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FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

THE WILDERNESS OF CAPITALIST SCHOOLING REVISITED[1]

The daily reality of social studies instruction in schools is dominated by what I have called the "grammar of social studies" meaning that most of our writing and research and a good deal of our teaching has little or no impact on actual classrooms. Most of us, as social studies educators and scholars, hope that our work makes a difference in schools. Many of us believe that meaningful and reflective approaches to teaching should become the norm in social studies classrooms. Yet, the reality that I see in reports from the classroom, and in my own visits to schools, is that meaningful social studies is a relatively rare exception. Social studies teaching and learning tends to be dominated by teacher talk, textbook, drill, and memorization. Advocates of meaningful learning in social studies face resistance from institutional mandates, pressure for coverage over depth, the perceived obligation to stick to the textbook, and compulsion for students to perform well on standardized measures of their learning. Given the dilemmas of the field and the profound barriers to widespread realization of meaningful social studies instruction in schools, what might lead a person to choose to become a social studies scholar?

EARLY YEARS

In my own case, it was naïvete combined with the drive for success. My career is a story of youthful idealism tempered by the realities of life in a mass, bureaucratized, capitalist society in which schools are dominated by a process of cultural transmission, a place where children are "drilled in cultural orientations" and subject matter becomes "the instrument for instilling them" (Henry, 1963, p. 283). My life as a social studies scholar developed out of a number of influences both within and outside of formal education. Several factors affecting my development as a child gave me an interest in social studies and a predisposition to focus on social issues. Family, church, school, and the culture of the 1950s and 1960s were all important influences on my thinking and orientation to teaching. I grew up in the south: Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Oklahoma. I witnessed the contradictions of Jim Crow segregation first hand, and benefited from the advantages of being White and middle class.

My father, raised in the North, and a liberal on most social issues, was broadly interested in issues of the day and spent many hours reading the newspaper, watching news programming on TV, commenting on developments, and engaging our family

C. Woyshner (Ed.), Leaders in Social Education, 55–70.

in dinner table conversations about important issues and topics. Though I had two younger sisters, they were seldom involved in conversations on issues until after I was out of high school. My father and I discussed many things: the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the counter-culture. We were seldom in full agreement and were frequently at odds. Sometimes, there were arguments.

He had grown up in a large family in which discussion and argument frequently focused on social issues and competing ideas of the 1920s and 1930s. The conversations, thoughtfulness, and argumentative nature of his family stemmed from a small town pietist background and a strong desire to make a contribution to the community and set the world straight. In part, this came from the social gospel of the Methodist church and from my grandfather, who spent a few years as a Methodist minister. I too was raised in the Methodist church and got a strong dose of the social gospel and a missionary zeal to save the world.

I can remember, from an early age, developing an interest in news programming on TV, in reading the newspaper, and in reading for pleasure. I was a good student, though not keenly interested in pleasing my teachers. In school, through reading and from my father's stories of World War II, I got interested in history, biography, and current events. I remember enjoying the *Weekly Reader*, *Junior Scholastic*, *Current Biography*, TV programming like "Biography," historical documentaries, war movies, westerns, and devouring books in the "Biography," "Landmark," and "We Were There" series during the upper elementary grades. Some of this reflected my father's interests, but what most captivated my imagination was the sense of drama, heroism, and glory. To counter this, my father shared a shocking little book, *The Horror of It*, an anti-war photo essay of pictures from World War I (Barber, 1932).

I never really liked school all that much and hated it at times. Nonetheless, a few teachers piqued my interest in social studies and contributed to my development. Mr. John Amick was an excellent sixth grade teacher who brought in biographies, important social studies topics, and regular discussions of current events and social issues. One discussion in particular centered on the conflict in the Middle-East. I asked, "Which side is right?" He gave a great answer, appropriate for our class, which was "it depended" on who you were and what you believed. That conversation, and the year in that class, had an important impact on me.

In junior high and high school most of my teachers were pretty ordinary. I did have a few excellent English teachers who inspired us to study and grow, and a number of experiences both in and out of school that contributed to a growing questioning of society. Outside, the national consensus was exploding—civil rights, the Vietnam war, the sexual revolution—we were innocents in the throes of the 1960s "revolutions." During high school, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, I remember hearing about this great teacher, a professor from the university (Oklahoma State), who taught an experimental summer class for high school students focused on social issues. Though I didn't take the class, the teacher, Daniel Selakovich, would later become my first professional mentor.

During my early years in college at the University of Oklahoma (OU) and Oklahoma State University (OSU), I drifted, occasionally joined in protesting the war, listened to Bob Dylan, and experimented with the things my generation is infamous for. I remember seeing books like the Leinwand series, *Problems in American Life* (1968–1969), Postman and Weingartner's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969), and Illich's *DeSchooling Society* (1971) though I didn't read them until much later. I chose not to apply for a student deferment on moral gounds, received a high number in the draft lottery, and slacked my way through school.

During my freshman year at OU, I took a U.S. History survey course, a large lecture section combined with once-a-week discussion. It was the first time I'd had a history class in which alternative ideas and interpretations were presented and discussed. The professor was a leftist historian and the graduate assistant I studied with disagreed with many of his interpretations—the dissonance created depth and a new understanding that the background to the explosive issues of the 1960s was contested, just as current issues were, and I found that intriguing. After a rough start, I ended up doing well in the course and majoring in history. As an undergraduate, I took a great number of history and social science courses, and a good deal of philosophy. Gradually, my skills and aptitude as a student improved. I was stimulated by social issues, hot topics, and the "why" of it all, and not particularly motivated by the standard curriculum.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU GRADUATE?

After college, I didn't know what I wanted to do. A degree in history from a mid-western land grant university was a ticket to a job cleaning tables, delivering pizza, building houses, driving a cab, or saving the world as a VISTA volunteer (I did all these things). I had chosen a major appropriate for teaching or graduate study, and little else. I resisted teaching. After a year spent doing other things, including reading Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) and taking my first motorcycle trip, I saw an ad recruiting VISTA volunteers, applied, and was sent to Kansas City, Missouri. I was assigned to a community re-development project led by former Black Panthers. The African-American men that I worked with had been community activists in Kansas City for a number of years. They had participated in the turmoil following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and had long contested the dominant power structure.

By the time I arrived as a VISTA volunteer, they were seeking ways to work within the system for gradual improvement. They had formed the Social Action Committee of 20 (SAC 20), a consortium of community service organizations, to coordinate improvement efforts. Many years later, I returned to Kansas City and visited the park across from the house where I had lived, only to find a statue of Bernard Powell, the civil rights activist who founded SAC 20, and learned that he had been murdered in 1979 after taking a well-publicized stand against drug dealing in the neighborhood. Mob connections were suspected but never proven.

Most pertinently, in terms of my own personal development, I was introduced to a new perspective. As VISTA volunteers, we surveyed community housing needs. It was an eye-opening experience. We learned that freeways were officially "National Defense Highways," with many exit ramps, but very few on-ramps, so that the militia could occupy the neighborhood on a moment's notice. Also, large swaths of housing in the area had been removed as part of a freeway development plan that was later halted by community pressure. Housing in the area was in poor condition, and there was a general feeling of hopelessness about future prospects for individual and community improvement.

That experience, though brief, taught me that the problems and issues of our society were deeply entrenched, and that in my youthful idealism I was quite naïve about social realities and the impediments to change. I had been a history major, but hadn't learned much about the historical rootedness of social institutions and behaviors. My VISTA experience taught me how difficult and profoundly ingrained the problems of poverty were, that there was a human face behind every statistic, that issues of social class were somewhat intractable, and that I had to find a point of leverage, an institutional niche where I could translate my idealism into action. Why not go through schools? I knew I could do a better job than most of my social studies teachers.

Though resistant at first, I fell into teaching. Back to school I went to get a teaching certificate and to study social studies methods under Dan Selakovich at OSU. He introduced me to the inquiry methods of the new and newer social studies, and shared many of the reflective, innovative teaching materials produced during that period. I student taught a 6th grade social studies class at Stillwater Middle School, then found a job at Olive, Oklahoma, a rural school less than an hour from home. Though I struggled as a beginning teacher with aspects of the job that beginners often find difficult (classroom management; thorough and consistent planning; clearly articulated rationale into practice) I learned that issues and problems of the past and present struck a nerve with students, just as they had with me, and helped make history and the social sciences come alive. Many of our class discussions and debates were highly animated. Though I failed in many ways that first year (I received a letter notifying me that my contract would not be renewed, later rescinded, as did several other first year teachers at the school), the experience was transformative. My failures increased my determination to succeed.

Following several months of drifting, and a hitchhiking trip to the east coast, I returned to school at OSU to work toward a masters degree and was fortunate to be offered a teaching assistantship by Dan Selakovich. It was a rich and rewarding growth experience. This time around, I put the necessary time into planning for my discussion sections of "Schools and American Society." Students responded very positively. From that experience, I learned that I was well suited to succeed at teaching, and could even enjoy the process. Following that, I taught successfully for three years in culturally diverse urban schools in Portland, Oregon. I learned

my trade and confirmed my commitment to an inquiry, issues-oriented approach through first hand experience in a social studies classroom.

INSPIRED BY ISSUES

The success I found in teaching was inspired, in part, by my interest in issues of social justice. Since childhood, I had been interested in history, biography, and current events, and puzzled by the perplexing issues of society—stratification between rich and poor, issues related to race, class, gender and other differences, war and conflict—by the failure to fully realize the American dream. I experimented with issues during my early years of teaching in the public schools, and saw myself as a discussion-oriented teacher. Issues, past and present, were the hinge that made discussions possible. During my years as a graduate student at OSU I got interested in Michael Harrington (author of *The Other America*) and democratic socialism, instigated in part by a brief article on Harrington in *Business Week*, "Socialism is No Longer a Dirty Word to Labor," and by growing familiarity with Marxian ideas and the roots of socialism.

A few of the graduate courses I took at the time were also very helpful. In particular, I had several history and social science courses in which I confronted a meaningful and in-depth study of political ideologies for the first time. Several of these courses were taught in a seminar style, the first time I had really experienced that kind of grounded, yet open discussion in my entire educational experience. In one history seminar, I wrote a bibliographic essay on competing interpretations of the causes for the Spanish American War, setting a model for subsequent work. These experiences further inspired my interest in social issues through weighing of multiple interpretations and discussion of competing ideas.

Additional inspiration stemmed from a deep-seated problem I had observed in schools, which was the general failure of my teachers to make history interesting, to relate or connect it to present day realities. Much of what I experienced was conditioned by the standard grammar of schooling, a rather lifeless and traditional approach, despite the fact that the society outside the school seemed to be exploding. The fundamental divisions in our society and our world—between rich and poor, black and White, oppressor and oppressed—led to specific issues that I used frequently during my early experiences as a teacher and confirmed the resonance and power of social issues.

BACK TO SCHOOL, AGAIN

In 1983 I left my public school teaching post in Portland for graduate school at Stanford University. I applied to Stanford and Indiana University based on the recommendations of my mentor, Dan Selakovich, and ultimately selected Stanford. As I recall, he said, "Not everyone there is as conservative as they are at the Hoover Institution. But, when you are looking for a job, Stanford will probably give you

an edge." At Stanford, under the mentorship of Richard Gross, I began reading social studies theorists in some depth. In one of my first seminar papers I examined alternative approaches to teaching American history. I read widely and encountered much of the literature on issues-centered social studies for the first time, including works by Rugg, Hunt and Metcalf, Oliver and Shaver, Shirley Engle, Richard Gross, and others. I read about the history of education and social studies in books by Ravitch, Tyack, Cremin, Hertzberg, and others.

My years in graduate school at Stanford were important growth years. When I arrived at the University, I was excited to be studying as a full time scholar, and a little intimidated by my surroundings. Was I worthy? Could I succeed at Stanford? Did I really belong? Prior to graduate school at Oklahoma State, my previous record as a student was somewhat spotty, and far from stellar. My experience at Stanford, with the caring mentoring of Richard Gross, taught me that I could succeed.

During these years my approach to the social studies field was gradually taking shape. I was influenced by my reading, mentors, teaching, and a broad array of life experiences. As I read during graduate school, I learned that I had an affinity for the "problem-centered" or "issues-centered" camp. An issue is a question on which people hold differing perspectives in the realm of public policy, in the interpretation of history or social phenomena, or in the sphere of personal belief and action (Evans, Newmann, & Saxe, 1996). In the context of a "troubled" society, attention to social issues in schools is an imperative. As Harold Rugg (1941) once wrote, "To keep issues out of the school … is to keep thought out of it; it is to keep life out of it."

SCHOLARLY INFLUENCES

My growing understanding of reflective teaching and the issues-centered approach was rooted in the works of many other scholars who were seminal thinkers in the social studies field, including Engle and Ochoa, Oliver and Shaver, Newmann, and others. As a young scholar and advocate for an issues-centered approach, many of these icons of social studies became informal mentors and friends, and strongly influenced my thinking at various times.

I am a fourth or fifth generation issues-centered educator. Both of my primary mentors during graduate school were advocates of issues-centered social studies, Dan Selakovich at Oklahoma State, and Richard Gross at Stanford. There have been many others influences including Mr. John Amick, my 6th grade teacher; my father; and a guidance counselor in high school who I observed as a great discussion leader. And I have had many informal mentors: Shirley Engle, James Shaver, Anna Ochoa-Becker, Fred Newmann, Howard Zinn, David Tyack, Clinton Jencks, and Michael Harrington. Several of these scholars spent time with me, sharing ideas or reacting to a draft of something I had written. The first time I heard Shirley Engle speak was in San Francisco in 1983 during my first year as a doctoral student at Stanford. Engle was a long-time advocate of issues-centered teaching and one of the leading thinkers in the history of the field. He was saying much the same thing as I was thinking and

writing, and he took the time to meet with me and share his thoughts in reaction to a paper I was working on.

A number of scholarly works have influenced my thinking about social issues. I read a lot as a child, both fiction and non-fiction. Two books stand out from my youth, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) and John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* (1961). During graduate school I read many works by issues-centered scholars in social studies, mostly on my own and for papers in open-ended seminars led by Dr. Gross. The titles include something of a who's who among advocates of issues-centered social studies: Postman and Weingartner's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969), Oliver and Shaver's *Teaching Public Issues in the High School* (1966), Massialas and Cox's *Inquiry in the Social Studies* (1966), Gross, Muessig and Fersh's, *The Problems Approach in the Social Studies* (1960), Hunt and Metcalf's *Teaching High School Social Studies* (1955 & 1968), and key works by Harold Rugg, John Dewey, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, and Paulo Freire. A few years earlier I had read Harrington, Marx, and others on socialism and competing ideologies. All of these works had an influence on my emerging world-view and ideas about education.

Richard Gross, my mentor at Stanford, introduced me to Harold Rugg through some of the stories he told during methods class and in seminars. When I announced at one seminar that the way to change social studies was to develop innovative textbooks, he responded, "Ron is where Harold Rugg was 50 or 60 years ago."

I was also motivated by scholars that I reacted against. At AERA in the late 1980s, I heard Diane Ravitch present a paper to a nearly empty hall in which she touted the revival of history and the new California Framework. Angered by much of what I heard, at the end of the session I asked, "When will students ever confront the issues?" From that point forward, I found myself writing scholarly work that challenged the wisdom of the revival of traditional history as a rather backward looking and conservative approach to education that would ultimately do more harm than good.

I owe a debt of gratitude for the support and mentoring of family and friends, including my parents, my wife Mika, and my children. Without them, my scholarly success might not have happened. Mika has always been supportive of my efforts and has accepted my sometimes preoccupied presence for stretches of time. Even when, in the words of Marilyn Monroe in "The Misfits," "It was like he wasn't there, even when he was." My father and my participation in a Unitarian men's group have also influenced my development and my work. My father forced me to be logical in our political arguments, and the men's group contributed by helping me learn to go beyond argument toward dialogue, an important distinction. All of these friends and family have listened patiently as I have talked about my work, offering support, questions, and comments. "How's that book coming," is a frequent refrain. In more than a few cases, they provided tangible support with proofreading and editing. I have also benefited from the support of my colleagues at San Diego State University and elsewhere, through their comments, questions, feedback, and, in the case of the

University, financial support for archival research and writing. So, my work is far from a "single handed" enterprise.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

As a curriculum historian I have read works by a number of previous scholars such as John Dewey, Harold Rugg, George S. Counts, and others. By these standards my contributions are relatively insignificant. So, I begin this task with a sense of humility. My motivations for becoming a teacher and scholar have activist roots. Moreover, I have long considered myself an advocate within social studies education. The *Handbook on Teaching Social Issues* (1996 & 2007) was essentially a forward looking contribution to the field, seeking to move it in the direction of issues-centered teaching and learning. The *Handbook,* for which I served as first editor, provides an introduction to some of the major works in the issues-centered camp and offers help to teachers in determining how to apply issues-centered principles to subject-centered courses. It has had some influence and continues to be used as a course text in a few places.

The Social Studies Wars (2004) started out as my attempt to write a history of issues-centered social studies and evolved into a full history of the field. The book attempts a balanced approach to understanding the history of social studies, though it is a story told through the eyes of an issues-centered educator. As I began the work, I wanted to write the history of issues-centered social studies, to examine where we were, how far we had come, and why we seemed to have so little impact on classroom practice, a key motivating question or dilemma. As I got further into the research and writing of the book, I found that it was necessary to look at all the camps in social studies, to trace their interactions, and to tell the full story, at least as much of it as I could grasp. Herbert Kliebard's work was a strong influence on my thinking, as were the works of Larry Cuban and David Tyack. The book provides an overview of the main choices in the field for teachers and policymakers as they have emerged and evolved over time. It may help readers clarify their orientation, purposes, and aims, and will at least provide some understanding of the historical evolution of the field. Unfortunately, American society has largely failed to critically examine the purposes of education, contriubuting to our ongoing "crisis."

I published a series of articles and book chapters based on field research I conducted in the earliest years of my career. "Teacher Conceptions of History" (1989) was the central piece. Other scholars have explored similar ground since then, but mostly through a different lens in which history is seen as the core of social studies.

Early in my career I edited a series of special sections on issues-centered education that started with publication of papers from a session I organized for the 1988 meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies. I invited several prominent advocates of issues-centered education (including Engle, Gross, Newmann, and Shaver) to discuss our progress and reasons for the failure to have greater impact on classroom practice.

The conference session led to formation of the Issues-Centered Education Special Interest Group (SIG) which I proposed and organized. I did so because after writing a doctoral dissertation on the history of the "societal problems approach" in social studies, I wanted to do something about it. The SIG, now known as the Issues-Centered Community, has enjoyed a continuing presence in NCSS meetings and has served as a enduring source of support and collaboration. At one of the earliest meetings, a longtime supporter of issues-centered education remarked, "It's great seeing all the rebels in one room." The *Handbook on Teaching Social Issues* was a collaborative effort that grew out of SIG meetings.

I have also written several critiques and reviews of the works of other scholars in competing camps, some friendly, others less so. In a few of these articles I served as a warrior from the issues-centered camp engaged in the battles of the social studies wars.

In recent years I have published three books focused on particularly interesting and enlightening episodes from the social studies past. The books include a biography of Harold Rugg and the censure of his social studies textbooks, *This Happened in America: Harold Rugg and the Censure of Social Studies* (2007); a history of the 1960s new social studies, *The Hope for American School Reform: The Cold War Pursuit of Inquiry Learning in Social Studies* (2011a); and a history of 1960s era reform, the academic freedom battles it spawned, and the conservative restoration that followed, *The Tragedy of American School Reform: How Curriculum Politics and Entrenched Dilemmas Have Diverted Us from Democracy* (2011b). I believe that the dramatic conflicts explored in these works offer important insights and have great potential as a documentary or screenplay. My current project is an in-depth examination of the origins and development of school accountability reform and its impact on citizenship education.

REALITIES OF SCHOOLING

Despite my continuing commitments, I have become more realistic about the limited chances for reflective, issues-centered, or other "meaningful" educational reform to make a significant dent in mainstream classroom practice. Occasionally, I get pessimistic and cynical. In the early 1990s Howard Zinn, noted author of *A Peoples History of the United States* (1980), once wrote something like, "I can understand cynicism, but I don't believe in it." In the rational parts of my mind, I'm coming from a similar position. The chances for large-scale change are slim. I recall a conversation with Jim Shaver in which he reiterated his mantra, "No major changes," meaning that curriculum change would come only incrementally and that the prospects for significant or widespread change were slim, along with his admonition on the lack of relation between research and practice: "You need a hobby, don't you?"

Yet, I believe it is crucial that issues-centered education remain one of the rationale choices to be considered as teachers confront the history of the field and reflect on what they are doing and why. However, getting teachers to reflectively examine

the rationales behind their pedagogical approaches can be difficult. It seems there is a great focus among teachers on what works, and often too little thought about the aims of education. The "mindlessness" that Jim Shaver criticized in his NCSS presidential address (1977) seems not to have gone away.

My work on the history of the field suggests that multiple strands of curriculum reform are at work in schools, have been for a century or more, and will continue. Moreover, the politics of the curriculum are constantly changing, and the pendulum seems to swing slowly between the poles of tradition and innovation. At the present moment we are seeing the implementation of a technology of "democratic unfreedom" (Marcuse, 1964) in schools in which the freedom to experiment that is required for meaningful reflective teaching is being systematically taken away. Teachers are increasingly facing de-professionalization by a system that repels alternatives. Moreover, issues-centered education is out-of-step with the times as advocates of traditional history are winning many victories in the state-by-state battles. Powerful interest groups impact the context of the social studies field, set parameters, and influence its direction.

I believe that it is essential for advocates of meaningful social studies to resist the current overemphasis on accountability and the neglect of our field. It is important for us to educate the public, policymakers, and teachers about the choices we have, and the historical evolution, scapegoating, and interest group financing in the war on social studies that has brought us to this point. Though I am rather pessimistic about our chances in the short-term, I believe that we can reach many teachers. Over the long haul the inherent energy of an reflective inquiry or issues-centered approach has staying power—it improves the chances for teachers to interest students in the great issues of our time, that span past and present, and the chances of students making connections between what they study in the curriculum and their lives outside school.

The oppressive nature of business driven accountability reform and the constraints it has created have driven me into an archive, and the dusty stacks of the library. It has led me to seek some distance and a bird's-eye view so as to examine long-term trends, contemplate what could make a difference, and try to comprehend why inquiry and issues-centered approaches have had so little impact on classrooms—Rugg, Problems of Democracy, the Harvard Project, and the flurry of issues-centered materials in the newer social studies were major successes—and all have faded from the scene. So, the trajectory of my scholarly work has shifted to curriculum history in an effort to develop a deeper understanding and more powerful explanation for our failure to influence more than a small percentage of teachers.

The obstacles to building and sustaining meaningful teaching and learning in social studies classrooms are overwhelming. We haven't fared very well, but we have good and respected company. In my own work, I have tried to be cognizant of the obstacles from the start—and to accept the relatively minor place in the schools that seems reserved for reflective and issues-oriented education. Still, it bothers me that we have so little impact. As Shirley Engle said at one of the last meetings of the

Issues-Centered Education SIG that he attended, "All this work, it's made so little difference." It's hard to accept losing. I have described some of the obstacles above, and in other publications. The obstacles relate to what Tyack and Cuban have called the "grammar of schooling," aspects of schools that are embedded in the institution and are hard to change, that become just "the way schools are" (1995). There remains a great deal of "mindlessness" at work in schools, and much of what goes on lacks clear rationale (Shaver, 1977). Unfortunately, in the current age of accountability reform, this seems more true than ever.

It also seems self-evident to me that social issues, reflective probing questions, and the great variety of teaching strategies that flow from them, are at the heart of social education (Engle, 1960). I remain confounded, and disappointed, when I see a focus on learning history or other social studies content "for its own sake." That approach amounts to implanting the "furniture" of content into the mind (Kliebard, 1986), like making "deposits" in the banking approach (Freire, 1970).

LESSONS LEARNED

The in-depth work I have done on the history of social studies has led to significant changes in my thinking. Though at one time I was a unrestrained advocate of issues-centered approaches to social studies, I learned that its potential is being realized in few classrooms. My work on the Rugg story and the demise of MACOS (Man: A Course of Study) and other new social studies innovations helped me recognize that innovative reforms in social studies have often met with criticism from powerful, dedicated, and unrelenting groups. My review of the status studies of the 1970s and beyond taught me the sobering lesson that the field is limited by a grammar of standard practices and barriers to change.

I have learned a few lessons that seem rather obvious. Social studies education, all of education for that matter, is inherently ideological. Social studies is contested, sometimes hotly. Since the conservative restoration of the 1970s, trends have moved primarily toward more traditional forms of social education. Despite the influence of several persistent interest groups, most of what goes on in schools is driven by principles of social efficiency and social control. Children go to school to be "drilled" in a cultural orientation. Partly for this reason, partially due to the nature of schools as an organization, and because of overt oppostion, major initiatives in social studies have usually made only a little difference in classrooms.

It remains a truism that major attempts at reform are profoundly influenced by the context of the times, by forces outside education. It is also true that the "two cultures" of social studies education exists, and tends to limit reform (Avery, 1957). Teachers teach as they were taught, and are generally supported in this pattern by the culture of school and society. Most professors and curriculum workers in our field seek innovation, but are frequently stymied by the grammar of schooling which is perhaps at its strongest and most persistent in social studies.

Because we've made so little progress in classrooms, we've got a big job in the years ahead. We need to better educate teachers, administrators, policymakers, and the public about the choices available, including discipline-based inquiry, the issues-centered alternative, and potential hybrids of the two, and that takes time, money, and commitment. Though many useful strategies exist, we need new and updated classroom materials that can help teachers better apply a reflective or issues-centered approach to discipline-based courses within the current context of standards and testing.

In curriculum history, we need more work uncovering and detailing the stories of great inquiry and issues-centered educators of the past, thus making those stories accessible. We also need to better educate teachers and teacher educators in the historical and philosophical foundations of education. However, if my own institution is any indication, curriculum history and educational foundations are at low ebb these days. Nevertheless, despite its apparent lack of popularity, foundational knowledge can be powerful in helping to create the possibility of a new tomorrow. It serves as a logical base for exploring questions of purpose and rationale. It enlarges the present by reminding us that there are other alternatives.

The key dilemmas of our field have a long history and will likely continue for the forseeable future. Social studies continues to receive second tier priority after literacy, mathematics, and science. The current emphasis on schooling as preparation for work, and as an extension of national economic policy, has come about because of groups like the Committee for Economic Development, the Business Roundtable, the National Governors Association, a striking number of conservative foundations, and a string of Presidents who have emphasized the economic purposes of education.

For many of us in social studies, recent trends are troubling. The insititution of standards, imposition of accountability measures, and privatization have led to the deprofessionalization of teachers and the erosion of public schooling and its civic purposes. Some policies have explicitly aimed at targeting and eliminating innovative practices of the 1960s and 1970s such as open forum discussion and values clarification. Policies rooted in "effective schools" research have aimed at re-instituting traditional forms of education. Accountability reform has brought increased pressure for coverage and less time for in-depth study, critical thinking, or discussion. Progressive, inquiry-oriented approaches to teaching focused on involving students through in-depth study of topics, issues, projects, and problems is less prevalent than at any time in the recent past (Cuban, 2004). Perhaps we have passed the zenith of extreme authoritarianism via accountability and its negative impact on levels of classroom thoughtfulness. As of this writing, some of our colleagues are hopeful that a new approach to standards and accountability will open the door to depth of study and critical thinking, possibly leading to a new and better day. I hope they are right, but only time will tell.

Despite this largely gloomy portrait, I have also learned that reform initiatives supporting reflective, inquiry, and issues-centered teaching can make a profound difference for many teachers and students, just as they have in the past. If thoughtfully

constructed and purposefully applied, they are worth the effort. We must choose wisely. Ultimately, every teacher has the responsibility to decide how he or she will work with students, no matter what the principal, the administration, or the current group in power may think.

At its heart, the progressive approach to schooling championed by Rugg and others held that students must be challenged to confront social realities, to understand how the problems and dilemmas of the contemporary world came to be what they are, and to think about what might be done about it. In his later years, Rugg captured the essence of the matter in one of his many talks about his work on the creative process:

> One of the very essential factors in the creative process, it seems to me, is the concept of integrity. It's involved in that very homely phrase, "I say what I think my way" …. An authoritarian world will not permit that question to be asked, "What do you think?" … Why it's revolutionary! … So you could generalize that, … and you could put it into schools. And (it) consists of teachers honestly asking, "What do you think?"
>
> I think we've seen almost a vicious expression of the very opposite of this. Not what they really think, but what ought to be said to fit in with the controlling interest, with the boss, with the owner, the employer, with the party . . . [or] in a democratic society where the powers that be control.
>
> Educationally, I would go back to what seems to be the heart of it, getting teachers to understand, that no matter what the board of education has prescribed, no matter what the superintendent and the principal, and the supervisor have said must be done, that basically, this group of children and I have got to explore life . . . together, honestly, and confront the problems . . . in spite of the possible authoritarian (reaction) . . . . The teacher would have to bring them right down to this village, this town, this neighborhood, this school, this class. Our problems. (Rugg, 1956)

Thus, Rugg's work was a call to confront the persistent issues at the heart of our social and economic lives. He called for students to find their own individual voices as they confront the most persistent dilemmas of our times. I believe that we should support Rugg's call to raise awareness and invoke a deep and fundamental questioning of our purposes as educators. For, as Rugg once wrote, "The world is on fire, and the youth of the world must be equipped to combat the conflagration" (Rugg, 1932).

NOTE

[1] Portions of the chapter are drawn from Ronald W. Evans, "Forty Days and Forty Nights in the Wilderness of Capitalist Schooling," in Samuel Totten and Jon Pedersen (2006), *Researching and Teaching Social Issues: The Personal Stories and Pedagogical Efforts of Professors of Education*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. (Reprinted in a paper edition by Information Age Publishing, 2012)

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