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THE ENVOY

In the preceding papers I have, with some repetition and much stumbling, set out a fairly complete theory of what men and women have to do at the present time if human life is to go on hopefully to any great happiness and achievement in the days to come. Much of this material was first prepared to be delivered to a lecture audience, and I regret that ill-health has prevented a complete re-writing of these portions. There is more of the uplifted forefinger and the reiterated point than I should have allowed myself in an essay. But this is a loss of grace rather than of clearness. And since I am stating a case and not offering the reader anything professing to be a literary work, I shall not apologise for finally summing up and underlining the chief points of this book.

They are, firstly: that a great change in human conditions has been brought about during the past century, and secondly that a vast task of adaptation, which must be, initially and fundamentally, mental adaptation, has to be undertaken by our race. It is a task which politicians, who live from day to day, and statesmen, who live from event to event, may hinder or aid very greatly, but which they cannot be expected to conduct or control. Politicians and statesmen perform live and work in the scheme of ideas they find about them; the

conditions of their activities are made for them. They can be compelled by the weight of public opinion to help it, but the driving force for this great task must come not from official sources but from the steadfast educational pressure of a great and growing multitude of convinced people. In times of fluctuation and dissolving landmarks, the importance of the teacher--using the word in its widest sense--rises with the progressive dissolution of the established order.

The creative responsibility for the world to-day passes steadily into the hands of writers and school teachers, students of social and economic science, professors and poets, editors and journalists, publishers and newspaper proprietors, preachers, every sort of propagandist and every sort of disinterested person who can give time and energy to the reconstruction of the social idea. Human life will continue to be more and more dangerously chaotic until a world social idea crystallizes out. That--and no existing institution and no current issue--is the primary concern of the present age.

We need, therefore, before all other sorts of organization, educational organizations; we need, before any other sort of work, work of education and enlightenment; we need everywhere active societies pressing for a better, more efficient conduct of public schooling, for a wider, more enlightening school curriculum, for a world-wide linking-up of educational systems, for a ruthless subordination of naval, military and court expenditure to educational needs, and for a systematic discouragement of mischief-making between nation and nation and race and

race and class and class. I could wish to see Educational Societies, organized as such, springing up everywhere, watching local bodies in order to divert economies from the educational starvation of a district to other less harmful saving; watching for obscurantism and reaction and mischievous nationalist teaching in the local schools and colleges and in the local press; watching members of parliament and congressmen for evidences of educational good-will or malignity; watching and getting control of the administration of public libraries; assisting, when necessary, in the supply of sound literature in their districts; raising funds for invigorating educational propaganda in poor countries like China and in atrociously educated countries like Ireland, and corresponding with kindred societies throughout the world. I believe such societies would speedily become much more influential than the ordinary political party clubs and associations that now use up so much human energy in the western communities. Subordinating all vulgar political considerations to educational development as the supreme need in the world's affairs, even quite small societies could exercise a powerful decisive voice in a great number of political contests. And an educational movement is more tenacious than any other sort of social or political movement whatever. It trains its adherents. What it wins it holds.

I know that in thus putting all the importance upon educational needs at the present time I shall seem to many readers to be ignoring quite excessively the profound racial, social and economic conflicts that are in progress. I do. I believe we shall never get on with human affairs

until we do ignore them. I offer no suggestion whatever as to what sides people should take in such an issue as that between France and Germany or between Sinn Fein and the British Government, or in the class war. I offer no such suggestion because I believe that all these conflicts and all such current conflicts are so irrational and destructive that it is impossible for a sane man who wishes to serve the world to identify himself with either side in any of them. These conflicts are mere aspects of the gross and passionate stupidity and ignorance and sectionalism of our present world. The class war, the push for and the resistance to some vague reorganization called the Social Revolution--such things are the natural inevitable result of the sordid moral and intellectual muddle of our common ideas about property. The capitalist, the employer, the property-owning class, as a class, have neither the intelligence nor the conscience to comprehend any moral limitations, any limitations whatever but the strong arm of the law, upon what they do with their property. Their black and obstinate ignorance, the clumsy adventurousness they call private enterprise, their unconscious insolence to poor people, their stupidly conspicuous self-indulgence, produce as a necessary result the black hatred of the employed and the expropriated. On one side we have greed, insensibility and incapacity, on the other envy and suffering stung to vindictive revolt: on neither side light nor generosity nor creative will. Neither side has any power to give us any reality we need. Neither side is more than a hate and an aggression. How can one take sides between them?

The present system, unless it can develop a better intelligence and a

better heart, is manifestly destined to foster fresh wars and to continue wasting what is left of the substance of mankind, until absolute social disaster overtakes us all. And manifestly the revolutionary communist, at his present level of education, has neither the plans nor the capacity to substitute any more efficient system for this crazy edifice of ill-disciplined private enterprise that is now blundering to destruction. But at a higher level of intelligence, at a level at which it is possible to define the limitations of private property clearly and to ensure a really loyal and effectual co-operation between individual and state, this issue--this wholly destructive conflict between the property manipulator and the communist fanatic which is now rapidly wrecking our world--disappears. It disappears as completely as the causes of a murderous conflict between two drunken men will disappear when they are separated and put under a stream of clear cold water.

So it is that, in spite of their apparent urgency, I ask the reader to detach himself from these present conflicts of national politics, of political parties and of the class war as completely as he can; or, if he cannot detach himself completely, then to play such a part in them, regardless of any other consideration, as may be most conducive to a wide-thinking, wide-ranging education upon which we can base a new world order. A resolute push for quite a short period now might reconstruct the entire basis of our collective human life.

In this book I have tried to show what form that push should take, to

show that it has a reasonable hope of an ultimate success, and that unless it is made, the outlook for mankind is likely to become an entirely dismal prospect. I put these theses before the reader for his consideration. They are not discursive criticisms of life, not haphazard grumblings at our present discontents, they are offered as the fundamental propositions of an ordered constructive project in which he can easily find a part to play commensurate with his ability and opportunities.