

Editorial & Publishing Offices :

MACMILLAN & Co., LTD.
ST. MARTIN'S STREET
LONDON, W.C.2



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No. 3532

SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1937

Vol. 140

Citizenship

AT the recent conference of the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, Mr. W. E. Park referred in his presidential address to a report on training for citizenship for students in technical institutions which had been prepared by his Association in conjunction with the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions and the Association of Technical Institutions. The report has just been issued, and is one which we believe ought to be regarded as of first-class importance.

The reasons for our belief are not far to seek. A glance about the world reveals its present discontents with an uncomfortable vividness. The old values which seemed once so secure are fading. Human organizations, which seemed but a few years ago to be leading, however slowly, to sane and rational ends, are crumbling. Over-production on one hand and even starvation on the other become more sharply defined. Political ideas appear charged with a newer and more emotional violence. The dream of a world-State shatters down to a grim reality of nations self-contained, self-striving and living in a fear-haunted hostility which keeps us on the brink of unimaginable dangers. If we are not, at the moment, living under the actual threat of war, we are daily made aware of rearmament and the need to be prepared for what can be little else than the crash of civilization as we know it. Yet, in spite of the distinguished writer who informed us with grim curtness that we are witnessing a race between education and catastrophe, it would seem, in Great Britain, at any rate, that the world of education moves on with calm serenity and is by no means convinced that, if it neglects the problems which none of its students can ultimately

avoid, it neglects a vital duty. Whatever we may think of dictator countries, they have at least learned to use the machinery of their schools. They have infused education with their own enthusiasms and made it aware of its part in the life and work of the community.

Sir Ernest Simon, chairman of the Association for Education in Citizenship, has summed up the aims of that education under four heads : a sense of social responsibility ; a love of truth and freedom ; the power of clear thinking in everyday affairs ; a knowledge of the broad political and economic facts of the modern world. Those aims are ambitious, and we would hesitate even to attempt to sketch the means whereby they might be attained. We know perfectly well that those responsible for any kind of school can point to their time-tables and syllabuses and ask where and how they are capable of addition. They can say, broadly, that the aims are inherent in their present work. But the problem has an urgency which will not permit it to be so easily dismissed. The manipulation of time-tables and syllabuses is a matter for experts, and none would be so bold as to say that it may not be somehow used to make education that very real thing—*adaptation to environment*. Inherent qualities, too, need more discussion than the phrase sometimes permits. We have long since given up the belief that training in one subject necessarily gives facility to deal with another. If that were so, we should find that our specialists were invariably wise and their judgment, outside their specialist field, invariably sound. But we know that is not the case. The specialist in physics cannot necessarily be regarded as being free from prejudice, emotion and even ignorance when he is asked to make a judgment

on the League of Nations or the need for tariff reform. Clear thinking, in short, cannot be transferred from specialist subjects to others with which the voter has to deal in everyday life.

Whatever may be done in other fields of education, then, it is clear that those concerned in technical education are to be encouraged in their attempt to view the problem of education for citizenship from the point of view of their own work; for it is a task which presents the utmost difficulties when any *direct* method of teaching the subjects which citizenship may include is attempted. Naturally, if and when other branches of education take up those subjects, it is a task which will become correspondingly easier.

A large body of the students of technical institutions are those who take part-time courses. They are engineers, chemists, builders and the like, who are already in employment. Since they attend courses on some three evenings per week, and since they have to undertake homework in addition, and since their work is directed to the attainment of some recognized professional or industrial qualification, it is difficult to see how it can be possible to secure their attendance for additional, and, at first sight, unrelated subjects. For these students there is the possibility of the 'indirect' method. If education for citizenship means training the individual for his relationship to the various communities on which he impinges, it is certainly within the bounds of possibility—to put it no higher—that specialist subjects could be used by skilful teachers so that their backgrounds, contacts and relationships could be shown in the everyday world. The discussions and debates of students' societies, too, could be used. One imagines, for example, engineering and commercial students dealing with problems of production and distribution—under happier titles, perhaps—and arriving at conclusions concerning duties and relationships which normally they might miss.

For full-time students we hope more can be done. In their case it ought to be possible to apply the 'direct' method. The introduction of studies of the social sciences, the structure of government, modern political and industrial problems would, in our opinion, be of immense value in attaining the ends we have in mind. It is not for us here to suggest the precise subjects, their method of treatment or their particular place in particular curricula. It may be that the use of daily papers—with a view to comparison of opposing views on a single issue which are so

constant a feature of our modern daily Press—will take the place of the more orthodox text-book. (Such a method would, at least, train students to sift evidence and arguments for themselves rather than be swayed by the prejudice of partisan announcements.) It may be that local circumstances could be used to demonstrate problems of town-planning, means of transport, food supply, organization of community life, local and central government. Whatever the method, if an active interest in the social and political structure can be developed, the first step towards attainment of the aims of citizenship will have been secured.

It may be objected that this kind of teaching involves a danger of bringing politics into education. We would reply that, if a scientific approach to social and political problems be not taught, young people will be left unprotected, both now and in later life. Which is the greater danger?

We would make it very clear, even to the point of what may appear unnecessary reiteration, that we have no wish to make dogmatic suggestions as to subjects or to their treatment. It is desired only to emphasize that the social sciences must, in some way, be made to keep pace with the other sciences, which are setting expected, as well as unexpected, problems to our civilization. Articles in these columns from time to time have underlined the fact that, in spite of the advances of science and the obvious advantages which these have brought to us, we stand in the face of vast dangers all of which point urgently to the need of adapting our social life to the new and changing environment which men's activities have produced. The technologist and the scientific investigator should not be allowed to work in specialized compartments with no picture of how their work is related to the rest of the community. For want of a better name, we call the presentation of that picture 'citizenship', which Aristotle saw as "the most synthetic of sciences" and, as a practice, "the most architectonic of the Arts". His notion of civics was expressed under the four types of co-operation between the labour of the people, the public functions of citizens, the meditations of philosophers, and the efforts of teachers. It is a notion which we moderns, in our present dangers, should not neglect. For that reason, we welcome the publication of the report prepared by the three technical associations, and we look forward to its implementation in no matter how experimental a form.