

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE FORGOTTEN MAN: A LIBERAL EDUCATION: SOMETHING GOOD OUT OF GERMANY? THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNFIT.

NOW that his vote has been secured, "the forgotten man" seems in danger of being forgotten again, until the next election. Just who he was before his brief rise to eminence, is already forgotten, if indeed it was ever clearly known. There is a new system, or a system of systems, and a new deal. They appear, without undue reservations, to be going well—in certain directions; and to be doing good—for certain people. But in the excitement of post-election accomplishment, the pledge implied in pre-election slogans seems in danger of being overlooked.

To the many readers who were familiar with his striking use of the term, "the forgotten man" could call to mind only the late Professor William Graham Sumner's essay, originally published in *The Yale Review*, and often reprinted: *On the Case of a Certain Man Who Is Never Thought Of*. Mr. Sumner's case, which he states with mathematical clarity and argues with logical cogency, is applied mainly to questions of philanthropy and sociological "reform". But its application is so general that we venture to give it a somewhat extended application for the moment, and reserve the right of sociological use if a later occasion should demand it. For our present purpose, the opening definition is almost all that is required. It may not denote the forgotten man that Mr. Roosevelt had in mind; but it does describe the man that every provident government should remember, and which nearly every form of government appears to forget. Mr. Sumner says:

The type and formula of most schemes of philanthropy or humanitarianism is this: A and B put their heads together to decide what C shall be made to do for D. The radical vice of all these schemes is that C is not allowed a voice in the matter, and his position, character, and interests, as well as the ultimate effects on society through C's interests, are entirely overlooked. I call C the Forgotten Man. For once let us look him up and consider his case....

Using our own values for Mr. Sumner's symbols, let us restate the proposition thus: "In almost every political 'deal', new or old, politics and business put their heads together to see what the consumer shall be made to do for the producer... The consumer is the forgotten man".

Perhaps it is merely because he is said to be the "only begetter" of the tag—"The New Deal"—by which the forgotten man has been charmed back to oblivion; but one's mind seems to turn naturally in this connection to Mr. Stuart Chase, and to his collaborator, Mr. F. J. Schlink. In "Your Money's Worth", and in "One Hundred Million Guinea Pigs", they have shown how the ordinary retail purchaser is at the mercy of trusts, price-fixers, and advertisers who conspire to make him buy an article that he doesn't want, incapable of fulfilling the purpose it professes to serve, at a price which is exorbitantly in excess of the cost of production even after the expenses of advertising have been included. Mr. Chase and Mr. Schlink are too precise in their analysis, too clear and emphatic in their charges against the producers of well-known commodities, to be open to any sort of refutation. Yet, in spite of advancing legislation to safeguard the lives if not the pockets of consumers, they show both directly and by implication that methods of manufacture and selling prices are still largely controlled on the principle that producers' profits have a sacred right to protection. Mr. Chase and Mr. Schlink are outstanding among the very few people who have attempted to give corporate expression to the voice of that scattered and unorganized body of forgotten men and women, the general purchasing public. Mr. Schlink's chief concern is with pure food and drugs, and he has produced evidence—which would be incredible if it were not documented beyond question—to show how selfish "interests" endeavour to burke any legislation that will result in a loss of revenue to manufacturers, advertisers, and publishers. We need not delay now on the somewhat obvious topic of "patent" foods, nostrums, and cosmetics, which could fill a treatise by themselves, and which Mr. Roosevelt, like any other enlightened leader, would doubtless bring within proper limits if he could circumvent the organized protection and special pleading of interested parties. As a sample of the general type of objection to consumer protection we may quote, however, the following extract from the bulletin of a newspaper publishers' association on the last Food and Drugs Act brought before Congress: "This is a very vicious piece of national legislation, which if passed by Congress in its present form will reduce national advertising lineage". Without discussing the merits of the products concerned, or even the interests of their manufacturers, the article goes on to urge concerted opposition to the Bill, because "it may take the support of every newspaper to defeat it".

Nothing quite so blatant as this could be published from within a representative House of Assembly. But the tacit assumption

that profits must be maintained at all costs is by no means absent from legislative deliberation, and the value of Mr. Roosevelt's national recovery experiment may be very considerably reduced because it appears to have confirmed rather than reversed the capitalist doctrine that so nearly wrecked the economic system of his country. The belief that the consumer exists for the sake of business and manufacture, rather than business and manufacture for the sake of the consumer, is a principle with which we are not unfamiliar in Canada, and one from which some of us had hoped that the New Deal across the border would show us a profitable method of escape. But the N.R.A., as a liberal and democratic policy, got under way to the good old Tory cry of bigger profits and higher wages. Prices were to go up, and everybody was to help everybody else by buying more of everything. The chief liberal element in the programme was that of first aid for farmers, whose voices were added to the jubilant chorus of those with something to sell clamouring for more buyers at higher prices.

Apart from the competitive jealousies of producers, all trying to buy cheap and sell dear, and all organized to fight for recognition, is the forgotten man for whom this policy of higher prices all round can mean nothing but a higher cost of living all round. He is the forgotten man, the salaried man who has nothing to sell but his services, and who is the chief target for State encouragement to help the other fellow. When prices go down, his wages are reduced; when prices increase, they are cut again. He is told to spend for the general good, and so make money for others, and his increased expenditure is wrongly claimed by the government as its contribution to increased production. To quote again from Professor Sumner: "The State cannot get a cent for any man without taking it from some other man, and this latter must be a man who has produced and saved it. This latter is the 'Forgotten Man.' . . . He will be found to be worthy, industrious, independent, and self-supporting. He is not, technically, 'poor' or 'weak'; he minds his own business, and makes no complaint. Consequently, the philanthropists never think of him, and trample on him". Professor Sumner, as we have said, is speaking of philanthropy in the ordinary sense, not of the subsidizing of one class of producers at the expense of others. But the principle is the same; and if we are to remain nations of shop-keepers, our governments should be on their guard against securing free meals for salesmen by starving all the customers.

THE writer of these meditations has sometimes been questioned for drawing so many of his themes from the country which, in the vague rhetoric of newspaper controversialists and platform orators, is adumbrated as "a neighbouring republic". The United States of America appear, to some patriotic statisticians, to come in for more than a fair proportion of his comment by comparison with Europe, the Far East, and this Canada of ours. But the reason should be obvious. Without sullyng the fair pages of this immaculate journal by any remote suggestion that Canada is cut to the pattern of her numerically more important neighbour, it is still possible to assume that conditions in the larger country may afford some guidance for dealing with analogous situations in the smaller. Soil, climate, population, government, and industry bear many resemblances. In the United States, the patterns are projected on a larger scale, and the American genius for thoroughness gives to both good and bad enthusiasms and experiments an emphasis by which they afford a clearer object lesson for a smaller, a more balanced and conservative community than could ever be learned from her own experience. There is the added advantage, when our horrible examples are drawn from over the way, of being able to point a moral more sharply and drive it farther home. This is especially true of the States, which in spite of their reputation for sensitiveness are able to accept cheerfully the pellets of minor critics, and supply them with further ammunition. Consequently, the critic of federal or provincial affairs in Canada is able to draw illustrations and arguments which are similar enough to be useful, and remote enough to be safe.

The above remarks are inspired by the discovery of a more than usually appropriate object lesson from United States experience and frank self-criticism. A topic which has been exercising the writer in the pursuit of his concern for the forgotten man, and the subjugation of his labours and emoluments to the whim of politicians, is that of the education of his children and the job that some of the elected representatives of this generation seem disposed to make of the electors of the next. Certain not very remote revelations concerning municipal and provincial education seemed to call for animadversion. The problem was how to bring attention to them without offending against the supersensitive susceptibilities of interested parties, and the expediency of editorial policy. An article in the February issue of *McCall's Magazine*—conveniently summarized in *The Reader's Digest*—supplies all the illustrations, comments, and arguments that are required. With the catchy and allusive superscription that ap-

pears to be obligatory for modern journalism, the essay in question is entitled "The Little Red School-house in the Red." Its purpose is to show that of all pound-foolish economies induced by so-called liberal or democratic efforts at reconstruction, the most foolish is a catch-penny reduction in the cost of education. The past generation had bequeathed a legacy of debt and mismanagement. The one surely enlightened policy for the present is to see that the next generation are equipped to meet a troubled world and leave it a little better than they found it. Education, in a world that has over-drawn its credit, is the one item on the budget that should not be whittled down. But the effect of local economies—according to the article—is to reduce education to a level at which it will be impossible for the rising generation to perceive the folly of its grandsires. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children shall have no teeth to set on edge.

One aspect of education that is emphasized in this survey is the unselfish loyalty and devotion of the elementary school-teacher; and in that respect we may venture on more direct comparisons. School-teachers throughout the world are the most devoted and least rewarded of public servants, and their courage and unselfishness seem to increase as their pay and status are diminished. The past few years, and especially the past winter, have brought to light many examples of fortitude and self-sacrifice among teachers and children in the elementary schools of Nova Scotia. Teachers with meagre and overdue salaries have struggled through snow-drifts, over roads impassable to traffic, to fulfil their responsibilities towards shivering undernourished children. Their training is inadequate, the equipment insufficient, the conditions of teaching are impossible. They carry on, as other teachers have done elsewhere. But the reward of such devotion—at least as revealed in the survey to which we have referred—is merely the increased application of "economies". Fuel supplies are reduced; salaries are cut; the term of instruction is shortened; and necessary repairs are "deferred for consideration". There is a familiar ring about references to heating and accommodation, to the boiler that ought to be replaced and the suggestion of children huddled together for warmth or sent home because their wits and their fingers were numbed with the cold. There is a reminiscent note also in the statement that in most States the reformers and economists have taken as their watchword "Cut out the frills and fads". This would be well enough if the "frills" did not prove to be anything that makes for happiness and spontaneity: in the view of our self-appointed pedagogical reformers, an adequate

education demands merely a shed, with benches and blackboard, a teacher with common-school education, and as much of the three R's as will equip the pupil to fill out an income-tax return.

"The old-fashioned education was good enough for us": away with kindergartens, school games, vocational guidance. Away with supervised attendance, and with special provision for the sub-normal or the specially gifted." Putting on one side the implied argument *ad homines*, that the old-fashioned education is sufficiently condemned as being "good enough" for these cheese-paring reactionaries, our American critic merely sets for consideration the ironical parallel between communist Russia, where child training comes before anything else, and an enlightened democracy in which children of kindergarten age are turned into the city streets. In respect to taxes for schools and teaching, the American situation should be of particular interest to observers in certain parts of Canada. Instead of centralized federal, or even state taxation, the burden of providing instruction for its children falls upon each unit in proportion to the number of its pupils. Children are poor men's riches, and in the matter of education they are subject to luxury tax. The same situation occurs elsewhere: apart from a small equalization fund provided by the government, individual communities provide schools and teachers for their own children. According to the system in vogue, a town of retired elderly millionaires with ten children would be required to provide for those ten only, and a town of unemployed miners with a thousand children must alone provide for the thousand. Under conditions such as these it is hardly a matter for wonder that any attempt at relief from the monotony of the multiplication table, any variation in text-books inherited from grandfather, would be subjected immediately to criticism and a demand to "cut out the frills".

In spite of unenlightened opposition, and financial systems designed to starve education at the expense of extravagant and unnecessary "public works", there has been some progress in nearly every English-speaking country in both the equipment and the methods of our schools. In England particularly, under burdens greater than those of the States and the Dominions, recent advances in education suggest not unfavourable comparison with the earlier achievement of France and Germany. These reflections, indeed, were first prompted by the perusal of a booklet describing the construction and equipment of a new English school, catering to an average cross-section of the population, and received at a time when schools of more direct personal interest to the writer were excusing themselves as "good enough" in spite of being hopelessly

inadequate, uncomfortable, and at times even dangerous for the children condemned to sit in them and make a pretence of learning about the world which they are to inherit. Like many defenders of the present penitentiary system of housing and instruction, the writer is acquainted with schooling in "the good old days"—with barn-like class-rooms, airless in summer and draughty in winter, with the thawing and freezing as each successive relay took its roasting at the stove and returned to the arctic regions against the wall. He has sat at desks apparently designed by an inquisitorial maniac to produce squint-eyes and curvature of the spine, and stood for hours, with forty others, in a corridor twenty feet by six, taking reading lessons by the light of a transom over the door. In his own opinion at least, he is not noticeably the better for this experience. Such schooling is not good enough for anyone, least of all for those whose school-days are a brief introduction to the hewing of wood and drawing of water. So long as the public expenditures on automobiles, on intoxicants, and on armaments remain what they are, there is no excuse for "economies" in education, except that an illiterate public is the surest way of providing for the continued power of the politicians who support the "good old days" and the "little red schoolhouse". To quote in conclusion from the article already referred to:

Free education is the cornerstone of our democracy. And we must overhaul our educational methods and make intelligent financial provision for it. If we do not, we will have a generation of idle, maladjusted, unhappy individuals who have no idea how to live in this modern world.

AMONG the burdens of "the forgotten man" is that of providing for his fellow men and women whom nature or circumstance has made unable to provide for themselves. To a certain point, this duty is also a privilege which no humane person would wish to avoid. But there are indications that a time may come when self-supporting members of our communities may be compelled to lighten their burdens in defence of their appointed task of supporting others. Like the rescuer who is being throttled by the importunities of those whom he would save from drowning, the taxpayer may yet be compelled to rid himself of a portion of his incubus.

This is not a new question; but like many another it has received the publicity of a fresh and startling discovery, through the emphasis that has been placed upon it by the special attention

of Herr Hitler, of whom most of us are ready to believe that he can see good in nothing that is not incontrovertibly bad. Nor do we need to argue that, in the hands of such persons as Hitler and his megalomaniacal subordinates, any added control of the lives and destinies of others will undoubtedly result in a wholesale extension of tyranny. The trouble with the Nazi schemes of social improvement is not that they are conceived in too little intelligence: it is rather that they suffer from too much. They lack humanity because they have too much mind, at least in proportion to the equally human faculties of kindness and humour. They have the soulless inflexibility of a mechanism or a maniac,—a Frankenstein monster with the power of a superman and the guidance of a demon. Whether the Hitlerite robots will turn and rend their creators, or merely run down like unwound clockwork, it is too early to forecast. In the meantime we may remind ourselves that some at least of the ideas behind them are, in the realm of ideas, not unworthy of consideration, and if tempered with humanity and applied with justice, not unworthy of adoption by wise and kindly governments. Some of the latest pan-Teutonic novelties have in fact been long since adopted elsewhere, but lacking the Prussian fanfare have passed without notice. There was a note of irony in the discovery by certain patriotic Americans that their respective States had for years sanctioned a policy of "sterilization" even more drastic than those of Hitler, which they had derided as foreign to the principles of a humane and enlightened community.

Apart from a general belief that no good thing can come out of Germany, or a vaguely benevolent unwillingness to admit that law, society, and religion are founded upon interference with the laws of nature and the so-called rights of others, it is difficult to see what objections can be laid against the general principle of a controlled posterity. As to the nature, extent and direction in which this control should be exercised, there is room for a variety of opinions and many degrees of thoroughness. Hitler, for example, will doubtless add sterilization to his more direct methods of cleansing the world's population from the Semitic taint by which it has been vitiated in such degenerates as Heine and Einstein; and his definition of "Hebrew" will be conveniently elastic. Each of us could think of sections of the populace to which an end could be made with advantage to society at large. Even the opponents of compulsory sterilization of the unfit are, as a class, inclined to allow an exception in favour of those who defend this policy. One advanced psychologist, opposed to sterilization of imbeciles and morons, has declared himself as seeing valuable benefits from

denying issue to the intelligentsia, on the ground that destructive wars and oppressive legislation can originate only in the minds of people of some intellectual attainments. Just who would look after the harmless insane to which the world would eventually be reduced, and whether he regarded himself as sufficiently advanced to be "trashed for overtopping", the learned professor did not have time to explain. Unlimited and fascinating possibilities of self-perpetuating autocracy suggest themselves to the imagination, but in normal conditions common sense will provide the necessary restraint, and a prudent and firm exercise of control may prevent abnormal conditions in which restraint will vanish.

IT is over a century since Malthus disturbed the complacency of our forefathers with the suggestion that the world might produce more people than it could properly maintain. Possibly his somewhat mechanical demonstrations might have received more practical attention if they had come a little earlier or a little later. Arriving as they did with the *Lyrical Ballads*, humanitarianism, and *Back to Nature*, they produced a vague unpractical disquiet until it was proved that Malthus's figures were all wrong, and that mass-production and the wheat-fields of the New World reduced his arithmetic to a fallacy. The increasing pressure of population against the means of subsistence has been denounced as an unsound economic theory. But it is none the less an economic fact that thousands of potentially useful and happy people to-day are denied the means of subsistence, while increasing thousands of others are encouraged to burden society with lives that are doomed in advance to misery and waste.

New discoveries may have reduced the force of Malthus's original argument based on the general increase of population. They have not so far accomplished very much to remedy a situation (which threatens some day to become desperate) in which the increase of useful citizens is being retarded in proportion as the addition of sub-human wretches is being accelerated. Wars—of which it may be too much to hope that we have seen the last—take their heaviest toll from the best of the population. The worst they leave undiminished and even increased. Birth control, whatever we may think of it, is an established fact that affects almost the whole of the population except the small number that it should affect most. The one class that it cannot protect—or rather that from which society cannot protect itself—is that which exists below the level of any conceivable standard of happiness, morality

or intelligence. In sterner times, the uncontrolled fecundity of this class was held in check by its natural inability to remain alive. But to-day the totally unfit stand a rather better chance than the average innocent victim of purely economic circumstances.

Those for whom sterilization should be enforced could suffer no conceivable hardship, since their minds can neither foresee nor desire the possibility of children; they are deprived of nothing that they value, and they need be subjected to no greater physical indignity than that of a compulsory bath or dental operation, or any minor physical attention to which the modern State has already accustomed the majority of its school-children. It is a measure of control that is made necessary in the interests of society, by society's perhaps excessive control in other directions. The absence of it means merely a license to the lowest element of the population to make itself lower and more numerous. If restraint on this progressive disproportion is not imposed soon, it may some day be too late.

Some objections are based on a sentimental humanitarianism that overlooks the complete absence of human potentialities in those whom it would license to spread imbecility and disease. Others are merely naively uninformed as to the nature of the interference that is proposed against the liberty of the subject. Sterilization appears to be vaguely associated with capital punishment, lethal chambers, and vivisection. Or possibly the term is reminiscent of carbolic acid and prolonged boiling. A very brief examination of the record of such family histories as those of the Kallikaks or the Jukes will provide material for serious thought. Since the Carnegie monograph on the house of Juke is at present out of print, we may assume that it has recently been the subject of increased attention. A slight indication of the menace is contained in the study of a small and undistinguished family—and one that is far from representing the lowest type—in the first volume of this REVIEW. It affords no very encouraging prospect of the future of the race. The question for the humanitarians to answer, if this growing horde of incapables is to be provided for, is the simple economic one of how, and by whom. For the time appears to be coming when every working tax-payer will be called upon to provide for four besides himself: one in the army, one in jail, one in the poorhouse, and one in politics.

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