

The Changing World

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LET'S EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE

FROM PRESS REPORTS we now learn that certain congressional committees are about to undertake a witch-hunt in search for Communists among teachers in schools and colleges. If it were not for the public confusion involved, we would do well to exhibit a little sense of humor in regard to such reports. But we know that few propaganda practices have contributed more to the confusion of the man in the street than name-calling. When it is discovered that an individual believes in federal support for good housing, for example, he is called a Communist. If he is opposed to such federal support, he may be called a Fascist. These terms have now become such a sensitive barometer of ideological positions that we are now told that anyone who uses the term "Fascist" is by virtue of this use a Communist. Logically, therefore, we might conclude that one who charges the other with being a Communist has thereby become a Fascist.

America's apparent fear of foreign ideologists is no doubt a significant commentary on our own confidence in our way of life. The spectacle of the world's most powerful democratic nation going into a dither over a small remnant of its population which advocates a different pattern of life would be ridiculous were it not so tragic. Make democracy work in America and no totalitarian group can make any headway. Therein, however, lies the rub. Many people are afraid to make democracy work. If we did make it work we would have to give the Negro his rights; we would have to stop discriminating against Jews; we would have to spend more money for public housing; we would have to give federal aid to education; we would have to give the coal miner a break; the consumer an honest value for his dol-

lar; the employer an honest day's work for the wage he pays. Since we are unwilling to do these things, we try to demonstrate our adherence to democracy by carrying on a witch-hunt and looking for Communists under every bed and behind every dresser. All of this pleases those who defend special privilege in our society and who deplore the efforts of the common man to secure his rights.

One of the distressing effects of the various anti-movements is the destructive influence which these outlooks seem to have on the positive influence of an individual. Let an education leader become a rabid anti-Communist and somehow his positive influence in democratic directions begins to wane. We do not have far to seek for the cause of this condition. Democracy and freedom are positive concepts. We cannot further them effectively by becoming lost in anti-movements. Democracy means respect for the worth and dignity of the individual human being. This respect for human worth is not a mere theory; it is a demonstrable concept.

As educators we should rise above ridiculous and misleading name-calling and banish such usages from our language. We should stop giving our efforts to anti-movements and become positive protagonists for democracy. We have a glorious philosophy to teach. If in the last one hundred and fifty years we had succeeded in *living* our democracy, neither Fascism nor Communism would have arisen. Totalitarianisms of all kinds are defeatist positions to which men retreated when the road to freedom looked too difficult and hopeless. If we as teachers make democracy work in our classrooms and communities, we will replace timidity and fear with courage and security.

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