

# FEAR AND REPRESSION

## EVIL FEATURES OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

### DECENTRALISATION-URGED IN ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT-AND EXPENDITURE.

In a lecture to the Public School Teachers' Association of S.A., entitled "Fear and Repression as Enemies of Education," Mr. A. L. Gordon Mackay, B.A.B., Ex. Dep. Ed., Assistant Lecturer in Economics, Adelaide University, said there was usually called up in the mind references to analytical psychology and the other host of new educational devices, such as the Dalton plan, and self-government, that existed in the world for freeing children from the alleged repressive atmosphere of the schoolroom and the educational system. Though he might have delivered a fairly interesting lecture on that subject, he had not the intention of doing so, because during his sojourn in Adelaide he had already addressed some dozen or so educational bodies on the matter of new ideas in education. It was his purpose, still keeping the same title, to attempt the task of showing that fear and repression retarded the development of educational work among both the teaching and administrative staffs of their various educational systems.

#### —Bureaucratic Methods.—

The specific type of fear and repression about which he proposed talking was that form which was instilled into the teaching service by bureaucratic methods resting on a basis of financial stringency. To further illustrate what he meant he gave some examples. They had first of all the unsympathetic methods of the Central Office towards the teaching staff spread throughout the country, and with this was coupled a whole series of petty economies which were both irksome and unnecessary. Then there was the matter of low salaries paid to men for doing the highest work which the Creator had given to man, and on top of that, in the interests of discipline and good government, they had a system of restraint which muzzled the teachers with regard to their public utterances. Further, there was the inspectorial system, which, though good in its way and necessary for efficiency, did not prevent the inspector from being a bloodhound, whereas his true function was that of a watchdog, or, if they liked, a guide, philosopher, and friend to the teachers. Then, too, there was the fact—and a very sad fact it was—that teachers were allowed to grow old in the service of the State to such an extent that they get out of touch with the younger members of the teaching profession, and with the children entrusted to their care.

World of Nations the angel of educational death has been abroad—we may almost hear the beating of his wings; and there is no one to smear with blood the lintel and sideposts of our doors that he may spare and pass on. He calls equally at our universi-

#### —Incubus of Routine.—

That, in the main, was due to the fact that a system of low salaries and insufficient superannuation had prevented them from putting by enough to retire at a fit and proper age. Then there was the incubus of routine, coupled with an insufficient number of periods off for relaxation, correction of written work, and preparatory reading. The absolute minimum of periods off should be ten, if teachers were to do their work properly. And, finally, there was an organised system of pedantry, of unnecessary control and supervision, of a lack of faith and trust in the men who had been chosen to do the edu-

cational work of the State. If only some headmasters would realise that the true function of a headmaster was to co-ordinate the work of his staff and to act as their chairman and adviser, there would be less silent revolt against the domination of men with strong personalities. It must be understood, of course, that in this critical survey of what he had called the "repressive system" obtaining, there were many exceptions to what he had said, and he was fully aware that his frank strictures did not apply to the administration of many schools and to quite a lot of headmasters and inspectors. But in the main he claimed that his above remarks were true, and what he wanted to point out was that these defects of compulsion by fear and repression were due not to the innate weakness of administrators or teachers, but rather to the fact that they were part of a grinding machine whose driving power got its "punch" from the existing financial stringency.

—Comparisons in Money Spent.—  
Let them examine for a moment a comparative table of moneys spent on education in different parts of the British Commonwealth:—

States.	Amount per head of population	Approx.
England and Wales . . . . .	£1 18 0	
Commonwealth of Australia . . . . .	1 4 0	
New South Wales . . . . .	1 10 0	
South Australia . . . . .	0 19 0	
New South Wales . . . . .	£12 0 0	Approx.
South Australia . . . . .	6 11 0	

And yet if they compared these figures with those in existence before the war they found if they applied the test of the index number to make certain of the purchasing power of money, that they were spending some 14 per cent. or 15 per cent. less than they were in 1914. And if they made the dates of comparison 1920 and 1913, and use the same method of comparison, they found they were spending 25 per cent. less.

—Despised Germany.—  
"Let us look for a moment," said Mr. Mackay, "at the efforts that are being made in the realm of education by despised Germany. Though it is impossible at the present juncture to get hold of financial figures, the following two facts alone will enable us to gauge the amount of money that is being spent (1) since the initiation of the German Republic, according to a report which I have to hand (that of the World Association for Adult Education), we find that Germany has added a Workers' Faculty to each of her 23 universities; (2) there is a clause in the new Constitution which governs Germany, which states that education in Germany shall be compulsory and free up to the age of 18. We can well imagine the amount of money that would have to be spent to initiate such a scheme of education.

#### —What Russia is Doing.—

Now let us look at Russia—bloody and despised Russia—the statistics as shown by the Statesmen's Yearbook for schools and attendances are as follow:—

Date.	No. Schools.	No. Children
1911	37,000	3,000,000
1919	63,000	4,800,000
1921	94,000	7,000,000
1922	55,000	4,800,000

We note that there has been a gradual rise up till 1921, and then a drop, which is due to the war.

Under the able administration of the People's Commissar, M. Lunacharsky, the following progress seems to have been made:—

In 1914 under the Tsar regime, 18 per cent. of the people could read. Between 1918-1922, of the 30,000,000 people between the ages of 18 and 40, about 15 per cent. had been taught to read.

There have been established 150 centres for the liquidation of illiteracy. There exists 55 teachers' training colleges, not necessarily all post-revolution.

There are 300 short-course teachers' training colleges, not necessarily all post-revolution.

In the Red Army, 55 per cent. of the soldiers have been taught to read. Trains run regularly into the country carrying educational literature, pamphlets, and cinema equipment for furthering the cause of education.

The 60 Russian universities all have had added to them workers' faculties, containing 24,000 worker students, and 158,000 ordinary students.

In the realm of music, 5 large State orchestras have been established and 50 small ones, and these, together, delivered in 1920, 400 concerts throughout the country. The collection of Stradivarius violins have come under State control and are awarded as prizes at annual Eisteddfods to the best performers.

In the matter of museums, there were in pre-revolution Russia a total of 21, and in 1922 the number had risen to 119, while in Moscow during the same year 500,000 people were shown over the principal museum.

"This information is all taken from the report of the World Association for Adult Education, which has just come to hand, and I have no reason to believe that the information is incorrect. If these statistics are true in the case of Germany and Russia, it is, I think, a fair thing to say that they are devoting more attention and money to the development of education than are the component parts of the British Commonwealth, particularly more than is being spent in the Commonwealth of Australia, or even in cultured South Australia.

#### —Angel of Educational Death Abroad.—

"The truth is, I think, Mr. Chairman, that in the British Commonwealth, at our high schools, and our primary schools, and our kindergartens, and it is on behalf of all these educational institutions that I am making this solemn appeal. For the axe of economy on the Geddes model is being applied rather ruthlessly in some cases, and whereas Germany and Russia, who are despised and afflicted of men, can spare money for pushing forward this high work, which we call education, we who are proud to belong to the British Commonwealth of Nations, the land on which the sun never sets, are spending no more, and in some cases less, than we spent in 1913.

#### —Get After Monopolies.—

"Well, sir, what is to be done? (1) Since we spend 27 millions a year on drink in Australia, and other large sums on confectionery and other such necessities, it is high time that arrangements were made for the Government to get out on the market and get hold of some of the money which is invested in breweries, distilleries, confectionery factories, and motor car works, even if it has to pay a rate of interest which is as high, if not higher, than do the business men. The interest on this money can easily be borne by the present adult generation, and the sinking fund for its repayment need not be initiated until the present school generation are educated and at work earning money. According to my reckoning, this State, if it is not to remain the black sheep of the Australian educational family, must raise its annual educational expenditure to at least one million, and if it is to do educational

work which should be fit the cultured State of Australia, the figure must go to a million and a half, even if we are to deny ourselves a little of the pleasures of beers and liquors, lollies and chocolates, doubtful picture shows, and motor cars.

#### —Decentralisation Necessary.—

"(2) One of the best ways of breaking down the driving force of fear and repression in the administration of our system is to decentralise education, both in the matter of administration, management, and expenditure. We have before us the excellent example of the British system, where a town like Leeds administers locally an educational area the size of South Australia by means of a local Board comprised of parents, teachers, and educational men of note. This then utilises the principle of local patriotism, and largely does away with the red tape and repression of a centralised system.

#### —Self-governing Guild.—

"(3) With regard to numuzzling teachers in the matter of public utterances, at the same time so as not to interfere with discipline, it is suggested that in addition to the mechanism mentioned under heading (1) that the Teachers' Association be encouraged to become a sort of self-governing educational guild, whose ultimate aim may be the control and management of the Education Department, provided their control is mixed with that of parental and citizen influence. This, I understand, is the aim and object of the British Teachers' Union, and I know that it is the policy of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation.

#### —A Vigilance Committee —

"(4) Finally it is suggested that with a view to bringing before the public general information of the character spoken about tonight, and of the state of education in South Australia and in the various local districts, that the Government appoint and pay a Vigilance Committee of Educational Safety, made up of young to middle-aged men (not please note), who will make periodical tours of the country for the purpose of doing liaison work and collecting and collating various weaknesses which they may happen notice. The personnel of this committee should be absolutely free of Governmental or political control, and should present an annual report to institutions such as the churches, the university, the Teachers' Association, citizens' and parents' committees, so that they, having informed their mind, may "tune up" their local members of Parliament and the Government in general.

#### —The Economic Basis.—

"To conclude, I have endeavored to make remarks to show that there is a lurking sense of fear, throughout our educational system. I have tried to show that this rests mainly on an economic basis, viz., that of financial stringency, and I may have done wrong with education in Australia and in South Australia in particular, is not that we have not teachers of vision, not that our teachers do not know what ought to be done, but that they are prevented from doing their work to the full by an oppressive administrative system, which rests its basis on financial stringency. In all humility, Mr. Chairman, I have done my best to indicate the lines along which our new development should go."