

THE EDUCATED MAN IN 1955

EACH age and civilization has its appropriate pattern of education, some emphasizing the conservative element, others the forward-looking. In his presidential address to Section L (Education), Mr. J. F. Wolfenden asks if there is, in Britain in 1955, such a pattern discernible, with its attendant type of 'educated man'.

Some hold that the prime distinguishing mark of the educated man is his understanding of human nature, on the ground that the most important fact about this planet is that human beings, each a unique blending of spatio-temporal body with eternal spirit, live on it. The corresponding educational pattern is composed of literature, history, philosophy, economics; it is not remote or 'literary' if it is fertilized by daily contact with practical human affairs.

This picture appears to leave out non-human phenomena, the subject-matter of natural science. The study of natural science begins as a disinterested inquiry. Nobody in 1955 can ignore scientific thinking and its consequences.

Many people brought up in the 'humanist' tradition not only do not know many scientific facts which are important; but also, more fundamentally, are incapable of certain modes of thinking derived from scientific studies and indispensable to an understanding of affairs in 1955. This does not mean that the scientist is automatically a more educated man than the non-scientist; he may be illiterate, incapable of historical imagination or of human insight. But it does mean that there are people who are scientifically illiterate. Nor does it mean that the scientist is the man who should decide politics—local, national or international. That is a misunderstanding of the nature of his training and his skills, especially as he must often, for the purpose of his own studies, ignore human factors.

So far we have been concerned with what will always be the education of a minority. The most important revolution ever to occur in educational theory and practice is the national decision that other forms of education in Britain besides that of the 'grammar-school' type shall be recognized as secondary education. To think in terms of educating everybody is revolutionary. Is there a type of education, based on this view, which will lead to a new kind of 'educated man'?

To be called educated a person must be able (a) to appreciate the achievements of the human race; (b) to move with some facility in the realm of abstract ideas. These criteria cannot at present be satisfied by the 'secondary modern' type of person or of education. This assertion is not undemocratic (though it is un-egalitarian) because the essence of democracy in education is not to provide the same thing for all but to provide the right thing for each.

It may be that there will arise an un-aristocratic culture, based on a new kind of approach to human affairs; and it may be that a new form of conceptual thinking will emerge, superseding the verbal. But it is hard to believe that this will ever be within the capacity of the majority.

THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON FARMING

IN his presidential address to Section M (Agriculture), Mr. W. B. Mercer points out that agricultural education in Britain grew up during the years of

depression at the close of the nineteenth century; but little progress was made until the Development Fund Act of 1910 made appropriate monies available. The general scheme then devised divided the field into three sections: formal education, research and advisory work among practising farmers. Apart from such advisory work as the universities and colleges could continue to carry out, the main task of interpreting research and carrying its fruits to the farmers fell on the county councils—and at a later stage on the National Agricultural Advisory Service.

The scheme has evolved broadly on the lines then laid down, but has been profoundly influenced by commercial firms providing agricultural requisites, by public corporations such as that for sugar beet, and marketing boards; even more has it been influenced by State direction and price guarantees, which have permitted pioneer farmers to adventure boldly in the development of new techniques. Technical progress is very closely linked with commercial prosperity. Though we have never squarely faced the problem of optimum agricultural production and man-power, we have always paid at least lip service to the idea of good husbandry and high output, and our policy in Britain to-day aims at steady expansion of production with a probably declining labour force. Thanks to the manner in which advisory forces are organized and to the many influences which can be brought to bear on any selected theme, it is now possible to mould or modify farm practice at a pace hitherto undreamed of.

Educational work started with soil science and plant nutrition; animal nutrition came later; only within recent years have the arts of animal and farm management, the latter with its attendant problems of finance, been subjected to scientific study. The influence of agricultural education on the several enterprises which make up modern farming has therefore varied greatly. Nevertheless, in most sections of the industry the links in the chain of research—interpretation, exploitation, absorption into practice—can be traced fairly clearly.

The study of grass as a crop has proceeded from the early work on hay at Rothamsted and the Cockle Park trials with grazing sheep, the results of which at first appeared contradictory. It was many years before the real difference between a hay field and a pasture with its clovers was appreciated, and several decades before the value of the grass leaf as distinct from the whole plant was demonstrated. Once this was grasped, the way was open to intensive grass production, to a study of interactions between crop and animal and to the evolution of an entirely new outlook on grass and entirely new systems of stock management.

In the widely different field of hygienic milk production, the role of the researcher has been technically much simpler. Here the main problem has been creation of an attitude of mind among producers rather than projection of a stream of new discoveries.

Poultry keeping forms a curious outlier to the general current of evolution. That developed from a hobby and a part insurance against unemployment into an industry mainly by trial-and-error methods exploited by practical men, and only when this stage was reached was scientific aid brought in. Commercial poultry keeping to-day is based on Mendelian breeding.

Many different lines of work converge in problems of land and stock management, and experimental work becomes, therefore, very complex. It is a most