

Broadcasting as a Medium of Education

Interesting Summary of Possibilities by Dr. J. Hight, M.A., Canterbury College



Y subject is "Broadcasting as a Medium of Education." Broadcasting we know; but what is education? This is as difficult a question as what is Truth? Certainly, education is not mere schooling; it is not the formal instruction of the child and the adolescent. It is a process, a complex of influences at work upon all of us through the whole length of our lives; everything of which we are actively conscious contributes to it. It is the leading forth or drawing out of the mind and its faculties, in the direction of the highest. It is the cultivation of what is best in man, and, therefore, always has reference to some standard or ideal. One of our Ministers of the Crown said the other day that he had been educated, not in the University of Oxford, but in the University of Life.

Few can claim nowadays that a university gives, or can ever give, a perfect or complete education; a great many recognise that the means of education lie in ourselves, and all about us ever and everywhere, but they recognise, too, that we shall all be the better able to use these means to the best advantage in proportion as we have been influenced by a good school or university.

BROADCASTING affects education in its widest sense, whether we like it or not. It is already an influence permeating the nations. As an educational medium it has, of course, suffered from its friends. At the outset they sometimes made rather absurd claims as to its value. It has its limitations. After all, the essence of the best education is in the direct contact of personalities, and a broadcasting speech, though more vivid than the printed page, has less abiding force. But broadcast is at work upon our lives, and we should make the best we can of it. This means organisation up to a certain point. There is a special need of this here in New Zealand. Everyone who goes abroad must recognise how difficult it is for us here in these remote islands to keep as fresh and vigorous and progressive as the peoples around the centres of culture and civilisation. Here is what a teacher from New Zealand, now on exchange in England, says in the last "Education Gazette" (May 1, p. 90):—"I think that, on the average, he (the English boy) has wider and deeper intellectual interests than his N.Z. brother. Apart from the advantages of environment, the excellence of variety of the wireless, which is in practically every home, must give a boy a fund of ideas and a breadth of intellectual interests for which the colonial youth cannot hope."

I THOROUGHLY endorse this opinion; but no people can succeed if their intellectual interests are not wide and deep. We in New Zealand should not dwell in complacent comfort, but should strain every effort to attempt to equalise conditions by making wholehearted, well-thought-out and systematic endeavours to give our young people the stimulus of a perfected broadcast.

At home great attention has been given to broadcast in relation to schooling. The B.B.C. and the Imperial Education Conference of 1927 discussed the question very fully and summed up thus:—"In the general discussion, members of the conference and visitors emphasised the importance of close co-operation between the broadcasting studio and the teacher, of good receiving sets, and of careful preparation before each lesson. To this end, it was explained, the Corporation arranges for schools to be visited and issues literature in connection with the lessons, illustrated by

maps, pictures, etc., besides encouraging regular correspondence from pupils and the sending of such matter as essays and tunes.

"The arrangements between the Corporation and the schools in Kent were explained in detail, special stress being laid upon the necessity for literature issued by the studio, for securing the active co-operation of the pupils, and for the careful study by lecturer and class teacher of the technique of the wireless station.

"It was generally agreed that wireless broadcasting offered a means of bringing the inspiration of the expert with a great personality into the school, that its value was probably greater in rural schools than in the large towns, and that its chief instructional use seemed likely to be found in music and language teaching. There could be no doubt of its possibilities as a stimulus and as a means of spreading adult education by means of evening talks."

Adult Education.

I HAD the pleasure of being present during the discussion at the Imperial Education Conference and what I say is coloured largely by recollections of it and the report of a special committee which examined the whole question.

These two developments, broadcasting and adult education, are special features of the last 25 years. Their appearance together was a happy circumstance, destined as one was to help the other.

In country districts in Europe the war stimulated the formation of clubs, guilds and institutes, especially of women. These created a demand for lectures, plays, concert recitals, etc. In the towns similar social groups were formed, with definite educational work in view—literary, musical, dramatic, scientific, artistic. The Governments encouraged the movement. In England, e.g., courses of 15 and 18 hours, even shorter courses and single lectures, were recognised for State grants in aid. The need in question could not be satisfied by the regularly continuing classes that were already in existence for more or less advanced study. There was a hungry multitude clamouring for pioneer single lectures, short courses, talks on music, books, drama, politics. And thinking people began to realise the immense significance of this new demand. In our democratic structure of society everyone has to discharge great responsibilities. And sound decisions are possible only when the individual can free himself from prejudices of all kinds and maintain a just balance between emotion and reason.

Moreover, the children at school or college are fast advancing in knowledge of the newer science of the day, and mother and father must find a short and easy way to keep pace with

them if they are not to be thought old-fashioned and out of date, and if the family is not to lose the feeling of intellectual kinship.

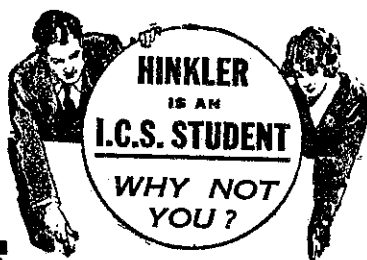
How Broadcasting Can Help.

CAN broadcasting help the present types of adult education? Undoubtedly it can. The ordinary means of education do not attract all adults who would like to have their outlook broadened. Some shy at the very mention of education; the word arouses most unpleasant recollections of their boyhood; some do not realise the wide range of interests that education satisfies; some have very good reasons for not leaving home in the evenings; some live in districts thinly populated or remote; some cannot find the money or the tutors; and for the most part only one subject can be offered at a time. In all these cases you will easily see how broadcasting gives just what is required.

Some people fear that its appeal may be too strong, that it will reduce the number of those who will undertake really hard intensive study. The W.E.A. in England feared this; but the real student will always prefer the ordinary means of studying if these can be had; nothing can replace the personal contact of student and teacher. The part of broadcast will be to draw attention to, to stimulate, and to supplement the activities of educational bodies. It can arouse interests in individuals and groups which can be satisfied only by further study in regular adult classes. It does this at the same time that it is keeping people abreast of the developments in modern life and giving information not yet made available in books or periodicals. The uses and the defects of broadcast as an educational medium are well summed up thus:—"It remains as true as ever that there is no royal road to learning and that education in the true sense does not begin till the learner, by his own efforts, begins to master the branch of study he has chosen. Nevertheless, it is a great thing to have a lift on the road and to get, as it were, a view of the promised country before embarking on the pilgrimage. To hear the great man who has overcome the difficulties and reached the heights ought to be a supreme incentive to face the toil which real learning will demand."

What Subjects?

WHAT subjects are best suited to a broadcast educational programme? They are such as will convey new knowledge or suggest new points of view or create new perspectives. (1) Foreign affairs. In many ways broadcasting is intimately concerned with international relations. The weekly 15 minutes' talk on world affairs in England is very popular and has a wonderful enlightening effect. (2) Empire relations; this is preparatory to the time when the members



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