

Our Increased Mobility . . . by Professor J. F. Graham

Transportation and communication systems are the means by which man masters space. The first term is taken here to include the arrangements and technical instruments by means of which things and people are moved from one geographical location to another over rail, land, and water, and through the air; and the second, those by means of which people as individuals and groups communicate with one another.

The existence of a complex society depends upon effective media of transportation and communication among its members and the forms of a society will be powerfully influenced by the particular techniques available. If this is so, we should expect modern societies to have been considerably affected by the great strides in these fields over the past fifty years. Most important and impressive have been the developments and widespread uses of the automobile, aeroplane, telephone, radio, motion pictures and television. A full discussion here of these developments and their ramifications is out of the question. A superficial treatment confined to a few arbitrarily chosen aspects must suffice.

Space constitutes a barrier to the movement of goods from where they are in abundant supply to where they are scarce. The lower that barrier (that is, the lower the cost of transportation) the more freely can these movements take place. Such movements are also facilitated by efficient communication which passes information concerning the goods from one place to another.

As in the nineteenth century the railroad and ship continue to be the work horses of transportation. But during the twentieth century both have undergone important improvements in speed, capacity, comfort and efficiency of power utilization. In addition, the use of refrigeration now permits a much wider distribution of fresh agricultural products. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1917 shortened many trade routes. Railroad lines were extended in all parts of the world.

The automobile and aeroplane, which are true children of the twentieth century, introduced much needed flexibility and speed to the movement of goods, people and information. They have added to man's mobility constituting part of the present challenge to the solidarity of the home and family as fundamental social units. They have also enabled man to make more effective use of his time.

We should have expected the vast extension of the range of communication to have brought peoples of different cultures to a deeper understanding of one another with a resulting diminution of international conflict and mutual enrichment of cultures. But breadth has not brought depth. It seems that if literature and the arts are to be spread widely on a national and international level they must be spread very thinly and superficially with the unfortunate result of communicating false impressions rather than fostering understanding and providing insight.

Radio, where it has been developed by commercial interests as it has been in the United States, is a good example of this. Since the aim of advertisers is to reach as large an audience as possible, commercial programmes, with a few happy exceptions, are narrowly restricted to those types which demand only the most rudimentary intelligence. All things that require some intimacy of understanding are therefore ruled out. Laughter, for example, has become a conditioned response to given situations, with the complete elimination of any appeal to the sensitiveness of the listener. In so far as the above judgment is justified it leads to the conclusion that intellectual minorities must be catered to if a medium of communication is to be productive in the sense of enriching and stimulating interest in literature and the arts and in social affairs. The B.B.C. and the C.B.C. have been successful in applying this principle, although even the C.B.C. must sell much of its best time, and with it part of its "soul", to advertisers.

Referring back to the question of international conflict, we can say that rather than breaking down militant nationalism the extension of lines of communication has had the opposite effect. Nations have tended to cling more tenaciously and more self-consciously to their nationalistic values, than before. This is due to those values being threatened by the greater ease of communication in conjunction with the greater degree of central political control which it makes possible.

Education: Real and Ideal . . . by Jim Proudfoot and Eldon Warren

In the past 50 years there has been grave danger that idealistic attitudes to education of some of the members of the university might lead to disaster. One of the most disturbing features of campus life this past season has been the recurrence of the idea that university examinations and degrees should be abolished. But let no one suppose that is the opinion of all the students or even of a majority. There is sound reasoning sustaining the position of Canadian Universities.

The services rendered by the university in granting degrees are enjoyed not only by the student but by his future employer as well, who can rely on the product of universities of high standing. It would be most unfortunate if the criterion of social prestige was entirely monetary. At present the acquisition of a degree greatly facilitates achieving social position regardless of financial standing. Even for the fortunate leisured class, the academic degree is an additional mark of distinction and implies the rightful place of learning in the community. It would be unfortunate to break with colorful tradition in this age which stands in so much need of a sense of style. The student enjoys fellowship with the scholars of the past; the cap, the gown, the scrolls are the visible symbols of this union. The iconoclast, wishing to destroy these ties, might well destroy with them the finer part of our heritage. It is utopian to suppose that youth does not need a certain amount of coercion to ensure that proper scholastic standards are maintained. Competitive examinations provide the necessary coercion in a most democratic form. The students, recognizing their own slothfulness commend this function of the university.

While the university is to be commended for its emphasis on academic prestige, there seems to be little conscious effort to institute degrees that will win the respect of the non-academic world. Science graduates invariably find that their training has not fitted them to take technical position immediately. The period of apprenticeship which follows certainly does not enhance the prestige of the university in eyes of the employer. The student can best serve the interests of his community and contribute to the prestige of his university by paying more attention to the commercial applications of science and less to the abstract subjects.

In the Arts faculties also, the university could do more for the individual to advance him socially. Today, when the doors of the university are open to all classes, the responsibility of the educators has increased. No longer are university students drawn exclusively from a stratum of society that already possesses style. If the attendance at social functions is indicative of the efficiency with which the university is carrying out its new duties, some new radical departures will have to be made to meet the situation. The University should set a minimum of social accomplishments for its graduates which should compare favourably with the standards set by the fraternities. This might easily be achieved by a credit course in the social graces,—with laboratory exercises. Dalhousie has maintained many fine traditions; however, even in this she is not entirely blameless. Unlike Kings, where they encourage the wearing of academic costume, our students and faculty are apparently ashamed of their academic status. It is evident that a breach with the past has already been attempted.

Skeptics might insinuate that these functions of the university are incidental and not at all desirable. That is, that industry is quite competent to screen its own personnel, and that our competitive industrial system allows no one to hide behind a parchment. It might be asserted by the unsympathetic, that the enhancement of one's social prestige and the maintenance of tradition is crass materialism, and that a far nobler idea of that truth is the goal of the student, the primary function of the university to assist him in this aim.

None of this healthy skepticism, however, questions the necessity for examinations. All concerned agree that degrees should be maintained if for no other reason than to make the student body. It can hardly be maintained that an examination in the spring will make the students study all the year round. The University owes a duty to the students not only in April but in the other six months as well. The Christmas exams can hardly be thought of as having any justification, as a failure does not necessitate repetition. It appears that there are but two alternatives open. A set of examinations each month with all the validity of the final exams should be substituted for the present ineffective system. The only other

mechanism available to the university to insure that it fulfills its function is to reinstate corporal punishment.

The Domestic Revolution . . .

(Continued from page one)

argued that an increase in the divorce rate represents a rising rather than a falling standard of public morals.

Finally, few there will be to deny that year 1950 heralds the advent of higher standards of mating. Of course, like friendship and religion, family relationships are spiritual in nature and their quality cannot be insured by legislation. Family integrity, like morality can never be coerced. Nevertheless education and the law are reducing the hazards of family life as never before. Many constructive aids have come to the assistance of the home. Physical and mental qualifications for marriage, education for parenthood, child psychology and mental hygiene—all these represent great gains.

There is an old saying that the more things change the more they remain the same. Only as institutions change can they live. That the family is changing is a sign of health and not disease. It must continue to come into closer accord with the currents of life as it lived today. It must adapt to machine production. It must adapt to urban civilization. Above all it must adapt to new philosophies. Unhappiness is one of the major maladies of modern life. There is no greater antidote than the family system can provide. But it must be reconstructed into an institution supremely satisfying to the needs of man.

We have seen that great as have been the changes of the last fifty years they have not all been liabilities. Indeed there is reason to believe that the Domestic Revolution has some distance still to run and that it may bring even greater gains in the future than in the past. Surely it is not visionary to conclude that

"the best is yet to come".

It may well be that, as Spencer believed, there is inherent in evolution a strain toward better things and that the laws of social change, like the laws of Nature herself are, in the long run, wise, beneficent and kindly in their operation and design.



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