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# EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

DRAWING on Jeffersonian precedent, and armed with statistics from the Harvard Committee Report on *Education in a Free Society,* Dr. Colgate W. Darden, Jr., president of the University of Virginia—the University founded by Thomas Jefferson—proposes far-reaching changes in high school education in the United States. He wants to separate the students who can use a high school education from those who can't. Today, he argues, the high schools of the country are overcrowded and are sinking into mediocrity while trying "to perform an impossible task." To meet the needs of quantity in education, there has been a serious reduction in quality: "Able students are held back and their enthusiasm stultified by others who are not equipped for a general high-school education, do not want it, resent it and, resenting it, become lazy or mischievous."

Dr. Darden's rendering of the secondary school situation has this statistical background:

> . . . In 1870 some 80,000 students were enrolled in secondary schools and 60,000 in colleges, whereas by 1940, 7,000,000 were enrolled in the former and 1,500,000 in the latter. . . Thus, while the general population was increasing three times over, the enrollment of the high schools was being multiplied about ninety times and that of colleges about thirty times. (Harvard Committee Report.)

With these figures in mind, one may easily agree with Dr. Darden that "sheer mass is having a depressing effect on American public education." Following is his analysis of the problem, and his solution, offered in an article, "Too Much Education?", in *Look* for Sept. 23:

> There are many youngsters who are not suited, by inclination, personality or lack of intellectual curiosity, for a good, general high-school education. We may call these youngsters hand-minded. Many other youngsters, suited for such an education, may be called book-minded.
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> Because of these contrasting groups, boys and girls finishing grammar school should be examined—under very strict safeguards—as to capabilities and interests.
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> The compulsory high-school attendance laws should be amended so that those youngsters not interested in or suited for a general high-school education could receive training in a useful occupation through apprenticeship, in trade schools or (and this offers the least) in vocational classes in high schools. . . .
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> We should set up a careful and sympathetic examination of every pupil completing grammar school. Boys and girls found uninterested, unwilling or unsuited to *do* good, hard high-school work—and this ought to concentrate on general education—would be directed toward vocational training.
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> This direction would be supervised by an appropriate governing board of the school system.

Under this plan, Dr. Darden adds, no child eager for a general education would be "deflected" to vocational training, while, on the other hand, parents would not be permitted to demand high-school work of children who would be "a burden on their class." His general conclusion is this:

> In our enthusiasm for mass education, we have lost sight of the vital importance of selecting the work best suited to the child. Compulsory attendance in high schools, because of this lack of selectivity, has been a disservice both to youngsters who would rather be learning a skill and to pupils who genuinely want a general education. Moreover, it has been a drain on the vitality of teachers who now are under the necessity of trying to force education into the heads of boys and girls who are not interested in it or incapable of receiving it. . . .
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> There is no intent here to detract from either the importance or the dignity of the manual trades. It is simply that, by reason of the known and mysterious factors that combine to mold a human being and to make each one different from the other, some youngsters lean toward manual skills.

Dr. Darden's manifesto has the immediate appeal of candor, and if, for some mysterious cultural reason, it is now possible to discuss in public the extreme differences among human beings with respect to intellectual abilities, then education will doubtless profit by having the problem out in the open. That Dr. Darden seems far from pointing to the best solution, so far as we can see, is a question quite apart from his courage in speaking his mind, and from the importance of discussing the problem openly.

Jefferson himself—the great Democrat whose mantle presumably shields Dr. Darden against charges of wishing to restore a cultured "aristocracy"—was even more candid in his discussion of public education for the State of Virginia. He proposed dividing the state into public school districts "five or six miles square," which would afford to every child, without charge, three years of instruction in "reading, writing, and arithmetic." The best scholar in each district would then be sent to a grammar school, and from each of the grammar schools, numbering twenty in the state, the best student would again be chosen and enabled to pursue further the higher learning. In Jefferson's unmincing words,"By this means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually, and be instructed, at the public expense, . . ." (*Notes* on *the State of* Virginia.)

Plainly, Jefferson was not opposed to the development of an educated elite; he accepted the idea of a distinguished few as a fact of nature. His great contribution to education was in establishing scholarly merit as the means of determining membership in the elite, instead of blood lines or the possession of wealth. And, in the eighteenth century, this was indeed a revolutionary contribution.

The defect of Dr. Darden's plan is that it merely repeats a proposal which was "advanced" in the eighteenth century, but is almost an anachronism in the twentieth. The problem of education—and of society in general—in the twentieth century has long been before us. One aspect of it was well stated by Arland D. Weeks in the *Scientific American* for February, 1931:

> Without education the people were felt to be unfit for self-government; but that with education they might still be lacking seems not to have occurred to anyone. It has remained for us to realize, in a time of the widest extension of educational opportunity, that there exists a range of mental ability that offers some very hard nuts to crack for exponents of democracy. The slump in democracy has coincided with the findings of intelligent tests.

The point, here, somewhat obscurely conveyed, is that the proportion of students who seem willing to grapple with the issues upon which successful self-government depends is not large enough to swing the balance toward intelligent decision. This aspect of our educational problem is not even mentioned by Dr. Darden, who says nothing at all concerning the relative number of hand-minded and book-minded. And he says very little concerning the basic education that is a practical necessity for all members of a self-governing community—which is the second aspect of our problem.

Let us consider first this second aspect. It has been squarely faced by very few modern educators, and by no one, we think, as clearly as by Dr. R. M. Hutchins. In an article directly concerned with the point under discussion (in *Measure,* Winter, 1950), Dr. Hutchins wrote:

> Democracy is the best form of society. . . . The function of the citizen of a democracy is ruling and being ruled in turn for the good life of the whole. In a democracy the good man and the good citizen are identical. . . . Since in a democracy all men are rulers, all men must have the education that rulers must have. . . . the only true education is that which aims at a social ideal that can be achieved by the improvement of men. The improvement of men is irrelevant to the preservation of the class and the selection of the elite; for the class can be stupid and wicked, and the elite can be wicked.

This conclusion speaks in part to Dr. Darden's proposal, for while the President of the University of Virginia has no wish to preserve

"class," he is interested in the selection of the elite, just as Jefferson was. But what of the education that all men as rulers must have? Again we quote from Dr. Hutchins—this time from his *Education for Freedom.*

> With the whole world in flames we must raise a standard to which all honest and right-thinking men can repair, to which embattled humanity can rally. It is the standard of freedom, truth, and reason. . . . An ancient sage remarked that the state came into being for the sake of life, for mutual assistance and protection. It made mere living possible. But, he went on, the state continued in existence for the sake of the good life, to develop and perfect through common effort the noblest abilities of all the citizens. . . . A good life is a life directed to knowing truth and doing justice.

We find no fault with Dr. Darden for not solving the problem of reaching these objectives; we find fault with him for hardly mentioning it.

We do not believe that education with these ends need be restricted to the "book-minded" among the young. ("The elite can be wicked.") We believe that if the best men among us, including the best educators, will devote themselves to these ideals, ways can be found to create an educational program for all students of high-school age by which moral intelligence will be fostered and awakened. For this is precisely the atmosphere of genuine civilization. If this atmosphere is to exist, it must, of course, be present elsewhere than in the minds of a few teachers struggling against great odds. It is admitted that the creation of this atmosphere will be difficult. But if we assume that many of the young—perhaps a majority—are capable of absorbing only "vocational training," it will not be merely difficult—it will be impossible.

# *Letter from*
# MEXICO

MEXICO CITY.—An obscure but courageous doctor rose on the floor of the Senate thirty-nine years ago—September 23, 1913—to voice a challenge that has since echoed across the mountains and plains of Mexico:

> You would tell me, sirs [he said], that the attempt is dangerous because Don Victoriano Huerta is a bloody and ferocious soldier who assassinates without vacillation all who act as an obstacle to him. It is not important, sirs. The country demands that you carry out what you should even in danger, with certainty of losing life. If in your anxiety to see peace prevail again in the Republic, you made a mistake, if you believed in the sham words of a man who promised to pacify the nation in two months, and had nominated him President of the Republic, now that you clearly see that this man is an imposter, do you allow for fear of death that he would continue in power?

Fifteen days after this memorable discourse, the man who uttered it was foully murdered, his tongue torn out, his body riddled with bullets.

Every year, in commemoration of that day, October 7, Mexico honors the memory of one of her noblest sons, Dr. Belisario Dominguez, an unknown senator from the state of Chiapas whose heroism is a poignant reminder of the idealism and passion that surged beneath Mexico's revolutionary struggle for national honor and dignity.

To render homage to the memory of this illustrious figure, each anniversary of his death the federal government takes part in a joint assembly of the Senate and the House of Deputies in a ceremony before the tomb of Belisario Dominguez. Of this observance the official government organ, *El Nacional,* declared editorially: "A great monument shall rise to shelter the remains of Don Belisario Dominguez as already, in the monument of the national conscience, is forever enshrined the spirit and example of the unforgettable martyr."

Dominguez had studied medicine in Europe before establishing a successful practice in the village of his birth, Comitan, state of Chiapas, where he was born in 1863. He was 50 years old when called to the capital to fill the post vacated by the death of the senator elected from his state. Don Belisario Dominguez had previously declined the nomination of senatorship, but was chosen alternate, an honorary title. Destiny intervened to alter the course of his life.

Upon assuming his post in the Senate, Dominguez urged his colleagues to depose the usurper, Victoriano Huerta, who had appropriated the presidency by murdering Mexico's first post-porfirian constitutional president, Francisco Madero, and vice-president Pino Suàrez.

A terrified Senate, "with very rare exceptions. . . sold to the grim power" of Huerta, listened to the "inconceivable boldness" of this sentinel, so audacious that the official *Diario de los Debates* omitted his discourse and subsequent addresses on the same theme.

But Don Belisario Dominguez went even further. He published his discourse on fliers and distributed it through the city, an action which enraged the huertista satraps. On the night of October 7, 1913, four police officers seized Dominguez in his room at the Hotel Jardin. He was never again seen alive.

Don Belisario Dominguez had distinguished himself in other ways, equally bold and imaginative. Publishing a small review where his progressive ideas were advocated, he attacked bullfighting. To advocate the abolition of bullfighting in Mexico, even forty years ago, required a social vision which matches the courage and vision of the abolitionists of a century earlier. To abolish bullfighting today, like abolishing pulque, the national beverage, is to do battle with entrenched interests whose investments in the industry run into the million billions of pesos.

If ever bullfighting and pulque make their exit from the cultural scene of Mexico, it will be because more heroes like Belisario Dominguez take up his battle.

MEXICO CORRESPONDENT

# *REVIEW*
## THE WORLD IN YOUR HAND

IT may be either unseemly or unimaginative to thrust upon readers expansive praise for a book, even if the reviewer conceives that one of the duties of MANAS is to call attention to what seems valuable reading material. Paeans of praise go beyond qualified recommendations, moreover, and too often reflect a purely personal reaction, whereas "recommendations," though more on the stodgy side, are apt to be safer. We can recommend a book on principle, and in conformity with editorial policy, but, when we are not careful, the "bursting enthusiasm" sort of praise will be awarded largely on the basis of a writer's predilections. Joseph Wood Krutch's *The Desert Year,* in any case, seems to justify superlatives. This book deserves praise if any book does, for praise, to remain as impersonal as possible, should be based upon a surety that what is praised will have universal appeal. This book does have universal appeal, for Krutch has learned to speak a universal language. We dare and double-dare anyone to read *The Desert Year* and come away with anything less than the feeling that the book has been both constructive and enjoyable. It doesn't matter how "intellectual" one is, whether one is a moralist or a scientist, a member of the literati or a nature lover—Krutch writes for all. Perhaps he has "The Mature Mind" Harry Overstreet is always talking about, for, with the possible exception of the last section of *The Desert Year,* Krutch shows himself to be proudly incapable of discussing any subject without relating it to perennial human problems. An opening example may be furnished in a discussion of property, occasioned by Krutch's realization that the vast expanses of desert land joggle our conventional concepts in respect to "owning." On the desert there is no point in trying to "own" any area which one cannot turn to use. The desert ranchers do not worry about trespassers, for nature itself has encouraged a much more organic view of property than the possessive squabbles of urban life allow. Krutch writes:

> I have never believed that "property is theft" or even that a thing necessarily belongs to him who needs it most or can use it best. At least, I do not see how men could live well together on the basis of any such assumption. But the proposition does have an obverse. This obverse states a principle which, like all laws of nature, operates everywhere and always, without waiting for a society to incorporate it into the kind of law which courts must enforce. If things do not necessarily belong to those who need and can use them, it is nevertheless certainly true that nothing can really belong to anyone *unless* he needs and can use it. "Under the present system" men may take title to much they cannot own. Sometimes they may thus dispossess those who could. But, at most, they exclude others from something they cannot themselves have.
>
> One can own, either rightfully or fruitfully, only those things—and only so much of a thing—as one can come into some intimate relationship with. One cannot really own any land to which one does not in turn belong, and what is true of land is true of everything else. One can own only what one loves, and love is always some sort of reciprocal relationship.

We hope that this passage begins to make clear the values we find in Mr. Krutch's book—a passage which starts out as an interesting description of the desert, then becomes an evaluation of the psychology of property-owning, a discourse on the inevitability of both private and social proprietorship, and, finally, an intriguing comment on the definition and nature of "love."

Here is more along the same lines—with the digression this time concerned with both estheticism and asceticism—and serving, incidentally, to explain why Krutch thinks that "a desert year" is a memorable experience:

> Southwestern deserts are exhilarating, but what they do to the soul is, in the end, the most important thing. I think that I understand better than I did before what it is that they do to the soul, why I find this country more than merely aesthetically satisfying, and why its spaciousness as well as its austerity are more than merely physically—and nervously—reassuring to those who have found the great centers

too crowded and too tense. Call it, if you must, only another aspect of the pathetic fallacy, but the desert seems to approve and to encourage an attitude with which I have found scant sympathy among men, and of which I have never before been quite so sure that even nature approved. However fanciful this may seem or, for all I care, however fanciful it may actually be, all the deserts seem to suggest and confirm a system of values for which much ought to be, but very seldom is, said.

In the desert the very fauna and flora proclaim that one can have a great deal of certain things while having very little of others; that one kind of scarcity is compatible with, perhaps even a necessary condition of, another kind of plenty—for instance, on even the level of things tangible or visible, that plenty of light and plenty of space may go with a scarcity of water. Much can be lacking in the midst of plenty; on the other hand, where some things are scarce others, no less desirable, may abound.

Let us now try a passage on politics and sociology—a passage which again originates in "ecology":

We talk about the "adaptation" of the flora and fauna to desert conditions, but "adaptation" is a cold word. Its connotations are mechanical and it alienates us from a life process which is thereby deprived of all emotional meaning. What the plants and animals have actually been doing is analogous to what we do. No matter how much we may try, we cannot really separate our privileges and our predicaments from theirs. To think of them in merely mechanical terms is to come ultimately to think of ourselves in the same terms —and that is precisely what the so-called educated man has been coming more and more to do. But those of us who would rather not deny and renounce the richness of our own experience by thinking of it merely as some process of mechanical adaptation had better not get in the habit of seeing nothing but mechanism in the life histories of other living things.

Let us not say that this animal or even this plant has "become adapted" to desert conditions. Let us say rather that they all have shown courage and ingenuity in making the best of the world as they found it.

Mr. Krutch is often reminiscent of Edmond Taylor, who, in *Richer by Asia,* described the process of psychological initiation which may result from entering a new and very different environment. While Krutch is never solemn—his most serious observations are relieved of ponderousness by delicate shafts of humor—he began to view his "Desert Year" as a matter of profound self-enlightenment, something beyond the realm of humor because an intense realm of its own. But there is much humor, still, around the edges, as when Krutch speaks of his first casual attachment to the desert country:

Great passions, they say, are not always immediately recognized as such by their predestined victims. The great love which turns out to be only a passing fancy is no doubt commoner than the passing fancy which turns out to be a great love, but one phenomenon is not for that reason any less significant than the other. And when I try to remember my first delighted response to the charms of this great, proud, dry, and open land I think not so much of Juliet recognizing her fate the first time she laid eyes upon him but of a young cat I once introduced to the joys of catnip.

He took only the preoccupied, casual, dutiful sniff which was the routine response to any new object presented to his attention before he started to walk away. Then he did what is called in the slang of the theater "a double take." He stopped dead in his tracks; he turned incredulously back and inhaled a good noseful. Incredulity was swallowed up in delight. Can such things be? Indubitably they can. He flung himself down and he wallowed.

The fact that the desert affects all men in all ways is later considered, along with Krutch's own personal reaction after five visits and a year of residence:

It suggests patience and struggle and endurance. It is courageous and happy, not easy or luxurious. In the brightest colors of its brief spring flowers, there is something austere.

The mark of the philosopher, as we see it, is his capacity to *see* philosophy wherever he goes. Krutch certainly qualifies and, moreover, points out the nature of this quality among earlier writings he has known and loved:

Both Wordsworth and Thoreau knew that when the light of common day seemed no more than common it was because of something lacking in them, not because of something lacking in it, and what they asked for was eyes to see a universe they

> knew was worth seeing. For that reason theirs are the best of all attempts to describe what real awareness consists of. Wordsworth and Thoreau realized that the rare moment is not the moment when there is something worth looking at but the moment when we are capable of seeing.

Yes, this is another of those books concerning which the reviewer, eager to supply reams of quotations, has to content himself with saying that he "could go on and on." "In nature," writes Krutch, "one never really sees a thing for the first time until one has seen it for the fiftieth. It never means much until it has become part of some general configuration, until it has become not a 'view' or a 'sight' but an integrated world of which one is a part." This book, too, must be read as a whole and perhaps lived with for a while to be thoroughly appreciated. We are so sure that it is worth living with that we press it upon readers as something to be owned rather than inspected, and given, rather than recommended, to particular friends. *The Desert Year* is published by Morrow at $3.75.

# *COMMENTARY*
## EDUCATION IS INDIVISIBLE

IN justice to Dr. Darden, and to keep the record straight, it should be pointed out that the closing quotation from Dr. Hutchins in this week's lead is taken from a discussion of the function of a university. The passage is so good that we should like to quote a bit more of it:

> Civilization is not a standard of living. It is not a way of life. Civilization is the deliberate pursuit of a common ideal. Education is the deliberate attempt to form human character in terms of an ideal. The chaos in education with which we are familiar is an infallible sign of the disintegration of civilization; for it shows that ideals are no longer commonly held, clearly understood, or deliberately pursued. To formulate, to clarify, to vitalize the ideals which should animate mankind—this is the incredibly heavy burden which rests . . . upon the universities. If they cannot carry it, nobody else will; for nobody else can. If it cannot be carried, civilization cannot be saved. . . .

So, Dr. Darden might rejoin, "That is fine for the universities, but I am talking about a here-and-now situation in the high schools, and I am proposing that we do something practical."

But we are maintaining, with Dr. Hutchins, that true education, like peace, freedom, and many other good things, is indivisible. If the university should set the example of how to seek out, discover, and pursue a common ideal, then the high school must at least take serious cognizance of the example. Dr. Darden himself observes:

> Of all institutions, the public-school system is the dynamo of self-government. It generates the power for the functioning of democracy. To the extent that it is held back and prevented from functioning as efficiently as possible, to that extent the foundations of democracy are threatened.

He may agree with Jefferson that every child must have "a foundation in the tool subjects"—the three R's—for the sake of "a reasonably informed electorate," but, in Dr. Darden's plan, that portion of the electorate which is "hand-minded" will be left without even superficial exposure (except in grammar school) to those ideals which have given the West what civilization it possesses. This seems a strange way of salvaging education—preserving it for some by denying it to others.

Why, finally, should we assume that hand-mindedness involves being impervious to great ideas? It is just conceivable that we fail in teaching great ideas, not because they cannot be taught to all, but because too few of our educators are vitally interested in great ideas, and able to teach them with imagination.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves

[The growing response of readers to discussions of juvenile delinquency and group discipline problems reflects we think, an inevitable deepening of interest in the field of psychological therapy. Perhaps a universal science may yet mature through psychological concerns, and more comprehensive developments in psychological science. No religion, we feel constrained to point out, has ever been "universal," partly because every religion has been sure that it was completely mature. Modern psychologists, on the whole, know better than to adopt this position, and thus there is definite hope of an advance towards "universalism." If the content is often weak, the spirit, at least, is often willing.

One of the communications received on the delinquency problem is extremely radical in recommending removal of all restraints, taboos, moralistic counsels, etc., on the theory that delinquency is an inevitable rebellion against authority, directed into wrong channels only by the nature of the authority. Bound up in this view is a phase of the eighteenth-century criticism of social institutions, reflected by Rousseau, and the idea of the "noble savage." Healthy animality, in other words, is sometimes regarded as *both* therapy for dislocated personalities and as a sort of ultimate goal. The contribution which follows takes into account the relative validity of opposing taboos, by way of the opening remarks on "inhibitions." Some reflection, however, is called for when terms such as "uninhibited" are used. For concerns and ideals are not inhibitions. Even Freud, it is reported, counselled a patient who was prideful in her release from all inhibitions to see if she couldn't go out and get herself some. The obvious point here is that "inhibition" has two meanings, the first having to do with external moral restraints upon fledgling personalities, the other meaning simply moral restraints based upon individual reflection and decision. The child needs freedom, but he also needs some encouragement to think that he is capable of determining worth-while goals and establishing principles for orientation of his own conduct.

The latter portion of the present contribution enters a metaphysical or mystical realm, but we happily include it with the thought that any speculations which widen our perspectives upon the possible nature and destiny of man are worth while—particularly in relationship to the search for a philosophy of self-reliance upon which self-discipline can depend.]

HAVING just read "Children . . . and Ourselves" for Aug. 13, some ideas were stirred up by the following paragraph:

> No home or community can be psychologically healthy so long as there is a persisting focus for devious conflicts between the generations. That there is, and always has been such conflict, except in the most perfect homes and communities, is evidence that many of the restraints imposed upon youth are less than philosophical in origin. For restraint *imposed* upon either adult or youth, simply for the sake of social convenience, cannot fail to generate rebellion against authority—any authority.

My early boyhood was spent amongst people the large majority of whom would presently be classed as "uninhibited." A good many of them were rather crude and uncouth but, so far as memory serves, symptoms of neurosis or psychosis were little in evidence (or, possibly, little noted). The people seemed to stumble along until in adulthood they married and attained the "stability" of ordinary citizens. One thing that has struck me time and again, through the years, is that one often cannot tell what the 14-year-old will be like when he reaches 28. The change is frequently astonishing. And this often takes place amongst people with little or no knowledge of formal psychology, sometimes with what might be called "the assistance" of the parents, or, again, despite what might be called "the resistance" of the parents.

It seems to me that most human beings are not going to be ruined by not having the advantages of what the experts might term a psychologically perfect environment. What might be "perfect" for Bob could, conceivably, be imperfect for John. It seems to me probable that some beings, for their development, may even "require" exposure to frustration, lack of sympathy, resistance, etc. Winston Churchill is reported as saying: "All the great men I have known had an unhappy childhood"—a statement that cannot be legitimately countered by the

disparaging assertion that all the men called "great" in history were neurotics. The effort to devise an environment perfect for two billions of diverse temperaments is probably a fruitless undertaking.

Certain principles would seem to be universally applicable: considering the human being as a self-reliant "pilgrim soul" and thus determining to interfere as little as possible with its unique course of progress; in every practicable instance releasing responsibility to the individual; eschewing our little "protective" selfishnesses—refraining from trying to make the child live the life *we* want it to instead of its own self-discoverable destiny. When children are very young it may be necessary to have an apron string attached so that when they step into the quicksand we can pull them out.

I think it was the "Review" section of MANAS that some time ago printed a description of life in an Indian tribe. When the Indian baby stretched its fingers toward the fire, its guardians did not interfere. The child burned its fingers. The Indians explained—they would not again have to be apprehensive about the child and fire. Considering the further account of how these Indians raised children to acquire psychological self-discipline, it seems to me the professors have nothing on them: the young Indians had to face up to all sorts of realities, bitter as well as sweet, from the beginning.

Some years ago I read a report by an official of New York City regarding delinquency in that city. He was struck by the fact that there had not been a case of delinquency amongst the Chinese population in eight years. He ascribed this record largely to the sense of responsibility to the Chinese community as a whole, which was so obviously developed in the children. To do that which would bring disgrace upon the community was unthinkable, and would bring down upon the offender the displeasure of the entire community. It might be most profitable to concentrate on the outlook of cultural and ethnic groups of people which have had marked success in the raising of their children, a study which would involve historical and philosophical research. This approach to delinquency would be like studying healthy bodies to determine what makes them healthy, rather than studying sickly bodies to determine what measures will alleviate present illnesses.

A practice that might bring some comfort to apprehensive parents is that of wooing their own memory of situations in their younger days—what they did or refrained from doing and with what result. A good many parents take the position: "Oh, yes, I handled that situation very well, but my child might not, and I don't want to expose her to the risk." It is quite possible, after all, that the child would accomplish and advance over what the parent did and learned.

I incline to belief in "many lives for every man," the hypothesis of reincarnation, particularly when I consider the many puzzles of childhood. Children do seem to be born, as I remember a professor once saying, "*with* something" the geneticists do not adequately account for. At any rate, if reincarnation be considered as a possibility, then it follows that each generation of children might come with subtle tendencies generated in a distant, prenatal, past. Well, we need new views, and, for most of our educators, this certainly is one, though not historically. To advance the cause of the perspective this theory suggests, one might cite that not only do a great number of the people of the earth entertain this idea, more or less definitely, but also that numerous great thinkers of our tradition—Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates, Bruno, Geothe, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, to mention a few—embraced the idea. Even so penetrating a pessimist as Schopenhauer wrote of this view that it "presents itself as the natural conviction of man whenever he reflects at all in an unprejudiced manner."

# *FRONTIERS*

## Rationalizing the Power Age

IN his *Economics for the Power Age, a Statement of First Principles* (John Day, $3.00), Scott Nearing seems to have gone about as far as one can go with a non-ideological analysis of the economics of the modern world and a non-ideological program for economic reconstruction. MANAS writers often admit—somewhat proudly, perhaps—that they know nothing of economics. They can no longer make this plea with the Nearing book in the editorial library.

Most writers on economics fall into two classes—either they are technicians of the *status quo* who write without interest in ethical considerations; or they are champions of revolutionary or reform programs which easily slide into the category of ideological crusades. Mr. Nearing's book belongs in neither group. *Economics for the Power Age* is an extremely simple account of the facts of the world's economic development and a description of the prevailing forces which operate in present-day industrial society, accompanied by lucid criticism and followed by a number of recommendations, both specific and general.

Proposals for change in the "economic system" are difficult to make persuasive for the reason that any kind of change which implies new psychological relationships with "things"—the goods and services involved in economics—is inevitably feared by a large part of the population. Mr. Nearing does not tell us how to overcome that fear, unless, perhaps, it be by reading his book. But reading his book, we think, might prove a fair answer to the problem, even though the re-education of mankind to the ethical level at which *Economics for the Power Age is* written may take a while longer than some of us would like.

But, granting this difficulty, let us look at the book itself. It is constructed around ten principles:

1. Individual and social life are conditioned by subsistence.
2. All subsistence originates with nature.
3. Western man utilizes nature by means of science and technology.
4. Subsistence is the result of productive effort and, increasingly, of group effort.
5. Subsistence should be apportioned by need.
6. The less overhead, the better.
7. The economy should be owned by those who use it.
8. The economy should afford a stable, secure subsistence.
9. The economy must assure justice and provide incentive that will lead the individual and the social group to assume and carry a full share of responsibility for the production and apportionment of livelihood.
10. The economy should afford opportunity for the growth and development of successive human generations.

There are ten chapters, each dealing with a principle. We shall not attempt a symmetrical summary of the book, nor try to identify its development in terms of past theories of revolution and reform. The book is an effort to accomplish basic education in economics and it quite self-consciously ignores the history of economic theory. About all that we can do here is to sample some of Mr. Nearing's thinking. We welcome the book because it deals with economic problems as *human* problems and discusses them in a framework of fairly self-evident philosophical values. This, we think, is pioneering in economics. In his discussion of the advent of technology, for example, Mr. Nearing has this to say:

> Machinery introduced a wholly different element into the picture. Those who designed and controlled the machines were concerned, not primarily with turning out useful and beautiful objects, but with acquiring wealth and power. They were businessmen and politicos, not artists and craftsmen, hence their first requirement was quantity rather than quality. Machine output was standardized, precise, interchangeable. Once the machine was set up it could repeat, semi-automatically, the same set of motions as long as power was supplied and its moving parts continued in their proper mechanical relation to one another. The result was an all-but-limitless volume of standardized, precise, interchangeable machine parts or consumer goods. The mass-production, machine process turned out, indifferently, drill presses, trucks, radio sets, shoes, trinkets, habit-forming drugs, and lethal weapons.

Until you read a book like this one, you are likely to have no idea of the extent to which the machine, as presently employed, has literally created the pattern of modern living. For example, it has transformed the economy which governs our material existence from a use economy to a market economy. We do not, as a rule, make things to use, but to sell. This decisive separation of men from what they make tends to exercise a disintegrating influence on their lives. The individual, for one thing, loses much of the pleasure of personal fabrication; he loses, also, certain intangible values which are of the essence of human character, such as a versatile sense of competence, which is replaced by more artificial and limited forms of "know-how." In general, technology is associated with false and psychologically destructive habits of mind. The physical pattern of life is also transformed:

> Concentration in large work places and large cities leads to the other phases of mass living. At every turn the mass man encounters regulations, restrictions, prohibitions. As a final indignity, a part of his product is diverted, whether he likes it or not, through a direct income or property tax or indirect sales and excise taxes, to the hiring of policemen who tell him where he may go, what he may do, and with whom he may associate, and to the setting up of a state apparatus with its armed forces into which the individual, during a certain period of his life, is conscripted and regimented.

One hears a lot about "human nature," and how it will always prevent any basic change in social and economic relationships. It is Mr. Nearing's contention—a just one, we think—that the excessively acquisitive outlook of Western industrial society is at least in part the result of "education":

> Even where members of the adult population have been able to resist the pressure, their children, indoctrinated from their cradles, grow- up possession conscious, and ready to dedicate their lives (1) to labor for the wealth and income required to buy the currently popular gadgets, and (2) to turn over their available means and mortgage their futures in order to have the finest and latest *jim cracks* turned out by mass production enterprises.

In evidence that the lust after possessions is neurotic and unnecessary, Mr. Nearing calls attention to so-called "primitive communities" whose people live side by side with industrial societies, yet are free from the acquisitive drive. We may note that an economy built around machine production is dependent upon adequate markets for the ceaseless outpouring of products from the machines. Accordingly, markets must be created, one way or another, and maintained, which means that the acquisitive spirit is taught as the gospel of modern technology. As Nearing says:

> Individuals, in an acquisitive, mass production culture (a) devote a large portion of their adult years to uncongenial, sterile, and often to destructive occupational activities in order that they may get the income necessary to satisfy artificially created wants. (b) They clutter up their lives with a quantity and variety of commodities which, on the whole, are cheaply made, unnecessary, unbeautiful, and in the case of processed foods unhealthful. (c) They compensate for the uncongeniality of their work by leaving it as soon as possible each day, staying away from it over long weekends, increasing the number and length of holidays, and consuming habit-forming drugs to lower tensions and forget their troubles. (d) They are lured into cities, and once there they are held like flies on sticky paper, by habit, poverty, and inertia. (e) They live in cities under high tension, over-stimulated by proximity to other individuals, by sights and sounds, by constant movement, shift and change. (f) They learn and practice the principle "every one for himself and the devil take those who fall behind." Thus they live their adult lives, caught on the horns of a frightful dilemma. Their ideals and ethical standards demand fraternity and neighborliness while in practice each is engaged in a perpetual struggle to get the better of his neighbor. This conflict between theory and practice confuses, dismays, frustrates, and finally paralyzes the individual by turning him into an embittered opportunist, cynic, and pessimist. . . . Perhaps the whole position may be summed up in a sentence. An acquisitive competitive social pattern produces unhappy individuals and unstable, self-liquidating communities. Such a conclusion does not mean that Proudhon was right when he wrote: Ownership is theft. Ownership has its uses, for individuals as well as communities. At the same time antisocial uses of ownership restrict livelihood, develop inequality and undermine the entire social structure.

On the subject of ownership, Mr. Nearing adopts the theory that those who create and use the economy should own it. When economic values are generated, not by any one man, but through the association of a number of men, the values should be the property of the association, whether of community, nation, or a

world-state. This is a simple principle—as Mr. Nearing says, a *rational* principle. It was a principle applied without argument or quarrel by those "primitive communities" previously referred to. We hope, however, that Mr. Nearing will agree with us in arguing that the "rational" approach to this sort of ownership is through general education of the people to *desire* to be rational, rather than through forcible manipulation of property and ownership entities. Group or public ownership in which acquisitive motives still prevail might be more vicious even than acquisitive private ownership—as, we think, is already proved to be the case.

Earlier, we spoke of *Economics for the Power Age* as a pioneer work because of its philosophical background. It is a pioneer work, also, by reason of its emphasis on the kind of life which the modern industrial economy imposes upon human beings. Ordinarily, neither labor leaders nor socialist revolutionaries interest themselves very much in the psychological problems created by a machine and market economy. They take these institutions for granted as either immovable realities or primary assumptions with which to work. It does not occur to the labor leader or socialist reformer that the bondage of men to machines will exist regardless of "ownership." The machines will still produce as much as before. The markets will still have to be found. If the revolutionary society accepts uncritically the acquisitive aims it inherits from a previous economy based on private ownership, the same insidious influences will be reproduced along with those aims, although their overt manifestations may change considerably. This Mr. Nearing seems to recognize quite clearly, for he proposes the rationalization of the *role* of the machine in our society as well as the rationalization of ownership according to use. This, we think, means getting to the bottom of our economic difficulties.

The clearly constructive proposals begin, in *Economics for the Power Age,* at about page 112, and occur in various forms thereafter to the end. Many of them may be applied at once, without any legislative changes or reforms. Unlike the familiar revolutionary program which awaits the development of a rootless, dissatisfied proletariat, Mr. Nearing would try to make it impossible for the proletariat to appear. He would restrict industrial techniques to those areas in which they are humanly advantageous, and encourage the development of a close human relationship between man and the production of subsistence. These are his suggestions for limiting industrialism:

> 1. Increase the area of the economy served by human energy and human faculty. Instead of tractoring the garden, spade it. Instead of buying food, produce it. Instead of securing a prefabricated house, construct it with your own hands, stone by stone and board by board. Instead of riding, walk. Instead of spectator living, participate actively and personally in the provision of subsistence.
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> 2. Re-establish joy and pride in workmanship by doing things instead of permitting a machine to do them. Some of the supreme satisfactions of life arise out of creative and constructive efforts. Industrial society has substituted for these basic satisfactions (1) possession of a multiplicity of gadgets; (2) professional amusement and entertainment (sports, movies, radios, video, comics); (3) comforts, conveniences and shortcuts; (4) the consumption of cheap, habit-forming drugs. The mass production and sale of these four items has been immensely profitable to the ruling oligarchy. The net loss to the workers has been heavy.
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> 3. Devote leisure time and means to productive, constructive, satisfying activities such as gardening, building, decorating, craft work, music, folk entertainment. Industrial society has tried to professionalize all these fields and has partly succeeded to the serious detriment of the people. . . .

The suggestions continue along these lines, some rather Spartan, perhaps, for urbanites, but Mr. Nearing has done all these things himself, which shows they are within the reach of energetic individuals who want to resist the stultifying effects of the power age. We conclude with the wish that there were more men like Scott Nearing, and the hope that there will be more books like this one he has written.