

# DEWEY DISCUSSES GOAL OF EDUCATION

**Individual Ambition Must Be Subordinated to Regard for Group Welfare, He Says.**

## THE NEEDS OF DEMOCRACY

**"Social Direction" Has Become a Requisite in the Training of Youth, Philosopher Asserts.**

*A picture of the kind of society toward which we are evolving and of the type of education that will be needed for it was sketched by Dr. John Dewey, the eminent philosopher, in his radio address broadcast last Sunday under the auspices of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education as part of its "Men of America" series. Parts of the address are given below.*

By JOHN DEWEY.

Our educational expansion . . . has frequently been attended with aimless dispersion and has led to superficiality. But when all allowances are made for mistakes and eccentricities, it still remains true that we now have and for the first time in history the physical and administrative basis for a truly universal education. For a universal education means not only one that extends its advantages to all, but one which meets the immense variety of social needs and of individual capacities and wants.

Much remains to do even in the way of extension. Pre-school education, parental education, adult education generally are only in their early infancy. Much has been said and written about a plan of vocational guidance which will help individuals find the callings in which they can be of use to others while finding happiness in their work for themselves, but as yet the schools have actually accomplished almost nothing. The trend toward high school and college still leaves two-thirds of our future citizenship with only the bare elements of intellectual preparation.

### An Ambition Unfulfilled.

Think of your own children of from 12 to 14, the degree of maturity they have reached, and call to mind the complex and difficult conditions of life and of making a living, and you will realize how far even in education we still come short of realizing the ideal of an equal start and an equal chance for all. Ignorance, lack of trained skill, are handicaps imposed on two boys and girls out of three. The evil is increased by the amount of child labor, even of a seasonal migratory sort, which our laws still permit.

Nevertheless, whatever our shortcomings, it is in education more than anywhere else that we have sincerely striven to carry into execution what James Truslow Adams has recently called "the Great American Dream": the vision of a larger and fuller life for the ordinary man, a life of widened freedom, of equal opportunity for each to make out of himself all that he is capable of becoming.

The movement is an endless one; the need for expansion and alteration in education can never be ended, because the need can never be fully satisfied. It is the need of a human nature and of a society that are themselves in process of constant change. The most universal ambition of the average American parent, man and woman, has been that his boy and girl should have a better chance in life than the father and mother had. This desire, which has been the source of infinite self-sacrifice, inheres in our social system with its belief in the possibilities of the common man. It can only be carried into effect through ever-renewed improvement of our educational system.

### Still Greater Changes.

Consequently, . . . great as have been the changes in our educational system in the last hundred years, and especially in the last thirty, they are nevertheless slight in comparison with those which must be undertaken in the next generation. . . . H. G. Wells said, soon after the close of the war, that we were engaged in a race between education and catastrophe. Here in America, it might be truer to say that we are engaged in a race between a miseducation which will bear no vital relation to the needs and conditions of the modern world and a possible education which will face the future and which will defer to the past and its traditions only as far as the past gives us aid in effectively facing the future.

The necessity of great educational change may be indicated by sketching the changes which life has undergone in the United States.

First, 100 years ago, our life was agrarian and rural. . . . During the nineties of the last century, our society became definitely urban and industrial. . . . Our mechanical devices and processes have got far ahead of our capacity to plan and to enjoy—ahead of our minds in short. The gaps between our machines and our ability to control them for human ends is widened because education has clung to old traditions and aims of culture in the face of the new industrial situation.

### Lagging Education.

Secondly, there has been a revolution in the methods by which things get done. . . . It cannot be said that our schools have begun to introduce scientific method into teaching to anything approaching the part which it plays in shaping our actual lives.

Thirdly, we have altered from a population with simple political problems to one with extremely difficult and complex issues. . . . The problem of democracy is no longer chiefly governmental and political. It is industrial and financial-economic. . . . The depression is a warning that we live in an age in which education must take on new responsibilities and come to grips with realities which it has passed by as outside its province.

Fourthly, control of natural forces by means of machinery has brought to humanity the possibility of an amount of leisure from which the mass of men and women in the past were hopelessly shut out. At the same time, popular amusements and recreation have been seized upon as means of financial profit. The combination of these two facts has created what may be truly called a crisis in our national moral life. A new conception of the uses of leisure has to be created; boys and girls need to be instructed so that they can discriminate between the enjoyments that enrich and enlarge their lives and those which degrade and dissipate. . . .

Not all the social changes which

are going on are good and beneficial. But it is claimed that these changes are here and must be faced, not ignored; education has the responsibility of developing types of mind and character that can direct these new forces toward good, and that otherwise they will surely become forces of destruction and disintegration.

The sum of the matter is that at the present time education has no great directive aim. It grows, but it grows from specific pressure exerted here and there, not because of any large and inspiring social policy. It expands by piecemeal additions, not by the movement of a vital force within. The schools, like the nation, are in need of a central purpose which will create a new enthusiasm and devotion, and which will unify and guide all intellectual plans.

In earlier days there was an aim which worked throughout the whole system. Education was the key to individual success, to making one's way in life, to getting on and getting ahead. The aim corresponded with the realities of social life, for the national need was the material subjugation of a continent, the conquest of a wilderness. There was always a frontier just beyond and the pioneer advanced to take possession of it. It was enough for the school to equip the individual with the tools of learning and to fire him with ambition and zeal to get on. His real education came in contact with others and in struggles with the forces of nature. The aim was individualistic, but it was also in harmony with the needs of the nation.

### Problems Ahead.

This earlier purpose has lost its vitality and its meaning. It survives, but operates as an oppressive handicap. As President Hoover said some time ago: "We are passing from a period of extremely individualistic action to one of associational activity." Except for a favored few, there is no longer any unbounded opportunity for advancement open to individuals. We live in an epoch of combination, consolidation, concentration. Unless these combinations are used democratically for the common good, the result will be an increasing insecurity and oppression for the mass of men and women.

Education must cultivate the social spirit and the power to act socially even more assiduously than it cultivated individual ambition for material success in the past. Competitive motives and methods must be abandoned for cooperative. Desire to work, for mutual advantage, with others must be made the controlling force in school administration and instruction. Instead of imbuing individuals with the idea that the goal is to sharpen their powers so they can get on personally, they must be trained in capacity for intelligent organization so that they can unite with others in a common struggle against poverty, disease, ignorance, credulity, low standards of appreciation and enjoyment. There must be a purpose and methods which will carry over the earlier ideals of political democracy into industry and finance.

### Role of Individualism.

Only in respect to methods of thought and judgment should the earlier individualistic aim be retained; there it should be intensified. Democracy will be a farce unless individuals are trained to think for themselves, to judge independently, to be critical, to be able to detect subtle propaganda and the motives which inspire it. Mass production and uniform regimentation have been growing in the degree in which individual opportunity has waned. The current must be reversed. The motto must be: "Learn to act with and for others while you learn to think and to judge for yourself."

The problem of educational reorganization is not one which is easy to solve. But we are discovering that the problem of maintaining the democratic ideals of our founding fathers is not easy, either. The only way to attain the latter is by giving a social direction to our educational system. If the good-will, the loyalty, the political faith and hope of the American people can be united with the affection which parents have for their children, and the union can be directed by the spirit of free scientific inquiry, there is no ground for fear of failure. When the ideals of democracy are made real in our entire educational system, they will be a reality once more in our national life.