

The Changing World

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OUR GROWING INTERDEPENDENCE

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MORE AND MORE, leaders in all walks of life are pointing to the actuality of a growing interdependence. In fact, it appears that this trend toward interdependence is apparently the ground-swell of a profound revolution in our time. If this observation is correct, it seems important that teachers should endeavor to understand the nature of this revolution in order that they may help our people to guide it intelligently.

What are some of the signs pointing to this growing interdependence?

The growing specialization of workers means that each worker is dependent upon workers in other specialized industries for the things and services which he needs and uses daily.

The growing specialization of industries means that when one large service or industry suffers a stoppage or dislocation this condition is felt immediately and progressively in all other industries.

The growing standardization of products and services operates as a factor in this growing interdependence. For example, I drive my car across the country knowing that I can buy gas and oil and replacements for worn-out parts at almost any service station along the highway.

The growth of interdependence is seen in the fact that, if factories and farms are to operate continuously at full capacity, consumers must have a purchasing power that is large enough to enable them to buy the things that are offered for sale in stores.

There is a growing awareness of this interdependence in still other areas. The social psychologist is pointing out that

those aspects of human behavior referred to as "mind" and "personality" are the products of human communication. Furthermore, the child guidance expert and mental hygienist are saying that the sense of security is a product of relations of interdependence. To these things may be added the observation that our basic Christian values, such as the Golden Rule and Brotherhood of Man, appear to imply that ethical values require a kind of interdependence for their emergence and realization.

And this growing interdependence is seen in our relations with peoples of other nations. Here again the facts and factors of interdependence are economic, psychological, and moral in nature.

At this point the question may well be asked: What are the educational implications of this trend toward interdependence? These things seem clear: (1) That teachers carry a special responsibility for helping our people to recognize and understand the growing pervasiveness and complexity of their interdependencies. (2) That teachers can help by showing the people how their competitive, individualistic philosophy, inherited from frontier conditions, now stands in the way of a full, generous functioning of the mechanisms of interdependence. And (3) that teachers are in a position to help our people create and develop a philosophy of interdependence. The question is: Will we choose an authoritarian interdependence or will we draw upon our democratic heritage in creating a democratic-cooperative, a voluntary-planning, interdependence?

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