Editorial

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The New World as Challenge and Opportunity

PERHAPS the most urgent demand on the American people, and so on American education, grows out of the necessity to meet rapid changes in our world—in American life and in the wider world of which we have become so inescapably a part. Young people, reading the daily newspapers and observing the new problems which beset our country, find a world fundamentally different from any previously known. Jets reach in hours places formerly days, even weeks, away. Crucial happenings on the other side of the world affect us deeply here in the United States.

Perhaps the most significant single shift lies in the new degree of world leadership thrust upon our country by the development of world events following World War II. Whether or not we are prepared for it, this responsibility has been thrust upon us, in large part by the division of the world into highly conflicting outlooks—the free world of America and Western Europe on the one hand, and the Communist world of the USSR and Red China on the other hand. Thus whether we like it or not, increasingly rapid change is part of our world in a sense and degree hitherto unknown, and we must learn to deal with it constructively. Again whether we like it or not, we in the U. S. have the obligation to meet our responsibilities in ways befitting the Free World's largest democracy.

We have learned at the same time the fact of Interdependence. The happiness of life in the United States can be affected by happenings in Moscow and Peking, in Indonesia and Singapore, in Korea and in Japan, in the Congo and in Katanga. Within, let us say, the past two decades we have learned the sobering fact of our interdependence, that misery, hunger, substandard living in any corner of the world must be our concern, that life in the United States can be affected by events half a world away, that well-being of hungry people over the world cannot be disregarded.

It seems clear that the overarching task and challenge to the world today is to build the Good Life, a Life-Good-to-Live, for each, for all. Philosophers through the ages have speculated about the Good Life, frequently in terms which restricted it to a few. Now sober thinking concedes that a Life-Good-to-Live for *all* persons is no impossibility. Machines, things, goods, money, even education and the opportunity to develop one's potentialities are all widely available in this country and in much of Europe. Moreover, the means exist to wipe out both want and lack of opportunity. Though this has not yet come to pass, it seems clear that this is the time to plan, to use the means and insight

we have already available so as to eventually bring about this worthy end.

Such a Life-Good-to-Live will vary according to the tastes and talents of individuals. Some will stress literature, music, the arts; some will find their challenge and satisfaction in science or in history; some will study the past, others the present; some will lead lives of religious devotion; and so on.

Plainly more is involved than a merely comfortable life, though provision for needs and the reasonable comforts of life is properly to be sought. But life is more than the body and its wants and more than possession of money and things. A sounder approach is through increasing depth and expanding horizons, a quality of living which includes the thoughtful, the discerning.

Perhaps the most significant question in this country at present is whether people themselves are ready to think in terms of a truly rich life rather than a merely pleasurable one, to think of a life depending for its richness on the content put into it. How to live fruitfully and satisfyingly, in the variety of ways suited to the variety of individuals? How to add quality to day-to-day living and to life in the long run as well? These are questions deserving of the best study and thought of mankind—in this country, beginning now, and with the whole of mankind as a goal.

Some Meanings for Education

If our young people are to succeed in facing the actual world of today they must build along various lines; knowledge of many kinds is needed, including knowledge of the world today; also needed are adequate character, values, insights. At every level of education these are not only relevant but essential. All our young people, for example, must build the inevitable fact of "becoming" into their thinking and learn to face it constructively. They must face the fact that change is inevitable in life, not to be feared but welcomed as opportunity to look again and improve. They must learn to think for themselves and also to exchange ideas as to novel proposals and situations, to sift better ideas from those of lesser worth. They must learn the fact of interdependence, in our smaller worlds and also in the larger one; that we cannot rely on the well-being of the United States without helping to effect the well-being of other countries also. Most of these countries look to the United States as friend, in one degree or another, and we must justify this feeling. We must learn that we are unusually fortunate in resources and abundance of goods, while others struggle against heavy odds for what we take for granted. We must come to feel our interdependence, that the world cannot be good for us while others live in dire need; that we have now abundance of goods and potentialities in far greater degree than before known, but that material goods do not necessarily bring friendship; this we must understand.

We must awaken young people, and their elders, to the fact that a Life-Good-to-Live depends on more than things, more than striving for ourselves; it depends also on helping to make life good for others; on helping to solve human problems; on gaining insight into ways of helping others; on growing to be wiser, broader persons.

We must build in our young people moral standards which include respect for the feelings and rights of others, others even in distant lands; which in-

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5. *Furnishing personnel, materials and facilities that are required to improve communication.* Good communication, which results in much in-service growth, should not be rendered ineffective by lack of support.

Nearly everywhere one mingles with teachers and supervisors, one hears that course guides and other curriculum documents have limited effect in improving educational practice. Perhaps we need a breakthrough in organization for communication which would permit continued use of curriculum documents, but would place them in a new position in the total communication scheme.

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clude, on the one hand, the obligation of a wider background of knowledge with which to understand the new world, and, on the other hand, a consecrated devotion to our common democracy and its place in the free world.

What further meaning has the foregoing for education toward a new world? The meanings are, of course, endless—the more the question is studied and worked at, the more potentialities will be found.

In conclusion, we can say that three factors make demands on our American education—the fact of change, our interdependence with the rest of the world, and the obligation to realize as best possible the Life-Good-to-Live. We must help our people to understand these demands and accept them as personal obligations; and we must help to have them understood as part of American democracy—what it means for us and should mean also for others in the world.

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