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EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

A Radio Address

by

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The great fundamental discoveries that form the basis of the development of modern scientific knowledge and invention were stones cast into the pool of human ignorance. These discoveries set up oscillations that ever widened toward that vague shore where man's mind approaches the infinite. But these same vast oscillations have returned to the center of the pool where the individual, in his struggle to survive, must meet their impact. The discoveries of such men as Archimedes in mathematics, Galileo in dynamics, Sir Isaac Newton in physics, Lavoisier in chemistry, Maxwell and Hertz in what is now known as radio, and innumerable others have surrounded us with those marvelous mechanical facilities that determine the characteristics of modern life. But science in its onward march has given us more than mere comforts and conveniences; it has propounded problems of human accommodation to environment that baffle the wisest of us.

I read this week that the United States Patent Office had granted the two-millionth patent, which reminded me of a Patent Office Chief who is said to have resigned several decades ago on the ground that his job was finished as there was nothing left to invent. Our problem is not one of invention, but rather one of harnessing and controlling those imponderable forces which the lever, the wheel, the arch, the use of steam and the invisible electric current have let loose upon us. The miraculous means of communication that put each part of the civilized world into almost instantaneous touch with each other have become gigantic agencies for the spreading of fear, distrust and mutual suspicion. With all the facilities of swift and cheap transportation at our command, one finds great ships sailing the seas, ballasted to the Plimsoll line for want of cargoes. Comforts and conveniences that should be commonplace possessions are too often luxuries for the few. The superb resources and equipment of our schools and universities are producing men and women whose education seems to fit them neither for the complexities of modern life, nor for the self-support and the sustaining interest in work which each individual has a right to expect under a well-organized social and political State. The social fabric must be so woven and re-woven as to offer a background on which each citizen can find room to inscribe his own design for living.

I am not one of those who believe that time spent in studies that are not "practical," in the most literal sense of that word, is waste. Indeed, an acquaintance with ancient languages, literatures and life, as well as general humanitarian studies of the intervening centuries, is essential to a balanced approach to the crises, the tensions and the strains of this world in which we live. If one can think of the present as an episode in the procession of time, one can reconcile one's self to what is happening, without the sense of frustration so apt to result from a too-minute concentration upon immediate problems.

The right kind of education tends to fit the individual into the environment of his generation. It enables him to become a man of the world, not in some cosmopolitan or sophisticated sense, but as one who recognizes himself as part of a great design. Those who possess that power of accommodation have, as individuals, much to contribute toward the steadiness and balance so needed in these difficult times.

Let no one think, however, that I am advocating a classical training as a solution for the problems of the oncoming generation. The spiritual and mental fitness of the individual to live in the modern world, to understand the world in which he lives, is not enough. The overpowering realities, the tides of nationalistic self expression, the distortions, confusions and inadequacies of political remedies, and the bewildering compulsions of the mass mind, beat upon the individual and all too often reduce him to a state of emotional prostration. It is here that the education for practical life, (this time in the most literal sense of the word "practical"), becomes of supreme importance.

Through a process of selection, through intelligent guidance, through a better integration of our educational facilities as a whole, and through a more accurate estimate of the opportunities that lie outside the walls of our colleges and universities, a start could be made toward resolving this great human dilemma. I do not mean that opportunities for education should be restricted, but I do mean that a great field is open for the most careful and intelligent planning of the careers of a rising generation soon to bear the burdens of its post-war heritage.

During the tremendous strain to which Government, whether Federal, State or local, has been exposed in recent times, the need and the opportunities for trained administrators has been apparent to all. Therefore the need of a permanent administrative staff to meet the great technical responsibilities of Government requires no emphasis from me. The classic example of what the permanent civil servant can contribute to national welfare is that of Great Britain. Regardless of a succession of changing Administrations at the head of affairs, the permanent administrator, advisor and expert has carried on the work of governing the British Commonwealth of Nations without disturbance in office, without exterior pressure and without political interference. That method is still, for us, an ideal. There are many vital differences between the two countries and I am not suggesting that the British method is adaptable to all the exigencies of the American system. But with the broad principle of having trained men for permanent government service, I believe no informed person will disagree.

I have seen the need for professional and technical training in the Department of Justice, and I have witnessed the excellent results when trained men are placed in posts, and assigned to duties, that require training. For example, from the first our Federal Bureau of Prisons has insisted on the professionalization of its personnel. With the exception of seven inspectors attached to the Central Office, all subordinates, employees and officials are under the Civil Service. Moreover, and even more important, those in charge of our penal institutions, as well as the supervising officials at Washington, have been chosen without exception on the basis of training, experience and fitness for the work.

All guard candidates taken from the Civil Service lists are put through an intensive course of training for the position of prison officer. Arrangements have now been completed to standardize and professionalize the guard service through provisions for training of all officers, examinations for promotion, rewards for meritorious service and the creation of a special court to try those officers charged with misfeasance or neglect. Thus, there is assured to the employees of the Bureau of Prisons from the

lowest guard to the highest official not merely a temporary job but a life work. The resulting increase in efficient administration and in morale has been self-evident.

So in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has investigative jurisdiction over all violations of Federal laws except those Congress has assigned through a specific enactment to other Federal agencies, rigid standards have been established and maintained as to the qualifications for admission to this service and as to the training required of Special Agents before entering upon the active pursuit of their duties. No one can become a special agent except those between the age limits of 25 and 35, and no one is appointed who is not a graduate of an accredited law school of recognized standing, an expert accountant or possessed of extensive previous experience in the investigative field. Over 400 of these men have academic degrees from colleges and universities; some of them have two, three and even four such degrees. About three score of them are proficient in one or more of 24 foreign languages. The administration of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is not subject to the mutations of politics. Appointments are on the basis of rigid qualifications for work to be done. Even after a man has been appointed, the Department puts him through an intensive course of training for the specific duties to which he will be assigned. Moreover, his technical education is not considered complete with the ending of this course. He is brought in from the field at fixed intervals for further instruction, and to ascertain that his technical qualifications have not become impaired.

I could advert to other Divisions of the Department of Justice and point out the high degree of specialized knowledge required. Striking illustrations are found in the Anti-Trust Division and in the Tax Division, where a mere knowledge of the law is not enough, but where the training and experience of those assigned to the most intricate cases become of the highest importance in the conduct of the Government's business.

The modern need is for the trained mind, whether in the occupational field or in the constantly widening areas of governmental and administrative activity. To those who are properly equipped there lie ahead fascinating experiences and ample rewards.