



# WHAT KIND OF A NEW WORLD DO YOU WANT?



**I**N an earlier talk I said that nothing but the spread of knowledge would give life and reality and immortality to any charter of liberties. I said that because I believe democracy has never yet existed except on paper. It cannot exist until knowledge is common knowledge; it cannot exist until the passion for getting at the truth gets into everybody's blood; never until sheer stark merit is the only quality which will cut any ice with any electorate.

Well, we have Lincoln's ideal of a rule of the people by the people for the people; and that is democracy. There has been a lot of talk of freedom of thought in the past year or two, but it isn't a thing you can get by just passing an act of Parliament or of Congress; it's a thing every man has got to get for himself. You've heard of making a corner in wheat or rubber for the sake of profit, but the biggest and the oldest game of that kind has been the cornering of truth. Kings and princes did it by gathering all the wise men to their Courts and persecuting the ones who wouldn't come quietly; patronage it was called, and can it be denied that truth has been cornered quite as effectively in our own time by buccaneers, commercial, professional, or political, whose only chance of success lay in the suppression of it. Once you stop that mammoth truth - cornering racket the ordinary decent man will at last begin to get the power into his hands and all the lesser rackets from share-pushing to world wars will just collapse for lack of liars and dupes.

## A Total Peace Effort

The only way to stop it is to train the ordinary decent man to think. You remember the story I told you last time of the man who slammed the door on the peace ballot canvasser and said that he wasn't interested? Well, there just isn't going to be any room in the sort of world we are aiming at for people who aren't interested. That is the vital difference between our new world and Hitler's new order, where too much interest or curiosity would get you into the concentration camp. Too much interest is not possible. You hear sneers at people who spread the net of their interests all around, but you cannot set bounds to healthy curiosity, which hungers for all wholesome fare as much as any appetite does. There is no room in our new world for snobbery of interest any more than for snobbery of

caste or of wealth. To be exclusive in your interest just means that you haven't got enough interest to go round. The peace effort will have to be as total an effort as the war effort, and there will be no room for watertight compartment jobs that do not contribute anything to the total effort.

earth fruitful, but he's never too busy to trace a bird call that he hasn't heard before. The most learned men feel it an honour to correspond with him but he would never think of leaving the humblest of the many letters that come to him unanswered. Sometimes he says things so beautiful they take your breath

level terms with any university professor. It's the proudest tradition Scotland possesses; it's her duty to keep it intact and hand it over as a high offering to the new order. Vocational training is just learning to do a job. There are in peace time more than enough people to do all the jobs. Earlier vocational training is to the benefit of no-one that I can see except the cheap labour market, which may be why some industries take such a close paternal interest in it. If, in the name of principle, we spent the latter part of last century legislating against the warping of children's bodies by sending them up chimneys and down coal-mines, it's a tragic throw back if we now set about warping their minds in the name of efficiency. We've had more automobiles and more refrigerators and more vacuum cleaners than we could ever use thrust under our noses in the peace-time that has gone. Looking back on it the margin of wasted effort seems prodigious and appalling. What we need now is not a bigger and better reservoir of top-grade mechanics and clerks and salesmen, but a bigger and better reservoir of top-grade citizens; and to get that I would forbid the teaching of a trade or profession till 21 at least.

**"There just isn't going to be any room in the sort of world we are aiming at for people who aren't interested," says IAN FINLAY in this recent BBC talk**

*IAN FINLAY is a New Zealander who has travelled all over Europe studying the arts and culture of the various countries. He was one of the first to debunk Nazi art and culture in a broadcast some time ago. He was born at Auckland, New Zealand, of Scottish parentage on both sides. Going to Britain, he was educated at Edinburgh Academy and Edinburgh University, where he took his M.A. in History, his special subject being the History of Art. Since then, art subjects have been his main interest. He has been for a long time on the staff of the Royal Scottish Museum, working in the Department of Art and Ethnography; he has acted as Secretary to the Scottish Committee of the Council for Art and Industry; and he has lectured on Scottish crafts at the Royal Academy Exhibition of Scottish art in London.*

*Scottish art, the importance of form and design in the output of industry, and the almost unexploited possibilities of museums in popular education—these are the three main themes of Finlay, who has for years, besides lecturing, been writing for the leading dailies, weeklies and monthlies.*

I don't want to squeeze the specialists out; that would be absurd. But the specialist who cannot see further than his desk or bench is as dangerous as the playboy whose interest is only in having a good time; in fact, he is more dangerous. If a man's got the brains to invent dynamite he's got the responsibility to see that other men use it properly. We've plunged into the present catastrophe largely because for a generation we've gone crazy on specialisation—boilermaker John Jones, actress Gloria Smith; news-line stuff maybe, but there they are pigeon-holed for life or until one day the real world comes crashing about their ears. If they call that liberty or democracy, I've got another name for it.

## Creating the Hunger

But how are you going to stir up this hunger to know in everybody? Well, it's one of those huge fascinating problems that we are only on the fringe of still, but I think myself it's got something to do with getting closer to the earth than we've most of us been for many a long year. The most vitally interested man I know lives on an island far from anywhere and he works with his hands all day long in his fields and then he works with his pen for most of the night. His life is one long fight to make barren

away until you realise it's only their simplicity and sincerity that make them stand out among your own tired, tawdry everyday comments.

Look at the pioneers, the trail-blazers of your own early days and see if you can't pick out men like him, men too vital to be not interested in anything. When the time arrives I wonder if the men who lead us back to sanity won't come like my friend from the island, wiping the good earth from their hands or the shavings from their aprons. I listened some weeks ago to a conversation between a quite eminent politician and a peer of the realm in which the two of them finally agreed that technical education should begin far earlier than it did. Sarcastically, I'm afraid, I suggested 12 as a good age to begin at, and they both took it seriously. At 12 they would have calmly seen all the wide adventurous horizons of travel and culture and science and philosophy stopped down to a bench and a bag of tools—stunting a boy's mind as no amount of forbidden smoking could stunt his body.

## Scotland's Proudest Tradition

Perhaps as a Scotsman I'm super-sensitive about the meaning of education, but there's still a tradition in country parts of Scotland that the hedger or the shepherd should be fit to argue on

## "Sour-viewed, Dried-up Prigs"

There's no time to detail methods I would like to see adopted to produce top-grade citizens, but here are as many of the targets as I can single out in half a minute. Teaching itself, and teachers. You know George Bernard Shaw's cynical dig, "Those who can do, those who cannot teach?" Well there's some truth in it, a lot in fact. Teaching should be the most honoured of professions, and until we can make it that the offensive for wider knowledge will never get under way. To say teaching is a mission should be a commonplace by this time, but it isn't. We still pick teachers for the medals they have won for history or chemistry, which is quite beside the point when their job's to stir up the hunger to know in a bunch of boys and girls. Enthusiasm is worth far more than a scholarly command of Latin. Enthusiasm is catching, Latin is not. Idealism too. No man or woman should be licensed to teach who is not an idealist. When I think of the bunch of sour-viewed, dried-up prigs I have met among teachers I'm not at all astonished that the League of Nations failed.

## The Problem of Leisure

But the teacher is not everything; or not quite. In the big schools here you'll

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