

UNITED STATES DELEGATION
TO THE
SECOND MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CULTURAL COUNCIL
Lima, Peru, May 1956

POSITION PAPER

Subject: Inter-American Competitions for Textbooks on Civics

PROBLEM: To implement the numerous resolutions of inter-American bodies for extending and strengthening civics instruction with inter-American relevance, the Inter-American Cultural Council at its first meeting recommended the inauguration of inter-American competitions for textbooks on civics (Resolution XXXVII). The committee study provides, in brief, that the competitions would be conducted by the Pan American Union under the following rules:

1. Subject matter would include such topics as the democratic concepts of the Charter of the Organization of American States and other international documents; concepts of peace and solidarity; and the main features of the inter-American system.
2. Competitions would take place every 5 years for textbooks for both elementary and secondary grades, including suggested exercises and teaching aids.
3. Contestants would submit to the Pan American Union unpublished manuscripts, in such number and form as indicated, which the Pan American Union would refer to a panel of judges, composed of PAU officials and a member of the Committee for Cultural Action.
4. Four prizes--2 of \$500 and 2 of \$300--would be awarded, the Pan American Union to handle publication of the prize-winning manuscripts.

U. S. POSITION:

1. That the U. S. Delegation should neither promote nor oppose a recommendation for the establishment of competitions for the preparation of civics textbooks with inter-American emphasis.
2. If such a plan is vigorously promoted, the U. S. Delegation should attempt to modify the proposed plan in the following ways:
 - a. Limit the competition to one book for elementary grades the first time, one for secondary grades the next time, with the possibility of not repeating the competition but merely bringing the books up-to-date in succeeding years.

- b. In lieu of Point 4, consider as an alternative to a money prize, arrangements by the Pan American Union to secure commercial publication and royalties for authors. Explain that the proposal for a money prize is contrary to the budgetary policy of this government in all international organizations.
- c. Substitute for the proposed panel of judges, specialists in civics and in instructional practices, with at most one OAS officer.

DISCUSSION:

It is true, as the Committee for Cultural Action points out, that the desire that school children and youth be informed about the inter-American system, its ideals, its organization, its methods of operation, and its accomplishments, has been the subject of numerous resolutions (par. 2 of Preliminary Note, CAC-E-11). It is also true that the preparation of instructional materials of appropriate content, including suggestions for student activities, has not yet been accomplished, numerous as are the basic documents of the Pan American Union on which authors could draw.

Further, most civics and social studies textbooks in the United States give little attention to the OAS. Textbook publishers are keen to sense a developing demand. Competitions such as those proposed here could result in intensified interest in the schools in teaching about inter-American cooperation and in the inclusion generally of more material about the American hemisphere.