

# ADULT EDUCATION

*The Quarterly Journal of the British Institute of Adult Education*

VOL. X

SEPTEMBER 1937

No. 1

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London

VOL. X No. 1 ADULT EDUCATION SEPTEMBER 1937

ficial and secondhand. We are in a great danger, I believe, at the present time, of being led away by a mass-reaction to words. Words have become so numerous that we often slur over them intellectually while allowing them to influence us emotionally. This can be seen in the attitude of men and women in dictator countries. But it is also apparent in our own country—in politics, in our respect for the catch-phrases of newspapers and advertisers. We need to pull words to pieces more, to consider what they really mean, and to take nothing for granted. And we need to use words ourselves with more intelligence and imagination. Good speaking and good democracy depend ultimately on the same thing—an attitude that is both critical and creative.

### *Education for Citizenship—In England and the U.S.A.*

KARL POLANYI

THE unique peculiarity of the United States among modern nations is that they were established straightaway as a *society* rather than as a state. It is probably the only instance in history that such a task should have been deliberately undertaken, or perhaps even contemplated. And yet, the first Americans were definitely society-builders, not state-builders. Whether the freedom of communal worship or the freedom of material betterment was the end primarily sought by them, they invariably identified the polity with a mode of social existence the rules of which derived their validity not so much from positive legislation as from the nature of things. They regarded society as a rational proposition the principles of which derive from natural and Divine law without the intervention of the political state. But by thus refusing to recognise territorial sovereignty and state power as the precondition of society, they were implicitly rejecting the idea of politics which refers precisely to the establishment and manipulation of such sovereignty and power. In effect, the main aim of the American Constitution was to prevent the emergence of such sovereignty. Accordingly, politics, in every sense of the term, remained a more or less peripheric and subsidiary sphere in the American social experiment.

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As in all other countries of the Western type, state and politics occupy the centre of the stage in England. Society is here a predominantly unconscious growth, founded and established by no man, and the structure of which is, by its very nature, removed from human interference. The road to change leads mainly through legislation. State and politics are here eminently the means by which members of the community govern, uphold, modify or transform society.

In England, therefore, the citizen is primarily related to politics, whereas in America he is related to society direct. The difference is momentous. *Education for politics* means in England education for the use of power, personal preparation for rule. In America education 'for politics,' as traditional politics go, would be almost a contradiction in terms. The corresponding process is *education for social existence*. Far from being a preparation for rule, it is a preparedness for adjustment to one's surroundings. It consists of a technique of behaviour with regard to the two basic facts of American life: the existence of manifold voluntary groupings in which the individual takes a part and a continuous process of almost convulsive change in human and natural surroundings.

The two basic facts are closely linked with one another. Extreme individualism, both mental and material; anarchism in relation to the coercive functions of the state; unlimited competition as the organizing principle of economic life—these basic tenets of American society worked for swift and sweeping change in an empty continent. Except for the old South and New England, where, on the whole, stability prevailed, the America of to-day is the outcome of one long sustained surge of change that has transuted the very fastnesses of the earth, raising thousands of settlements to dizzy heights and ploughing almost as many under again; blasting life from mountain flanks and rocketing skyscrapers from the plains; disrooting the primeval cover of the ground, forest and grass, and replacing them by ploughed fields and flying ports—with stunning results both of a creative and a woefully destructive kind. In this *maelstrom* of change social environment underwent at a forced pace every manner of transformation linked with the phenomenon of growth or, occasionally, decay.

Such, in terms of social reality, was the background of the American



approach to the problem of the rôle of the citizen in the community and, eventually, to the educational needs of the citizen with a view to this rôle of his. For the success of the community obviously depended upon the achievement of its individual members, and, no less manifestly, the fate of these members upon the measure of success (or failure) attained by the community as a whole. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this mutuality of benefits between citizen and communal group was offered by the rise of real estate values in America, this ever-active propelling motor of the greatest shift of population known in modern history. Under permanent duress the American learned to realise the thousand ways in which the individual can behave constructively towards the group to which he belongs and can influence creatively that process of change in which he is both an active and a passive partner.

Thus it came about that the Americans as a people acquired a unique knowledge of the manifold correlations involved in social change. The effect of individual behaviour upon human surroundings, on the group and its functions, especially with a view to their prospective evolution, is a field of experience on which American families will carry on sustained discussions that would seem almost pointless to non-Americans. Often the subject will be the changing function of the family life, of marriage and parentage; the changing relationship of sets of friends in the depression period; the changing form and content of cultural and intellectual pursuits, if not the function of education itself, its aims and methods, both in relation to the earning capacity of the children and to the diminishing functions of the family under changing conditions. And invariably, the point will be: *What to do about it?* which, more often than not, means, how to *behave about it, individually*. Behaviourism as a school of psychology is merely an abstraction from the methods applied in practice in the United States when dealing with the reactions between individuals and surroundings. A community which habitually does not look to political means to shape their own social destinies must tend, even if unconsciously, to evolve some educational technique which will reach the individual to deal with the problem of social change single-handed. The often ridiculed efforts of American educationalists to bring this process under the control of consciousness by developing

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handy methods of investigation into the facts of social change with a view to mastering them are the equivalent, in a non-political type of society, of 'education for politics.' Not for nothing has America become the home of descriptive sociology, the study of human relationships and 'integrated' social curricula. Some of it may lack discipline and maturity—taken all in all, it is a priceless start for the development of new organs of consciousness in a complex society.

American society was a society of change, because it was born out of a rebellion against a semi-feudal state power on the background of free land. English society, which continues to embody the principles of feudal social organization more completely than any other society of the Western industrial type, became a society of stability. The principle underlying its economic organization is that of an assured standard of living on the basis of accepted social inequality. English society is a society of a feudal type, not on account of the preponderant role of the aristocracy in public life, but because its economics are that of a *producers' society*. Not as a consumer but as a producer does the citizen play his main part in industrial life. Accordingly, the social accessories of economic life are invariably fashioned in such a manner as to aim at securing to the producer the maximum stability of conditions of work, earnings, professional honour and traditions. Unlimited competition, atomistic individualism, an anarchistic impatience with regulation, have got but scant room in such a system. Distribution of incomes is governed by the feudal idea of *sumum cuique*. The mutual recognition of their respective privileges and monopolies on the part of the various professional and vocational groups forms the basis of social cohesion. And the supreme guarantor as well as, to an increasing degree, also the regulator of these privileges is, to-day, the state. The decision as to the share of the producers in the national income falls, therefore, largely in the realm of politics.

Education for politics in such a basically feudal society is education of a privileged class for the task of leadership, responsibility and rule in the state. This is supplemented by the complementary education of the other classes to be ruled and to make use of their rights and privileges within their own limited sphere. Incidentally, a complete dichotomy of the educational system proper is the result—the famous 'two nations' with their two ways of speech, two manners of behaviour,

two levels of social responsibility, two outlooks on life. In effect, the broad masses of the population of England must be regarded as only comparatively literate. They are not taught to master their mother tongue at school; they lack the capacity of self-expression by written word as well as by word of mouth. Only through the grant of a scholarship to higher education (a chance which is, recently, more liberally accorded) can the offspring of the common people escape this socially degrading form of aphasia. In such cases, however, the privileged child must leave his people and join the higher social strata for good and ail. If his children were, eventually, to consort with their less fortunate cousins, they might pick up an 'accent.' Distinctions of speech have almost the rigidity of a colour bar in England. Segregation of the children of the 'under-privileged' is the inevitable consequence. The nation has become so accustomed to this qualified form of caste system that the political unity of the nation, far from being endangered, has been, in the past, rather strengthened by this system.

It is doubtful, however, whether England will be able to hold her own in the international field under this system in the future. The outlook of the upper class in world politics is practical and realist; public schools like Eton, Harrow, Rugby or Winchester; the old universities of Oxford and Cambridge; an admirable tradition of conferences, summer schools, and carefully prepared discussions helps to keep them up to the mark. The outlook of the working classes, on the other hand, is sentimental and 'idealist' in the sense of being out of touch with reality. This is a matter of serious consequence for Great Britain's national policy. Formally, policy in England is directed by a democratic parliament which must, in the nature of things, rely on an effective opposition in the fulfilment of its task. But during the Ethiopian crisis the Labour Party, although agreeing in the main with the sanctionist line of the government, failed to urge effective sanctions upon a reluctant cabinet, presumably because this would have involved some measure of support for rearmament on the part of Labour. This lack of push and grasp was hardly the result of any essential divergence of interests within the ranks of the party. The failure to face up to the responsibilities of the situation was simply due to the absence of any political education of a realist kind on the ranks of the masses.

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The average working-class man of whatever political creed is an idealist in that ominous sense of the word which connotes thinking in terms divorced from reality. His political thinking invariably tends to move between the two poles of the antithesis selfishness and altruism. It is this false antithesis of an obviously religious origin which hides reality from him. For no community can ever be faced by such an alternative *in politics*. The reference of politics is to aims and ends, whatever they happen to be. A community may be seeking primarily its own material interests; it may entirely subordinate these to some romantic or religious interest. The one thing it can not do is to cease to follow its interests. To the current idealist such a recognition smacks of cynicism. ~~This is curious enough, since this recognition~~ implies that spiritual or religious interests are as actual as so-called material ones. But unfortunately our idealist has come to link the word interest with the association of sordid motives. It may seem curious, but he associates his own interest with narrow selfishness and the interest of the other man with broad idealism. This explains his insistent refusal to envisage politics as a matter of his own interest. That this interest may, and in fact, does, mainly consist in the achievement of human ideals, makes no appeal to him. Quite naturally, on the other hand, he is loth to sacrifice his own obvious, immediate interests whatever they be, to the other man's interests. So he is unable to decide either way. Permanently baffled, he turns to the methods of wishful thinking which yield a ready solution: reality, that is the stuff which forces decisions upon men, is eliminated from the realms of politics, which is thus elevated into the sphere of a roaming altruism. His attitude to political facts is that of the transcendentalist towards the material world—he disapproves of it, if he does not faintly doubt its existence, and resents any reference to it as an attack on his fundamental convictions. The type of mind described above is simply the secularised form of the transcendentalist attitude nourished by the religious revival of the time of the industrial revolution. If the Wesleyan movement is often credited with having saved England from a social revolution, it certainly achieved that result only by turning the minds away from this world and incidentally blinding them to the realities of social action. During the second half of the nineteenth century the religious was replaced by a secular content.

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no less transcendental in character. The League of Nations, for instance, is to the common British idealist not a political but a religious idea, as has often been remarked, but unhappily, which is often overlooked, of a type of religion that has allowed itself to be divorced from reality. What is true of the League of Nations holds good of the Empire, the international situation, working-class politics. With the one great exception of Trade Unionism, there is no field of social reality in which thinking has outgrown the secularised form of an unreal religion. The fact that the religious sources of this mentality are mainly unconscious makes it almost impossible to reduce these airy ideals to reality. Switch the conversation from international to industrial affairs and the man with whom you speak undergoes a sea-change. The vague, helpless and puzzled expression vanishes from his face and the exponent of a woolly idealism is transformed before your eyes into a different person, whose mind, whatever its bent be, mirrors with a striking accuracy both the broad principles and the intricate details of the industrial situation. Any fruitful investigation into the problem of a realist education of the masses must, we feel, start from here.

### 50 Years of Extension Lectures

IN the autumn of 1877 the first course of University Extension Lectures was delivered at Norwich under the auspices of the University of Cambridge. In July 1937 the Diamond Jubilee of this event was celebrated. In the intervening 60 years similar courses have been arranged in an unbroken series, and that they continue to meet a demand is shown by the fact that over the last 20 years attendance at the evening courses has averaged over 200 per lecture and that the University Extension Society in Norwich is one of the most vigorous and enterprising in the country. Indeed it can face the future with as much confidence as it can look back upon the past with satisfaction. This record, which may be paralleled, but not surpassed, in a few centres in the north of England, is one of which the ancient city of Norwich may well be proud. It is also an indication that the "Lecture Course" has an important part to play in the provision of adult education in this country.

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