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with that of the United States of America. That country has a tradition of respect for learning, which may at the moment be somewhat in eclipse, but which has its roots deep down in many places in the community. They will not lightly or easily wither away. Since the end of the last war, the problem of education in a democracy has been squarely tackled in America on a vast scale, and with some real success. Immense sums of money have been spent on it and—far more important—the thought of many of the best minds in the country has been devoted to it. Coincident with this development—and it must, in fact, be more than a coincidence—there have been flourishing the beginnings of a real renaissance in American culture—in literature, in architecture, in painting and in music—based, as all real culture must be, on a living relationship between man and his environment, and materialising, as all real culture does, the essential quality of the people which creates it.

War, it may be, is slowing down and spoiling much of what promised so well, but a nation which has had a respect for learning and the beginnings of a culture of its own is in better case to withstand an attack on its spirit than one which has none of these things. And we have not. Our respect for learning is and always has been precarious and bounded by economic considerations. Our culture

—such as it is—is mainly derivative and shallow-rooted, though here and there may occasionally be discerned some beginnings of a real Australian outlook that is not merely parochial, but speaks with the accents of mankind. But in fact, we have little or no defence against a determined attack upon our adherence to the essential values for which we are at war, and he would be a very rash man who asserted that in the hurly-burly of reconstruction there was no possible danger to our casually-assumed liberties.

### Comparison With England

Again, compare our position with that of England. Here, too, we find a traditional respect for and belief in the practical use of learning very different both in extent and quality from anything that we can muster—a respect that exhibits itself in the extensive recruitment of the Public Service from university graduates of the highest calibre and an increasing belief that the old slogan "If all else fails, try teaching," is not only out of date, but a danger to the community that echoes it. And to England war has brought one great good fortune which in the long run may well outweigh the many material tribulations which have befallen her. Her people have been welded into one by the dangers they have shared in common. The product of the blitz has been a real brotherhood

and a real tolerance and, whatever the cynics may say, I do not believe that any task of reconstruction is beyond a nation that has given so excellent an example to the world, or that any campaign, however subtle, can shake the permanence of the principles which have been proved by adversity.

That is not our case. Relative to others, we have suffered little. We can still find time to indulge in the care-free practice of the art of politics—on the basis of art for art's sake—and it does not now seem probable that we shall be forced by enemy action into the position of having to present a common front against imminent danger in spite of ourselves. We are indeed a fortunate people—or are we? The answer to that question depends very largely upon the part we allow education to play in reconstruction. We shall, in my view, be in far greater danger from ourselves in the post-war years than ever we were in from the Japanese in 1942. If we presume upon our good fortune, it may well turn out to have been nothing but a catastrophe in disguise. If we reflect upon it soberly, realising that it is we who have got to provide the basis stuff, the basic attitudes of which reconstruction must be made, inasmuch as events have not provided them for us, there is no need for inordinate alarm. But our real foundations are

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