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## ADULT EDUCATION AND THE WORKING CLASS OUTLOOK.

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The victory of the Labour Party at the polls occurred at a juncture when the general reconstruction of the country was the issue at stake and it is almost universally taken for granted that democratic socialism will remain one of the foundations of Britain's future. We rightly speak of a "silent revolution." For the first time in the history of this country, the working people have become a prime factor in the shaping of national life.

Education in the broadest sense is only another name for society. Though adult education forms merely a fraction of the education system as a whole, it is, in the nature of things, the fraction most responsive to the demands of change in a democratic society. A new social situation requires new ways of thinking, and these cannot be made to order, but depend in their turn on new developments in education.

Clearly, the ability of the working people of this country to cope with the tasks now facing them is of paramount national importance. The problem is very far from being restricted to politics. Socialism transcends politics. That is why a social democratic government means a sudden vast increase in the responsibilities of working class people. Not in the time-honoured and comparatively simple job of political government, but in dealing with the new and complex problems of industry will working people have to prove their competence to lead on to a new kind of society. Nationalisation of coal mining is a revealing instance. Industry, in this regard, stands in a different category from political government. The latter, in a democratic society, is the concern of the political parties; industrial democracy involves far more: an application of the intellectual, moral and physical capacities of working men and women. Compared with the responsible producer, the responsible citizen is but a vague and airy creature.

No wonder the question is frequently being asked whether adult education should, in the future, take account of what, admittedly rather vaguely, is described as working class outlook? Also, how such an outlook may be relevant to adult education? and how far, though perhaps unconsciously, are we already taking account of it in our work as tutors?

### I.

In the traditional view, of course, such a question could hardly arise. Adult education was regarded as a leisure-time occupation which should enable the working class student to make better use of the rest of his leisure-time. Undoubtedly, this contained an element of truth. Any education deserving of the name must aim at enhancing a man's desire for contact with nature and the arts. It stimulates him to transform his environment, so as to create within the limits of the possible some of that artificial nature which we call culture. Such was the leisure theory at its best, and it largely applied during the early decades of the movement. At its worst, it tended to degenerate into that new fangled manorial week-end party, the methods of which suggest "Kraft durch Freude," to be translated not as "Strength through Joy" but rather as "Weakness through Snobbery." Indeed, a working man's life that had no roots either in his work or craft, or in his relations to his fellows in trade union or shop, or even in the broader implications of his functions as a producer, but was merely as a parasite on his own leisure-time, would be a hopeless conception. Such a man would resemble a person who tried to find his way by following his own shadow.

