

Social Activities in Americanization

By Hulda Youngberg, Oakland, California.

EVERY Americanization teacher, we take it, is intensely interested in the two chief aspects of her work, the promotion of a constantly improving educational technique and the development of types of social organization suited to the needs of her local community and night school. That word "social" we of course scrutinize most closely for its implications and applications as connected with our work and take it only in its highest sense. We know that the social activities of the night school are, at their best, not casual or incidental or accidental, but the fine flowering of a plant carefully nurtured in the educational life of the school. They are the expression of the organized life of the school as a social center. For the students these activities mean (1) training in democratic coöperation, (2) the growth of a sense of responsibility toward school and neighborhood, and (3) the development of leadership. With these objectives in mind the task of social organization in any school becomes clarified and simplified as to method, but the social responsibility of the teacher is intensified because of the continuous contact demanded in the social training of the students for self-direction and executive ability.

Because of this importance of the social activities as an effort of community self-expression and as a process of education for more purposeful citizenship, it is of interest to us all to learn how different evening schools are achieving ways and means suited to the needs and the character of their communities. It is to be expected that social activities present in our California schools a number of different forms of organization and also of different stages of development. The districts recently organized for Americanization work are laying the foundations of community desire for self-directed social activities with the school as social center, though they may not have arrived at any actual club organization. Other schools, somewhat older, have achieved at least some kind of organization if they have made progress of the forward-looking sort. The larger school of the large city type, with many academic interests as in commercial, vocational, and Americanization classes, seems likely to evolve a complexity of clubs and councils. Lodi, for example, has not yet any organization of the students in the Americanization classes, but the Friday night assemblies, with their excellent and definite topical program of educational motion pictures and their promotion of an atmosphere of school hospitality, seems fairly to invite the speedy organization of the students for social responsibilities in the life of the school.

In Crockett, membership in the one existing students organization is voluntary, but includes almost all in the men's classes. Brief programs frequently follow the weekly business meeting. Dues of fifty cents a month support the social activities. Each class has a less formal organization, the presidents of the different classes forming an executive committee for the nomination of officers for the student body and also acting as advisory committee.

In Richmond the Americanization classes have formed a cosmopolitan club, meeting monthly, to which

any one is eligible who has at least his first papers. In Santa Ana, with its two Mexican sections, one at either far end of the town, the older night school has a centrally located building. Mrs. Ricciardi, Director of Immigrant Education, writes:

We try to have any Mexican within a radius of five miles feel that the auditorium and community room of that school are always for Mexican use. * * * The night schools are loosely organized in the form of clubs. It is the aim this year to have one president for the two schools, with assistant officers in each school. By carefully choosing our officers we hope to throw much of the responsibility for all entertainment upon the student body.

The Oakland Evening High School is the most closely organized of any school reporting its social activities for this article. This is one of the older evening schools, and its social history ranges from the old days when the teacher conducted the social affairs of her individual class, to the complex student body organization of the present time, into which has been merged the International Club, a sub-organization of the school. Some years ago the leaders in the Americanization classes organized the International Club, the different classes electing representatives to the general committee which was the executive body. Its activities were in the nature of parties and excursions, etc. Mr. J. H. Allen, the principal, writes:

The International Club being merged into the student body organization now has the assistance of the general student body in any of its activities, although the plan is to give about twice in each term some form of social activity that is designed especially for the Americanization classes. * * * For the last three or four years some of the outstanding events for the Americanization classes have been a patriotic program put on for American Education Week in the fall term, and in the spring term the Independence Play, as a compliment to the newly made citizens. Also each term a separate dance is given exclusively for the benefit of the Americanization classes.

The activities carried on in our schools through these organizations are of varied character. The club at Crockett gives several parties during a semester. Its outstanding social function, the annual Thanksgiving dinner, is becoming a tradition. The affair is always given at the Community Auditorium, and is the biggest and most elaborate affair of the year. At Santa Ana the schools have coöperated with a cultured Mexican who trained his own Mexican pupils for a Cinco de Mayo program, to which the evening schools added numbers. Of their own initiative the Mexicans gave a religious play. Dances are given frequently and the different classes have parties. For last year the record is sixty community evenings and assemblies for singing, six programs, eleven teachers' parties, seven school dances and parties. There was an attendance for the year of 5823. Richmond reports as follows:

We have indoor picnics, indoor track meets, illustrated lectures, community singing, suitable observation of the national holidays by patriotic plays, speeches and songs. Our most successful venture was an original pageant "The Spirit of America."

San Jose has an organization unique in the fact that the young men organizing the club came into the

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