Further, it may be desirable to examine the special electric conditions in the atmosphere over the magnetic equator by means of radio investigations.

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¹ McNish, A. G., *Assoc. Terr. Mag. and Elect.*, Trans. Edinburgh meeting, 271-280 (Copenhagen, 1937).

² Appleton, E. V., *Science*, 106, 17 (1947).

Citizenship and Current Affairs in Army Education

THE following observations may perhaps serve to allay certain misgivings expressed in your thoughtful and constructive leading article in *Nature* of February 21, dealing with Army education, at the "undue emphasis" placed by the Army Council on citizenship and current affairs in the recently announced Army Education Scheme (Interim Period).

In any system of education it is inevitable that, for purposes of analysis and administrative convenience, there should be division into categories, and into subjects. Thus, in the new Army Education Scheme, there are the broad divisions of general education and individual education, and the former is itself divided into subjects of primary instruction, with the addition of citizenship and current affairs. Despite these necessary divisions it is not intended that any category or subject shall be dealt with in isolation, but rather that all subjects shall combine to foster the development of the responsible and well-informed soldier-citizen. Training in citizenship, therefore, will be the student's concern not only in periods set apart for that purpose but also in those devoted to the ordinary subjects of the curriculum; conversely, the study of public affairs cannot proceed without, and indeed must to some extent be based on, attention to historical and geographical considerations, to mastery of the basic skills of general education, and to the part which science plays in the modern world.

The distinction is rather one of emphasis. The young soldier joining the Army is given a short initial course in citizenship and current affairs, provided he is not in more urgent need of special instruction in elementary reading and writing. This first course is part of his introduction to the Army. It seeks to explain the need for service and to awaken in him a realization of the responsibilities as well as the privileges of citizenship. Later, the emphasis swings in the direction of consolidating his general education in primary subjects, a process to which two thirds of the time available for compulsory education is devoted. After the first twelve months of service a further change of balance takes place, and for the next two years, for those who are staying on in the Army beyond the period of national service, citizenship and current affairs share together an equal place with instruction in primary subjects. Finally, after the third year of service, citizenship and current affairs remain the only compulsory subjects in the curriculum, though facilities in working hours will continue to be made available for the pursuit of voluntary studies (a position identical with that occupied from the start of their service by those exempt on educational grounds from the provisions of general education).

It will be seen from the above that training in citizenship is in a sense the hard core of the Scheme,

forming thereby the most important single factor making for a balanced and integrated curriculum. Certain cogent considerations may be held to justify this choice. First, it is a theme particularly relevant to adult students, for the man, unlike the boy, can quickly be made conscious that he has a stake in the community; matters which in the schoolroom can only be considered in the abstract take on with the approach of adulthood a reality and a seriousness which only maturity and experience can give. Secondly, the war-time experiment of current affairs discussions together with systematic study of the "British Way and Purpose" gave, despite many imperfections, convincing proof that the product of such periods was valuable in the way of improved officer-man relationships as well as increased social awareness.

It is true that discussions of this nature cannot always be divorced from political considerations, since politics is the art or science of living in society. But the discussions must be conducted with good temper and objectivity, and party political bias is not allowed to dominate them. It is true, too, that present educational standards among the majority of young men and young women entering the Army are such as to lay emphasis on the need for careful and accurate presentation of information as a necessary preliminary to any exchange of views. This is not lost sight of, and it may be pertinent to mention in this connexion the valuable contribution in this field made by the B.B.C. in its current affairs broadcasts for the Forces—factual commentaries valuable either as the raw material of discussion or as briefing matter for the instructor.

There are two further, and perhaps less obvious, reasons why current affairs discussions may be considered to play a particularly valuable part in the Army Education Scheme. First, the regimental officer has a special responsibility in acting as chairman at such discussions. This cannot but have a potent effect in driving home his personal responsibility for the educational progress of his men; he has a definite part to play and is therefore in less danger of considering education as something apart from the normal life of the unit, something to be left to the specialist instructor. The basis of the Army is the unit, and the best laid educational plans can only come to full fruition as an expression of unit life and experience. Finally, the current affairs discussion group is not based upon an educational grouping; that is to say, it is not composed of individuals of approximately equal educational attainment but is a cross-section representative of the unit as a whole, since it is composed upon a platoon basis. There are thus brought together individuals differing widely in interest, occupation and intellect but united by the common bond of fellowship within their small community. That throughout the Army men and women should be meeting regularly in small groups, under the chairmanship of their own officers, to discuss together some current topic of common interest is surely expressive of our democratic way of living and is powerful for good in its opportunities for the development of those qualities of tolerance, fair play and understanding on which as a nation we set such store.

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