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Editorial and Publishing Offices

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Telegrams : Phusis Lesquare London

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EDUCATION BEFORE DEMOBILIZATION

AMONG the limited number of benefits conferred on us by the War is the growth of the educational services in the Armed Forces. The work carried out has already been referred to in some detail in these columns¹. The schemes have developed along different lines in the three Services, but in each case the amount and quality of work that is being done has reached proportions which would undoubtedly astonish those who were familiar with Service conditions in the War of 1914-18. In the Army, for example, a compulsory form of education has now been conducted for four years, and has grown into what must be one of the most searching and wide-ranging experiments in adult education that has yet been attempted. Soldiers and auxiliaries have been given opportunities of voluntarily studying subjects as far apart as chiropody and Chinese, music and metallurgy; the element of compulsion has been applied to the discussion of current problems and the way in which good citizens are produced. These miscellaneous activities have not been without effect, and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that Service education departments have been preparing even more comprehensive programmes for the release period which will begin when Germany is defeated. The Army and the Royal Air Force schemes were announced at the beginning of October, and it is expected that a statement will be made on behalf of the Royal Navy in the near future.

In the R.A.F., officers, airmen and airwomen, who have not been selected for regular service in the post-war period, are to be given a pre-release preliminary training to prepare them for return to civilian life, under a scheme which will be known as the Educational and Vocational Training Scheme. This will form part of the Government plan for the re-settlement of personnel after release from the service. The training will consist of three main types, re-settlement, educational and vocational, and will be part of an obligatory programme which will take up an average of six hours training time a week. Of these six hours, one will be devoted to re-settlement training, and run mainly on discussion-group lines and designed to give both background knowledge on post-war problems and information on the fundamentals of citizenship. The series of booklets, produced by the Army and called "The British Way and Purpose", will be used to deal with particular aspects of citizenship. To supplement the discussions, additional methods of instruction such as lectures, broadcasts, films, etc., will be used.

Educational training will be provided at secondary and higher levels and will allow R.A.F. personnel to improve both their general educational standards and their qualifications for civilian employment. At the secondary level, training will be devoted mainly towards the Forces Preliminary Examination. This Examination will be introduced to meet the needs of men and women who wish to prepare themselves for subsequent entry to certain universities, the Civil Service or some of the professions. Success in the

Examination will allow the candidate to be considered for entry to a university or to be exempted from the preliminary examination of the professional body concerned. It will in no way replace existing means of qualifying for entry to universities. Higher educational training will be available for those who have reached matriculation standard, and will normally consist of individual private study under the supervision of education officers and instructors.

Vocational training will be provided for civilian occupations only when the prospects of employment are favourable enough to merit training. Frequently, this training will consist of the conversion of a skilled R.A.F. tradesman into a tradesman fitted for a job in civilian life. In other cases, the aim will either be to improve existing civilian occupational qualifications or to give a man or woman with no qualifications the groundwork on which more specialized vocational training may be built outside the service. Since there is almost certain to be a great demand for training for jobs, it will scarcely be possible to provide resident specialist instructors at each station. Instead, pools of specialist instructors in technical and professional subjects will be maintained at some central station and will visit units to meet current requirements.

The training for vocations will be worked out in the following way: (1) There will be practical instruction and exercises on stations supervised by visiting instructors. (2) There will be courses in the basic theoretical subjects necessary for groups of civilian occupations. (3) Conversion courses will be arranged in station workshops. (4) When other facilities are not available, study syllabuses and textbooks will be provided. (5) Close liaison will be maintained with civilian authorities, and attendance at classes in local technical colleges and schools will be encouraged.

The scheme announced by the War Office is less ambitious than that for the R.A.F. In a pamphlet called "Brush-up for Civvy St.", which has been issued by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, the plan is modestly described as a means "for making up, so far as possible, those arrears of education and training which are a part of the debit side of war service", and the hope is entertained that the scheme will make an important contribution to the morale and community spirit of the Army during a difficult period.

The scheme itself is described in general terms in the pamphlet; the latter will be used immediately by regimental officers to acquaint their men with the main features. But these officers are categorically told that they must make it quite clear to the men that the educational scheme to be introduced in the release period is not intended to prepare them for a gilt-edged, guaranteed job. The business of getting soldiers into jobs, or getting them trained for jobs, will be mainly the duty of the Ministry of Labour. The Army itself can do no more than provide the men and women who are awaiting release with some kind of preliminary training which will be useful to them when they are demobilized. For those who need it, "it will teach the A.B.C. of industry and commerce, so that they can go out and learn the

language". For the soldiers who do not require any preliminary vocational training, opportunities will be given to pursue hobbies and interests which will broaden their cultural horizon. Individuals whose professional studies have been interrupted by the War will be given a new chance to take up the threads by means of correspondence and other courses.

The varied principles of the scheme are described under eight headings. It will be compulsory, that is, it will be an obligatory part of the working timetable. This is merely an extension of the present system, but under the new regulations, educational training will be given more emphasis and more time. Variety will be introduced into the scheme in that the troops will have a reasonably wide choice in what they want to study. The third principle—that participation in the scheme as instructor or as one of the instructed will in no way affect the individual's chances of demobilization—will be one that will wreck the scheme at the outset unless it is said loudly and often. To fit in with military organization the new scheme will dovetail into the existing pattern of Army administration and procedure. Fifthly, the scheme will be co-educational and will apply equally to men and women whenever possible. For obvious reasons, it will not be possible to put the scheme into operation at any predetermined, fixed time; according to the pamphlet, "formations will 'lay on' the scheme at different times, depending on what part of the world they are in and what their other circumstances are (e.g. static, operational)". The close collaboration with the civilian educational bodies which already exists will be continued, partly for its direct and intrinsic value to Army education, and partly because, having had experience of what the civilian system can provide, soldiers may be more stimulated to use it after the War. Lastly, it is emphasized that the new scheme will be merely a growth of something that already exists; it will be the wider and better equipped development of educational schemes which have been operating in the Army since the winter of 1940.

Although the Army cannot provide a curriculum so diverse and selective as that of a polytechnic, the War Office has attempted to provide a broad classification of subjects of study within which all soldiers will find something near their requirements and interests. These have been grouped into six wide categories: (1) technology; (2) general science; (3) home, health and hobbies; (4) man and society; (5) commerce and the professions; and (6) arts and crafts.

Under the heading of technology, courses will be organized in electrical and mechanical engineering, building construction, and similar occupations. In general science, men and women will be given the opportunity to study essential scientific principles as applied to manufacture and the professions or the problems of industry and society. The third category is intended to meet many different needs; it is not meant to teach a wage-earning job, but will provide a background knowledge for the soldier who is interested in, say, gardening or poultry-keeping, or the auxiliary who wishes to know more about domestic

subjects. "Man and society" covers sociology in its wider sense while, under "commerce and the professions", courses will be arranged for men and women who wish to make a serious study of business organization or prepare to enter the Civil Service, local government or the professions. The sixth broad field, "arts and crafts", is intended for those who want to familiarize themselves with drawing or painting or musical appreciation. "Men and women who hope to go in for printing or design or architecture or teaching will all find something in this category to provide the first principles of their special need or interest."

The organization of the scheme shows how education in the 'Interim Army' will function in a way which has not previously been possible. Instead of the present system of two compulsory hours—Army Bureau of Current Affairs (A.B.C.A.) and British Way and Purpose (B.W.P.)—there will be six to eight hours a week of education. A.B.C.A. and B.W.P. will be retained as part of these and will be organized on a communal basis as at present, that is, on a platoon or squad or troop basis. For the other four to six hours, men and women will be treated individually and will join with like-minded individuals from any part of their unit to study the subjects they select.

The Army Educational Corps is to be considerably increased in numbers and will be responsible for the general direction of the scheme. But since the programme will be organized on a unit basis, the key men will undoubtedly be the unit education officers, "the 'amateurs', whose duty it will be to publicise the alternatives in the curriculum and to organise the facilities which unit resources can provide". They will be specially trained and equipped with manuals of guidance which should help them over some of their difficulties. The instructors will be selected from unit personnel and will be drawn from officers and other ranks. (The scheme as a whole will apply equally to all ranks.) A start has already been made in training instructors in a wide range of subjects at an Army school specially created for the purpose. Moreover, although the educational scheme for the release period cannot train men for jobs or find jobs for men, unit education officers will be supplied with a steady stream of information which will allow them to give "details of the various trades and professions and the qualifications required for them to those individuals who are in doubt about their careers".

Some of the educational activities will naturally be devoted to the passing of examinations; the Forces Preliminary Examination will apply to the Army in the same way as to the R.A.F. No doubt some unit education officers will be tempted to assess their achievement merely by the number of certificates their units can collect, but they will be strongly urged to keep this 'pot-hunting' in its proper place and concentrate their energies in giving a little to the lot rather than a lot to the few. No scheme of the above magnitude could be attempted without suitable accommodation and a considerable amount of equipment. It is heartening to know that already the

premises in which educational work can best be conducted are being earmarked and scheduled for adaptation. Books by the million are also being negotiated for, as are the tools, the raw materials, the films, and other educational accessories.

In assessing the merits of the above scheme, it may be illuminating to recall a little of what happened when a former British Army was sent back to civilian life after a long war. As is well known, a comprehensive educational scheme for the Armistice period after the War of 1914–18 was drawn up by Lord Gorell and his staff. But since there had been no official recognition of education in the Army until September 1918, it can be understood that the scheme for the demobilization period had to be hastily devised and implemented. To the end of the scheme attendance remained voluntary. Further, the accommodation provided for the educational scheme was far from satisfactory in many cases, and often educational activities would have been impossible if the Young Men's Christian Association and the Church Army had not come forward to place their huts at the disposal of the service authorities. Much more unfortunate, the demobilization of men on a profession basis meant that all serving schoolmasters and students were demobilized almost simultaneously early in 1919, leaving the Army without a group of instructors that it could ill afford to lose.

In turning to the scheme proposed for the coming release period, one can see that it starts with many points in its favour. There is now a well-established Army Educational Corps the ranks of which have been considerably increased during the War. The war-time scheme has been in existence for four years already on an official basis, and had been in unofficial operation for some time before that. A measure of compulsion was introduced so far back as 1941. The early problems of accommodation were energetically tackled and in the interim period should present no difficulties incapable of solution. Above all, the way in which demobilization is to take place suggests that instructors and potential instructors will be demobilized in stages rather than as one group, leaving at least some behind who will close their ranks and carry on to the end.

Yet although there are many reasons why the present schemes announced by the Army and the R.A.F. should work, the fact remains that paper schemes, however brilliantly conceived, often fail to go beyond the infant phase. When the schemes are translated into practice, many obstacles will have to be overcome. Men and women who have become used to a life of movement and sometimes excitement will find it difficult to submit to the discipline of the class-room. If this is true of individuals who were previously accustomed to study, it will be ten times more applicable to those for whom regular study was hitherto unknown. The number of competent instructors is not likely to be nearly adequate. These, and other reasons, will present formidable problems. It will, indeed, be interesting to see whether the bolder scheme announced by the R.A.F. achieves more in the long run than the more cautious programme which the Army proposes adopting.

Nevertheless, although the Services are scarcely the ideal places for arranging educational programmes, these schemes should work—and must. The difficulties may be many; frustration and disillusionment will be inevitable. But Service educationists who have developed vast programmes during the War should not find the problem of expanding these schemes during the demobilization period beyond their skill and resource. If they need encouragement, they should be constantly reminded that their individual efforts will together make up one of the greatest contributions to democratic thinking yet attempted.

¹ *Nature*, 151, 440 (1943).

PROBLEMS OF DEMOBILIZATION

The Journey Home

A Report prepared by Mass-Observation for the Advertising Service Guild. ('Change' Wartime Surveys, No. 5.) Pp. 123. (London: John Murray, 1944.) 6s.

ALTHOUGH the Government has only just declared its demobilization plans, the question of demobilization has been ably discussed in reports from the political parties as well as in one of the usual admirable broadsheets from Political and Economic Planning. These, however, have been concerned essentially with proposals or principles for demobilization and to some extent this is true of Sir Ronald Davison's somewhat broader survey "Remobilization for Peace" in the "Target for To-morrow" series. Mass Observation, in its fifth major social survey since the War began, makes an attempt to chronicle what people are actually thinking about demobilization and to provide a sample of public opinion on this question for the guidance of those who have to plan "The Journey Home".

The report is admittedly qualitative in nature. Its main statistics are based on 570 interviews, half in London, and half in other parts of the country—in Manchester, Bolton, Newark, Bishop Auckland, and a cluster of Hampshire villages. This material was supplemented by reports from Mass Observation's National Panel of Voluntary Observers, while a series of smaller investigations were made to amplify and clarify trends emerging from the analysis of this material; and although the gross numbers are necessarily small, every effort was made to obtain a justly weighted cross-section.

The first point of interest that emerges from this survey is the soundness of the point made both in the *Planning* broadsheet and in the report of the Conservative Sub-Committee that the Government, having announced the general principles which it proposes to adopt, must see that they are strictly observed. Full publicity and strict observance appear to be even more important than the general details of the scheme, provided it is one which wins the approval and confidence of the members of the armed forces. Mass Observation drives home the point in reference to the points scheme outlined by the Conservative Sub-Committee itself, which, while embodying the type of principle which people appeared to consider a just and fair basis for priority in demobilization, made very little impression on the minds of the civilian population because propaganda was not continuous.

It must, of course, be remembered that sampling opinion by a series of questions in this way has the admitted defect of psychological laboratory tests that the test itself mostly creates an artificial situation which has somehow to be discounted. The questions are liable to start the questioned on an unaccustomed train of thought, at the end of which he finds his opinions are really not at all what he supposed them to be. For all that, a study of the report suggests that the summary does give a composite picture of the hopes and fears of the Englishman or Englishwoman at the time of the inquiry, even if the spontaneity or representative character of particular sets of answers is to be discounted.

The picture, it is true, is largely one that might have been expected. Nevertheless, it throws some light on the conflict in the public mind between ideas of liberty and fairness, between conceptions of democracy and efficiency, and in this respect "The Journey Home" is of interest in relation to the question of other post-war controls than those involved in demobilization. The conclusion that no executive action will be a success unless the hopes, fears, moods and expectations of the masses who will be affected are taken into consideration has a wide bearing on post-war planning. To the extent that tension between expectation, hope and realization leads to a sense of frustration becoming prominent, the possibility of a harmonious solution of demobilization or other social problems recedes.

Clarification of ideas on demobilization is the first step, it is urged by Mass Observation, though "The Journey Home" cannot be regarded as a contribution to that end comparable with Sir Ronald Davison's little book. "People need to know more than how and when they are coming out. They need to know where they are going then. They need to know where everyone is going, what is going to happen to mankind." There is a task, or rather a duty, of exposition or interpretation which is primarily the responsibility of the Government, whether through the Ministry of Information or in some other way, and a popular booklet at a much lower price than "Remobilization for Peace" would be valuable.

But beyond this it might be added that the success of demobilization and of post-war reconstruction depends on people minding enough about the future of mankind to accept responsibility for concrete action themselves. There is nothing in this survey that indicates more clearly the weakness of democracy than the tendency of those interviewed to dissociate themselves from their democratic responsibility by saying 'they' instead of 'we' when they mean the powers that be. The report is a timely reminder of how much yet remains to be done in this direction and how much a democratic system depends on an educated electorate. To the sociologist it is of interest as an example of technique in the analysis of public opinion on any subject, and incidentally raises the fundamental question of what we understand by public opinion. It has, however, a wider appeal to all who are concerned with the prospects and possibilities of post-war planning as indicating not merely some of the dangers and difficulties to be faced, the immensity of the task of education, but also practical problems for each individual, of adapting and fitting his own hopes and aspirations into those of the community as a whole if demobilization is to prove what it is intended to be—the first step towards remobilization for peace, for building up the future of man.

R. BRIGHTMAN.