collective action would develop a society based on cooperation, mutual benefit, and human rights. But the question remained. Will a collective society bring more freedom and less oppression? Social reconstructionists believed that it would.

A weakness of the social reconstructionist position was the fact that it accepted concerted group action as the way to build a new society. Collectively, people would automatically build a cooperative world. Technology and science would be released from the domination of special interest groups and be made to serve all the people.

Social reconstructionists did not question the basic philosophical goals of the nineteenth century. They continued to believe that industrialization and economic growth would liberate mankind. Reconstructionists only wanted to change the method. They acted for collective ownership instead of individual ownership. Because they did not address the more fundamental question of metaphysics in a different way than nineteenth century thinkers, they were not able to succeed in further working out their ideas of a new society.

People were familiar with a form of collective owner-

ship, one that was quite totalitarian, and they did not see it as an alternative to the one they had. Schumacker (1973, p. 76) correctly states that education cannot help us if it does include metaphysics. He states that

> "if teaching does not lead to a clarification of metaphysics, that is to say, of our fundamental convictions, it cannot educate a man and, consequently, cannot be of real value to society."

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND EDUCATION

Today's educational programs are in the midst of changes and controversies. Such controversies about what the goals of education should be, have been a part of serious educational discussion for years. Fifty years ago similar concerns were felt. Concerns over educational goals gave rise to Progresssive Education and its offshoot Social Reconstructionism.

This section deals with social reconstructionism and education. First it reviews the philosophy of education of three of the leading social reconstructionists: Harold Rugg, George Counts, and Theodore Brameld. Then it looks at some of the proponents of social reconstuctionism in the 1970's. Finally, it attempts to synthesize the issue by focusing on the goals of education which are common to all reconstructionists.

Harold Rugg

Harold Rugg was an engineer turned educator. One of his first encounters with education was a study of the child-centered school. In the child-centered school, Rugg saw many positive aspects of schooling. This included self-expression, aversion to learning subject matter for its own sake, and the study of the real world. However, Rugg did not become a supporter of this movement because, according to him, child

activity often became an end in itself rather than a means to grow.

The abuses of big business and the depression led Rugg and other reconstructionists to work towards a redefinition of the role of education. When they viewed the problems of the nation, they believed schools had failed. Schools had to change. They had to develop a new social order based on a cooperative society instead of being merely a reflection of a middle class, individualistic, competitive, business-oriented society. Such an order should help develop people who were socially committed, loyal to the community and who had the necessary skills to function in a technological society. The latter called for the development of much creative power.

Reconstruction of society became the goal of schooling, and the classroom became the place to pursue social objectives. The new curriculum according to Rugg had to be problem-centered so that children learned to understand modes of living and begin to solve social problems. The curriculum was to emphasize problem-solving and creative expression. The freeing of the "inner light" of the artist in each person was advocated by Rugg who saw the weakness of pragmatic education reflected in the problems of the days.

Rugg recognized that building a new social order through education was inculcation, but it was necessary to counter the influence of an indoctrinating society. Rugg

saw the role of teachers as being active agents of social change, first within society and then within their own classrooms.

Throughout his career Rugg was most concerned with creating a curriculum to achieve the stated objective of reconstructionism. The focus of his work was to organize a unified, integrated social science course based on studying issues and solving problems. To a certain degree, Rugg was quite successful. More than 4,000 school districts used his textbooks between 1929 and 1939. However, Rugg's success may be attributed more to his innovative materials and methods rather than to a wide acceptance of his philosophy. In the 1940's, under the pressure of "patriotic" and business groups, Rugg's books were gradually withdrawn from schools for being "anti-American."

George Counts

A contemporary of Rugg and the father of social reconstructionism, Counts believed the world was heading for catastrophy unless society was ready to change drastically. He believed that the root of the problem was human inventiveness. This human inventiveness was bringing ever rapid and increasing technological changes while people's moral consciousness and social organization were lagging further and further behind. Count's socialist vision of the world was radical for free-enterprise America. He recommended: 1) the collective ownership of all natural resources and of

all important forms of capital; 2) cooperation of all individuals for the benefit of society; 3) commitment to the social welfare of all; and 4) a global approach to solve the world problems.

Like Rugg, Counts believed that traditional and progressive education was perpetuating the system without solving the problems, neither had prepared the nation to deal with the great crises of the time. Although Counts recognized that schools were only one of the many agencies of education, he saw their role as agents of social change with the teachers as leaders. Schools were to supplement the learning and to correct the errors of the other institutions of education.

Counts believed that indoctrination was inevitable. The job of schools was to choose what to inculcate. To him, the inculcation of love of laws in support of democracy, liberty, justice, and freedom were primary. Also important was teaching students to understand and to recognize the dangers of concentration of power, be it political power, military power, and particularly, economic power.

Like the Progressivists, Counts agreed that the learners' needs and abilities had to be taken into account; however, he refused to make the children's interests (although they were to be included whenever possible) the goals and guides for curriculum development. Children were children, and their goals were rarely geared to the attain-

ment of a desired end. Immature goals did not teach the reality of life in a modern world. Rather, the curriculum should be based on a series of carefully controlled situations that would allow students to grow in self-discipline and self-direction. Content was relevant when it was based on the world we live in. The world's value questions were chosen so that students could learn to select, to evaluate, to reject values, and to make decisions that went hand in hand with objective problem-solving.

Theodore Brameld

Brameld shared many of Counts' ideas on society. These included the belief that culture was in a state of crisis and needed radical changes; inconsistencies in the system were pulling it apart; and there was a need for redistribution of political and economic power to give equality to all in a collective society.

For Brameld, contribution to social self-realization was the supreme goal. Social self-realization meant that the maximum satisfaction of the wants for individuals and groups was the new supreme goal. Brameld believed that a new unified philosophy of education would use aggressive techniques to retain the ideal of a collective commonwealth. Such an ideal had to be established with programs aiming at consciously fashioning a desired utopia for the future.

Brameld wanted the school curriculum to be politicized. It had to foster a concern for the future and a commitment to

action that would bring about changes by democratic means. The study of present-day global society, of its political and economic problems, and of the ways and means to correct them had to become an important part of the program.

Brameld proposed an entirely new concept for high schools. His goal-centered general education was built around a core or central theme that changed each year. He also proposed general assemblies. Related studies should be done using discussion groups. These groups were to focus on both content and skills. Strong emphasis was placed on communication, group dynamics, work experience, and participation in community activities. Students determined the topics and the methods they wanted to use, while teachers became democratic leaders, guides, specialists in various areas, or resource persons. Teachers had to be willing to make their "partialities" known to students and to submit these "partialities" to rigorous examination.

Finally, as a means to determine the truth (the validity of goals, programs or solutions), Brameld proposed a method called consensual validation. This approach involved the development and clarification of people's own experiences. Experiences could then be examined and agreed upon as being common to the group. As the group worked together, the largest possible number of people concerned could act upon any single problem. This method required much time. However, Brameld felt that it was far superior to the majority decision method.

Present-Day Reconstructionists

Recent and contemporary reconstructionists include people like Metcalf, Hunt, Mann, Shane, Cloak, and Illich. Their orientation to education is consistent with that of their predecessors. These educators believe that social reform and responsiblity to the future of society must have priority in education. The school should be a bridge between what is and what should be. These educators differ only in their approach to how much involvement schools should have in bringing about changes. They do agree, however, that education is to be a total experience and curriculum must relate to social issues.

Metcalf and Hunt propose that the curriculum be based on a critical study of society and of its hope for the future. What should society be like, and how should it bring about changes? Metcalf and Hunt suggest that teachers use the students' own assumptions (often contradictory) and their rejection of the adult world as a starting point for the study of values and utopias. This study should help students determine what and how the future should be.

Shane believes that education should provide the necessary tools for individual survival, because humans have rendered their environment dangerous. The aim of his curriculum is to prepare students to keep up and adapt to an ever-changing technological world. The problems of ecology, hunger, waste, and conflict should be central to the curri-

culum; and, cooperation should replace competition.

For Cloak, education which breeds conformity and continuity in behavior must cease. Instead, students should be given the freedom to choose and to experiment with as many possible ideas as possible. Eventually, Cloak believed, one right choice will emerge for future society.

Mann, influenced by Illich, is more radical in his approach to start in school. School is just as oppressive to students as is the use of political and economic power in the democratic means. Teachers must ally themselves with rebellious students and facilitate the process which, once successful, can transcend schools into society and then change society. Students must prepare for leadership so they can intervene in society and become agents of change.

Reconstructionism starts from a critical evaluation of present-day society where social, political, and economic institutions are working to protect the interest of some groups at the expense of others. Radical change must take place to prepare for the future, otherwise the world is heading for disaster. Schools perpetuate the system and serve the interests of power groups. All the time, teachers attempt to remain neutral. Such neutrality, the reconstructionalists say, is empty.

What Did Reconstructionists Believe?

Reconstructionists advocated that the reconstruction of society must start with the schools, and must build the bridge between what is and what should be. Schools must

become relevant. They must let the world in. Schools must be laboratories where, through carefully controlled situations, students can evaluate social issues. Students must be allowed to experiment, to make choices, to learn to recognize and use political and economic power, and to prepare for the future. Value questioning, problem-solving, and group work are the bases of the curriculum which also takes into account the abilities, needs, and interests of children.

Reconstructionists recognize that indoctrination is inevitable. Therefore, the educators must choose carefully what they want to inculcate. Reconstructionists are strongly influenced by socialism. Their vision of the world is reflected in the values to be taught:

- Commitment to the laws of democracy - liberty, justice, freedom;
- Commitment to the welfare of society which take precedence over the needs of individuals;
- Cooperation rather than competition;
- Commitment to action once a choice has been made;
- Commmitment to social reform;
- Responsibility to the future

Finally, social reconstructionists redefine the role of the teacher. Instead of being a guardian of the existing order, the teacher must become a leader and an agent of change. The teacher must be at the forefront of reforms.

The early reconstructionists were considered radical by their contemporaries because they attempted to bring about

radical changes to solve the tremendous problems of their time. How much influence their committed philosophy had upon society will be reviewed in following chapters. However, one cannot but be pessimistic, given the enormous problems which confront present-day society and the lack of care society as a whole shows for its human and physical environment.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEPRESSION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOCIAL RECONSTUCTIONIST THEORY

The 1920s were prosperous. Farming and industry were flourishing. Wages were low, but so were the prices paid for goods and services. The population was increasing due to immigration. People were generally happy with the social conditions in which they lived.

The serenity however, was soon shattered. Canadian Blue Chip Stock was falling because of an oversupplied market, the economies of the European countries were still shaky from the war, the stocks of the New York Stock Exchange had been grossly overvalued, and the government, in its belief that things would become bigger and better, chose to ignore these danger signals. When the stock market crashed in October 1929, it drastically affected the economy throughout the entire world.

When the United States sky-rocketed their tariffs on such exports as grain, pulp, paper, and metals, Canada was devastated. Canada relied on trade with the United States. Factories closed; there was little money in circulation; and the lines at the relief office grew longer and longer. Gloom and despair deepened and was to last for ten years. People literally scavenged for a way to survive as they clung to any hope for a better future.

The Beginning of Social Reconstructionism

As the Depression continued with no end in sight, tensions were brought to the surface. These tensions prompted change. People had become disenchanted with the capitalist system. Many groups were questioning why the Depression had occured. One such group (later known as the Social Reconstructionists) grew out of the Progressive Education movement headed by John Dewey. Dewey believed that, if one could free the child's creative and intellectual abilities from the oppressive nature of the society, youth could cure society's ills. The Social Reconstructionists went further. They discussed the relationship of the schools to an industrialized society. Specifically, they questioned how education could become a more effective instrument in humanizing the society. Schools, they believed, should equip teachers and students with the intellectual tools necessary to understand and direct social change.

The philosophies of progressivism and reconstructionism differed. The progressive educators advocated that a change would occur in the society as a natural and inevitable effect of liberating the children of the society. On the other hand, the reconstructionists believed that positive change would only come about if it were preplanned, deliberate, and structured. The Social Reconstructionists felt that giving Dewey's philosophy a more social and political goal would have more impact.

Some educators had been impressed with Russia's recovery

after World War One and especially with the role that education had played in the rejuvenation of the Russian society. When the stock market crashed, these educators began to look at the institution of education as the place to modify and rebuild society. The actual Social Reconstructionist theory began before the Depression; but, the Reconstructionists were never a cohessive group until after the effects of the Depression. They believed a new model for the society had to be found.

The Impact of George Counts

In 1932 George S. Counts, a professor at Teacher's College, addressed a group of educators and stated that the middle-class

> "must face squarely and courageously every social issue . . . establishing an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of social welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny, and become somewhat less frightened of the bogeys of imposition and indoctrination." (p. 37)

By seeking power and then using it in the interests of the great masses of people, teachers would be grasping the opportunity which fate had placed in their hands. Counts criticized the overly romantic ideals of the Progressivists. He believed that science and technology could be used to overhaul capitalism for the benefits of the whole society and not merely a few individuals. He felt that, by implementing a curriculum based upon co-operation and collective responsibility, one could restore the democratic ideals of the

society and enlighten the students as to the evils of capitalism. The two questions he asked were "Dare the school build a new social order?", and "Dare the teachers take the lead?"

Counts stated that the time was right for educators to rise up, take control, and restructure society. He felt that it was their moral obligation to clarify social issues, and align themselves with progressive forces for the benefit of society. As a group, Counts believed, teachers possessed the necessary knowledge of social issues and the strength of organization. But Counts questioned whether they had the courage to strive to strengthen the role of the school in society.

Count's address aroused the emotions of those present. In his address, he stated the general Social Reconstructionist's philosophy of the period. The philosophy was a zealous one, marked by a sense of mission, a utopian outlook, and evangelistic attitude. These characteristics were consonant with the general philosophy of reconstructionism, although each of the individual philosophers' viewpoints were different in some way. The characteristics of mission, utopia, and evangelism were excellent for getting the group to rally together. However, they began to hinder the group as well. At times, group members became so involved emotionally that they could not rigorously scrutinize their ideas.

This was the case with the Social Reconstructionists. Nevertheless, this emotional characteristic sparked the

beginning of the Social Reconstructionists' attempt to modify society. The heartbreaking events of the Depression added weight to the logic of the social reconstructionism. The tangible effects of the Depression caused a discouraged populace to become a receptive audience to change. The Reconstructionists gained support and momentum; although individual classroom teachers were left with many unanswered questions.

Until this time theorists had been concentrating on a philosophy for restructuring society. They had, however, not planned a viable program for implementing their ideals in the classroom. Even if the teachers had supported their cause, there was no way for teachers to organize their teaching methods around it.

The Social Frontier

In the fall of 1933, Social Reconstructionists decided that a more specific statement of goals was required to stimulate teachers to action. Thus the main advocators of Social Reconstructionism, George S. Counts, John L. Childs, Harold Rugg, Kilpatrick, Jesse Newlon, Norman Woelfe, Mordecai Grossman, and many others, joined together in publishing a monthly journal. The journal was dedicated to clearly defining criticisms of the existing society and portraying a philosophy and methodology for the rejuvenation of the society. Through the magazine, they believed they could both rally teachers receptive to their idea of using the school to bring about immediate social reform and provide

a curriculum for the implementation of their program in the classroom. The magazine was called the Social Frontier. It was edited by George S. Counts.

The first publication of the Social Frontier was in October 1934. The response was more promising than anyone could have expected. What the Reconstructionists hoped to accomplish was the transformation of capitalism into an economic collectivity. Capitalism they felt, had three major problems. First, capitalism failed to utilize the benefits of technology for the good of the whole society. Second, capitalism effected individual morality by emphasizing rugged individualism and the profit motive. Third, capitalism failed to develop a philosophy of social welfare.

From the destruction of capitalism, the Social Reconstructionists felt that they could revive a truly democratic society. Only a new society could provide optimum opportunities for the educational growth necessary to reconstruct society. This new set of values would remold the economic realm, leading to a collective economy. They also believed that a more socialistic outlook in regard to social welfare could be created by alleviating the devastation of the Depression. Educational, economic, political, and social problems are inseparable Reconstructionists believed; the role of the school was to eliminate capitalism. However, despite their strong critique, Social Reconstructionists failed to discuss the negative aspects of an economic collectivity of welfare state.

Moving Toward a Political Agenda

During 1935 the educational philosophy of the Social Reconstructionists became more politically oriented. They continued to advocate social reform but were becoming discouraged with their ineffectiveness. They began to adopt a more radical and Marxian position and started to believe that educators could not restructure society alone. They decided that, by allying with the working class and giving the students in the school a labor orientation, teachers could rise up and defeat the capitalist system through a class struggle.

Dewey opposed the use of a class struggle. He felt it subordinated education to a political issue when the main goal of reconstructionism had been to use the educational institution as a means to reform the society. By using the class struggle to achieve an end whose composition they could neither define nor agree upon, the educational implications had been lost. Dewey felt that society must obtain a peaceful consensus from the citizenry for societal change. Class struggle could too easily lead to revolution.

However, Brameld fully supported the idea of a class struggle as the means to building a better society, and went as far as advocating violence if necessary. He believed that the Marxian methodology for social reform should be used to analyze social problems and establish programs for future social planning. Brameld stated that the working class was

the only truly democratic class. Being the majority, workers should be able to rise up and transform society into a collectivity for the benefit of the majority.

The Political Role of Teachers

The role of the teacher in such a program was confused. If it is to serve the common good of the society, who decides what is the common good? Dewey and the Social Reconstructionists suggested that the teacher was a social partisan. Teachers must use the school as a circumstance for social progress that would reform the social classes who clung to unhealthy values. By having the working class take control of the production of society and evenly distribute the wealth through collective ownership and welfare state, citizens would be freed from oppression. But did the teachers have this power?

With the idea of class struggle came the belief in a common working class viewpoint which would be generated by the school. However, there was controversy about which method should be used to arrive at a major consensus of values among the working class. Counts felt that indoctrination should be used. Since every patriotic and religious group indoctrinated their members, it was a valid method to disseminate new ideals.

Kilpatrick's view was less radical. He believed that social change should not be portrayed as indoctrination; but, rather it should be seen as a normal and inevitable part of nature. Brameld felt that indoctrination did not mean

eliminating other points of view or a distortion of the facts. Rather indoctrination would inevitably lead to the ideals of the Social Reconstructionists being seen as the best set of values from the alternatives. Each theorist had a separate idea about the issues involved in using indoctrination or a class struggle to achieve their desired end. These differences caused further factioning of the group.

The Lack of Successful Change

The theory of social reconstructionism never went into practice. Labor organizations refused to support the Social Reconstructionists use of undemocratic means such as indoctrination and class struggle to achieve their ends. Although the labor organizations wanted a larger share of the profits made by the companies, they were unwilling to abandon the profit motive and the individualism of the capitalist system.

By the end of the first year of publication of the Social Frontier, there had been no changes in the social order. Teachers had no greater powers, either. But, the Reconstructionists had challenged the educational complacency and conservatism of the traditional institution. There had been a clarification of the goals of the Social Reconstructionists philosophy, but the method for attaining these goals was still being debated. Another problem arose as the leaders of Social Reconstructionism refined their own philosophies. Even within their own group they could not reach decisive conclusions. Now each philosopher examined his stance even more closely. Further differences emerged as people reached

even finer and more varied conclusions. The unhappy result was that the general philosophy had become oversimplified, little action had taken place, and there had been no critical reflection upon the educational implications of the political strategy.

During the 1936 issues of the Social Frontier, the editors began to take an even more political stance. They called for liberals, communists, radicals, and socialists to unite in a common struggle against fascism. Germany had been taken over by the Fascist party, and the world feared its spread. The Social Reconstructionists equated fascism with extreme capitalism and used this circumstance to try to rally more support for their cause. They believed that Germany had failed to collectivize their economy. If the world acted now to combine the liberal tradition with Marxian economic realism, it was possible to survive the pressures of the fascist forces. The Reconstructionists were becoming more involved in a political scene and getting away from the educational aspects of the problems of the Depression.

Throughout the rest of 1936 and 1937, the journal continued to lose momentum. It was impossible to gather support during the worst days of the Depression. Because of their inability to portray any cohesiveness as a group, the Reconstructionists did not even appeal to the educators of the time. Furthermore, because of their radical stance, they could not get support from the community.

By the spring of 1937 Counts had resigned as editor.

The other editors had either mellowed in their philosophies or had become so radical that they lacked appeal in the more conservative society. In 1939 the Social Frontier was taken over by the larger Progressive Education group. Even though they continued to publish the journal, it was with less conviction and enthusiasm.

Special programs had been started in parts of the United States in an attempt to revive the economy. These attempts were boosting the morale of the people, and the general population was simply not as receptive to the idea of change. When war was declared against Germany in September 1939, the whole country was involved in a push for national unity. Protecting land and lives was suddenly crucial. The military effort required every able person, and employed thousands of people in the rejuvenated factories.

It had not been the brains of the world's scientists, the social planning of the theorists, or the legislation of the politicians which had brought about an end to the human suffering of the Depression. Rather, the demands of war unified the nation in a new circumstance of suffering. It was a historical circumstance Social Reconstructionists could not survive.

This was the end of the era of the Social Reconstructionists. They had been unable to restructure the educational institution, let alone the whole society. Social reconstructionism would lie dormant until the 1960's when, again, there was social unrest and people started to question the basis of the capitalist society.

CHAPTER 4

Social Reconstructionism and the Communal Movement of the Sixties

Many youth in the 1960's and 1970's experimented with new "ways of living". Communal societies flourished in most parts of the United States and Canada. These 'experiments' reflected a desire on the part of youth to "correct" or "escape" many of the failures they thought were rampant in society at large.

There were various types of communes, ranging from ones which sought to 'drop-out' of society to those which sought to affect changes. The latter were far less numerous. Society's reaction to communes was, however, similar.

As a guide to analyzing these motivations, types, and success of the communal movement it would do well to keep several questions in mind. These questions include: "Are communal experiments the wave of the future? Are they viable alternatives for the future?" "Are communal experiments simplistic 'cop-outs' in the face of complicated problems?" "To what extent does the commune alternative reflect the goals of social reconstruction?"

Common Principles of Social Reconstructionists

Many people have written their own interpretations of the theory of social reconstructionism. In some respects these people would disagree on the fine points of social reconstructionism; however, they do hold beliefs in common.

Reconstructionists agree that present society, regardless of the age in which they write is inherently filled with "evils". McNeil (1977, p. 20) states.

> Most people are not now able to act responsibly, they say, because they have been persuaded and stunted by a dominating minority - those who largely control the instruments of power. Hence most persons do not exercise their citizenship in behalf of their own interests - their cherished values - but in behalf of scarcity, frustration and war.

Alienation and dehumanization are the primary cause of much dissatisfaction. People are unable to 'cope' in their everyday lives. Youth are particularly upset. They see that, as the machine age advances, increased depersonalization is even more likely. When humans lack of a feeling of community or purpose, there is a growing sense of uneasiness.

Most reconstructionists think that the institutions like business, labor, and the military contribute to oppression. These institutions should be altered. Reconstructionists see the continued maintenance of the 'status quo' as serving the interests of the powerful few. Some reconstructionists, such as Theodore Brameld and John Mann, advocate the adoption of specific ideologies and practical ideas which hopefully would eliminate oppression and 'liberate' the workers. Their ideology was extremely socialistic. Other reconstructionists, like Metcalf and Hunt, agree with the nature of discontent. However, Metcalf and Hunt do not prescribe specific socialist solutions. They believe that drastic change is desirable; but they would be more open in allowing people to choose their own "relevant utopias."

Reconstructionists see the present school system regardless of the age in which they write, as functioning to maintain the 'status quo'. Their common goal would be to help the school act as an agent of societal change. The school would be instrumental in providing opportunities for students to be challenged to confront conflicts that plague their personal lives. Students would learn to relate these personal problems to those of the society at large. Identifying problems is only the first step toward the actual reconstruction of society, however. Students are required to take two further actions. They are expected to propose changes and to work toward bringing them about.

The key to social change is the belief that desirable changes or reforms involve adopting certain very specific values. The early reconstructionists felt that values such as egalitarianism, humanitarianism, and democracy were essential to the ultimate improvement of society. Metcalf and Hunt, writing in the early seventies, did not endorse specific values. However, they would probably agree that there are values that would, in fact, be desirable. Metcalf and Hunt were not as prescriptive in proposing specific solutions as their predecessors probably because it was less popular to take what might be seen as a dogmatic stance. When Metcalf and Hunt were writing, it was not fruitful to imply the use of indoctrination. In the early seventies, this was particularly true. Belief that one had the freedom to choose was too strongly valued in the seventies for writers to take dogmatic stances.

Modern Communes and the Theory of Social Reconstruction

It is possible to relate social reconstruction to the actual responses made by youth in the 1960s and early 1970s. During these years, there was a noticeable increase in discontent shown by youth. One more obvious trend was for young people to form communal societies. There seemed to be common motivation for the rapid growth of these communes even though the types of communes formed were extremely varied. Some goals of these communes included 'back to nature', religious groupings, sexual utopias, Skinnerian (Walden Two), ideas, urban revolutionist, and women's communes.

The general dissatisfaction by youth usually stemmed from society's unquestioned assumption that material well-being, technological progress, and authoritarian, political and economic institutions were desirable and should not be changed.

The frustration posed by the American involvement in the Vietnam war also emerged into practical action. Youth were forced to confront the question of whether they would willingly participate in such a war. The Vietnam War itself, was different from preceding wars. Some of the reasons include:

a) The war involved 'saving' a country most American as had little reason to identify with or care about.

b) Many citizens felt that American involvement was

strictly political and economic and that the 'moral justifications' were of a secondary concern (saving the Vietnamese from the "yoke" of Communism).

c) American youth were unprepared for the kind of warfare that was used. As a result, youth felt that they were simply pawns in the system. Little concern was shown for individuals, and the country did not seem to be behind its fighting men. One evidence of lack of commitment were the non-glorious returns of Vietnam war soldiers.

d) Fighting wars and killing went against the new 'values' of the times. Many saw war as being inherently evil and wanted to have no part in killing.

Resistance to the draft took on a new significance. Not only was resistance seen as a method to "save ones own skin," but it was an opportunity to formally reject society's values in general. Draft dodging was more than a posture, it was an active seeking for an alternative life-style which would eliminate the need for war. Killing for the sake of enhancing 'national glory' or increasing the GNP were not sufficient justification for participating in war.

The 1950s were a period which set the stage for the more extreme youth movements of the sixties. The "beats" or beatniks were making their discontent known primarily in the literary field. The number of people involved were few, but their impact was to be felt throughout society. The writings of Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg and Herbert Marcuse voiced

sentiments typical of the kind of anti-establishment attitudes which were beginning to take hold.

The expression "counter-culture" was born during this time. People attempted to shock the bourgeoise by purposely adopting poverty, by spending their time contemplating life, and by writing about the repressive nature of Americans. The Black expression "soul" (meaning non-phony experience) was given new significance and became a desired quality. A rally to reject technology because its promises were false was put forth by Theodore Rozak in his book, The Making of a Counter Culture.

Also during the 1950s interest in civil rights emerged not only among Blacks but also among the American White, middle-classes. There was no question that repression and inequality existed. How should it be dealt with? This problem confronted those interested in eradicating racial and sexual inequalities. Freedom marches and civil rights demonstrations were among the common methods employed to raise the 'conscience' of the society at large. The common hope was to eventually effect political changes. From the 1950s on, Americans were forced to confront the reality that their ideals did not necessarily conform to their practices.

According to Ron Roberts (1971) there are several common reasons for rejecting the society at large upon which communalists, of whatever type, would agree. First, most modern commune members reject the notion of hierarchy. They tend to be egalitarians. Roberts (1971, p. 11) stated that

> "to the extent that we develop our capacity for power we weaken our capacity for love; and conversely, to the extent we grow in our ability to love we disqualify ourselves for success in the competition for power."

Second, the communal system was a movement back to the idea of "community." Society was seen as being too "large-scale." Because this was true, human relations suffered. People were lost in the maze and simply became numbers, without faces or forms.

Third, communes were anti-bureaucratic in structure. Bureaucracies were seen as contributing to a situation where, as Roberts (1971, p. 13) states:

> the young person abandons a world of directness, immediacy, diversity, wholeness, integral fantasy and spontaneity. He gains abstraction, distance specialization, monotony, dissociated fantasy and conformity. Faced with this . . . transition . . . the youth can only hesitate on its thresold... The humanization of childhood has been accompanied by a dehumanization of adulthood.

Social Reconstructionists and Communalists

It is easy to draw parallels between the social reconstructionists and the communalists. When reasons for rejection of society are compared, many similarities emerge. Both social reconstructionists and communalists assume that people are profoundly affected by the social institutions of the society in which they live. They would also agree that change or reform was necessary for the future preservation of society. The nature of the reform they propose is, however, very different. Social reconstructionists viewed the school as a primary agent of change, whereas communalists did not

hold much hope for changes eminating from the schools alone. Communalists saw the school as being too much a part of society's structure. It was doubtful that schools could provide a leadership role which would emerge and challenge values upon which its foundations rested.

Instead communalists opted out of society and formed communities which reflected their personal desires for a better life. Usually they believed that change resulted from a more personal willingness to change a complete life-style. Seldom did communalists seek to change the greater society. There are, however, two notable exceptions which would, more closely, conform to the method of reform advocated by social reconstructionists. These exceptions are urban revolutionary communes and women's communes.

Urban Revolutionary Communes

Urban revolutionary communes, as the title suggests, center their organizations in cities "where the action is." These groups are revolutionary in the sense that they are usually motivated by anti-war sentiments. They are also politically active. Sometimes they advocate violence to achieve their ends. Urban revolutionares justify these tactics as "self-defense." Some urban communes, however, did function as service agencies. Breakfast provision programs, anti-heroin campaigns, aiding the unemployed, and helping the homeless are examples of some programs.

Urban revolutionary communes believe that collectives

allow people to incorporate socialism into their daily lives. Roberts (1971, p. 85) reviews the purpose of urban collectives.

> Precisely because our task is not only to destroy capitalism but also to radically remake ourselves, the present historical period calls for organization built around collectives of 10 to 15 people. It is only in collectives that we can develop ourselves as creative political organizers without the stifling atmosphere that the large mass-meeting based organizations like S.D.S. made current. In the difficult struggle to transform the movement from the male-dominated, easy going, non-ideological and anti-intellectual fun and games of the sixties into a tough and sensitive grouping prepared in the seventies, the collective will be crucial. The collective forms allow us to build trust, mutual love and struggle, and will liberate the creativity and imagination which must still be among our chief weapons.

The tie between the ideology expressed by urban revolutionaries and the ideology expressed by early social reconstructionists is close. Certainly, the language is filled with a sense of mission, a utopian outlook, and an evangelistic attitude. The method of attaining similar ideals of socialism differs, however. Urban revolutionaries typically urge a much more radical, and sometimes violent, approach, while reconstructionists are more moderate. Typically, reconstructionists still believe change is possible within the system.

Women's Communes

Women's rights or 'liberation' communes are closely allied with the civil rights movement. The goal of these groups is to restructure a society which dehumanizes women.

Women's communes join together as a reaction against forces that make them hide their intellects, emphasize their bodies, ignore careers, and dedicate their lives to pacifying the male ego.

In the past, significant political changes were made by suffragettes. More recently, after women's organizations helped creating a situation where women gained "freedom." Equal pay for equal work is now more likely to exist than ever before, and women are continuing to fight for issues such as abortion on demand. In their own way, many people suggest that women's "liberation" is as violent and militant as urban collectives. The issue remains controversial for both men and women.

Women's communes usually exclude men. Such communes often conduct study sessions and actively work to affect changes that they feel might 'improve' the situation of women. These groups often sponsor educational programs to eliminate sexual stereotyping in textbooks and demand that all students be given the opportunity to take all courses. One hope is that the traditional role orientations will break down if the socializing agency of the school can be made more flexible.

Communes in General

The most common type of commune which emerged during the 1960s was the 'back to nature' commune. This commune was revolutionary only in the sense that values and lifestyles

reflected the antithesis of the "straight" society. These communes did not generally seek to reform society. Certainly, they probably felt overwhelmed by the task. Most likely, however, industrial society presented few structures worth saving. It seemed better to start over completely from scratch than to try to build on a false and weak structure. Instead, theirs was an escape. They attempted to create a more simplified world where individuals could "do their own thing."

The education of children in back-to-nature communes took two forms. First, the commune itself was the school for all. Formal school structures were seldom seen as being necessary. They also went against the belief that children should grow up to be free and unhindered by the limited environment of a school. Second, where schools did exist on the communes, education was also the antithesis of education found outside the commune. Creativity was stressed over formal academic studies. Parents likely hoped that their children would adopt lifestyles similar to the lifestyle they had found. A small element of the reform and reconstructionism can be found even in the isolationist communes.

The Success of Communes

Most communes had memberships composed of middle-class white people. The failure rate of communes was very high, especially where there was a lack of organization and structure. Plus, people who supported communes were often naive. The act of pulling away from society did not eliminate soc-

iety's influence. People carried with them the socialization of their past and found it difficult to escape the values they had learned as children.

Also communes could not be totally isolationist. They still depended on society for at least a few material possessions. People were forced often unsuccessfully, to change their behavior or beliefs in order to accept these things. For some, communal living became a lasting experience. However, the return to the security of mainstream existence still occured with most people. Communal living did point to the advantages of nonexploitative, cooperative living; but, overcoming society's ills was a task which communes were successful in eradicating.

They could not reconstruct society. Perhaps the spirit set by the communal movement will prove to be an indirect method of eventually encouraging changes in society. Such changes are gradual and require a historical perspective. At this point, it is difficult to judge. Communal success is probably best judged not in terms of its impact on society at large but on how it enhanced the lives of individuals within society.

Conclusion and Summary

In some ways, it is easy to compare the communalist movement to the ideals advocated by social reconstructionists. First, the reasons for their existence was similar. The two groups shared common criticisms of modern society. Both saw society as controlled by a powerful elite

which cared little for the lives of the common people. Both also agree that problems of depersonalization, technology, and relevancy are justifications for their proposed reform. Second, values such as the importance of human relations, egalitarianism, and democracy coincided. Communalists also placed a great deal of emphasis on the need for increased freedom, a sense of community, and opportunities for creative expression. Third, in regard to the educational institutions, social reconstructionists saw the school as being instrumental in changing society. Generally, communalists believed that the school could not provide the impetous for change. Their technique for change would be based on a personal commitment to reform of their own lifestyles in a holistic manner. Fourth, the ideology of early reconstructionists coincided with both urban revolutionary communes and women's communes. Many modern communes adopted socialist practices although not always as a conscious ideological choice.

Assessing the impact of communes on society is difficult to do, however, values and lifestyles that communes adopted seemed to have had some effect on society. Awareness, in general, about important issues such as pollution, thermonuclear war, and overpopulation were some examples. Certainly the outward appearance of many 'straight individuals' was influenced by youth movements of the 1960s. Clothing, langauge and values (such as freedom and creativity) have made their impact felt recently. Credit for

this awareness might also be given to educationalists who have been instrumental in incorporating new ideas and issues into their courses. Without extensive research it is difficult to pinpoint just exactly how much influence any group has in changing the values of society.

CHAPTER 5

Social Reconstruction and its Application to the 1971 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum

Introduction

I have taught in high school for ten years. During that time I have given assignments, among others, to a murderer, an evangelist, a pugilist, a thief, and an imbecile.

The murderer was a quiet boy who sat on the front seat and regarded me with pale blue eyes; the evangelist, easily the most popular boy in the school, had the lead in the junior play; the pugilist lounged by the window and let loose at intervals a raucous laugh that startled even the geraniums; the thief was a gay-hearted Lothario with a song on his lips; and the imbecile a soft-eyed little animal seeking the shadows.

The murderer awaits death in the state penitentiary; the evangelist has lain a year now in the village churchyard; the pugilist lost an eye in a brawl in Hong Kong; the thief, by standing on tiptoe, can see the windows of my room from the county jail; and the once gentle-eyed moron beats his head against a padded wall in the state asylum.

All of these pupils once sat in my room, sat and looked at me gravely across worn brown desks. I must have been a great help to these pupils - I taught them the rhyming scheme of the Elizabethan sonnet and how to diagram a complex sentence.

from "I Taught Them All"
Clearing House November, 1937

This commentary on education succinctly expresses what many critics of education, both in the past and in the present, are saying. "I Taught Them All" despite its brevity captures the sense of futility that many educators express with regard to the school system. Education is often worthless when it comes to helping people to live life.

There have been many calls to reform the schools. The reform movement embodied in the Progressive Education Movement, which flourished during the first half of the twentieth century, was a primary force behind a demand for a change in the education system. The criticisms of the school system, by those who saw the need for change, were stunning denunciations of most of what had occurred before. The traditional school system must change. These denunciations spurred by progressive education were followed by demands for change, demands that became louder and more powerful as more and more people flocked to the ranks of this growing reform movement. According to the movement, education was all but worthless and change was desperately needed.

Although all members of the Progressive Education Movement believed that education must change, the Progressive Education Movement was not a homogeneous group. Within its ranks, people held many diverse views. Stanley (1981) states that many members of the movement focused their attention on the needs of the child and avoided the development of a social program. A much smaller group in the Progressive Education Movement, Eisner and Vallance (1974) suggest, challenged this view and championed the cause of the schools acting to bring about social reform. This latter group became known as the social reconstructionists.

Alberta Social Studies: The Early 1970s.

The early 1970s witnessed the introduction of a new Social Studies curriculum in Alberta schools. The curriculum was embodied in a document entitled Responding to Change. The curriculum was new and radical. It was largely influenced, Korteweg (1972) suggests, by curriculum developments occurring in American education. One of the most important of these curriculum development was Values Clarification model. Values clarification involved students in social studies classrooms through a process of multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary inquiry-discovery teaching and learning. Responding to Change copied this approach. The 1971 curriculum was designed in marked contrast to the previous social studies curriculum instituted in the 1950s which was highly centralized and followed a traditional structured approach with an emphasis on the study of the disciplines and on factual content.

This 1971 Social Studies Curriculum shared many of the views of the social reconstructionists. This chapter will examine the degree to which the 1971 Alberta Social Studies curriculum, Responding to Change, allowed for social reconstruction to be utilized within its curriculum framework.

The 1971 Alberta Social Studies as Social Reconstruction

McNeill (1977) suggests that one of the underlying views of social reconstruction is that a curriculum should not help students adjust or fit in with the existing society. Instead, education should foster critical discontent which

will lead to the formation of new goals and result in positive social change.

The 1971 Alberta Social Studies curriculum, Responding to Change, adheres to this view. The curriculum guide states:

> The new social studies invites free and open inquiry into ...individual and social values. Such inquiry will serve the humanistic goals of education by offering students experience in living and not just preparation for living. By actively confronting value issues, . . . students . . . will deal not only with the "what is" but also with the "what ought to be" and will have the opportunity to make this world a more desirable place in which to live.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 5)
> (emphasis added)

The 1971 curriculum, although stating that students "will have the opportunity to make this world a more desirable place in which to live," does not concretely specify what type of world is more desirable. However, it does offer some guidelines. Some of these can be seen in the following:

> The new curriculum allows students to explore ways and means of enhancing the humanness of humanity.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 64)
> (emphasis added)

> Those social and moral values] deemed particularly worthy of attention in the new social studies are: the dignity of man, freedom, equality, justice, empathy and loyality.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 65)

These ideas received very little emphasis in the curriculum guidelines. In fact, the focus of the 1971 curriculum was to have students experience the process of arriving at their values, without specifying what those values would be.

The curriculum guide states:

> The objectives of the new social studies places high priority on the valuing process. The valuing process has become content . . . The process by which a student arrives at his values is more important than the value position he obtains.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 64)

The curriculum guide also states that no set of values is to be imposed on the student.

> There is no truly universal set of values . . . In this perennial problem of human existence, authentic individuality is the highest value. The only values acceptable to an authentic individual are those which he has freely chosen.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 64)

These views put forward in the 1971 curriculum guide are in marked contrast to the views held by the social reconstructionists. The reconstructionists have a definite socialistic orientation. They believe that the capital and natural resources of society must be collectively owned. Only then would a truly democratic society be possible. Based on this conception of what society should be, social reconstructionists like George Counts put forward a strategy for education that will indoctrinate students to accept this view.

Although many of the progressive educators would be repulsed by the idea of "indoctrination," Counts argued that the schools have always indoctrinated and acted as agents of the state. The task of progressive educators became one of choosing the correct democratic ideas to indoctrinate, rather

then simply indoctrinating those ideas which maintained the status quo. The status quo failed because it fostered inequality. The ultimate aim of this "indoctrination" by the social reconstructionists was to have students act to transform their world into a new collective society.

The 1971 curriculum encouraged students to take action "to make this world a more desirable place in which to live in", (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 5). However, what was desirable was not specified. This differed from a social reconstructionist curriculum. The encouragement of action found in the 1971 curriculum could be taken at face value; however, within the 1971 curriculum guide, one finds a number of restrictions placed on social action. The guide states:

> One should take into account prevailing Community attitudes . . . If a teacher perceives a need, he may want to investigate a certain problem, but should use discretion in the choice of materials and in the development of content. He should not upset the community needlessly.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 46)

These restrictions are limiting. They tend to place all inquiry or action within the parameters of the existing status quo of the community. The type of action recommended by the social reconstructionists, such as Counts, certainly is not the type encouraged by the 1971 curriculum.

Social reconstructionists view the teacher's role as being very important. The Social Reconstructionists (Stanley, 1981, p. 59) state that teachers are not to be neutral, but "should seek political power in the interest of the masses".

Teachers must take sides. They should ally themselves with movements for social change. Rugg (1955, p. 631) contends that teachers must have the freedom to ". . . deal with problems and issues, freedom to interpret the social heritage, freedom to pursue an inquiry without interference, and freedom to teach its fruits."

The role of the teachers, as outlined in the 1971 curriculum, is also important. Responding to Change calls for teachers to make many decisions. Teachers appear to have a large degree of autonomy in the planning of learning opportunities and in developing, assessing, and using resources.

One must continue to hear in mind the restrictions imposed in the 1971 curriculum.

There is some similarity between the role of the teacher envisioned by the social reconstructionists and the 1971 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. As an example teachers in both situations are encouraged to be autonomous. There are however, important differences. Social reconstructionists held the view that teachers should be free to question the status quo; and, in fact, they should pass this questioning attitude on to their students.

The goal was that the students should reject the established order and build a stronger, more equitable, and more democratic one. Within the philosophical framework of social reconstruction, teachers would not have the autonomy to accept the established order. Teachers in the 1971 curriculum must also allow their students "free and open inquiry."

But, the position that students must take is not specified. In fact, students could engage in the open inquiry of the 1971 curriculum that would lead them to accepting the status quo. This would never occur in a curriculum envisioned by social reconstrcutionists like Counts and Rugg.

The type of relationship that should exist between teacher and learner is also established by the social reconstructionists. Rugg, in Social Foundations of Education (1955, pp. 694-716), outlined the relationship he envisioned between teacher and student. Teachers were to be guides and co-participants involved in the cooperative task of understanding society and working to transform it. The task of the teacher was to build a program of teaching around problems. The task of the learners was to practice problem-solving thinking on these problems. Through this method a pupil's imagination would be cultivated. Students would be able to find and satisfy their own needs for expression, and to outline their own vision of life in their own way. Rugg was certain that this type of educational experience would help the students build a mood of courage and confidence in taking a stand for the creative reconstruction of society.

In 1971 curriculum also suggested that the teacher should act as a guide and stressed the importance of student-teacher cooperation. The guide stated:

> More detailed planning of learning opportunities is the responsibility of each teacher and class.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 8)

> Teachers should permit students to set goals rather than goals being set exclusively by teachers.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p.48)
>
> Involve the students in planning the objectives and learning experiences, and in evaluating the success of these learning experiences in the achievement of objectives. Provide for individuality. Draw upon the special interests and abilities of individual students, and endeavor to adapt content and assignments to these interests and abilities.
>
> (Responding to Change - 1971: p. 48, 49)

The philosophy found in the 1971 curriculum was very similar to Rugg's (1955, p. 673) view that "curriculum planning should be a joint enterprise of learners and teachers. The teacher remains the responsible guide, but much initiative is left to children and youth."

In both curricula, cooperation between teacher and student were stressed. The key difference was that social reconstructionists held the view that teachers would work together with students, to bring about a collective society. The 1971 curriculum held no such view.

The process by which students would "solve problems" or "choose their values" was similar between what Rugg elaborates and what is presented in the 1971 curriculum. Rugg's view was that problem-solving was an important component of education. He outlined the following four steps:

1. Recognize the problem.
2. Suggest alternative ways of solving the problem.
3. Try the alternatives, compare and appraise them, and reject or accept solutions from the range of alternatives.

4. Act upon the problem. (Rugg, 1955, p. 705, 706)

The 1971 curriculum utilized values clarification as an approach in confronting problems or value issues. This approach was similar to the approach outlined by Rugg. The steps were:

1. Confront real problems that involve conflicting values.
2. Choosing
   - identify all known alternatives
   - consider all known consequences of each alternative
   - choose freely from among alternatives
3. Prizing
   - be happy with the choice
   - affirm the choice
4. Acting
   - act upon the choice
   - repeat the action consistently in some pattern in life

(Responding to Change - 1971: p. 5,6)

The main differences in this process, however, was that the social reconstructionists had a pre-determined view of what choices and actions should be made. This was not the case in the 1971 curriculum.

Summary and Conclusion

In examining the major tenets of social reconstruction and its application to the 1971 Alberta social studies curriculum, one finds several parallels. Many of the processes found within social reconstruction are also found within the 1971 curriculum. For example, the process engaged in when solving problems or dealing with value issues are similar. The need to take action is stressed. And, the role of the teacher in relation to his/her students is roughly the same.

The key difference between the 1971 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum and Social Reconstructionism was not so much in the process, although there were differences, but in the perceived end product. Social reconstructionists hoped to use the schools to build a new social order which was egalitarian and democratic. The 1971 curriculum, although it alluded to the need to build a better society, did not concretely establish for students and teachers what kind of world this would be. Herein were the crucial differences. While there were opportunities to apply certain components of social reconstruction to the 1971 curriculum, the ability to reach the goals of social reconstruction were largely unattainable within the 1971 curriculum framework.

CHAPTER 6

Opportunities and Limitations: Applying Social Reconstructionism to Alberta Social Studies

Introduction

Social reconstructionism summons a call for reform that has been apparent throughout much of the history of the Western World. The school is the institution of society called upon to act as the change agent. It represents the link between the problems of the present and the ideals of the future. Social reform and social change are the cornerstones of social reconstructionism, and the school is the most obvious vehicle of reorientation. Because social studies is social education, it is the subject essential to a discussion of reconstructionism. Social studies deals with political, historical, economic, and social knowledge as well as values clarification and skill development. All of these areas are necessary if the individual is going to help shape society.

Social reconstructionism has been called a radical movement, or at least a reformist movement. Social reconstructionists had a radical idea about schools. School should be used to educate students to intervene in the political life of society to force and shape change. The school can help in many ways. It can create the leaders who advocate aggressive change that will reorder the nature of society. But, what does the school require if it is to promote this reconstructionism in the 1980s? More specif-

ically, what is the nature of a social studies curriculum which is oriented to social reconstruction?

An Environment for Change

At the school level, social reconstructionism requires a committed teacher, a suitable curricular philosophy and content, and receptive and responsible students. The teacher's qualities are individual; the students' qualities may be inherent or the product of the teacher's work and/or curriculum activities. Both of these factors, however, are beyond the purview of this chapter, which seeks to deal more specifically with the philosophy of the curriculum and the nature of its content. These factors are crucial to the development of reconstructionism through the school.

Social reconstructionism requires a curriculum which, as an instructional plan, is reasonably flexible and includes a futuristic direction. The document must address both "what is" and "what ought to be." The student must become aware of the present (as a result of the past) and his or her role in shaping the future. Such a curriculum centers on issues of social concern and their resolution or reorientation. An inquiry component must focus on such things as the skills of critical analysis, extra polation and synthesis, and evaluation . Each of these skills moves toward the development of a questioning, critical mind willing to make tough-minded decisions.

Participation skills are also crucial. In such a cur-

riculum this means the development of leadership skills. Values clarification is also important in a reconstructionist curriculum to provide the student with opportunities to set a rationale for change in society. Discussion centers on way of resolving the apparent problems. Such change is generally aggressive in nature. The curricular philosophy of social reconstructionism is based on change and reform and encourages the student to determine "what is," "what ought to be," and "how to make the ought the is."

Notwithstanding the curricular philosophy, the content must also be suitable. Those current social issues which have ramifications for the redesign of society must be resolved by social inquiry. The concepts of power, social justice, equality, freedom, social disparity, and change must be examined from a values perspective. Inquiry and leadership skills must be gained by students as a part of the social action process. In such a way, the content is appropriate to the aims of the curriculum.

The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum

The prescribed 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum provides opportunities in the achievement of social reconstructionism as a curricular goal in senior high school. According to the 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (1981, p. 1) social studies is seen as a subject in which "students learn to explore and, where possible, to resolve, social issues that are of public and personal concern." The ulimate goal of the curriculum is effective citizenship, and

the program is designed to assist students develop "intellectual independence, moral maturity, and more effective involvement in the political, economic, and social affairs of their communities" (p. 1). Topics focus on global and Canadian concerns, a time dimension of past, present, and future, and a spiral development of concepts. One quarter of the instructional time is given to the presentation of topics of teacher, student, and community interest. Certainly, these factors represent a potential curriculum of reform.

The curriculum is limited, however, by the prescription of seventy-five per cent of the program with social issues determined by the Department of Education. Further, there is no guarantee that all factors which encourage social reconstruction will be present in any particular unit. Just the same, the program's curricular philosophy holds considerable promise for social reconstructionism.

The content of the curriculum centers on the application of knowledge, skills, and values objectives to the curricular philosophy. This content presents opportunities and restrictions. Seven topics are studied in senior high school. In grade ten, students examine human rights in Canada, the national unity issue, and Canada's role in the world. Centering on Canada, students study social issues which have both national and international overtones. Grade eleven students focus on tradition and change in society as well as the global problems of population and distribution of resources. The grade twelve course deals with both political

and economic systems and the problem of conflict and cooperation among nations. Both senior courses deal with social issues form a global prespective.

An assessment of each of these topics shows the degree of social reconstructionism encouraged by the prescribed curriculum content. This assessment can be completed by analyzing the content of the prescribed 1981 program and the requirements of a social reconstructionist curriculum. These include, specifically:

(1) Competing values and concepts (social issue);
(2) Future orientation (knowledge);
(3) Social action process (inquiry skills);
(4) Development of leadership skills (participation skills);
(5) Active resolution of issue (valuing).

Specific Examples: Human Rights

Human rights in Canada is a social issue involving the conflicting values of personal freedom and social control. The grade ten unit urges the student to determine the limits of social control and individual freedom. Such concepts as justice, citizenship, freedom, and social control are clearly reconstructionist, and the unit is rooted in case studies of past examples of violations of human rights. Students examine Canadian issues of contemporary and historical concern, e.g., the FLQ Crisis, creation of the Bill of Rights, Japanese Canadians in World War II, and the Manitoba School Question.

The knowledge component of the unit examines the extent of human rights in Canada, responsibilities individual

citizens have to maintain and control these rights, and opportunities to enhance and uphold rights of Canadians. The student studies examples of both freedom and social control, and the essential conflicts these opposites generate. The knowledge component of the unit is clearly oriented to the future. The past is used to show examples of conflicts between social control/individual freedom.

The skills section of the unit emphasizes the development of research questions and hypotheses in gaining a wide variety of information about human rights issues. Data is analyzed and synthesized; however, resolution of the human rights issue is not prescribed. The participation skills do not encompass leadership. They do, however, touch on interpretation, group decision-making, and communication.

Indeed, participation involves working together to determine a collective preferred relationship, but individual leadership in reform is not stressed in any way. In a similar sense, the values section focuses on the future of human rights. By making the student identify his or her own feelings and experiences about human rights and by studying the historical examples of conflict between freedom and control, the student is able to determine some of the logical relationships between control and freedom. The end point of such study may be the ultimate realization of such concepts as justice and equality.

The topic does not prescribe social action, and it does not encourage leadership. However, it does emphasize indivi-

dual responsibility and the role the individual must paly to guarantee human rights in our society. The direction of the curriculum is the creation of the individual who respects human rights. Such a direction is certainly a goal of effective participatory citizenship. It is, however, not completely worthy of social reconstruction.

Specific Examples: National Unity

National unity directs the students' attentions to the conflict between provincial autonomy and federal centralization of power. Such concepts as federalism, regionalism, identity, and power are emphasized. The student is encouraged to develop a conception of national unity. In studying the prescribed knowledge component, the student looks at the advantages and disadvantages of strong federal or provincial government. The student also studies how historical issues, e.g., bilingualism, biculturalism, and resource control, have affected national unity in the past. The unit tends to emphasize reasons why there has been difficulty creating a national unity instead of enhancing those things which unite Canadians.

The skills section emphasize organization and interpretation of data. The inquiry process is tapped for social action by formulating alternative solutions to the problems of national unity. The participation skills tend to enhance the inquiry objectives. Specifically, contrasting views must be communicated effectively, and the group must decide

together a plan of action to improve national unity. Such a process includes the creation of a "sense of community."

The development of attitudes and values is a crucial part of this issue. The student is required to identify contrasting values positions associated with the various influences on Canadian unity. Furthermore, competencies are developed by separating fact from opinion. Students are urged to tolerate ambiguity in dealing with such an issue.

Yet, the direction in the overall unit is fuzzy. The social issue is not really resolved, except to enhance the individual's level of tolerance of politicians. Social action is prescribed, but leadership is not. Although the topic claims to focus on Canadian unity, it tends to stress those aspects of our heritage which divide us. It would be hard for reconstructionism to flourish in such a curricular context.

Specific Examples: Canada and the World

The Canada and the world issue requires students to assess their views about global concerns and national self-interest. Such concepts as interdependence, culture, and sovereignty are crucial to an understanding of this topic. The knowledge component deals with cultural, military, and economic associations between Canada and other governments. These include such things as foreign aid, foreign investment, and international stability. Citizenship is broadened in perspective, and the individual sees past the international boundaries to view Canada's relationship with a global community.

The inquiry skills place emphasis on the formal research process. Skills include establishing research questions, gathering information from a wide variety of sources on opposing views, analysis and synthesis of information, and evaluation of conclusions to assist in resolving the issue. Social action is not prescribed for this unit, and the participation skills emphasized involve communication and group consensus.

Again, there is no leadership education, and action is not required on the international issue. Students are required to identify the extent of self-interest and internationalism apparent in Canadian policies with other nations. Alternative foreign policies are encouraged and students evaluate the consequences of policy alternatives.

In developing attitudes, students concentrate on accepting Canadian contributions and the development of a positive self-concept of responsible citizenship. Throughout the topic of internationalism, the direction is inward, not outward. The goal of the study is to see how Canada is doing, and to be proud of the work Canada does in the international scene today. Internationalism and charity are viewed as valuable, but the extent of Canadian involvement is not a consideration. Social reconstruction is hard to achieve in such a unit because the limitations of study are very nationalistic. Although alternative policies are discussed, the conclusion of the unit deals with national awareness and

responsible citizenship. The logical extension of the policy-making exercise, ways to improve Canada's role in the global community, is never really reached.

Specific Examples: Tradition and Change

The first grade eleven unit centers on the competing values of tradition and change in a world dominated by pressures to conserve and reform. The social issue deals with such concepts as evolution, revolution, progress, and human welfare. The nature of social change is discussed, and students are required to examine the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the French Revolution as examples of change. The clear emphasis is on the process of change, and the impact of change on society. The inquiry skills require the student to focus on the issue, gather and organize data, and synthesize information.

However, social action is not prescribed in this unit. This fact presents an odd counterpoint to the nature of the unit structure itself. The unit examines the process of change, but the actual change mechanism - social action - is omitted from the requirements. Participation skills include critical thinking (through discussion of the issue with others) and the development of independent thinking (through the use of a statement of personal view).

The values aspect is also restricting. The student is encouraged to identify factors which promote and reject change as a force and how change is institutionalized in society. The effects of change on th society and the individual are also examined. However, the entire process of change is grounded by seeking such goals as respect for

evidence and recognition of the tentativeness of conclusions.

Although the values tend to address the impact of change, the attitude section limits this impact by encouraging restraint and conservation. The curious nature of this unit is that, while the issue is change itself, social action (the change mechanism) is not prescribed, while individual decision-making is required. Further, analysis of values requires assessing the effects of change on society; and the individual, while the application of the concept creating an attitude about change is restricted by conservative forces (respect for evidence and tentativeness of conclusions). The direction of the curriculum is jumbled. It seems to call for leadership without action, assessment of change for the future without change. Social reconstructionism would find difficulty in gaining ground in this unit.

Specific Examples: Population and Resource Distribution

The population and resource distribution issue deals with the problem of scarcity and how global imbalances can be redressed. The knowledge component stresses development, prosperity, disparity, and culture. Students examine why there are differences among nations in natural resources, development of such resources, resource distribution, and how these factors affect distribution of wealth. Students also research the implications for future years. The inquiry skills include data gathering, organization, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. Moreover, social action is prescribed. The student is required to prepare a plan of action

to resolve the issue that includes the feasibility and desirability of taking action. This plan of action is required by the curriculum, although an evaluation of the plan of action is not.

Participation skills stress interpretation and assessment of argumentation as well as group awareness. Critical thinking at an individual and group level is encouraged and provokes the individual to make conclusions on the topic. Although the knowledge and skills components of the curriculum provide for social action, the development of values tends to be conservative. The student is able to identify conflicting values and to understand global welfare and national prosperity from a variety of perspectives. Solutions are drawn and students examine the favourable and unfavourable consequences.

However, in the development of attitudes, the curriculum prescribes an empathy toward others and a sensitivity as a responsible citizen. Social reconstructionism cannot be realized in such a unit unless there is more emphasis on the students' own development as agents of change. To recognize, to empathize with, or to be sensitive to global problems takes the reformist only part of the way along the road to change.

Specific Examples: Political and Economic Systems

Given the grade twelve topics, it would seem that the greatest opportunities for reconstructionism would be pos-

sible at this level. The political and economic systems unit examines the conflicting political and economic values of freedom versus control and personal welfare versus the collective good. The social issue emphasizes such aspects as ideology, power, citizenship, and crucial conce s like leadership, decision-making, and individualism. Students study the major political and economic ideologies apparent today, and how political and economic decisions are made in society.

The inquiry skills require specific research, including the formulation of questions, data gathering, organizing, and analysis. Students are required to generate definitions of individualism and collectivism in contrasting political and economic systems and to develop generalizations about key variables which differentiate these systems. Students are also required to take social action by stating their conclusions about other political and economic systems and determining the desirability and feasibility of modifying Canada's political and economic system.

Participation skills include role-playing and a "sense of community" idea, both directed toward the production and clarification of an independent values position. The values objectives are not subject to the conservative tendencies found in other teaching units. The student deals with the individualism versus collectivism continuum in political and economic systems, and uses this orientation to consider reforms to the Canadian political and economic systems. As a

result, the student respects evidence and understands that one's conclusions are tentative and testable. As a whole, the unit does pursue individualism and decision-making in rationalizing and directing the Canadian political and economic systems. The student is able to take measure as an agent of change to truly encourage effective citizenship in Canada's society.

Specific Examples: Conflict and Cooperation

Conflict and cooperation are the central themes of the study in the second grade twelve topic. This topic stresses the dicotemy between national goals and international harmony. This topic emphasizes such concepts as co-existence, cooperation, conflict, detente, sovereignty, and balance. The student surveys examples of conflict and cooperation among states in the twentieth century, and discusses Canada's role in these relationships.

In inquiry skills, the student is responsible for focussing and clarifying the conflict versus cooperation issue, as well as data gathering, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing. The student formulates conclusions about the importance of such things as nationalism and internationalism in the twentieth century. Resolving this issue and applying the decision are not prescribed, nor is evaluation of the process.

Participation skills focus on leadership, and require the student to devise a plan of action for relieving international tensions. Negotiation, persuasion, and bargaining

are also emphasized in decision-making. The valuing objectives require the student to focus on feelings which cause nationalism and internationalism, and to determine the consequences of such forces. In the end, the student develops a feeling of self worth and of appreciation in the efforts required to resolve international difficulties. However, the valuing component is very conservative, and the opportunities for promoting change are limited. In this final unit in social studies, the curriculum prescribes leadership skills and the related values. However, the curriculum fails to prescribe social action. The social reconstructionist ideals are not entirely met.

Evaluation

Only one of the seven high school units meets the criteria for social reconstructionism - the grade twelve political and economic systems unit. Others meet all but one or two of the criteria; most units meet less. The

following chart serves to summarize the fidelity of the 1981 social studies curricular content to the nature of a social reconstructionist curriculum.

TOPIC	(SI)	(K)	(IS)	(PS)	(V)
Human Rights	*YES*	*YES*	*NO*	*NO*	*YES*
National Unity	*YES*	*NO*	*YES*	*NO*	*YES*
Canada & World	*YES*	*YES*	*NO*	*NO*	*YES*
Tradition/Change	*YES*	*YES*	*NO*	*YES*	*NO*
Population	*YES*	*YES*	*YES*	*YES*	*NO*
Political/Economic	*YES*	*YES*	*YES*	*YES*	*YES*
Conflict/Coop	*YES*	*YES*	*NO*	*YES*	*YES*

LEGEND: Competing values and concepts (social issue); Future orientation (knowledge); Social action process (inquiry skills); Development of leadership skills (participation skills); Resolution of issue (valuing).

Summary

There are a number of prescribed opportunities for social reconstruction in senior high school social studies. Students are required to deal with social issues which concern the future, a social inquiry process with social action, participation skills which may include leadership education, and a values framework which encompasses clarification and resolution of one's position. But from a slightly different perspective, there are several other ways the curriculum can be used to achieve social reconstruction.

Social reconstruction is identified most frequently with social reform and social change; however, much can be

done by individuals who have been taught to be better equipped to effect change. Such an individual is knowledgeable, skilled, and knows when and how to take action on an issue. Grooming leaders is less important in such a curriculum than providing the individual with the knowledge, skills and values needed to shape the future of society. The 1981 Social Studies does not prescribe social reconstruction, but many of the features are apparent.

Social action is not prescribed by the curriculum in all units; however, it is a part of the social inquiry model and may be used by the teacher in building a unit. The Department of Education outlines some concerns in the use of the social action component (e.g., community, parent, and school restrictions); yet, it still exists for application in some form. As well, the prescribed curriculum represents seventy-five per cent of the social studies program, and the balance is determined in part by the teacher, who is directed to consult with students and the community-at-large. An opportunity is provided to study other social issues which require action.

Maybe most important is the role of the committed social studies teacher and responsible students in social reconstruction. Regardless of what the curriculum says, a dedicated reconstructionist will find ways to groom students for leadership roles for a future, changing society. Prescription or not prescription, the teacher still directs the program. Ultimately, however, student are the change agents;

and, the success of social reconstructionism is in their hands. Whether through the curriculum's prescribed philosophy and content, the role of the teacher, or the students' ultimate response in society, social reconstructionism, a kind of effective citizenship, is alive and well in the 1981 Alberta social studies program.

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