

Illiteracy

By Samuel Rosinger

I was astounded at the statement made by District Governor Smith that Jefferson County harbors an illiterate population approximating eight thousand. It is almost incredible to realize that such a large number of human beings should escape the blessings and benefits of free public school education. Reading is the key to the treasure house of knowledge. One who is so unfortunate as to lack this key, is shut out from that beautiful world which the spirit creates through the instrumentality of the mind. Poorer than the most wretched beggar, is he who lacks the elementary means of education. There is no greater poverty than the poverty of the mind, and if the state and society feel duty bound to relieve physical suffering, they ought to feel even more keenly for the mental paupers, and put forth every effort to relieve them of their misfortunes.

A number of years ago, I attended the convention of the National Educational Association in Denver, Colorado. The most interesting feature of that important gathering was the demonstration of the work done in behalf of the reduction of illiteracy in America. Men of middle age, even grandmothers, whites, negroes and Indians, proudly displayed their ability to read the primers, or the school readers, with remarkable fluency. The happiness which beamed from the eyes of these proud possessors of the key to knowledge, could convince everyone present, that no greater joy and blessing could have come into their lives than the removal of the scales of ignorance from their eyes. Had they been relieved of physical blindness through an operation, they could not have been more thrilled at the beauty of the world revealed to them, than the delight they manifested in being able to see that sublime world which is encompassed between the covers of a book.

Illiteracy is a disgrace to any country, more especially to a democracy, the solid and permanent foundation of which rests not on force, but on an enlightened and educated public opinion. This most important work is, indeed, a challenge to our club. True, its magnitude is such that no individual organization could possibly make even a decent dent in it; yet, our club could make an honest start, and stir up the interest and enlist the co-operation of all those agencies that have the welfare of America at heart. The chief activity of our club has been along the lines of education. Heretofore, we have sponsored higher education. However, a pyramid without a solid base, is bound to topple over. Let us strengthen the foundation, and eliminate the most dangerous defect in the groundwork of American democracy, illiteracy.

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Slants at the Meeting

We are now converts to the theorem there is compensation in everything. A few kind words will get you a place at the prexy's table.

Right now your reporter is sitting just as pretty as a bride on her wedding gown. Next week we may be as low down as the rings in a Scotchman's bathtub, when the water is metered.

When Tom Reed started that apologetic prelude, in his introductory remarks of the Governor, we braced ourselves for a collapse in about the third round. Our surprise was just as great as that of the young man who had gone thru matrimony and the depression and confided to his friend things were not as tight as he thought.

Guve Roy sure set himself a task when he adopted the program of eradicating illiteracy.

When old Greece was in her glory and those mythological gods had their bag of tricks bum-fuzzling the Athenians before they ever learned to black boots or make hamburgers, their greatest task was the Herculean stunt and that required some biceps.

Compared to eradicating illiteracy Hercules job of cleaning the Augean stables was as simple as stealing money and coming clear.

Then, too, the way the Guve started off he had us just as nervous as a bowl of gelatin on a vibrator, but before he finished we had settled down as calmly as dregs in bad coffee.

As a whole the Guve was fairly well pleased with Scotchkiss' administration and delighted to learn of the wonderful work done in the "Back-to-school-movement" under the able guidance of Carl Dickens.

Roy detoured from the devious path of beatitudes and platitudes and confined himself to talking horse-sense (perhaps arriving at this decision after looking over the bunch). A business man for business-like administration.

Big Ed, the king of hosts did the gracious thing and shuttled the Guve down the placid Neches to get a tang of salt air . . . or was it a nip of hospitality?

—Check.

Ham and Eggs for All

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An Incomparable Asset

The bursting of any speculative bubble that involves the savings of millions of people compels all of us to appraise what is salvaged, and it is then that a job with a salary takes highest rank among our assets.

A man is wealthy in proportion to his realizable earnings, and a job pays wages even when dividends are omitted and bond coupons are not cashable.

When times are good and all is well, we cannot avoid envy of the man who lives on interest and dividends. Earning a living by work then seems hard and dull. When the wheel turns and conditions compel the elimination of payments to owners and creditors, the man with a job is king. In this fact lies recognition that workers are the first obligation on the community's pocket-book and owners are the last.

When we think of capital, most of us think of profits. Seldom do we think of losses. It is easy to suggest a different division of profits, but nobody offers a new plan for the division of losses. Radicals conceive of capitalists as money-makers, never as money-losers. They forget the risk, the initiative, and the worry necessary in investment.

The man with a trade, with skill, with brains, able to perform some service which has a marketable value, owns an incomparable asset. He can wrench a living from the world even when government bonds are worthless.

Parents who train their children to make a living with mind and muscle, thereby leave them a heritage more valuable than an annuity or a safe filled with gilt-edged securities.

Shakespeare once counseled us to pour our purse into our head. Then, he said, no one can take it away from us. The education and training we give our children is an endowment that will serve them all their days.—Imperial Type Metal Magazine.

To many Americans and to the so-called "rest of the world," the prodigious effort the United States is making to rout the depression is still a hazy picture. That is not surprising, for news of the National Recovery Act must be bottle-necked through cable and radio, telescoped by pressure of more localized news, and, in many cases, blurred by translation.

It is essential, therefore, that he who would understand must hold fast to the fundamentals of the underlying philosophy. They are quite simple. Two crisp sentences by Administrator Johnson sum them up in a way that he who reads as he runs may understand.

"The very rich," he said, "do not buy \$40 worth of ham and eggs for breakfast. If we want to keep this country going we have got to find a way to let everybody buy half a dollar's worth of ham and eggs."

Economists and social workers, decrying concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, are no longer voices in the wilderness. The NRA is, in effect, notice to the world that the American business man is awakening to the logical implications of a civilization built around the machine. He reasons something like this:

Twentieth century economics are predicated on science. Science means machines. Machines mean mass production. Mass production requires mass consumption. But mass consumption is impossible unless the masses have money. If large groups are unemployed, if wages are paid which do not permit families to buy ham and eggs and clothes and shelter, business will wane. Therefore, means must be devised to employ men and put in their pockets the wherewithal to buy.

The National Recovery Act is, of course, the answer of the moment to the challenge of this logic. It simply seeks a planned readjustment of economic processes, whereby, to quote Administrator Johnson again, all the employers in the United States "do about the same thing at about the same time"—cut hours to employ more men and pay a living wage. It is a vast and unique experiment upon which the United States is launched.—From The Rotarian Magazine.