

Letters from Abroad

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County Colleges in England and Wales

¶ Christopher Jameson, director of the Training College for Technical Teachers, Northwestern Polytechnic of London, describes for us the experimental program for the education of teachers for County Colleges in England and Wales. The establishment of these County Colleges is a part of England's present program in adult education. Mr. Jameson, as director of one of two colleges experimenting in the education of teachers for the County Colleges, is particularly well qualified to write on this subject.—GHF

THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT gives England and Wales the basis of an educational system which can be planned in three progressive stages: Primary Education for children under eleven years of age, Secondary Education for the age range eleven to sixteen plus years, and Further Education for all those who have left school at the statutory school-leaving age of fifteen years (later to be sixteen years). There is no intention of sweeping away what already exists, but the immediate task is to reorganize and rebuild so that an educational service compatible with the principles of growth and development of the individual shall emerge.

Further Education, i.e., provision for those who have left full-time educational institutions, has been a feature of English education since the early days of the 19th century. It had its beginnings in the evening classes of those early days when young people and adults, too old for the new elementary schools, attended in order to learn the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. With the greater provision of elementary education and certainly after the introduction of compulsory attendance at school, evening

classes became more and more directed towards the vocational element. In the 1930's the volume of evening class instruction grew to such an extent that by 1938 the number of evening students approached the three million mark.

There have always been a few progressive employers who, recognizing the inadequacy of evening classes, have released the most promising of their young employees to attend day classes at the local technical college. Throughout this century the volume of this part-time day work has steadily grown, so that in 1947 some 167,403 young people between the ages of fifteen and eighteen plus were released from employment to attend classes at technical colleges one or more days per week. The 1918 Education Act contained provision for the compulsory release of all young workers between the ages of fifteen and eighteen to attend some kind of educational institution, but lack of public understanding and financial stringency resulted in the abandonment of the scheme.

Education for Living

The 1944 Education Act contains similar provision, requiring young people between the ages of fifteen and eighteen to attend for one day per week at County Colleges. Only general principles concerning the provision of County Colleges are included in the Act, but more detailed considerations and suggestions appear in the Ministry of Education's Pamphlet No. 3 "Youth's Opportunity," (H.M.S.O. 1945). The generally accepted principles which should guide us when planning the work of the County Colleges are:

► The general education of the young people should be continued and every op-

portunity should be taken to make it a real and vital part of each young person's life. The aim should be not only to train efficient workmen, but through aesthetic and cultural activities young people should develop worthwhile pursuits for leisure hours.

► This is a period in the young person's life when increasing opportunities for ever-widening contacts with the world around, together with a growing sense of independence, make it a suitable time to foster and develop the right ideas about citizenship. Thus, through the development and stimulation of individual interests young people should be brought to a sense of individual and community responsibility.

► For those who desire it there should be provision for vocational training.

► Health education and the physical development of young people should be adequately cared for.

Teachers in Preparation

The sections of the Act which call for the establishment of the County Colleges and release from work to attend such institutions are not yet in force. The provision of buildings, equipment, and teachers are big problems and much of the planning must be on a long-term basis. However, on the supply and training of teachers some small beginnings have already been made. Experimental courses at two colleges have been in existence for two years. The number of students has been kept deliberately small so as to allow the maximum amount of experimentation and to avoid serious difficulties in placement at the end of the course.

The applicants for the course must have minimum educational attainment of the order of intermediate degree, although there is nothing rigid in this respect. Interest in young people and experience in industry or commerce which helps toward an understanding of the young worker are considered essential. Most of these student teachers have been of high quality, for during the selection interviews emphasis is placed on personality,

and evidence of a real interest in young people is looked for. Quite a number have been engaged in voluntary youth work before they came to college.

The course which is of three terms duration (September to June of each year) is mainly devoted to consideration of the work of the proposed County Colleges. Two important factors are kept continuously under consideration. First, these student teachers are preparing for full-time posts where the pupils will be young wage earners, i.e., young people with a growing sense of independence, who are already on the threshold of adult life. Second, the interests of young people must be considered and their enthusiasm must be stimulated and harnessed in desirable directions. It is essential, therefore, to direct these student teachers so that while in college they are able to focus and develop their own interests to such an extent that they can stimulate and foster the growth of similar interests in their pupils.

These future teachers give special attention to the purposes as well as the organization and underlying philosophy of the County College. In addition to general courses in education and psychology, all students consider methods, with particular reference to adolescents, in groups of subjects such as social studies, English, science, and the humanities. Teaching experience in institutions where young workers attend and also in youth clubs is a part of the course.

The teacher in training is also given every opportunity to pursue his or her interests in both formal studies and in informal cultural activities. Lectures are reduced to a minimum and the greatest possible activity on the part of the student is aimed at through tutorials, seminars, study conferences, and group discussions. Through a variety of ways of approach and the maximum participation by the students themselves, the staff of the training college aims to stimulate a similar attitude in County College work.

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Dewey's writings as though they were the final authority, the truth with a capital T, the eternal verity. A Dewey disciple—not a Dewey student or admirer, mind you—seems to regard Dewey's writings as a body of sacred writ. He quarrels with other disciples over the "true" meaning of the writ. To "prove" pet contentions, he cites something Dewey wrote near the turn of the nineteenth century. His opponent, in turn, proves the contrary by quoting something Dewey wrote forty years later. Each regards deviation from Dewey as the ultimate in heresy—unless the master can be cited to justify the deviation. They sound like two comrades confounding each other with quotations from Marx and Lenin on the correct interpretation of the current party line. Unconsciously these disciples are au-

thoritarian, not experimental. Regarding Dewey's great contribution as a gospel denies everything Dewey stands for! That's not what old John means at all!"

"Care to quote from his writings to prove that?" she inquired delicately. Properly, he paid no heed.

He summarized. "There's a great difference between the students of Dewey and the disciples of Dewey. Disciples turn Dewey's magnificent contribution into authoritarian dogma, complete with writ, expounders, and disputatious sects. They turn Dewey into a saint." He chuckled. "I suppose he's the first relativistic saint in all history."

As she poured their last cups of hot coffee, his wife said, "Maybe we should leave confusing things like these to philosophers, dear."

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Emphasis on Youth Needs

The field of Further Education is a broad one and includes training for a wide range of vocations. This college is concerned not only with the education of the general subjects teacher but also with technical and commercial subjects teachers, many of whom will be employed in County Colleges. Every opportunity is given for the various specialist teachers to meet and discuss general and specific problems. The teacher of social studies, English, or science may be found discussing teaching problems with the teacher of engineering science or commercial subjects. The emphasis is placed on the function of the teacher in respect to the development and growth of their students as individuals and in guiding

them to become worthwhile members of the community in which they live.

The program of training for the teachers of the County Colleges which we have developed at this college is regarded as highly experimental. We have been up against many difficulties for there are no County Colleges yet established and no one has worked out in detail the curriculum of such a college. We believe that it is of fundamental importance to place the emphasis on the interests, the needs, and the welfare of the young people who come to County Colleges. The training college must preserve a freshness of approach in order that its students will go out with keenness and enthusiasm to guide young people through critical years to manhood and womanhood.

Christopher Jameson

Educational Leadership

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