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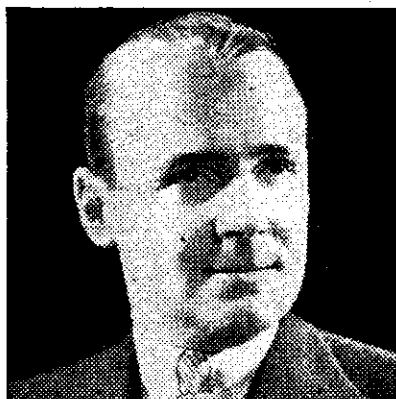
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Education and Reconstruction

(continued from previous page)

For some of them a university arts or commerce course may fill the bill but not, I think, for many. What they will really need is a course which will rehabilitate them to the outlook and the responsibilities of civilian life—any of you who remember the end of the last war will agree with me as to this—and that is something which does not at the moment exist. If nothing is done for them, they may well become an acute danger.

There are, in fact, two avenues available for dealing with the problem. In the first place, the universities might organise special arrangements for them. It may be necessary to provide for university annexes in existing camps in which such rehabilitation courses of varying duration could be devised. The universities themselves could not cope with them in their existing accommodation, save at the risk of complete disorganisation—and it will be of paramount importance that we should disturb as little as possible our existing—very defective—technique of Quality Control. But—though the proposal has many disadvantages—Universities could be of very great service in organising and supervising courses, discovering the necessary staff—inevitably in most cases from outside their own overworked personnel—and assisting in administering.

Future of Army Education

The alternative is to use the existing Army Education Service for the job. That service has done yeoman work in the face of great difficulties, and it has built up an organisation which must not be dissipated when peace comes. Its present contemplated function is to provide for those in the services until they are demobilised. The main difficulty is that, as was abundantly proved at the end of the last war, the moment demobilisation sets in, education carried out in the Army acquires a flavour of unreality which deprives it of all stimulus or inspiration. Education for civilian life must be done in a civilian environment and, I think, by civilians. It may be that a combination of the two agencies could best effect the solution. But the solution must be found for, unless it is, the part to be played by education in reconstruction may well be confined to cowering in the wings while virtue lies prostrate on the stage.

From Indifference to Prophecy

I said in my first talk that the educator has been content in the past to toil panting after the *status quo*. He has in the main, taken his conception of the future for which he is training his victims from other people or alternatively has not thought about it at all. The result is that education has always been behind the times, and it is this fact, as much as anything, that is responsible for the present condition of the democratic conception of life.

It is now as certain as anything can be that the *status quo ante bellum* will never come back, and I believe it to be the educator's duty to forsake his past indifference and to become his own prophet. He will get little honour out of it. Prophets are never popular and, when they prophesy change, they have stones thrown at them. But neither in universities nor in schools has cloistered seclusion any more relevance to real life, and we owe it to those who will

man the future to have our definite picture of it and to train them purposefully to fulfil their functions in it.

Four General Conditions

Now there are certain general conditions which are to my mind clearly prerequisite for the continued existence of any kind of democracy in the world of to-morrow, and our systems of education must be remodelled to the extent that these conditions necessitate. They are, firstly, that an efficient technique of Quality Control be developed; secondly, that genuine communal effort for the ordinary person is possible; thirdly, that a living culture that is relevant to its particular environment is actively fostered; and fourthly that a scale of ethical values which is based upon firm foundations and not only taught but practised underlies the whole structure. Volumes could be said on each point.

I mean nothing highbrow by "Quality." I am not talking in a narrow so-called "cultural" sense. There are at present some seven and a-half million human beings in Australia, and among them is some of the finest human material in the world. Latent in that material there is enough quality to provide us not only with the writers, and the artists, and the critics, and the musicians, and the teachers, and the researchers that we must have to make our democracy a live, coherent, and inspired thing, but with the technical, administrative, and political ability which is necessary to enable it to continue in existence at all. We cannot afford to lose or to waste one iota of this, the most essential of our resources. To compass this end, three things are imperatively necessary and many others, which will no doubt occur to all of you, are essential.

These Are Essential

The first is a permanent continuance and an extension of the principle of educational subsidy which has been introduced as a war measure by the Federal Government. My own view is that all education should be free and compulsory up to the limit of the capacity of the individual to profit by it. But until that comes, as it will, we must see to it that no one is debarred by economic considerations from the full realisation of his intellectual equipment. The subsidy range must be extended to cover income groups higher than its present upper limit of about £600 p.a., for you know as well as I do that nowadays the dreams of avarice are not automatically dissipated at that level. It must be extended to cover the years between school leaving age and matriculation, for it is here that the biggest wastage occurs. And it must be accompanied by a serious attention to the development of psychological aptitude-testing services which, if suitably intermixed with common sense, have proved themselves an invaluable ally for the educator.

The second is the disappearance of the widely-held conviction that education is something to be done with at the first possible opportunity. Our bias toward economic motives has imbued too many people with a desire to see their children out in the world and earning money as soon as their minimum schooling is completed.

The third, linked closely with the second, is the provision of a really efficient system of Adult Education. I shall develop this point in my final talk.

(To be continued)