

tions by distorted statements and propaganda. It makes the struggle appear to be one in which the pawn is the integrity of the human mind. Let anyone go back 10 year or longer to some great period of conflict and read the history of that period. He will be aware that the strife may have been avoided if reason, not passion, had been applied to the situation. It can be said that if the problem of relations between labour and management cannot be solved, it is useless to hope that the question of the relations between the nations in the larger international area can be solved. Every time that labour and management agree to a policy of reason and ordered relations, a victory for peace can be recorded.

Slowly there is emerging a clear visualization of the principles underlying the relations between labour and management:

1. Prior to collective bargaining negotiations, there must be a period of genuine self searching by labour and management culminating in clear resolution that sound relationships shall be set up. This is a *sine qua non*. This period of self analysis and new resolution is usually overlooked and neglected.

2. There must be an establishment of the conference method, with clear communication between labour and management in all essential matters.
3. Collective bargaining must be an honest give-and-take across the conference table, and not a one-sided affair. It must go beyond mere legalism.
4. Collective bargaining must not be merely an annual wage conference: it must underlie relationships throughout the year. It must be placed on a fair-minded basis, and the use of technical committees in which labour can participate in the processes of production are the best tools of encouragement.
5. The guiding principle in all these relationships is the welfare of the industry or the shop, and behind this—the welfare of the nation itself.

It is patent to the casual observer that the world is moving into a new era of international relations. This can be forwarded more rapidly and with more intelligence if the principles of sound relationships, learned in the industrial field, are applied in this wider area.

## Workers' Education: A Review

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**T**HOUGH the movement for workers' education has so far failed to attract even interest labour en masse, the numerous articles which have dealt with the subject in previous issues of PUBLIC AFFAIRS disclaim dissolutionment. They record that the movement has spread to all democratic countries, and describe the snail-pace of growth beyond the landmark institutions established in the first quarter of the century; they point to a new era for workers' educa-

tion—to a new confidence and a new drive in the movement. The present paper reviews, in a summary manner, what is common to institutions in the Anglo-Canadian-American sections of the movement; the endeavours towards national unified administration; and some of the compelling considerations which affect the future.

### I—Common Aspects

**Aspirations**—Nothing is more common to the movement than statements

of purposes, striking in their similarity: to educate workers in the principles and problems of unionism, for citizenship, and as adult individuals. Their sweep and majesty is expressed in an apt phrase: "Educational Service to Democracy." The aspirations engendered are not very different from those of the state itself in the educational field: they reveal the same neglect of the past, the inefficiency of the present, and the hope of the future. They are:

To develop a broad and balanced expansion of all purposes: the institutions become fewer which insist that workers' education is an "either-or" choice between "unionism" and "culture", that a combination is a mere concubinage, and that emphasis on "unionism," hitherto pre-eminent, is alone expedient.

To provide for greater variety in the subject matters in fact pursued: hitherto the catalogue has been deceptively imposing, though rooted in the social sciences and ranging through literature and arts, science, commercial and clerical subjects.

To expand program facilities, which range from single talks through short-term resident schools to full and part-time university courses, and to synthesize them with a view to provision for (a) informal programs for those who have done little reading or previous study, (b) more formal programs for those with more advanced backgrounds, and (c) specialist and long-term courses where need for highly qualified union personnel must be met in that way.

To provide suitable accommodation, located and equipped for the purpose: for, apart from oases in the desert of accommodation, workers' education has advanced at extravagant cost in human interest and effort.

To employ the range of available educational techniques, media and methods, and to exploit the contributions each has to make.

To develop a proficient and adequate teaching staff by (a) the appointment of full-time educators, (b) augmenting the number of educational directors attached to trade unions, and (c) training suitable union members in the techniques and methods necessary to "feed back" programs, as well as to pro-

vide "educational leadership," at the local level: hitherto, though the instructor is the link between the movement and the worker, staff members have been very largely a collection of volunteers and invitees, many of them without knowledge of the techniques of workers' education or with no conscious appreciation of its purpose.

In fine, present aspirations are directed towards expansion, diversification, and integration of programs, facilities, and techniques to the end that divergent needs may be met, interest stimulated and facilities and techniques used to advantage. Their scope, and the drive behind them, reflects, to some extent at least, the failure of adult educational associations to forge vital links with trade unions and the failure of universities to offer a more vital leadership. It reflects as well the influence of educational experiments undertaken in the armed forces, and the stimulus from co-operation with, and the not infrequent pressure and competition of, various bodies, private and public, engaged in aspects of education indigenous to the movement.

**Problems**—The familiar "nurturing" problems associated with aspirations—especially, inveterate apathy and in-porable media (films, radio, recordings, books and pamphlets) ill-designed for the task—exists in their fullness. But apart from the mooted matter of joint employer-employee participation in educational programs, the movement has its own particular problems, derived in part from the distinctive features of workers' education.

Sturdy problems for program builders are posed by trade unionists with an almost incorrigible disregard for academic divinations of "subjects," by student groups very often mixed as to age, sex, occupation and previous study, and by volunteer attendance. So far as practicable, the seductive attractiveness of themes and topics has very largely replaced the dowdiness of "subjects." There have been remarkable programs,

remnants and oddments of education, and rag-bags of miscellaneous topics. Consistent with the characteristics of workers' education, there is now general agreement that much more is required. One emerging solution is to give systematic treatment to definite and manageable themes and topics; the emerging problem is to envisage them as integral sections of wider programs, and to ensure the necessary measure of continuity.

One link in that chain—provision for long, medium, and short-term resident study—envisaged with enthusiasm when postwar planning was bold, is now assessed with frank realism. Resident schemes in the armed forces and older ones in Scandinavia, though demonstrating the familiar advantages of resident study and the need for diverse facilities, failed to bridge the gap separating them from the native soil of workers' education and the experiences of the movement with its own schemes. Through the medium of short-term resident courses, particularly among rank-and-file trade unionists who are as yet largely unconvinced, the tradition is being built first that resident study—however diverse (and with some institutions it is diverse)—has distinct advantages valuable to the trade union movement. Besides, in common with short-term *non-resident* courses, experience has established their value in meeting the newer needs of trade unionists, in sustaining interest, and in providing the foundation for advanced courses; it has made them the acknowledged vehicle for workers' education, though other program facilities, such as single talks and lectures, discussion groups and weekend schools, continue to be the preparatory facilities. With respect to resident courses, however, there are emerging problems: to guarantee employer co-operation, and to provide workers with financial assistance, where necessary, to attend them.

The present standards of workers'

education reveal, on close analysis, the strain of experience, the tugs of "popularization" and "academic approach", and the stiff problem of objective. The endeavour is to maintain, even in pioneer work, the highest standards feasible at the level of the particular student-worker group. The overwhelming objective is "how to think," not "what to think"—to develop respect for accurate information, for the complexity of problems in their perspective, and for an objective, though not necessarily a sit-on-the-fence, approach to problems. In short, the goal is the development of initiative, competence and judgment which alone are vital to the trade union movement. The task is to bring such standards to fruition at the rank-and-file level, and to maintain the present objective throughout the movement.

The decided trend to draw worker-educators from the trade union movement itself, though inevitable and necessary to meet an urgent need for qualified staff, evinces a certain belief in "those who belong" and a desire, not uncommon to the professions and the church, to train their own members. But this desirable trend will not become, as some fear, an avalanche. For among other reasons, the limited educational values of inbreeding are well known; the necessity for expert participation is appreciated; the probable impact from infusion into the movement of "white-collar workers" is understood. The emerging problems are: to ensure a proper admixture of qualified trade unionists and non-trade unionists at the instructional level, and a host of qualified trade union members to implement educational programs at the local level—neither parrots nor dodos will do.

Divided opinion persists within the movement and in university circles as to the place and, if any, the function of universities in this field. University participation, however, though limited except in Great Britain, has been comparatively

significant in relation to over-all effort. Apart from suggestions brewed in a nether pot and those of fact, both sides have said too often that universities are for "serious students" or for "learning and research" and cannot minister to "popular tastes" incompatible with "academic standards." It is time to face the facts. Great opportunities for co-operation to the mutual advantage of the movement and universities exist and are ahead; necessity, as the range of past and present experiences so clearly shows, does not limit that co-operation to narrow spheres.

## II — United Effort

What has been referred to as the workers' educational movement is in reality a collection of variously described institutions—educational departments of trade unions, workers' educational associations, labour colleges, universities and similar organizations, large and small, associated with or engaged directly in workers' education. Bewildering in the diversity of their structures and administration, confusing in their cross associations, and absurd in the duplications and omissions of their services—these are the institutions with the aspirations and the problems generalized in the preceding section. It is almost a common thought that existing administrative organization, product of development and sporadic growth, is no longer adequate. Various endeavours have been made to weld national sections of the movement into articulate wholes.

**Amalgamation**—Certainly the most recent endeavour to provide a comprehensive and unified scheme of workers' education followed the unanimous resolution adopted by the Trades Union Congress of Great Britain in 1946. The Educational Committee of the TUC requested the principal bodies concerned—the National Council of Labour Colleges, the Workers' Educational Association, the Workers' Educational

Trade-Union Committee (an agency of the WEA), and Ruskin College—to submit their views with respect to (a) complete amalgamation and (b) the maintenance of existing bodies as separate entities but under the control of a central authority. As the four bodies could not agree on complete amalgamation, the Committee reported in 1948 that it was improbable that differences could be resolved within any scheme of amalgamation.

The differences detailed in the Report were of three kinds, which, taken from their context, indicate that the situation is not dissimilar to that in North America. First, structural differences between bodies associated with universities, those controlled solely by trade unions, and those supported by trade unions in association with non-trade union bodies. Second, divergent methods of finance between bodies receiving public grants, those operating on a fee-for-service basis, and those financed directly by trade unions on a per capita or some similar basis. Third, differences in educational point of view between bodies devoted to "the provision of independent working class education" and those engaged in "liberal education in citizenship." The Committee's findings light the abysmal depths, however. The four groups favoured closer organization: the NCLC preferred complete amalgamation, the WEA-WETUC a tripartite arrangement with the NCLC and the TUC, and Ruskin College a form of federal co-ordination. The Report noted that numbers of national unions co-operated with both the WEA-WETUC and the NCLC, and that Ruskin College, though associated with the WEA, accepted students impartially from the WEA and the NCLC.

The obstacles to amalgamation are, if anything, greater in North America. Merger between the American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the United States, and between the Canadian Con-

gress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress in Canada, the dominant trade union bodies, may be the indispensable prerequisite to any unified educational effort on either side of the border. Joint educational ventures by trade unions affiliated with different congresses are not, however, unknown. Again, though short of amalgamation, there are signs of co-operation at higher levels. In 1948, the AFL and the CIO united their forces and, together with other trade union bodies, pressed before Congress a Bill to provide federal aid for workers' education.<sup>1</sup> That Bill envisaged an exacting degree of continuing co-operation, in so far as labour members were to be appointed to a national advisory council and to state boards from panels submitted by national and state labour organizations.

**Co-ordination**—The proposed Congressional scheme and the one considered by the TUC Committee have ranking place among the many schemes visualized for co-ordination of existing institutions. Indeed, apart from the source of funds, the two schemes were very similar in principle. Each left existing institutions intact, envisaged a central fund, and under fund pressure would have stimulated expansion and achieved a measure of co-ordination. Where the Committee's scheme proposed distribution of funds by the TUC to institutions in respect of services rendered, the Congressional plan proposed federal funds channelled through state labour extension boards after requests for aid had been screened.

Such plans leave unaltered the position of institutions which remain outside and leave to those within the power of secession. Both militate against effective central direction. Co-ordination proceeds only in so far as the central fund directors secure co-operation or themselves make decisions and assume responsibility in matters of educational

principles, methods, and program provision. Perhaps with undue haste, the TUC rejected a central fund scheme as being of "no practical value;" in any event, the fund proposed was no more than a pool of current union education budgets.

**Absorptions**—Proposals for the development of an integrated and comprehensive scheme by complete absorption of all workers' education within the trade union movement itself have been frequent. That too was rejected by the TUC Committee, but only for the reason that the time was thought inappropriate to recommend a minimum levy of 3d. per member per annum when a similar proposal in 1925 had foundered on a 1d. levy. The Canadian Congress of Labour knows no such caution: under its recently announced program for workers' education, it is reported to have allocated \$250,000 for the current year alone. This staggering amount represents about 75 per cent of the total expended by all sources on workers' education in Great Britain where union membership is about twenty times as strong.

**Towards a United Effort**—It is clear that only a comprehensive scheme for workers' education will enable the movement to satisfy its aspirations; the number of institutions which cannot get beyond the scrap heap of effort to the broad horizon is probably large. The preparatory work has been done; it is time for an agreed program to emerge for united effort. Past endeavours seem to indicate clearly enough that the formula of organization must satisfy three conditions:

1. It must be "prescribed" in unselfishness and nurtured in reality;
2. It should embrace the co-operation and goodwill of existing institutions and many more, as the envisaged educational effort takes place on a functional as well as a geographical basis with some neat hills demarcating divisions of effort; and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. H. Hedges, "Workers' Education before the United States Congress," *Public Affairs*, July, 1948, p. 146.

3. It must come very largely from the national congresses.

For that reason, apart from others, the evolution of the CCL's program is worth watching. It seeks not only to integrate the educational programs and to pool the resources of affiliated unions, but also to ensure the full co-operation of universities and other educational bodies. It seeks not only to provide workers' education on a national basis, but also to integrate programs, provision for them and facilities on a national basis.

### III — Aspects of the Future

Failure of the trade union and workers' educational movements to develop comprehensive schemes for workers' education might be thought to show "the general estimate of educational effort throughout the movement," more especially when response has been infinitesimal in relation to trade union membership. But that factor cannot be assessed until the national congresses make a decided effort. There are other factors as well which bear on the immediate and long-run future of workers' education.

**Workers' Interest**—Explanations for past response are not wanting; a strong basis of hope for future response exists. Where there was recurrent unemployment and insecurity, significant progress has been made towards economic and social security; where conditions of work, bearing on fatigue and leisure time, were wanting and inadequate, they have become more adequate and less wanting; where trade unions were weak, they have grown to proportions and sunk deep and permanent roots; where there was an early school-leaving age, there is steady improvement. The absence of any background of further education still exists; so too, the familiar difficulties of housing and family circumstances. Each factor has been important in the past and will be in the future.

Though the environment for workers' education has been immeasurably im-

proved, and the once enfeebled movement for workers' education is itself immeasurably stronger, the movement is wise to the fact that these improvements, displayed so to speak in shop windows, will not break the hard core of apathy. Progressive institutions search for no mythical "slipper of interest." Successful techniques employed to stimulate interest in the war effort have been merged with their own developed techniques; the potential touch with rank-and-file members is very great. But the sights are not set for phenomenal numbers of workers "techniqued" to interest. The objective is to reach an impressive number.

**State Interest** — The contribution which the movement has made to adult education through workers' education is a public service not to be ignored. As the TUC Committee reported, however, financial resources to that end are limited. The case for state assistance might be based on grounds of parity, in so far as the state assists in training candidates for the professions, provides vocational and technical courses from which industry draws trained personnel, and takes technology to farmers and fishermen. But the cry for parity disguises, as in those instances, the motive for assistance which is interest.

What critics of workers' education inaccurately describe as the narrow emphasis on "unionism" would seem more than sufficient, though other reasons inhere in the broad purposes of workers' education and apart from them, to evoke the interest of the state. The emphasis on "unionism" is not surprising; it is especially desirable:

It is of vital importance to the trade union movement that its officials at every level—and for every purpose—be fully qualified. It is equally vital that rank-and-file members be assimilated; effectuate self-government in the conduct of union affairs; acquire a grasp of union policies and problems; participate in the formulation of policies and assume a collective responsibility for them; be confident of their collective abilities and respon-

sibilities as workers and as citizens—in fine, that members be active and alert, informed, and responsible.

The recent phenomenal growth of the trade union movement, and the rapid development in North America of industrial unionism, which lacks something of the natural adhesiveness of craft unionism, have intensified each of these ever-present considerations.

From the trade union point of view, the peril of indifference to workers' education and the virtue of attention has been adequately expressed: "Without workers' education there is almost certain to develop a fatal division between leadership and membership." To avoid that division—to ensure stable and progressive unionism—is a distinct labour gain. But even more it would be a distinct *democratic* gain; for the very reason that the trade union movement, with nearly nine hundred thousand members in Canada and approaching eight and fifteen millions in Great Britain and in the United States, respectively, is a dominant institution in society. It is capable of exercising even greater power and assuming even greater responsibility—each with ramifications more profound than are known at present.

**State Assistance**—Hitherto state aid has been, on the whole, indirect, limited, and confined almost entirely to the contribution made by participating state-aided universities. For many years past, however, assistance has been available in Great Britain, in the form of conditional grants, to approved institutions engaged in workers' education. Present regulations (under the new Education Act of 1944) provide specifically for courses ranging from ten meetings to those of twenty-four meetings in each of three educational years, for less formal courses, designed to stimulate more systematic study, and for "vacation courses for selected students." Grants may also be made to assist in the establishment and maintenance of facilities. The limitations of this scheme, apart from the size of the grants available, are found

in the conditions prescribed for the "approval" of institutions and for the "approval" of courses by the Minister of Education.

Significant differences in the approach to state aid for workers' education appear between this scheme and the proposals lately before the United States Congress. The latter was essentially a trade union scheme with federal assistance distributed to each state, according to the number of its non-agricultural wage earners, and screened through a state labour extension board with majority labour representation. The British scheme is essentially part of an over-all provision for "further adult education" with funds distributed to "responsible bodies", irrespective of area, and with no direct trade union representation at the distribution level. Though the British WEA receives considerable assistance under the scheme, the NCLC operates independently; presumably, the TUC Committee, in advising against a comprehensive TUC program, felt precluded from grants under the existing regulations. Within the trade union and workers' educational movements, as within most groups which engage in educational effort, there is a natural desire to participate effectively in administration and in policy determinations. To that extent, at least, the two schemes clarify some of the questions involved in providing state assistance for workers' education.

The British White Paper on *Educational Reconstruction*, issued by the Churchill Coalition Government in 1943, quoted on the introductory page the memorable words:

*Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends.*

Those words express beyond improvement, with no neglect of implication, the responsibility and the challenging task of those concerned with the present of workers' education and its certain future.