

this point. Many a silly attempt to be useful to society would be avoided if people were only more sure that an honest occupation for profit is just as high and noble as any other form of human effort and less likely to become wasteful and fantastic. Let men stick close to profitable employment and be assured that in so doing they are performing good service to themselves and to others. The State which should attempt to prevent such action by the individual members of itself would soon find itself reduced to starvation and barbarism.

The settlement, however, of the dividing line between individual action and collective action has always been a difficult thing, and is likely to continue so. What are the things which the State can best do, and what the individual? Let us look a little into details.

Certain national functions are inevitable and no argument regarding them is necessary. If there is to be a State at all, peace must be kept internally and defence against exterior enemies must be maintained, and some internal and external means of communication must exist. That is, there must be soldiers, policemen, judges and roadmakers. These are all of very ancient origin, and there would be little dispute amongst men regarding them. But when we pass beyond these primary elements of the State there is much room for difference of opinion.

For instance, should religion be a State or a private affair? In the past it has been very commonly considered as one of the most important functions of the State (and is so still in many countries). To-day it tends to become a private matter. In many countries, as in Canada, it has become, at least in theory, wholly an affair of the individual conscience. Nevertheless religions and quasi-religious subjects do invade the field of public activity. Religious prejudice not infrequently guides the hand that marks the ballot and the tongue which frames policies. And it is curious to note that as the fervor of orthodoxy dies down it is sometimes replaced by the fervor of fussiness, to such an extent that the emphasis of piety is shifted from points like the Trinity or the Atonement to those of Lord's Day Observance and Teetotalism. Many good people have substituted for zeal in soul-saving a strong desire to make addenda to the Decalogue and to give greater amplitude to the Criminal Code. In this, doubtless, there lies great danger both to individual liberty and to national peace and prosperity. Resistance to it will soon be recognized by many as a civic duty.

In a somewhat closely related department, viz., that of education, the tendency in most countries is towards a more complete assumption by the State of the work of educating the young. And yet it is growing clear to some that the State is performing this function rather poorly; the feeling prevails in some quarters that there are inherent weaknesses in State schools which probably can never be cured, the chief of which consist in the fact that schools are usually regarded as unreal things by those who have most to do with them, i.e., by pupils and teachers.

It has also been remarked that there is some resemblance between the steam engine and the State-controlled educational system. In both there is an enormous waste of energy. The uniformity, which seems inevitable, in the preparation of teachers, in the making of school manuals, in the arrangement of schemes of study, and so on, tends to stifle enthusiasm in both teachers and pupils. Interest in a subject is crushed by the weight of regulations, prohibitions and admonitions issued by paternalistic Departments. And worst of all, student and teacher tend to regard the regularly measured snippets of truth contained in a school-book as all that there is to be learned about the vast mountains of human knowledge. Self-satisfied priggishness usurps the place of the desire to know.