

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

An address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, at a special Convocation of McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, May 15, 1948.

If I were graduating today from a University or a College I would, I think, be both bewildered about the present and anxious about the future. My heart would be clouded with doubts and questions. Unless, of course, it was so filled with pure joy at the successful completion of my academic work and the achievement of my degree that it could find no room for any other emotion. As a matter of fact, when I finished my own undergraduate course at Oxford University, when I had filled the last sheet of the last examination pad, my feeling of elation at having come through that ordeal alive, was so great, that I fear I had no thought at all, save that of celebration. The dry squeezing process to which I had been subjected, simply had to be reversed, and that left for the moment no time for any anxiety or doubts about the future.

The undergraduate or graduate of today is a more serious person, I think, than he was twenty-five years ago. He certainly has more about which to be serious. He is also, I think, less easily fooled, less inclined to accept without query and analysis the casual platitudes that are so often the lazy substitutes for thought; the eloquent, but often empty, promises that a new world, a brave new world is spread before him; that all he has to do is to conquer it and war with becoming modesty and victor's garland. The undergraduate of today knows that it is more than a short, sure step from college commencement to the Cabinet, the Supreme Court or the Board of Directors.

The reason for this more realistic attitude is not hard to find. The generation who are leaving college in 1948 have some knowledge of the wastelands of both our pre-war and post-war world. Many of them have also had a bitter experience of the bloody and desperate years between. They are therefore not likely to fall easy victims to shallow talk about a new Jerusalem fit for heroes.

This is a sombre and sobering time in history and the younger men and women of today are reacting to it, it seems to me, courageously and with good sense. Thank God for that. For it is about our only hope. As I visit colleges and universities, and I do whenever I can, for they are a refreshing change from parliamentary corridors and United Nations Committees, I sense a solid realism among students, an impatience with the conventional answer, a desire to find out, and a determination to put their discoveries to a good social use. In short, I sense magnificent material for education, but I don't always sense that education or educators are living up to the opportunity that this material affords.

We have gone far in this western world, in providing facilities for the stimulation of curiosity. We have elevated the achievement of mechanical skills and the pursuit of scientific facts into a high position in the educational hierarchy. We have put the

courses on advertising and business administration on a level with those on philosophy and politics and surrounded their completion with more lucrative prospects. We have spread our university net so wide, with its mesh so small, that any tiny intellectual fish can be caught, can be processed, tinned, "degreed" and distributed. We have built our academic palaces, without ensuring that they are likely to produce members of the royal family of scholars and gentlemen. We have built our giant football bowls, and then been forced to meet the mortgage by enrolling "All Americans" in courses where a knowledge of reading and spelling is desirable but not essential.

We have broadened the basis of higher education, though often at the expense of deepening its value. We have made astounding progress in the natural and physical sciences. We have literally changed the face of the world. Indeed the pace of change in this field has in the last 50 years been so swift that a Roman senator would have found himself more at home in a Victorian drawing room, than your great-grandfather would in Radio City Music Hall today. Above all, we have released atomic energy, and shrink with fear from the results of that release on a world of social and political anarchy.

Education, however, is far more than intellectual activity directed towards scientific investigation and material progress. Or possibly I should put it this way; such education, unless balanced by progress in the social sciences and the humanities will succeed in destroying life itself. That surely is not the objective we are seeking in our million dollar laboratories. Education has produced in those laboratories the fact of a split atom, but education has not yet produced anything but terror at the thought of the most likely utilization of the power that this has made possible.

It is the other kind of education which men must seek and secure before these terrors disappear; the kind described by a poet, with beauty and truth, as "the creation of finer human hungers". Education that is preparation for life, not preparation only for livelihood. And life, as Justice Holmes once said, is "painting a picture, not doing a sum". The education that will give us the strength to be daring and the weakness to be humble. Above all, the education that will produce the type of man who, when he has to call on himself in an emergency, will always find someone at home; the type of man who is unconscious of his own integrity and unaware of his own knowledge.

We need this kind of education now as never before. We need a breathing space from the discovery of scientific facts, so that we can catch up, socially and morally, with the implications of the facts that we have discovered. If that is impossible, and I know it is, because no limit can be put to man's questing mind, we must direct education more intensively, more eagerly towards social and political ends. We must focus attention less on the physical world about us, to the improvement of which such amazing contributions have been made, and more on the ways and means by which man can live in that world with other men, secure and unafraid. There is nothing for satisfaction or for pride in having produced a world where man needs merely to push buttons to satisfy all his desires, if there is one other button which, pushed by error or intent, will send this globe spinning through space, a lifeless lump of rock. It is difficult to get much pleasure out of television, when we see in the screen, darkly, a world which hovers on the brink of atomic obliteration.

All of this means, if it means anything at all, that we should re-examine and re-define the objectives and methods of education, in the light of scientific progress, on the one hand and social and international dangers, on the other. I suggest that any such re-examination must start from the absolute and imperative necessity of doing everything we can to make the citizen of today more intelligent and

informed about his function as a political animal than he has ever been before in history. That is a "tall order" I know but a necessary one if democracy is to survive and develop. The process should begin when we learn our A.B.'s and should not end when we win our B.A.'s.

This may seem pretty platitudinous stuff. It is. Some platitudes, however, have become such because they are so fundamentally true that it is impossible to refrain from repeating them over and over again. I do not apologize, therefore, for repeating that the kind of education that is most essential now is education for citizenship. All that this means in reality is the cultivation of a capacity to think clearly and honestly on political, social and moral issues. That is all, but that is everything.

There is, of course, much more to a liberal education, the values of which I am venturing to emphasise, than training for citizenship. If I have now singled out this one part, it is, I suppose, due to the fact that my studies in the past have been, and my interests at present are largely concentrated on government and citizenship, national and international. Not many persons in recent years have had better opportunities than I have had to note the lamentable results when uneducated, or worse still, evilly educated minds are applied to contemporary political problems, more particularly in the international sphere, where there is so much room for prejudice, passion and misunderstanding. The representative of a country at an international meeting, reflects the views and opinions of his government. In a free democracy, if those views are wrong and narrow, they will, in most cases, reflect the wishes of the free people who put that government in power. The fault may be in the fact that those free people have not been educated, they have merely been taught sums. The individual citizen and his government cannot escape from their responsibility to provide the education which is required to make the good citizen. Nor can the teacher, the school, the college escape from their responsibility to use intelligently and unselfishly the educational facilities that are given.

We have the tragic and horrible evidence of Nazi Germany to prove what evil education can do to a single generation. We have evidence before us every day to show the power that communist educational systems can exert over the mind and the soul. We know that education can bend and warp the mind, especially when it adopts, not the simple techniques of the little Red School house and the three R's, but when it batters the brain and heart with every modern mechanical device for forming thought and creating emotion; the radio, the motion picture, the mass appeal.

In communist states and in particular, Soviet Russia, education is the agent of the state for purposes, many of which have little or nothing to do with any good result. In a recent Soviet article on "Pre-School Education", written by one L.I. Mikhailova it is emphasised that the purposes of the kindergarten is to instill in the minds of the small children, from three to seven years of age, a love for Soviet Russia, for Comrade Stalin and a pride in the glory of the Soviet army. That may seem to be a somewhat ambitious if not too alarming, educational programme for a three year old. It becomes something much worse when the same children are also taught at an early age that foreigners, except of course, communist foreigners, are their enemies, with whom no friendship or mutual understanding is possible - even on the intellectual plane. There is much evidence that this kind of education, which arouses in us feelings of discouragement and even despair, can be devilishly effective. The essential prelude today, to the establishment of a dictatorship, whether of left or right, is the false education of youth. The essential foundation of a free democracy must, in its turn, be the good and true education of youth.

If it is so easy to teach a whole generation hatred and suspicion, and false pride and prejudice, cannot the same determined energy and relentless purpose be applied, and the same resources provided for the construction of a dynamic and democratic citizenship?

Well, what can be done about it? How can education be made to serve more effectively the free democratic state, without weakening the freedom of the individual to make up his own mind?

If I knew the answer to this question, I would deserve much more than an honorary degree. I know however, that it cannot be done by concentrating on huge mass-production educational factories, where the over-worked, under-paid professor drones his lecture over a loud-speaker, in a great hall to a thousand students. Nothing could be much more remote from intelligent and rewarding education procedure than that. I know also that it cannot be done, and indeed that it will be prevented, by stifling free expression of opinion and shackling academic liberty in the name of protection against subversive doctrines and for the sake of increased endowments. I know finally that it will never be done if the teaching profession is not exalted in dignity and reward, well above the plumber, for whom I have a very high regard, and the hockey player, for whom I have a very great envy.

One really constructive way of ensuring that colleges perform effectively the vital function of education for citizenship would be to put in all things the educator ahead of the edifice; and the quality of students ahead of their quantity. That is why I would like to make a plea for the small college, where education can retain the appealing advantage of personal contact and the intimate relationship of master and student. I hope that in this respect MacMaster will stick to the things that are righteous and leave the cult of size and of magnificence to others.

Every student cannot give all his time to philosophy, politics and economics. Of course not, but every student, before he leaves his college can and should be given the chance to understand - and the understanding is terribly difficult today - his relationship to his community and his state, and their relationship to the community of nations. Every student, whether he is majoring in veterinary science or Etruscan art can and should be assisted and encouraged to think straight on the social, political and economic issues of the day. Straight thinking on these is the crying necessity of our time. Crooked thinking is its greatest danger. To see through shams and not be fooled by words. To shun self-deception, the peculiar weakness of the Anglo-Saxon mind. Every student must be given an opportunity to cultivate these essential attributes of the good citizen.

Let me tell you how one American college has met this challenge squarely, and with great success.

Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire, introduced last October into its curriculum the requirement that every senior, no matter what faculty he might be attending, should complete successfully a course, called "Great Issues".

This course, according to a college bulletin explaining it, has three aims.

1. To provide a more purposeful transition from undergraduate to citizen and from classroom general education to adult education.

2. To develop in all graduates of the college a sense of common public purpose, of heightened individual public-mindedness and to sharpen a little the individual's ability to relate learning

to the contemporary world and to bring his developed power of thought to bear on the issues of that world.

3. To experiment with this pedagogical technique as one means (a) of promoting that sense of intellectual unity which general education seeks and (b) of stimulating that process of self-learning, which comes from out-of-class discussions where a group, such as the entire senior class, considers large, live issues together.

The college bulletin continues: "The procedures of the course will be adapted to these ends and in particular to a high level of adult, public education. The same will be true of the content of the course, which covers the entire range of liberal arts subjects, and stresses not the divisional separations but the interrelationship of the humanities, sciences and social sciences.

Each senior will be required to subscribe to both the daily and Sunday editions of the New York Times or the Herald Tribune. Reading assignments will be drawn from significant pieces in the periodical literature, government publications and other current publications of general consequence."

The Great Issues class meets as a whole three times a week. The principal presentation of a subject is made by a guest lecturer invited to Hanover each week. His talk is preceded, the day before, by an introductory "briefing", usually by a selected Dartmouth faculty member, on some illustrative aspect of the issue, e.g. its history, its breadth, its place in contemporary politics, its press treatment, its pressure group interest, and so on. On the morning following the evening lecture, the Director of the course conducts a large-scale discussion session of the class with the guest lecturer and others participating.

In addition to the assigned readings and the class sessions, there is what is called a public affairs laboratory connected with the course where the seniors are given first-hand experience and individual instruction in the analysis and use of such contemporary information resources as representative newspapers and periodicals, the literature of organized groups and government publications of various sorts. In that laboratory, public affairs projects are undertaken, in the manner of an experiment in physics or chemistry.

I had the good fortune this winter to be a guest lecturer at this course and it was a stimulating experience. I have seldom received such a cross-examination after a statement - even from a Parliamentary Committee. Nor have I ever been more impressed by any experiment than by the work going on, the projects, in the Public Affairs laboratory.

The course this year was divided into the following subjects:

- What is a Great Issue?
- Modern Man's Political Loyalties.
- The Scientific Revolution.
- The International Aspects of World Peace.
- The American Aspects of World Peace, and, finally,
- What Values for Modern Man?

No Dartmouth student could graduate until he had successfully completed this course as well as his assigned project in the laboratory.

I may be wrong, but I have a faint recollection that the only compulsory requirement in my day for every student in my own

university before he could graduate was an ability to swim the length of the tank 4 times!

and as a matter of fact, for one, would like to see the Great Issues Course in every college in Canada; indeed, with suitable changes, in every high school. Personally I would not object to exchanging, say, Algebra for it, if no room could otherwise be found. But then, I always failed in Algebra.

If I were organizing this "Great Issues" course today in a Canadian university, I would certainly wish to include in it a study of the nature and meaning of that much abused word "democracy"; a word which once had a clear sound and a clean meaning, but which is now so often debased, even at places like Lake Success, and especially in those countries whose communist totalitarian systems are as far removed from democracy, as the darkness of midnight from the light of noon day.

I would like those in our course to learn what democracy is, and is not. It is not the rule of a mechanical majority; the divine right of 50% plus 1. It is not the right of the powerful to trample on the rights of the weak. It is not liberty for the capitalist to exploit or for the labour leader to extort. It is not extremism of the right or the left. Nor is it merely anti-communism or anti-fascism. It is the middle of a road which is leading in the right direction. All this has been said much better than I could say it in a magazine of humour and of wisdom, the "New Yorker". Its editor once soliloquised about democracy, as follows:

"It is the line that forms on the right. It is "hi", as against "heil". It is the "don't" in Don't Shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere."

I would also want my Great Issues course to include a project on the reconciliation of "Nationalism and Internationalism in the Democratic State". These are words for which men have lived greatly and gloriously died but which now are too often the cheap coinage of appeals to every kind of prejudice, pride and narrow emotion. It is now recognised in most peace-loving democratic states, that nationalism must be reconciled with some larger association of free peoples, who voluntarily give up certain rights of sovereignty in order to ensure their security and promote their progress. I think that this development is wise and heartening. My feeling that it is so is strengthened by the attacks on it made by the communist despots. They have become ardent advocates of nationalism and make stirring, if insincere appeals to the virtues and values of national sovereignty, though the communist creed grew out of and remains based on the non-national idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its anthem is the Internationale.

This spurious nationalism, supported by international communism for its own purposes, is reactionary and an obstacle to progress. So is the internationalism of that kind of capitalism - now happily uncommon - which exploits subject peoples and is lauded by those whose belief in it is no deeper than an oil well.

One thing is clear, however. The doctrine of the sovereign omnipotent state, recognising no other authority and equal to any other state, is as dead as the Divine Right of Kings. The fiction that all states are equal is not even observed in theory on all occasions. We pay tribute to this theory at Lake Success in the Assembly, but when we move across the hall to the Security Council

we abandon it in practice for the veto of the Great Powers. In any event when you have such a gap in responsibility and power between, say, Liberia and the United States of America some compromise between practice and theory in this matter becomes inevitable. I hope, however, that we can find a better one than giving five states a veto and lumping all the others together in an unprivileged group. Likewise, sovereignty, in its unrestricted nineteenth century sense, is also becoming a relic of constitutional theory. It must be clear now to all who care to think about it, that while the enduring values of national loyalty and patriotism must be preserved, nevertheless in this age of atom bombs and supersonic speed, certain aspects of national sovereignty have to be abandoned in the interest of greater international security. Somehow the duty and loyalty we rightly owe to our own state must be reconciled, in our own interest, with our obligations to other peace loving and democratic states with whom our welfare, indeed our very existence, is bound up.

How can this be done? Certainly not by exalting nationalism into a narrow and exclusive creed. May I quote the New Yorker again. Its editor had a Christmas dream a few years ago. Here is how he wrote it down:

"This is the dream we had, asleep in our chair, thinking of Christmas in lands of the fir tree and pine, Christmas in lands of the palm tree and vine, and of how the one great sky does for all places and all people.

After the third war was over (this was our curious dream), there was no more than a handful of people left alive, and the earth was in ruins and the ruins were horrible to behold. The people, the survivors, decided to meet to talk over their problem and to make a lasting peace, which is the customary thing to make after a long, exhausting war. There were eighty-three countries, and each country sent a delegate to the convention Each delegate brought the flag of his homeland with him - each, that is, except the delegate from China. When the others asked him why he had failed to bring a flag, he said that he had discussed the matter with another Chinese survivor, an ancient and very wise man, and that between them they had concluded that they would not have any cloth flag for China any more.

'What kind of flag do you intend to have?' asked the delegate from Luxembourg.

The Chinese delegate blinked his eyes and produced a shoe-box, from which he drew a living flower which looked very like an iris.

'What is that?' they all inquired, pleased with the sight of so delicate a symbol.

'That', said the Chinese, 'is a wild flag, *Iris tectorum*. In China we have decided to adopt this flag, since it is a convenient and universal device and very beautiful and grows everywhere in the moist places of the earth for all to observe and wonder at. I propose all countries adopt it, so that it will be impossible for us to insult each other's flag.'

'Can it be waved?' asked the American delegate, who wore a troubled expression and a Taft button.

The Chinese gentleman moved the flag gently to and fro. 'It can be waved, yes,' he answered. 'But, it is more interesting in repose or as the breeze stirs it.'

'I see it is monocotyledonous,' said the Dutch delegate, who was an amiable man.

'I don't see how a strong foreign policy can be built around a wild flag which is the same for everybody,' complained the Latvian. 'It can't be,' said the Chinese. 'That is one of the virtues of my little flag. I should remind you that the flag was once yours, too. It is the oldest flag in the world, the original one, you might say. We are now, gentlemen, in an original condition again. There are very few of us.'

The German delegate arose stiffly. 'I would be a poor man indeed,' he said, 'did I not feel that I belonged to the master race. And for that I need a special flag, natürlich.'

'At the moment,' replied the Chinaman, 'the master race, like so many other races, is suffering from the handicap of being virtually extinct. There are fewer than two hundred people left in the entire world, and we suffer from a multiplicity of banners.'

The delegate from Patagonia spoke up. 'I fear that the wild flag, one for all, will prove an unpopular idea.'

'It will, undoubtedly,' sighed the Chinese delegate. 'But now that there are only a couple of hundred people on earth, even the word "unpopular" loses most of its meaning. At this juncture we might conceivably act in a sensible, rather than a popular, manner.' And he produced eighty-two more shoeboxes, and handed a wild flag to each delegate, bowing ceremoniously.

Next day the convention broke up and the delegates returned to their homes, marveling at what they had accomplished in so short a time. And that is the end of our dream."

Finally, I would wish my "Great Issues" students to think hard and straight through the most difficult project of all "The Search for Security".

Economic Security. Is it a gift that the state owes us, or something we must seek for ourselves? If we rely too much on the state for this security, may we not lose the freedom without which our security may easily become that of the jail or the concentration camp or the regimented robots of the communist state. But, if we cling to our unrestricted freedom, to every last tattered remnant of laissez faire, may not great numbers of our fellow citizens be left merely with freedom to remain unemployed, or cold, or hungry?

The same dilemma confronts us in the search for political security. How can this be attained by peaceful peoples for whom there is now no refuge in remoteness and no safety in harmlessness.

In the past in democratic states we have accepted relative security in return for fundamental liberties and national sovereignty. The consequences of conflict are now, however, so terrible that we insist on complete security against complete destruction. The danger here is that this gives power and encouragement to those that insist there can be no complete security without complete authority. We must not permit freedom to be used to destroy freedom but neither must we lose our liberty in the name of safety.

Even if we avoid this tragic dilemma, -and we must avoid it the problem, how to achieve national security remains. By armaments - or by disarmament? Certainly the latter - disarmament - is no guarantee of security in the suspicious, divided world of today. Indeed, it would probably provoke war by providing an irresistible temptation to an aggressor. On the other hand, superiority, even overwhelming superiority

in arms, under national control, never has ensured and never can ensure that permanent peace of which men have dreamed and for which they have died. It may be argued that it is only commonsense to be supreme in arms. But, as it has been put, "one nation's commonsense is another nation's high blood-pressure". Your security becomes your neighbour's insecurity which forces him frantically to search for arms to remove that insecurity. And the inevitable and fatal race is on.

Superiority in arms can do this, however. If it is possessed by a group of free, peace-loving states, it can act as an effective deterrent to war - something not quite the same as maintaining peace - and thereby give the statesman and diplomat time to solve the problems that make armaments seem necessary.

That, I suggest, is the situation today. In the absence of any confidence between the two great groups of powers, the democratic and the totalitarian; with the United Nations completely powerless to prevent the aggression of any powerful state, arms are as necessary as ever before in peace time in order to prevent any existing threat to the peace exploding into war.

The potential aggressor must not be given any encouragement to exploit a situation, which may seem to him to offer tempting opportunity for conquest. He must be confronted and contained by overwhelming force, military, political and moral. Thereby an opportunity is given us to create a healthier political atmosphere where peace will rest on a surer foundation than an atom bomb.

The containment of a possible aggressor in this way however, cannot be made effective by national action and with national arms alone. It can be done only by an association of free states who are willing to pool their forces and use them only to discharge their obligations under the United Nations Charter. Collective action of this kind can however only be accepted on the part of nations who have confidence in each other's good will, who are willing to work together as a group in peace, and in war to fight together as a group against the aggressor.

That is the only sure foundation for security in the circumstances of the present; the steady, determined and collective resistance to all acts of aggression anywhere; honest and complete recognition of the fact that an unprovoked attack on one is an attack on all.

I would like my Great Issues student to be very thoroughly soaked in that doctrine.

There are other things that I would like to see discussed in my Great Issues course. In fact the problem would be one of what to exclude, not what to include. But above all, I would hope that my student would as a result of this course, leave college in a better position than he would otherwise be, to think clearly and to think dispassionately about the political and economic issues of the day, and thus be better able to take his place in an alert and vigilant democracy.

Believe me, this is no easy goal to achieve in the educational field. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said to some graduating students "I say to you in all sadness of conviction that to think great thoughts you must be heroes as well as idealists". The student and the citizen of today must learn that kind of heroism; and in the learning he will require the highest qualities of heart and mind. This will be difficult but this is not enough, for education must express itself in action as well as in thought if, to use Justice Holmes' words again "dreams are to be more than dreaming,

ideals more than visions, or knowledge more than mere awareness".

I hope that in the difficult and dangerous years ahead, MacMaster will not forget, as I know she will not, that her greatest contribution to Canada will be to turn out men and women who will think great thoughts, think them clearly, and act in the spirit of those thoughts to make their own communities, their own country and their own world a better place in which to live.