

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 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.

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