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**THE
CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY**

by
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I

The Moral Basis of Democracy

We have reached a critical stage in the history of democracy. The world war which began in 1914 and was continued in the second episode of 1939 was in its political aspect a conflict between the opposing ideas of government by force and government by persuasion. This was pretty well understood from the first. But what we did not realise in 1918 was that, since all war is essentially about moral issues, the conflict did not finish with the armistice: the decisive struggle remained in fact to be fought out after the guns had ceased to fire. Since then we have gone a good deal further along the road of understanding. We know that military victory cannot end the opposition between democracy and autocracy. The defeat of the Germans and Japanese in war does not prove to them the folly of relying on brute force: it merely proves the folly of relying on insufficient brute force. War can never decide the fundamental issues dividing nations. It settles which side has the greater manufacturing resources and inventive skill and the greater will to use them; it settles which side shall have the power to control political and economic machinery for a certain period after victory; but it leaves the moral questions underlying the conflict unresolved. The brutalities of war only exacerbate the antagonism and hatred between nations and postpone indefinitely the achievement of the ultimate goal of international co-operation and friendship. This goal appeared remote and dim enough in the distracted Europe of 1939; in the devastated Europe of today it may seem scarcely discernible through the mists of the future. Yet it remains the goal to which our efforts must be directed. A tyranny unsurpassed in infamy has been broken at unimagined cost in material destruction and human suffering. But the spiritual

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battle that is the reality behind the physical struggle still goes on. The winning of that battle is made immeasurably more difficult owing to the bitter hatred stirred up by the ruin and the slaughter to which whole nations have been subjected; yet unless we can believe that this moral victory is possible, we can only abandon ourselves to utter despair. Dark as the immediate prospect appears, we must strive to produce in our enemies—and in ourselves—that spiritual change that is the only guarantee of peace; we must move forward, however slowly, to the creation of a world society based on human brotherhood.

For us and for the other victorious nations, therefore, the greatest danger is that with the return of peace we shall desire only to relax and take our ease, believing or hoping that the diseases of our civilisation will cure themselves. After six years of enormous military effort involving an unparalleled upheaval of our social life it will require all our moral courage and determination to keep our energies at tension for a further unlimited period. Yet merely to restore tolerable material conditions of life to war-ravaged Europe will prove as formidable a task as waging the war itself; and if in addition we are seriously to set about the task of curing the spiritual disease that produces wars we shall indeed need faith and steadfastness of the highest order. Unless we display these qualities, however, in the coming years, the future of Europe and of the world will be no brighter than it was after 1918.

The professed aim of the democracies, as we very well know, is to translate their political principles into international terms—to create the great society in which general welfare is based on respect for the rights of the individual nation and for the personality of the individual citizen. It is well that we should profess such an aim. It would be well also that we should fully realise that this is essentially a long-term aim. It cannot be achieved by a stroke of the pen or even by a protracted series of conferences. The indispensable condition of its achievement is that the nations shall have developed spiritually to the point at which they are ready to subordinate their separate interests to the needs of a larger whole. The failure of the League of Nations taught us that the key to international harmony is not to be found in the mere

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invention of elaborate machinery. Before a real community of nations can be brought into being something of essential moral import must happen within the nations themselves. Individual citizens must feel themselves to be members not merely of their own national society but of a European or a world society. In spite of all the propaganda carried on in recent years by the supporters of an international order, it would be pure self-deception to maintain that this feeling is as yet at all widespread. The invention of the atomic bomb has shocked people everywhere into a vivid awareness that the establishment of an effective United Nations Organisation is a matter literally of life and death for mankind. It may be that through very fear we shall surmount the initial difficulties and make some progress in the creation of such a body. But fear is not enough. The new international organisation will eventually suffer the same fate as its predecessor unless the member nations bring to it a genuine spirit of tolerance, a sense of human brotherhood, and a readiness to sacrifice selfish interests for the larger good.

Can we even say that the spirit of community within our own democracy is all that it ought to be? The stress of war has no doubt strengthened it enormously; but will it retain its vigour when the call for sacrifice is less urgent? How strong was the sense of national solidarity during the miserable time of economic distress in the years between the wars? Surely the first stage towards the creation of an international spirit is the creation of a healthy national spirit. The nation that would play its proper part in an international society must consist of citizens bound together in service for the common good—the common good being necessarily conceived of, in the first place, as related to the nation itself, but being capable of extension to the peoples beyond its frontiers.

We must learn to walk before we can run. The feeling for the smaller group must be fully developed before it can be transformed into a feeling for the larger group. Thus the immediate task for our democracy is to strengthen in all possible ways the social sense within the nation. This means that we must revivify those principles on which we profess to base our political life and make them a revolutionary force for the reordering of our society. It means creating the kind of social system in which the citizen

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feels he has a real place, and for which he is called upon to work. Only so can we hope to generate the moral power to enable us to play an effective part in creating an international order.

The task of social reconstruction based on a new moral outlook awaited us in 1918 as it awaits us today. But many of those who rejoiced in the earlier victory were anxious only to forget the four years of horror and to take up their lives again at the point where war had interrupted them. Instead of looking forward to a better society, they were content to indulge their regret for the conditions before 1914. Others, inspired by a shortlived idealism, put their hands to the plough but turned back as soon as they encountered the obstacles in their path. As a nation we were enfeebled by war-weariness, and we proved incapable of the sustained effort demanded of us in the post-war years. We had created the machinery for a vast international organisation, and we thought we had done enough. We lacked the will to make it work. We had rescued democracy from the power of German militarism, and here too we thought we had done enough. We did not see that democracy itself must be transformed to fit it for the tasks of the new age, and that in fact nothing but the infusion of a new spirit would save it from decay.

Our flabby inefficiency in coping with the national and international problems of the inter-war period did little to encourage and strengthen the democracies of Europe, most of which in any case rested on insecure foundations. When in one country after another democracy collapsed, the Dictators who came to power flourished before the world a new political creed which denied everything the democrat holds dear. But the ideology of autocracy was by no means negative: it proclaimed a new way of life which was an imperious challenge to traditionalism and political complacency. Mussolini and later Hitler were loud in their insistence that they had discovered the political institutions appropriate to the twentieth century, and that they were the prophets of a new world order. And they lost no opportunity of proclaiming that the democracies were decadent. This was no doubt said with more regard to effect than to truth; but it was not so far wrong as we liked to believe.

The charge proved to be only too true in the case of France.

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When military disaster came in 1940 it completed the long process of decay caused by national divisions and political corruption. The Third Republic fell because its foundations were rotten. On the other hand, we in Great Britain can point with legitimate pride to the resurgence of democracy in face of the challenge of Hitlerism in 1939. Whatever may have been our political sins, we showed a dogged courage, a sense of national unity, and a belief in ourselves which proved our salvation in the greatest peril in our history. But our behaviour in the great crisis of the second world war is not a complete answer to the charge of decadence. A sick man is capable of prodigious efforts in a struggle for life. We have still to show that when the time of extreme tension has passed, we shall not once again sink back into lethargy and fumble ineffectively with the tasks awaiting us. We have still to prove that the democratic idea, which is the product of our national spirit in past centuries, has not spent its force, and that the institutions of democracy can be adapted to present needs and be given new life.

The successful working of democratic institutions depends ultimately on the moral qualities of the mass of the citizens; in particular it depends on the willingness of a sufficient number to undertake the duties of active citizenship. Parliamentary government will work as long as there is the desire to make it work. It is the weakening of this desire in recent years that has given some justification to the Dictators in pointing the finger of scorn. We lack the faith and vision of the popular leaders of the early nineteenth century who strove for the sacred cause of the Rights of Man. The spirit of these apostles of democracy was at work through the century: it inspired those who fought for the successive extensions of the franchise, those who organised the labour unions in resistance to intolerable conditions in factory and mine, and those who worked to create a national system of education. By the early part of this century these aims were largely realised. Men looked around to appraise the results of the long series of political and social reforms. These results certainly did not come up to what the earlier enthusiasts for the perfectibility of man had imagined. Consequently there was a weakening of faith in political action.

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The efficacy of the old democratic ideals was becoming exhausted, and no new political motives had made their appearance.

The trouble was indeed deep-seated. It was not merely that people were ceasing to believe in democratic action; they were ceasing to believe in anything at all. Political faith is after all only one aspect of the belief by which a nation lives. For the great majority in the nineteenth century, belief in social reform was rooted in religious belief. It is true that the seeds of religious doubt had been sown by scientific speculation, and they were in due course to come to fruition. But the traditional faith of the mass of the people remained on the whole unimpaired. The prevailing tone of popular literature was in harmony with Christian principles. Dickens cherished the letters he received from clergymen praising him for the influence of his writings on the moral and religious life of the nation. Tennyson, though he gave ever-memorable utterance to the religious doubts of his age, came finally to a position of trust in the Christian verities. Moreover, the unbelievers, the doubters, and the agnostics—George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, J. S. Mill, and the great Huxley himself—kept firm hold of the ethical principles of the religion whose dogmas they rejected. When Leslie Stephen gave up his college tutorship and abandoned his university career at Cambridge because he had ceased to believe in the religion of which he was an ordained minister, he wrote in a private memorandum: 'I now believe in nothing, to put it shortly; but I do not the less believe in morality, etc. etc., I mean to live and die like a gentleman, if possible.' The same sentiment is even more forcibly expressed by Annie Besant in a passage in her autobiography referring to the period of the 'seventies, when she was actively propagating the creed of atheism and materialism: 'The total loss of all faith in a righteous God only made me more strenuously assertive of the binding nature of duty and the overwhelming importance of conduct. . . . In all the years of my propaganda on the platform of the National Secular Society no subject was more frequently dealt with in my lectures than that of human ethical growth and the duty of man to man. No thought was more constantly in my mind than that of the importance of morals.' Thus even the intellectual leaders who revolted against the prevailing religious ideas exerted their

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influence in support of accepted moral principles. Nor must we forget that for many of the progressively-minded the vacuum caused by the loss of religious faith was filled by the secular religion of progress. The scientists who were not on the side of the angels pursued the inspiring aim of using their newly acquired power over nature to ameliorate the material conditions of mankind. Brushing aside the parsons with their talk of happiness in 'another world, they addressed themselves with passion to the task of making life happy here on earth.

Mrs. M. A. Hamilton has described the moral and religious attitude of her set of Cambridge undergraduates in the period before 1914. They were emancipated from conventional religion, and they regarded a small group that held prayer meetings as bad form. 'We did not talk about religion mainly because our belief in progress and human perfectibility was sufficient; full of faith in man we did not need faith in God. . . . Education is, in part, a process of realising that, as it was succinctly put in a school story in my childish days, "The world is large and I am very small". . . . Large, yes; but firm on its moral foundations. It was our belief that, as we grew in experience and in knowledge, we should grow in understanding and consequently in mastery over the world. The prospect of learning to know our way about it was exciting, not terrifying. . . . We were simple, but neither self-absorbed nor complacent. We were critical of ourselves and of the world: and chock-full of conscience, social and individual. We saw ourselves as going out to fight, as best we could, on the side of the battalions of light and hope'.¹ *Jan 15*

But by the opening of the present century the scepticism which had hitherto affected mainly the intellectual classes had permeated the great mass of the people. In the new mental climate created by the triumphs of science the traditional religious ideas ceased to flourish and the long-accepted ethical code was openly challenged. Lip-service continued to be paid to Christianity as a matter of respectability, but religious faith counted for less and less in individual and social life. As for the secular religion of progress, this was to receive a shattering blow in 1914. After the shock of the great war it became almost as difficult to believe in

¹ *Remembering My Good Friends*, Cape, 1944, pp. 60-61.

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the inevitable forward march of mankind to an earthly paradise as to believe in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body and a heaven beyond the grave. In this period of disillusion and disaster our typical intellectual leaders were sceptical not only of religious belief but of the whole scheme of moral values hitherto accepted. The old standards were overthrown and no new ones were set up in their place. The masses, no less than the intellectuals, were without any moral sheet-anchor. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the years after 1918 we lacked the moral energy to extricate ourselves from the slough of despond into which we fell. It is not surprising that we were unready for a new political advance. We had lost our direction, our motive-power had failed, and we were uncertain of our destination.

In the years of crisis before 1939 there were signs of a change of spirit. The threat of a second disaster even more terrible than the first brought to many people a new seriousness. The realisation that so little had been learned from the experience of 1914-1918 that nations could deliberately prepare once more to plunge into the insensate cruelties and barbarities of war came as a profound shock to the moral consciousness. Meanwhile we looked on at the tortures inflicted on the Jews; and we were apparently powerless to prevent them. Brute force was stalking through Europe; and it was supported by organised lying of a skill and malignancy hitherto unknown in communities with any pretence to civilisation. The rapid disintegration of European culture, the destruction of the fundamental virtues and even of the decencies that we used to take for granted, gave us pause; we had to look within ourselves, search our hearts, and find answers to questions that we had previously ignored. We had to face the problem of evil in the world; we had to make up our minds about the ultimate values in life. When the cataclysm came, and the horrors of bombardment and massacre were again unleashed, the urgency of this heart-searching was intensified. In the world of war it was impossible to go on living without having answers to the fundamental questions. Many who had been sceptics or materialists or merely indifferent fought their way through to belief. But whether the community as a whole will emerge from the conflict with a stronger and higher conception of social duty derived from a new faith remains to be seen.

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Yet nothing less than a moral re-awakening will serve our purpose. Our primary political problem is not specially a problem of democracy: it is a problem confronting every society—confronting every individual: it is this problem of belief. As individuals, and hence as a nation, we must believe in something, and believe in it strongly enough to provide an effective motive power for action. As a stimulus to action a substitute-religion—like the nineteenth century faith in material progress, like the Communism of Russia and the Fascism of Germany—may be as potent as a genuine religion based on spiritual values. But where this power of conviction derived from either religion or pseudo-religion is lacking, national life stagnates and the national will is paralysed.

The conclusion that, if our democracy is to be revitalised, it must be inspired once more by a living faith is one that all would accept. That this living faith should arise from a genuine religion is a further conclusion that most people would accept. It is when we proceed beyond this point that our difficulties begin. To a certain number of people, of course, the next stage in the argument is perfectly clear. The final solution of our problem, they are always telling us, is a return to Christianity: a society permeated by Christian principles would go forward to realise the highest aims of which mankind is capable.

The solution is less simple than it sounds. In the first place we have to inquire what exactly it is we are asked to return to. This question apparently presents no difficulty to the various bodies of laymen from which we are becoming accustomed to receive appeals in support of Christian standards of conduct in business and political life. These unofficial advocates of a spiritual renewal evidently mean by Christianity little more than the natural religion which has been at any rate nominally accepted by the European nations for many centuries. They have in mind the ethical code which is not the monopoly of Christianity and which was in fact already thought out in the main by the Greek philosophers. A re-establishment of those moral standards which have been set up by the best human wisdom of the past—or rather their establishment for the first time—is supremely desirable; but it would be quite misleading to call it a return to Christianity.

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The official spokesmen of the churches are, of course, careful to explain that Christianity is not merely a system of ethics and a way of life: it is a philosophy and a theology. While it provides us with the principles of conduct, it also gives us the final answers to questions about the nature of the universe and the relationship of man to the divine. It has, in fact, an intellectual as well as a spiritual message. The Christian philosophy is set out in the creeds and dogmas of the Churches. But between the various bodies there are profound differences of view. Thus it would make for precision if, instead of talking about Christian philosophy, we spoke of Romanism, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, and so on. The Churches have, however, a more or less common body of doctrine which they invite us to accept as the solution of our intellectual problems. This is a highly complex logical scheme originally developed by the Christian Fathers in a pagan environment to meet the intellectual needs of the time, and incorporating essential ideas from Greek thought. It has but slight foundation in the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and its validity as an intellectual development of his teaching depends on the assumption that Christian theologians through the centuries have been divinely inspired. But its acceptance is obligatory on all who are full members of a Church.

At the same time we must take account of those who urge us to return—or, perhaps they would rather say, go forward—to a Christianity shorn of the accretions of mediaeval thought which form so great a stumbling-block to modern minds. Professor John MacMurray is typical. 'A Christianity which was true to its own essence', he writes, 'would undoubtedly be adequate to the salvation of the world in our time'. But, he continues, 'Christianity must come out of the old order and be separate. On the side of doctrine and theology it must exchange the conservative spirit of Mediaeval Scholasticism—which is the spirit of dogmatic religion—for the creative spirit of modern science. The empirical, experimental spirit of science is not merely congenial to creative religion, it is itself the product of essential Christianity. The traditional theology, with its guaranteed certainties, its traditional revelations, its *a priori* argumentation is essentially the product of pagan philosophy. The struggle between Science and Religion

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has in fact been mainly a conflict between Science and the Classics. Creative Christianity would find in Science not merely the intellectual reflection of its own spirit, but the instrument for the victory over evil and pain, and for the ordering of the Kingdom in which the meek shall inherit the earth.¹

We have noted the varied meanings attaching to the term Christianity today. Evidently, however, it is not to lay reformers but to the Churches themselves that men will naturally turn as the true repositories of the faith; and the Churches present the faith in a traditional dogmatic form sanctioning their ritual and the function of the priesthood. It is true that, by reason of the crying need to restore moral standards of conduct, Christian clergy in the pulpit, on the wireless, and in the popular Press generally stress the simple ethical principles and push purely doctrinal matters into the background. There is a similar tendency for parish clergy to concentrate on social work and to leave discussion of the more abstruse matters of belief alone. But, it must be repeated, the moral principles summed up in the idea of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God are not the exclusive possession of the Christian faith. Institutional Christianity is distinguished from the other great religions by its intellectual system; and it must stand or fall by that. Nor do the thousands in search of spiritual guidance desire that intellectual questions should be put aside. They want food for the mind as well as for the soul. The terrible events of recent history have forced the perennial problems of evil and suffering and death into the very centre of our consciousness. To meet our imperious questionings the Churches offer only the logical ingenuities that satisfied the mediaeval mind. In the mental climate of the twentieth century the Christian scheme of thought has become incredible. This is not merely a statement of my personal opinion; it is a statement of fact. I do not say, of course, that no intelligent person can accept the dogmas of the Churches; for obviously many intelligent persons do genuinely accept them. But these are a small minority. The great majority of people today are either definitely antagonistic to Christian doctrine or quite indifferent to it. There is no hope that a religion so hampered by obsolete intel-

¹ *A Challenge to the Churches*, Kegan Paul, 1941, pp. 61-2.

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lectualism will provide us with the necessary inspiration to social action.

In spite of the manifest and increasing decay of the influence of the Churches there is a fatal reluctance on the part of religious leaders to acknowledge the true cause. Christian writers with a political bias, like J. Middleton Murry and Sidney Dark, have been popularising the view that the impotence of the Churches in the modern world is due to their failure to intervene in matters of social organisation. They emphasise—quite rightly—the fact that a religion which does not pervade the whole of life, including the economic sphere, is nothing; the business of the Churches is not merely to preach the Christian virtues in an other-worldly context, but to make those virtues prevail in the common life of man and so to promote the Kingdom of God on earth. The late Archbishop Temple exerted the full weight of his authority in support of this point of view. If the voice of individual Christians and of the religious bodies as a whole could be heard clearly on those fundamental moral issues which underlie social and political problems, we should indeed witness a notable advance. But it is a great mistake to suppose that such a reorientation of policy would in itself be sufficient to save the Churches from extinction. They have still to put their message about man and his destiny into an intellectual form that the modern mind can accept. The Christian who carries his faith into every phase of conduct proves the sincerity of his ethical convictions; but he does not prove the truth of Christian dogma.

One cannot pretend to keep the personal element out of a discussion of this kind. By now my own religious attitude will have become fairly obvious to the reader. But perhaps I should do well to state it more explicitly. I accept the need for religion; and I accept those broad truths that have emerged from the religious thought and experience of mankind. I find the highest expression of religious truth in the teaching of Jesus. But I reject the Church's doctrine concerning the person of Christ and the theological framework within which his teaching is presented. I have no home-made philosophical system to offer as an alternative to the Christian scheme of thought. In most of the metaphysical problems that have exercised the minds of philosophers through-

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out the ages I am not particularly interested, for I doubt whether they are capable of solution by any human mind. Certainly my own mental equipment is inadequate to deal with them. I find much that is congenial to me in the attitude of Stoicism. In this philosophy, the great rival of early Christianity, to which it came so remarkably close in its ethical teaching, there is little attention given to metaphysical questions: the main emphasis is on principles of conduct. If the world is to be made a better place, I feel that far more will be achieved by the steady adherence to the simple ethical rules derived from the religious experience of mankind than by all the argumentation of philosophers. I make this confession of faith not only because I think the reader is entitled to know where I stand, but also because I believe I am typical of a large body of people at the present time. This temper of mind must be reckoned with as a very important factor in social and educational developments.

I am sure it is wrong to regard a religion as something conservative and static—to think of it always in terms of the faith once delivered to the Saints. Any religion that retains its vitality must expand and be transformed as man's mind and experience develop. It is impossible to believe that truths can be the same in substance and in statement today as they were in the time of the Christian Fathers. Thus we should not be content merely to accept a religion; we should rather enter upon a process of ceaseless adaptation and discovery of truth. It would seem that the present age has still to reveal to itself the religion it needs. It may be that the religion of the future will be found in a new interpretation and development of the teachings of Christ freed from the trammels of mediaevalism.¹ If so, we must look for it in spiritual movements outside the Churches, for there is little sign at present of a new reformation from within. It may even be that we are on the eve of one of those religious revelations that come but rarely in the history of mankind—a revelation that will carry the teaching of Christ a stage further. In its intellectual scepticism and spiritual malaise our age exhibits a certain parallelism with the period of

¹An attempt to present the essentials of the teaching of Christ stripped from the accretions of dogma has been made by Dr. H. D. A. Major in *Basic Christianity: The World Religion*, Blackwell, 1944.

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the Roman world at the time of the growth of the Christian Church. Perhaps the time is ripe for the appearance of a new religious genius. Meanwhile it is for those who care to seek the light wherever it may be found. /

Our immediate concern is with religion in its social aspect. Our community has to rediscover a faith to serve as the unifying principle essential to any healthy society. Such a faith is not provided by institutional Christianity today, and, though the stirrings of a new religious impulse are observable, there is as yet no alternative creed likely to win general acceptance.

Professor Laski in *Faith, Reason, and Civilisation*, has considered the problem from the point of view of the non-Christian. Recognising the need for a new faith, and the inability of the Churches to supply it, he boldly offers us a substitute-religion of the now familiar political type. In an essay remarkable both for its special pleading and its philosophical naïveté, he urges that our society can be reinvigorated only through the ideals of the new Russia. He writes:

‘Our problem is the simple but vital one of finding a new system of values which enables men to live together in peace; for the civilised tradition, as Whitehead has so eloquently insisted, means nothing so much as the movement from force to persuasion. The power of any supernatural religion to build that tradition has gone; the deposit of scientific inquiry since Descartes has been fatal to its authority. It is therefore difficult to see upon what basis the civilised tradition can be rebuilt save that upon which the idea of the Russian revolution is founded. . . . On the one hand, it satisfies the masses by its power to offer to them a sense of individual fulfilment now wholly unattainable within the confines of any alternative social system. And, on the other, it offers to the élite a vocation of leadership which seems likely to replace with real adequacy that wealth so often unrelated to function which has done so much to discredit the claims of privilege in our time. Wherever the idea of the Russian Revolution has taken hold it has bred in its exponents a yearning for spiritual salvation; and it is out of that yearning that there is at least the hope that we may recover a philosophy of values.’ (pp. 54-5).

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I pause to consider the phrase 'spiritual salvation'. That, since the Revolution and especially during the war years, the Russian people have achieved what a non-Marxist might legitimately call a state of spiritual exaltation no one would deny. But it is strange to find a political scientist ascribing this yearning for spiritual salvation to the working of a revolutionary idea which rejects spiritual values, and whose orthodox exponents profess to yearn for nothing that cannot be attained by scientific processes of thought in the material world of here and now. But Professor Laski insists on the 'spiritual' results of a materialist philosophy. He returns to the point later:

'It is true that the significance of the Russian Revolution is unmistakable. For, with all its grave limitations—and they have been grave indeed—it has created in the masses of the Soviet Union the will to dedicate themselves to a great purpose beyond a purely personal end; and in the work of dedication they have found, amid the difficulties they have had to face, material improvement and spiritual elevation. This is the inner secret of all authority which has the power to effect a social renovation. It is, indeed, the source of the power religion has exercised over men in its moments of most intense creation. No one is now entitled to doubt that there are developing in the Soviet Union those qualities of mind and heart which gave to the Greek city-state at its best its capacity to raise the moral stature of its citizens. There is a pride in the common task, a discovery in the social purpose of the means whereby the individual can secure fulfilment. Out of all this slowly, perhaps painfully, too, there are being born before our eyes the characteristics of a great civilisation'. (p. 154).

If we are to imitate the Russians, what is the great purpose to which we must dedicate ourselves? What is the good to which our common activity must be directed? Professor Laski's answer brings us back by a devious route to the faded nineteenth century ideal of material progress:

'I am concerned only to affirm that, as a working assumption for the people who live, not upon the heights, but in this work-a-day world, adequate external circumstances are likely to mean adequate internal fulfilment. This is the humanism which, as

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I think, has a basis in the common principle of human nature all over the world, and transcends in its importance today, as it has transcended throughout human history, the appeal of any special religious creed which crusades for the renovation of man's nature. And it then follows from this assumption that the greater the degree in which external circumstances all over the world are made adequate, the greater will be the number of satisfied men and women. Good, on this view, is the satisfaction of demand on the largest possible scale; and a good society is one built upon an institutional basis which enables it perpetually to reach out to an ever-increasing satisfaction of demand.' (pp. 149-150).

From this description it seems that the earthly paradise for which the Russian communist is striving is one that would appeal equally to the American high-pressure salesman: they would disagree only about the means of reaching it. Professor Laski's whole argument is, in fact, no more than a rationalisation of his instinctive belief that the greatest evil of human life is poverty, and that consequently the greatest good is the establishment of a high (how high?) material standard of life for all.

Russia is a country in which the masses of the people have never till our time seen the hope of emerging from sub-human conditions of life. It is not surprising, therefore, that a national effort to end poverty and to create a new material civilisation based on scientific techniques should kindle their idealism and provide a purpose for which they are willing to spend and sacrifice themselves without stint. It will not be surprising if the masses in the other poverty-stricken countries of Europe catch the enthusiasm of the Russians and unite to build a new society in which material goods are more evenly distributed and the national resources are fully developed for the benefit of all. But I cannot believe that at this time of day such an aim would be sufficient to provide a faith for our own people. In spite of the great deal that remains to be done, we have passed through the worst of our struggle with poverty, and we are no longer dazzled by the marvels of scientific technique. There was a time, indeed, when our imaginations were stirred and our idealism fired by the visions of material well-being opened before us by H. G. Wells. We looked forward to a world of technical perfection in which all

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evils were subdued by the power of far-ranging human intelligence. We were then at the stage at which the Russians are now. But we have since been forced to witness the monstrous evils of which the human intelligence is capable when unrestrained by moral scruple, and we have passed through the cataclysm of a war which has compelled us to face the question of how much the trappings of life really mean to us. We have grown in moral stature. More and more of us are coming to see that human happiness cannot be secured by external conditions, that the only true basis for human society is spiritual; and that the pursuit of material improvement is justified only in so far as it tends to remove the hindrances to the good life.

We have seen too much and learned too much in these years of trial to be satisfied with a substitute-religion. If we are to accept a new faith, it must be the real thing. We must believe in certain truths and certain ideals of conduct, not because they serve to promote a higher standard of material welfare, but because they are in accord with the universal law of life. We must hold firmly to the truth that the only real progress is a spiritual progress. For many people this basic faith will continue to be embodied in the creeds of a church. An increasing number, however, will seek it elsewhere than in a particular creed: they will find it in the spiritual experience of mankind as manifested in all the great philosophies and religions; and they will wish to accept it without reference to a theological setting. The virtues of love, truth, justice, and mercy, on which a new social order must be founded, belong to all the higher religions. They have traditional value as part of the Christian heritage: and not so long ago they were almost taken for granted in western civilisation. But now we find ourselves in a world in which they are systematically derided and deliberately crushed. Our first need is to recover and maintain a faith resting on the simplest ethical principles. If an Englishman can judge the temper of his countrymen, it would seem that we are more ready than the other great nations of today to accept such a faith. The prevailing indifference or hostility to religion, which is so often complained of, represents a feeling directed not against religious truths as such but against dogmatic and institutional forms.

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Meanwhile what is to be done about it? Obviously we cannot take public action to force the rebirth of religion. We can only wait for it to happen. We are here outside the region of political planning. But though we cannot create a new faith to order, we can do much to provide conditions favourable to its growth, and we can try to make effective those elementary ethical principles which are generally accepted, in word if not in deed, both by those who call themselves Christians and by those who do not. If we agree—as I think we do—that they must be the foundation of a new and better social order, we must give no less care to instilling them than to drawing up plans for material progress. We can at least remove from our society those features that are in obvious conflict with elementary morality. We can, for instance, free our economic life from the kind of cut-throat competition that leads to commercial dishonesty and the calculated mendacity of advertising; we can resist the commercialisation of leisure with all it entails in exciting the craze for new sensations; we can prevent the mass-civilisation of our time from completely engulfing those areas of privacy which are essential to individual spiritual development.

I say that 'we' should do this and that. By 'we' I mean, in the first place, each one of us in his individual capacity and in his capacity as member of a family or of any other social group. But in the second place, 'we' must be interpreted as meaning the State. Though moral improvement must come ultimately from individual feeling and action, in a politically organised community the cumulative effect of individual wills is given expression in state organisation. No state can be ethically neutral—least of all the modern state whose activities invade the life of the individual at so many points. The social and economic system under which we live is a large-scale illustration of our conception of right and wrong. The nineteenth-century principle of *laissez-faire* in a sense represented the State's attempt to disclaim ethical responsibility for its actions; but the attempt could never succeed. The State which allowed all kinds of cruelty and misery to persist on the ground that it had no right to interfere with the working of the so-called economic laws was not remaining aloof from ethical considerations: it was in fact adopting a definite ethical attitude

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and asserting the moral right of the individual to pursue his private advantage with no regard for the welfare of others.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the State has in modern times assumed control of national education. Since an essential part of education is the inculcation of the principles of conduct, it is obvious that the State must give its sanction to some conception of morality. This conception may be largely negative, as it has been with us for so long. Or it may be positive, as it is in the dictatorships. We are apt to think of a dynamic ethical attitude on the part of the State as being fraught with danger. Actually it need not be. The charge to be brought against the totalitarian states is not that they have imposed on their peoples a positive morality, but that they have imposed on them a false morality.

Actually our British democracy, as it has emerged from the phase of *laissez-faire* economics, has gradually taken on a more and more clearly ethical character. We have come to think of the State not as a remote organisation having the careless aloofness of the Epicurean gods but as the positive instrument of human welfare. It is now the part of the State to perform those duties of charity and mercy that were formerly undertaken, if at all, by private benevolence. It is taken for granted that the State shall relieve poverty and provide for the sick and the aged; we are looking forward to a complete system of social insurance under which the individual shall be guarded as far as humanly possible against the hazards and misfortunes of life. We expect the State to deal with the evils of unemployment and bad housing, to assist family maintenance, to provide maternity and child-welfare services, and, in fact, to do all in its power to promote the happiness of its citizens. Now the State that is the instrument of social service is based on a very definite moral idea, which is that the welfare of each citizen is the responsibility of all, and that we are in fact members one of another. The purely moral idea may be obscured in the clash of politics through the insistence on rights rather than duties, but it is a fact that as a community we are, through our manifold and ever-extending system of social services, putting into practice the principle of human brotherhood.

The moral structure of democracy has also been greatly strengthened during its conflict with the dictatorships. In the

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course of the struggle with one of the most brutal tyrannies the world has ever seen democrats everywhere have been forced, to reaffirm and to fight for those basic principles of their creed which they had come to regard as established and secure; they have once more become the active champions of freedom and the elementary rights of man. Against ruling cliques who treat individual citizens merely as victims to be sacrificed to the Moloch of the State, they have stood fast to defend the sacredness of human personality. Seeing the abyss of horror into which a community can fall when the fundamental human rights are treated as of no account, even the politically indifferent have been made to realise that the articles of the democratic faith are not the musty relics of a creed outworn but the essentials of any tolerable political philosophy.

There can therefore be no doubt about the positive ethical attitude assumed by our democracy today. Nor can it be doubted that this attitude is in harmony with the fundamental ideas of religion, for those ideas are implicit in the democratic creed. Democracy derives its political energy from the ideals of brotherhood, equality, truth, toleration, and respect for the individual—from the ideals, that is, that have come down to us from the merging streams of Christianity and Hellenism. It is not too much to assert that in a genuinely democratic community the Christian virtues are also the political virtues. This is not to say, of course, that the democratic state must be a Christian state in the full sense of the term. What I mean is that the virtues of democracy are also the virtues of that natural religion of goodness which is at the basis of Christian morality.

Thus it may be said that a nation in which the spirit of democracy is fully alive will necessarily display the essential moral virtues; and conversely that a nation wishing to make democracy a reality must first secure the ethical foundations. The faith we need is to be found in those simple moral principles whose acceptance makes both good citizens and good men. When, as a nation, we have recovered this faith, we shall be inevitably led to a new and more vigorous conception of democratic citizenship. We shall think less of liberties to be guaranteed and rights to be satisfied and more about duties to be fulfilled and responsibilities

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to be undertaken; we shall think less about what we can get out of the State and more about what we can put into it. We shall see too that the moral ideas in which democracy is rooted cannot be allowed to sink into neglect as truisms; rather do they need to be preached with religious fervour if they are to prevail against the evil forces at work in the world. The practice of democratic citizenship in its highest form will in fact constitute a religion of conduct making very exacting demands. The social creed of the new democracy will not of course exhaust religious aspirations; men and women will continue to reach out to spiritual conceptions beyond the simple rules of conduct; but in our present phase no other creed can become so great a force for social unity. For a higher faith derived from a new religious philosophy in which spiritual intuitions are allied with a credible theology we must await the fulness of time.

II

Motive Power Through Education

The rebirth of the democratic faith will find its most striking manifestation in the sphere of education, for education is only an extension of politics. The essential relationship of politics to education was clearly stated by the Greeks: 'The chief task of politics', says Aristotle, 'is to produce a certain character in the citizens and to make them good and capable of noble actions.' In modern times the unity of politics and education has been spectacularly demonstrated by the totalitarian states, though on the lowest level and with a debased aim. The principle would indeed have been admitted by the nineteenth-century democrats, but their grasp of it was enfeebled by the influence of the ideal of *laissez-faire* which, carried over into education, produced a negative attitude towards training for citizenship. Thinking, as they did, that it was the duty of government to keep the ring for the struggle of competitive industry, they not unnaturally considered that government should similarly stand aside from the conflict of ideas and leave political education to voluntary, non-official agencies. Today we are all ready to agree that the political inadequacy of modern democracy is the result of educational inadequacy, and that the state which neglects positive training for citizenship does so at its peril. But it has still to be brought home to us that we cannot solve our educational problem until we have solved our political problem. We must know what kind of citizen we want before we can proceed to train him.

We are now entering upon a period of great educational reconstruction. Let us be quite clear that the extent of real educational progress will be conditioned by social and political progress. What is at present lacking in our education is a unifying and directing principle; and this can be supplied only by a

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vigorous political philosophy. The fascist and communist educational systems have been so successful in producing a certain type of citizen because they have obviously served the ultimate purposes of the State, and they have made the fullest demands on the effort and enthusiasm of the young in a clearly defined cause. It is the absence of a similar central aim that has led to the ineffectiveness of our schools and universities for any purpose beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge.

This, I am convinced, is the underlying cause of the feeling of dissatisfaction which, open or unexpressed, is prevalent among those engaged in educational work. In the nature of things teachers will always be troubled by a healthy dissatisfaction with the results they achieve; and, being human, they will find plenty of reasons for their failures in the conditions under which they work. Today we hear them blaming large classes, bad buildings, the tyranny of examinations, and so on. But at the back of all these complaints there is the insistent question, 'What is it all for? What are we really aiming at?' From year to year their task is made more difficult by the multiplication of conflicting claims on their time and effort. They will not find peace of mind and joy in effective work until they feel they are really co-operating in a clear social purpose in which the imparting of knowledge is only a means.

The defects of our present educational system have been pretty well canvassed in recent years, and if I enumerate some of them it is not in order to repeat a familiar indictment but in order to show that these defects can all be ultimately attributed to one cause, namely, the lack of a single, compelling purpose. Democracy has not made clear to itself for what end it is educating its children.

Take first the most glaring evil—the fact that we have for so long allowed the great bulk of the population to go out into the world with no educational guidance after the age of 14. We have been aware of the evil for long enough. We could have done much to remedy it after the first great war if we had put the Fisher Act into effect. But we were daunted by financial and other difficulties. Another attempt will be made under Mr. Butler's Act. But the new Education Act will again remain for years a matter of hope

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rather than of achievement unless we are prepared to take heroic measures for the training of teachers and the provision of buildings and equipment. Why have we not hitherto been ready to make the effort obviously needed to provide adequate educational facilities for the whole population? Surely because of our limited view of the needs and duties of citizenship. With the develop'ment of industrial civilisation we have been forced to see that every child is given a minimum of knowledge and skill to enable him to earn a living. We have considered him as a wage-earner and producer but not as a citizen. If we had really believed that every individual has his contribution to make to the life of the community, and that it is only by increasing the value of this individual contribution that the quality of social life can be raised, we should have let no obstacles prevent us from bringing educational influences to bear wherever possible and for as long as possible; and certainly we should have regarded it as supreme folly to leave boys and girls to their own resources and to the attentions of sporadic voluntary agencies during the most impressionable years of adolescence.

What of the minority who receive secondary and higher education? At the secondary stage there are the generally admitted evils of an overcrowded and badly conceived curriculum, premature specialisation, and the tyranny of examinations. The conventional curriculum is not the result of conscious planning: it has come to assume its present form almost fortuitously. If it is based on any general principle it would seem to be to give the pupil a little of everything and hope for the best. The study of the classics, which still remains a considerable—though diminishing—part of the secondary course, survives from the curriculum of the old grammar schools and public schools, which professed to give a 'liberal' education to be continued at the university. The private academies of the eighteenth century added modern languages and science. In the middle part of the following century the new proprietary boarding and day schools taught—besides the classics—mathematics, foreign languages, and some science to meet the demands of commerce and the requirements of Woolwich and Sandhurst and the Civil Service. The second half of the century witnessed the successful struggle to establish science as a

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main department of instruction. In more recent years the broadening of the conception of culture brought the arts and crafts into the ambit of serious studies. From time to time, also, the pressure of sectional interests has been responsible for other permanent or temporary additions to the time-table: thus the demand for closer commercial relations with Latin America led to the introduction of Spanish; the great advances in biology have added a third science to the traditional chemistry and physics. And so the process of almost uncontrolled growth has gone on; with the result that the school of today is always trying to do too much in too many directions in too little time.

It is not surprising that a school course which has grown by such a haphazard process of accretion should lack a cohesive principle, and should be thought of both by teachers and taught as an aggregation of 'subjects'. The pupil who passes his day in absorbing the prescribed doses of this, that, and the other 'subject' has little or no conception of their inter-relation, and only the vaguest notion of what it is all supposed to lead to. The idea of the prime importance of the 'subject' is reinforced by the present practice of specialisation in teaching. The specialist teacher is naturally convinced of the peculiar cultural value of his department of knowledge or skill, and of the need to defend his preserve against the encroachment of rival specialists. His job is to ensure that his pupils reach the required standard in mathematics, or history, or chemistry; and too often he does so with a blinkered efficiency that is one of the chief obstacles in the way of education. It may thus be said that the whole trend of modern teaching practice is in the direction of the fragmentation of knowledge, and away from its integration for social purpose.

Congestion and lack of cohesion are not, of course, the only defects of the secondary curriculum. It is to be remarked that the course is to a very large extent determined by the requirements of the universities, in spite of the fact that only a small percentage of the pupils pass on to the universities. Again, certain subjects still retain a large share of school time on the ground that they 'train the mind', although the old psychological theory that generalised mental training necessarily results from training in a specific direction has long been abandoned. Further, after all

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their work at an excessive number of subjects most boys and girls go out into the world ignorant of the rights and duties of citizenship and with minds wholly unprepared to cope with the problems that will face them in the world they are about to enter.

But I need not proceed to a detailed criticism of the present day curriculum. The point I wish to make now is that the defects in the secondary course are all ultimately due to the fact that we have no adequate principle of selection. We cannot make a rational decision about what a child should learn until we have formed a much more positive conception than at present of why he should learn anything at all.

The question of the secondary school curriculum is bound up with that of examinations. The school examinations conducted by the universities very largely determine the range and nature of the studies during most of the school period. What is more, they tend to provide the main incentive to learning at the very age at which the need for free and disinterested study is becoming vital. There are differences of emphasis from school to school, of course, but for probably the great majority of school pupils the goal of education must seem to be the passing of examinations. Teachers like to put the blame for this state of affairs on the business men who now as a matter of course demand that candidates for the better sorts of employment shall possess a School Certificate. But have not the teachers themselves helped to create the examination fetish by their policy (always discreetly disavowed) of advertising their examination successes and engaging in systematic rivalry? Are they really nursing in secret a worthy ambition which is being frustrated by the stupidity of parents and business men? If all external examinations were swept away to-morrow, how many schools would be ready with a policy to make effective use of their new-found freedom? I cannot help thinking that the true reason why the teachers submit to the tyranny of examinations is that they do not genuinely want any other controlling principle.

One of the worst results of the influence of the universities on the schools has been the encouragement of premature specialisation. At an age when the mind should be opened wide to receive stimulus and nourishment from all sources, the secondary school pupil is made to limit himself to the specialised studies required

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for the Higher School Certificate and perhaps a university scholarship. He becomes either an 'Arts' or a 'Science' student; and even if he intends to leave school at eighteen or so, he pursues the study of his special subjects on the traditional academic lines imposed by university methods. The result is that the schools are turning out every year on the one hand thousands of students of history, literature, and languages who lack an understanding of scientific method and of the place of science in the modern world, and, on the other hand, thousands of scientific specialists who are illiterate.

For those students who proceed to the universities the process of specialisation is continued and intensified in preparation for the Honours Degree courses which have become the recognised form of study for the best students. The candidate for an Honours Degree confines himself to a single branch of knowledge in which he is trained as a professional worker; and this applies whether he is studying a science, or history, or literature. In so far as the content of its curriculum is concerned, the university of today cannot be said to give an education: it gives instruction by experts in particular fields of knowledge. Students pursue their particular specialisms with the aim of acquiring technical proficiency (in science) and exact scholarship (in arts subjects); and if they graduate with sufficient distinction they may hope to engage in research, which too frequently means amassing superfluous knowledge about matters having no relevance to the central problems of life. It would be absurd, of course, to suggest that university students do not manage to pick up something of an education by the way. Some subjects by their very nature lend themselves to genuine educational purposes; and even the most unpromising subject may be given value by a brilliant teacher. Further, the clash of opinion and personality in undergraduate life—especially in a residential college—is in itself of the highest educational value. But it remains a fact that the university curriculum is not organised according to any adequate educational principle, and it neglects to establish a vital relationship between the lecture-room and the great world outside. And if we ask why our universities are content to turn out specialists and technicians rather than educated men and women, the answer must be that

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we value certain limited capacities rather than the rounded character of the whole man. We think of higher intellectual studies much as we think of technical training at a lower level—as the means of turning out an efficient worker in a world organised for the division of labour. We have lost the understanding that knowledge and technical skill are of value only in so far as they help towards fine living. And so the universities, ideally the centres for studying the art of living, are content to pursue means rather than ends.

I have tried to show that the lack of direction observable in our educational system is only an aspect of the purposelessness of our social life. Until this fact has come home to us no real educational advance will be possible. Yet the tone of much present-day discussion suggests that all we need is sufficiently sweeping administrative action. Let us not delude ourselves with the belief that when all children are given equal educational opportunities without regard to parental income, when the leaving age is raised to sixteen or eighteen, when all slum school buildings are cleared away, and when all school teachers have a university degree, our problems will be solved. These reforms could all be effected within a fairly short period if we were determined to secure them. (Anybody who doubts whether such rapid progress is possible should consider what was achieved in a few years in Russia). But schools can have perfect external arrangements and yet be dead. Their vitality is the measure of the vigour of national life.

If, as I believe, we are in process of recreating a faith by which a democratic society can live, it follows that the education of the future must be based upon that faith. The aim must be to train for democratic citizenship—no more and no less. We must think of education for citizenship not as something incidental but as the central purpose of all educational effort. When we make clear to ourselves what the ideal citizen of a democracy should be like, we realise that such a purpose is as lofty as we could wish. The democratic citizen requires the mental qualities of clear thought, independent judgment, impartiality, and, especially, interest in public affairs: he requires the moral qualities of unselfishness, tolerance, readiness to serve, and devotion to the ideal of human

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freedom. His moral qualities, in fact, are those which are basic to the religious character. An education calculated to produce such a type of citizen will make the severest demands on both teachers and taught. Unlike education for the totalitarian state it seeks to promote the free development of the individual personality within the necessary social setting; for democracy demands the play of individual effort at the most intelligent level. For this reason it requires the greatest tact in method. The principles on which this kind of training can best proceed are only now being worked out. The great thing to be clear about is that the aim will not be achieved by merely adding this or that 'subject' to the curriculum, or by giving sufficiently large doses of 'civics'. It is a matter of remoulding the curriculum in accordance with a criterion of value and a clearly defined end. It is a question of giving unity of purpose to the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge and skill and, above all, of laying the moral foundations of character.

At this point I must make it clear that I do not believe the moral foundations of character can be laid by the methods advocated by the propagandists of the Churches. Those who aim at instituting or restoring 'Christian education' in the State schools are pursuing a will o' the wisp. The giving of more and better religious instruction of the conventional kind offers no real solution of our problem, and we should resist the efforts now being made by pressure groups to get us to accept such a fallacious solution instead of seeking a new approach in the light of social realities. The supporters of institutional Christianity have strong influence in the universities, in the schools, and in government circles, and their political power is clearly seen in the new Education Act. Not only is a daily 'corporate act of worship' made compulsory in all State schools, but religious instruction is required to be given in every school. Moreover, there is to be a drive for more religious teaching of the familiar kind. Such changes are not likely to achieve any notable result. In the circumstances of our time the teaching of Christianity cannot be effectively carried out in State schools; and therefore it cannot provide the principal instrument of moral education.

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I suppose that in the minds of the advocates of 'a return to Christian education' there is a conscious or unconscious nostalgia for the vanished mediaeval civilisation in which the Christian religion provided the unifying principle of society, and in which intellectual and spiritual ideas were brought into a harmony. Without seeking to idealise the social conditions of the Middle Ages, we may with reason regret the passing of a phase of European culture in which men were generally free from intellectual doubts and uncertainties, and scholars set out on the path of learning with a clear goal in view. Christianity was not only the accepted source of all ethical and spiritual teaching; it set out plainly the ultimate objective of study in the schools and the universities; and it established the relative importance of the various branches of the curriculum. The aim of the individual life was salvation; the means of salvation were supplied in the creeds and the sacraments of the Church. It was universally agreed that the purpose of acquiring knowledge was to understand what was written in the scriptures and by the Christian Fathers concerning God's revelation of Himself to man. The various branches of human knowledge were of value only in so far as they assisted the knowledge of God. Philosophy herself was only the handmaid of theology. The vast compilations of universal knowledge characteristic of mediaeval scholarship were very different from modern encyclopaedias. Their enquiries consisted of many lines all converging to a single point and all informed by the same purpose. Daring investigators such as Roger Bacon found it difficult to keep their intellectual activity within the scheme of Christian philosophy; but on the whole the mediaeval mind accepted the restraints imposed by singleness of aim, and culture gained the benefit of unity of purpose.

During the period of the Renaissance the European mind burst the confines within which it had remained for so many centuries. Philosophical and scientific speculation roamed freely on ground that had been previously regarded as forbidden or as shrouded in impenetrable mystery. The human intellect was no longer satisfied to pursue the traditional paths leading to the summit of theological knowledge. It ranged far and wide through vast regions now being revealed by the scientists. Knowledge was

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prized for its own sake; freedom of thought and expression became a right to be won at all costs. As a result of this enormous extension of the frontiers of learning, the compilation of a universal compendium of knowledge ceased to be within the capacity of a single mind. The mediaeval ideal of scholarship survived indeed into the sixteenth century, when Francis Bacon could claim to take all knowledge for his province. But henceforward the principle of the division of labour was applied more and more in the realm of scholarship until specialisation entirely supplanted the old ideal of universalism.

But the most significant change brought about by the modern spirit was the complete separation of secular learning from Christian philosophy. Theology was no longer the queen of sciences; it sank to the position of one among many branches of learning, each of which would make its contribution to the sum of truth. Christian doctrine ceased to be the focal point of intellectual enquiry. Thus the unity of purpose and definiteness of aim that characterised mediaeval culture disappeared. We may look forward to the development of a new integrating principle in our civilisation, but it will obviously not be found in a return to the intellectual hegemony of traditional Christian theology.

In spite of the complete change in the orientation of men's minds in modern times, the leaders of the Churches still seek to persuade us that Christianity can in some way provide the cornerstone of a new educational edifice. But while they assure us that we must work towards the goal of a 'Christian education', they exhibit considerable disagreement about what form this education is to take, and what it may hope to achieve.

As I understand it, a school which gives a true Christian education must make the teaching of religion its chief function and stress above all else the importance of the religious life; it must give full instruction in the articles of the Christian faith; it must train the pupils to take their part in the services and ritual of the Church; and it must practise them in the Christian virtues through the corporate life of the school. Education of this sort will not only give the requisite knowledge for the intellectual apprehension of the faith; it will instil certain principles and habits of conduct; and it may be expected to prepare the ground for the

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growth of true religious feeling. This is the kind of education which the schools belonging to particular religious denominations try to give. In such schools the teachers are convinced and practising members of a particular communion, and the children come from homes that at least nominally adhere to the faith.

But in the vast majority of schools conditions are very different from this and no attempt is made to teach denominational Christianity. Religious teaching is given in odd periods which are generally regarded as being apart from the serious business of the day; the teachers in any one school may belong to various religious creeds or to none at all; a great proportion of the children are brought up in a home atmosphere of indifference to religion. The teaching of scripture is often in the hands of those who have no real desire to do it, and therefore do not do it with conviction. In such circumstances it is small wonder that, generally speaking, religious teaching is a dismal failure.

Of course, an improvement could be effected if, as is now proposed, religious instruction were given only by properly qualified teachers who undertook the work willingly and with enthusiasm. But there still remains the problem of what they shall teach in undenominational schools. Opinion is divided even among Christians. There are those who assert that religious teaching must go beyond merely ethical teaching; it must be specifically Christian in character, though not sectarian. They assume that a body of doctrine common to the various churches can be selected and taught, while the points of difference are ignored.

I do not myself believe that this solution is a genuinely workable one. But in any case what is it hoped to achieve by teaching a nebulous undenominational Christianity in schools devoted to the secular aims of life? Can we hope to secure the only true purpose of all religious teaching, namely to prepare the soil in which the plant of religious experience can take root? It requires an optimism of singular robustness to think so. Yet there are some who believe that, given certain administrative reforms and an improvement in the efficiency of teachers engaged in religious instruction, such an achievement is possible. This is indeed the view of the authors of the Conservative Party's Report on Post-war Reconstruction

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Looking Ahead, 1942); they urge that 'the State must do its best to ensure that every child is given opportunity and help towards the awakening of its religious sense', and they define 'religious sense' as the emotional awareness of the individual of a purpose at once transcending and governing not only his own life but the whole contemporary and terrestrial scene. This touching of the emotions is to be the essential purpose; religious knowledge is of subordinate importance. But surely such an aim, however desirable, is unattainable so long as religion is just one among many subjects studied in an atmosphere that is predominantly secular, so long as the religion offered is a woolly, undenominational Christianity, and so long as the teachers responsible are anything less than dedicated souls with a genuine vocation and special gifts.

There are, however, other advocates of Christian education who propose a more modest aim. In their view all that can be considered as essential and practicable in State schools is that the pupils shall be given a suitable amount of 'religious knowledge'; that is, of course, knowledge about religion. The purpose is, in the words of the Spens Report, to make the children 'aware of the religious interpretation of life'. Such religious teaching, says the Report, must, in a country with a Christian tradition, be based on the study of the Bible. What is the method to be followed? 'The approach to the study of Scripture which we have in mind is historical and objective, the temper and the method of the teaching being such that the teacher's primary purpose will have been attained when he or she has made the pupil understand the meaning of the book which is being studied; and by "meaning" is understood the meaning, so far as it can be ascertained, for those who wrote the book and for those for whom it was written.'¹ The teacher's task as here defined is, it seems to me, of no small complexity and requires considerably greater Biblical scholarship than most teachers—and many parsons—possess; but at any rate it may be said that the aim is the limited one of explaining and assisting the appreciation of a piece of literature.

Such a limited conception of the scope and purpose of religious teaching has a delusive attractiveness for many people because it

¹ *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education*, 1938.

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seems to by-pass the difficulty of doctrinal teaching. In fact, it does nothing of the kind. The Bible, after all, is not an easy book conveying a clear and consistent message to anyone who takes the trouble to read it. The New Testament, which contains the specifically Christian doctrine, cannot be profitably studied without dogmatic interpretation. There are, of course, straightforward passages of narrative and simple ethical teaching; but there are also passages in which ethical truths are clothed in obscure parables; and the message of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels is subtilised in the mystical Gospel of St. John and overlaid with theological argument in the Pauline Epistles. The teacher who reads the New Testament with a class cannot put aside the miraculous element without discussion; nor can he ignore the problem of the person of Jesus as presented in the Gospels. In reply to the inevitable questions about these and other difficulties he has three courses open to him: he can expound the dogma which he personally holds (and he is not allowed to do this in an undenominational school); or he must say that some people believe so-and-so and others something else, and leave it at that; or he must remain silent. I cannot imagine that either the second or the third course would commend itself to any teacher having genuine convictions. The fact is that 'undenominational Christianity' is a completely unworkable intellectual compromise. Unless it starts from a clear dogmatic position (not necessarily the position of the Churches) the study of the biblical record is made ineffective and pointless by doubt, hesitation, and mental reservations. The Norwood Committee, who follow the Spens Report in their recommendations concerning religious education, rather gratuitously take to task those many teachers who refuse to participate in religious instruction. They suggest that this refusal may come from a misconception of what demands are made on them. The Committee may be assured that these teachers know very well why they refuse. They know that the attempt to expound to the intelligent young the comfortable woolly kind of undenominational Christianity which seems to satisfy the collective soul of expert committees is doomed to failure.

In my judgment the most searching and realistic examination of the problem of religious education is that made by Dr. J. H.

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Oldham.¹ He frankly recognises that we are no longer, except in name, a Christian society. 'We have to adjust our thinking to the fact that the country is much more pagan than we have been accustomed to suppose.' Thus the attempt to capture the schools for the systematic inculcation of the Christian faith might have dangerous consequences through the opposition of those who are hostile to Christianity. 'What has to be preserved and re-established in the face of deadly assault is the substance of man's humanity—the values of personal, social and political freedom, of social obligation and responsibility, of neighbourliness and fellowship. These are not values peculiar to Christianity, but they are the presuppositions of a society in which the Christian message can have significance.' In this region of the natural virtues Christians and non-Christians can find common ground. Thus 'the unifying principle of national education must be sought not in a complete Christian interpretation of life but in an agreement about the fundamental values of man's natural life and of a healthy social order'. Dr. Oldham distinguishes between the functions of the Church and those proper to the school. 'To present the Gospel as a call to faith and obedience is the distinctive function and responsibility of the Church. It cannot be assumed that it is the business of the national education system, which aims at equipping future citizens to fulfil their functions in a temporal society, any more than of the government or of organisations of social welfare, to carry out the functions of the Church. The primary concern of the Church is with the ultimate choices of life, and there is, indeed, no greater danger than that this function of the Church should be usurped by the State or the community or the educational authorities. This leads directly to totalitarianism.'

This conclusion—that instruction in the Christian faith is the business of the Churches themselves—is forced on us not only by logic but by the proved failure of the quasi-Christian teaching hitherto given in undenominational schools. Improvement in the quality of teachers and the institution of agreed syllabuses of instruction will touch only the fringe of the problem: at the centre of it is the prevailing attitude of indifference to the Christian creed. On the whole it would be far better for the

¹ *Christian Newsletter*, 19th November, 1941.

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schools to give up the pretence of carrying out a task which in the circumstances of our time cannot be successfully accomplished.

Some would deplore the abandonment of so-called Christian teaching in schools because they foresee adverse effects on the training of character. I believe such fears are groundless. In one aspect at least the change would be beneficial: it would cause the disappearance of a good deal of insincere religious formalism. As for the code of ethics prevailing in schools, this depends hardly at all on specifically Christian teaching. The virtues of honesty, truthfulness, courage and unselfishness are encouraged for their own sake as part of natural goodness; the traditional Christian sanctions of rewards and punishments are seldom, if ever, invoked nowadays.

So far I have done my best to destroy some of the misconceptions about religion in schools. There is too much easy tolerance of the cant and nonsense talked by people who are either ignorant of, or shut their eyes to, what actually goes on in schools. The dead forms of religious teaching to which we still cling are only an excuse for our neglect to provide the genuine moral education on which democracy must rest. Instead of continuing the sham attempt to instil religious doctrines in which only a minority of the community believe, we should address ourselves to the task of inculcating those social virtues and moral ideas in which all true citizens of democracy profess to believe.

The religious teaching of today is a failure because a large proportion of the teachers either refuse to take part in it or do so with no conviction that they are accomplishing anything of real value. We may take it that all except a few eccentric members of the profession accept the ethical principles implicit in the democratic way of life, and are not prevented by intellectual doubts or scruples of conscience from actively propagating them. With the assured co-operation of the teachers we could embark with reasonable hopes of success on the task of laying the moral foundations of democratic citizenship.

How are we to set about it? In spite of a good deal of experiment in various directions we do not yet know as much as we ought about the way to go to work. What should be perfectly clear,

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however, is that the problem is not so much one of method as of attitude. We are not looking for a method of tacking a certain amount of moral training on to the existing curriculum: we need a fresh integrating principle for the curriculum as a whole. Moral education of the kind that will really make good citizens demands a new approach to the whole business of teaching—new, that is to say, so far as the great mass of our schools are concerned. We shall get less guidance from those who pay the conventional lip-service to ‘character training’ than from confessed revolutionaries like A. S. Neill, who, of course, by conventional standards is not a moralist at all. He has no use for religion; he rejects discipline and the usual kind of authority exerted by the old over the young; he leaves children to govern themselves. He believes, in fact, that if they are let alone to pursue their own creative interests, they will actually develop their innate goodness. Yet, although he rejects the traditional forms of moral pressure, Neill is essentially a moralist, since he is all the time concerned with individual character and the provision of suitable environment for individual growth. That is why he attaches little importance to the amount of work his pupils put in at their various ‘subjects’. ‘We are not interested’, he says, ‘in what a child knows; only what a child is.’

That, I am sure, is the right attitude whatever we may think of Neill’s particular methods of dealing with children. And it is a revolutionary attitude. In spite of all the protestations dutifully made on Speech Days, the vast majority of schools—including those that give prominence to character training in their prospectuses—are interested primarily in what a child knows and only incidentally in what a child is. In practice teachers make it their main job to see that every pupil acquires the standard amount of knowledge and skill in the usual directions. Of course, they must interest themselves more or less in his character and general mental development, but too often this interest arises merely from the need to discover what is hindering the process of absorbing the necessary quantity of Maths., or Latin, or History.

The teacher in the ordinary State school will reply that anyhow it is impossible for him to be a child psychologist and moral guide personally interested in every one of a class of fifty, forty, or even thirty pupils. To which, of course, there is no answer. The

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standards of staffing hitherto considered adequate, necessarily tend to reduce education to little more than mass-instruction. A drastic reduction in the size of classes is indispensable to any notable educational advance. But even while we are waiting for this blessed consummation, some steps towards the revolution could be taken by relaxing the pressure of learning. The standards of knowledge expected to be reached at the successive stages of the school course are quite arbitrary, and might well be lowered. Examination requirements both at the secondary and the university level have risen to a point at which they impose far too great a strain on those who take them. The average boy or girl conscientiously pursuing the secondary course has no time to stand and stare, much less to sit and think. Time set free by reduction in the amount of book-learning required could be made use of both in and out of school for occupations of more importance in the development of character. And, during lesson-time, teachers would feel more free to indulge in those digressions from the straight and narrow path of the syllabus which can be of the highest educational value.

If we think of every child first of all as a potential citizen and only secondarily as a potential scholarship-winner or black-coated worker, we shall make it our main business to provide the right stimulus and the right opportunities for the development of his individual character in the membership of a community having certain clearly defined ideals. The best way of teaching him the social virtues is to give him the chance of practising them. For this purpose the community life of the school is all important. This can be organised so as to encourage unselfishness, readiness to accept responsibility, and willingness to serve others not only within the school society but in the world outside. As a preparation for democratic citizenship it is obviously desirable to introduce as wide a measure of self-government as possible. Progressive schools have already carried out a good deal of pioneer work on these lines, so that the difficulties and dangers to be encountered as well as the positive results to be achieved are by now pretty well known.¹

The need for a developed community life as the main instrument of moral education is often adduced as an argument for the wide

¹ See, for instance, J. H. Simpson: *Sane Schooling*; F. C. Happold: *Towards a New Aristocracy*.

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expansion of the boarding-school system. The boarding school has the undoubted advantage of giving the schoolmaster complete control of the life and environment of his pupils for twenty-four hours a day during term time, and thus enabling him to create the kind of society in which his ideals can best be fostered. But I am not convinced that even this weighty advantage compensates for the removal of a child from his family and the normal life of the world during the greater part of the year. (Of course, if the home life is unsatisfactory, the boarding school is to be preferred). I doubt whether any school except the very best is fit to be trusted with the complete supervision of a child, day in and day out—and not all schools will ever be of the very best. Moreover, it is bad for some children—perhaps for all—to be constantly in company of the herd. A boy needs his periods of privacy when he can think his own thoughts, occupy himself in any way that interests him, or even loaf about and do nothing. And the effect of boarding-school life on the teacher is often overlooked. How long can he be expected to retain his freshness and his intellectual quality in conditions which give him no respite from the society of the immature and limit his interests to the doings of a narrow community?

Moral training by means of community life is indirect in its working. Is there a place for training of a direct kind—that is, for moral exhortation? Victorian schoolmasters of the type of Dr. Arnold attached great importance to the sermon as a form of moral influence. Nowadays, however, this kind of teaching is at a discount. We realise that preaching at the young is only too likely to set up a resistance in their minds and to do more harm than good. Not that the direct assertion of ethical principles is always valueless. In the mouth of the right person at the right time it may have a powerful effect. What is important seems to be that the exhortation should arise naturally and urgently out of a particular occasion.

But in general it is true to say that moral ideas cannot be taught as matters of fact. Moral truth—as Karl Mannheim so rightly insists¹—is personal truth: it unfolds in the process of living. This process cannot be forced, though it can be assisted. The pace of

¹ Address to the Summer School of the Association for Education in Citizenship, 1943.

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growth varies enormously as between individuals. Mannheim stresses the value of free discussion as a method of moral training. He finds that boys and girls from the age of about fourteen are generally ready to be interested in ethical questions, and he believes in confronting young people with concrete problems of society and letting them know the different views held about them in real life. It is a good thing to give the adolescent the opportunity of talking about his personal problems and of stating the ethical ideas so far developed by his short experience of life. Living discussion has a cathartic value for him: when he has said what is on his mind, perhaps rather bitterly or violently, he undergoes a spiritual cleansing that transforms his attitude and makes it possible for him to co-operate rather than merely oppose or state a personal grievance. There is evidently need to explore the possibilities of the method of free discussion. To use it with success will demand both skill and tact.

Merely to arouse interest in ethical problems is something; but we must go further than this and strive to familiarise boys and girls with certain moral ideals. In our reaction from Victorian methods of moral preachment we tend to leave the use of example in undeserved neglect. Yet in this age when the trivial and the worthless in character and achievement are given the widest publicity in the pulp press and the literature of the films, and are even held up to admiration, it is more than ever necessary that we should familiarise the young with examples of fine living. Sir Richard Livingstone has said some wise things on this topic, and has suggested ways in which boys and girls can be given an acquaintance with the first-rate in character and life through the channels of history and literature. In treating history in this way we should be reverting to the attitude of the days before it became a science, when its function was generally regarded as being to teach by means of examples. History for the historians must mean primarily the dispassionate inquiry into fact; history for schools might well mean, to a much greater extent than is common to-day, the pageant of the makers of civilisation. If less attention were paid to the morally insignificant facts in the record of the past, more might be given to the men and women whose lives have notably influenced the moral progress of mankind. Social

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history, which receives increasing attention nowadays, lends itself naturally to the moral approach, for tracing the progress of social reform necessarily raises all sorts of ethical problems. These problems can be given full treatment, and the character and achievement of the great social reformers can be stressed. As regards literature, the problem is again one of selection. It is possible to choose books to be read in schools not only because they are within the range of immature minds, or are commonly 'set' for examinations, or are standard examples of particular literary types, but also because they exhibit nobility in thought and action. We cannot here pursue the matter in detail: but before leaving it, it is perhaps desirable to reassure readers who are in strong revolt against Victorianism that it is not proposed that we should revert to an old-fashioned and priggish moralism. Teachers of history and literature are not to be expected to poke about for moral lessons in everything they handle. What they are asked to do is to accept responsibility for seeing that their pupils are acquainted with the finest in human thought and character. Examples of moral greatness—like the masterpieces in the arts—can be left to make their own impression.

Can the boundaries of literature be extended to include suitable portions of the great philosophical and religious writings? Is it possible to replace the conventional Bible reading and vapid commentary by a genuine study of moral and religious ideas? Sir Richard Livingstone has made the suggestion that senior pupils of secondary schools should be given an introduction to Greek thought through translations of parts of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. The discussion of the characteristics of Greek humanism could be made to lead naturally to a study of the Christian view of life to be derived from the portrait of Christ as presented in the Synoptic Gospels. As to the difficulty of teachers who are uncertain about their religious beliefs Sir Richard says: 'There are certain things about Christianity which almost any intelligent, candid and serious person believes and can teach, and anyone who does not believe them may indeed teach mathematics or science or pure linguistics, but, in school at least, had better leave history and literature alone.'¹ The teacher's personal difficulties are no

¹ *The Future in Education*, pp. 124-5.

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doubt minimised when he is dealing with older pupils—provided he is free to be quite outspoken and candid. Certainly there can be no gainsaying the logic of the demand that the young should be made acquainted with the ideas of both Hellenism and Christianity, the twin sources of western culture. One feels, however, that the task is more formidable than Sir Richard Livingstone supposes: it would require a greater amount of time and attention than the present examination-ridden school is usually willing to devote to an 'extra'. But that of course is no argument against its desirability. We have been considering what should be done in a school which concerns itself with the ends of life more than with the means. In such a school the time for a study of the literature of ethics and religion would certainly be found, and that study would be at the centre of the senior course.

III

A Curriculum for the New Democracy

Mr. Butler's Education Act marks an epoch in educational progress. It provides for nearly all the administrative changes that have been demanded by informed opinion in recent years. Every child is to be given the education suited to his needs; nursery schools are to become general; the school age is to be raised; secondary education is widened in scope and given greater variety, and is unified with primary and further education in a single administrative system; compulsory part-time education up to the age of eighteen is to be instituted; adult education is to be developed; there is to be reform in the methods of recruiting and training teachers.

One administrative problem, it is true, has been shirked by Mr. Butler, namely, that of the common school. It is a problem that cannot be ignored in any discussion on education for democracy. True democracy is incompatible with class-division based on wealth. Yet there is such a class-division in our society; and it is perpetuated chiefly by the segregation of the child population into two types of school—the private preparatory and public school on the one hand, and the State-controlled primary and secondary school on the other. It is evident that, if we are to achieve unity of spirit in a regenerated democracy, the system of one school for the rich and another for the poor must disappear. But it seems equally evident that the time for its disappearance is not ripe. In spite of the vigorous agitation by many educational theorists and by politicians of the Left I doubt whether the position of the independent schools has yet been seriously shaken. It is not merely that the privileged classes are reluctant to abandon their chief bulwark of exclusiveness; the great body of professional and technical workers and the middle ranks of

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business men are just as reluctant to forgo the chance of giving their children a place inside that bulwark. Snobbery and an excessive consideration for worldly success are not confined to the topmost economic levels of society. On the other hand it is not surprising that parents who can afford to pay for private schooling should hesitate to send their children to a local primary school which may be little better than a slum, or to a secondary school in which facilities for games and other activities are far below the standards of the public school. The controversy² concerning boarding schools and day schools which inevitably arises from discussion of the public schools tends to obscure the essential social issue. A great deal of cant as well as a great deal of sense is talked about the relative educational value of the boarding school and the day school; and in the heat of the debate we should not lose sight of the fundamental fact that the public schools are mostly residential not because the parents are all passionately convinced of the supreme educational importance of the residential principle, but because, if the children of the scattered privileged minority are to be educated together, they must of practical necessity be sent away from home to suitable centres. Mr. Butler's postponement of the problem of the public schools will no doubt be ascribed to the influence of the vested interests and a small group of Tory reactionaries; but do not let us forget the influence of a big section of the middle classes, who are by no means ready for a thoroughly democratic reorganisation in the school system.

Even though the new Act does not tackle the question of the public schools, it promises so much that we may be tempted to forget that its provisions are limited mainly to matters of organisation and control. These are only the externals of education. When they have been settled, there remains the all-important question of what we propose to do with the children in the new and better conditions to which we look forward. We have discussed the need to make moral education a reality underlying the whole of the work of the schools. We must now ask what changes are required in the content of the curriculum. How can the subject matter of instruction be made to assist in creating a healthy democracy? For the highest form of citizenship must rest on an intellectual as well as a moral basis. It is true that a person of humblest mental

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capacity can be a model citizen within limits; but for those who are to influence policy and initiate social action knowledge is as necessary as right principles.

The problem of what we shall teach is of especial importance at the secondary stage and in the schools which deal with the ablest children. Criticism of the secondary curriculum led to the appointment of the Norwood Committee, which reported in 1941. In spite of much that is sound and valuable in the Norwood Report one feels that it is informed by a disappointing conservatism of outlook. The Committee fail to link the educational problem satisfactorily with the political problem of our time. It is true that by the phrasing of their statement of principles they show that they have this vital connection in mind; but they do not treat it as the crux of the whole matter—which indeed it is; on the contrary, they lay a restraining hand on those who try to do so.

Their 'basic principle of the curriculum' is unimpeachable. 'The purpose of education is to provide the nurture and the environment which will enable the child to grow aright and to grow eventually to full stature, to bring to full flowering the varying potentialities, physical, spiritual, and intellectual of which he is capable as an individual and as a member of society' (p. 55). Here we have the explicit recognition of the complementary ideas of the individual and of society. Education must always serve the needs, on the one hand, of the individual, and, on the other, of the community of which the individual is a member. In theory, no doubt, the two requirements may be held in perfect balance; in practice it is almost inevitable that the balance should be tipped in favour of one or the other according to political circumstances. The English democratic tradition has been to think more of the child than of the State, or rather, while rightly concentrating on the child, to ignore the claims of the State. The Committee are in line with this tradition in their emphatic affirmation that education must be 'child-centred'. They do not indeed overlook the social aspect of education; but it seems to me that they do not allow sufficiently for the critical changes taking place in our society, and therefore they give too little weight to training for citizenship. In the world crisis through which we are passing democracy is struggling for survival; for the period ahead of us,

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therefore, the means of ensuring social cohesion assume supreme importance. There are several passages in the Report in which the authors give their blessing to education for citizenship. My complaint is, first, that their support seems to come less from conviction than from the desire to show that they have considered all sides of the question; and secondly, that they fail to make use of the idea of education for citizenship as a principle of selection and direction.

The principle of education for democratic citizenship, when once accepted, determines not only the moral attitude of the educator but the kind of knowledge that he will wish to give his pupils. If these pupils are eventually to play an intelligent part in the life of the community they must begin as soon as possible to acquire a fair picture of the world around them, and they must develop certain intellectual interests immediately related to public affairs. They will require, for instance, an appreciation of the main trend of recent world history and of the chief problems of international politics; they will want to understand something of the working of our economic and industrial system; and, of course, if they are to assist effectively in working the political machinery of democracy, they must grasp the essentials of parliamentary and local government. As the Norwood Committee insists, and as will be generally agreed, these matters for the most part do not come within the range of the younger pupils in school. But knowledge of this kind should surely form part of the body of learning to which the course of education is directed; and the ordinary school subjects even in the earlier stages, should be taught with this end in view.

At what age should we expect pupils to come to essential social studies? In my view, it should be in the sixth form of the secondary school. It is at the age of roughly sixteen to eighteen that the adolescent generally opens his eyes to the significance of movements and events, and his interest is aroused in social and political ideas. He can now be given a curriculum containing a core of social studies, on which his developing intellectual interests can be exercised. We need not expect too much even of the sixth form pupil: he is still immature and he has had little experience of life. But he will be ready to assimilate important factual knowledge; and the great point is that he can be encouraged to address his

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mind to central contemporary problems. As to the form and method of these studies, we must again not ask too much: it is unwise to require pupils to embark on academic courses in economics, political theory, and so on. It is far better to tackle special themes, if possible, of topical character; they should be dealt with in concrete fashion and the ideas they suggest should be followed as far as possible into the areas of the various 'subjects'—history, geography, politics, ethics. The pupils are still at the stage at which descriptive work and discussion related to a concrete situation are more valuable than strictly theoretical analysis.

Such a nucleus of social study, together with training in the use of English, and the study of literature, should be included in the course for all sixth forms in the grammar schools and in the technical schools of the future. The present specialisation, with the rigid division into Arts and Science and Technology, should be done away with. In the later years of the course a bias in the direction of science, languages, history or technology should be allowed in accordance with the interests and aptitudes of the pupils; but it should be no more than a bias. Such a reform would no doubt necessitate the lowering of the examination standards in individual subjects; but that is by no means to be deplored. The standards are at present too high. In order to memorise the mass of facts and to acquire the elaborate mathematical and scientific techniques required for the present higher school and scholarship examinations, pupils have to work under excessive pressure, and they have far too little leisure for the cultivation of their individual interests. And after all, the only reason for this over-pressure is in the alleged requirements of the universities, to which only a minority of the pupils proceed.

In the matter of examinations, I am prepared to go further and seriously advocate their complete abolition in their present form. The harm they do is incalculable. We have all, of course, heard of exceptional schools in which examinations are given no special importance and are 'taken in the pupils' stride'; but all who have inside experience also know that in the vast majority of schools examinations determine the syllabus, prescribe the goal of effort, and reduce education to more or less efficient cramming. Teachers need to be saved from themselves. So long as the examination

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system exists they will disastrously compete with one another in getting results; if it were swept away, they would be forced to make clear to themselves their educational aim and win their pupils' co-operation through their interest rather than through their fear of failure in a test.

In view of the importance of the final stage of the secondary school course, it is essential that as many pupils as possible should stay at school for sixth form work. It is now unfortunately the rule rather than the exception for grammar school pupils to leave before the age of eighteen: the majority, of course, leave at sixteen plus, after taking School Certificate. Every means will therefore have to be taken to prolong school life. It should be much easier to do this when the school-leaving age is raised to fifteen (sixteen) for all. The maintenance allowances which are necessary should be made generously available. For clever pupils especially, the years between sixteen and eighteen are of crucial importance.

If the sixth form work is to have the clear character of training for citizenship, the curriculum of earlier years must be conceived as preparation for it. In the lower and middle school the pupils are necessarily occupied mainly in acquiring the tools of learning through mastering the elements of the conventional subjects: they need not be expected to see how those tools are afterwards to be used. But as soon as sufficient progress has been made in the knowledge of basic facts and principles it is possible to turn the attention of pupils to the relevant social aspects of the matters they are being taught. At a fairly early stage in their study of science they can be brought to consider certain aspects of the impact of science on the life of the community. The history lesson will present constant opportunities for relating problems of the past to those of our own day. A visit to a modern factory or farm will lead quite naturally to the presentation of industrial and economic problems which, simply and concretely treated, are quite within the grasp of even the younger pupils. At this stage, however, what should be aimed at is not so much the giving of facts or the discussion of theories as the encouragement of a certain attitude of mind. To do this satisfactorily will require a new handling of the conventional 'subjects'. History, geography,

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science and the rest must not be treated simply as branches of pure knowledge in each of which the classes are expected to reach a measurable standard of attainment. The teacher must be free to range along any paths to which a particular problem leads him, and those paths will often pass beyond the bounds of one 'subject' into others. I do not mean that teaching should become one long series of digressions, but rather that, when a theme having important social implications crops up, it should be permissible to treat it fully as a theme without strict regard to barriers between 'subjects'.

The changes I have indicated as desirable in the content of the secondary school course, especially in its upper reaches, can scarcely be made by teachers of the prevailing type. A very different outlook and set of interests is demanded. The specialist teacher of a single subject, who is now the rule in secondary schools, has generally had so narrow a training that he is unfitted both intellectually and by inclination to deal broadly with a correlated body of knowledge over-running the limits of the conventional subjects. There may always be a legitimate place for a certain number of specialists in, for instance, languages, music and art; but the typical secondary master of the future should be one who has followed a broad path of learning at the university and is qualified to deal with three or four related subjects; and in any case he should regard himself not as a teacher of subjects but as an educator. The Norwood Committee is, I believe, perfectly right in advocating a return to something like the old system of form masters, under which a particular form was taken in two or three subjects by a single teacher who could thus effectively supervise the general progress of his boys, and, moreover, was able to exert a strong moral influence over them. The only effective means of correlating subjects is to have them dealt with by a single teacher.

Reform of the education and professional training of teachers is thus of fundamental importance. In so far as the training of teachers is associated with university work, reform depends on the reorganisation of university education. Here is indeed a problem. The universities are fully committed to a policy of

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training specialists and technicians; and in spite of growing criticism in recent years they show little readiness to change it. The British Association's Report on University Education (1942), if adopted, would liberalise the science courses; a similar scheme should be worked out in the arts courses and the technical courses. The difficulty, of course, will be to break a vicious circle and find university lecturers capable of handling studies conceived on broader lines. For this reason, if for no other, we are likely to have to wait a long time before the university authorities make a move. The Ministry of Education could hasten reform by insisting that the education of teachers should be non-specialised and such as to fit them to be educators rather than subject-crammers.

So far we have been considering the pupils of the best ability in grammar schools and technical schools—the class from whom university students are drawn. Outside the ranks of these pupils is the very much larger group of those who would have left the elementary schools at fourteen and in the future are to have a secondary course at a 'modern' school up to the age of, eventually, sixteen. The same principle should govern their curriculum, though its practical application must be different. The approach will vary according to the quality of the pupils; but for all it will be less academic, and for those of the lowest grade it must be very simple and practical. But whatever else there is in the syllabus of the last school years, there must be at the core a course devoted to citizenship; this course can be continued and amplified in the county colleges up to the age of eighteen.

High hopes are based on the raising of the school age and the institution of compulsory part-time education. Those who lack professional knowledge of the difficulties are apt, in fact, to expect too much. The large group of boys and girls of low mental ability who will have to stay at school for a further year or so will not prove tractable material for the educationist. They will certainly not absorb much in the way of book-learning. They will gain most from physical recreation, practical hobbies, and club activities; and, of course, they will be in contact with the health services. As regards part-time further education, experience of continuation classes after 1918 showed how difficult it is to handle young people when they are conscious of having left school and gone out into

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the world as wage-earners. The teaching in the new county colleges will have to be extraordinarily skilful, resourceful, and sympathetic if worth-while results are to be achieved. It will be no small problem to find and train suitable teachers for this type of work.

The county colleges are to work in association with the Youth Service. Rightly handled, the Youth Service can become a valuable means of fostering self-discipline and a sense of responsibility; and it can do much to arouse interest in local and national affairs. Begun during the war, when there was little leisure for young people, when suitable premises and leaders were hard to come by, the movement has not yet had a fair chance to demonstrate its full possibilities. The real test of its usefulness will come when these difficulties are removed.

We have been considering how to instil the principles of citizenship through the normal school and university courses. We have still to examine the field of adult education; and it may well be that here we shall find awaiting us the greatest of our unused opportunities. Hitherto we have made a serious mistake in concentrating our educational effort almost exclusively on the period of adolescence. We have tacitly assumed that education ceases for the vast majority when they leave school, and for the few when they leave the university. If challenged, we should have been ready enough to admit the truism that education is a life-long process; but we have evidently acted on the principle that, so far as the provision of educational facilities is concerned, it is only the early part of that process that really matters. One of the reasons for the overcrowding of the curriculum has been the fear that, if the pupils are not given the chance of learning this or that subject 'essential to a good education' while they are at school, they will never have it afterwards. This also accounts for the very general tendency to force young pupils to deal with matters which are beyond their capacity at their stage of development. Sir Richard Livingstone (in *The Future of Education*) has done a great service in calling attention to this defect in our educational method. He points out that literature and history, which form part of the school course; and subjects like politics, economics, ethics, and philosophy, which are introduced at the university stage, all require

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for their proper study and appreciation an experience of life which the immature student does not possess. It does not follow, of course, that the immature obtain no benefit from the study of such subjects. Clever students certainly achieve something of value: they assimilate a good deal of factual knowledge as a necessary basis, and they sharpen their wits and learn the technique of discussion by handling a particular set of important social, moral or aesthetic problems. The less clever ones tend merely to learn the facts and to memorise second-hand opinions. But the point is that even the best pupils cannot with their lack of experience appreciate the deeper significance of the human problems they so glibly discuss; hence the study of literature, history, and the social sciences which is most fruitful is that which is undertaken in adult life.

Now it is just these ideas—the ideas forming the subject-matter of the ‘humanities’ and the social sciences—that are of capital importance in the intellectual equipment of the good citizen. Clearly then we should provide far more encouragement than at present for the study of these subjects after the period of formal education, when most benefit can be derived. Let us by all means open the eyes of the young in schools and colleges to the social and political problems of the modern world, and let us see to it that especially the most intelligent are given such knowledge of facts and theories as can be assimilated and turned to account later. But at this stage the study of social, ethical, and political ideas can be no more than preparatory: it is the sowing of the seed which will come to fruition with widening experience of life and conduct. Those whose interest in the vital problems of citizenship has been aroused in their youth should be given opportunity to study them in later years when theory can be illuminated by practice.

The task of harnessing adult education to the essential purposes of democracy has scarcely been attempted in this country. Efforts in the field of adult education are dispersed and unco-ordinated. Local education authorities carry on a good deal of work in evening institutes; but there is an absence of any general purpose outside the utilitarian one. Most of the classes are concerned not with education as such but with preparation for technical and professional examinations and for commercial careers. There are,

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of course, classes of a purely cultural character, but the number of students attending them is a microscopically small proportion of the population. The lack of appetite for the fare provided by the education authorities is not surprising in view of the fact that it is offered in the uninviting surroundings of school classrooms by teachers who are usually already tired with a day's work. The Workers' Educational Association has done notable work in providing courses of serious study on academic lines for working people who for any reason have failed to receive the normal higher education; but the total number attending these classes is relatively small: the number of students in 1938-9 was nearly 70,000. University Extension Classes cater for a limited number of students interested in cultural subjects. We also have a small number of residential colleges of adult education like Coleg Harlech and the Woodbrooke Colleges; but few people outside educational circles have ever heard of them. Valuable work is being done by the B.B.C. by means of its talks for discussion groups; many listeners are thus encouraged to give serious thought to important current topics. But it is easy to exaggerate the educational value of the discussion group: it will do much to stimulate interest; it may also encourage the idea that uninformed chatter is a substitute for thorough study. The biggest experiment in adult education has been made in the armed forces during the war. Great ingenuity and enthusiasm have been brought to bear in organising classes and winning their interest in a wide variety of topics. But in the extremely difficult circumstances in which service education has to be carried on it would be foolish to expect very great results of the kind that peace-time teachers would look for. Perhaps the chief beneficial effect of all this activity will be to give wide currency to the idea that it is not altogether unnatural for adults to pursue educational courses.

What we need, indeed, is a changed attitude towards adult education. We shall have to build up a tradition that it is right and proper for adults to come together in study groups, and that it is one of the duties of a citizen to fit himself by study to make an intelligent contribution to the solution of contemporary social problems. I do not suggest that there will ever be a large proportion of adults who are willing to give up time and energy to

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this kind of work. We must look for students mainly among the most intelligent classes. Experience shows that many of those who leave secondary and technical schools are very ready to pursue more thoroughly the intellectual interests aroused at school. With a change in the character of university courses, we might expect university graduates to be ready to take greater interest in the social sciences—or at least the social implications of their special branch of learning, when their period of non-specialised training is completed. Among older people there are those whose professional experience has given them special insight into particular problems and who are ready to discuss their work in relation to the needs of the community at large. Civil servants, local government officers, doctors, architects, industrialists, can profitably come together to consider their special problems. If the minority of superior ability could thus be brought within the ambit of adult education much would be done to strengthen the intellectual leadership on which the health of democracy depends.

But if we are to make adult education—of the kind which has no commercial value—a really important factor in our cultural life, we must make it far more attractive than it is at present. As conditions are now, it is no wonder that only the few really enthusiastic and determined seekers after knowledge take advantage of the facilities offered. Classes for adults should not generally be held in ordinary school buildings. Attractive rooms should be provided in suitable cultural centres; and students should be given the amenities of a club. As the provisions of the new Education Act are brought into force, a great deal of new building will be required to provide for the expanded educational services. It is to be hoped that the needs of adult classes will be borne in mind. The Ministry of Education has already made some suggestions in its circular on Community Centres.

The tradition in this country has been that adult education is conducted in the evenings in leisure time after the working day. Admirers of the People's High Schools, which have had such a remarkable influence on the national life of Denmark, are urging that we should adopt a similar system of residential colleges, at which men and women could spend a continuous period of study as members of a community. Incidentally, we should in this way

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find an excellent use for the numerous large country houses that nobody wants nowadays for ordinary residential purposes. There is much to be said for a system which entails a complete break with the routine of working life for a period and enables the student to give undivided attention to the things of the mind in an atmosphere of serious inquiry. The main difficulty at first would be to get employers to accept the principle that members of their staff should be given leave of absence for this purpose.

While we should do everything possible to encourage among adult students the disinterested study of the humanities and the social sciences, we should also make better provision for the needs of those young people who, while at work, are qualifying themselves for technical, professional and commercial careers. By suitable changes in the syllabuses of the examinations the work done by these students could be given much greater educational value, and in particular it could be related to the needs of citizenship. Many members of the Civil Service and the Local Government Service study for examinations to secure promotion: it would be a simple matter to ensure that they should all acquire some knowledge of sociology. Students of banking, insurance, architecture, surveying, and so on should be asked not merely to qualify themselves in purely technical matters but to put their vocational specialisation into its social setting. But if students are to be asked to carry their studies beyond the strict requirements of technical competence, they should be given the time in which to do it. After all, the present arrangement by which young people in many vocations are expected to do a full day's work and qualify themselves by study in their leisure time is unreasonable. Until they have passed their qualifying examinations they should be regarded primarily as students rather than as workers, and their working hours in office or workshop should be made sufficiently short to enable them to give proper attention to their theoretical work. In this way not only would the standard of professional attainment be improved, but their courses of study would have far greater educational value.

IV

The Cultural Background

It is a remarkable thing that in the official pronouncements on education and in the many special reports of advisory committees on educational matters no serious notice has yet been taken of those powerful cultural influences emanating from sources other than the regular school system, the B.B.C., and the recognised voluntary agencies. Yet we live in an age when we may well doubt whether the teaching profession counts for as much in moulding character and determining social attitudes as do the journalists, the film magnates, and the practitioners in advertising. These experts in mass-psychology never cease to play on the public mind; and their appeal is made not only to the adult population who are supposed to think for themselves but also to the young who are undergoing formal schooling, and whose minds are still in the most plastic stage. I say, then, that it is remarkable that the State which assumes responsibility for the formal education of its citizens remains apparently unconcerned about the immensely potent agencies of entertainment and propaganda characteristic of our time.

The explanation must surely be that we still only imperfectly realise the revolutionary social change brought about in the course of this century by the rapid invention and vast development of the mechanism of communication and hence of propaganda and cultural influence. We are never tired of talking about the marvellous transformation wrought by the scientists in our physical environment, but we give far less attention to the equally marvellous transformation of our mental environment. The inventions which have enabled millions of people throughout the world to be brought under the same psychological appeal of the most penetrating kind have produced a completely new social

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situation. The power over men's minds that can now be wielded by a single man or group of men is simply terrifying in its extent and subtlety. The various forms of mass entertainment have revolutionised individual outlook and social habits. The great majority of people attend the cinema as regularly as their grandfathers attended church or chapel. There must be few who do not spend some part of the day in listening to the wireless. Cheap reading-matter is now available to all on an unprecedented scale; and the syndicated newspapers with circulations of millions are vehicles not only of news but of very effective popular entertainment. The press, too, is the chief medium of commercial advertising, which has become an increasingly important factor in creating social attitudes. People's minds are open as never before to ideas and suggestions from quarters far outside their range of personal experience.

Up to a couple of generations ago the family and local custom and tradition played a dominant part in moulding individual character; and local custom was intimately associated with religion. The only other important social forces besides those of formal education were the platform and a press of limited circulation and independent and varied proprietorship. Today the influences of the family, of tradition, and of the Churches have become seriously weakened, and they are exerted in competition with the great commercial organs of entertainment and propaganda which operate with a minimum of moral responsibility. The ideas propagated with the greatest power are those that suit the purposes of the world of commerce.

The developments to which I refer have proceeded further in the democracy of the United States than in our own, and the leaders of American opinion are fully alive to the social danger. I quote from the report of a Joint Committee of the Faculty of Harvard College and of the Graduate School of Education:

'The tendency of all of them [newspapers, magazines, cinema, and (especially) radio], in part even the conscious effort of those responsible for these instruments, is to cajole and lull readers, onlookers or listeners into a permanent state of unquestioning receptivity; to prevent their becoming reasoning, critical beings; to standardise them as consumers of goods and of entertainment,

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and even to standardise them as voters, to make them eat, drink, wear, buy, believe, think, live and die alike. Perhaps the purveyors of mass-communication, sometimes spoken of as "amusements", or "occupations of leisure time", offer a sort of escape from the uncertainty and insecurity we have already mentioned. They *appear* to offer answers to the baffling questions that face young people today. The "success story", the barrage of advertising of nostrums to cure every ill, real, imagined, or invented by the advertisers, and to allay every doubt, have undoubtedly a certain success. Conceivably, movies and radio might be used as partners of the schools in educating adolescents for living in the world today, but at present they have also an opposite and dangerous effect. Such answers as they give are stereotyped, ready-made, and romanticised. In truth, they do not give answers, but anodynes, and they make the task of the schools, whose purpose it is to develop individual talent, even more difficult. Compared with the instruments of mass-communication in certain other countries, the American newspaper, radio, movies, and magazines are not standardised, but it would be misleading to avoid the fact that these instruments, from the point of view of an individualised citizenry, must be regarded as possibly creating, in all innocence, the kind of standardisation which leads to an intellectual totalitarianism perhaps as dangerous as political totalitarianism and certainly more insidious, since those in control of these mediums are not publicly known, screened as they are behind the glamour of "names". But the truth that stereotyping is the deadly enemy of education in any true sense is never more applicable than in the case of young people in the amusement world of today.¹

It will hardly be denied that the ideals most firmly implanted in people's minds today are those of the film world. And what are these ideals? This is what Roger Manvell writes in *Film*:

'Certain themes are implicit in most pictures (American and British alike, but more vividly in American) and might be listed as follows:

(a) Wealth in the abstract is a good thing.

¹ *The Training of Secondary School Teachers*, Harvard University Press, 1942, pp. 4-5.

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- (b) Luxury, especially associated with women, is normal.
- (c) The full-time pursuit of women by unoccupied business men and rich young rulers is normal.
- (d) The desks of high-power executives are always clear.
- (e) Fathers spoil their daughters with money gifts.
- (f) Men are the source of money for women.
- (g) The desirability of the night-club-with-cabaret life.
- (h) A sock in the jaw is an honest man's answer.
- (i) Men should appraise women by externals, with close-ups of essentials.
- (j) Women should be judged satisfactory on the basis of desirability.
- (k) Sex is probably the most important sensation in life.
- (l) Women can be come-hither till you don't know where.
- (m) Women may appraise men by externals and invite intimate attention at speed.
- (n) Things of the spirit are either funny, eccentric, charlatan, or ever so wonderful. (Art is usually debunked as artiness, religion as mania, mysticism as a yearn in soft focus).
- (o) Reformers are either harmless saints or agitators. (No controversy, please—Promoter and Censor).
- (p) Brainless patriotism is preferable to national self-criticism.
- (q) To be foreign is to be under suspicion. To be Eastern is to be horrific.
- (r) Life is a lark if you have the facilities, poverty is an act of star-slumming, boy gets girl is the end of life's difficulties, divorce is as easy as knife, and riches are the reward of virtue.'

The tinsel materialism and shoddy sentiment of the fictional world of the films are bad enough; the crude hedonism and licence of the real world of the film stars is even worse. Yet the artificial and unworthy lives of these people are given the fullest publicity in the daily Press and in the multitude of movie-magazines. Their doings are held up to the masses as something to be envied and even to be imitated.

The commercialisation of some of the chief cultural influences of today is a social fact of supreme importance. The Press, the

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theatre, and some other forms of popular amusement and instruction have, of course, always been run as business enterprises. But in the days when they did not greatly affect the lives of the mass of the people, the nature of their economic organisation did not seriously matter. Now that these influences count for so much with nearly everybody, the motives and purposes of those who control them do most certainly matter. There is more than a quantitative difference between business and Big Business. Moreover, the undesirable features of profit-making enterprise as applied to material things are intensified when it is applied to things of the mind. It is strange, therefore, that those who call so loudly for the public control of railways, mines and manufacturing industries should be usually silent about public control of the industries of entertainment and propaganda.

Certainly the crude nationalisation of the means of influencing public opinion and sentiment would be the negation of democratic liberty. The seizure of all forms of education and propaganda is the first step in the creation of the modern totalitarian state. For future historians Dr. Goebbels will be a symbol and a portent. He gave the completest demonstration of how it was possible for a twentieth-century despotism so to manipulate Press, radio, and cinema, and all forms of education as to silence the voices from the world outside and to turn a national culture into a closed system. He showed how an utterly unscrupulous governing clique intent on moulding the public mind according to its will could destroy the plain meaning of words and murder truth. He made clear, once and for all, that modern instruments of propaganda, used with complete ruthlessness, can so inhibit rational thought and stimulate herd-emotion that the very foundations of civilised life are destroyed.

Even the limited control of news and opinion exercised by our own democratic government in the war period was fraught with dangers that are plain enough. The news and the comments provided by the Press and the B.B.C. were then subject to a censorship which, however repugnant to democratic principles, was accepted by us as a necessary emergency measure. As an essential part of 'political warfare' we organised government-inspired broadcast news-services for foreign countries, with the

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object of demoralising the enemy and encouraging the subjugated peoples of Europe. We ourselves were also constantly subjected to 'propaganda designed to maintain the national morale. The aims of our propaganda chiefs were the same as those of Dr. Goebbels, even though our methods were different. We always claimed to disseminate the truth: but obviously the claim needs qualification. War is a dirty business, and no nation can wage it with perfectly clean hands. But we hope and believe that in all this centrally controlled publicity at home and abroad the truth was not unnecessarily distorted; and that, although omission, calculated emphasis, and heightened colour were imposed by military requirements, we did not descend to deliberate misrepresentation. The immense power of concentrated propaganda has, however, been brought home to us; and we shall certainly not be willing to entrust any government with such power now that the emergency has passed.

There is, however, one phase of government propaganda in wartime which we can contemplate with satisfaction, and which may be of considerable significance for the future working of democratic government. Owing to economic stresses various government departments have made a practice of directly addressing the public through the Press and other agencies with warning, admonition, advice, and help. In matters of food and health, in particular, much valuable educational work has been done by this form of official publicity. The results have been to some extent impaired by public awareness of the fact that advice was often being given with an *arrière pensée*: it was impossible not to notice the tendency of the Ministry of Food, for instance, to extol the dietetic qualities of a particular food when it was plentiful and to be silent about it when it was 'in short supply'. But in spite of this, there has been developed a general feeling of confidence between the public and the departments that could be used to good purpose as a normal part of administrative procedure. By means of this direct approach to the public through the organs of publicity, ministers and government officials can carry out a most important kind of civic education: they can make the ordinary citizen vividly aware of his duty and responsibility in particular matters and can make telling appeals for his aid and co-operation.

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The sense of intimacy between government and people is an enormous gain.

The tremendous object-lessons in the use and abuse of State-controlled publicity in the war period and earlier have emphasised the need for the democratic state to come to terms with the new giant forces released by science. The traditional policy of non-intervention will not do, because it is based on conditions that no longer exist. The position to be faced is that, if the State rightly declines to monopolise the new channels of propaganda and popular culture for its own purposes, irresponsible organisations will none the less use them for their own profit-making purposes. To meet this new position a reinterpretation of the democratic creed is necessary, for the old creed is obsolete. It is an accepted principle that the democratic state shall not attempt to indoctrinate its citizens with ideas beyond a certain point (I say 'beyond a certain point', for it is obvious that the democratic state is justified in teaching the elementary ideas on which it is based). Therefore—the old argument runs—it cannot be right for the State to control the agencies of information and propaganda for its own political ends; on the contrary, since freedom of thought and expression is fundamental to democracy, the means of influencing public opinion must remain in private hands. This conclusion has, of course, received additional support from the belief in the value of private enterprise in the economic sphere. But this conventional argument leaves out of account an essential factor in the present-day problem. The great organs of culture which it is desired to keep free from State interference have fallen into bondage to Big Business.

What meaning has the doctrine of the freedom of the Press in present circumstances? The most vital of democratic liberties is still a reality in the case of books, the smaller journals of opinion, and the large amount of privately printed propagandist literature; but it is obviously not a reality in the case of the typical popular daily and Sunday newspaper. The big-circulation newspaper has only very limited freedom to frame policy in the best interests of its readers. It is tied on the one hand to the advertising interests who supply the major part of its revenue, and on the other hand to the shareholders who expect good and increasing dividends. It

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is, in fact, no different in character from any other great business corporation: it deals in the commodities of news, views, and popular entertainment, and its primary purpose in handling these commodities is to improve its position as a property for investment. Whenever the choice has to be made between maintaining high standards of journalism and extending circulation we can be fairly certain what the choice will be. With the enormous increases in circulation since the beginning of this century popular newspapers have sunk deeper and deeper in the mire of triviality, sensationalism, and vulgarity. In the highly competitive conditions of present-day journalism the ever-pressing need to get in first with a highly coloured 'story' makes mere accuracy a matter of subordinate importance. When therefore a big newspaper syndicate claims immunity from state interference on the ground that the Press must be free, we must remember, first, that its existing freedom is largely illusory owing to the pull of economic interests, and secondly, that a great business organisation is asking to be allowed to continue as a powerful agent of political education and popular culture while having no effective responsibility except to shareholders, and working under financial pressure which makes professional integrity virtually impossible.

Similar considerations apply to the film corporations. The huge financial organisations that exploit the general human desire for entertainment have spoilt a potentially fine instrument of popular culture by treating it as a channel for profitable investment. Big Business may not be wholly incompatible with art, but it effectively prevents art from more than occasionally rising to the higher levels. The routine commercial film, like the popular newspaper, must reach down to the lowest grades of intelligence in order to find the wide market it needs. When such enormous sums of capital are involved in costs of production, considerations of safe popular appeal must come first, and those of art second. I stress this point because freedom of artistic expression is one of the cherished principles of democracy, and interested parties might claim that any form of public control of the cinema would violate this freedom. But the freedom of the film art today is as illusory as the freedom of the Press. The British censorship (set up voluntarily by the trade itself) imposes the rule of 'no contro-

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versy', which effectively ties the hands of producers when handling themes involving social or political problems. In any case, the film magnates find their interests too closely identified with the present order of society to be willing to propagate any ideas calculated to disturb it. Furthermore, it is not only films touching on social problems that have to submit to this voluntary censorship. Every Hollywood film is subject to the hidden censorship of the studios—a censorship based on a minute and systematic analysis of public reactions in all parts of the world to particular incidents, types of plot, verbal expressions, and methods of treatment. The need to avoid giving offence to any considerable section of the world-public for a commercial film makes it difficult, to say the least, to treat any theme with artistic sincerity and distinction. It is significant that Russian film-makers, though working under State tutelage, have in some respects set up standards of artistic achievement for the emulation of the 'free' producers of England and America.

It seems clear, therefore, that, in view of the intrusion of Big Business into the field of journalism and mechanised entertainment, we must re-state democratic principles of liberty of thought and expression. We must preserve at any cost the freedom to publish in all sincerity the political or artistic or religious faith we hold, and to persuade others to accept that faith; the freedom to pursue research into any branch of human knowledge for the advancement of science and scholarship; the freedom to give expression to thought and feeling for the purposes of art. But the governing motive cannot be disregarded. There is no reason why a democratic state should grant unfettered liberty to commercial groups to degrade political and cultural life by purveying inaccurate and distorted news, dishonest opinion, and insincere art with the prime object of financial gain. The freedom we guarantee must be freedom to act with a worthy purpose.

State control of the kind familiarised by the totalitarian state is not the only alternative to the present position of free play for capitalist enterprise. It is possible to combine public supervision with genuine professional freedom and independence. The best practical methods of securing this aim must be worked out by the democratic communities if they are to promote a healthy cultural life.

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In the constitution of the B.B.C. we have in fact demonstrated the possibility of reconciling essential independence and freedom of action with the necessary public control. We should indeed count it fortunate that in the early days of broadcasting we had sufficient wisdom and foresight to make it a public service freed from the trammels of private profit. We created a public service board of which the directors, while ultimately responsible to Parliament, were free to initiate and carry out policy as seemed best to them. After several years' experience of the working of the Corporation, few people would wish to change over to a commercial organisation. We have our complaints about the B.B.C. as about any other public body, and according to personal taste we are dissatisfied with this or that feature of the programmes. But on the whole we should be thankful for the high standard of integrity that the Corporation maintains. Such mistakes in policy or working as occur are the result of human failure and not of the distracting influence of wrong motives. As a cultural institution the B.B.C. is the product of the social ideals of our society, and it seems to be as good as those ideals allow.

Recently, however, there has been a certain amount of unfavourable criticism of the B.B.C. and people are dallying with the idea of breaking the monopoly of broadcasting enjoyed by the Corporation and introducing some form of competition. The B.B.C. is accused of always playing for safety, of failing to give a hearing to minority views, of being infected with the 'Civil Service mind', of always appearing to address an audience of Christian maiden aunts, and so on. These charges have been heard most insistently since the broadcasting service became virtually a department of the Ministry of Information, and the people who bring them seem to me to make insufficient allowance for the conditions imposed on the Corporation by government pressure for war purposes. Everybody knows that the B.B.C. was the mouthpiece for government views and policy during the period of emergency; and nobody can reasonably have expected it in the circumstances to be other than cautious in its talks policy. We can begin to prod it and see that it pursues a properly progressive policy now that its independence is restored. As for the complaint that the B.B.C. has always barred extreme opinions in its talks and discussions, I am

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not at all sure that it is right to demand that it should do otherwise. In view of the number and character of its audience the B.B.C. should represent the broad band of progressive opinion. Extreme views on politics, religion and morals can find more appropriate expression in books, in journals of opinion, and in public meetings.

Could the newspaper Press and the cinema be brought under public control in organisations similar to the B.B.C.? In the case of the newspapers the solution of the problem is difficult. If we assume that they are to continue to act as the organs of the various political parties, we cannot contemplate the creation of a publicly controlled Press corporation speaking with a single voice. The most hopeful suggestion seems to be to separate the three essential departments of the newspaper business—the manufacture of the physical object called a newspaper, the gathering of news, and the comment on the news—and so to free the purely editorial side of journalism from the economic trammels at present imposed by the production side. The industry engaged in manufacturing and printing newspapers could be organised in a single corporation of the public service board type; and this corporation would also handle all the advertisement contracts. The business of news-gathering would be put in the hands of a central news agency instituted by the State, but thereafter independent in its working. This agency would put its news freely at the disposal of all the newspapers. In order to provide satisfactorily for the third aspect of newspaper work it would be necessary to devise a scheme for enabling the various political parties and cultural groups to acquire their own papers and to appoint editorial staffs of their own choosing.¹ Such a reorganisation of the Press is, of course, revolutionary and would meet with fierce opposition from the enormous vested interests concerned, but no measure less drastic will suffice if we are to secure the reliable and impartial news service which is vital to democratic political life.

As regards the cinema, there seems to be no practical reason why it should not be brought under public control in a corporation

¹ See S. de Madariaga: *Anarchy or Hierarchy*, Allen & Unwin, 1937, pp. 231-236; also my *Social Reconstruction*, Nelson, 1943, Chap. VI.

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similar to the B.B.C. If a public corporation can successfully manage broadcast entertainment, it can equally well manage visual entertainment; the B.B.C. had, in fact, before the war already started its television service. In the cinema industry there are two main departments—the making of the films and the distribution and exhibition of the films. Whether these two branches should come under a single authority is a matter for discussion. What is required in the first instance is that the studios should be taken out of the hands of the present financial groups.

An independent Film Corporation, freed from the necessity of making profits, could devote its whole attention to developing to the utmost the artistic and cultural potentialities of the cinema. Like the B.B.C. it could give due weight to the requirements of the more intelligent public, and need not be afraid to provide occasional films known to be above the head of the 'average cinema-goer'. Moreover, it could develop and win far greater popularity for the documentary film. Hitherto this most promising branch of film work has been left to official or semi-official groups, and the fine work that has been done has been seen far too little in the commercial cinemas. Yet we have in the documentary film an unrivalled means of popular enlightenment on all sorts of subjects. *World of Plenty* made by the Ministry of Information, dealt with the production of food, problems of distribution and waste in peace-time, the control of food production during the war, and the need for world planning after the war. It was a brilliant piece of exposition and propaganda, using all the most cunning film devices for holding the attention and impressing facts and policies on the mind. If it were shown as widely as it ought to be, such a film would awaken new conceptions in the minds of thousands of people who would never think of reading economic literature. Handled in this way, the film is a cultural medium of immense potentiality; but it will never be given its chance so long as it has to compete with the purely money-making pictures of glamour and crime.

But so far, there is no articulate demand for public action in the matter of the cinema. The present situation seems to be generally accepted as inevitable. Every now and then a film of unusual quality is produced and the more enlightened cinema-

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goers accept it with thanks and hope it is earnest of more to come. Meanwhile they take it for granted that the masses must be doped with the weekly dose of commercial rubbish.

At the moment it seems likely that, if any change in the attitude of the State to the film industry is to come about, it will occur through developments in the industry itself rather than as a result of public agitation. The trend towards monopolistic organisation in British films has caused disquiet in official quarters. An interesting episode occurred in 1943. The President of the Board of Trade, Dr. Dalton, intervened to put a curb on the financial activities of Mr. J. A. Rank, who was by way of becoming the dictator of the British cinema industry. In a letter to Mr. Rank, Dr. Dalton made the emphatic pronouncement that the government 'could not acquiesce in the creation of anything like a monopoly at any stage—production, distribution, or exhibition'. Rather strangely it was not made clear on what grounds the objection to monopoly was based. Was the government concerned with the cultural results or merely the economic results of monopoly? Anyhow, a gentleman's agreement was arrived at by which Mr. Rank and the companies he controls undertook not to make further acquisitions of cinemas or studios without the prior consent of the Board of Trade. The moral of this incident—which, by the way, attracted surprisingly little attention at the time—seems to be this. If through the normal pressure of finance the British film industry is moving towards private monopoly, it is itself destroying any theoretical or practical objections there might be to the creation of a public monopoly.

Of the powerful cultural influences generally ignored by the Board of Education and professional educational bodies, there remains commercial advertising. When post-war capitalist enterprise again gets into its stride, we shall no doubt once more see Press and hoardings plastered with mendacious announcements seeking to persuade us that the ultimate aim of life is the endless acquisition of material goods. Once more the venal 'experts in mass-psychology will get busy with the task of creating false values to delude the credulous. Ordinary consumers will privately agree that competitive publicity is all poppycock and lies, and will none the less give their preference to nationally advertised brands;

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manufacturers will deplore to one another the amount they are obliged to spend on publicity, but will agree that in the highly competitive conditions of modern industry he who fails to advertise is lost; and the advertising agents, while explaining on the quiet that a man must make a living somehow, will publicise themselves as members of a profession which forges an indispensable link in the chain of modern production and distribution. British advertising experts will, I suppose, seek to reach the hitherto unattained standard of efficiency set by their American counterparts. Our magazines will rival those of America in the insidious allurements of the publicity pages, and we shall be made free of a world of acquisitiveness, vanity, childishness, snobbery, and sensuous enjoyment beyond belief.

Advertising is commonly treated as simply an economic problem. Business men and economists solemnly discuss such questions as whether advertising campaigns pay for themselves, and whether advertising adds to the cost of an article to the consumer. The most pungent comment on this attitude to the question was made—unconsciously, of course—in a talk broadcast shortly after America entered the war. It told how the many competing oil companies in the U.S.A. had waived their rights in particular territories and co-operated to construct a single pipe-line to bring oil to the Atlantic coast for the war needs of the Allies. We were told how willingly these companies had put aside their sectional claims and pooled their equipment, and how they now found themselves handling, not this or that brand of oil with talismanic properties, but 'just oil'. Now the piquant thought is that these temporary converts from competition to co-operation are no doubt congratulating themselves on the restoration of the status quo in which they cease to perform the simple task of supplying 'just oil'—a commodity basic to industrial civilisation, and can once more enlist an army of mercenaries to persuade the world that they are each selling something different and better. It is difficult to be patient with the hopeless irrationality of such a situation.

But it is altogether wrong to consider advertising as if no more than an economic problem were involved. To any mind not completely dulled by custom the hoardings and the publicity

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columns of the Press provide an essentially moral problem. The crude facts are, first, that in peacetime hundreds of thousands of men and women sell their brains to promote calculated misrepresentation and falsehood for the stimulation of human acquisitiveness, and, secondly, that the advertising interests, by their power over the daily and periodical Press, which has become essentially a vehicle of advertising, are causing the continual debasement of cultural standards. It is time that we woke up to think of commercial advertising in its present form; not as an element of debatable value in the economic system, but as a moral cancer at the heart of society.

What is the cure for this social disease? If, as the advertising people themselves tell us, and as business men seem to believe, modern methods of production cannot be profitably carried on unless large enough markets can be created by means of advertising campaigns, the only conclusion is that competitive industry must be done away with. There are plenty of other reasons why the transfer of industry from predominantly private control to predominantly public control is imperative. But even if this were the only reason it should be decisive. An industrial system which is confessedly based on morally rotten foundations cannot justify its continued existence.

In the course of this chapter we have strayed from the field of culture into the area of political and economic organisation. The discussion has in fact given another illustration of the impossibility of considering educational problems in isolation from the problems of society as a whole. We are well on the way to making far-reaching changes in our system of formal education; but these will have very limited effect if they are not accompanied by an improvement in the social and cultural ideals prevailing in the world outside the schools and universities. And such an improvement must be accompanied by a profound modification of our economic system.

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By means of far-reaching educational changes we hope to quicken the pulse of social life and to infuse new energy into the body politic. How do we expect this new energy to manifest itself? Do we look for a great development of political consciousness among the masses of mankind? Have we a vision of 'the century of the common man', in which the ordinary citizen is not only guaranteed his rights but is himself the active guarantor of those rights? Or do we pin our faith to the creation of a better-trained minority of citizens of superior intellectual ability, and assume that the masses will remain a mere dead weight in social affairs?

In modern non-democratic political philosophies, whether of the Right or Left, it is essentially the minority that counts. Political energy is generated by the party, which consists of a limited number of members proved to be sound in opinion and reliable in action. In the fascist state the function of the party has been simply to dragoon the masses in accordance with the will of the governing clique. In the communist state the rôle of the party is less crude. It is frankly admitted that even in the revolutionary proletariat the majority will be politically indifferent and inarticulate; it is therefore necessary that a specially trained body of political shock troops should be created to give expression to what the masses would desire if they were fully conscious of their own good; it is for the active minority to force the passive majority to be free and to secure the advantages of their freedom.

The communist theory of the party is based on a refreshing realism, and the issue which it raises must be squarely faced by democrats. Actually, however, current discussion of the place of the common man in the democratic system reveals much loose

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thinking and considerable divergence of opinion. If our plans are not to go awry, it behoves us to clarify our ideas.

We are here, of course, entering the perennial debate between those who regard the common man as the repository of social virtue and an effective agent of social change, and those who find the determining factor in history in the great man or the intellectual élite. (The protagonists in this debate reject, as I do, such materialist theories as that which asserts that the course of history is determined by the system of economic relationships; they affirm that the ultimate force is mind.) Since the emergence of the totalitarian state, this controversy between the champions of the common man on the one hand and of the ruling élite on the other has ceased to be merely academic; it has acquired bitterness and urgency through the introduction of strong emotional antipathies. The principle of leadership is in question. For many this takes on a wholly sinister significance through its association with the fascist idea; and they react with an increased readiness to profess an uncritical faith in the political competence of the masses.

In view of the wide educational measures on which we are now embarked it is most necessary that the debate should be restored to a cool and rational atmosphere, and that we should arrive at an agreed conclusion on which to base practical action. For if we believe that it is only the gifted few that matter politically, we shall be wasting our efforts and laying up a store of disappointment by providing elaborate educational schemes to awaken a social consciousness in the many. On the other hand, if we are convinced that every citizen has his contribution to make to the building of the good society, and that it is the State's duty to assist him to do so, we must clearly understand what kind of contribution this is.

The two points of view here mentioned are usually presented as antithetical. I believe, however, that they can be reconciled. As is usual with such opposites, each embodies an essential part of the truth; but there is a larger truth embracing both. The appreciation of this larger truth must have an important place in a new theory of democracy.

Let us consider for a moment this faith in the common man which is a permanent though rather vague and varying element

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in democratic sentiment. Among its changing forms the first to be mentioned belongs especially to the early nineteenth century; it is not given expression by the more intelligent today, but it is frequently met with in popular discussion. It is the view to which currency was given by the rationalist believers in the perfectibility of man, who held that, given a satisfactory social environment and proper education for all, it would be possible to achieve an unlimited rise in the general level of intelligence, and by the cultivation of reason and its application to human affairs political life could be transformed. This theory is mistaken. We now know that reason is bound to play a much smaller part in thought and conduct than the early rationalists supposed. We also know that, in so far as political capacity depends on intelligence, there is a limit to the extent to which it can be cultivated. Intelligence is a quality innate in the individual; in suitable physical and mental conditions it will develop to its maximum; but the maximum varies widely in different individuals. Actually it has been shown by the application of intelligence tests that the bulk of mankind have only moderate mental capacity. Our present imperfect educational system admittedly does not develop all individual potentialities to the full; but there is no ground for supposing that even an ideal system would reveal a great reservoir of intelligence hitherto undisclosed or would add considerably to the small group of intellectual leaders.

It is not uncommon to find people who, while under no illusions as to the intellectual capacity of the average man, profess a purely romantic belief in the instinctive goodness of the common people and even in the soundness of their collective judgment on broad human issues. They tell us that, whatever the intellectual shortcomings of the ordinary folk, their heart is sound. Give the people the facts, we are told, take them into your confidence, and their judgment won't be far wrong. This, of course, is the kind of talk that wins applause for platform orators or forms an attractive ingredient in the leaderette of popular journalism: it is then probably insincere. Even when this belief is sincerely held, there is rarely any attempt to give it rational justification: it results essentially from an emotional attitude.

An aspect of the same point of view is seen in those who assert

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the capacity of the common man to appreciate the higher forms of art. In their view all the ordinary person needs is opportunity. Give him, they say, the best in music, or painting, or literature, and he will not fail to respond. Show him typical examples of contemporary art, and he will readily perceive what is new and vital in it; his very ignorance of artistic tradition will enable him to approach the novel with an open and receptive mind. The advocates of this view do sometimes try to support it by facts. An organisation like the Arts Council takes a show of modern pictures to a factory or to a working class district that is usually denied access to good examples of visual art. The exhibition is a success; considerable numbers of working people attend it; the comments they make are often intelligent and appreciative. Or again, a symphony orchestra visits an area in which concerts are seldom provided; there are large and enthusiastic audiences of people who have had little previous musical experience. It is not unusual for such cases to be quoted as proving that ordinary folk can be relied on to acclaim what is good in art—and even that their judgment is more trustworthy than that of the class of trained experts. I would suggest, however, that the true conclusion to be drawn from such instances is only that the natural liking for the arts is more widespread than is commonly supposed, and that it is independent of social class. It is obvious that those members of a factory population who take the trouble to visit a show of modern pictures do so because they start with some conscious or unconscious interest in pictorial art and expect to obtain amusement from it; they therefore form a special group within the class to which they belong; they are not to be considered as a true sample of their class any more than the people who frequent the Bond Street Galleries can be taken as completely representative of the middle and upper classes. Amongst any group of people we shall find some with a natural power of appreciating artistic work, but there is no rational ground for supposing that the common man possesses a mystical faculty of discernment denied to the trained and experienced student.

At this point I ought perhaps to interject the remark that the term 'the common man' and its variants, 'the average man', 'the little man' and 'the man-in-the-street' have no logical validity. The

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common man is not a peculiar species of the genus *homo sapiens* that can be isolated and furnished with a scientific description. I use the term in the loose and shifting senses usual in discussions on the present topic.

In searching for the sources of the widespread belief in the political capacity of the common man we must not overlook the influence of Marxist teaching. It is true that the doctrines of Marx had little in common with the beliefs of the utopian political philosophers who trusted in the developed reason of the ordinary citizen; but it would be only natural for his less enlightened and more emotional adherents among the masses to equate the common man with the member of the proletariat—the class which is destined to be the agent of social revolution and to usher in the millénium. It may be granted that in strict Marxist theory the proletariat is to be carried to dictatorship by the inner necessity of the historical process rather than by its peculiar moral qualities; but in the popularised form of the theory the common people, who are to be the creators of the new order, can scarcely fail to be credited with the mental and moral virtues appropriate to their task. If the proletariat is eventually to swallow all other classes and digest them into a classless society, it must surely have a peculiar fitness to survive.

But the true source of that faith in the common man which permeates democratic ways of thinking is to be found in the principles of Christian ethics. The doctrine of the worth of every individual soul in the sight of God and the allied doctrine of the brotherhood of man, which are central to Christianity, preclude altogether a conception of a humanity as divided into a master class and a subject class, an intellectual and spiritual aristocracy and a mass of worthless clods. We are all equal before God; we all have the spark of the divine. Those who believe this must have a reverence for our common humanity, and must find worth in every human being. The Christian idea of the value of human personality is indeed the root that has nourished the democratic idea of human equality; but whereas Christian doctrine rightly asserts only a spiritual equality; democratic theory, at any rate in its popular forms, has brought confusion by maintaining human equality in something more than a spiritual sense.

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After all, the glaring fact about human nature is the enormous difference between individuals in intelligence and will. Inevitably those of superior intelligence and will have emerged as leaders and rulers; and the very few of supreme ability and energy—the great men—have undoubtedly changed the course of history for good or ill. To what extent they alone are to be accounted responsible for the achievements with which they are credited, and to what extent they are to be considered as the channels for currents of emotion and energy generated by the people they have led, it is impossible to determine. But that the modern world would have been a very different place if Luther, Napoleon, and Hitler had never lived we cannot doubt.

The number of those who in any generation are accounted great men is extremely small. But below them there is a more numerous group of intelligent and forceful men and women who come to the fore in the sciences, the arts, the professions, and in public life. It is they who set the current of ideas in literature, art and politics; and when political conditions are propitious, it is they who are active in promoting social change. It is characteristic of democracy that it gives full opportunity to these natural leaders. In a totalitarian state the function of social leadership is taken over entirely by the party. But whatever the form of the state, the select few—whether they are selected for their outstanding personal qualities or for their fanatical adherence to a party programme—have a very great influence on the speed and direction of social movements.

The question is whether this influence of the superior minority is so powerful as to make all others of no account. Undoubtedly it would be if intellect and energy were all that matters. But the spiritual force at work through mankind is not dependent on or necessarily associated with intellect. It may find its channel in the great man; it may equally well find it in the person of no outstanding ability whatever. Those who make their mark in human history exhibit varying degrees of spiritual capacity. While they commonly display exceptional mental power, great energy and capacity for work, extreme tenacity of purpose, and a strong and infectious faith in their personal destiny, they often work on a very low spiritual plane. The term great man is applied

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not only to Socrates and St. Francis but to Frederick the Great, Napoleon, and Bismarck. The high roads of history are strewn with the wreckage left by great men who had no higher aim than to satisfy a puerile acquisitiveness and a gangster's love of power. In intellect and vitality they were giants; in a spiritual sense they never grew up. On the other hand, the spiritual insight and right sense of moral values which are often so conspicuously lacking in the outstanding personalities may be found fully developed in humble folk of no intellectual distinction. It is only by giving due weight to this fact of human nature that we are able to attach a true meaning to human equality and to set a true value on the common man. The importance of those millions of ordinary folk whose lives will never be recorded by the historian lies in the fact that they include a multitude of men and women who by their qualities of character set the spiritual tone of their age.

This is substantially the conclusion arrived at by Charles Morgan in an essay¹ discussing the influence that 'the private citizen' (an alias of 'the common man') can exert on political affairs, and especially on the foreign policy of the state. After calling attention to the obvious fact that the ordinary citizen lacks both the knowledge and the equipment to criticise effectively either the strategy or the tactics of diplomacy, he continues:

'But what he can do is to decide what character he wishes his country to bear in the world; what kind of part he wants her to play, though not how she shall play it. Here he is as well equipped to decide as the Secretary of State himself, for decision depends, not upon a reading of Foreign Office telegrams, but upon a reading of history and of conscience. When we say that the German people are ultimately responsible for the acts of their rulers and someone answers, "How can that be? They are not consulted. They have no say in policy", it is legitimate to insist that they are nevertheless responsible for the character their country has presented to the world.'

The private German citizen's responsibility is not the same as Hitler's; for he did not send the armies into Poland. But in so far as he helped to shape the national character he must accept his share of responsibility.

¹ 'Menander's Mirror' in *The Times Lit. Supp.*, 3rd March, 1945.

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Owing to its very nature the influence exerted by the common man on the course of human affairs is not easily discernible but it can be detected if we look for it. Consider the growing dissatisfaction with our industrial civilisation—a dissatisfaction marking a new phase in our social development. May we not see in it a revolt of the common man against a soulless intellectualism? The elaborate material apparatus of twentieth century civilised life is the product of the superior brains—the scientists and technicians whose primary interest is in technical progress, and the commercial magnates whose primary interest is in profits. They have shown enormous skill in applying the new scientific knowledge of our age, but they have shown small concern for the moral values they were destroying in the process. The dominating ideal of industrial civilisation has come to be material comfort (when it is not insensate destruction); and this ideal has to be realised in vast urban communities, in which the individual human being is constantly submerged in mass activity whether at work or play, and in which he is denied the opportunities for privacy and withdrawal needed for spiritual development. There is, as I say, a growing feeling against the mechanisation of social life. This is an assertion of spiritual values against the power of intellect operating without regard to the essentials of human welfare. How does this feeling find outlet? Partly, of course, through the intellectual leaders of finer spiritual sense who are able to give expression to it in literature, in art, and in other ways; but also through the less articulate strivings of the common man. The youth who turns his back on the mass-pleasures of holiday resorts and finds his recreation in the simplicities of solitary walking; the town-bred boy or girl who discards shops, cinemas, dance-halls, and skating-rinks to take up agricultural work; the victim of urban congestion who insists on having a cottage and garden rather than a scientifically planned flat in a five-storey block with central heating and a communal laundry; the man who reduces town-planners to despair by building himself a bungalow on a virgin site far from all social services; all these are in their own way expressing their dissatisfaction with the trend of civilisation and helping to give a new direction to social policy.

The broad conclusion at which we arrive seems to be this. The

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common man is not endowed with the mystical excellence attributed to him by his more romantic admirers. We must not therefore expect too much of him. He is unlikely to be able to contribute much of value to the discussion of technical matters of politics and economics. But he may be quite capable of making right moral decisions and of correctly judging the character of those who seek to become rulers over him. Though lacking in the mental qualities that would take him out of the rut, he may still be one of the spiritually developed who are the salt of the earth. It is the multitude of common men who determine the moral character of the community in which they live.

This conclusion, if accepted, must govern all our efforts to strengthen the foundations of democracy. It must guide us in our plans for educating a free community and for widening the opportunities of active citizenship.

We shall certainly avoid some of our past educational errors if we remember that the great majority of those who pass through the schools and eventually become democratic electors will not be out of the common. This is not to say that they will be lacking in individuality, but merely that they will not achieve intellectual distinction of any kind. Among them, however, there will be many having strong moral qualities through which they can exert their influence over their fellows—qualities to which our society has hitherto given insufficient play. During the war we saw how natural leaders emerged from the ranks of ordinary folk not only in the services but in the various emergency organisations of Civil Defence. The most unexpected people performed all sorts of social tasks with the utmost efficiency and displayed quite unusual gifts in dealing with personal situations. We need to win the co-operation of people of this type in the full service of democracy. It is thus one of the chief tasks of the schools to give the best possible opportunities to the 'ordinary' child to develop his latent qualities of character. Let him by all means pursue his intellectual interests as far as they will take him, but above all encourage him to do things and to exercise his gifts in managing people. Do not treat him as though his only purpose in life is to absorb and regurgitate second-hand ideas. Give the ordinary child, who will develop into the common man or woman, a

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real chance to make his contribution to the life of democratic society.

In the scale of human ability there is the broad band of moderate intelligence to which the majority of people—the ordinary folk—belong. Above and below them in the scale are to be found groups of 'uncommon' individuals. The lowest of these groups presents a serious problem for democracy—a problem we are much too ready to ignore. In this class are to be found those individuals of low intelligence allied with moral inertia who are the despair of the teacher and of the social worker. As to what proportion they form of the whole population we should have more precise information when the results of the mental tests carried out for recruitment purposes during the war are made available. In any case we have to reckon with the fact that these sub-normal individuals have the rights of democratic citizenship. They neither can nor will exercise those rights to any purpose. The best we can hope for them is that they shall be as far as possible indoctrinated with the basic ideas of the democratic faith and habituated to the elementary principles of community living. Something can be done to instil right social habits in them, even if they will never appreciate social ideas. For them education must take the form largely of frank propaganda.

At the other end of the scale there are the minority of superior ability who are destined to become leaders in intellectual and practical life. To them the democratic state has a duty that has so far been very imperfectly discharged. Mistaken doctrines of equality have tended to make us forget the essential importance of leadership. In every form of society—democratic no less than authoritarian—there must be leaders; and in a modern democratic society they should be drawn from all those of superior ability who are prepared to accept the burden and responsibility of public office. In view of the difficulty and complexity of present-day social problems it is of crucial importance that the leaders should have the best possible mental and moral equipment for their task. It is thus the business of educators to seek out ability wherever it is to be found, and to foster it with all care. Hitherto the discovery of ability has been left to an unsatisfactory scholarship system which selects for mental capacity only; and when we

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have found the boys and girls of special promise we have given them an intellectual training with little reference to civic duty. If we are to train leaders effectively, we must train them above all in social responsibility. In this respect our educational system needs a complete change of direction.

Having recognised the paramount need to make the best social use of individual ability, we must also recognise that we are here concerned with a small minority of the population. We must resolutely set our faces against the sentimentalists with political axes to grind who would have us believe that as a result of an unjust social order many thousands of potential geniuses are being denied the higher education which is their right. That our State schools do not yet provide the fullest possible opportunities for all is true enough; but it is a delusion to suppose that there are vast stores of unused academic ability in the primary schools. We need a big expansion of educational facilities to provide cultural training throughout the years of adolescence for those who have hitherto been inadequately served or wholly neglected; but we do not need a great addition to the number of institutions providing education of an academic type. When the school-leaving age is raised and the new secondary modern schools are properly functioning, it will be necessary to devise a curriculum for them very different from that of the traditional grammar school. The proportion of those who can really profit by secondary and university education of the present intellectual standard is not large. We should accept this fact, plan higher education facilities for a comparatively small minority, maintain the intellectual standard in this respect, and cater for the less gifted majority in other ways. Only by taking account of the diversity of gifts and aptitudes can we provide real equality of opportunity for democratic citizens.

VI

The Area of Liberty

During the years that witnessed the rise of fascism one of the commonest and loudest complaints against democratic government was that it is inefficient—that it falters helplessly when confronted with the social tasks of the modern world. This charge was made not only by the leaders of foreign authoritarian movements but by critics at home. The successive governments of our own democracy in the inter-war period did in fact make a very poor showing in their efforts to cope with the great economic issues that had become the major pre-occupation of statesmen throughout the world. Politicians in power acted almost as though the tragedy of mass unemployment must be accepted as an inevitable feature of our national life. For impressive examples of the way to make a real attack on the economic evils of the time we were invited to look abroad to the autocracies of Russia, Italy and Germany. Much of what we saw in the fascist countries was mere window-dressing, and it became increasingly clear that the aim of it all was pernicious; but unquestionably in both communist and fascist states new experiments in positive government were being initiated; a new drive and a tremendous urgency were being brought into political action. Gibes at the ineffectiveness of democracy were only partly countered by the examples of the United States, whose New Deal rescue work showed much real vigour and imagination, and of Sweden, whose socialist government reorganised national financial policy in a scientific attempt to counteract the trade cycle.

Our own failure to accept the challenge of events was due partly to sheer moral inertia, but even more to our unwillingness to abandon the principle of negative government with which democracy had been so long identified. The idea that the less we

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had of centralised state control the better, was still dominant. As regards economic affairs the view was still widely prevalent that government should stand aside as much as possible and leave the initiative to private individuals, contenting itself with guaranteeing a fair field to the various competing interests. We were not yet ready to accept the conception of a state entrusted with full power to promote the positive economic good of its citizens. If we go so far, we thought, as to hand over to the government the initiative in the economic sphere, shall we not be taking the road to totalitarianism? Can we accept the new ideas of positive government without sacrificing our democratic liberties?

. In spite of all that has happened since then, there are still many people who retain the fear that positive government is incompatible with the democratic ideal of liberty. They submitted to a system of all-embracing state action during the war, and they were willing—with rather bad grace—to allow certain controls to be continued during the post-war period of reconstruction. They view with apprehension and disapproval the programme of socialisation embarked upon by the present Labour government, and they still hope that the State can be eventually pushed into the background so that free enterprise can again be given its chance.

The General Election of 1945, however, showed that the majority of people have lost the fear of widely-exerted state action. The younger citizens, especially, who have grown to political maturity under a democratic government armed with full emergency powers to control the national economy, are determined not to see a return to the old conditions. They will insist that the vigorous and positive direction applied in wartime shall be fully maintained in dealing with the problems of peace. They will be far less concerned about theoretical conceptions of liberty than about the practical means of restoring law and order in a stricken world and of carrying out the enormous tasks of reconstruction at home. They cannot fail to be impressed by Sir William Beveridge's massive argument that nothing short of the full authority of the State will avail to save post-war Britain from that most terrible of giants—mass unemployment. They are therefore almost bound to take it for granted that the driving force in economic planning must come from the State.

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Thus the demand for positive government is more widespread and insistent than ever before. Is this demand being made without a full appreciation of the consequences involved? Is it true—as many still assert—that to yield to it will eventually bring about not the strengthening but the destruction of democracy? It is important that we should satisfy ourselves as to whether positive government and democracy are really compatible—whether, that is to say, a democratic state can undertake the task of actively directing economic life without denying fundamental liberty.

At this point we must be prepared to state what we mean by the liberty fundamental to democracy. British democracy has grown up in association with two sorts of freedom. The first is religious freedom, which was substantially won in the struggles of the seventeenth century; from it sprang freedom of thought, freedom of the Press, freedom of teaching, freedom of assembly—all, in fact, that is included in cultural freedom. The second is economic freedom, by which has been meant freedom to own and bequeath property, to buy and sell in the market, to choose one's occupation and to multiply this world's goods to whatever extent one desires, without interference by the State.

All who hold the democratic faith will agree that the first of these forms of liberty is fundamental; without it the sacredness of human personality disappears. The whole issue between democracy and any kind of authoritarianism turns on the principle that the spiritual life of the individual is an area in which the State is not competent to interfere.

It is the second of these two freedoms that is curtailed by positive government exerted in the economic field. Is this economic freedom also essential to the democratic way of life? Many people think that it is. Some confusion, however, is introduced into the argument by the ambiguity of the term 'economic freedom'. The upholder of traditional individualism means one thing by it, namely, the right of private enterprise to function without government interference; the modern social reformer, on the other hand, often means quite a different thing, namely economic security—the freedom from want. In this latter sense economic freedom is certainly of cardinal importance, and we must accept the truth of the catch-phrase that there can be no

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genuine political and cultural freedom without economic freedom. Freedom of the mind, though not impossible, is extremely difficult of achievement in conditions which demand unremitting and exclusive attention to material needs. On this we should all agree. The question before us is whether the rights of private enterprise are equally essential to the good life as the democrat understands it. I do not think that they are. If private enterprise gives place to a system of state control, the individual will admittedly lose a considerable amount of liberty in certain directions, but he will not necessarily become a slave of the State. Even supposing that our economic system were organised so that we were all civil servants or local government employees, it would not follow that we should lose the essential freedom of the mind, nor should we be necessarily precluded from changing our occupation or from moving from one office or workshop to another if we found conditions disagreeable.

In regard to this last point, I note that Sir William Beveridge puts freedom to choose one's occupation among the essential freedoms. In so far as one's work is an expression of one's personality it is certainly desirable that it should be done in accordance with individual choice. But I am not convinced that vocational liberty is of the same order of importance as liberty of speech and cultural freedom generally. A man might be required by the State to do so many hours of task work every day, and yet remain a free man: he would lose only so much time. Many people in an individualist community have to work against their inclination under conditions of virtual compulsion. In our so-called free society choice of occupation is by no means unrestricted; and it is not only financial and social circumstances that impose limitations. But in point of fact, we need not fear that a democratic government which planned economic life would wish to interfere seriously in the individual's choice of occupation. That there would be some interference is inevitable, and Sir William Beveridge, of course, takes account of it. But from considerations of mere efficiency it is obvious that any planning authority would try to let everyone as far as possible do the job he wants to do, which would generally be the one for which he is best fitted, and in which he would achieve the best results.

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Of course, the separation I have made between cultural freedom and economic freedom is to some extent unreal. The economic system is itself a cultural factor: the conditions of a man's work necessarily have their effect on his character. The unmitigated rigours of free competition fostered self-reliance, independence, and personal effort; when individual enterprise is replaced by state control, initiative and independence are discouraged and the citizen tends to be content with the routine performance of allotted duties, to be the passive recipient of state benefits, and to rely on the public social services for security against the risks and accidents of life. Few will deny that there has, in fact, occurred a modification of the national character in this direction in recent times. There has been a weakening of the sense of personal responsibility, which is such a necessary attribute of the citizen of a democracy. On this ground, then, it might be asserted that economic liberty exerts a cultural influence essential to the good life. But we must remind ourselves that, if free competition produced certain good qualities, it also put a premium on hardness, selfishness, and unscrupulousness. Moreover, so long as we are aware of the kind of influence exerted by the economic system, it is within our power to counteract it, if necessary, by appropriate educational methods. In a society in which daily work is done mainly under state direction, educators must use every means to cultivate the sense of the duty owed to others and of the need for personal effort for a higher aim than private gain.

Provided, therefore, that cultural freedom is preserved, the democratic state is not undermining its own principles by undertaking the control of economic affairs. But it is well that we should realise the extent to which the traditional liberty of the individual will be affected. It is a matter on which the advocates of national planning are apt to be silent.

If the change-over from private to public enterprise is carried out by stages there will be for a period at any rate a certain diminishing scope for individual initiative in the sector of private enterprise that will continue to exist alongside of the publicly owned and controlled industries and services. It may be that a permanent place will be reserved for private enterprise in the luxury trades, and in new industries, and in business of a highly

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specialised and individualised nature. But even such privately owned concerns could be allowed freedom only to the extent to which they fitted in with the general plan. They could not, for instance, be permitted to absorb labour or materials required for essential purposes; they would, in fact, be in the position of those businesses that were engaged on non-essential work during the war. Furthermore, they would not, as in the past, be free to place themselves where they chose; they would have to conform to a national policy for the location of industry.

Investors will, of course, have very much reduced opportunity. The main outlet for savings will be the various forms of state or public securities, for the general direction of investment will be in the hands of a state organisation forming an integral part of the planning authority. There will certainly be no place for the speculator in stocks and shares, for the stock market will be reorganised in such a way as to restrict its activities to the legitimate business of facilitating the transfer of stocks and shares: mere gambling on the movements of prices will be made impossible.

The position of the retail tradesman will be considerably altered, though to what extent will depend on the method of distribution adopted by the planning authority. To some extent the practice with which we have become familiar during the war might be retained: government-controlled stocks of commodities might be supplied to private retailers who would sell them at fixed prices. In the case of essential foodstuffs suitable for standardised bulk production, such as flour, bread, butter, margarine, milk, sugar, we may expect the government not only to control the big manufacturing organisations but also to undertake the distribution so as to save the costs due to the competition of a multitude of small retailers.

What of the individual wage-earner or professional worker? In the first place, his choice of occupation must be in some measure restricted. The State Planning Commission will have to determine the relative size of the various industries and professions and hence the number of workers engaged in them. It will therefore have to exercise some control over recruitment. If at any time there is likely to be a surplus of chemists or dentists or miners for a considerable period ahead, it will have to take

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measures to prevent or discourage entry into those occupations. It will have to decide which industries are to expand and which to contract; and the process of contraction will cause sometimes temporary unemployment and sometimes the permanent displacement of workers. Since it will be one of the chief aims of the planning authority to secure full employment, it will have to take measures to deal with workers permanently displaced. It must either transfer them from one area to another or, if necessary, retrain them for another occupation which is in greater demand. We had some experience of government action in this direction during the depression of the 'thirties, when rather belated attempts were made to transfer or retrain workers in the depressed areas. Coal miners from Cumberland were induced to move to the Kent coalfield, where their labour was in demand. Many of them became so unhappy at being uprooted from their home surroundings that they gave up their jobs and returned to Cumberland. Some of them walked all the way. It is of course obvious that compulsory transfer to another part of the country or to a different kind of work altogether is not something that will be generally relished; but it seems to be a loss of freedom that must be endured if the state direction of industry is to be effective. The alternative for the worker is the freedom to stand in a queue waiting for the job that will never turn up and to become a state pensioner in the meanwhile.

In the new conditions not only will the freedom of the worker be restricted but the policy of his trade union or professional association must be modified. Many trade and professional customs of a restrictive nature will have to be abandoned. The shop rules that trade unions agree to suspend in wartime could hardly be retained in a nationally controlled industrial system. Nor would trade unions and professional associations be able to continue a policy of restricting entry so as to establish closed trades or professions. Under a planning authority wielding full powers it would not be for the medical profession to prescribe the nature of a national health service or to dictate the terms on which they would take part in it. Similarly, if such an authority decided that to meet a special emergency the building industry must be expanded to two or three times its size, it would not be

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permissible for the building operatives to reject the dilution of labour, or to persist in customary practices restricting output. Again, if a planned economy based on full employment is brought into being, the long-cherished principle of collective bargaining in connection with wage-rates must come under revision. Hitherto each individual trade has used its bargaining power to get the best terms for itself, regardless of the effect of its wage-rates on other trades. In a planned economy, however, wage-rates in any one industry must be considered in relation to other industries connected with it and to the requirements of society as a whole. Further, in conditions of full employment the workers would be in such a strong bargaining position that if they chose to exert collective pressure to the full they could force wages up and up in such a way as to lead to general inflation. It would be impossible to maintain a stable price level unless the unions were prepared to consider something more than their sectional interests.

I have indicated some of the more obvious limitations which a planned economy will impose on individual liberty. Plainly these will be considerable. To the adventurous individualist the price to be paid for positive government must seem a high one.

Is it, in fact, too high? Not if it will guarantee a more equitable distribution of the national wealth and provide the means for full employment. But I am not here concerned to argue the case for a planned economy on the ground of its superior efficiency in securing human welfare. My theme is liberty, and I am trying to show that essential liberties need not be destroyed if the State exercises direct control over the economic system.

At this point it becomes relevant to note that the choice before us is not between an existing economic system granting full liberty and a state-controlled system necessitating restricted liberty. The economic liberty dear to the heart of the individualist has already to a great extent disappeared within the capitalist system itself. Not only has the modern transformation of competitive enterprise into monopoly capitalism very greatly reduced the area of economic freedom, but it is clear that within the present order developments are proceeding which, if unchecked, threaten to destroy even the essential freedom of the spirit.

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their various trade associations have developed powerful and subtle methods of influencing the public on economic and social questions. By a constant stream of literature and advertising material they aim at creating a climate of opinion favourable to their purposes. It is not that they are merely putting forward a reasoned case for the superiority of the capitalist system: there could be no objection to this in a free society. The point is that they use all the advertiser's tricks in distorting the truth about the aims of profit-making enterprise, the demands of labour, and the effects of state interference. The public mind is thus confused on essential social issues by the *ex parte* statement of interested views masquerading as impartial discussion. This insidious form of attack on the freedom of the mind is even more dangerous than the flat repression of ideas characteristic of the mediaeval state and the modern totalitarian régime.

In these ways, therefore, monopolistic enterprise has already seriously encroached on individual liberty. According to Professor Hayek,¹ the only way in which we can preserve our liberty is to return to a genuinely competitive system. He maintains that monopolies and quasi-monopolies are not—as Marxist theory states—an inevitable development at this stage of capitalism; he asserts that they have arisen not as the direct result of technological changes but because of economic and political policies deliberately pursued by governments. With the contention that these forms of organisation are ultimately due, not to the working of blind economic forces, but to ways of thinking, every non-Marxist will agree. But it is surely true that the way of thinking that led to the invention of mass-production also led inevitably to the creation of the big business, for mass-production does not pay unless it is carried out on a sufficiently large scale; and the big business, whether aiming at monopoly or not, is an important reservoir of social power working under arbitrary control. Professor Hayek does not disclose how we might restore a free competitive system; and to most people the idea would seem to be completely impracticable. The only alternative, therefore, would seem to be a system of public control under which the lesser liberties are sacrificed in order to secure the greater.

¹ *The Road to Serfdom*, Routledge 1944.

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It is just this alternative, however, that Professor Hayek refuses to accept. He argues that state planning inevitably leads to totalitarianism and all the abuses of dictatorial power. In his view, the difficulties and complexities resulting from the attempt to organise economic life in accordance with a national plan are so great that any body of planners would sooner or later be compelled to adopt the methods of Nazi gangsterism in order to impose their will. But clearly this is true only if we suppose that those who come to the top as planners are the sort of people who would be corrupted by the power entrusted to them. Rather too much play has been made with Lord Acton's famous aphorism about the corrupting effect of power. It is, by the way, generally misquoted. What Acton wrote was: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' Undoubtedly the tendency of power is to corrupt; but history is full of examples, from Marcus Aurelius to President Masaryk, of men who have held the most exalted positions without losing their integrity. Six years of state planning for war have not produced any notable deterioration in the character of our ministers who have carried it through. If indeed we cannot believe that democracy can throw up leaders of sufficient honesty of purpose to withstand the temptations of power, we must despair altogether of political action. We must in fact despair of human nature.

But while Professor Hayek proceeds to an extreme conclusion which is not likely to be generally approved, he calls attention to a real danger which we ought not to belittle. A central authority charged with the duty of planning our economic life may allow itself to become involved in the planning of the whole of our life in the interests of the technical efficiency of the plan.

To avert this danger we must bear constantly in mind that there is no virtue in planning as such: whether it is good or bad depends on the end that is pursued. Economic planners are concerned with means: the ends must be dictated to them by the community. In other words, economic decisions must be taken in the light of ethical principles on which the nation is agreed. The fundamental issues in a state-controlled economic policy are not technical; they are moral. Under the system of free enterprise

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material requirements are met more or less adequately as the result of the push and pull of competition, and the urgency of demand is measured by the movement of prices. Such questions as how much we should manufacture of this or that, or how much we should import and how much export, are settled by the price mechanism. In a planned economy they must be settled by moral considerations: how much of this or that ought we to manufacture, how much ought we to import or export to satisfy national needs? Still more obviously are we in the realm of ethical principle when we ask whether we should make full employment our central aim, whether we should manufacture guns or butter, what place agriculture should have in the national economy, or what standard of material comfort we should aim at. The answers to these questions depend upon our conception of the sort of society we want. It is for the community as a whole to come to a decision on these moral issues, and to establish a social creed by which any board of planners can be guided. The community as a whole must decide to what extent planning operations are to be allowed to encroach on individual freedom. Without such guidance from a supreme authority representing the nation, a planning board can only aim at technical efficiency in carrying out their private ideas of what is good for the nation. There is no reason why they should be chary of interfering with forms of liberty to which the citizens themselves appear to attach little value.

I speak of a supreme authority to give expression to the social creed of the community. This will, of course, be the sovereign Parliament. It will be a constitutional problem of considerable difficulty to ensure that a planning authority is strictly and effectively subordinate to Parliament. Yet it is of the first importance that this should be so. A planning authority must have very wide jurisdiction and immense power, even if it is charged with the direct control of only the key industries in a partially socialised economy; in a fully planned economy it might seem to take to itself the entire power of government. This power, however, great as it is, must be executive only. The function of the planners must be to carry out a programme decided on by the national assembly. Parliament must lay down the guiding principles of economic policy in accordance with the social ideals of the nation;

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and Parliament must be the watch-dog guarding the citizen against unwarranted invasions of his liberty.

In proclaiming a social creed Parliament will be only the mouthpiece of the people. The people must have something to say.

VII

Efficiency in Democratic Government

The prime necessity for a healthy society is that as many of the citizens as possible should take an interest and an active part in public affairs, and, further, that the body of active citizens should include the men and women of the best type. When it becomes habitual for the ordinary citizen to think and behave as though matters of government were no business of his, the corruption of the state is inevitable. The feebleness and inadequacy of our foreign and domestic policy between the wars was ultimately due to the prevalent lack of interest in the working of government: too many of us were content to leave politics to the other fellow, and to assume that he would not only tell us what to do but also shoulder the task of doing it. The graft that has defaced the public life of the United States is attributable to the fact that business and professional men of the highest type have stood aside from politics and left public administration in the hands of self-seeking careerists willing to become the tools of pressure groups. The enormity of the Nazi reign of terror was possible only because so many 'decent Germans' were politically indifferent and morally inert.

The renewal of democracy can come about only through a change of attitude on the part of ordinary citizens. They must consciously accept responsibility for the conduct of public affairs. All the more will this be necessary as the remnants of aristocratic rule disappear from our social life. The current seems to have set definitely towards the elimination of the wealthy leisured class through the drastic reduction of the extremes of income. But it must be remembered that the 'idle rich', who are such an easy target for the shafts of the demagogue, have always included a body of public-spirited men and women who have voluntarily

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devoted themselves to public life and used their advantages of leisure and wealth in the service of the community. Even since the establishment of complete formal democracy in this country through the granting of universal franchise they continue to do much of the most arduous public work in connection with central and local government and in other spheres. It is all very well to assert that, if these people had not used their position of privilege to secure the leadership in public life, other more humble folk would have been ready to do the job and would no doubt have done it just as well, if not better. It remains to be proved in actual practice that this assertion is true.

There are indeed encouraging signs today that people are shaking themselves free from political apathy and are becoming more ready to take an active part in public affairs. This change of attitude owes a good deal to the sense of responsibility fostered by the numerous voluntary local services instituted during the war. In the conduct and the result of the General Election of 1945 there was much that was of good augury for the future of parliamentary institutions. In spite of differing views as to the wisdom of the popular decision on the party issue, all believers in democracy must welcome the demonstration that the mass of common folk have a mind of their own and are far less susceptible to propaganda than many of us feared. It is heartening to know that the judgment of millions of voters was strong enough to survive the tremendous barrage of advice and exhortation laid down by the largest section of the popular Press, and that a grateful nation was not unduly swayed by the appeal of even so illustrious a personality as Mr. Churchill. It is also gratifying that the winning party relied to an unusual degree on the reasoned statement of a coherent programme, and generally eschewed electioneering trickery. They were shown to be right in their belief that a new seriousness had entered party politics. This seriousness was reflected in the character of the candidates and of the House of Commons that was elected. The present House presents a strong contrast to the one which came into being at the close of the first great war. It is generally agreed that it contains an unusually high proportion of able back-benchers with expert knowledge of social problems; it is drawn from a wide variety of

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professions and social classes; for the first time the products of the secondary schools have been given their chance beside those of the public schools.

This is all to the good. A new development of political consciousness is undoubtedly in progress; but, if it is to continue, it must be strengthened in every way possible. We must do all we can to give the ordinary citizen confidence that he can really make himself felt politically; that as a unit in a population of forty-seven millions he is not a mere nonentity; that democratic machinery affords him a real chance of expressing his will. He has got to be finally cured of the habit of saying: 'After all, what can I do about it? I know that I can vote for this or that person at the next election, but when I have done that "they" will just carry on and do what they like.'

It is of particular importance to convince young citizens that the democratic system really works and that they can individually take an effective part in working it. One of the most depressing features of the political situation in this country in the inter-war years was a widespread cynicism that corroded the optimism and generous enthusiasm natural to youth. It was all too common for boys still at school to talk as though the world was going to the dogs and there was nothing they could do about it; to assume that public men were generally animated by motives of self-interest; to take it for granted that government was in the main a sinister conspiracy by which the ruling class feathered their own nest, and, what is more, to accept this as in the nature of things. Happily this unfortunate attitude seems to be far less common than it was; but it might easily develop again in the circumstances to be faced in the post-war period. The present world situation following a victorious war is not one to inspire easy confidence: the young people who have to face it will need unusual faith and courage if they are not to fall into the Slough of Despond. Everything possible must be done to make them feel that by their individual efforts they can influence the course of affairs not only in their own country but in the complicated world outside. They must be given the assurance that, if they supply the current of political energy, the lines of transmission will be open.

We need a wider appreciation of the fact that democratic

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citizenship involves much more than mere voting. There are other very important ways of influencing the course of affairs. In a democracy, government is more immediately responsive than in any other kind of state to the force of opinion, and since opinion is left free, every private citizen can do his part in moulding it. He can do this not only through private contacts and through the public expression of his individual opinions but even more effectively as a member of a voluntary association formed to represent trade or professional interests or to carry on propaganda of any kind.

The importance of the propagandist society as an instrument of democracy is too obvious to need emphasis. Something should be said, however, about the influence of such bodies as trade unions and professional associations of various kinds. Through a noteworthy development in the technique of democratic government it is becoming increasingly the practice of the State to make use of these voluntary associations for its own purposes. It not only relies on them for information and advice on matters within their special competence, but it has preliminary consultations with them before the introduction of new legislation affecting their interests. Their evidence is regularly heard by Royal Commissions and other official committees of inquiry: thus the trade unions were consulted as to the methods of increasing production in war factories at the beginning of the war; the teachers' associations and other professional bodies had the opportunity of expressing their views during the preparation of Mr. Butler's Education Act; the government has been careful—perhaps excessively careful—to woo the support of the medical profession for the scheme for a new health service. In the democratic state of today the citizen can exert a very real influence on public policy through his membership of an association. The State is, in fact, to be thought of as a federation of free groups within the framework of the law. It follows, of course, that the free associations, while representing and safeguarding the interests of their members, must strive as far as possible to get above these sectional interests and consider the welfare of the community as a whole.

But when all allowance has been made for the scope offered to

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the citizen for action through associations pursuing limited ends, it remains a fact that his prime duty in the political field is to choose his representative in Parliament. By casting his vote he makes his essential contribution to the process by which the general will is converted into public action. If he is to take the business of voting seriously, he must have confidence that the electoral machinery is efficient; in other words, he must be sure that the Parliament that comes into existence as the result of an election is truly representative of the citizen-body. Unfortunately he can have no such confidence under our present electoral system based on single-member constituencies. As a matter of simple mathematics it is clear that the House of Commons elected under existing arrangements can never accurately reflect the opinion of the country. The way in which representation is distorted is seen most obviously in the case of a three-cornered contest: the candidate polling more votes than either of the other two is elected, even though he may have a minority of the total votes cast. As to the results of present electoral methods on the composition of the House of Commons I cannot do better than quote from a very careful study of the subject by Mr. J. F. S. Ross. He is concerned especially with the facts as they appeared between the two wars:

‘The erratic nature of the present “system” is strikingly demonstrated by the fact that, whereas in 1929 an aggregate Labour vote of 38 per cent of the grand total gave us a Labour government, in 1935 an aggregate Labour vote of 40 per cent of the grand total gave us a strongly anti-Labour government. . . .

Four times since the last war the Conservatives have secured a substantial majority of seats in the Commons when they had only a minority of votes in the country. For seventeen years out of twenty-four the Conservatives have dominated the government while markedly in a minority in the country. The sweeping changes in the party complexion of Parliament at such elections as that of 1931 do not represent any corresponding change of view on the part of the electorate. Labour lost 224 seats at that election; its loss of voting strength only corresponded to a loss of 39 seats.

We observe another defect of the present system of election in the virtual disfranchisement of electors belonging to minority parties in many constituencies and in quite a number of extensive

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areas. For example, in the inter-war period the County of Sussex, with a population of nearly half a million, has had forty-seven electoral returns, and the Conservatives have secured the seat in forty-six of these. The 40 per cent of Sussex electors who belong to the Liberal and Labour parties are completely unrepresented and likely to remain so; nor is this area unique.¹

The method of democratic election does not happen to present one of those intractable political problems for which no satisfactory solution is in sight. If we really want the House of Commons to be a faithful mirror of national opinion we can secure this aim by introducing the principle of proportional representation through the single transferable vote. This is agreed by all impartial students of the subject. Proportional representation has hitherto been always rejected by the various Parliamentary committees (including the Speaker's Conference of 1944) charged with the consideration of electoral methods; but that is chiefly because they have approached the matter from the point of view of party interests rather than of the efficiency of democratic government. The Conservatives favour the continuance of the existing system because they have so far had the luck of the gamble; for the opposite reason the Liberals are staunch supporters of proportional representation. The conclusions arrived at by the investigating committees represent compromises resulting from party manoeuvrings. The non-partisan arguments against proportional representation generally take the line of asserting that the present system 'works' (in the sense of providing an effective government) and proportional representation would not 'work' so well. The implication is that the one essential is to secure an effective government; provided that this end is attained, it does not matter whether Parliament faithfully mirrors opinion. The acceptance of this implication is surely a denial of democracy. The matter still awaits treatment by a responsible and judicial body capable of rising above party considerations and thinking solely of what is necessary to put the democratic house in order.

Apart from the method of election, we want to be sure that candidates for public office can be drawn from all sections of the community, so that there is real equality of opportunity in active

¹ *Parliamentary Representation*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1943, pp. 114-5.

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citizenship. The ordinary citizen with the desire to enter political life should be assured that there are no insuperable social or financial obstacles in the way of his candidature for Parliament or for local government office. We know that at present such obstacles do certainly exist. The high cost of Parliamentary election expenses and the inadequacy of the salaries of the members of the House of Commons make it impossible for anyone to contemplate entering Parliament who is without either private means or the financial support of a trade union or similar organisation. Without giving undue encouragement to cranks and undesirable careerists it should be possible to devise means of obviating this difficulty: the State could defray election expenses; members of Parliament should be paid salaries adequate to the needs of those with no other resources; and some arrangement by way of continued salary might be made to cover the period during which a member who loses his seat may re-establish himself in the professional or business life he has temporarily abandoned (I assume that membership of the House of Commons should be—as it is not at present—a full-time job). Something should also be done to make it possible for persons who lack private income to serve on County Councils.

It will not be enough, however, to improve the composition of our elected bodies. If we are to foster and maintain the ordinary citizen's belief in the soundness of the democratic system and to secure his active co-operation in working it, we must convince him that the machinery of government is adequate to the tasks now facing it. Much of the impatience with democracy in the years of crisis between the wars was due to the spread of the idea that Parliamentary machinery was obsolescent, and that something more than repair and overhaul would be necessary. The dictatorships, it seemed, could get things done; we could only talk about it. Government by decree is always likely to be speedier than government by persuasion; but the trouble with British democracy is that for so long after we have been persuaded that something ought to be done nothing is in fact done. One important reason is that Parliamentary business is so congested that the channels of legislative action become choked. Traditional Parliamentary procedure has been very imperfectly adapted to the

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requirements of modern government concerned with highly complex and technical social and economic problems; it is thus impossible to find time in any given session to deal with all the important matters demanding attention. How the rush of urgent legislation during the post-war reconstruction period will be dealt with it is difficult to imagine. The present Labour government has taken certain steps to expedite legislation by extending the use of standing committees. It is clear, however, that this should be regarded as only the first stage of the necessary reform of procedure. In the executive sphere there is the problem created by the institution in modern times of various new ministries—often with overlapping powers. This problem has been enormously aggravated by wartime developments. The whole question of the machinery of government was thoroughly investigated and reported on by the Haldane Committee in 1918; but nothing was done about it. Mr. Churchill devised his own machinery for co-ordinating the working of the Cabinet and the departments to meet the requirements of the war emergency. But it is evident that a more radical and permanent solution of the difficulties will eventually have to be found. The time for administrative reconstruction would seem to be when the redundant war ministries are dissolved or reorganised. But the difficulty will be to get any government to give attention to the thorough consideration of these matters at a time when so many apparently more urgent tasks are waiting. The temptation will be to make do with existing administrative arrangements as long as possible. To yield to this temptation will, however, be a great mistake. We do not want to present any future party aiming at a dictatorship with a case based on the inefficiency of democratic government.

It is not only in Whitehall that great changes are needed. Our system of local government is equally in need of drastic revision. This is universally recognised. With the constant multiplication of the duties laid on local authorities, and the growing practice of creating special regional authorities under this or that department at Whitehall, local administration has become enormously complicated, and there is a chaos of overlapping functions. The situation is worst in the Greater London area, where the affairs of a fifth of the country's population are managed by authorities

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having totally inadequate powers and scope and working in an administrative muddle. Local authorities themselves are anxious for reform; but the Coalition Government, which issued the White Paper of 1945, was unwilling to make a real attack on the problem. Yet the function of local bodies is ever growing in importance with the rapid development of social legislation which they have to carry into effect. The responsibility for the sound administration of many services rests with them. Moreover, for the citizens at large the results of popular government are perhaps most clearly exhibited in the conduct of affairs in their immediate neighbourhood. Nothing, therefore, is more likely to undermine confidence in democratic control than inefficiency in local government. And there is a further point. There is in local government a far wider scope than in central government for the exercise of active citizenship. It is in this area of public life that a new infusion of democratic energy can best make itself felt. Reform of local government is thus to be advocated not merely on grounds of administrative efficiency but as a necessary means of recreating a living interest in democracy.

In the modern state—democratic or other—an increasingly important part is played by the permanent staffs of the Civil Service and the local government offices. The result is a good deal of loose talk about ‘hordes of officials’, whom the less intelligent correspondents to the Press seem to regard as miserable parasites on the community, whose numbers should be kept down at all costs. Public departments are freely described as the homes of ‘inefficient bureaucracy’ and ‘soulless officialdom’. In view of the irresistible trend of modern government it is most unfortunate that such a view of public officials should be current among the general body of citizens. If it is true, the reform of the official system is urgently called for; if it is untrue, steps should be taken to enlighten the public as to the true facts.

The implication of the sort of criticism to which I refer is that the multiplication of officials is somehow inherently wrong. Yet it is clear that, if we accept the principle that more and more of the machinery of community life is to be brought under public control, we must also accept additions to the numbers of civil servants and local government officers needed to run it.

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Nobody questions the high standard of intelligence and integrity in our Civil Service of today: we may well be thankful that we are served by a professional body of such competence and with such a high sense of public duty. The results of the absence of such a body have been painfully obvious in France during the period of reconstruction after the overthrow of the German occupation. The French Civil Service has always suffered from under-payment and unsatisfactory conditions; consequently when it was called upon to deal with the black market and other problems of re-organisation its efforts were seriously hampered by corruption and inefficiency among its members.

As to the charge that our public officials are dilatory and inefficient, it must be said that it rests partly on the business man's natural prejudice against state control, partly on the erroneous belief that conditions have changed little since the period of Dickens's Circumlocution Office, and partly on wartime experiences of hastily improvised government departments with makeshift staffs of doubtful competence. That our government departments have at any rate a certain sort of efficiency is demonstrated by the skilful way they have tackled such intricate wartime jobs as rationing, food distribution, the concentration of industry, and the control of public finance. Yet the business man maintains his obstinate dislike of Civil Service methods and the 'Civil Service mind'. He is never tired of contrasting his own prompt efficiency with the dilatoriness and red tape of officialdom. The contrast is overdrawn; but there is a good deal in it. We remember how Mr. Churchill had to impose a firm restraint on official verbosity in departmental papers. The fact is that the traditions and methods of our civil service were developed at a time when the main business of government departments was control. Today—not only in wartime but equally in the rapidly changing conditions of our peacetime economy—many of the departments are charged with the duty of running large sections of productive enterprise: they have to initiate, experiment, and give positive directions. Others have to guide and co-ordinate the work of local authorities in administering social services. The new civil servant of the higher rank requires qualities that the old could do without; and the office methods which suited previous generations may be no

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longer appropriate. The matter calls for inquiry. Whatever militates against the speedy conduct of the nation's business, should be put right.

Is there justification for the criticism of the public official as a soulless bureaucrat lacking in imagination and sympathy with popular needs? If so, changes in selection and training are needed. Between the general public and the servants of the modern state there should be a relationship of friendliness and confidence. This good relationship will become the more necessary as the state agencies of social security are developed and extended under existing and projected legislation. An increasing number of officials will be required to give personal advice and help to people suffering from the hazards and misfortunes of life: they will administer benefit for sickness, unemployment, and industrial injury; they will assist the unemployed to find suitable jobs; they will be in charge of schemes of re-training and rehabilitation after industrial accidents; they will relieve special cases of destitution; they will run the social services for mothers and young children, and will watch over the needs of old people. For those engaged in such tasks mere ability in office routine is not a sufficient qualification; they are in fact social workers, and they need knowledge of social conditions, allied with imagination, tact, and human sympathy. Some special training is obviously desirable. The virtue of the voluntary charitable agency is that it can give its assistance with individual and personal care. When the work previously done by voluntary societies is taken over by the State the personal element in the administration should remain. The citizen in receipt of public assistance must come to look on it not as something supplied as a matter of routine by an office concerned mainly with finance and statistics but as a personal service rendered by people who have a genuine interest in the work. If public officials are inspired by such a spirit, the old-fashioned view of the state as a meddling busybody will die a natural death and we shall fully accept it in its new character of the agent of social welfare.

It remains, finally, to consider the party system and its place in the machinery of democratic government. The working of the system is apt to generate a certain amount of impatience,

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especially among the more intelligent members of the community who find the trammels of a party programme irksome. With the growth of the scientific habit of mind and the application of scientific methods to the study of social problems, there has grown up a natural desire to see the great political questions handled by the best men acting according to their expert judgment of the needs of the particular situation and not according to preconceived party ideas. It is also felt desirable that House of Commons debates should exhibit less vain repetition, and that members should be free to yield to argument and vote according to their private conviction without constant fear of the Party Whips. The party system has indeed obvious drawbacks. But it has the inestimable merit of providing for the bloodless revolution by which a government that ceases to enjoy public confidence can be turned out of office and replaced by a new one. Thus until some better device is invented it remains indispensable to the working of democratic government.

At the same time, however, we must recognise that the old, limited conception of party politics is out of date. As we move towards a planned society it is no longer possible to treat the art of government as consisting solely in securing the programme and the interests of the party in power. Any intelligent and comprehensive plan in the social and economic spheres must be made on the assumption that there will be continuity of policy over a period of time. Such continuity can be secured, of course, by a revolutionary dictatorship that suppresses all opposition, but so long as conflict of opinion is tolerated, long-term plans for industry, for transport, for social security, for education, must be based on a programme representing the widest measure of agreement between the parties obtainable at the moment. It follows that those who represent the parties and mould national policy must be prepared at some point to sink partisanship in co-operation. The point has been well put by Karl Mannheim:

‘Planned democratic society needs a new type of party system, in which the right to criticise is as strongly developed as the duty to be responsible to the whole. That means that the liberal education for intelligent partisanship, which is mainly defending the interests of your faction and party and leaves the final integration

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to a large extent to the natural harmony of interests, must gradually be replaced by a new education for responsible criticism, wherein consciousness of the whole is at least as important as awareness of your own interests. In a planned society it is not the national interplay of interests which gradually leads to a total scheme of action, but a plan intelligently conceived and accepted by all parties. It is obvious that such a new morality can only be achieved if the deepest sources of human regeneration assist the rebirth of society'.¹

Democratic government will continue to work through the conflict of parties; but both politicians and ordinary citizens must reach out to a conception beyond party. Above all, the party in power must realise its full responsibilities to the community as a whole. It is perhaps fortunate for the development of democratic methods that we have got accustomed in recent years to a series of emergency coalition and 'national' governments. The experience has shown the extent to which co-operation of the parties is possible in questions of vital national interest; it has shown how for certain purposes Parliament can be converted from an arena of party politics into a true council of state. It is to be hoped that the results of this experience will be applied after the resumption of full party government. In the coming years we shall be confronted with problems of enormous complexity and magnitude, for the solution of which party slogans will be a poor guide. They will need to be considered in the light of the existing situation and the best expert advice. When no real cleavage of opinion is involved, would it not be possible to take the problem out of the arena of party conflict? That part of foreign policy which concerns the United Nations Organisation might prove to be an example. There is general agreement in this country on the principle of giving the fullest possible support to the international authority; and at present there are no competing plans before the public for translating principle into fact. Any government dealing with the matter will have to work out a policy in the light of what is possible. Could it not then call the Opposition into its councils and frame a national policy which could be debated in Parliament, and on which decisions could be taken by a free vote of the House? There may also

¹ *Diagnosis of Our Time*, 1943, p. 102.

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arise domestic issues of a similar character. Social insurance might well have been one of them. The public had decided that it wanted a measure of this kind; the general lines of projected legislation had been laid down in the Coalition Government's White Paper and had been generally approved; there were differences of opinion over details, but they were not very serious. The only reason for making such a piece of legislation a party matter after the dissolution of the Coalition would seem to be to enable the government that secured its passage to claim the credit for it at the next election. The prestige of Parliament in the eyes of the nation would, however, have been greatly enhanced if this great measure of social amelioration could have been presented, discussed, and voted on as a non-party measure. It would have given a heartening demonstration that even in peacetime sectional interests can give way to the national interest.

I have tried to show how the cause of democracy could be assisted by improvements in the machinery of government. Some of these could no doubt be brought about quickly through the initiative of political leaders with a real desire for efficiency. To be of any lasting value, however, changes in machinery must spring from the developing political consciousness of the nation as a whole. The rebirth of democracy can come only from the infusion of a new spirit into the body politic.

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