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Humanizing history: [Review of the history series Clarendon biographies (London: O.U.P.)]

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BOOK REVIEWS

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PREDOMINANTLY RURAL COUNTRIES

edited by *Professor John Turner*, published by the School of Education, University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. (R1-00).

This volume is devoted to the proceedings of a seminar held at Roma in June, 1968, and in this context "predominantly rural" refers specifically to Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Malawi, countries which, because of their size, lack of major industries and meagre economy face the same problems in educational decision-making and economics.

Much of the material in this collection of papers is devoted to the economics of education in these countries, not mainly from the point of view of professional economists, but from that of administrators and senior officials who, according to Mr. M. V. B. Mangoche in his paper on "The Role of Youth Movements and Voluntary Organizations in Rural Countries" are, in the main, "the men to blame for the wrong decisions which Governments make."

The question of economics in education is approached from different standpoints — primary education, higher education, youth movements, implementing the curriculum in countries where agriculture plays the major role in the economic development; but they all have the central theme that overall development cannot take place independently of educational development, which in its turn is dependent on economic factors. These economic factors are common to many of the smaller countries in Africa, and although it may be said, we hope without appearing conceited, that South Africa does not face the same economic problems as these other countries, even in Bantu education, the papers are of importance to South African observers. The volume should appeal to those interested not only in the economics of education but also in comparative education, and complements Professor Turner's penetrating article elsewhere in this issue on "Some Educational Tensions in Developing Countries".

L.P.

MAPS AND AIR PHOTOGRAPHS

by *G. C. Dickenson.* Arnold (London).

I regard this book with gratitude and satisfaction, for it is so essentially what has long been needed, to help and guide students. When there are some who have been "geographically" trained and others who have not, it is difficult, to turn out, at the end of a course ,a uniformly qualified and capable group. This book simply, interestingly and informatively set out, has a great deal to offer the trained student and the wherewithal to lead the untrained, to work with confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

Part I provides an excellent historical backgroup to map-making. The calculations and considerations of individuals such as Eratosthenes, Ptolemy, Mercator, show the progressive efforts to record expanding knowledge of the world. The determination of latitude and longitude led to the development of map projections. This section is skilfully handled and the discussion of the basic properties of distance, direction, area and shape (without the complication of mathematics) offers a refreshing yet convincing account, of the difficulties of accurate map-making, then and now.

Part II is particuarly pleasing. It treats of fundamentals such as scale, area, enlarging and reduction, grids, the use of maps in the field, the third dimension (profiles and block diagrams). It makes maps come alive, for students who have before, not been able to interpret the data offered on the printed sheet.

Step by step, the intricacies of contouring and its associated problems and possibilities, are set out in Part III and the chapter on "Features of the Human, Social and Economic Landscape", highlights the geographical relationships and reactions which explain the distribution of people and their mode of living.

Mapping from Air Photography (Part IV) is new and exciting. The characteristics of air photography and the necessarily new methods of interpretation are explained. The physical properties are discussed, clearly, simply and instructively. Lastly comes the great thrill of plotting from aerial photographs, either to supply more detail to existing maps, or to make entirely new maps.

This book contains a wealth of information and the sequence, clarity and exciting interest which it evokes, make it not only, "a guide into the intriguing world of maps" but an essential reference book for mapmaking and interpretation.

C.R.

HUMANIZING HISTORY

Is there a new approach to the teaching of history in our schools? While almost every other subject in the curriculum of South African schools has experienced a revolution in approach and new

methods of presentation, history has been left behind in stagnant backwaters.

One aspect of the conservatism of history teachers is the fact that in most schools pupils are still anchored to the single textbook, which is frequently regarded as authoritative, not only by pupils but by their teachers and examiners.

It is in view of this lavish devotion to the one textbook, that the publication of the Clarendon series of biographies by Oxford University Press is to be welcomed. The provision of these accounts of the lives of the makers of history, written by scholars and teachers of experience, will help to involve pupils in the use of a variety of books for information and enjoyment. These biographies, which contain source material in the text, will give young readers a clear picture of the age and encourage them to read further.

A glance at the titles of this series — Charles Darwin, Alfred the Great, John Wesley, Isaac Newton, Napoleon, Queen Victoria, and Gandhi — shows how the scope of history embraces not only the great political leaders of the centuries, but the great thinkers in realms of science.

The biographies are not so massive as to discourage young readers, and yet not so slight as to be found trivial or superficial by the more experienced. The format of the books is pleasing and the style attractive. They will give the reader a taste for literary work in history, indeed this series supplies the need for history readers — not simply textbooks.

These biographies, by the inclusion of fascinating personal details of great lives, will help to *humanize* history.

A.N.B.

EDUCATION AT BERKELEY — 'THE MUSCATINE REPORT'

University of California Press 1968.

In March, 1965, a resolution was adopted in the Senate at Berkeley proposing a commission of inquiry into the state of education at the university, the object being the 'revitalization of educational aims and practices.' The commission was duly appointed with Charles Muscatine as chairman.

After lengthy investigations during which hundreds of members of the various faculties were interviewed and a survey, based on the analysis of a questionnaire submitted to over 2000 students, conducted, the report was issued in 1966.

Certain sections of this report should be compulsory reading for all engaged in higher education in South Africa; although circumstances in this country are in many respects quite different from conditions on campuses in the United States, there are suggestions in the report which could do much to revitalize university education in South Africa.

During the widespread unrest among students in America, especially at Berkeley, many students openly questioned the adequacy of universities as educational institutions. Although many university authorities in South Africa would question the validity of student opinion on these matters, and suggest that instead of paying atention to the complaints of discontented students, who, it is claimed, are only a vocal minority, the needs of the majority of students should be considered, the commission at Berkeley made every effort to ascertain student opinion on all matters concerning the kind of education offered on the campus. The Committee believed that the feedback of student opinion can contribute not only to the improvement of specific courses but also to the assessment and planning of educational programmes. As the Committee expressed it:

> 'The students bring to discussion of educational policy and assessment both a fresh viewpoint and an acute involvement in such discussions. By the time a student has graduated, he is often qualified to evaluate certain aspects of the curriculum better than many of the professors who teach in it. He is in a good position to recognize omissions and redundancies in curriculum.' p.60.

Student ratings were used to recognize distinction in teaching. In appraising their own teaching most lecturers have little communication with students. This is especially true of large lecture groups. Student ratings, like all ratings, are subject to bias and unreliability and cannot always be taken at face value, nevertheless it would appear absurd to deny that such expression of student opinion is a highly relevant factor to be taken into account by a teacher in governing his conduct of a course. It is natural that many lecturers should tend to avoid the possibly traumatic outcome of the collection of student ratings, nevertheless, it is necessary for the maintenance of high quality teaching at college and university level.

The Committee also pointed out that students may also be more strongly motivated in their studies if they sense that lecturers are interested in them as individuals — not just an amorphous student body.

> 'We must try to build bridges across that gulf between generations that separate students from their teachers and their own past . . . professors may themselves re-discover the youthful spirit.' p.36.

The Committee in its analysis of the anatomy of student discontent has some interesting observations on drop-outs and rebels.

> 'Dissatisfaction is most prominent among the nonconformist students who are typically inclined towards the humanities and social sciences . . . The dropout is the extreme case of