

Social mobility, however much to be welcomed, is an essentially passive aspect of the operation of democratic society. It is the removal of a barrier, the dismantling of an obstacle to man's realization of his full potentialities. As such, as I have tried to suggest, it undoubtedly represents a crucial element in the educational explosion. But what is bound to be paramount, in any consideration of the theme "Education for Responsibility", is man's active involvement in society. For if the imparting of knowledge and information is the means by which education operates, the end of education -- in the teleological sense -- must be to produce free men responsibly involved in a free society and a free world.

Judgments and Standards

Over the centuries the mechanism of society has become more complex. It has come to operate at many levels. It involves us in different capacities. It faces us increasingly with the need to make sophisticated judgments -- judgments as to what is practicable, what is right and what is true. It is of the essence of our rights as free citizens that we should be able to arrive at those judgments freely and independently. But it is also of the essence of our responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society that we should maintain and cultivate those standards and values and beliefs which we hold in common and which, indeed, are the attributes that give real meaning to the concept of society as such.

For the discretion to make those judgments in the light of all the diverse factors that have a bearing upon them, for the knowledge of those common standards and values and beliefs which are the cement that hold us together as a society and a community, we cannot but look to education. For it is education, broadly based and widely diffused, which alone can ensure that we exercise our responsibilities as free citizens with due regard for the common good.

I can do no better at this point than to refer again to the Harvard Committee Report on the Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society, which puts the argument as follows:

"The task of modern democracy is to preserve the ancient ideal of liberal education and to extend it as far as possible to all the members of the community.....To believe in the equality of human beings is to believe that the good life, and the education which trains the citizen for the good life, are equally the privilege of all. And these are the touchstones of the liberated man: first, is he free; that is to say, is he able to judge and plan for himself, so that he can truly govern himself? In order to do this, his mind must be capable of self-criticism; he must lead that self-examined life which, according to Socrates, is alone worthy of a free man. Thus he will possess inner freedom, as well as social freedom. Second, is he universal in his motives and sympathies? For the civilized man is a citizen of the entire universe; he has overcome provincialism, he is objective, and is a 'spectator of all time and all existence'. Surely these two are the very aims of democracy itself."