

WHAT THE WORKER SHOULD KNOW.

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A belief in the extension of education for the multitude in new ways and in subjects hitherto untouched by the masses is manifest. Three important schemes are in operation :—

1. The Education Act, 1918, popularly known as the "Fisher Act," has established in Great Britain "a national system of public education available for all persons capable of profiting thereby," and has placed upon the council of every county or borough the duty "to contribute thereto by providing for the progressive development and comprehensive organisation in respect of their area." "Half-time" school attendance is abolished, and instruction may continue, in certain cases, if the local authority requires it, up to sixteen years at the day school. Young persons, principally of course the workers, must now attend for 320 hours in each year at a Continuation Class in the working day in such ways as the local authority may require, and after seven years from the appointed day of its operation attendance at such continuation classes will be compulsory upon young persons between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years.

For these purposes it is now the duty of the authorities to provide free continuation schools, supplying suitable instruction and physical training for all young persons in their area, to supply or train teachers for the same, and the authorities may also provide holiday or school camps, physical training centres, playing fields, swimming baths, and centres for social training. Voluntary organisations are encouraged to co-operate, in an elastic way, with such schemes.

All over 18 years of age who may wish to attend are to be encouraged to do so, especially in non-vocational classes.

2. The State, as a large employer of labour, had already required in certain departments as the G.P.O. that their juvenile employees should attend continuation classes. A large extension of this idea to adults is now found in the Army Education Scheme and, in a smaller way, the Navy Education Scheme. To make the serving soldier not only a better soldier but on his return to civil life an efficient citizen, with a skilled trade or occupation, the Army Council now requires "educational training" each week as a parade, in Elementary, Technical, and Higher Education, according to needs and capacity. An Army Education Corps of Officers and N.C.O.'s over a thousand strong is formed, regional libraries and training centres

throughout the commands of the Empire have been formed, in addition to the old Army Schools and their schoolmasters. Each battalion has its own Education Officer and N.C.O. Instructors, who are attached to the unit, which also has its standard library and sets of text-books, etc, provision of transport being made up to two ton for educational equipment (books, blackboards and the like) when the regiment moves. Staff Education Officers are appointed, in addition, to each G.H.Q., Division and Brigade.

3. The third scheme alluded to is found in the Report of the Committee on Adult Education, presided over by the Master of Balliol.

This Report suggests not so much further legislation but administrative action and voluntary co-operation of parties and organisations concerned to secure the extension *at once* of Adult Education for the masses in Great Britain. The Report is a store-house of suggestions and record of actual successful schemes, and as such is being widely taken up and used, thus forming the roof to the educational edifice of the Fisher Act.

Some quotations from this Report will show that there is contemplated a larger education of the worker than has been as yet considered or at least affected. The brilliant boy or girl of the working class who can run up the "educational ladder" as a sort of intellectual acrobat to his or her own advancement is not any longer to receive most attention. All workers are, as *adults*, to have available more and better education for its own sake or the sake of the community at large.

The concept of State-aided education is enlarged; all are to be allowed and encouraged to participate, no matter how lowly or humble may be the occupation of the particular worker, in some form of liberal studies.

The Master of Balliol's Report puts this clearly before the people of Great Britain in the following words, giving the substance of the findings in the preparatory letter to the Prime Minister:—

"If we take the Imperial position we see its has been for ever altered by the war. Some way or other we have to re-adjust to these new facts the future relation between Britain and the Dominions. Everything will depend on mutual understanding and sympathy."

Speaking of the need of education—"Then there are our home problems, which hardly waited even till peace was in sight to burst upon us. Is the State to buy up the railways, mines, shipping, and 'the trade,' as it modestly calls itself? What sort of Cabinet are we to have in future and what sort of Second Chamber? Can we shake off the baser sort of politician

and the dark methods of the caucus, the secret funds and the sale of honours, without weakening the practicability and the efficiency of the two-party system? Is it not manifest that a democracy which has to solve these questions must be an educated democracy? And what of the new form of society that is trying to build itself under the hands of Labour—Labour which has been awakened by the war to a new sense of unity and power and a new reading of social justice?

"The necessary conclusion is that adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short span of early manhood, but that adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong.

"That the opportunity for adult education should be spread uniformly and systematically over the whole community as a primary obligation on that community in its own interest and as a chief part of its duty to its individual members, and that therefore every encouragement and assistance should be given to voluntary organisation so that their work, now necessarily sporadic and disconnected, may be developed and find its proper place in the national educational system.

"That such a process needs to be planned out at once and set going immediately as part of the general work of reconstruction.

"An uneducated democracy cannot be other than a failure, nor can the new developments of education for children and adolescents supersede the need of education for adults; rather they will accentuate the need.

"The workpeople are themselves coming to be conscious that such changes are necessary. They realise that modern industry tends to become more and more mechanical, that it provides less educational interest in the work itself and offers little opportunity to satisfy intellectual, social or artistic impulses. They demand 'industrial control' on the ground that industrial democracy is as essential to individual freedom as is political democracy."

In the course of their more detailed findings the Committee state :—

"The test of education is not what children do in school, but what men and women enjoy out of it. A people which reserves its religion for Sundays is not religious, and it is not educated if, while it multiplies schools, it takes pleasure in filling its evenings with bad plays, its houses with shoddy furniture, and its towns with 'municipal statuary.' A conception of education which limits it to the training of intellect without

seeking to humanise all social activities will lay no spell upon ordinary men, and will ultimately find that the very schools on which it relies as its strongholds are invaded by materialism.

"An education which is merely one additional specialism is not education at all, and if the centuries which created English folk songs and ballad poetry had fewer schools and less information it may be doubted whether, nevertheless, they were not, in some essential respects, better educated. If there is ever to be the reality of popular culture in England it will not be achieved by reproducing the academic traditions of ancient institutions, however excellent. It must spring, like Welsh music, from the soil, and draw its inspiration from popular life. The natural vehicle is to be found in some form of Art.

"Education in literature may be given in such a way as to make an equal appeal to the instinct for artistic expression. The primary aim of education in literature, so far as adult students are concerned, should be not the acquisition of information but the cultivation of imagination. The test of its success is not that students should be able to talk fluently or even intelligently about literary history, but that they should have been penetrated by the power of some great writer, should have made something of him, at least, a part of themselves, and should have acquired insensibly an inner standard of excellence which will lead them (for example) to prefer Hardy to Hall Caine and the Irish Players to a Revue."

Without the encouragement of a Fisher Act, already in operation here, the Viceregal Commission of 1918-19 on Primary Education, over which Lord Killanin presided, had reached similar conclusions in their report of 1919, though the circumstances and their terms of reference precluded apparently their proposing any definite scheme of adult education for Ireland. The opening paragraph of their report states:—

"For undoubtedly a strong, if not vehement, desire for better and more thorough organisation in the arrangements of social life has arisen. On the one hand, the minds and consciences of men have been deeply touched by all that has occurred recently in public and international life, and have become more keenly sensitive to the need for great improvements in the standards of living and conditions of the people. On the other hand, *society has grown profoundly apprehensive of the dangers that lurk behind many neglected ills in the body politic, and is determined, if only for its own protection, that every effort shall be made to mitigate them.* Even the oldest and most civilised communities have been brought face to face with the terrific eventualities that can be produced by sordid and evil circumstances menacing their very existence, and these

experiences and lessons have led to a vivid recognition of the necessity for coping in a more zealous and courageous and candid fashion than heretofore with the grave social problems that confront civilisation.

"At such an epoch-making time this Committee, although it had not been formed expressly in view of such a conjunction of events, could not be blind to the movements and signs around them, the more so when it is our conviction that *in no sphere of reform can more useful and permanent work be done than in that of the education of the people*. For, however beneficent may be the material changes introduced into the plan and various arrangements of society, education is a most important part in the spiritual foundation on which the character and stability of the social edifice will rest. If the foundation is not sound and adequate all attempts at the amelioration of other features of the structure will be frustrated or marred. After physical well-being, there is, assuredly, no social question so vital as education, especially for the poor, whose sole chance of enlightenment it may be. Moreover, the power and significance of education becomes every day more evident and widespread. The safety, welfare and happiness of a people and the progress of a country are dependent on the training which is given in the schoolroom."

Adult Education in Ireland.

It remains then to consider how far adult education has extended or should be developed in Ireland for Irish workers.

A return states that in the year of the war 700,000 pupils were on the rolls of day national schools, with an average attendance of 500,000. Of these 7,000 boys left school for the working world, having only reached the Third Standard, and over 3,500 did likewise, having only reached the Fourth Standard. A similar flow out, it is assumed, has occurred each year, and will occur until we have a better School Attendance Act.

Is it to be thought that these pupils enter as workers some scheme of adult education as they grow to manhood?

There were in a recent year only 44,000 students attending technical institutes and classes from all types of day schools in Ireland. None can enter such who have not passed the Sixth Standard of the national schools or its equivalent.

Technical Instruction.

The limitations of the scope and extent of such technical instruction as is taken in Ireland is seen if we consider, for instance, how far we have in any way eliminated "blind-alley" employment in the case of newsboys, or, to take a homely

example, the repeated statements of mistresses as to the incompetency of their cooks and the inefficiency deplored by employers of the office boy. Again, trades unions have not in any comprehensive way made technical training guaranteeing efficiency upon all their apprentices or members. We have not seen in Dublin a weaving class established in our technical schools nor one in glass-making, though poplin making still is, and "Waterford" glass-making was, a staple industry of our city.

Elementary and Introductory Classes.

It may, however, be that the numbers outside the technical schools—for the mass of the workers do not take up technical courses—seek further instruction somewhere.

The last return available for 1918-19 shows that only 2,600 pupils in Ireland qualified for grant in elementary evening schools—a falling from 7,000 in the year of the war and 1,400 in the introductory courses to technical schools, making 4,000 in all. The corresponding numbers for Scotland are 22,000.

Yet about 10,000 working boys, not having passed beyond the Fourth Standard, leave the national schools each year on an average for the working world, thus inadequately equipped educationally for the rights and duties of citizenship, and remain so for their lives.

Need of an Experimental Scheme of Non-Vocational Classes Now.

Adult education in Ireland is therefore, with the exception of a very few elementary evening schools, some isolated tutorial classes of the Workers' Education Association, and introductory classes, numbering not 5,000 students, is limited as regards a national scheme to the technical schools which cater for the few and not the many of our Irish workers.

Technical education is itself more strictly technical instruction; it may make a good craftsman or a skilled mechanic, it may not manufacture, save in rare cases, 5 per cent., as the Master of Balliol's report suggests, employment, though of course it is necessary. It may leave the students as it found them very undeveloped citizens, unable to cope with their rights and duties and—what is equally important—unable to enjoy the good things of life at their very doors—in books, pictures, antiquities, museums and galleries, in organised games and the various higher forms of rational amusement. For most of these are only of meaning to persons possessing a certain amount of accurate education with facility for thought and action.

To help all manner of workers to such things we have not, and we require a national plan, available in local centres of liberal studies, covering over a period of three or four years, such subjects as Civics, Economics, History, Literature, and Art and Music, which, according to their tastes, the worker on entering the working world from the day schools would automatically take up, giving systematic and continuous study under suitable and sympathetic teachers.

Immediate Scheme Suggested.

In the present circumstances we have no authority with adequate finance able to institute such a comprehensive scheme in every locality, but it is contended that the field for future effort can be usefully explored by small experimental schemes of such non-vocational classes. The Office of National Education might be able, out of its existing elementary evening school vote, open and subsidise, if only in their own model schools, such centres of instruction, carefully selecting suitable pupils, through workers' clubs, etc., and supply and training picked teachers for the purpose.

The recent vote (1919-20) for elementary evening schools was £7,000, and of it only £2,000 odd was used, showing a surrendered credit balance as in past years. This vote indeed stood in 1906 at £23,000.

No purpose is served by going into greater length into the deadlock in the use of this money resulting from the circumstances of Irish administration and the partly ineffective negotiations between the Treasury, the Managers and the Office of National Education from 1910 to 1920.

The first step, however, in any national plan of adult education in Ireland will be one half-way between the day school and the centres for humane and liberal studies, and this indeed will be equally necessary for the extension of technical training. The strength of a chain is measured by its weakest link, and in the case of the average Irish workers there are many weak educational links, and we must do something for the educational derelicts in our midst.

The continuation class in Ireland will for many years be engaged in supplementing the deficiencies of the elementary education of the average workers of to-day, the victims of trust land school attendance, and untouched by any future day school reform; and in the case of the older students special treatment will be required, though, of course, humane studies should also be furnished for the type—the 44,000 now attending technical schools.

Accuracy of thought and action and capacity for thought and action in the complexity of to-day's civilised life is essential. Here are a few daily actions, taken at random, which may be required of a citizen:—

To write legibly and rapidly, and to clearly understand meaning of words.

To use a dictionary, a directory, a Bradshaw, and, say, a catalogue or index with, say, cross-references.

To make up small accounts, to fill in an insurance card.

To record a telephone message clearly or to send a telegram.

To understand the principles which may be discussed in a political manifesto or a newspaper "leader" which may be concerned with terms such as industrial co-operation, nationalisation of industrial resources, a republic, dominion, a public loan, proportional representation, etc.

To draw or read a simple plan, such as a new screw, as we saw in the *Daily Mail*, or, in rural districts, a leaflet on the use and composition of a new potato spray

To draw up the proceedings of a meeting or prepare an agenda.

To make intelligent use of a public library, picture gallery, museum, zoo or botanical gardens.

Comfort in social life depends largely upon operations such as the above being accurately performed. Such things as the foregoing cannot be adequately learnt by the boy in the day national school, and they are certainly not taught on any organised plan in continuation classes in Ireland. Elementary evening schools or the introductory course have indeed not got very far beyond the three R's. It is not enough to say that the worker may learn all these and similar items of the daily round as he goes along. He may and in cases he may not. At any rate, the knowledge is bought too dearly in the inefficiency and the irritation and inconvenience to all in the process if the learning is thus incident to the day's work. Notice the inability of a worker to fill in a form neatly, to find an address in a directory quickly, or to record accurately a telephone message.

For workers below the Fifth Standard special treatment by chosen teachers is necessary. They must not be given dull lessons, and their deficiency in English and Arithmetic must be overcome incidentally to the study of interesting subjects.

A teacher reported to me some extreme cases. "It would surprise you to find how little they know about the periods of the year, its beginning, number of days, etc. Poor A. B. did not know when the New Year began. N. M. hardly knew the

days of the week." Yet in this same school on the first night attended by a young worker from a soda-water factory keen to get on and learn the meaning of life around him, a teacher set him this headline to copy :—

"I intend to come regularly on the nights appointed." This drove him away for ever. His copy was given, as you may see, to another more advanced student who could write Irish and was able to parse a sentence.

Yet young men will come from Harold's Cross to the centre of the city or, as I can vouch in one case, walk home from Clarendon Street to the Pigeon House after a hard day's work to attend a night school.

With a good will and co-operation our eighty-three national schools in the Dublin district might be made live centres for the number of members below the line of educational equipment, even under the existing vote and rate of payment. Here is the material available *in any one year* in round numbers :—
Leaving day school for work at Third Standard, 400

Fourth Standard, 300

Fifth Standard and over, 1,000

To instance the kind of teaching required for those below Fifth Standard the continuation class would tell them how to read a newspaper, an actual *Mail* or *Herald* being used by each student. Telegram forms would be filled in, real directories would be used and names and addresses of interest found. Arithmetic would be taught through small accounts, and the use of insurance cards, keeping of records of use of gas in meter and actual daily items. English, the use of words, might well be studied in a lesson analysing the rules of camogie or cricket and in reading from a high-class paper. An actual three year programme in English for unskilled workers is available.

For students over the Fifth Standard definite preparation in mathematics and drawing should be made to allow them to enter as soon as possible suitable technical classes.

Manual instruction in woodwork, elementary science and civics should have their place. The whole course should run for about *three* years.

It is contended that it is difficult to teach civics in Ireland without touching politics. Yet such subjects as Parliamentary control, the functions of a local authority, the nature and scope of departments of State, poor laws, rates and taxes can easily be treated in a neutral yet useful way. Unless, indeed, some general knowledge of these subjects is possessed by the worker-voter there is a danger that, in consideration of policies of national or local government, a large section of the community may remain governed by newspaper headlines.

The proper place for civics, science, rural or industrial, and woodwork is in a large degree in the continuation school. The day school is largely overburdened already.

The higher type of worker, say of the Seventh Standard or Junior Grade Intermediate, should immediately on entering life as a worker take up art and literature or history. A scheme submitted to a group of young clerical workers of from 18 to 21 years gives as suggested books for study from which parts would be selected—Turner's History of Art, Mills' Representative Government, a novel of Scott, Dickens or Stevenson, Burke's Speeches, Franklin's Autobiography, and Lecky's History of Ireland and Joyce's Social History of Ireland. These books as used are to be closely co-ordinated with visits to the museum, public galleries, historical portrait gallery or public libraries (for reference or original publications), as the case may be. It is of course not intended that one student should take all these subjects.

Visits to centres of educational interest, such as an electricity works, a public department, a newspaper office, etc., should be arranged under guidance of a teacher for all groups.

The needs of working girls or women in domestic science should similarly be provided for.

Popular lectures have their place as propaganda, but are not all and only relatively useful if they lead to continuous and systematic study. This is the view of the Master of Balliol's report. The R. D. S. recent action in this respect is very important.

For all types of workers, juvenile and adults, organised games, both indoor and outdoor, must be put on a better basis. Few know accurately the rule of "off-side" in football. It is surprising to find how many working boys cannot play draughts. Chess is hardly established. What organised games working girls play I do not know.

Nothing is more depressing than to see the desultory manner in which hundreds of our working boys from want of a guiding, organising hand play games—cricket, hurling or football—in our parks or waste spaces on Sundays or their "half-holidays," and the consequent squabbles and breaking up of the match. A player, whose coat has served as goal post, may even with that necessary item depart in a huff, or an entire side leave the field asserting that the others were "roughing it."

Basket ball, played with a full-sized football and posts, affords a short game, giving better amusement and exercise, with rules which, if kept, incidentally develop a sense of "sport" and "fair play." It has the advantage of being playable in the

open or under cover, and so suits our uncertain climate. Its interest is enough also to hold adults, even keen footballers, as has been experienced in Jacob's Factory.

As a prerequisite, however, to the efficient and satisfying scheme of outdoor games for Dublin or other Irish workers, a proper scheme of physical drill with plenty of movement and the new type of games introduced therein seems a need. Physical drill in the day national school does not seem to be intensive enough to have any marked influence one way or another on the action of the young worker when he takes up outside games. Swimming should have its place in such a scheme.

I have not attempted to go in this paper into the ways and means of the experimental continuation classes which for the unskilled worker might be formed in Dublin, though particulars are available if called for in the discussion. I have only tried to emphasise what provision should be made for the type, many in number, who do not enter a technical school.