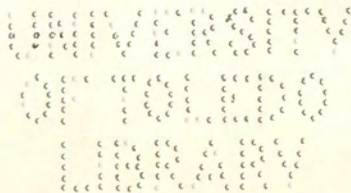


# Implications for Education in the New Deal

PHILIP C. NASH

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It is evident to us all that we are living at a time in world history when mankind is making such far-reaching revisions in his outlook on society as to cause major changes in the civilization of the future. Probably never before has there been such world-wide questioning and experimentation. Certainly there have never been so many people on earth, nor such a common knowledge and understanding of events in other parts of the globe. These two factors lend importance to these experiments and changes that apparently give them greater significance in the progress of mankind than any which have gone before.

In Europe these experiments are of three diverse types: evolution of Capitalism under Democracy in England and France, Communism in Russia, Fascism in Germany and Italy. In this country we are working towards our immediate goal under the ægis of democracy.

What is the goal? It is a standard of living for the great majority of our 125,000,000 Americans that is far superior to anything that the world has yet seen. Is this possible of accomplishment? It would appear perfectly feasible if we have the intelligence and good will necessary to combine the essential factors. Certainly we have the raw materials: plenty of food, cotton, steel, copper, etc. In fact it sometimes appears that we have too much and we pay one another not to produce some of these items. We have machines: the mechanical slaves equivalent to one hundred human slaves for every single one of us. Our society could not exist if those slaves were actually human, as Greece and Rome found out. The stresses caused by such a multitude of human beings crushed under the domination of a relatively few masters have always been so great as to cause an explosion in the civilization that used the system. Of course, there are very difficult problems connected even with the machine slaves but I think they can be solved. We also have the power to drive the machines: coal, gas, fuel oil, and water power. Sometimes it also appears that we have too much power when the oil people try to limit production.

<sup>1</sup> An address to the University of Michigan chapter of Phi Kappa Phi, December 17, 1934.

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and the coal people protest against the cheap power of the TVA. And above all we have the physical stamina and courage and ingenuity of our people. These are our assets in almost unlimited quantities: food, raw materials, power, machines, and men to operate them. Is there any fundamental reason why we should not have radios, bathrooms, good homes, autos, and good clothes to a far greater extent than ever before?

Well, why don't we get them? Because our faulty distribution and monetary system have piled a load of debt on our whole civilization that has clogged the wheels. In every major depression heretofore the community has got rid of this debt by the simple device of almost every one going bankrupt. For instance, this is what happened in what was probably the worst depression in this country. "In May, 1837, the banks suspended specie payment. Values melted. Farms could be sold for only 2 percent of their supposed worth. It was said that in Alabama practically the entire property of the state changed hands and that 50 percent in all the United States did so. Boats lay idle at the docks and all building ceased. Nine-tenths of all the factories in the eastern states were closed; the suffering of the working class was intense."\* This was painful while it lasted and meant untold misery to thousands of persons, but the ultimate result was that the survivors could start over again with a clear slate and recovery was rapid. We have not yet been willing to take that bitter dose in this depression, and we have even flirted with the idea of cancelling all our debts the other way, that is by inflation; a condition where a million-dollar debt in Germany became worth less than a cent.

So we wonder how we can get out of the morass. We think of planned economy. Here is what happened once when they tried that!

Economic planning was imposed on the Roman Empire by the Emperor Diocletian about 1,650 years ago. He changed the amount of gold in the standard coin, rehabilitated silver as a monetary metal, went in for public works in a big way, fixed prices for all important commodities, determined what occupations the citizens should pursue, fixed wages, required producers to join trade associations, and established a huge bureaucracy to enforce his decrees.

Private initiative in economic matters disappeared; speculation and interest were prohibited; each artificer and merchant was supposed to sell his goods at a just price, and to live on a scale that was appropriate for his position in society.

The business depression following the adoption of this comprehensive system of economic planning lasted for 1,200 years.†

We fear the regimentation and loss of freedom that goes with the dictatorship necessary to procure complete economic planning.

We think of inflation and we fear the loss of savings and the inevitable dictatorship that follows this course also.

\* James Truslow Adams, *Epic of America*, p. 212.

† *New Outlook*, January, 1934, p. 33.



We are gradually coming to agree with Stuart Chase that the solution of this depression may be a program of public works far greater than any we have yet seen, and financed by borrowing with little or no interest or perhaps by direct government appropriation. This is already hinted at in the press releases from Washington. Even the eight billion dollar program that is spoken of will probably not go far enough, but it will be a start, and the principle will be established of adding to the public wealth by the work of millions of people otherwise unemployed. This money will be borrowed at a very low rate of interest. Last July the Government borrowed 300,000,000 dollars for six months at .07 percent per year and while it is a little higher it is still very low.\*

My own opinion is that the administration is on the right track. The aims seem to be: (1) An attempt to balance the budget sometime fairly soon by means of steeply graded income taxes, inheritance taxes, and reduction of tax-exempt securities; (2) a great program of public works; (3) withdrawal from too much lending that tends to prevent the fall of much business structure which probably must fall in the end, no matter how painful that may be; (4) withdrawal from price fixing; (5) an increase of regulation of business but not competition with business; (6) and careful experimentation as in the TVA.

If this analysis be reasonable and if these things can come to pass, then perhaps we are on the way toward this goal of a high standard of living combined with reasonable economic security. We may well be proud of our generation too in that while we seek for a way out of this morass, we seek it for all. We have a social consciousness and social conscience now that has not appeared in the world heretofore. We saw what happened in 1837. Now let us see how it looked eight years later.

"Recovery from the disastrous pains of 1837 was slow but in another half-dozen years the mills were making very large profits. By 1845 the Nashua and Jackson mills were paying 24 percent in dividends. In both Europe and America the period was one of *laissez faire* in economics. In New England the will of the employers, with very few notable exceptions, was directed to making every cent of profit possible without the slightest regard for the welfare of their employees or the larger social questions of Americanism in the section. The manager of the largest mill in Fall River announced that, so long as he could find hands to work at the lowest wages, he would get every particle of work possible out of them, and when worn out, would discard them as he would worn-out machines."<sup>†</sup>

\* National City Bank Bulletin, August, 1934, p. 120.

† Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 181.



We are a long ways ahead of that point of view now. We are eliminating child labor, planning for decent economical housing, setting up unemployment insurance and old age pensions, etc. These last two things are very symptomatic of the general opinion that any recovery must be shared by all. As we begin to approach this goal of high standard of living, reasonable security, and considerable leisure time, the terrible fear of being penniless will decrease. Men will direct machines for comparatively short hours. They must be skillful and intelligent and very careful. But there will not be the heart-breaking long hours nor the desperate attempt to keep the job at all hazards. If the job closes up there will be the unemployment insurance. If the man gets too old to work, he will not be thrown "on the town." He will have earned and will receive old age pensions. The result of these changes should be an entire change of emphasis in our culture, and the generations to come may see a new golden age of art, literature, architecture, education, social service, which has not yet been approached in world history.

I have dwelt on these highly complicated and uncertain matters because I believe it essential that all of us try to see clearly the implications of our present situation and come to some considered opinions as to what policies ought to be followed. Certainly for our schools and colleges the challenge is obvious. However badly we have failed in the past to orient our educational policies to life itself, we see now how necessary it is to do so.

Four major trends seem to appear :

(1) We must help each of our students select a vocation and get a start in it. The University of Toledo is asking every one of its freshmen this year to spend from one-tenth to one-fifth of his time during the first semester in studying this problem. Even more important than vocational training and placement, however, will be the acquaintance with the intricate problems of our modern civilization and a zeal for the work of solving those problems. If we are to survive as a democracy there must be a great number of our citizens who have some knowledge of modern problems and who are willing and eager to give generously of time and energy to their solution. This will not come about by accident. There must be conscious effective appeal to human idealism. The 1934 graduating class of the University of Toledo would not have started the campaign for better government of the city by securing 20,000 signatures to the City Manager petition, unless the courses in municipal government had definitely held up the challenge to these young people that the debt they owe to the city is to try to make it a better city.



(2) Life will be more leisurely than heretofore; quality will count more than quantity. This appears strange to us but it seems inevitable to me. Millions of men will work only thirty to forty hours per week. They will work hard and efficiently for that time, but they will not be under the deadly continuous pressure of ten or twelve hours six days a week. This will not apply to executives and professional men and women who, as heretofore, will have their work more or less with them for the whole twenty-four hours, but it will apply to more and more of our college graduates, who will find the professions too crowded and will seek new fields of employment.

(3) This leisure will give time for study, creative expression, hobbies, political and social thought, and recreation. We must train our students and our adult population to take full advantage of such a glorious opportunity.

(4) Money will cut less figure than heretofore in people's lives. The days of tremendous fortunes are probably over; income and inheritance taxes will take care of that. There will be less worry about advancing years because of old age pensions; less worry about unemployment because there will be insurance or its equivalent. Of course we shall always as individuals be seeking more money and the higher standard of living that goes with it, and thousands of people will probably be on a fairly narrow margin of life as they are now, but for the educated, efficient, and well-trained person other things will come to have a greater influence, and money a lesser influence than heretofore.

All this may seem like a glorious dream far from the realities of the present moment and it is true that there will be many heartaches and disappointments before any such development can appear. There will be plenty of opportunity for the present students in our colleges to exhibit all they have of the old-fashioned virtues of *courage* and *loyalty*. It is not surprising, I think, that we fall back on these two strongholds of the human heart in our search for guides that we may suggest to the college men and women of today. We cannot foresee the storms of the next half-century voyage on which today's young people are setting out; we can only see dimly the direction in which they must steer. But we may be sure that courage will be a good engine to drive the ship forward, and loyalty the best rudder to steer the course.

When J. M. Barrie became rector of St. Andrews University in 1922, the subject of his address was "Courage." He said, "I would that I could put into your hands a staff for the march along the road on which you will soon set forth. I cannot provide you with that staff



for your journey; but perhaps I can tell you a little about it, how to use it and lose it and find it again, and cling to it more than ever. You shall cut it—so it is ordained—every one of you for himself, and its name is courage.” And Barrie goes on to tell of the examples of courage—Scott freezing to death at the South Pole, men giving up their lives in the war, and Henly writing

I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

while lying in the hospital in the desperate business of finding out whether or not his foot could be saved.

Such courage in the face of physical danger and hardship may not be called upon from most of our young people. In many cases it will be more like the courage of Barrie himself working in London without friends, funds, nor food. As he tells it, “There was no food in the cupboard, so I did not need to waste time in eating. The pangs and agonies when no proof came! How courteously tolerant was I of the postman without a proof for us; how M’Cornachie, on the other hand, wanted to punch his head.” (M’Cornachie was Barrie’s other self, the part that writes plays and flies around on one wing while Barrie himself stands sedate and secure on the hearth rug.)

Are the collegiate institutions somehow putting their stamp on their graduates so that they will have the courage and the loyalty and desire to make a better world? What sanctions may we suggest to our young people to guide their lives? They will clearly not believe in eternal damnation, in hell fires, if they do wrong; neither is it easy to sell the idea “be good and you will be happy,” because they immediately ask, what is good? and is happiness the gratification of the inclination of the moment? No, the young people of today demand more stable signposts to guide their way and it has been my experience that an appeal to loyalty is their favorite. Professor Royce, you will remember, defines loyalty as devotion to a cause and this implies loyalty to other men and women working in the cause. This is a good start. If young people will pick out the things that they believe worth working for as an expression of their wish to make their lives worth living, and then give their full devotion to those causes, their life is bound to have meaning.

But how shall I differentiate between good causes and bad causes and how prevent the conflict that comes with the person who selects, perhaps in all good faith, the other side of my cause; and what cause or what loyalty impels me to live a simple, frugal, temperate, and honest life rather than one of ostentation, licentiousness, and selfishness? Royce says, “Give your loyalty to those things to which all men may

be loyal; truth, honor, unselfishness, the golden rule. This test will, in most cases, make it easy to determine how to place your loyalty."

So I come to the optimistic conclusion that the ferment in our society today is working toward a better and fuller life for all men and the present challenge for education is really the same as it always has been, to push forward the progress towards this better social order and to continue the attempts at an indoctrination of young people with the ideals of courage and loyalty to give power and direction to their efforts in this direction.