



FOUR OF THE SIGNATORIES

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THE PIPER AND THE TUNE

Should The State Take Over England's Public Schools?

THE war, as everybody knows, has made it impossible for some of the Public Schools of England to carry on without State aid. How this aid should be given, and what obligations it should involve on both sides, is at present being investigated by a special committee. Meanwhile this outspoken letter has been sent to the Editor of "Nature", the most widely read of British scientific journals. The letter carries these signatures:

Prof. J. D. Bernal, F.R.S.; Prof. P. G. H. Boswell, O.B.E., F.R.S.; Prof. S. Brodetsky; Prof. J. Chadwick, F.R.S.; Prof. W. E. Le Gros Clark, F.R.S.; Brig-Gen. F. A. E. Crew, F.R.S.; Prof. C. Lovatt Evans, F.R.S.; Prof. B. Farrington; Prof. C. B. Fawcett; Prof. Sargent Florence; Prof. P. F. Frankland, C.B.E., F.R.S.; Prof. Lancelot Hogben, F.R.S.; Prof. Julian Huxley, F.R.S.; Dr. R. K. Kelsall; Prof. R. D. Laurie; Dr. Joseph Needham, F.R.S.; Prof. R. Pascal; Prof. J. A. Ryle; Dr. F. Soddy, F.R.S.; Dr. H. G. Stead; Prof. Geo. Thomson; Prof. F. E. Weirs, F.R.S.; Prof. F. Wood-Jones, F.R.S.

"B RITAIN is the only great industrial country where wealth systematically buys a different type of education for its offspring; where education sets a different aim for the wealthy than for those less well off. We thus preserve a system in striking contrast to those of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. and of those smaller democracies such as the Scandinavians to whose social institutions we look with admiration.

"The system of public school education is undemocratic. It segregates those children who, by inheritance, proceed to leading positions in industry, politics, the civil service, the armed forces, and by its training strengthens their social privileges.

"It is socially injurious, since it divorces this section of our people from

the rest, from the life of the main part of the community, especially from all those engaged in the productive processes, manual and technical labours.

"Men brought up in the public school tradition are out of touch with modern social realities and often incapable of grasping modern social problems.

"The prospect of endowing these schools with Treasury grants is usually linked with a proposal to admit into those schools a limited number of the more gifted members of the poorer sections of society. (*Such a proposal has since been made.—Ed.*) This proposal is born as much from the financial crisis as from an awareness of their social responsibilities. If it were adopted the main results would be:

(a) A direct subsidy by the tax-payer to the schools of the wealthy.

(b) The psychological dislocation of the gifted poor boys, who would thus be in the position of poor relation in the family of the rich.

(c) The stultification of the gifts of these hostages since in this atmosphere they would lose contact with the life and problems of the mass of the people.

(d) The intellectual impoverishment of the State-aided secondary schools which would thus lose their most gifted pupils.

"However much the study of the natural and social sciences is cultivated in the public schools, the divorce between this type of education and life cannot be overcome.

"Science under these social conditions tends to become an esoteric cult isolated from social purpose. If non-scientific subjects are adapted to social ends, the public schools tend to develop into institutions for the training of 'leaders', that is, into political academies for the firmer establishment of the dominance of a class. The type of social conscience thus engendered and expressing itself in this sort of reform is undemocratic and reactionary.

"Any botching and patching of the existing public school system will necessarily tend, whether or not by intent, to perpetuate present evils and inequality. It is true that some public schools possess, at present, advantages from a technical-pedagogical point of view over State-aided secondary schools. But this is no reason for prolonging their existence in their present form. Let us see their educational methods, their organisation, and their personnel applied to the services of a wider community than the wealthy.

"We do not ignore the fact that State-aided secondary education stands in need of considerable reform. Much adjustment is needed in the matter of school government, curriculum, of social status. Once the dichotomy in our secondary education is overcome, a concerted drive for reforms in these fields can be made, undistracted by considerations of social prestige and privilege.

"We call therefore for the full incorporation of the public schools into a unified State-aided system of secondary education as a step towards democracy in our educational system and towards greater health in our national life."

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the coast all the time, and we with no aircraft or airfields able to do anything to stop it. And then escape from Singapore after the occupation in a leaky fourteen-footer. Our State Battalion had four months' training and was waiting, at Kuala Lumpur, for things to begin to happen. So we fell between two stools—too late for civilian preparations for Christmas, too early for military ones. All the same our Chinese cook raked up two geese somehow.

AIR FORCE MECHANIC

NO, last Christmas was better than this one is for me, even if the small girl had measles and my wife and I could go out nowhere all my leave. My brother—the one who is a missionary in

the Solomons—was free and on his station then. We know nothing whatever of him now. And though I knew my other two brothers were prisoners in Italy I had had no word from them a year ago. Then one of them wrote: "We are well treated. But after getting your Christmas parcel I could almost have run a chain."

NETHERLANDS NAVAL OFFICER

CH RISTMAS, 1939, I am home in Haarlem, at our own proper ways in the Netherlands of celebrating it. Christmas, 1940, I am in New York, cold and foreign, and my family and country are occupied. Christmas, 1941, I am in the air—between Palambang and Batavia. Batavia is very quiet and very serious when I land there. Christmas, 1942—here I am.