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SOCIAL PROGRESS  
AND EDUCATIONAL WASTE

# Social Progress and Educational Waste

BEING A STUDY OF THE "FREE-PLACE"  
AND SCHOLARSHIP SYSTEM

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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## PREFACE

THIS study of the Free Place and Scholarship System has been made possible by the goodwill of the Trustees of the Barnett Fellowship and the Ratan Tata Foundation. I would express my thanks to them both for their patient and kindly encouragement. To many others, teachers and administrators, I owe all that these pages are worth. Their courtesy and criticism have been given willingly and un-sparingly. No one can spend a week in educational enquiry without developing a profound sense of thankfulness that such a devoted band of men and women are engaged in both the administrative and teaching functions of the community. Without the encouragement of Mr. R. H. Tawnéy this study could have been neither initiated nor sustained. Though he will tire at having his name once more put in a preface, it must stand, for without him the book could not have appeared.

Finally, I wish here to pay a tribute to the late Mr. W. G. Rushbrooke, whose great contribution to this problem, as Headmaster of St. Olave's Grammar School for twenty-nine years, has yet to be recognized. As a pupil of his for eleven years, I learned something of the meaning of the "imponderables" in education; and if these dull pages are too closely concerned with systems and statistics, I do not forget that, even when the opportunity is open to all for free and unhampered development, the "imponderables"

will remain. By his genius, sympathy and brilliant teaching power Rushbrooke of St. Olave's raised countless poor boys to the high pinnacles of knowledge and learning. It is now the business of the community to help create the conditions of the good life for all its future citizens.

The first three chapters attempt an estimate of the general problem, and they should be read together. The remaining chapters deal with specific areas, and together provide the evidence from which the conclusions have emerged.

TOYNBEE HALL.

KENNETH LINDSAY.

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## INTRODUCTION

How far is secondary education easily accessible to children attending the primary schools? What proportion of them receive it, and for how long a period does their secondary school life last? What should be the relations between the primary and secondary stages of education, and between education and industry? What are the obstacles which impede easy access to the secondary school, and by what measures should those obstacles be removed?

These are questions of vital significance for the future, not only of English education, but of English society. They have too rarely been made the subject of detailed and impartial study. In the following pages Mr. Lindsay has done something to fill the gap. Naturally, the enquiries of a private investigator cannot cover the ground with the completeness of an official publication, and Mr. Lindsay has wisely preferred an intensive study of certain areas, supplemented by the Board's statistics and by corroborative evidence from elsewhere, to the attempt to make a necessarily superficial survey of the country as a whole. But, so far as the resources at his disposal have allowed, his work is thorough and objective. The growing body of opinion which realizes the importance of a far-sighted educational policy, based on a realistic examination of social facts, is under a deep obligation to the Barnett Fellowship and to the Social Science Department of the London School of

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Economics for making it possible for him to undertake it. It is much to be hoped that the interest of his results will encourage other enquirers to pursue research into the fruitful, and too much neglected, borderland which lies between educational and social organization. Mr. Lindsay's conclusions should be compared with those reached by Mr. G. S. M. Ellis in his recently published work *The Poor Student and the University*.<sup>1</sup>

For the nature of those conclusions, and for the evidence on which they rest, the reader must turn to Mr. Lindsay's book; but I may perhaps be permitted to draw his attention to some of those which appear specially to deserve attention. It is clear, in the first place, that, in spite of the enormous progress which has taken place in secondary education in the last twenty years—a progress so great as to amount to a silent revolution—and of the closer links which have been established between the primary and the secondary schools, the proportion of children who pass from the former to the latter is still, in the country as a whole, surprisingly small, not more, indeed, than 9·5 per cent. It is clear, in the second place, that the percentage of children obtaining a secondary education varies very greatly (whatever the explanation), both from one area to another, and, within the same area, from school to school. Thus at Bradford the percentage of the age-group 10 to 11 passing from primary to secondary schools appears to have been in 1923, 27·1; in London in 1923-24, 6·4; in Warrington in 1923, 7·3; in Oxfordshire in 1924, 8·4; while, in London, the proportion of children

<sup>1</sup> *The Poor Student and the University*, by G. S. M. Ellis (The Labour Publishing Company, 2s. 6d. net).



from seven well-to-do boroughs winning scholarships was in 1924 four times as high as that in seven poorer boroughs, and in Oxfordshire, in 1924, 172 out of 212 schools supplied no "free-placers" to the secondary schools. It is clear, in the third place, that different social strata contribute in very unequal proportions to the secondary school population. The interesting table of parents' occupations printed by Mr. Lindsay shows that, while 26.9 per cent. of the pupils in secondary schools in 1921 were the children of "wholesale and retail traders," 20.5 per cent. were the children of "skilled," and only 3.2 the children of "unskilled," workmen. It is clear, finally, that the secondary school is still mainly a preparation for some kind of "black-coated occupation": of the pupils who left secondary schools in 1921 under 10 per cent. passed on into industrial or manual work. It is noticeable, however, that in areas where the percentage of children passing from primary to secondary schools is unusually high, both the proportion of pupils coming from the homes of manual workers and the proportion entering industrial occupations is, as would be expected, unusually high also. In Bradford, for example, where 49 per cent. of the pupils in secondary schools were the children of manual workers, no less than 21.2 per cent. of pupils leaving them entered industrial occupations.

"There is now," a statesman quoted by Mr. Lindsay is said to have remarked, "a complete ladder from the elementary school to the University, and the number of scholarships from the elementary to the secondary school is not limited, awards being made to all children who show capacity to profit." To the reader who weighs the facts

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presented in the following pages that statement will appear, it is to be feared, somewhat too optimistic. It is true, of course, that in the last fifteen years there has been a remarkable, and most welcome, increase in the accessibility of secondary education. But it still, unfortunately, remains the case that, while estimates of the proportion of pupils "capable of profiting" by secondary education differ, the percentage actually entering secondary schools is, for the country as a whole, far below the lowest of them. The shortage of secondary school places is one serious obstacle, which, incidentally, combined with the great increase in the demand for secondary education, has had the effect of converting the free-place examination from what it was intended to be, and what it is described as being in the statement quoted above—a qualifying examination—into being normally an examination of a highly competitive kind. The lack of means on the part of parents, which prevents them from dispensing with the earnings of their children, is a hardly less serious barrier. The figures presented by Mr. Lindsay of the number of children who, after winning free-places, are obliged to refuse them owing to poverty, tell, indeed, a story which few thoughtful persons can contemplate without grave disquietude. The development of "central" schools has done something to mitigate the first evil, and the increased provision of maintenance allowances the second. But, even so, the gap which remains to be filled before the nation can be satisfied that it is making a wise use of its human resources is still very large.

The realization of these defects should be, however, a ground for hope rather than for despondency, since it is the

progress of education itself which has caused public opinion to be conscious of them. It remains to build upon the foundations which have already been laid. The time has come, it may perhaps be suggested, when, in addition to the immediate steps—the provision of more schools, a larger expenditure upon maintenance allowances, and the more general acceptance of the policy, already adopted by Manchester, Salford, Bradford, Sheffield, and several other authorities, of abolishing fees at municipal secondary schools—it is desirable to reconsider the whole question of the relations between primary and post-primary education.

It is obvious, indeed, that in many areas such a reconsideration has for some years been going on. On the one hand, new forms of post-primary education, such as that given in the central schools, are rapidly developing, which, though not "secondary" in the unfortunately limited sense in which that term has hitherto generally been used in England, are secondary in fact, since they are designed to offer a broad and liberal education (including, of course, provision for practical work) during the years of adolescence. On the other hand, the grave waste involved in plunging approximately 80 per cent. of the boys and girls leaving the elementary schools into full-time industry (or, in too many cases, unemployment) at the age of 14 is being increasingly realized, and the time cannot be long delayed when the age of full-time attendance will be raised to 15.

The organization to which developments now taking place or in contemplation seem to point is one under which, to quote an apt phrase of Mr. Lindsay's, "selection by differentiation will take the place of selection by

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elimination." In place of an elementary system lasting till 14, from which a small minority of children pass to secondary schools, education, it seems reasonable to anticipate, will be regraded, in such a way as to consist of a primary or preparatory system for all children up to the age of 11 or 12, followed by varying forms of secondary education, corresponding to the differing tastes and capacities of the pupils, after that age. Thus primary and secondary education will be brought into a simple and logical relation with each other, and the grave intellectual and social wastage caused by our present failure to provide for the years of adolescence will be prevented.

But these are questions which travel beyond the immediate scope of Mr. Lindsay's book, and which are too large to be discussed in an introduction. Whatever educational developments the future may contain, the only foundation upon which a far-sighted and coherent policy can be built is a systematic investigation of the present situation and of the problems to which it has given rise. I welcome Mr. Lindsay's work as a conscientious attempt to explore one corner of this great subject, and I hope that it will lead to further investigations in the same field.