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SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF WAR-TIME EVACUATION

AN admirable review of the problems arising out of the sudden redistribution of population involved in the evacuation of the priority classes at the outbreak of war is given in a broadsheet on the "Home Front" recently issued by Political and Economic Planning (P E P). So far, however, there has been little evidence of any long-term thinking on these problems. Moreover, although a number of individual business firms appear to have acted on Mr. Harold Macmillan's plea for a considered review of the whole policy of evacuation, and returned part at least of their central offices from the country into London or other larger cities, there are no signs that the opportunity of revising and improving evacuation arrangements is being utilized by the Government.

On the contrary, so far from evidence of fundamental thinking about the essential problems, which have such a close bearing on the efficiency of our war effort and morale, everything indicates that evacuation questions are being dealt with as day-to-day exigencies, with little attempt at the long-range thinking which would avoid many of the dilemmas at present involved. Until recently, no serious effort has been made to consider the problems of visitation between parents and children, whether of parents to the evacuation areas or of children to their homes.

The acute problems which evacuation has raised in the sphere of education are indeed realized, and a belated attempt is being made to deal with the difficulties of education of the children remaining in the evacuated areas—difficulties which a firmer and more definite policy at an earlier date might have very considerably reduced. Even in the reception areas, the essential social welfare work has been left to voluntary social service organizations, and local welfare committees, and no

organized effort made to meet the needs of the children or adolescents out of school hours, away from home influence and with the long nights of winter already here.

The absence of such national direction and co-ordination not only places heavy burdens on local authorities, but also is apt to engender a feeling of injustice in the reception areas, making for further attrition of the whole evacuation scheme. Its absence leads to grossly unfair burdens falling upon the teachers themselves, who are often bearing much heavier financial charges as a result of the disruption of their home life, apart altogether from the heavier responsibilities and the inroads on their private life. The effect of such factors on the efficiency and morale of the teaching staff is very far from receiving the attention it deserves.

The basis for any long-range policy which is to grapple effectively with the difficulties must be an impartial scientific examination of the facts. It is accordingly encouraging to find that an attempt at a scientific survey of evacuation problems has been made in at least one district. A preliminary report on this investigation, which has been made possible by a grant from the Liverpool Council of Social Service, and carried out by the University of Liverpool Department of Social Science in co-operation with the Liverpool University Settlement under the direction of Dr. Gertrud Wagner, has been published by the University Press of Liverpool.

The report is based on 356 interviews in the neighbourhood of the settlement, and is preliminary to a fuller investigation; but nevertheless it indicates clearly that the difficulties in working the evacuation scheme are due to four sociological and psychological facts. The family—

the basic unit of society—is broken up in the evacuation area or may be gravely disturbed in the reception area, with serious economic and psychological difficulties. For most working-class mothers, the main or even sole purpose in life—bringing up and working for their children—disappears when they are evacuated. Each social group in society has its own standards of living and behaviour, but under the evacuation scheme different groups are forced to live together.

The main difficulties discovered are listed under six heads. There is that of the mother in adapting herself to the new environment, and of the host in accepting the intrusion of someone with a different standard of living. Separation of the parents from the children frequently leads to a serious emotional problem. The provision of additional or better clothing for the children and the cost of fares to visit them present urgent economic problems, while lack of selection in placing the children and sometimes poor organization are a fourth set of difficulties. Removal of children from the reception areas by parents without due consideration or consultation, and the departure of the mother from the home leaving behind members of the family unused to managing on their own, apart from the economic difficulty of keeping two homes going, are further causes of trouble.

These difficulties are not to be dismissed lightly, and the report makes a number of suggestions for meeting them. The appointment of trained social workers in each reception area to visit the homes regularly and give informal advice to the hosts on the care of the children and their education, and to straighten out difficulties the hosts may have had with the children, would solve many problems. Propaganda by wireless talks or in the press advising mothers against visiting their children too soon after their removal from home or against being unduly influenced by letters written in a moment of depression would be of service, while social workers could also assist in diverting heavy demands on the mothers for clothes to organizations dealing with such matters.

Accurate knowledge in advance of the available accommodation in a reception area is essential, and also arrangements for medical examination of evacuees to secure diversion to camps or hostels of those unsuitable for private houses. Requisitioning of empty houses in the reception areas to deal with emergency cases is also recommended, as well as some regulation to prevent the removal by parents of their children without the

consent of the appropriate educational authority.

It would be unfair to expect of a preliminary report more than recommendations to mitigate the difficulties, and this investigation, which incidentally, by illustrating the admirable contribution which the universities can make in social research, underlines the recent appeal of the National Union of Students for liberal support by the Government even in war-time, only indicates the wide field open for both private and official investigation if an adequate and resolute policy is to be evolved. Urgent as is the need for such investigations, there are matters in which immediate action is called for. The question of holidays has to be faced boldly and frankly, whether from the point of view of the children, the teachers or the hosts. The construction of school camps needs expediting, and a large expansion of that programme would alleviate many difficulties. The school medical services must be reorganized in time to cope with any of the usual spring epidemics, and strenuous efforts made to safeguard, in reception as well as in evacuation areas, not merely teaching and discipline but also the whole system of milk, medical, nursing and dental services, which largely came to an end when the schools were closed.

One recommendation of the Liverpool report would appear to be fundamental. Unless it is known what numbers of children are to stay in the country, reorganization of education in the reception areas, the opening of temporary schools and hostels, the building of camps, and the release of the local schools from the shift system cannot proceed. Parents should at least be requested by authority to make a definite choice and compelled to abide by it.

Education is, however, only one aspect of civil life which has been disturbed by evacuation, and even here the problems are far from being confined to those of school-children. In technical and university education, problems have been raised which are equally acute even if less in magnitude. Profound disruption has been experienced in professional life, and the recent acceptance by the Ministry of Health of the proposals of the special Advisory Emergency Hospital Medical Service Committee for reorganization of the emergency medical service covering the hospitals, the medical staffing of first-aid posts and the position of specialists, indicates that in one important sphere at least the opportunity of readjustment and reconsideration has been utilized.

Much more, however, might be done to correct defects in our emergency plans, given the willingness of authority to recognize such defects and accept constructive criticism. Measures to facilitate the resumption by adults of family life might well assist in guaranteeing the maintenance of our economic strength and the expansion of industry necessary both for the output of munitions and the buoyancy of the national finances. As Mr. Macmillan suggested, even now large industries and Government departments could consider a return to normal, or at least locate their units in accordance with long-range plans in which all the risks and disturbances are weighed. The surrender by Government departments of schools and hotels so hastily commandeered should not only diminish some of the evacuation difficulties in the educational field but also remove a potent cause of public discontent.

The importance of this factor must not be overlooked. In the absence of any attempt to redress the mistakes made in this matter of commandeering—to repair the disturbance of education and destruction of equipment which occurred although alternative office accommodation was available, or to do justice to those who have suffered from the commandeering of hotels and other buildings—a lack of confidence is engendered alike in the impartiality and the integrity of the central administration. There can be no mistake as to the firm determination of the nation to see war through to victory, or as to the equally firm determination to have the utmost competence in its conduct. Refusal to acknowledge and rectify mistakes, or to accept constructive criticism, only undermines the good will and morale upon which the struggle and, above all, the unprecedented redistribution of population and activity make such tremendous demands.

THE LIFE-WORK OF MY FRIEND F. W. H. MYERS

Human Personality and its Survival after Bodily Death

By Frederic W. H. Myers. Vol. 1. Pp. xlvi+700. Vol. 2. Pp. xx+660. (London, New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1939.) 36s. net.

FREDERIC W. H. MYERS died in Rome in 1901, just as this century opened; but he left behind him a mass of writing which was afterwards edited and published as two volumes on "Human Personality", reviewed by me in NATURE of June 18, 1903 (68, 145). These books represent for all time his real life-work, that for which he was willing to live laborious days; they represent what he genuinely conceived to be a message of moment to humanity; they are his legacy to posterity; and in the light of the facts contained in them he was willing and even eager to die.

Death Myers did not dread. That is true; and his clear and happy faith was the outcome entirely of his scientific researches. The years of struggle and effort and systematic thought had begotten in him a confidence as absolute and supreme as is to be found in the holiest martyr or saint. By this I mean that it was not possible for anyone to have a more absolute and childlike confidence that death was a mere physical event. To him it was an adversity which must happen to the body, but it was not one of those evil things which may assault and hurt the soul.

Myers would have described himself as one who walked by sight and knowledge rather than by faith, and his eager life-long struggle for knowledge was in order that he might by no chance be mistaken. To some, conviction of this kind would be impossible—they are the many who know not what science is; to others, conviction of this kind seems unnecessary—they are the favoured few who feel that they have grasped all needed truth by revelation or by intuition. But by a few here and there, even now, this avenue of knowledge concerning the unseen is felt to be open. Myers believed that hereafter it would become open to all.

The doctrine which Myers arrived at after years of study is that each individual as we perceive him is but a small fraction of a larger whole, as it were the foliage of a tree which has its main trunk in another order of existence. The metaphor constantly breaks down, as all metaphors must sooner or later; for some purposes it would seem better that the tree should be inverted; and the adjective "subliminal" contains no reference to what is beneath, except in the sense of foundation and support; in every other aspect the subliminal is probably the more real and more noble, more comprehensive, more intelligent self, of which the supraliminal development is but a natural and healthy and partial manifestation.

The products of the subliminal are to be regarded as "higher" in a definite sense than those of the supraliminal. The supraliminal is that which is the outcome of terrestrial evolution, and so is able