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CONSCRIPT ON EDUCATION

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MUCH IS SAID of the mighty role our men now in arms will play in civil life, once the battle is won. The opinion seems to be general that our troops need to be enlightened. Mrs. Roosevelt wants officers to lead their men in round-table discussions; the Army has its specialized-training program, designed to remedy in this brief hour the deficiencies of the generation; Russians rescued from the Vichy French are amazed at the political ignorance of the American soldier—a species of ignorance we cannot view as wholly unblissful. If, then, we warriors are to shape the globe anew and are to be taught global architecture, a conscript sergeant, a military speck in the mass of our armies, may venture to inquire concerning the type of intellect with which he should equip himself for the purpose—and, more important, to inquire if anyone has remembered that intelligence, benevolent or malign, has far more to do with making new worlds than have dreams and machines.

In a recent essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*, George Boas expressed his interesting opinion of what sort of minds soldiers should have: "If training men in trigonometry and physics and chemistry, to the detriment of the humanities, will win the war, then for God's sake and our own, let us forget our Greek, our Latin, our art, our literature, our history, and get to business learning trigonometry and physics and chemistry."

When a professor of philosophy at Johns Hopkins is thus heroically willing to sacrifice other men's educations upon the altar of Mars, it is time we began the re-examination of fundamentals in learning. When, beginning with a dubious premise, he concludes that the intellectual tradition of mankind should be ignored, even temporarily, upon the ubiquitous excuse of the totality of war, we may well begin to think that our educational system is insecurely supported; and it is a moot point whether the sort of "liberal" education in which most students are immersed be superior to a course in welding. Education in these United States has reached a sorry point if another pronouncement of Professor Boas's be sound; for,

writing of the scholar in arms, he tells us: "All the learning in the world is not worth the experience which he will gain from his military career; and if he is killed, at least he will not have asked someone else to die for him."

It might not be surprising to hear the headmaster of a military preparatory school expounding a doctrine which exalts above his victim the legionary who slew Archimedes; but to listen to this cry of "sound, sound the clarion, sound the fife," coming from the ivory tower is another matter. It is an opinion which differs only in degree from an important article of faith in the credo of those states now contesting with us the mastery of the earth, whose intellectual principles we profess to despise. Before commencing our work of world reformation, it might pay us to consider whether we are going to beat the Nazis and enlighten them, or beat the Nazis and join them. We are fit to weigh this question only if we retain some vestige of the liberal learning so quickly cast aside in one crowded hour of glorious life; and it is to be feared that a smattering of trigonometry and physics and chemistry is not sufficient to make the mind liberal. The physical sciences have their place, a respectable one; but they, primarily, do not win wars; the human spirit still does that; and physical sciences certainly cannot suffice for the men who are to make and maintain a peace, who are to establish liberty and justice, who are to set free the body and the mind.

The whole neglected realm of education needs a more thorough survey than any Congressional committee could give it; already we may be making blunders that will prove nearly irreparable. Are we teaching ourselves to govern the world? Are we teaching ourselves to govern ourselves? The author of *Into the Valley* has his soldiers exalt pie, as the symbol of their sacrifice; but if we are to win no more from this mêlée than another piece of pie and another pat of butter, and at the same time lose much of what remains of our intellectual birthright, our ecstasy over the restoration of the four freedoms will have been as sorry a show as the salvation and subsequent backsliding of a streetcorner sot. A physical victory by ourselves and our allies now has become inevitable; but our intellectual victory still is in doubt. It may prove more difficult for us to think clearly and loftily than it is for us to strike lustily and often; but without one triumph, the other is worth little.

In a talk delivered in Detroit, the versatile and mercurial John Erskine announced that the mechanization and technicalization of American education alarm him very little. He dreads not the blow this war strikes at liberal learning, which, he implied, is of small import. College teachers are unable to agree upon what a good book is; and, by deduction, a good book doesn't matter much. Professor Erskine held a different opinion when he wrote that penetrating little volume *The Delight of Great Books*; but it appears that principles do indeed change with times, and that Paris still is worth a mass. Yet there is truth in his observation that colleges have not fulfilled their implicit pledges during these past decades; and evidence of this is the fact that a professor of literature of considerable popular distinction can speak thus sneeringly of liberal learning. When our teachers have reached this pass, what of their students? Archibald MacLeish and others find it fashionable to declare that our intellectuals have betrayed us in our hour of need; they have been tried and found wanting, our enthusiasts cry. So they have, but may not the roll-call of these unfaithful highbrows include the names of Boas and Erskine and MacLeish? There is too much loose talk of treason in these days; but if we are to accept the definition of our flag-wavers, literary and political—i.e., treason is the absence of enthusiasm—these beaters of drums and brandishers of swords stand convicted. They have damned liberal education by their sneers, not for its faults, but for its very principles. If a time should come when no one is interested enough in letters to buy even the books of these writers, they will have themselves to reproach. American education has been failing dismally; the rot at the heart becomes apparent, and some of the grubs gnawing away there have distinguished names. But it is of no avail to rail at our own faults; we must identify and begin to remedy them, before this war and its subsequent new order have doomed true knowledge. We might have done a better job of managing this world since 1918, had our schools been better; we certainly would have been wiser and happier in adversity; and there is little reason to talk of postwar planning if we ignore the basis of all sound plans, knowledge. What then is wrong with our schools?

It is true that the average graduate of our colleges knows neither how to live nor how to think. His four years of membership in the academic body served chiefly to muddle his mind, to blur the sound prejudices in it. He cannot tell you how Cato died at Utica, or who Rasselas was, or what John Stuart Mill had to say about liberty. Shade of Macaulay's schoolboy! As a corollary of his ignorance in these matters, he does not know what he wants in life—other than "progress," unwitting pragmatist that he is—or for what he is willing to die. Is this the man to rule both the world and himself? His, it is to be feared, would be a Roman peace. It is even difficult for him to write a coherent letter. He can tell you something of sports; he knows that there is a Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago; he has had a course in principles of sociology, and feels vaguely that social security is a good thing; he may even recall a few chemical formulae. Is this our proconsul? Is this our Brave New Man, who is to be the recipient of the delights of a broader life?

It is true that the average human honorably discharged from our high schools feels like a lost soul. Philosophy, rhetoric, the arts, history, music, belles-lettres, the pleasures of the mind—what has he had to do with these? His teachers, for the most part, laughed such toys to scorn, or else spoke of them with hypocritical veneration, as of the dead. He has been taught to adjust himself to modern life; and yet he finds modern life singularly unco-operative. He has been stuffed, unwillingly, with civics and vocations and shop-work, primed to be an obedient cog in the social machine. Although he has been shown how to make ash trays out of tin cans, he is given a job as a truck driver. Though he may have industriously tormented cats in the anatomy lab, he finds himself behind the counter of a grocery store. All this projected harmony with the New Living has made him none too prosperous in the material sense. Sometimes he realizes, dimly, how unprosperous it has made him spiritually. As a soldier, he feeds his mind with comic books; he learns his strategy from Captain Midnight, not from General Lee. He is often brave enough; he is warmhearted, sufficiently honest; he has the veneer of civilization. Too often he wants penetration, constancy, firmness of purpose. He can fight; but so can the Nazi, whose education is incomparably worse. Can he convert or subdue

the world? Can he convert or subdue himself? Will he not be among the new bonus-marchers rather than with MacLeish in the clouds? He knows not whither he goes, nor has he any guide but his own vacillating will. It is time we remembered the words of Burke: "It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters."

True, a minority come from our schools with reason and imagination. Some have read philosophy; some even have a philosophy. The fact that men can continue to love books and to study character, despite the handicaps with which our materialistic educational system burdens them, is evidence of the tenacity of truth and of the virility of classical education. There still are some who would rather read the pages of Plutarch than those of Erskine Caldwell. It is not too late to increase this minority to a majority—a majority, that is, of the men and women capable of reflection, leadership, and self-government. Many a fine mind falls into Vanity Fair or the Slough of Despond for want of guidance and sympathy. The roots of the tree of liberal learning are not dead.

The liberal learning meant is the sort of knowledge that sets men's minds free. The most important question of our era, as of every age, is not the political question; it is the personal and intellectual puzzle. Free minds are those elevated above the sordidness of everyday life. Everyday life will be sordid under any New Order, men being creatures of passion. Let the state of the nation be what it may, the man of liberal mind need not despair; he has his memories, his books, his ideals. These elements are worth more than Utopia. But there is a worldly, utilitarian value in liberal learning, too. So long as we are bent upon Utopia, we must have minds that can conceive Utopia, that know Utopia has to be built of stone, not of air. A liberally educated man has a great store of general knowledge and common sense; ignorant enthusiasm cannot remake the world. Let us weigh a single example: our view of the Germans.

A great many people, some of them prominent, find it clever, nowadays, to declare that they consider the Nazi in particular and the German in general a distinct species, not amenable to the natural laws of humanity. Perhaps we have not been so silly in this respect as we were during the last war with Germany; but our folly is more

ominous now; men are suggesting in print that we deal with Germans accordingly. The gentle voice of Ernest Hemingway is uplifted in favor of literal emasculation. Clifton Fadimans, in their popular abhorrence of the Teuton, tend, unconsciously, toward the theories of race maintained by Rosenberg and Goebbels. We are rightly unwilling to concede that the Jews are a people irrevocably apart, possessed of emotions and characteristics peculiar to them; yet we proclaim that the German is such a creature, a sort of pulp magazine, Martian being. While our eyes are opened no more widely than this, we shall not subdue the German; we shall not reform him; we may not even beat him; and we are not likely to judge of any other nation more wisely. Only the state, the army, and the man of liberal mind can defeat an enemy and win him to friendship, or, at least, passivity. One of the first principles of liberal learning is the universality and timelessness of human nature.

Liberal education frees the mind; it also frees men. Why, then, have we scoffed and kicked learning of the old school. Perhaps because of our national passion for novelty; "new methods," "progressive education" (that siren of progress—toward what?). We have turned from the classics to the lathe because of our fetishes of creature comforts and material aggrandizement. We have forsworn the old ways because of our love of ease; for true learning is difficult to acquire, and modern studies, from sand-pouring to hotel administration, require a minimum of effort. Our vices have betrayed us; our folly and our sloth have had their way; and now, when we need men of lofty mind, broad views, and stern integrity, we find ourselves a nation enamored of fads, fierce passions, and selfish materialism. In part, the moans of anguished motorists, the riots in Detroit, and the coal strikes were the products of our educational failure.

Our colleges fail miserably; but they cannot hope for great improvement until there is reform in public schools. College freshmen pour into ivied halls ignorant of grammar, of orthography, of English literature, of modern and ancient languages, of scientific theory, of geography, of history, of the rules of decent conduct. With this mob—many of them potentially intelligent, many pathetically eager for knowledge—what can be done? Some have overcome the handicaps of our public schools, and possess some of the elements of knowledge; some fall into the hands of exceptionally able and de-

voted instructors; but most muddle through their four years, get their parchment, and go out ignorant into life.

The failure begins when children enter kindergarten. There are four sins of public education: equalitarianism, technicalism, progressivism, and egotism.

That leveling spirit, that democratic movement which, although often termed particularly American, really is the spirit of this age throughout the world, is not to be resisted. Although there is much confusion over the terms "democracy" and "republican" and "freedom," and much foolish talk of the infallibility of the *demos*, this soldier and his contemporaries are democrats. It is to be hoped, however, that our democracy has become mature enough to begin to level up rather than down. We have long been tending to reduce our educational problem to the lowest common denominator. In our anxiety to make equal those whom God created unequal, we have been as industrious, although not as successful, as was Colonel Colt. We have tried to explain the learning of the ages in terms comprehensible to the dumbest little boy from the East Side; that little boy is unable to understand Homer; so Homer is not taught. A prejudice has arisen against brilliant teachers deserving the satire of Swift; a teacher, it is said, must not rise above the level of his pupils, or they will not understand him; therefore a teacher must be found as dull as the dumb little boy. Now all this is most generous toward the dumb little boy; but too often he is not sufficiently appreciative, and remains dumb as ever, while his classmates, out of boredom, descend to his level. It does no harm for a teacher to lecture in a tone somewhat lofty for his average pupil; the dumb student gains something, the average student is stirred to curiosity, and the intelligent student is pleased. This soldier never learned anything from men who came down to his level; admiration of knowledge, followed by emulation, is more effective. We talk of education for leadership; but actually we educate for mediocrity. It is better to increase the knowledge of one average boy by ten degrees than to increase that of two dumb boys by one degree.

Our second curse, the popular acclaim of "practical" knowledge, of technical skills, the training of young people to minister to our comforts, is harmful not so much per se as it is incidentally; it occupies precious hours that once were given to literature, languages, and

the story of the past. All our material progress has not enabled us to increase the number of hours in a day, or the number of years in a boy's youth; and if he is learning arc welding, he is not likely to read Milton. Some boys, of course, never could read Milton with profit; but not enough of those who could are given the opportunity. They are occupied building clumsy bookcases, and the girls are baking soggy cakes, during the period when the old rhetoric hour used to come round. It is well that some men be able to build bookcases, and that most women be able to bake cakes; but they once learned these useful skills without going to a big brick building in the center of town. For manual and domestic acquirements, apprenticeship and practical experience still are the schools of greatest worth; and were we to lock our school shop and kitchen doors tomorrow, we should still have bookcases and cakes. Since it is popular to level shafts at the industrialist, this soldier shoots one more bolt: much of this vocational training is simply a subsidy to management, for public money provides for experience the industrialist otherwise would furnish in his factory.

Technical and manual skills are necessary; but they can be taught elsewhere than in public schools, and, so far as practical mastery is concerned, already are taught elsewhere. The enlightenment of minds should take priority. Constitutional history and woodcarving cannot be taught simultaneously to the same boy in the same classroom; and of the two, America and the boy are more in need of constitutional history.

The doctrines of the "progressive" movement in education are interestingly varied; but the assumption at the foundation of the progressivist system is that there is an easy way to learning. This theory has a charm for too many Americans, with their visions of a perfection consisting of two cars in every garage. Vacuum cleaners save housewives from toil; cannot new means of education save their children from learning the alphabet and the names of dead presidents? Aristotle remarked, "Education ought certainly not to be turned into a means of amusement, since all learning is accompanied by pain." The pleasure of knowledge comes after the pain of education has been endured. But the progressivists are not willing to pay their penny to see the show—precisely as many other Americans think that the magic of installment buying saves them from the

unpleasant necessity of raising cash. Who heeds Aristotle and the Greek view of education: namely, that its object is to make man the master of his soul?

John Dewey and the lesser gods that sport about him, composing the pantheon of the progressivists, ask, why exercise compulsion upon the school child? There is a very simple way to avoid compulsion: if the child doesn't like the multiplication table, let him scribble with crayons. The line of least resistance is the road to education, it is held; in consequence, the alphabet is flouted as much as possible, resulting in a splendid disregard of orthography; history and politics are metamorphosed into community civics; if a child finds *Pilgrim's Progress* a bit hard to read at first, give him something simpler. The notion that a student must learn by doing (act *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and not read *Hamlet*; play with numbered blocks, not stoop to old-fashioned tables of calculation) is carried to such an extreme that even Bertrand Russell is alarmed, writing in *Education and the Good Life*:

And I should say that culture involves a certain power of contemplation, for thinking or feeling without rushing headlong into energetic action. This leads me to a certain hesitation in adopting the theory of what is called "dynamic" education, which requires pupils actually to *do* what they are learning. Undoubtedly this method is right with young children, but education is not complete until more abstract and intellectual methods have become possible. To "do" the nebular hypothesis or the French Revolution would take a long time, not to mention danger from the guillotine.

Readers of Saki will remember, too, the Schartz-Metterklume Method, and the re-enacting of the rape of the Sabine women.

That egotism which is the fourth curse of our schools lies in the unjustifiable conceit of a great many teachers. They call themselves liberal, and yet they shut their ears and eyes to all opinion but that which comes from "modern" and "progressive" sources; they prate of freedom, and yet make a closed corporation of their profession. These vices are particularly apparent among the younger teachers, who have been exposed to all the faults of the educational system of the past two decades. Many teachers of sound instincts escape these failings; natural good sense or an early and accidentally acquired love of books saves them from the follies of progressivism

and technicalism; and many a graduate of a teachers' college will do worthy work; he might do better work had he been better instructed. But a great many are imbued with a ridiculous contempt for learning and a jealous anxiety for the main chance.

The closed-corporation aspect of the teaching profession is displayed in the restrictive laws, common to most states, which require a student to submit himself to many a boring hour of classes in tests and measurements, applied psychology, care and feeding of infants, and the like, if he wants a certificate entitling him to teach. Educational associations have cajoled and bullied state legislatures into this folly. Such restrictions reduce the supply of teachers. One is reminded of the minimum-price regulations of barbers; but cutters of hair make little pretense to altruism. The result of these impediments to a career in teaching should be obvious: many an able student who would be an able teacher is discouraged from entering the profession because of the boredom of the apprenticeship he would have to endure; and many another earnest soul who struggles manfully through these parrot-courses finds himself insufficiently learned to teach any particular subject; he has been compelled to learn how Pavlov made dogs slaver (and how, consequently, teachers can make infants lick their chops), when he wanted to read Gibbon.

Professor Boas writes: "It is the intellectuals who are the cynics. Fortunately they have very little influence in the United States." It is depressing to find a professor of philosophy denouncing intellect. But in one respect, he writes truly; for many of our teachers are deserving of ridicule. They have embraced educational fallacies at which any parent of common sense scoffs, and have combined with these fancies the species of selfishness more commonly attributed to the labor racketeer. When their instructors are without either erudition or sincerity, what shall we expect of the pupils?

A youngster after a dozen years of training in public schools may have found his semesters pleasant enough; but unless he has unusual natural talent and curiosity to compensate for the lotos-eating of progressivism, he will graduate a fool. The celebrated survey of the *New York Times*, which indicated a profound ignorance of American history among public-school pupils, came as no surprise to those familiar with the vagaries of our educators. Each year the entering group of freshmen in colleges is less aware of the first principles of

every branch of knowledge; even college administrators who pride themselves on toleration are aghast. These neophytes cannot commence with a study of English poetry; they must first be taught to diagram a sentence. They cannot set out upon the reading of Livy; they first must be informed that Ancient Rome existed. With youth instructed after this fashion, we cannot expect much of our colleges; but these institutions do not fulfill even the modest functions we might think should be theirs.

For colleges have a scourge not inflicted upon public schools: competition. The shattering results of their rivalry, their passion for attracting students, would serve a Marxist as an eminent example of the folly of private enterprise, were it not that the competition is as bitter between state institutions as between privately controlled colleges. Our public schools cannot well attract students from outside the districts they are established to serve; and so they plod along without incentive to compete. All this monotony of enrollment in basic education is blotted out by the fury of clamorous colleges. Their motives for tumult and shouting are not difficult to penetrate. Mere continuance of existence is a factor only with the smallest and most impoverished; state universities are lavishly supported, although still not in the style to which they would like to become accustomed, and most private colleges are as well off as they have ever been. Their incentives to aggrandizement are two: the American passion for bigness, and the administrator's passion for power. In many another field during these past few years we have found that magnitude is merely shapelessness, but many an American college president and dean still measure knowledge by noses, and appeal to the patrons of the arts for a larger stadium. Size and power! What unworthy objectives for men who make a pretense of learning! But these passions are not so despicable as is the ruling vice of men who barter the quality of education for larger salaries as administrators or as teachers, who would institute courses in mule skinning if they thought they could increase thereby enrollment and, consequently, alumni and monthly checks. Love of might and love of wealth are common frailties; but a learned man should be able to rise above them.

The product of this love of magnitude which is most often condemned is the mania for sports and merriment at college, heartily

encouraged, often created by the administration. Sneers at money and enthusiasm expended upon these devious means to wisdom are justified. But such by-products of the college mill do far less harm than does much of the graver work inside the walls; indeed, the display of muscles and the worship of the light fantastic generally have become distinctly severed from other activities of the school, and sometimes even are self-supporting. Stephen Leacock, writing of the college of the future, tells how football players will be transported in cages to the deserts of the Southwest, where games can be conducted without peril to the radio audience at home. If taxpayers who support a state institution wish to pay for a string of athletes and for lofty ballrooms, no one can well gainsay them; the harm is to be found chiefly in the financial strain put upon little colleges which feel the necessity of presenting a similar false front.

A lure as powerful as the carnival of brawn and frolic is that of higher-education vocationalism; and it is twice as ominous for the future of education. It is not enough, it appears, for the high-school pupil to endure courses in "vocations"; once he gets to college, the dean wants to know "what are you going to study for," and proceeds to fit this square peg into the most nearly round hole at hand. It hardly enters the head of a college professional gladder these days that a student might have some faint desire to find knowledge; it is taken for granted that he must be looking for "training." Alleged training the colleges certainly offer; their catch courses and stuffed shirt curricula are without number. We might think that one could best learn the management of hostelry by working in a hotel; but some colleges offer to teach hotel administration. We used to have good minions of the law who began their career on the beat; now they are supposed to study police administration. This soldier has known good accountants who learned by apprenticeship or a short course at a commercial school; now, we are told, the accountant must be no less than a bachelor of arts. Many a bachelor of science who spends his life at the blueprint table or bossing a pavement-laying gang could have learned his trade in the school of hard knocks, the uninitiated might think; but it is found desirable for him to spend four years academically with the applied sciences. Now, many of these hotel clerks and policemen and accountants and straw-bosses are intelligent men whose minds would profit

by liberal college training. But a liberal education is not what they receive during four or five years on the campus. "Training" crowds out education. Many a clerk in a public office has hopefully studied public administration or political science, only to learn anew, once he became a part of the bureaucracy, the little that college really taught him of this occupation. While he sat through interminable droning *in re* examinations for civil service employees in Indianapolis, he was missing the class in the history of philosophy. It is quite possible to be both a good public servant and an educated man; but it is very difficult to acquire the two accomplishments simultaneously.

There remain some students not so much interested in finding a lucrative job as in making a brave new world or expounding a brave new theory. College administrators, doing their best to be all things to all men, have pottage for them ready boiling. Out with philosophy and history and political economy and literature and languages and music and the old sciences as the way to knowledge of man and society! The student is set upon a new highroad to wisdom; he is told to apply himself to psychology and sociology, which form a compendium of knowledge of the individual and humanity.

If there be sacred cows in modern education, they are named psychology and sociology. It has become almost blasphemy to assail them. But any soldier who has been a year or two in barracks knows how little information psychology, that muddle of physiology and metaphysics, can give him concerning his fellow man or himself; and the man who has met the Japanese can laugh, if he lives, at the glib phrases of sociology, that jumble of history, economics, and sentiment. The cleverest act of the "social scientists" has been to envelop themselves with jargon like a squid's ink, through which few hostile minds have patience to penetrate. Some soldiers, nevertheless, have read both Shakespeare and Watson, have essayed both Livy and Laski; and they know that they would rather have Falstaff with them in the foxholes than the Behaviorists, that they learn more from high old Roman virtue than from feral man. The social sciences are another short cut to learning, and the educational short cut is as full of pitfalls and labors and deceptions as is the usual geographical one. But psychology and sociology are fine words, and our colleges pump air into these bladders with a will.

Let us cease the recounting of our educational ills. From the block-piling of kindergarten to the thesis-grinding of graduate school, we pamper and flatter and deceive ourselves. In the pursuit of ease and novelty, we have forgotten the pursuit of knowledge and genuine happiness. The consequences are easily discerned in the dwindling number of good bookstores, the vanishing of reviews of belles-lettres and discussion, the substitution of passion for reason in politics and in economics. With all these afflictions of Job, the surprising fact remains that old-style education and even reformed old-style learning survive this deluge of novelty and sophistry. There still are high-school teachers who believe William Makepeace Thackeray a better novelist than Thomas Wolfe; there still are public-school pupils who prefer an hour with an encyclopaedia to a class in abstract sketching. College freshmen—many of them—still have an unaccountable liking for the essays of Lamb, and a complementary distaste for following rats through mazes. These folk have had a hard fight against the handicaps of modern education, but they have managed to learn something. A popular impatience with the new deal in education has begun to arise. A score of colleges have perceived that liberal education means education for free men. More and more has come the realization that we need men who read books as much as we need men who keep books, that we need to get out of our own mazes rather than get rats into other mazes. The revulsion against the pap of educationalism was growing when war came.

## III

This war has not yet seriously injured American education. In its immediate effects, if peace come within two or three years, it will not blight our schools and colleges. The real danger or hope lies in the policies the government now is adopting in regard to education, for the peacetime educational system may be treated accordingly. Wars in themselves need not injure cultural development. A good many young Americans, it is true, will lose pleasant and instructive years they might have spent in college. But what matters most is intellectual tradition, now seriously endangered.

There has been much lamenting over conscription of college students; it is indeed regrettable. It may have been necessary. England held back from that step as long as she could; our government

showed little reluctance to adopt it. Our worship of equality is involved; Boas rejoices in it: "But in what sense of the word is it any unfairer to send a bookkeeper on the same mission? Of course if we think that a scholar's life is in itself, and regardless of other considerations, more inherently valuable than a bookkeeper's, I can see the justification for our behavior. But one might think that such conceptions died out some years ago." Such conceptions are indeed dying out, and this soldier is sorry to see them pass.

Once, said Socrates, men would accept the truth though it came from sticks and stones, but now they must pry into the life and motives of a man who utters it. This soldier offers the assurance that he was not a student when war came, nor was he a teacher; he was, indeed, more nearly a bookkeeper than a scholar. Having had experience both in reading books and in keeping them, he is willing to declare that the life of the scholar is worth more than the life of the bookkeeper, for it represents a higher stage in human development. One can be both scholar and bookkeeper of course. This soldier is much more the latter than the former; he has suffered from the deficiencies of modern education and thus knows little Latin and less Greek; but, like Johnson's wherry-boy, he would give all he has—almost—for such knowledge. Be this as it may, the drafting of students will not ruin the colleges; they will find means to survive the war. True those students who are drafted will suffer, and nothing can now be done for them. Single men in barracks no more turn into philosophers than into plaster saints. But their injury will not destroy our schools, though false steps in the education of those now in school, and of those who in the next decade will enter school, may lead to disaster. Harry Hopkins, representative of an influential faction, offers his ideas in the *American Magazine*:

Every college and university should be turned completely into an Army and Navy training center. . . . The women, too, should remain in college only while they are being trained for their part in the war effort.

High school hours should be shortened so students will have more time to work, especially on farms. Some students should quit high school entirely. I can see no reason for wasting time on what today are non-essentials such as Chaucer and Latin. A diploma can only be framed and hung on the wall. A shell that a boy or girl helps to make can kill a lot of Japs.

Mr. Hopkins, it is evident, has no more ideal of what real victory is than he has of Chaucer or of Latin. His victory is concerned with bread and butter. His program might be worth consideration were we at the end of our national tether, but our situation is far from desperate. Forgetting great books and turning colleges into technical schools for the sake of a few more shells, even in time of war, is a fool's bargain. Youths that ceased to hang diplomas on walls might soon be hanging men on lampposts. It is possible that Mr. Hopkins and men of his mind would deal with education in no less summary fashion in time of peace, if they had the authority. The time is coming when they may possess the opportunity.

The federal government has become a power in education. It subsidizes colleges through contracts for military students; it subsidizes public schools in a variety of ways. Many a college administrator rushes fawning upon the federal colossus, and turns his excess of zeal into the familiar channels of catch courses and collegiate fanfare. "Military English" is being taught far and wide; if it be the sort of military English with which this soldier is familiar, it is to be hoped that coeds are barred from classes. "Culture courses," designed to familiarize a gullible student with the history, art, and politics of a race in the space of a few weeks, are a big drawing card; freshman coeds are encouraged to believe that a semester spent in studying the "culture" of France will enable them to become female proconsuls for Uncle Sam, once peace is established. Languages are taught "the new way," omitting grammar and all such impedimenta, enabling bright young things to speak and comprehend foreign tongues after a few weeks in Municipal College. Unfortunately these tongues will not be spoken by the peoples to whom they are addressed; Touareg cannot be learned in two easy lessons. Though the government is not free from sin, these follies are the work of our college and high-school administrators, seeking once more the streamlined gocart that rolls downhill to wisdom.

The assumption that a few months of training in "military government," "psychology," "rare languages," and the like can make men capable technicians or administrators or leaders—the idea that culture is a commodity to be ordered by contract—is pernicious. Hopkinsian spirits are liable to work parallels in peacetime education. The materialistic spirit may come upon the eagle's wings.



Some educators, nevertheless, seem to look upon this crisis and postwar reorganization as a golden opportunity for federal renovation of our educational muddle. Conant and other presidents view with raptures the munificent federal grants-in-aid proposed for ex-soldiers who may wish to attend college after Armageddon; Alexander Meikeljohn writes in the *New Republic*: "The federal government should bargain with existing colleges for the education of young women and men in time of peace just as it is now bargaining for the education of soldiers in time of war." The American worship of the great idol Panacea is displayed here. Is there virtue in federal money to reform a system of education? Will not academic competition for public favor be supplanted only by competition for federal favor? What reason have we to suppose that the machine of state at Washington will have as much sympathy with liberal learning as have the regents of a state university or the directors of a private college? Significantly, federal grants for education thus far have been for vocational training. The more distant the source of money expended, the more need a legislator or a director feels to justify his action as "practical"; a Congressman who would vote for a national program of instruction in riveting would not dare advocate the acquisition of a collection of volumes in Old French.

Can a river rise above its source? Can the federal organization be more discerning in education than are most of the intelligent citizens of this nation? The humanistic revival so recently gaining strength may be overwhelmed by a centralized utilitarianism. Here lies the great menace of this emergency to education of the future. Our need for speedy training of unusual numbers of men and women in technical skills for this hour of need may make us forget that man does not live by the lathe alone; and our overanxious desire to educate the discharged veteran, our blind faith in the efficacy of federal intervention, may make us forget that knowledge resides not in the state, but in the man. Regeneration of education must come from within; and it must be a training of men, not of units of manpower.

Selfishness, pedantry, and folly in education, as in other concerns, can be remedied only by reformation of opinion, not by fiat. To institute a system of liberal learning, the man and the crowd must *believe* in a humanistic education; otherwise federal billions are of

no avail. Criticism of our educational institutions by students and citizens and trustees and legislators, as individuals, can make schools worth attending and the new life worth leading. To resign the management of our educational program to bright young men on the shores of the Potomac would be a betrayal of the intellectual trust which men of vanished ages have bequeathed to us.

In this war, fought in the name of liberalism, very few think of liberalism of knowledge. We need an Epictetus to remind us that freedom of the mind is more important than freedom of the body. If our thoughts are not liberal, we shall not know how to rule, once we find ourselves masters of the world's destiny. More important still, we shall find the taste of victory bitter, for the emptiness of our minds will be the more unendurable, once the hot excitement of battle has passed. The time has passed when we were compelled to fight for our bread. Now, when, at last, we have the leisure and the wealth and the power to spread truth and knowledge, we are in danger of turning to Mammon rather than to Minerva.

Are we to be victors, and not know the names of Horace and Burke, of Bach and Velasquez? "Change is not reform," said John Randolph of Roanoke, more than a century ago. Although the terms are not synonymous, it is our opportunity and our duty to achieve educational reform in the process of social change. As it has become fashionable to say, the time is now.