



RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

10

PAMPHLETS IN THIS SERIES

The Aims of Recon-
struction. (Published)

Demobilisation of the
Army. (Published)

Naval Demobilisation.
(Published)

Guide to Work and
Benefits for Soldiers
and Civil War
Workers. (Published)

Re-Settlement of Civil
War Workers.
(Published)

Raw Materials and Em-
ployment. (Published)

New Fields for British
Engineering.
(Published)

Housing in England
and Wales. (Published)

Housing in Scotland.
(Published)

Labour Conditions and
Adult Education.
(Published)

Re-Settlement of
Officers,

Land Settlement,
State Regulation of
Wages,

International Aspects
of Reconstruction,

Relations between
Employers and Em-
ployed,
and others will follow.

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND ADULT EDUCATION

TWO PENCE

MINISTRY OF
RECONSTRUCTION

1919

Labour Conditions and Adult Education

THE idea that grown people need education is now being generally accepted. The fact that, as a people, we were lagging behind some other nations has long been recognised. The truth that great numbers of our adult population are desirous of improving their education and would overcome difficulties that might well deter them has only recently been grasped and many people are still unaware alike of the difficulties and of the desire to surmount them. For that reason the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction (Chairman, the Master of Balliol College, Oxford), was appointed.

This pamphlet is in substance a summary of that Committee's Interim Report.*

Describing the nature of the demand among adults for education of a non-vocational character, the Committee says:—

“The motive which impels men and women to seek education is partly the wish for fuller personal development. It arises from the desire for knowledge, for self-expression, for the satisfaction of intellectual, æsthetic and spiritual needs, and for a fuller life. It is based upon a claim for the recognition of human personality. This desire is not confined to any class of society, but is to be found amongst people of every social grade.”

“The motive is also partly social. Indeed, so far as the workers are concerned, it is, we think, this social purpose which principally inspires the desire for education. They demand opportunities for education in the hope that the power which it brings will enable them to understand and help in the solution of the common problems of human society. In many cases, therefore, their efforts to obtain education are specifically directed towards rendering themselves better fitted for the responsibilities of membership in political, social and industrial organisations.”

* Interim Report of the Committee on Adult Education. Industrial and Social Conditions in relation to Adult Education. Cd. 9107. 3d. net. A Second Interim Report has now been published (Cd. 9225. 2d. net), which deals only with Education in the Army.

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

“ That a social purpose should so largely be the force underlying the demand for adult education is a fact which will be regarded, we think, with general sympathy and approval. It is evidence of an appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship, of the existence of political, social and industrial ideals, and of a growing determination to realise them. It will be universally admitted that the successful working of a democratic society implies a wide diffusion of a sense of responsibility and the intelligent participation in public affairs by the rank and file of the population. In view both of the grave problems with which the country will be confronted in the generations after the war, and of the ever-increasing complexity of social organisation, the need for the intelligent interest and the active co-operation of the mass of citizens will be greater than ever before. Women as well as men must make a direct contribution to the solution of future problems. The extension of the franchise to women is a significant expression of this need.”

In a further Report the Committee intend to make a survey of the very considerable educational activity there is already going on.

“ While for many years past a number of agencies have been at work in this particular field, it is since the opening of the 20th century that the development of adult education has been most marked. This period has been one of growing educational activity, and it is significant that the rise of the new universities has synchronised with the spread of educational effort among voluntary organisations of working people. Varied and widespread as such educational work amongst adults has been in recent years, much of it has escaped the notice of the general public.”

The University Extension Lecture system is well established and well known. The Gilchrist Educational Trust has for half a century done valuable pioneer work in adult education. The Adult School movement, which has expanded rapidly in recent years, covers a wide range of educational activities. Before the War there were 1,883 adult schools scattered over the country with a membership of over 80,000 men and women. But perhaps the most significant movement is the Workers' Educational Association founded in 1903, which in 1917 had 186 branches in England and Wales and four in Scotland, comprising in all 2,333 affiliated societies (trade unions and other working class and educational organisations) and 10,700 individual members, independent of its membership through the affiliated societies.

ADULT EDUCATION

It was as a direct result of this organisation of the Adult demand for education by the W.E.A. that the University Tutorial Class movement was established in 1907. The demand rapidly expanded and every University and University College in England and Wales has participated in the work. A tutorial class consists of not more than 32 men and women (mainly working people), pledged to undertake a three years' course of study which "must aim at reaching, within the limits of the subject covered, the standard of University work in Honours." Methodical reading and essay work, as well as regular attendance at class, are required from the students, and it is a testimony to the reality of the demand that men and women, the greater part of whose time is given up to their daily occupations, should have been willing to fulfil these conditions. The subjects studied include general and industrial history, economics, political science, philosophy, biology and literature. It may be noted that these are subjects the study of which tends to widen the outlook of the student, to make him a more capable citizen and to render him more able to understand and control the social and economic forces that shape his life. And it is for these reasons, and not for any immediate pecuniary return, that working people study them. They are striving to arrive at an understanding of the world they live in.

In 1914 there were 152 University tutorial classes in operation, containing 3,110 students. The effect of the War was to reduce the number of classes, which in the winter of 1916-17 had fallen to 99. During the Session of 1917-18, however, the number rose to 121.

Mention must also be made of institutions such as the old established London Working Men's College, Ruskin College in Oxford, and the Labour College in London. These provide residential courses to fit working men to take an active part in their Trade Union and other organisations. Each college also provides instruction for external students by means of correspondence in such subjects as industrial history, economics, English grammar and literature. The Labour College has also recently established classes in industrial districts for the teaching chiefly of social history and economics, attended by about 3,000 students.

Summer Meetings and Vacation Courses are an important feature of adult education. Among the better known of these are the Summer Meetings for University Extension Students, which were commenced some thirty years ago, and which have become increasingly popular. There are also residential Summer

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

Schools for University Tutorial Class Students. The first of these was held in Oxford in 1910 and similar schools have since been started by other University Joint Committees. The length of stay by students has ranged from one week to two months. These schools are increasing in numbers, and are now attended annually by several hundreds of students; and it is clear that there is a considerable and increasing demand for Summer Courses, which existing provision does not fully satisfy, though the demand is as yet confined to what is only a relatively small section of the community.

“The greater part of the work sketched above has taken its rise in the industrial centres and urban districts, where the conditions are perhaps more favourable than they are in the rural areas. At the same time, adult education is by no means confined to the towns, and during the past few years there has been a decided development in the villages. The reality of the demand in rural districts may be illustrated by the movement which, beginning in a Kent village in 1915, has now spread to about a dozen villages and small towns, where there are classes or study circles with a total membership of about 200.”

In this very brief review of educational opportunities of a non-vocational character any reference to the work of Local Educational Authorities amongst adults has been omitted. Their activities are much better known, and in this sphere there is considerable difficulty in drawing any sharp distinction between vocational and non-vocational education. Their work is mainly, but not exclusively, vocational in character. Local Authorities have also given financial and other assistance to many voluntary organisations undertaking educational work.

“Though at the beginning of the War there was a temporary set-back to the work of adult education, it is significant that the present volume of educational activity is larger than it was before the War. This awakened interest has been shown in the course of lectures, study circles, and classes arranged by a large number of organisations. A large part of this activity has been directed towards the study of the historical background and causes of the War, but attention is now being turned to the problems of Reconstruction, and organisations are finding great difficulty in coping with the demand for knowledge on these questions. An illustration of the educational work which is being carried on during the War is to be found in the activities of the Y.M.C.A. both in the camps at home and abroad and in munition centres. Lectures and study circles, arranged by it in co-operation with

ADULT EDUCATION

the Universities, Extension Boards and other educational bodies, are meeting with a response which indicates in some degree the possibilities of adult education in the future."

"It is undeniable," says the Report, "that a great mass of people are still untouched by the desire for education, and therefore make no response to the opportunities already provided. Many, however, are debarred through no fault of their own. But there can be no doubt that, in spite of the existing obstacles, education is making a wider appeal, and that there is need for an extension of facilities to meet the growing demand."

At present all efforts to improve and extend adult education are, perforce, made around a vicious circle. We are constantly being informed that our average production per head is far lower than it should be, that we are slow in adapting ourselves to evolutionary changes and in adopting new ideas—industrial, social, and political—that it is impossible to produce a healthy, prosperous and vigorous nation so long as our general standard of education is as we have hitherto been content to have it. And yet on all hands it is agreed that certain industrial and social conditions both hamper the full use of existing educational opportunities and even deter or prevent many people from trying to make use of them at all. The views of men and women, both students and tutors of long experience in all branches of non-vocational adult education throughout the country, are evidence that prevailing industrial and social conditions even before the War were only too often almost insuperable obstacles to adult education, and prevented individual workers from realising fully their powers and capacities.

(A)—INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS.

HOURS OF LABOUR.

Excessive hours of labour are amongst the great obstacles to adult education. It is true that the State has laid down for some classes of workers maximum hours of employment. So far as men are concerned the only case of direct legal limitation of hours is to be found amongst the miners. "The hours of labour of women are regulated by the Factory and Workshop Act and the Shops Act. Women and young persons engaged in domestic occupations and in clerical work, however, enjoy no protection by law in regard to hours. The hours worked by men are often indirectly limited by the laws regulating the employment of women and young persons, though this is by no means universal. The existing legal limitation of working hours, confined, as it is, to certain industries, though these are amongst the more im-

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

portant, and inadequate in the stringency of its regulations, even in the case of those to which it applies, is therefore one of the chief obstacles to the pursuit of intellectual and other interests. It is pointed out by many of those whom the Committee consulted that the absorption of so large a part of each working day in wage-earning employment leaves little time for the duties of the home, social intercourse, public duties and study. It was represented that after ten or twelve hours of work there is some excuse if the mind turns to rest or pleasure."

"My hours of work during the past ten years," stated a goods checker in the service of a railway company, "during which time I have been a student of non-vocational subjects, have been between sixty and seventy a week. These hours have hindered study. After twelve hours' work one cannot mentally concentrate to any extent."

The hours of labour are often even longer than they appear to be. A North Staffordshire colliery surface labourer, referring to the position of surface workers, gave evidence as follows:—

"they check on at 6 o'clock a.m. and leave at 5 o'clock p.m. You generally find the collieries are outside the towns and are miles away from social activity. This means to the workers that they have to rise at 3 o'clock and they arrive home between 6 and 7 o'clock at night."

The results of these long hours naturally make educational work difficult, if not impossible, and the effects upon the minds of men and women must be hurtful.

OVERTIME.

Closely associated with hours of labour is the evil of overtime. Overtime, where it constantly occurs, is from the point of view of educational opportunities even worse than long hours of labour, because of its uncertainty. In seasonal trades where the period of pressure happens to be the winter months (when educational facilities are most readily available), there is an additional hindrance. An employee in a London white-lead works gave his experience in the following quotation:—

"I was employed by ————— from 7 a.m. till 7 p.m., with two hours overtime nightly, which I had very little chance of escaping, making it 9 p.m. before my work was ended. Rising at 6 a.m., returning from work at 9.30 p.m., does not leave me with much strength to study. . . . The only time I found of value to read . . . was in the

ADULT EDUCATION

half hour allowed for breakfast. Under a dirty arch, surrounded by empty white-lead casks and near a refuse heap, I managed to learn something in conjunction with what I learnt at the class in three years."

The opinion of tutors of adult classes is unanimous regarding the effects of overtime.

"Long continued overtime," wrote a University Tutorial Class teacher with south country experience—

"overtime, that is to say, which is another name for long hours, and not merely a means of meeting a temporary boom—is a very serious hindrance to adult education. Even when overtime does not prevent actual attendance at a class one night a week, it interferes disastrously with home work and the writing of essays, which is an essential of solid tutorial class work. Moreover, and this is a matter which I wish to especially to emphasise, the value of special training such as that given in tutorial classes is to a great extent lost, if the students have little time for general reading."

THE SHIFT SYSTEM, &C.

Another grave difficulty is to be found in irregular hours of work, the shift system and "split turns." Large groups of workers are affected by these conditions, *e.g.*, railway and tramway workers, postal servants, policemen, miners and restaurant and hotel employees, whilst it is notorious that the work of domestic servants and housewives is never done.

Tramway employees may be taken as an example of "split" turns. It is common for them to work approximately from 5.30 to 8 a.m., from 12 noon to 1.30 p.m., and from 4 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

Practically all miners work on the "shift system." The following account by a Staffordshire collier explains the situation:—

"In many mines the three-shift system already obtains, and in every instance this largely interferes with the attendance of workers at any educational classes in that district. In fact it leaves those concerned but one week out of three in which they may attend evening classes. The same system also upsets the general home-life of the worker's family. When there are three or four workers in one house it is quite a usual thing to find all three shifts being worked during one week in one family. Hence three men will start out to work each at a different hour of the day, and of course will return at different times. So the women folk in that house at any rate simply live to prepare meals."

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

The position is summarised by a tutorial class organiser as follows :—

“ It is no exaggeration to say that in any industrial district hundreds of would-be students are prevented from taking up courses of study owing to the fact that they work on a shift system, which means generally that they are only able to attend classes once in two weeks, or once in three weeks, according as they are employed on the two-shift or three-shift system, and that therefore they cannot secure any continuity of study. Yet so keen are some that rather than be shut out altogether they will join a class and attend when they can, which means a very considerable effort of will.”

The effect of the shift system on the domestic life of the worker, and therefore on the opportunities for education of himself and the other adult members of his family, must also be considered. It is clear that the working of the household is determined by the conditions governing the employment of the male members. There can consequently be no opportunities for leisure for the women folk to cultivate wider interests. Those domestic conditions, the outcome of the shift system, react also upon the men in destroying what opportunities there otherwise might be for home study.

NIGHT-WORK.

“ Shift work ” means, as a rule, frequent periods of night-work, though it is well to remember that there are many who regularly work during the night. This is true not merely of people like night watchmen (who are usually elderly men), but of groups of workers like night wool-combers. Strong objection is taken to it on the ground that it requires too great a sacrifice of individual freedom and the normal methods of life to industrial purposes. A railway worker expressed himself as follows :—

“ To be engaged upon night-work is the greatest of all handicaps to the student. Most of the ordinary educational opportunities are closed to him, and even when chance brings to his door a morning or afternoon lecture he usually has to forego sleep to attend. Night-workers suffer from an insufficiency of sleep in an attempt, which is usually a failure, to live an ordinary life The inability to take part in civic and social activities creates a grave grievance.”

A printer's manager in a northern town said :—

“ It seems to me a topsy-turvy sort of world that sends one mass of men to toil and the rest to bed at the same time.

ADULT EDUCATION

It is possible to devise classes to fit a shift system, but it strikes me as a ridiculous sort of proceeding—putting the cart before the horse. To produce a highly developed personality, which education really stands for, is more important than producing a night wool-comber, and instead of making the more important subservient to the less important as we have done for so long, we should insist on industrial arrangements being made to fit in with our educational requirements.”

A SHORTER WORKING DAY.

“ From the point of view of education and of participation in public activities (a most valuable means of education) one of the greatest needs is the provision of a greater amount of leisure time ; this is the more necessary because of the increasing strain of modern life. The view sometimes held that the community must necessarily suffer economic loss as a result of a shortening of working hours is not one to which modern economic science lends any confirmation, and has, indeed, received an impressive practical refutation from the enquiries into the relation between output and working hours conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions during the present War. The unduly long hours which still obtain in many industries are, in fact, but a legacy from the traditions of half a century and more ago, and persist in the face of scientific proof of their uneconomical results.”

In order, therefore, that people may have better opportunities of devoting themselves to the things of the mind and to interests outside the daily round of toil a reduction of the working day is an urgent necessity. It is impossible within the limits of a pamphlet to enter into the many economic questions involved, but from the point of view of opportunities for education and self-development a general shortening of the wage-earner's working-day is indispensable in the manufacturing, distributive and commercial employments of the country.

THE REDUCTION OF OVERTIME.

The limitation of the working day would not in itself yield the desired result unless at the same time steps were taken to minimise overtime employment (which is often another name for long hours). In certain industries the further limitation of overtime would be attended by considerable difficulties, but perhaps the greater part of the overtime worked in the past was not so much the result of inherent conditions as of a lack of adequate industrial

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

organisation. In some trades overtime during certain parts of the year has become stereotyped as part of the normal system. It is well known that in the past industry has with considerable success adapted itself to the restrictions imposed by the State in the interests of the community, and a stricter limitation of overtime would doubtless be followed, in many cases, by the discovery and adoption of more effective methods of regularising employment.

SHORTER WORKING WEEK FOR WORKERS WITH IRREGULAR HOURS.

Those workers whose hours of labour are irregular need special consideration. There are difficulties in regularising hours of employment in all occupations, but it is probable that much might be done to ensure greater regularity of hours than now prevails. Where, however, the nature of the work seems to preclude this in the present stage of industrial organisation, workers whose hours of labour are irregular might be compensated by a working week less than the normal, which would allow them two days in seven free from wage-earning employment.

HEAVY AND EXHAUSTING WORK.

In spite of the development of mechanical appliances there still remains in many industries a considerable amount of work of a very heavy and exhausting character. It is not necessary to labour the point that work which requires the constant expenditure of an excessive amount of physical and nervous energy must deprive the workers of vigour otherwise available for personal interests and public affairs. Clearly none but the strongest animal spirits can prevail against the effects of protracted heavy toil. It is not merely a question of muscular fatigue, but also, and even more particularly, one of nervous exhaustion.

To give greater opportunities to these workers for such pursuits it is necessary that very exhausting occupations should be scheduled and more closely regulated by law and the hours of labour brought well below those of the maximum working day.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

Unemployment, if prolonged, unfits a man for any participation in educational and intellectual pursuits or in social activities. The urgent need of finding work, the wearing anxiety as to the present and future maintenance of himself and his family, make mental concentration upon anything else than the struggle for existence an impossibility. It is the decent, self-respecting citizen who,

ADULT EDUCATION

finding himself unemployed not by any fault of his own but by the exigencies of industry, suffers most. Because of his very self-respect he cannot bring himself to take advantage of the means (so often savouring of "charity" and the poor law) provided for alleviating distress caused by unemployment. As all observers are agreed, the result is, saving in very exceptional cases, physical and mental deterioration. Moreover, should unemployment be prolonged beyond a certain point, it is often found that the process of deterioration has gone too far for the victim entirely to retrieve his position, and thus a permanent loss is inflicted on the nation. A class secretary, speaking of his many years' experience in a large industrial town, said :—

"Unemployment, when all the future is uncertain, is even more distressing and demoralising. The writer has seen keen students, suddenly unemployed through no fault of their own, steadily deteriorate with the long anxiety and the daily fruitless search for work—which means a search for means of subsistence for themselves and families—until they are no longer able to continue, or to take pleasure in their studies ; and it has been distressing to see such students who formerly were moved by the strongest educational desire, fall to pieces as it were, and eventually lose touch with the movement. A class secretary in constant touch with his fellow students is made to realise as very few others can, the evil effects to the individual and the great moral loss to the community of some of the finest of its citizens, caused by the workers' insecurity of tenure giving rise to unemployment —"

A tutorial class student, formerly employed as a railway porter at Reading, and now on the railway clerical staff, said :—

"Unemployment and short time are both fatal to non-vocational education. A man's time and thought are spent in seeking work so that he can live ; for he must live, and have at least the bare necessities of life secured before he can devote time to education."

HOLIDAYS.

In pursuing their inquiries the Committee had brought under their notice the limitation of the educational opportunity of the manual worker owing to the inadequate provision of holidays. While in the North the annual week's holiday has become the rule rather than the exception, in the South the reverse seems to hold. For a large number of workers there is no customary holiday allowed, except Bank Holidays.

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

At the best the average town worker can only look forward to not more than one week's leave, and this is often subject to the demands of industry permitting, and has almost always to be taken at his own expense. In fact, it has been pointed out that "the worker, as a general rule, does not have holidays but periods of unemployment." During the past few years the facilities for adult education have been enlarged by the establishment of Summer Schools and Vacation Courses held under the auspices of the Universities, the Workers' Educational Association, the Co-operative Movement, the Adult School Union, and other bodies. While these schools are well attended by working people it is usually only the more fortunate who are able to take advantage of them, and there is little doubt that the number of these schools would largely increase if adequate provision were made for an annual holiday.

THE EFFECTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL BACKGROUND.

The above are some of the specific industrial obstacles to adult education. But beyond this there is the important question of the relation of the whole industrial organisation to the intellectual, æsthetic and spiritual life of the nation. It is precisely with these aspects of the life of the community that education in later life is primarily concerned.

The modern industrial system has very largely solved the problem of supplying the material needs of the world's population. To that task the energies of the past century and a half have been largely devoted. It will be generally agreed that this is the primary function of economic society. The progressive increase in productiveness has not, however, been an unmixed gain. The gross evils of a century ago, when large masses of the working population lived in abject misery and laboured under conditions of the most revolting and degrading character, have been largely overcome. But there still remain serious evils to be eradicated. The rising standard of life, the spread of knowledge, the developing aspirations of labour, and the increasing sense of responsibility among employers, will demand a reorganisation of the industrial system.

The Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories, the Reports of the Health of Munition Workers Committee, and other official documents, together with the inquiries of private investigators, are convincing evidence of the drain on physical health and strength which still continues from day to day in industry. It has recently been pointed out that "our national experience in

ADULT EDUCATION

modern industry is longer than that of any other people. It has shown clearly enough that false ideas of economic gain, blind to physiological law, must lead, as they led through the "nineteenth century, to vast national loss and suffering."

The revulsion against long hours, exhausting forms of labour and monotonous employment is fully justified by the results of scientific research. The fear of unemployment which hangs like a heavy cloud over so many breadwinners brings a sense of insecurity into their life and deprives them of all incentive to take a whole-hearted interest in the various activities which are a necessary accompaniment of a complete life. In such circumstances it is surprising that they make as much response as they do to the appeals of science, literature, music, art, and the drama, and exert so much effort to equip themselves for the responsibilities of citizenship. The workman demands (*a*) security of tenure, (*b*) adequate wages, (*c*) freeing from the limitations which our present specialism imposes upon him. To hand out doses of education while these things are ungranted will be to play with the problem. You cannot "educate" a man whose uppermost thought is the economic "Struggle for Existence." Nor can a spirit of intelligent and responsible citizenship be readily developed in those whose mainspring to activity is a continual struggle for the bare necessities of physical existence.

Whilst a very large proportion of the working population has not clearly formulated its fundamental objections to the conditions and circumstances of industrial life, the articulate minority is placing an increasing emphasis upon what may be called the moral factors. There is undoubtedly a growing feeling of dissatisfaction on the part of workpeople with what they regard as their position of inferiority. This inferiority, it is urged, is due to a forced submission to undesirable conditions, to the subjection of the worker both to the machine and to the will of others, who are vested with an authority in which the workers have no share. The new currents of thought, which during the past few years have increasingly agitated Labour, are a sign of deep-seated reaction against the de-humanising influences surrounding industrial life. One of the most insistent demands made by the rising generation of workers is for what is called "industrial control." The view which they hold is that the subordination of the worker to an industrial policy and to regulations for which they are not themselves directly responsible is unjustifiable, because it is inconsistent with the rights and obligations which ought to be inherent in membership.

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

of any organised group within society. They believe that industrial democracy is as essential to individual freedom as political democracy.

The movement is significant, because it gives evidence of a growing desire for new responsibilities. It is true that existing obligations are not by any means always fulfilled. But that fact, it is argued, is no valid reason for refusing to recognise the existence of a demand for new responsibilities.

Industry exists for man, not man for industry, and if it be true, as it is, that modern industrial conditions have often tended to deprive the worker of the education which he previously derived from the intrinsic interest offered by his work, that fact makes it doubly important to supplement these deficiencies by a humane and generous educational policy.

Evidence was brought before the Committee showing that certain employers, who have themselves enjoyed the benefits of a wide education, have approached the question of non-vocational education in a highly commendable spirit, and have provided for their workpeople facilities for humane studies. It is much to be hoped that the immediate future will witness a growth of this spirit among employers generally.

Self-education and, indeed, good citizenship depend in no small degree, then, upon a new orientation of our industrial outlook and activities. Improved conditions and the diffusion of responsibility for the proper conduct of industry will strengthen the need for educational opportunities. In so far as that need is fulfilled, industry will gain by a more effective "industrial citizenship," and will itself become more truly educative. Thus increased opportunities for adult education and the stimulus of a freer and finer industrial environment are correlative, and help to develop each other.

(B)—SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

HOUSING.

Opportunities for education depend to a considerable degree upon the character of the houses in which the people live. The unsatisfactory condition of working-class housing, as regards both quality and quantity, in town and country alike, is now realised on all hands. This problem, though accentuated by causes arising out of the War, existed even before the War in an acute form. Nearly half the population of England and Wales (48·2 per cent.) before the War were living in houses with more than one person per room. There were 39·1 per cent.

ADULT EDUCATION

of the population housed in tenements with over one but not more than two persons per room, whilst one in eleven of the population (9·1 per cent.) were crowded more than two in a room.

Serious as these figures are, the Scottish returns are even more serious. In Scotland, 43·6 of the population were in 1911 living more than two in a room, over a fifth (21·1 per cent.) were living more than three in a room, whilst one in every twelve (8·3 per cent.) were living under such conditions of overcrowding that there were more than four persons per room.

It is clear, therefore, that the majority of the people are badly housed, and such conditions, it is only too obvious, militate against the full use and right enjoyment of life. It is difficult, often indeed impossible, for badly-housed men and women to develop intellectual interests, and where such interests have been developed, almost insuperable obstacles bar their full realisation. The information submitted to the Committee on this question was unanimous in condemning existing housing conditions; and students, teachers and social workers were in full agreement as to the very serious handicap imposed on those who would wish, as one puts it, "to do more than work, eat and sleep."

A certain amount of privacy and seclusion is necessary if a student is to read and generally to follow up a course of study or engage in any intellectual pursuit. In a workman's cottage, with its one living-room in which all the domestic activities take place, and which is usually the dining and sitting-room as well, such privacy and quiet are impossible until the other members of the household have gone to bed. Many students are so keen and determined they they strive to overcome the difficulty by sitting up after the rest of the family have retired, but this imposes a serious strain on health, and often ends in a breakdown.

THE RURAL PROBLEM.

The rural aspect of social and industrial conditions is one of considerable difficulty and complexity, and needs separate mention.

The social conditions of country life are inextricably bound up with the whole tradition of rural industry. From this point of view the rural population suffers from special disabilities.

The character of a great part of agricultural work is such that there is not that close contact between workers which is possible in factory life, and which does very much to develop common

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

interests and interchange of opinion. The same isolation of the individual tinges the whole character of the industry, and has always made the organising of the rural population for any purpose exceedingly difficult. Unless future policy involves either (a) an increase in small holdings ; or (b) the closer grouping of cottages, this isolation must to some extent be permanent.

A rural organiser in the W.E.A. mentioned the " little development of corporate life " in the villages, and went on to say :—

" I found, especially in smaller villages with scattered populations, a strong class prejudice, almost feudal in its intensity. Without being able to express reasons, many were convinced that there was no point of contact between landed proprietor, farmer, labourer, and the trades craftsman of the urban cities.

" Those beyond 25 years of age were usually so absorbed in making both ends meet that they had little inclination to take part in work of an educational character. Villagers below that age did not seem to regard village life as a permanency."

The development of Continuation Schools, well adapted to the circumstances of rural life, would do much to stimulate the rising generation to educational effort, and to take their part in the common activities of the village.

Low wages have accentuated another disability. The housing accommodation in rural areas is very deficient in quantity and very defective in quality, because the countryman cannot afford to pay an economic rent. The fear of being without a cottage is always prevalent in many districts. The over-crowded and insanitary conditions of many cottages not only react on physical well-being, but exclude the privacy which at times is a deep human need.

It is unfortunate that so large a number of villages are without any meeting-place under public control. Church and Chapel buildings are by no means always available for secular purposes. Village institutes are few, and often are not under public control. The schools, which the local managers largely control, afford a very inadequate meeting-place at the best of times.

Good village libraries are few and far between. Indeed, the surroundings of the rural worker are notably lacking in any facilities for educational and social development.

While the general conditions of rural life are unfavourable to the development of self-education, there are parts of the country

ADULT EDUCATION

in which the village is still a centre of popular culture. In Scotland the village school has for centuries been a potent educational influence. In Wales village life is quickened by the more artistic temperament of the people. If in the villages of most parts of England the outward symptoms of intellectual life are not conspicuous, the difference must be ascribed to unfavourable conditions—partly historic—rather than to insensibility in English people to spiritual influences.

The solution of the problem of citizenship and the provision of opportunities for a fuller village life lies primarily with the people of the country-side. Certain reforms are needed at once, the most urgent of which, the Committee hold, is the provision of a hall under public control in every village. The accommodation would, of course, depend on the size of the village, but even a single room might form the nucleus of a new social life. The ideal to be aimed at, however, is a village institute with many-sided activities standing as the centre of the intellectual and social life of the community for whom it exists.

THE PROBLEM AS IT AFFECTS WOMEN.

The intellectual and spiritual needs of women are as insistent as those of men. The industrial and social conditions which bear heavily on men are equally injurious to women.

But there are problems specially affecting women. In the past the lot of domestic servants as a class has been far from satisfactory. Their work is irregular and generally spread over the greater part of the waking hours. There is often, therefore, little freedom and leisure in the life of the domestic servant, especially where she is alone in a household, and in such cases she may live in an undesirable isolation. During the war, conditions have improved considerably, and it appears certain that the change in conditions will, in large part, continue after the war.

Housing is essentially a woman's question. Good housing means more for women than it does for men, and more for housewives than for female industrial workers. The home is their normal environment. On the other hand, her influence is to a considerable degree determined by the character of the house in which she spends so great a part of her time. Lack of sufficient accommodation for the members of the family, ill-lighted rooms, the absence of proper domestic facilities, and so forth, must necessarily react upon the housekeeper. The cares and responsibilities of domestic life, the never-ending

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

round of duties, the cramped environment, have only too frequently converted the housewife into a drudge and established the tradition that interests outside the home are no concern of the working woman. It is a matter for satisfaction to find, however, a growing number of housewives taking part in educational as well as in social and public movements. But, with the responsibilities of citizenship, women will come more definitely to feel the need for education, and for a wider experience of other than domestic affairs. In this connection a better standard of housing is vital.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.

In its summing up of the effect of existing industrial and social conditions upon the present and future possibilities of Adult Education, the Committee makes the following recommendations on educational grounds :—

- (a) That there should be a general shortening by law of the normal working day, and that, subject to qualifications in the case of certain industries such as agriculture, it should not be more than eight hours.
- (b) That in heavy and exhausting kinds of work, and work accompanied by special disabilities, the maximum legal working day should be shorter than the normal.
- (c) That overtime should be more closely regulated by law and reduced to a minimum.
- (d) That where "shift" work continues the hours should be reduced below those of the normal working-day; and that, except where it is absolutely essential, regular night-work should be prohibited by law.
- (e) That efforts should be made to meet the evil effects of monotonous labour by alternating forms of employment, by creating opportunities for the exercise of initiative, and by establishing works committees for the consideration of matters affecting workshop life.
- (f) That steps should be taken to guarantee to the worker some reasonable security of livelihood either by such a reorganisation of industry as may prevent or minimise fluctuations in the volume of production, or, where that is impossible, by some extension of the principle of insurance.
- (g) That wage-earners should be entitled by law to an annual

ADULT EDUCATION

- holiday, with pay ; and that the weekly half-holiday should be extended by law to the worker in agriculture.
- (h) That the preparation of schemes of housing and town-planning should be accelerated ; that such schemes should be drawn up in consultation with the best expert advice available, and in co-operation with representatives of the people for whom such schemes are intended, and particularly representatives of women.
 - (i) That adequate washing facilities should be required to be provided in all places of employment where the nature of the work makes it desirable.
 - (j) That special consideration should be given to the peculiar problems of rural housing.
 - (k) That a village institute, or at least a hall, should be established in every village under public control.

CONCLUSION.

Important as are the immediate and urgent economic and social questions, it is well that they should be regarded from the wider points of view that are suggested in the foregoing pages and that they should be solved with reference to the larger questions of social well-being. The effects of evil industrial and social conditions will persist after the conditions themselves are removed, and new conditions will be reflected but gradually in new standards of life and citizenship. But while it cannot be expected that a generation which boldly attacks the defects in its social and industrial structure, and opens up possibilities of new opportunities, will itself enjoy the full results of its labours, nevertheless the work which has been done in the past justifies the hope that the men and women of to-day will increasingly utilise the enlarged opportunities for equipping themselves by education for the development of life and the duties of citizenship.

RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

NOTE : The following is a list of the publications already issued by the Ministry of Reconstruction and the Reconstruction Committee which preceded it. Other reports of a more confidential nature have been drawn up but not published.

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ADVISORY BODIES APPOINTED BY THE MINISTER OF RECONSTRUCTION, STATEMENT AS TO. (Cd. 9,195, price 2d.)

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Report of the Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee. Parts I and II (Cd. 9,079, price 1s. 3d.)

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