

of differences—a mosaic susceptible of no general pattern.

There is no typical colonial constitution for the colonial empire. May there never be any such thing! It is far better, infinitely better, to have the rich crop of experiments, each adjusted to local circumstances and local needs, which gives us the peculiar pattern of Ceylon (where one of the most significant and suggestive experiments has recently been made), the peculiar pattern of Nigeria (where a system of Indirect Rule began

which is one of the boldest of the Empire's constitutional experiments), the peculiar pattern just offered to Jamaica, and everywhere else, in all the continents and seas of the varied and diversified colonial empire, pattern on pattern as varied and diversified as the colonial empire itself. To proliferate, to germinate, to experiment, to grow—this is the genius of the colonial empire; and this is the genius of the whole empire, of which the colonial empire is so fascinating and so richly promising a part.

## Adult Education and the Crisis of Democracy

By WATSON THOMSON

THE history and evolution of modern Democracy can be read between the lines of the story of Adult Education. From the beginning the two have gone hand in hand. Where democracy has flourished best (as in Britain, the Scandinavians, New Zealand, and certain parts of North America), there adult education also has been a sturdy growth. When democracy has been most heartily given over to individualism and the private profit motive, then was adult education mostly an affair of vocational evening classes to better one's economic and social status. And again, latterly, the glory having departed from the *laissez-faire* system, adult education comes to consist of handfuls of puzzled and disconsolate citizens meeting together as study-groups to discuss "the economic problem." It is not surprising therefore that the present war, being a struggle in which the very existence of democracy is jeopardized, is also a time when adult education has to accept changes which alter its character and may transform it out of existence, so far as any liberal understanding of the term is concerned.

Let's see, then, what's been happening to adult education in Canada in recent

years. The depression decade was the "study-group in economics" phase just described. But the meaning of that phase is worth fuller analysis. As compared with the earlier, vocational type, this later sort of adult education was more free from academic discipline and was an education, not of workers and careerists, but of citizens and persons. It was, in fact, more *total*; first, because it was a response to a deeper and more complex need; and secondly, because in the study-group setting it involved a more active and personal type of participation. Very often, too, in that same period, it was made still more inclusive and total by virtue of being related to an active social or political objective. Cases in point are the credit-union and cooperative study-groups of Antigonish and the partisan study-groups of the CCF and of Social Credit in Alberta. Needless to say, it was extremely worrying, if not positively distasteful to the academic purist, to find that, in such study-groups, emotional values crept in alongside the intellectual, and that tendentiousness of one sort or another began to undermine the straight, factual objectivity beloved of scholarship.

Then came the war. I well remember, as I sat up through that cataclysmic night listening to radio flashes confirming

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the fact that all unleashed were the dogs of war—I remember thinking to myself that adult education was finished. We had failed. In retrospect, one can see that as a highly emotional over-simplification. But it was sound to this extent that adult education was about to suffer a sea-change the consequences of which were destined to be revolutionary.

After a period of suspension—the “phoney war” period—the new currents began to set in. Most typical of these, in my view, was the National Film Board’s rural-circuit plan for the showing of Public Information films through the country districts of all the nine provinces. Here was obviously a powerful instrument of adult education from which it would be folly to dissociate oneself. But there were also such new features as the CBC’s Labour Forum, the Farm Radio Forum, and educational material emanating from the War-time Prices and Trade Board, as well as from the Information Bureau in Ottawa.

In such ways, the national emergency asserted its transcendent importance over any more local or personal concern. Adult education found itself drawn into the national preoccupation, compelled to gear itself to the single-purposed national drive and to utilize instruments and materials related to this central national purpose.

Now, all this is of course good for national unity and the winning of a war, but how are we to assess its effects on adult education itself? First, let us look at the positive factors. In many ways, it has brought a widening of horizons which is entirely valid, educationally. When a provincial farmer’s organization, with its special interests and specialized idology of protest, changes over to the National Farm Radio Forum for its discussion material, there is an immediate broadening—less “preaching to the converted,” more recognition of the complexity of social relations in which the farmer’s problem is embodied. If they can be persuaded to take into their organized listening a programme like the current series “Of Things to Come,”

the broadening effect is, of course, even greater.

But, to turn to the other side of the picture, there are features in all this “national” education which might well give us pause. There is, first of all, the obvious charge that much of it is not education at all, but propaganda. Now, I don’t think any of us really knows where the line can be drawn between these two. Propaganda does not necessarily distort or suppress the facts, and education does not, in practice, always convey the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Indeed, we are beginning to realize that there is in both processes an element of tendenciousness which is no more salutary in the case of education because it tends there to be more unconscious. The more conscious and deliberate (and therefore more obvious) bias of purposive intention in the case of propaganda may actually do less social and educational harm.

No, our reservations about national propaganda-education refer more justifiably to its forms rather than to its content. In the nature of things, it uses the great instruments—radio and film chiefly—which appeal to masses of people in their generality. And, again in the very nature of things, the characteristic feature of these instruments is that they are mechanized and that they demand no active personal response at the receiving end. Just about the time it began to seem we had realized, as a first principle of pedagogy, that the best learning was by doing, we produce new and irresistibly attractive instruments such as the movie and the radio which involve less “doing” than ever!

Now it can hardly be denied that, in effect, radio and film are instruments not so much of education in any real sense, as of mass-conditioning. The fact that they are favourite tools of Herr Doktor Goebbels does little to discourage us from that view. Is there then a totalitarian potential in the very nature of modern technology? This is a disturbing thought, with enough evidence in favour of an affirmative answer to terrify us



legitimately. How do you derive anything but totalitarianism and depersonalization from the conditions of a modern corporation with its tens of thousands of workers, its time-clocks and assembly-line methods? Or out of citizenship in political units which necessarily tend to become ever larger in extent (again by technological pressures) and ever more centralized?

Yet the only fair answer for us at present is still in the words of a popular song—"It ain't necessarily so." For there are creatable counter-trends, even in direct relation to the conditioning instruments of film and radio. With the Public Information film-show in the rural community can be correlated the work of the local study-group. They can stage panel-discussions about the subject-matter of the films and start a citizens' forum; thus turning the one-way traffic of the mass-conditioning process into the two-way traffic of a sturdy democracy. Active participation and personal contribution *can* come back into the picture. In Manitoba, these showings of Public Information films produced by the National Film Board now reach 175 rural communities monthly, and in over a third of these a forum discussion is now an established and appreciated part of the proceedings, with steadily increasing audience-participation.

So also with radio. National educational programmes can have organized listening such as in the highly successful Farm Radio Forum groups. These add the same elements of local and personal contribution (and retort) to the centrally produced and centrally disseminated material.

Looking, then, at the whole picture we see that adult education as a matter either of vocational "subjects" for the individual career or of some academic purity of objectivity is now more than ever overwhelmed by a type of adult education coloured by collective purpose and designed to issue in collective action. Yet most of us would agree, I think, with the ancient dictum that the "end of knowledge is right action." And,

without doubt, there was in the recent past all too much of the education which contained itself in some cloistered unreality or was for some petty purpose of self-advantage. But is it possible to have large collective purposes, to unify and dynamize a whole nation towards any goals which are not so crude and oversimplified as to do violence to all the careful accuracies of science and the subtleties of true knowledge? A dynamic democracy is an end devoutly to be desired. But are not its roots inevitably in some mass-emotion, some warm unanimity which flouts logic and is too impetuous for any really careful thought?

Emerging from these trends and from our understanding of these trends, there is, it seems to me, a choice both for adult education and for our transforming societies. One road—a road still open to us—leads unquestionably to the totalitarian state. Thither, and nowhere else, will drift and inertia lead us, for all the characteristic instruments and institutions of our age make for the creation of the mass-man responsive only, in a subhuman automatism, to the crude stimuli of a centrally-controlled propaganda machine.

The other road has as clear a goal but a far subtler method. The goal is not, this time, the totalitarian state but the total (that is to say, the whole, the integrated) person. Now this does not imply individualism, the continuance of the latent (and sometimes not so latent) anarchy of *laissez-faire* democracy. For social chaos and incoherence are offensive to anyone who is achieving coherence in his own personality. And no man is even approximating to "wholeness" in himself who is not able and willing to accept an ever-widening and deepening sphere of loyalty and obligation—to the local community, to the nation and to the world. In short, the social goal on this road would be that minimum of central control and planning necessary not only to preserve the national society from disintegration but also to create those orderly and progressive conditions out of which can proceed further devolu-



tion of authority and control, the stimulation of free and creative impulses from below, and the growth of self-sustaining individual personality.

I have just said there was a choice before us all between a road ending in the totalitarian State and another leading to the "total" person. But really the alternative is only specious. The modern fascist regime has in it the "seeds of its own destruction" more obviously than most systems. Born out of a petulant refusal to bear the pain of transition to a higher social form, necessitated as much as anything by the fact that the common citizen was growing up and away from his dumb acceptance of conditions, the fascist states have everywhere thrown their citizens back into a lower and more primitive system of social relations by playing on atavistic, sub-personal impulses of tribalism and hero-worship. But in Canada there is no such tribalism available. The appeal would have to be not to one but to half-a-dozen tribalisms and, although there have been incipient moves in that fatal direction, it would so obviously defeat the streamlined unity desired of totalitarianism that it could hardly be entertained seriously as an effective technique. In short, fascism in Canada would not only, as elsewhere, be foredoomed as an attempt to push human consciousness back to a lower level than it has in fact reached and to crush the indestructible spirit of man; but it would also be, in this country, deprived of the only cloak which, in Germany, Italy and even Japan, covers the naked brutality of despotism—namely, glorification of a particular racial culture.

It is just conceivable that we may try a little longer to maintain the anarchy of *laissez-faire* individualism, though its day is so obviously over that this seems hardly likely, even as a forlorn hope. That leaves us with the alternative of a colourless finance—military totalitarianism or—the new "personalism." We have the germs of the latter in existing social and adult educational forms. What is needful is a more conscious social

philosophy about it, and a renewed devotion to our tasks in fostering its growth.

I have used the word "personalist" to describe the social and educational form of the future democracy. It is a useful word, suggesting an important distinction from "individualist." A person, we are beginning to realize, is not just an individual, separate and isolated, but an individual-in-good-adjustment-to-his-social-context. The best proof of "wholeness" of personality is socialization, that is, the achievement of rich, manifold and constructive relations with the human beings and human groups surrounding the individual life.

That is why the small discussion-group, with its continuous process of rubbing-off rough edges of personality, and building up an increasing coordination of the minds and wills of citizens and neighbours once divided by shallow understanding (or equally shallow misunderstanding), is the very type of the personalist adult education which democracy desperately needs. Here a whole new world opens up of the possibilities of a co-personal mutuality and of cooperation in community action. Around such a nucleus of increasing cooperation-about-life-in-general can develop a whole network of specific "cooperatives"—consumers' and producers' coops, community canning bees, cooperative small industry, and so on. Everything indeed which works towards the breaking down of all these obsolete old barriers—of race, occupation, creed, sex or age-group—is a natural extension of the more personal kind of social integration in small study-groups. All are part of the great process of this century which is lifting men and women in every corner of the globe out of century-old ruts in which they were less than persons because they were mainly or merely such lesser things as "British" or "farmer" or "Protestant" or "Liberal" or "female."

By the same token, all those activities which endorse a man's or a woman's, personal worth—the discovered ability to make with his or her own hands a



better and more beautiful article than the department stores have to offer: the renewed love of the personal practice of music or painting or drama; the awakened interest (love succeeded by curiosity and curiosity by science) in the free delights of birds, flowers and all the creatures of the fields and the forests—all these will have a place in the adult education which has this objective of a personalized society and socialized personalities.

Let us, however, face the essential difficulty. All that we speak of as desirable, all that seems so clearly the *only* desirable new social pattern, is nevertheless by no means in the natural, that is to say the unconscious, tendency of the times. Although the war has given us new institutions, like farmers' production committees, community war-service councils, labor-management cooperative committees which are in the desired direction, it would nevertheless be naive folly to suppose that the current is assuredly set this way. All these war-created forms of personalized, functional "get-togethers" are still few in number and hard to keep alive. The forces of depersonalization in the mass-industries of the city, in the stultifying toil of the farms and in the canned entertainment of radio, film and juke-box, seem everywhere overwhelmingly dominant. Every-

where there are monstrous forces creating a sub-personal uniformity of thought and of taste which, on analysis, originate with the monopolizing tendency inherent in modern finance-industry.

For that reason, it seems not only inevitable but profoundly right that the adult education which has such a humanist and personalist vision of society must ally itself with those groups and social forces which are in protest against their bondage to these anti-democratic and irresponsible economic institutions in our own society. Not, be it noted, to identify itself completely with any political or "cooperative" movement, but to act as guide, counsellor and friend to such groups, friendly enough to uphold most scrupulously amongst them the highest standards of knowledge, science and truth.

But the day of adult education as an affair of individual self-advantage or as a learned process conducted in an academic vacuum, is ended. Adult education is, as we all are personally, involved in the crisis of our times and, with democracy itself, it has to choose and to act. It becomes more and more a matter, not just of the mind, but of the mind and the heart and the will. Like war, it becomes "total." And, as we have said, total can mean either totalitarian or wholly personalist.

## How Good is the Canadian Gallup Poll?

By WILFRID SANDERS

FOR nearly 18 months, newspapers across Canada have been regularly publishing bi-weekly articles purporting to set forth what the division of Canadian opinion is on a wide variety of subjects, from air raids to war aims, from by-elections to Vitamins.

Who is it who claims to speak with such neat, tabular authority, on such a daedal subject as mass opinion? What is their

authority, and how accurate are they? Finally, what is their function—good, bad, or indifferent?

Let's look at some facts.

The Gallup Poll, or, to give it its full title, the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, is one of a chain of affiliated Institutes operating in the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Sweden, and Canada. The American Institute is now in its eighth year, the British in its seventh, and the Canadian, Australian