Military training of youths of school age in foreign countries

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MILITARY TRAINING
OF YOUTHS OF SCHOOL AGE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

By W. S. JESIEN
BUREAU OF EDUCATION
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, April 17, 1917.

Sir: To meet the demand for information as to what provision is made in the several countries of the world for military teaching for boys of school age, I have caused to be prepared the manuscript which is transmitted herewith and which I recommend for publication as a bulletin of the Bureau of Education.

Respectfully submitted.

P. P. CLAXTON,
Commissioner.

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.
MILITARY TRAINING OF YOUTHS OF SCHOOL AGE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

INTRODUCTION.

The matter presented in this circular relates to the military training of youths of school age, conducted either as a part of the regular school work or by independent agencies. Military instruction, of the exact nature and to the same extent as that given to soldiers, is not found in the schools of any country of Europe except the special military schools. Such training is confined everywhere to the period of active service, and no attempt has ever been made to impose upon the school the task of producing fully trained soldiers. In many countries having universal military service the public schools provide for training boys in such elements of military science as may be conveniently combined with their physical training and at the same time prepare them for the active service awaiting every young man.

The attitude of foreign educators in the matter is well defined. They do not, as a rule, regard the military instruction as a successful substitute for the well-established systems of physical training and character building. They generally view it as an anomaly in the school system, justified only by the exigencies of national defense. The enthusiastic support they lend this work comes more from patriotic than from pedagogic motives. Occasionally, however, the beneficial effects of military training upon the moral and physical sides of boys' education are emphasized. Very marked results of this nature have been observed in Australia, which should have more than passing attention.

In France, where military training is a component part of the prescribed program of public primary schools, it is not approved by leading educators as a method of physical training, but it is recognized and commended as preparatory training for military service, intended to raise the efficiency of the French Army. The programs of public schools of France include gymnastics and moral instruction, the former as a means of building up the physique of the boys and the latter of developing their character; it is generally recognized that these two objects of education can not be perfectly attained by any system of military training.
On this subject one authority says:  

Military training may present, as regards hygiene, serious inconveniences; it implies rigid discipline, which is condemned by true pedagogy. Outside of that it produces results that are only partial, limited, and special.

This opinion relates to military training regarded as a method of physical education. But by the same authority military instruction is termed "a work of urgent interest to the country and to all young citizens."

These quotations represent fairly the attitude of enlightened and patriotic French opinion.

An Austrian educator, Prof. E. Bausenwein, writes on the same subject as follows:  

Shooting practice in the Austrian secondary schools was not introduced as a matter of sport to which one may be devoted or not but as a serious necessity, the effects of which are rightly estimated as of great importance for the defense of the State in a time of trial.

Although each country possesses its own system of military training of school youths, adapted to the specific conditions and purposes of the movement in each particular instance, a certain similarity of origin and organization of these movements may be observed. In most cases the source of the movement can be traced to the department of war, assisted by the department of education and patriotic organizations of citizens. Where military instruction is not an obligatory part of the public school curricula, it is promoted in the form of student organizations under the leadership of patriotic clubs and aided by Government grants and by the lease of Government property. In those countries where the Governments are not directly active in this work it often arises spontaneously under the guise of semimilitary clubs.

It is also a significant feature of all militaristic movements affecting the schools that they appear wherever and whenever special need is felt for raising the standard of the military preparedness of the nation. In France the movement was started after the disastrous war of 1870 and revived after the reduction of the term of active service in 1905. In Austria intensive military work in schools was launched after a similar reduction of the term of service. In Switzerland and Australia it accompanied the introduction of an abbreviated system of universal military service. During the period from 1908 to 1914, when apprehension of the oncoming European conflict was keen among the nations of the Continent, the training of school youths in warlike exercises was greatly extended. In Germany, according to Körperliche Erziehung, schoolboys were attracted in this period to numerous civilian rifle clubs and semimilitary organizations.

1 L’Annuaire de la Jeunesse, 1914, p. 4.
2 Körperliche Erziehung, June, 1912.
In a certain sense all work of a military nature performed by schoolboys, whether compulsory or voluntary, whether promoted by the State or by private agencies, and whether in the nature of extensive military training or of simple close order drill, is worthy of note in the present consideration. The differences that appear between the countries here treated are chiefly those of degree of universality and thoroughness of the training given. Australia and Switzerland have the best organized systems of preparatory military training; in both these countries this work is regarded as a part of the regular military training provided for the Army, the school simply relieving the military establishment of a part of its task and shortening thereby the term of training in the active service. In other countries, like Great Britain, the work appears in an unorganized, sporadic, and limited form, or in conjunction with training for other purposes. Between the two extremes represented by Switzerland and England there are several intermediate forms, such as (a) prescribed military drill, but in a limited extent, or (b) thorough military training, but conducted by outside agencies and therefore not obligatory, or (c) prescribed military training limited to certain kinds of schools, etc.

For a comparative view, a bare outline of the systems prevailing in various countries is given below. It will be seen that the list includes all the important countries for which information is at present available. This outline is followed by detailed statements for the several countries and a bibliography.

BRITISH EMPIRE.

England.—Strictly voluntary work carried on by private agencies.

Australia.—Military instruction compulsory for all boys from 12 to 18 years of age.

New Zealand.—Military instruction compulsory for boys over 14 years.

Canada.—Military instruction carried on in voluntary cadet corps.

FRANCE.

Prescribed military instruction without arms, and rifle practice in elementary and higher elementary schools. Ages 9 to 13 years; rifle practice limited to boys over 10 years of age. Specially trained instructors. Strong organizations carry on the work of military preparation among older boys.

GERMANY.

Voluntary organizations of older public-school pupils and students of secondary schools. Training without arms. Decrees issued during the war provide for preparatory military training of all boys over 16 years of age.
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY.

Austria.—Voluntary organizations for military training of pupils of secondary schools, under Government protectorate. Optional rifle practice in the last two years of secondary schools.

Hungary.—Military training obligatory in the last three years of certain gymnasia designated by the Government. Voluntary rifle clubs in secondary schools. Military drill in primary schools.

SWITZERLAND.

Instruction in military gymnastics in elementary schools obligatory throughout the school age. Conducted by specially trained instructors. Voluntary rifle practice and military drill both with and without arms.

SWEDEN.

Compulsory rifle practice in public secondary schools for boys from 15 to 18 years of age. Given by special instructors.

NORWAY.

Voluntary rifle practice.

ITALY.

Military training given as obligatory subject in "national colleges." Private agencies provide for simple military drill for younger boys.

SPAIN.

No distinct military training is given. Some simple drill is included in the program of physical training.

PORTUGAL.

No military training is given in schools. The subject of "physical culture," which is taught generally, includes simple drill without arms. Boy Scout organizations are numerous.

RUSSIA.

Prescribed military gymnastics in elementary and secondary schools.

NETHERLANDS.

Military training given in voluntary organizations for boys over 15 years of age.

GREECE.

Very intensive military instruction is given in gymnasia, under the patronage of the King. Simple drill obtains in all public schools in connection with physical training.

JAPAN.

Military gymnastics obligatory in elementary, secondary, and normal schools.
MEXICO.
Obligatory military drill with arms in all primary and secondary schools. Regulated by State laws.

ARGENTINA.
Obligatory military training in the last two years of secondary schools. Specially trained instructors.

BOLIVIA.
Simple drill in connection with gymnastics.

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