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GEOGRAPHY FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

THE Editor of the JOURNAL has long been much dissatisfied with certain tendencies in reference to physical geography in secondary schools. Finding by informal discussion that others were also in a similar state of mind, he recently sent out a small series of questions to a number of geographers, teachers of geography and superintendents, to ascertain if any agreement could be reached as to the present needs and future possibilities of secondary school geography.

To date, twelve replies have been received, representing the opinions of seven teachers in universities, four in normal schools and one in a high school. Although permission to publish the names of the writers has, in most cases, been given, it seems to the Editor best to print the replies without credit, in order that all may be quoted with equal freedom.

The questions sent out were as follows:

1. Do you believe that secondary school geography for students not preparing to enter college should be restricted to physical geography as outlined in the modern text-books?

2. Do you favor a continuation and development of the modern practice of emphasizing the detailed, systematic classification of land forms?

3. Should the course for pupils not expecting to enter college be in any way different from that for pupils preparing for college entrance?

4. Do you believe that secondary school geography would be equally valuable as a subject for pupils not proposing to enter college, if it included more of a study of selected regions of the world? *Either*

a. Studied in association with the distribution of the greater land forms as, for instance, the plains of North America, of Europe, etc., as related to the life consequences, *or*

b. Given in a definite course devoted to regional geography of, say, the United States and Western Europe, in which the order from causes

to consequences should be rigidly followed. For instance, in the study of North America, the work to proceed from position to the larger land features, to drainage, to climate, to economic and social conditions.

5. Could a course along these lines be as disciplinary and strong as the present generally followed course? Would such a course be as good or a better preparation for students who have also to study history and perhaps economics, and who need geography as a preparation for living and not for college entrance?

6. Should commercial geography be included in non-technical high schools? If so, should it be as a separate course or as an important phase of some systematic regional treatment as outlined above?

7. Is the content of the modern course too much influenced by our belief in the necessity of laboratory treatment?

8. Do you think that the good results from laboratory training would be sacrificed if the presentations were a little less formal and included more of an emphasis of the life response side?

The answers received follow, including individual comments from the writers.

A.

1. No.
2. No. Rather in the college.
3. No.
4. a No.
b Yes.
5. Yes.
6. No. Enough of the commercial could be woven into the regional.
7. Perhaps. But laboratory treatment could be very well introduced into the regional geography as well, and with as good results.
8. Yes.

B.

1. No.
2. Yes, if this means that high school pupils are to continue studying such books as are now in frequent use; but I do not object to the study of other phases of geography also.
3. No. I should prefer to put this question the other way round: Course for those who prepare to go to college should not differ from that for those who do not. The minority should follow the

majority. See Report of Committee of Ten, 1893. One hundred members of that committee and sub-committees voted unanimously, I think, for this principle.

4. From all that I have seen, the introduction of areal study before systematic study results in rather vague ideas. It can be done and made interesting and profitable. In the hands of poorly prepared teachers, themselves ignorant of the land forms about which they are to teach from a text-book, I think the descriptive course is much safer than the systematic course. I should be glad to see more actual examples introduced with systematic work, or more systematic explanations given in areal work; but unless some such combination is made, I fear that the results will be unscholarly.
5. See 4 and 3.
6. I do not know enough about what is actually being done about commercial geography to answer this intelligently. There does not seem to me to be sufficient reason for sharp separation of commercial geography in schools from other kinds of geography. I should like to see the whole thing well knit in a rational whole.
7. No. Laboratory treatment ought to be increased; but before that it ought to be improved. From what I have seen of it in our admission examinations, the things that now pass for laboratory work in physical geography are poor stuff, in most cases; they show that the teachers have not had a sufficient training in laboratory work themselves.
8. This question implies that I know what you mean by "less formal." Less formal than what? Certainly the work should not be "too formal," and it should have a lot of illustration of the life response side.

I suppose all of your questions are apropos of what has been called the exaggerated attention to physical geography that has come about in the last twenty years and from which there is now something of a reaction. I think the exaggeration results from an unbalanced training on the part of the teachers, as much as from anything else. Too many of them follow the book only. If the book is purely physical geography, their teaching will be of the same purity; an undesirable purity, in my opinion.

C.

1. No, not necessarily.
2. Yes.

3. (Also 1.) Depends on the school officers and teachers. In most schools I should say they should be the same.
4. No, unless the teacher has the time and is competent to give a supplementary course. I do not believe it would be wise or fruitful to branch out on either line without a physical geography basis.
5. It is possible, under the exceptional teacher. Under the ordinary teacher I should say no.
6. No. There are too many subjects now and I doubt the wisdom of the course proposed.
7. I think not. There is room for improvement in the kind of laboratory work. I should say improve the quality but do not decrease the quantity.
8. Question not clear, as I infer it is much less formal in some schools than in others.

D.

1. Physical geography alone is not sufficient unless much emphasis is put on the life side. A better course is physical plus commercial geography in one course or two.
2. Decidedly no; I consider the emphasis put on systematic classification of land forms to have been a distinct detriment to geographical teaching in this country.
3. No; the physical geography presented by pupils for college is of little use in advanced work and it would be much better if such students should have pursued a general course without reference to college examinations.
4. I think secondary school geography should contain much more of a study of regions of the earth on a large scale as related to the life consequences.
5. Such a course could be made thoroughly disciplinary and would be very much better preparation for students who intend to study history or economics or who need geography as part of a general training.
6. Commercial geography, I think, should be in all schools, but rather as a part of a course in physical geography than as a separate, statistical treatment of commerce.
7. Yes; there is danger of pushing laboratory treatment in physical geography to a point where reasoning is omitted, and I think this has been accomplished in some of our most thoroughly equipped schools.

8. I can not see how good results from laboratory training could be sacrificed if a greater attention was devoted to "life response." In any case, it is far better to give a pupil an appreciation of man's relation to his environment than to develop skill in reading instruments and drawing sections.

In conclusion let me say that I am in hearty accord with any movement which will rescue physical geography from the geological chain which seems to bind it. In some ways, the teaching of physical geography twenty years ago was designed to give a better training to the student than the highly developed laboratory presentations of the present day.

E.

1. I do not believe that we should restrict geography work in secondary schools to purely physical geography, for those students who do not present it for college have no place in this course, but that the physical geography should be made to include more of an application to life, rather than so much technical classification of land forms.
2. The detailed classification of land forms occupies too much space, in my opinion. A larger part of the time should be given to teaching the effects of these forms upon life.
3. The course for pupils not expecting to go to college should be the same as that for college candidates. The colleges, it seems to me, should be willing to accept a course in this subject with less detail technically, and one more in line with "2."
4. Secondary school geography would be equally valuable to the pupil not entering college, if it included more of a study of selected regions of the world, as suggested in "4b." The local conditions should be studied to learn how physical conditions affect the locations, growths and sizes of cities, for example.
5. The test of a course, it seems to me, is not in the number of facts the pupil carries away with him, so much as the development of a power to observe closely and reason clearly from cause to effect. History study and perhaps the study of economics would be made more interesting, I think, if the pupil could picture to himself the appearance of the regions concerned and could see a reason for certain developments, in the very nature of the country. Such a course would seem to be a better preparation for living than the technically elaborate physiography.

6. Commercial geography should not be included in a non-technical high school. If it were necessary to include it, it might be of advantage to teach it in connection with the physical geography of the regions studied. Students should be able to see a reason for certain commercial development as connected with the physiography of the regions.
7. I should not like to see the amount of laboratory work cut down. There might be more library research work, perhaps, and it seems to me we get little enough field work at present.
8. I do not think the good results from laboratory work would be sacrificed if the presentation were a little less formal and there might well be more time spent on the life response side.

F.

1. I certainly do not believe that secondary school geography should be so restricted. The present course should be increased to a one-year course by the addition of suitable material, perhaps in regional geography. Where electives can be offered (and the number of such high schools is growing) a second-year course devoted to regional geography should be among the options.
2. The present tendency is certainly in the opposite direction and I think very properly. The first need of children (this includes first-year high school students) is an enlarged and enriched stock of mental pictures of the world, its processes and its contents. Detailed classifications are for those who have something to classify and are indispensable to advanced work, but they are deadening to the elementary student. (Compare biological sciences.)
3. The sooner the colleges abandon the notion of separate courses for these two classes, the better it will be for the colleges.
4. I should not try to kill two birds with one stone in one-half year. Where the course is lengthened to a full year, there may well be a choice between (1) basing the whole year on study of principles, bringing in the regional work by way of illustration, and (2) giving at least a part of the time to studies primarily regional.
5. It is hard to answer categorically. Either course needs good teachers and needs them badly.
6. The *bait* here is the word "commercial." The rational teaching of it involves so full a treatment of general and physical geography, that the word "commercial" is too narrow. If it is taught in this

rational way it will not differ much from the teaching of regional geography with the emphasis on human response. If not taught in this way, it has no place outside of a technical school.

- 7 and 8. The dangers in laboratory work probably lie in the direction of formality, but I do not have the intimate knowledge of laboratory work in secondary schools necessary to answer these questions.

G.

I was inclined to answer questions 1 and 2 in the affirmative until I read those which follow, but to question 3 I would say decidedly, no.

The questions as presented make a very decided distinction between pupils who expect to enter college and those who do not. It seems to be taken for granted that the pupil who wishes to go to college *must* take a certain kind of physical geography, but that one who does not *may* take another kind which it is admitted may or even probably will be a better preparation for life and for the study of history and economics. Are we to assume, then, that the pupil who is to go to college need not make any preparation for life or that he will not study history and economics?

I object to this distinction between pupils. It assumes that they would not study the kind of physical geography required for admission to college from their own choice but because they must. If it fails to interest the pupil who is not going to college, then it is a poor kind of geography even for the one who is going.

I believe that I can still answer Question 1 in the affirmative, however, with this modification, namely, that there shall be incorporated into the course, and eventually into the text-books, what is suggested in Question 4a. I would not go so far as to recommend a distinct course as suggested in Question 4b.

I can also answer Question 2 in the affirmative, provided the systematic classification of land forms be carried no farther than in Professor Davis's *Elementary Physical Geography*. It is not desirable to divide and subdivide merely for the sake of having a "system." I fear that some of us have lost sight of the purpose of classification in so far as we have made the systematic study of land forms an end and not a means. Any rational classification which places the majority of the land forms in a few great groups is sufficient for the purposes of the pupil.

I anticipate Question 8, which is closely related to Question 2, to say that to leave out the human element of physical geography is to invite first the indifference and finally the distaste of the pupils for that subject, at least in the high school. Physiography for its own sake may be all right in college, but it will not do in a high school. If that is the idea of Question 2, then I say no, but if it is merely to continue about as at present, then I am willing to "emphasize."

Commercial geography is not especially desirable in a non-technical high school. In view of the crowded curriculum it may well be omitted. Commercial geography should be treated either in an elementary way in the grades below the high school or else in a more specialized course for which the completion of the regular course in physical geography should be required for admission to the class. Such a course as the latter would belong more properly in a commercial or technical high school.

To Questions 7 and 8 I would say no, with such qualifications as are suggested in the answer to Question 2.

H.

1. No.
2. I am not sure I know what you mean. If such descriptions as "an imperfect peneplain sub-maturely dissected" are in mind, I find them inappropriate to secondary school work.
3. At present the colleges ask nothing and *credit* nothing. Colleges are harder to move, more conservative, than the public schools. It will be long before they will credit any high school geography not physical. Meantime, perhaps we can get into other courses than the college preparatory some geographic *work*. In so far as a different course would be helpful. If possible, the colleges should recognize the work and the course be the same for all.
4. Yes. I would not limit treatment to "a" or "b" given.
5. Yes; of course the work must be *good*, with a *good* teacher.
6. Either way the *teacher* wanted to do it. Teachers should be pretty free.
7. I do not know.
8. Hard to answer. There ought to be applications to influence on life all the time.

I.

1. No. The chief value of physical geography lies in its wide and intimate relations with other subjects. It forms a necessary basis

for the fruitful study of all other phases of geography, of plant, animal and human ecology, politics, history and sociology.

2. No. The detailed, systematic classification of land forms is already overdone in secondary schools. Somewhat less emphasis should be given to their structure and origin, and more to their functions as organic environments.
3. That depends upon the nature of college entrance requirements. The course should be planned for the large majority of students who do not go to college, and the college requirements should conform to that.
4. Yes. The course in secondary school geography would be more valuable for all students, if it included a study of selected regions. The regional method is the only one which calls for a complete synthesis of all the geographic factors. The selection of regions should not be made wholly upon the basis of land forms, but also upon that of climate and vegetation. It is time that the absurd custom of teaching geography by political divisions should be abandoned. The regions should be physiographic in the fullest sense. This is especially true of North America. In Europe the political divisions have become fairly adjusted to physical conditions. On any scheme of physical division the treatment should be rigidly scientific from causes to consequences.
5. Yes, such a course, if based upon an adequate physical foundation, would be more valuable than the course generally followed at present, for all students who are to live and do business in the world and especially for those who are to study history, economics and sociology in college.
6. Commercial geography is the least valuable of all the phases of geography now taught. It is poorly organized, its subject matter is undergoing perpetual transformation and, as often taught, it lacks both foundation and framework. It is apt to be a mass of dry statistics which are soon forgotten, but not sooner than they cease to be correct. The general principles of economic geography, the relations of natural resources to the production of wealth, may be profitably studied as a phase of systematic regional geography.
7. Yes. Laboratory work in geography is largely a figure of speech. It can not be, except to a limited extent, work which brings the student face to face with the actual material of the science, as in chemistry and botany. That can be done only in the field. It is

necessarily a study of representations and graphics. Such work, under whatever name, is indispensable for good teaching in any phase of geography, and will be productive of equally good results in regional geography as in physical. A map of waterways or of population density is not less educative than a relief map or a weather map.

8. No. Reasons have been given in 7.

J.

1. Secondary school geography for students who are not preparing to enter college should not be restricted to the study of physical geography. The daily experiences of the average adult call for a knowledge of the regions of the world,—their physiography, industries, products and the actual life of their peoples—which a course in physical geography does not give. This knowledge is needed in business, in reading, in social intercourse. Many high school graduates, without any additional training, take up the work of teaching. It is evident that they are not prepared to teach geography in the elementary schools.
2. The present practice of laying stress upon the study of land forms is good when it leads to a clear understanding on the part of students of the influence of these forms upon human activities. Too frequently the human side of the subject is neglected.
3. Pupils not expecting to enter college or a normal school should not be required to take a year's work in physical geography. A better plan would be to devote one semester to such work, and one to general or economic geography. This would give a broader preparation for living.
4. As already indicated, pupils not intending to enter college would be greatly benefited by a study of one or more great regions. Such study should, in all cases, have as a foundation a brief course in physical geography. There would, at present, be some difficulty in placing in the hands of the students satisfactory texts.
5. As to the disciplinary value of regional and economic geography, when it is properly presented, there can be no question. Such work is a better preparation for the study of history and economics and for the ordinary affairs of life than is one devoted strictly to physical geography.
6. Commercial geography should, in my judgment, be offered in *all* large high schools. It should, however, be much more than a

presentation of statistics and a brief description of commodities and methods of handling them. A course in commercial geography should include a close study of the influence of physiographic conditions upon industry and commerce. It should also deal with the changes which man has made in his environment and with the effect of industries and commerce upon social conditions.

7. Rational laboratory work in physical geography is absolutely essential. Without it our students acquire little but the ability to use words. Laboratory work which deals extensively with the astronomical phase of geography or with mineralogy is not rational.
8. The chief purpose of school geography is to give students an understanding of the relations between life and its environment. Unless secondary school geography shows students how man makes use of, responds to, and modifies his environment, it has not been a success. There is great need of placing more emphasis upon the human side of geography in our laboratory and other phases of the work.

K.

Our high schools are, in most instances, overpowered by the college entrance requirements. These schools have had their courses shaped, to a large degree, by the college demands. There have been signs, and still are, of a more efficient high school than is now the case. The private and special institution has dictated, I believe, too long. The cry for industrial high schools and the criticism of the product of our high schools has arisen, to some extent, from this condition of affairs. To prepare for college is not the aim of our schools.

My answers to your queries, influenced somewhat by the above state of mind, follow:

1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Not in the main features.
4. Yes. I am not prepared to decide between "a" and "b". The grammar schools offer physical geography as the culmination of the geography work in the grade schools. During the earlier years of the high school course, a more mature consideration of geography than is possible in the grade schools, is thereby rendered easy. That such a course would have its advantages and be beneficial to a high degree, I am convinced. Whether this should be systematic or

regional (regional rounds out the courses, as I know them, better) must be left with the instructor to some extent. I believe such a course should be required of all pupils in the high schools during the first or second year. The physical geography which has found a place in certain courses, as in the English course, not in the classical course, during the last year of the high school outline is worth retaining at this place.

5. The course suggested under Query 5 could be as disciplinary and as strong as the present generally followed course. It certainly could not be so at once. With proper development, it should be beneficial in future work either at school or out of school.
6. In the high school of many courses, in cities where no technical high school exists, commercial geography has a place in the business course. In the Latin high schools, or the classical course of smaller high schools, there is a need of regional or systematic geography, as stated above, but not of commercial geography.
7. There is a tendency in that direction.
8. No. The division of the time allotted for physical geography into recitation periods and laboratory periods is unfortunate in the early stages of the subject's development. The two periods are apt to follow different lines of thought and the pupil makes the connection between the two with an effort. I believe that the laboratory work and the field excursions are of the most benefit when they are included in the method of presentation of the subject at the time of the recitation and as a part of it.

L.

I am of the opinion that secondary school geography for all students should not be restricted to the outlines of the subject in the present high school text-books, but should be a rather broader study, including a very much greater emphasis of the life side. In other words, I think that physical geography, which has undergone remarkable changes in the last few years, is destined to undergo even greater changes, and that the time devoted to the present, admirable, systematic classification of land forms must be curtailed in the elementary courses in order to make room for a more systematic treatment of life in its relationship to all geography.

I do not see how it is possible to make a course for students who are going to college any different from that for students not prepar-

ing for college entrance. I am convinced that it would be wise for college entrance. I am not convinced that it would be wise to introduce courses in regional geography in the secondary schools. It seems to me that the same results can be brought about by making the introductory geography of the higher grades contain more of the subject matter of such a course as suggested in 4b. In other words, the regional geography ought to be developed in connection with a study of the greater land forms themselves, but not otherwise independently except in college. Additional subject matter on regional geography of the continents might, however, be provided in supplementary geographical readers.

I see no reason why a course developed along the systematic lines of relation of influence to consequences on the life side could not be made exactly as strong and just as disciplinary as systematic studies of land forms. Such courses would naturally be a better preparation for students who are to study history or economics or who are going to work along various commercial lines for their living.

I think commercial geography should be made an important phase of the systematic treatment either in the secondary school geography or in the high school physical geography course of the broader type, and not a separate course. I do not feel that laboratory work in the hands of the proper instructor is in danger of distorting the point of view in the modern course, and it would naturally follow, with the vitalizing of geography and physical geography, that the life response side would be developed and made stronger in the laboratory without being made informal. I feel convinced that inevitable, continued change in physical geography instruction will be shaped along the lines of greater development of the life side rather than greater systematization of the description of land forms.

SUMMARY

The answers thus far received seem to show a strong consensus of opinion on certain points; namely, that courses for students not preparing for college should not be restricted to physical geography as outlined in the leading texts; that the life side of geography should be emphasized in a systematic way and that colleges should accept such courses for entrance; that regional geography should be given greater attention in secondary schools; that this work could be as disciplinary as the present subject and

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more valuable; that commercial geography has not yet won its right to special emphasis in most secondary schools and that the laboratory side of the work should be in no way decreased.

Opinions differ slightly as to the value of the present emphasis of the systematic classification of land forms. Several desired to see this phase of the work reduced and others would like to have it not go beyond the present limits.

The Editor believes that the time is ripe for a systematic endeavor to bring about the kind of work that is now in the minds of many people. He believes further that the topic is worthy of more study and will be glad to receive the opinions of all those interested. Other replies to the questionnaire will be printed in due course of time.

This subject is the liveliest topic in modern geography teaching. The "question is before the house." Let us have a free and frank discussion before the "question is called."

RICHARD ELWOOD DODGE.