

The Major Problems of Transition

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THE WAR has been a cataclysmic experience for the American people. It has made us more realistic about the world in which we live. It has shattered our complacency and caused us to take stock of our values and the ways in which they can be conserved. Through the war experience we should be made more mindful of our responsibilities to other races and peoples and more cognizant of our dependence upon them. Most of all, we should realize that the winning of the war is but the first step in the development of a stable world. It is likely that the war will be followed by a period of unexampled economic prosperity which can be made to continue only through wise management, a spirit of service, and a universal application of the principle of the brotherhood of man.

No group in our society carries a heavier responsibility in relation to this difficult period of transition than our teachers. The war has revealed the weaknesses of our past educational efforts, but it has also opened new vistas

for educational achievement and laid bare the basic issues, in terms of which educational planning for the future must be carried on. If we are to plan an intelligent educational program for our country and for the world, we must be cognizant of the major problems that will face a world in transition from war to peacetime conditions.

Providing for Full Employment

The most crucial problem in the period of transition will be that of providing full employment, not only for the population of our own country, but for that of the entire world. Unemployment here at home will rock our entire economic and social order with destructive results that one hesitates to contemplate. Similarly, widespread unemployment in any section of the globe will threaten peace and security in our own country, regardless of the fact that such unemployment may develop in a spot a great distance from home. We must recognize that our world has become a little community in which maladjustments become felt almost immediately, regardless of their source.

Education has a definite responsibility with reference to the maintenance of full employment. In the first place, we shall not have full employment unless our people have such attitudes toward our social and economic structure that society can plan for full employment. In the past, we have opposed govern-

It is good to look ahead when our way is uncertain. That is what Ernest O. Melby of the University of Montana helps us to do on these pages. Mr. Melby interprets post-war problems of a new "one world" in the light of our tasks as educators and introduces topics of transitional importance which you will find developed in more detail in other articles in this issue of Educational Leadership.

mental planning and even widespread private planning on the part of industry. Traditionally, we have believed in a loose, rugged individualism and a scarcity concept of economics. We must help our people to realize that we possess the raw materials, the human resources, and the planning genius to maintain a national income of at least a hundred and fifty billion dollars a year. But in order to have such an income, we must release the creative capacities of our people to the fullest possible extent. Government must become an agency which encourages private enterprise, but it must likewise be an agency which facilitates national and local planning along social and economic lines in order that our resources may be utilized to their maximum capacity.

Understanding the Complex Role of Government

At the present moment, many of our people are lost in confusion over the issue of centralization in government. They are fearful of the Federal Government because of its expanding role in our society. Yet, they do not understand the economic and political forces that are producing this centralization. It is a recognized fact, of course, that the problem of the role of Federal, State, and local governments is a very complex one which cannot be solved without a careful study of all the underlying issues. We must develop for our schools a new and more realistic treatment of government. Instead of a course in civics which treats the bare machinery of government, we must relate government to the economic and social issues of the time. We must help our pupils to analyze the problems and

conditions which give our Government its current signs of growing pains.

The problems confronting Federal, State, and local governments in the postwar period will be even more complex than those of the wartime economy. These problems cannot be solved in the realm of prejudice and political expediency. They will be solved only as the American people think through the various issues calmly and objectively. Education has a major responsibility in helping our citizens to do this kind of thinking in regard to current issues. As educators, we can have no sympathy with the idea that these problems are too complex for the average citizen. Our democracy rests upon popular understanding of current issues. This was true in the early days of our Republic. It is even more true today, because of the growing number and complexity of our problems.

Our economic system has long since passed the stage where it can be operated successfully without planning. One of the most encouraging signs of the present period is the large number of civic groups interested in planning for the postwar period. Such activity is not limited to social and educational groups, but is being carried on by business organizations as well. Examples are the National Resources Planning Board, the Committee on Economic Development, the work of the United States Chamber of Commerce, and the large amount of postwar planning being done in the various communities of the nation, both by industry and by civic and governmental units.

But the success of these planning efforts will depend upon our willingness and capacity to work together.

Here, our educational institutions have a major responsibility. In the past, we have carried on an education which has been essentially competitive in character. We have done little to equip boys and girls and men and women for cooperative effort. Every school must become a laboratory for teaching boys and girls how to work together. Often when we ask employers of large numbers of people what is the major weakness of the people they employ, they are likely to reply that the young men and women have not learned to work with others. Teamwork is going to be important in the postwar world if full employment is to result. We shall not have continuing and effective teamwork unless our educational institutions provide preparation for it.

Developing Social Effectiveness

But education faces not only the responsibility of changing the attitudes of citizens so as to make full employment possible. It must also equip the citizens for effective participation in our society. Vast numbers of those now employed on the fighting fronts will need to be re-trained for participation in peacetime production. Those injured in the war will need to be rehabilitated for effective participation in our economic order and happy living in our society. We need a new conception of the significance of vocational education and a new outlook in regard to the role of the various professions in our society. Generally speaking, there will be more emphasis in the postwar world on rendering service to one's fellow men and less on individualistic profit or gain. This does not mean that the profit motive will disappear. It means merely

that man will see other motives in his vocation or profession which play a larger part in his life than desire for profit.

A careful analysis of our society will have to be made in order to determine our needs in various professions and fields of activity. Now, for example, we are training almost no teachers. If full employment continues in the postwar period we shall find it increasingly difficult to recruit new entrants into the teaching profession, unless we can give that profession a dignity, economic security, and attractiveness it has not possessed heretofore. Similarly, if we wish to give adequate medical care to our population, it will be necessary to provide more doctors than we had in the prewar period. If education is extended downward through the kindergarten and nursery school and upward through the junior college for the vast majority of our people, we shall need a far larger number of teachers than we had before the war. We must also keep in mind that a period of prosperity will carry with it a greater emphasis upon artistic and cultural areas of human experience. We shall need more musicians, more painters, more writers, more social workers, and more experts in the field of recreation.

We have only begun to develop the community as a place in which to live. Improved housing, more parks and playgrounds, more effective community organization will all create the need for skilled leadership and professional competence. We shall need more architects, more landscape and interior designers, more men and women who can give sound leadership to our community organizations.

In the past few years we have been extremely critical of the leadership given to labor and capital, as well as the leadership in our political life. We criticize politicians, labor leaders, and industrial magnates alike, accusing them of selfishness, lack of social vision, and disregard of public welfare. Even though the criticism may be well-founded, we shall do little about it until we provide a definite educational program for leaders in these areas and until we as teachers do something to encourage high-minded young men and women to enter these fields.

Too many of our college students consider a political career something to be avoided because of the evil connotation of the word "politician." Similarly, relatively few men and women set out to become leaders in the labor movement. In the main we have no program of training for any of these fields. Even such programs as we have emphasize chiefly the technical skills and knowledges involved and give little preparation in the way of basic social attitudes and preparation for broader responsibilities.

Establishing a Stable World Order

But no matter how good a job we do in educating for full employment and social effectiveness at home, we shall be unable to maintain the stability of our own society unless that society plays its part as a member nation in a stable world order. Education for "one world" is going to be a difficult undertaking. We are as yet not agreed on the extent to which we wish to participate in a world government. Nor have we agreed upon the structure of world society. But there can be no de-

nying that we are ready to go further in this direction than ever before in our history. Almost all thinking men and women recognize the need for some kind of world-wide organization of nations. They recognize further that this organization must be equipped and authorized to utilize force in maintaining world peace and justice. As educators we need to think these problems through very carefully.

While we may not come to complete agreement on the desired pattern for world organization, we shall make ourselves more effective as teachers of children and youth if we acquire an understanding of the various issues and a sensitivity to them. For one thing, no world organization will be successful in the absence of willingness to cooperate on the part of the various nations. And our willingness to cooperate with the peoples of other nations is a quality that can be developed by education. As teachers we can do much to teach our boys and girls to appreciate the achievements of other races and peoples. We can by our own example teach tolerance and understanding. We can bring into our classrooms the artistic, literary, and musical achievements of our neighbors in this hemisphere and of peoples the world over, and help boys and girls to see that foreigners are not odd, peculiar people, but men and women whose major aspirations in life are very similar to our own but whose modes of expression are somewhat different and therefore exceedingly interesting and worthwhile for us.

In dealing with the problem of world-wide organization, we must remember that its development is a long-time undertaking. Our own nation has more

than one hundred and fifty years of experience in the practice of federal government. We have by no means attained perfection in that period. In fact, it often appears to us that we have made only a very small beginning. It seems unreasonable to suppose that in the organization of a world society we shall make very much more rapid progress. For these reasons we need to remember that educational programs should be designed not only for the creation of immediate attitudes and abilities, but also for bringing about long-time understanding and laying the foundations for a stable, world-wide social structure.

Developing a Truly Great Conception of Life

The present war can be traced in large measure to the breakdown of spiritual and moral values which took place from 1918 to 1939. No stable world either at home or abroad can be built on a set of unsound life philosophies. Throughout the United Nations and in the occupied countries people have been horrified by the ghastly result of totalitarian outlooks on life based on power and the negation of human values. It is not enough, however, to express our horror and opposition to such concepts of life. We shall need a positive program in order that our people may have something to live for and live by. Separation of church and state in America has caused public education to avoid the realm of religion. Regardless of one's points of view in these areas, there is no necessity for the kind of education which disregards the question of values. On the contrary, our educational institutions will fall far

short of their opportunities unless they give our children and youth sound conceptions of life and a devotion to human values.

The basic principles of democracy are virtually the same as those of the Christian tradition. They emphasize faith in the common man, respect for the worth and dignity of individual human beings, and respect for truth. Such basic principles can be taught by the adherents of all of our various religious sects. Moreover, they can be given expression in the life of the schools through music, art, literature, and the great out-of-doors.

The cynic has no place in the classroom as a worker with children and young people. I do not see how one can be a teacher in the true sense of the word, and at the same time sit in the seat of the scornful. Education should make one more reverent, more sympathetic toward one's fellow men.

If in the postwar world we are to have great literature, glorious music, and socially significant art, we must develop an educational program which gives a prominent place to the question of values. Here we must take care that our attention to values does not degenerate into mere lip service and doctrinaire presentation of morals and ethics. In fact, the most effective program in this direction will not be verbal. It is when the great conceptions we try to teach become basic to the very life of our schools and communities that we shall be most effective. The school must itself become a fine example of democratic living. In this living we shall experience first hand the meaning of a significant art, the beauties of our music, our literature, and our scenic glories.

Building a New Concept of Leadership

The final problem to which attention is directed in this article is that of building a philosophy and practice of educational leadership designed to meet the demands of the difficult period of transition. Educational administration and supervision are going through a difficult period in transition themselves. Theoretically at least, we have turned our backs on the authoritarianism and mechanistic tendencies of our earlier activities. Generally, administrators, supervisors, and teachers are groping for a new concept of leadership and new methods of procedure. Democracy in administration is a term frequently heard. A careful examination of current practice, however, indicates a strange mixture of the new and the old.

Some of our democracy in leadership is merely benevolent despotism. In other cases, it constitutes an excessive collectivism with little resultant freedom for creative effort. In still other instances, it is a sort of chaotic lack of program and common goals. None of these conditions will meet the difficult problems we shall face in the transition period. We shall need to stay in close touch with one another in order that we may profit from each other's activities and share in each other's strength, courage, and imagination.

Leadership can no longer be the function of administrators and supervisors alone. It is a responsibility which must be shared by teachers, pupils, members of boards of education, parents, and all who have an interest in education and in social progress. The greatest problem of educational leadership for the postwar world is that of so organizing

the school and community that all who are interested in education can make their best contribution to the improvement of the educational process.

Perhaps the first step in educational leadership is that of helping the people with whom we are associated to discover, clarify, and intensify their goals and objectives. We shall not succeed in this leadership undertaking unless we are constantly analyzing, clarifying, and intensifying our own aims and purposes. In the second place, leadership must function so as to release the creative capacities of those with whom we are associated. This is a most subtle and complex undertaking which cannot be treated in this article. It is clear, however, that as a result of the work of supervision, the teachers, the pupils, and the people of the community should have more, and not less, freedom. They should have more enthusiasm for their work and be clearer about their goals and objectives. Finally, educational leadership itself calls for a strong faith in human values and in the capacity of human beings for solving their problems. Cynics have no place in leadership.

Humanity is passing through an ordeal such as it has never experienced before in history. It can emerge from this ordeal into a world of security, justice, and creative achievement only as it has faith, imagination, social effectiveness, and devotion to the idea of the brotherhood of man. Such human attributes can be developed only in an education which is itself devoted to these qualities and whose leaders order their own lives on such a basis. The period of transition will thus be full of difficult problems, but it will also be filled with unexampled opportunities.

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