

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 092 464

SO 007 580

TITLE You, Too. The Social Science Newsletter for Secondary Teachers. Volume 3, Number 4.

INSTITUTION Educational Research Council of America, Cleveland, Ohio.

PUB DATE Feb 74

NOTE 8p.; For related documents, see ED 085 311, SO 007 579, 581

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EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC Not Available from EDRS. PLUS POSTAGE

DESCRIPTORS Book Reviews; Concept Teaching; Democratic Values; Discussion (Teaching Technique); *Educational Innovation; *Educational Problems; Instructional Aids; *Newsletters; *Political Science; Politics; Secondary Education; *Social Sciences; Teaching Techniques; United States History

ABSTRACT

This newsletter, published monthly during the school year, disseminates ideas and suggestions concerning innovations and problem solutions for secondary social sciences. Political science education is the focus of this issue. The importance of this subject, and its sophistication and challenge to the classroom teacher are discussed. Examples of complex and simple governments, notes on diagrams of a free constitutional government and a totalitarian government, and techniques for introducing difficult concepts are presented. A story for discussion initiation and suggestions for discussion questions are followed by a statement of the meaning and conditions of freedom and related questions for discussion. Tips for dealing with party politics and a book review conclude the newsletter. (KSM)

you, too

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distributed by the Educational Research Council of America

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POLITICAL SCIENCE

The present issue of you, too is concerned with a few topics in political science.

Teachers often criticize ERCSSP on the grounds that it is too difficult, especially in its conceptual framework for political science. Although the ERCA staff have done and are doing their best to reduce the difficulty of the materials, there is a limit to the amount of watering down of concepts and method that can be done. Hence our first item is:

WHY POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT, AND WHY IT MUST BE SOPHISTICATED AND CHALLENGING.

There are two significant categories into which systems of government may be classified: simple and complex. Most governments in history (and probably in the contemporary world) have been and are essentially simple. In a simple system you find a strong authority or power on one side (the government) and submissive obedience on the other (the people or subjects). This simplicity is found in primitive societies governed by custom and ritual, and in societies ruled by force.

In simple systems of government there is little or no need for political science. The ability to think critically about government and politics is unnecessary in a customary or a dictatorial system: indeed, that ability would be a nuisance, and such thinking is actively discouraged by the established authorities.

The situation is very different under a complex system of government. Under such a system the powers and authority of government are divided, and the relation of the people, and of each individual member of society, to government is conditional and self-conscious. Loyalty and political obligation (the moral duty to obey laws and government) are not, in a complex system of government, mere matters of

unthinking submission—a knee-jerk reflex of obedience. Quite the contrary, a complex system of government, if it is to work effectively, calls for sophisticated knowledge on the part of all citizens as well as on the part of those citizens who hold governmental office. In other words, a knowledge of political science is indispensable in a complex system, and the political science that applies to a complex system is itself complicated and difficult.

Any attempt to oversimplify political science will be harmful to and probably destructive of a complex system of government.

Some may ask: What is so special about a complex system of government, and why should we strain ourselves to understand a complicated body of knowledge called political science? A crude answer might take the form of another question: Do you want people to be slaves? Do you want a nation of sheep? Only under a complex system can people have freedom to think, discuss, and make choices. They have these freedoms precisely because the institutions of government are divided, counterbalanced, checked and limited, and responsible to the people. Further: the freedom to think, discuss and choose cannot be exercised by naive and ignorant persons.

Educators in free societies are unanimous in asserting that students should learn to think for themselves. They agree that people who can think for themselves are in a position to realize their fullest potentialities, to make the best use of their talents, to take responsibilities.

However, thinking for oneself is not an inborn or spontaneous faculty. Thinking for oneself is a faculty that has to be developed, trained and exercised. It calls for a wide base of knowledge on which each person can found intelligent or prudent judgments.

For these reasons, the serious study of political science is and ought to be a vital

SD 007 580

element of education in a free society, which must also be a society with a complex system of government.

EXAMPLES OF COMPLEX AND SIMPLE GOVERNMENTS

In the ERCSSP fourth grade teacher's guide on Industry: Man and the Machine, two diagrams are provided to illustrate a free constitutional government and a totalitarian government. These are excellent illustrations of complexity versus simplicity in government. Here they are.

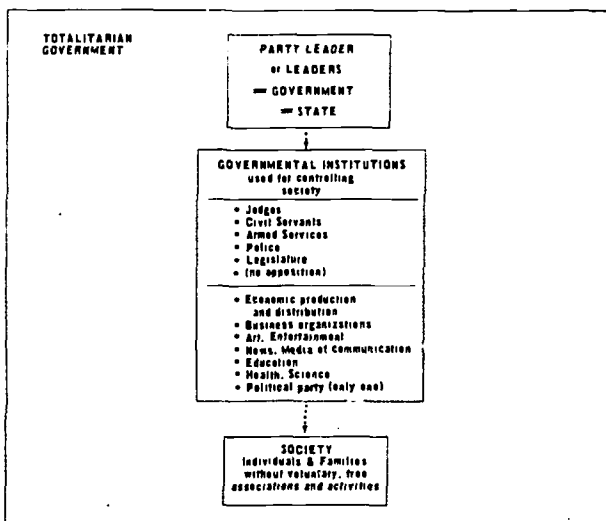
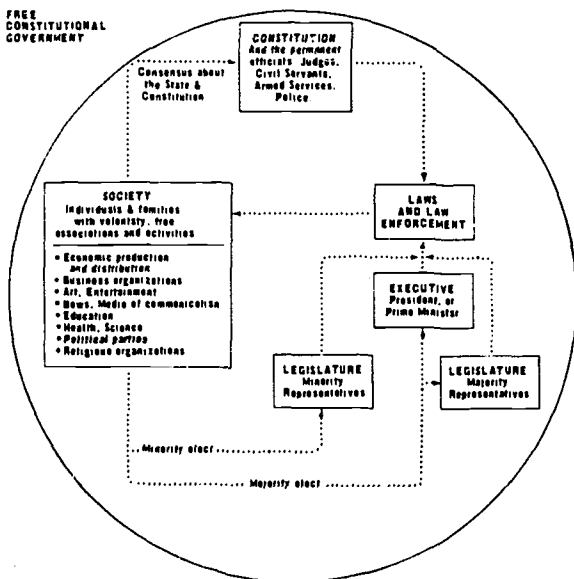
NOTES ON DIAGRAMS OF A FREE CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND A TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENT

Notice that SOCIETY includes people, organizations, groups, and activities. In a free society the greater part of the organizations and activities are spontaneous and voluntary, though controlled by law. Some activities, like education, may be largely controlled and financed by government or public bodies (local school boards), but, in general, in a free society most activities and associations are pluralistic and voluntary.

Notice that the CONSTITUTION controls the legislative and executive branches of government. The idea is that practically everyone consents freely to the Constitution and basic philosophy of the state, while majority and minority may have differing views as to the personnel and policies of the government at any given time.

The "Free Constitutional Government" diagram shows the relations between society, constitution, and government only in a unitary state. In a federal state, such as the United States, the diagram would be further complicated by the need to show two constitutions (national and state), and three sets of governmental institutions (national, state, and local).

About the unfree society there is little to say. Whoever gets control of the Party and governmental machinery exercises absolute control through all the institutions and technical devices now available. The people are completely helpless under this immense structure of power.



INTRODUCING DIFFICULT CONCEPTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

It is possible that materials on political science appear to be more difficult than they need be because they are used wrongly. Since political science is a difficult subject, it must be taught by the teacher. Just as one would not throw a chapter of a book on algebra at students without first carefully introducing the subject matter and terminology, so one should not ask

students to read a challenging chapter on political science until one has given a general explanation of the chapter.

This recommendation cannot be over-emphasized. Sophisticated political science can indeed be read with pleasure and understanding once its basic concepts and vocabulary are grasped, but this consummation will not be attained overnight.

There are, for example, many technical terms in political science. Often, however, they do not seem to be technical, since they are also words that are bandied about in daily conversation—words like: freedom, power, arbitrary, justice, equality, rights, duties, constitution, fair trial, obligation, law, aggression, punishment, self-government, and so on. When used in the context of political science, however, such words should be defined and used in their exact sense (or, at least, used consistently as defined). Notice that unless the student is properly coached in these meanings and usages, he is liable to flounder in confusion, since the words he reads may convey vague or even misleading impressions.

In short, the textbook alone is an inadequate learning device in political science. It must be supplemented before as well as after reading by classroom discussion.

ATTENTION-GRABBERS

Another request that teachers make is for introductory activities: some brisk device for stimulating interest and impressing the relevance and importance of the topic to be studied.

Here is a story that may be read aloud to initiate discussion at an early stage in a political science course.

A STORY WITH TWO ENDINGS

Joe and Bill were machine operators in a factory.

One morning while they were setting up their machines, Bill, who was a grouchy, griping type, started to blast the government.

"Why we put up with those lousy s-o-b's," said Bill, "is a mystery. All they do is sit up there feathering their own nests and soaking the workers with taxes and higher prices. Look at the latest thing they've done: prices up 10 per cent since last month! Why don't we throw 'em out, and put someone in who'll give us justice and fair play?"

"Take it easy, Bill," said Joe. "We've got to get on with the job, you know."

Joe turned back to his machine and put it into operation.

* * *

Now there are two different endings to this story.

The first ending goes like this.

At the lunch break, Bill sat next to Joe and started in on the government again. Joe agreed in part with him, but argued that politicians had many problems to solve, and it was easy for people like Bill to gripe as long as they (people like Bill) didn't have to make responsible decisions.

They went on arguing, and other workers joined in. There was quite a bit of shouting; even mild-mannered Joe got excited. Then the whistle blew, and the foreman shouted "All right, boys! You can settle the affairs of the nation tomorrow." The machines started up again.

Next day the argument went on for a short time, but it petered out when someone started to criticize the manager of the local ball team.

* * *

Here is the second ending of the story.

At the lunch break, Bill sat next to Joe and started in on the government again. Joe looked at him with pity.

"Cut it out, you damn' fool," he said. "Someone will hear hear you."

"Who cares?" Bill replied. "We can't lie down under this slavery forever. Listen, there's a group of us who are organizing to get rid of ..."

"Shut up! Shut up!" said Joe. "You'll end up in jail or dead. I won't listen."

Joe got up and left Bill to fume by himself. They did not talk any more that day.

Next morning, Bill was absent from work. Joe did not worry too much, since Bill had been working at the next machine for only a week. The thought did cross Joe's mind that perhaps Bill had been opening his big mouth once too often.

In the middle of the morning, a message came for Joe to report to the manager's office. He obeyed, wondering what it was all about.

In the office he found the manager and two other men, one of whom was unknown to him, and the other the local party secretary.

"My friend," said the secretary, "we have an important question for you. Have you heard any dangerous subversive talk in the factory?"

Joe stared. He quickly went over in his mind the brief conversations with Bill. No one else had heard them.

"No, I haven't heard any subversive talk," he said.

"Sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"No one criticized our great leader, or told you about an anti-party group?"

Joe hesitated, then he said as firmly as he could: "No."

The secretary shrugged his shoulders and pressed a buzzer.

A door at the back of the room opened, and Bill appeared.

"Do you know this man here?" the secretary asked Bill.

"Yes, he's the one I tested with subversive talk yesterday," said Bill.

Joe turned white. He looked as if he were about to faint.

"Friend," the secretary said to Joe, "your failure to report that incident merits immediate despatch to the Labor Camp—or maybe the death penalty. Have you anything to say?"

Joe was in too great a state of shock to do more than stammer and shake his head. He was thinking of his wife and their two children. What would happen to them? What a fool he had been to try to cover up for someone else! And the

someone else was a stool pigeon, at that!

"Well, Joseph," said the secretary, "you're on probation. I hope you have learned your lesson."

"You mean...?" Joe stuttered, as a wave of relief swept over him.

"I mean you will not be sent away this time," the secretary remarked coldly.

"But if there is ever another time, you know what to expect."

* * *

The second story is quite true. Incidents such as this have happened thousands of times.

* * *

DISCUSSION

Which ending might have happened in the United States? Which ending could not have happened in the United States? Why?

Can you think of any countries in which the second ending might have happened in the past? Any in which it might happen today?

What conditions make the second ending possible?

At this point, the discussion should lead to examination of the contrasts between arbitrary, totalitarian government, and constitutional representative government. Consider:

1. the right to criticize government
2. the right to organize to replace the existing government by constitutional methods
3. the right to fair and open trial
4. the existence of open opposition parties
5. the use of provocative agents and secret police
6. the technique of terrifying private citizens into becoming spies for the party and secret police
7. the difference between a state in which loyalty to the government in power is the same thing as loyalty to the country,

and a state in which loyalty to the country does not require enthusiastic support of the government in power (how is the latter distinction possible in, for example, the United States?)

It should become obvious at this point that the study of political science is vitally important to anyone who wants to preserve freedom and justice.

THE MEANING AND CONDITIONS OF FREEDOM

It was stated on page one that a complex system of government was necessary if people were to have freedom, and that knowledge was indispensable to the exercise and retention of freedom. What, it may be asked, is freedom? Philosophers and theologians have argued about the term; politicians have used and abused it; practical men have pointed out that one person's freedom may imply the deprivation of freedom for another person; some thinkers have suggested that freedom is an illusion since we are all of us conditioned by heredity, environment, and experience to predetermined responses to stimuli.

In effect, the definition of freedom leads back to further problems of definition of terms: what is the nature of human beings and what is the purpose of human existence? Can we, however, for political science purposes, come to some working hypothesis? Assuming that human beings are not mere preconditioned automata, they may choose to define freedom in one of two ways, and to act accordingly:

1. they may say freedom is simply the absence of external restraint—the ability and opportunity to do anything one wants to do if it is physically possible;
2. or they may say that freedom is the right and the ability to do what one ought to do—to choose morally and intelligently.

The first definition seems at first glance the obvious, no-nonsense definition. The second seems to be weasel-words: it seems to say, "You can be 'free' as long as you don't use your freedom to do anything I don't like!"

In truth, either definition carried to naive extremes becomes self-contradictory, but it is probably true that the first definition leads to self-defeat faster than the second. A person who acts on it will soon find himself subjected to plenty of external restraint—probably in a penitentiary. Thus some thinkers, who accept definition number one, conclude that freedom is socially and politically undesirable or even impossible. The English philosopher, Hobbes, came to that conclusion. Radical revolutionaries have time and again been driven to the same practical conclusion: witness the Puritan Commonwealth in England (1649-60), the rule of the Jacobins, Robespierre and St. Just (1793-94), and the course of the Russian Revolution from 1917 onward.

For practical political purposes, it seems that one should start from definition number two. One might make the following assertion: the degree of external restraint and coercion exercised by society over its members will be in inverse proportion to the degree of internal restraint (or self-government) that its members exercise over themselves. Bertrand Russell used to quote a Soviet Commissar, who replied to an English critic of the Soviet police state, by remarking that Englishmen didn't require much external coercion because each lived in a "mental strait jacket."

That remark illustrates both the price of freedom (self-restraint) and the danger of carrying the second definition to extremes. One can imagine a society in which every member was so perfectly self-restrained that laws and police were absolutely unnecessary. This is the case in primitive communities governed by custom and taboo. A perfect example of such a society is a beehive. No one, however, would claim that a group of Netsilik Eskimos or a community of bees was a paradigm of a free society.

In any relatively free society there will be friction. That is why we do our best to ensure that laws are just: so that men and

women can obey them voluntarily without offending their consciences or sacrificing their interests. For the same reason we have elections and representative legislatures so that laws can be altered. We have checks and balances in government, too, to lessen the chances of clashes between the public authority of society and its members. Yet it remains true that if a large proportion of the members of society are unable or unwilling to govern themselves—to act rationally and predictably within the framework of the laws—freedom in the sense of absence of external restraint (definition one) will diminish and perhaps disappear. So will the institutions of political freedom: open elections, separation of powers, rule of law, fair trial.

It will be noted that the foregoing all-too-brief discussion alternates between the two definitions of freedom. The two definitions are, in practice, mutually dependent, and either alone will lead to absurdity and self-defeat. This paradoxical logic forces itself on us in many situations in real life, not merely in politics, but in economics, ethics, personal relations as well. It makes for compromises and apparent contradictions which offend the purist and academic logician. It offers another illustration of the difficulty and the importance of teaching social science in a realistic, sophisticated spirit.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

The abstractions of the preceding argument may be illustrated in terms that students can appreciate. Here are some openers for discussion.

1. How does a child or a young person behave if he wants his parents to release him from external restraints? Does he act irresponsibly? Does he show contempt for standards accepted by his parents?
2. Would you give a child freedom to cross the road by himself, before he had learned how to

watch the traffic, understand traffic signals, keep his head, and judge speed and distances?

3. Why does the state insist on a driving test before giving people the freedom to operate a car?
4. Which school would you prefer to attend: school A, where you daren't leave your pen or purse unattended on your desk for a couple of minutes because of thieves; school B, where everyone respects the property of others?
5. How would you like to attend a school where all students were expected to act as spies on one another, and report every word or act of mischief or stupidity or wrong-doing to the principal?
6. How would you like to attend a school where differences of opinion were discouraged or absolutely forbidden? Or a school where nobody gave a damn about opinions, and where there was no such thing as right or wrong?

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

A distinction should be made between politics and government. Government is a fairly neutral term that can refer either to the process of maintaining order and defense in a society, or to the institution (or institutions) carrying out the process.

Politics, however, is a more fluid and controversial concept. Politics is the process of deciding (a) how government (the institutions that control and use the public force of the community) shall be constituted and (b) what policies it shall follow. Harold Lasswell, many years ago, wrote a book with the title: Politics: Who Gets What, When, How? The phrase is a trifle overdramatic, but it is a useful reminder of the essential feature of politics, which is, in general, a struggle for power and influence.

It has often been noted that politics will be found in any organization that generates

power and leadership. One can study politics—mutatis mutandis—not only in national, state and local governments, but in business corporations, labor unions, colleges, schools, inside an office, or a private club. In any such organization one can observe the process of debate over policy, techniques of persuasion and pressure, decision-making, alignment of opposing groups and interests: in other words, politics.

It has, indeed, been suggested that political scientists, like economists, have a special, simplified or abstract model of human nature suited to their discipline. The economist talks about economic man, that is, about a creature concerned with exclusively economic concerns: scarcity of goods, and unlimited wants; and motivated by the desire to maximize his own satisfactions. Similarly, the political scientist (especially if he is of the Machiavellian persuasion) sees man as political man: a creature concerned with power, and its use or abuse, wanting maximum power for himself, but recognizing that the likelihood of his being the victim of power in the hands of others is far greater than the probability of his being a sovereign arbiter of power himself.

Both economic man and political man are abstract models. They do not pretend to describe the whole man, but only to isolate those aspects of men and women which are especially relevant to the disciplines of economics and political science respectively. Neither the economist nor the political scientist is likely to draw the conclusion that economic life or political life is or ought to be a raw struggle of greedy egotists or power-intoxicated megalomaniacs. Rather, each will try to identify general tendencies, and systems for analyzing and regulating such tendencies in the best interest of the public and the individuals who compose the public.

More importantly, the economist and the political scientist will recognize that any attempt to ignore the model for their discipline will result in unrealistic and utopian conclusions. A constitution of

government that started from the assumption that human beings were indifferent to power and influence, and that they would under no circumstances attempt to get power in order to dominate their fellow men and women, and would consequently never form parties, factions and pressure groups, would be ineffective from the date of its adoption. The most serious mistake made by the Framers of the original U.S. Constitution was their assumption that the election of the president could be a non-partisan selection of the best man for the job. The method worked under the exceptional circumstances of Washington's presidencies, but broke down after that brief period. The XIIth Amendment remedied the error.

Teaching about politics and political man is not easy. Young people are prone to oversimplification. They are all too liable to start from an idealistic, utopian view of government as the means by which justice and the good life can be directly attained. Then, when the falsity of that vision is revealed in practice, they may swing to the opposite extreme of cynicism and contempt for the "dirty business of politics." The teacher's task is to demonstrate that: the degree to which government can be the means by which the good life and freedom and justice may be made possible will depend on the degree to which government is established on a realistic understanding of political man. It will depend, too, on the degree to which citizens understand the nature of government and politics.

TEACHING ABOUT PARTY POLITICS

Americans—including students—get very excited about party politics, especially at election time. Passions may and do run very high. Some teachers become concerned about this phenomenon, which seems somehow incompatible with the reasoned and considered judgment that should be central in the study of political science in general and American constitutional government in particular. Yet, as was indicated in the note on "Politics and Government," the two contradictory things—political passion and reasoned, balanced governmental

institutions—go together. If politics were not passionate, irrational and abusive, a complex system of checks and balances would be unnecessary.

Yet there is a caveat. If a two, or multi-party system is to survive, the gap between parties must never become so wide that the supporters of the losing party feel that defeat will be an overwhelming disaster. In other words, if the victorious party proposes to attack the fundamental consensus of the nation on the constitution and basic moral values, or if it intends to ruin a large minority or suppress opposition, then it cannot expect the minority to acquiesce peacefully in its victory. In this circumstance, the victors will have to resort to forceful oppression, and the party system will, inevitably, be destroyed.

This is common sense, yet it should be made explicit. It is, after all, less than two hundred years since some peoples of western Europe and the people of the United States concluded that party government was a feasible political system. Until that time, parties were known as factions. Factions were regarded as disastrous and disruptive. Winning factions had no hesitation in persecuting and destroying the losers by treason-trials, impeachment, bills of attainder, ex post facto laws, and enforced exile. (Article II, Section 9, clause 3, of the U.S. Constitution is revealing; so are Amendments I, IV, V and VI. Consider also the grave warnings against the spirit of party in Washington's Farewell Address, and the uproar over the Alien and Sedition Acts, 1798).

In short, a workable party system is, in the history of civilization, an abnormal not a normal phenomenon. How many times have systems of party government broken down, even in the past two hundred years! The history of the French Revolution, the coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte (1850), the rise of Mussolini and Hitler, the multiple dictatorships of Europe in the 1920's and '30's, the Spanish Civil War—these are close enough to us. How many Latin American countries had or have dictators? How many "new nations" of

the 1950's and '60's managed to maintain dual or multiple parties and open elections? Events in Eastern Europe, the USSR, China and Southeast Asia convey an obvious lesson, too. One is tempted, at this point, to refer to disquieting symptoms nearer home, but enough has been said to underline the point that successful party competition depends on a basic atmosphere of mutual confidence and on consensus as to the fundamental values and loyalties of the nation.

A NOTE FOR TEACHERS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

A valuable work was recently issued by the National Council for the Social Studies. It is an indispensable aid for teachers who wish to keep abreast of new interpretations, and to introduce students to conflicting views on the history of the United States. The book:

William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson, editors, The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture. Washington, D.C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1973. Hard cover edition \$8.50. 554 pages.

The book consists of a series of 26 bibliographical essays, subdivided under four main headings: (1) The State of American History; (2) Race and Nationality in American History; (3) New Perspectives in the Study of American History; and (4) The Reappraisal of the American Past. Included are topics ranging from "The Jacksonian Era, 1824-1848", "The Transformation of the American Economy, 1877-1900", and "The United States in World Affairs Since 1945", to "Women in American Life", "The History of the American City" and "The Asian American Experience." Brief summaries of and references to thousands of books and articles are provided.

The present comment does not do justice to the book. Every teacher should consult it. It is a rich mine of ideas. To consult it is also a somewhat overwhelming experience, inducing a certain degree of awe and humility, not to say confusion.