

The Listening Post

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Unfair Attacks on Education Generate Renewed Support

UNFAIR CRITICISM sometimes achieves good in arousing interest otherwise undreamed of. No doubt the unfair and unwarranted article written by Irene Kuhn in the June issue of the *American Legion Magazine* accomplished just that result among the rank and file of the American Legion members.

The American Legion, more than most organizations, is made up of members of all walks of life. Also this organization, more than most organizations, contains thousands of dues-paying members who seldom attend a business meeting. They support the American Legion because they feel the Legion has done constructive work in services for the community and the public school, as well as for the veteran.

Long History of Support by American Legion

The services of the American Legion to the public schools have been long and valuable. In the early years of its existence, the Legion initiated the idea of American Education Week and it continues to lend its cooperation in this activity. National commanders have many times gone before Congressional committees taking a stand in favor of federal aid for education. Through the years the Legion in local, district, state and national meetings and conventions has passed resolutions supporting better education for American youth.

One such resolution, passed in the American Legion National Convention

in 1949, received noteworthy attention and wide acceptance by educators and book companies as well as other organizations. It concerned the evaluation of instructional materials and set up the following criteria for judging them:

1. "In the study of democracy, both its accomplishments and failures are examined.
2. "In the treatment of the individual's relationship to government, his obligations are stressed as well as his rights.
3. "In the presentation of the bitter truths of the history of democracy, an attempt is made to present constructive recommendations for preventing recurrence of the undesirable results described.
4. "The materials help students to develop their own methods of propaganda analysis to be applied to all situations.
5. "In dealing with controversial issues, both sides of the issue are fairly presented."¹

Legion Posts React to Unfair Attack

In spite of this valuable work, certain departments and local posts sometimes have drifted away from the general aims of the Legion. Unfortunately, these deviations are often played up by certain newspapers more spectacularly than all of the constructive work which has been done by the Legion. Such was the case with Irene Kuhn's article.

¹ *Educational Leadership*, March 1951.

However, the untruthfulness and unfairness of the statements made in her article aroused not only the active Legion members but also the easy-going, dues-paying members who seldom attend a meeting. The result was that many Legion posts across the country passed resolutions indicating their disapproval of the ideas in the article, and expressing an assurance of the Legion's faith in and support of the public schools. Some Legion posts even started resolutions through the proper channels requesting the national organization to take similar action. Such local action led through the Department of Illinois up to the National Convention at New York City, August 25-28, 1952, and resulted in the passing of two resolutions, No. 211 and No. 212.²

Resolutions Passed by 1952 Convention

The first resolution, No. 211, commended the National Education Association and the teaching profession for their continued assistance to (1) the Americanism Program of the American Legion, which includes the American Education Week, Oratorical Contests, Junior Baseball, Boys and Girls State, Child Welfare, Poppy Day, Scholarship Awards, etc. (2) their fight against subversive groups.

It is worth noting that the American Legion national organization took cognizance of the strong resolution

against communism passed at the National Education Association Convention in St. Louis, July 5 and 6, 1950. This resolution, in part, and an amendment to the by-laws:

1. Excluded from membership in NEA any member of the Communist Party.

2. Requested that members of the Communist Party shall not be employed in our schools, and that Communist organizations and Communist front organizations should be required by law to register with the Attorney-General of the United States.

The second resolution, No. 212, expressed the Legion's intent to defend the public schools against subversive attacks. It acknowledged with pride the achievement of the public schools and their effective work in building and safeguarding the ideals of American citizens. Realization was also shown that other subversive groups besides communists are attempting, through raising false issues and sinister criticism, to do injury to the public schools by causing doubt and confusion concerning their integrity and effectiveness.

Perhaps these two resolutions would never have been offered had it not been for the stimulus of the Kuhn article. There is considerable satisfaction, to those who have the interests of our public schools at heart, that the public has again risen to the defense of the public schools against unfair attack. —*Floyd L. Haight*, teacher, Dearborn Public Schools, Dearborn, Michigan.

² Copies may be secured by writing to the National Headquarters, American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana, or to the National Education Association.

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