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Telegraphic Address :
PHUSIS, LESQUARE, LONDON

Telephone Number :
WHITEHALL 8831

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Education and Leisure in Progressive Life

THE extent of unemployment in the world to-day in itself has forced attention on the problem of leisure. Plans have already been proposed for the wider distribution of leisure as a contribution towards the reduction of unemployment by raising the age of entry to industry at one end and lowering the age of exit at the other. Similarly, the reduction of working hours has been advocated as a means of distributing leisure and employment more equably.

Behind such proposals lies the fundamental belief that the increased powers of production which the advance of mechanical and physical science has placed within man's power, if rightly used, make possible a higher standard of living for all and also the attainment of that standard through less physical effort and with consequent greater leisure than ever before. Already this belief is challenging economic and political systems or dogma which prevent the realisation either of that higher standard of living or that fairer distribution. There is a widespread readiness to try new methods if the old prove inadequate.

The very linking of the problem of leisure with that of unemployment in such ways as these has, however, proved an obstacle to clear thinking on the fundamental issues with which the coming of leisure confronts us. Only slowly are we coming to see that education must be a preparation for leisure as much as for work.

Work and leisure cannot well be separated ; one is complementary to the other. Life must be viewed as a whole, and, whether from the educational point of view or the wider social point of view, a society which does not provide the training or the facilities for the adequate enjoyment of leisure is in as dangerous a condition as a society in which training and opportunities for earning a

livelihood are defective. The view of education as a preparation not merely for work but also for life, the conception that the provision of adequate facilities for recreation and the right use of leisure is a prime function of the State, are so revolutionary as to involve a radical change in our views on education and other questions.

The situation calls for much creative and fundamental thought, and it was with this conviction that in 1934 the New Education Fellowship commenced a comprehensive inquiry into the subject. The outcome of the first part of this inquiry is embodied in a report which has recently been issued under the title "The Coming of Leisure"*. This report outlines the problem as it exists in England to-day, and shows the directions in which solutions are being sought. It formed one basis of the discussions at a conference held at the University of St. Andrews on August 13-22.

The report naturally starts with the problem which leisure presents to education in its narrower sense. If education, whether at school or in adolescence or in adult life, is to be a preparation not merely for work but also for life, the fundamental policies in our system of national education require drastic modification. The belief that we have merely to teach a child a certain number of subjects with some relevance to the way in which he is to earn his living, and which will provide him with a modicum of knowledge and give him the facility for acquiring more, is hopelessly inadequate if we are to educate for leisure.

If therefore education is to help youth to master the means of making life worth while a new method of approach may be required if not an entirely new technique, and a complete change in

* The Coming of Leisure : the Problem in England. Edited by E. B. Castle, A. K. C. Ottaway and W. T. R. Rawson. Pp. 78. (London : New Education Fellowship, 1935.) 2s. 6d.

chemist as such is necessarily qualified to undertake the supervision required, and it considers that accredited bodies should have power to recommend suitably qualified persons.

The proposal in regard to members of the profession of chemistry raises, however, another important issue. While any member of the professions of pharmacy and medicine is recognised as competent, such recognition in the profession of chemistry is only to be extended to members of the Institute of Chemistry. The reason advanced for this proposal is that members of the Institute, like members of the medical and pharmaceutical professions, are subjected to disciplinary control and that the qualification can be withdrawn in cases of professional misconduct. Since a university degree in chemistry cannot be withdrawn in such event, it is suggested that holders of such degrees should apply for the necessary qualifications by becoming a member of the Institute of Chemistry, a procedure which would not necessitate a further examination.

These proposals and the comments on them in the Poisons Board's Report have been promptly challenged. It has been pointed out that the British Association of Chemists also issues documentary evidence of competency in chemistry, and has the power to withdraw that evidence in the event of professional misconduct. Moreover, this organisation has substantially stronger claims than the Institute of Chemistry to be regarded as representative of the industrial chemist. Though the Institute of Chemistry represents some forty per cent of the chemists in Great Britain, the implication in the Report of the Poisons Board that it occupies a position in the profession corresponding with that of the General Medical Council or the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society in the medical and pharmaceutical professions is not warranted by the facts.

The proposal, which would in future compel a graduate to subscribe to the Institute of Chemistry if he is to practise in a certain branch of chemistry, has already aroused strong opposition from the universities and from the profession in general. The Board contends in its Report that a university degree or diploma in science does not necessarily imply that the holder is qualified in chemistry. According to the regulations of the Institute, however, any graduate of a recognised university holding a degree with first or second class honours degree in chemistry is admitted to the associateship, and the examination for the associateship is

a general one in chemistry, and can scarcely be regarded as conferring a special qualification to handle dangerous drugs. Had the Board stipulated a fellowship of the Institute in food and drugs, or the possession of the diploma of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, the qualification might have been considered unnecessarily narrow, but there would have been reason for the Rule.

The position, of course, would manifestly have been different had there been in existence any general register of chemists. No reasonable objection could then have been raised to requiring graduates in chemistry to apply for registration in the same way that a graduate in medicine is admitted to the medical register kept by the General Medical Council. Abortive efforts, partly on the initiative of individual members of the Institute, have already been made to establish such a register of chemists; but the failure of such efforts is largely to be attributed to lack of support from the Institute as a whole and the apathy of the majority of the members of the profession.

The existence of a general register might equally have avoided dangers inherent in the final proposal of the Poisons Board in regard to qualifications, that to admit those who have for three years been continuously engaged in such work. In the absence of any adequate definition of control or supervision, there is serious risk that the standard may be set dangerously low and admit those who are little more than charge hands or laboratory assistants without adequate scientific or technical knowledge on which to call for action in emergency. Responsible professional opinion holds that the only satisfactory way of admitting to a register persons whose qualifications are based merely on the occupation of a particular post is the careful scrutiny of their individual claims by a competent professional board, which would demand evidence of something more than ability to deal merely with routine duties.

Whatever may be the outcome of the discussions which the publication of the Report of the Poisons Board has initiated, or the effect of the representations which may be made to the Home Secretary, its proposals have indicated a conspicuous lack of harmony in the profession of chemistry, the significance of which should be duly noted by other classes of scientific workers. It is only as scientific workers can present a united front and can work harmoniously together that they can expect their representations to the State to have their full and desirable effect.