

The Young Wage- Earner

And the Problem of his Education

Essays and Reports

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With the Committee of the

Uplands Association

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THE YOUNG WAGE-EARNER

INTRODUCTION

AT the Summer Meeting held during August 1917 in Bangor, the problem of Continued Education proved of great interest; it was therefore decided to pursue the inquiry after the Meeting closed. The Committee put together a statement (see p. 10 below) which was issued in January 1918, and it was then decided to extend the study to a further stage by preparing a number of essays and reports. These are now collected and submitted for the use both of teachers and of the wider public interested in educational reform.

The reader will bear in mind that the treatment is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, but is designed to support a distinctive point of view as regards the part-time education of adolescents. The examples chosen by the reporters may be said almost to be chosen at random: they happened to have come within our purview and to be apposite: the reader may take it for granted

that similar activities can be witnessed in many other districts than the one which has fallen under our notice. Our purpose is to supply data, sufficient to secure a point of view. Some omissions will possibly be remarked. Writing as several of us do from Manchester, it might be expected that we should give a leading place to Lads' Clubs, but we have preferred rather to deal with efforts which have not been brought so prominently under public notice. A full account of this movement, from the pen of Mr C. B. Russell, was published by the Board of Education a few years ago, and a more recent summary can be read in the British Association volume called *Manchester, 1915* (The University Press, Manchester), written by Councillor Melland.

Our space has only permitted a scanty reference to religious institutions, but here again those who want to know the facts can readily ascertain them. The Roman Catholics maintain most active societies, of laity and clergy combined, for the oversight of youth; the Jewish community often maintain clubs and other social organisations: the Wesley Guild, attached to the Wesleyan Methodist Church,

flourishes in most large towns and in many smaller centres also.

In spite of these evidences of religious zeal there can be no question that only a small portion of the ground has been covered, especially in regard to the new scholars, the hitherto untouched mass of young wage-earners, who are the theme of Mr Jackson's essay. And Professor Shelley does not hesitate to affirm that the Churches on the whole have failed to realise the tragedy of the moral crisis which the war has exposed. A confirmation of this view is presented by the results of an inquiry conducted during the last month in a large town in Lancashire. A **Juvenile Organisations Committee**¹ has commenced operations in this town at the instance of the Home Office, and has collected full information from every type of religious and social organisation, including Bands of Hope, Guilds, Boy Scouts, etc. The conclusion, as reported so far, is that only one in five of the young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen are to be found in any kind of voluntary association.

While the contributors to this volume are

¹ See p. 114 below.

largely of the same mind in general policy, some divergence may be noted in details, and no effort has been made to ensure consistency of exposition. We write as students, who approached this new field of inquiry without any prepossessions, and we submit these first-fruits of our study to those who are prepared to investigate the needs of the young wage-earner with an unbiassed mind. Apart from the extracts quoted in the Appendix, all the contributions have been prepared by members of the Uplands Association.

J. J. FINDLAY.

POSTSCRIPT

While this volume has been passing through the press, the House of Commons has considered the Education Bill. Clause 10 as we have printed it below has suffered some change, and many reformers are inclined to reproach the Government for making any concession at all to those who claimed to speak on behalf of manufacturing and agricultural industries. Without an inside knowledge of the force of the opposition which the Government had to

face no one can judge how far such reproaches are justified. The main principles underlying Clause 10 are maintained, and at the moment of writing there is every prospect that they will be translated this summer into an Act of Parliament. That is a great achievement, and Mr Fisher's name will be associated with it for all time.

The result of the changes is a postponement of the introduction of compulsory part-time schooling between 16 and 18 until seven years from the "appointed day," instead of two years, as was contemplated under Clauses 10 and 45 taken together: and a permission to Local Education Authorities during this period of seven years to reduce the attendance from 320 to 280 hours if they elect to do so.

The Government has added to Clause 10 a subsection relating to Works Schools which provides that "A local education authority shall not without the consent of a young person require him to attend any continuation school held at or in connection with a place of employment, and any such school shall be open to inspection either by the local education authority or by the Board of Education at the option of those responsible for the manage-

ment of the school." These provisions are the result, it appears, of friendly compromise between the representatives of labour and of the large manufacturers. The Reports numbered I. II. and VI. below will show how necessary it was to determine by law the status of this peculiar type of " non-provided " institution.

The chapters that follow deal only with wage-earners between the ages of 14 and 18, who are henceforth to be legally described as " young persons " ; a critic might fairly point out that thousands of children earn wages before they become young persons on reaching the fourteenth birthday. For many reasons, however, we have thought it well to confine this volume to the problem of continued education, basing our arguments upon the psychology of adolescence. The relations between schooling and employment previous to 14 are equally important, and the discussions now proceeding in the House of Commons are of great moment ; but the proper treatment of these would require us to expound the psychology of childhood, and in particular to consider how the practical outlook of the child upon his environment affects

his relation to work and to paid labour. Such a study would require a separate volume.

Now that the Government Bill seems fairly secure, the pages that follow will, we hope, assist public opinion in answering the urgent question which must now be answered—viz. where are the teachers to be found? The reactionaries who hope that the inevitable postponement in adopting the new law may lead to its being eventually dropped are relying upon the scarcity of teachers as a weapon of attack. It therefore becomes a matter of the first importance for reformers to fix their attention on this aspect of the problem. If I may venture on a personal opinion, I would prophesy that many of the teachers and supervisors of the Young Wage-Earners will be found in our citizen army. During the last few months our soldiers have begun to realise the possibility of educating themselves while still wearing the King's uniform: if this movement spreads, assisted by the Y.M.C.A., by the universities, and by all grades of the teaching profession, we may find when demobilisation sets in that Education has become a matter of real interest and pride among

soldiers and sailors : if so, these will furnish an adequate supply of men and women ready to serve the youth of England in days of peace with a devotion and a loyalty equal to that with which they have defended our country amid the perils of war.

J. J. FINDLAY.

12th June 1918.

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