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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION THOUGHT OF HAROLD LASKI

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

MAURICE GLEN POOL

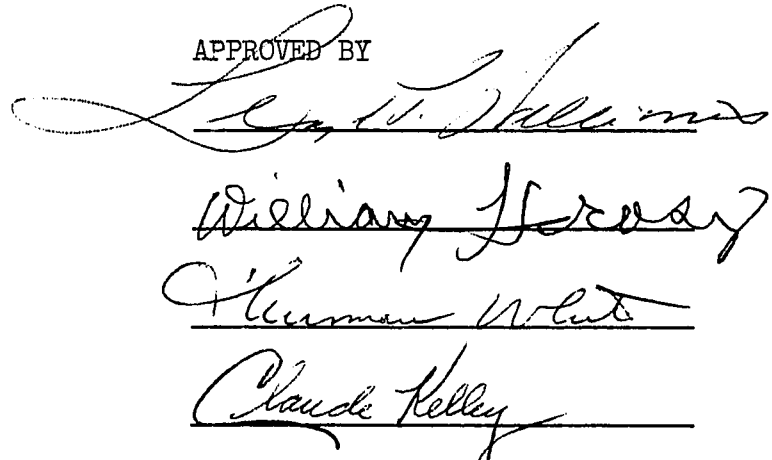
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1967

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF

HAROLD LASKI

APPROVED BY



DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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M.G.P.

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF HAROLD LASKI

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Harold Laski was born June 30, 1893, the son of a prosperous Jewish merchant in Manchester, England. His family was orthodox in its Judaism and with that mixture of pride and religious high hope usually found among Jewish families regarding a male child expected that his life would be a continuing expression of their own aspirations.

Laski was a precocious child and became a prize pupil at the Manchester Grammar School. In July of 1910 there was published in the Westminster Review an article by Laski entitled "On the Scope of Eugenics," a field in which he early studied and in which he determined at the time to work. The article caught the eye of Sir Francis Galton who congratulated the young scientist and who, upon meeting Laski, was amazed to learn that he was only seventeen years old. Laski had won a history scholarship at New College, Oxford in 1910, but chose to study eugenics with Karl Pearson at University College in London.

In the summer of 1911 Laski went to Scotland and married Frida Kerry whom he had met in 1909. She was a Gentile and the news of the marriage precipitated a crisis in his Jewish home that was not resolved

until Frida embraced the Jewish faith some years later. At the time of his marriage he agreed to go off to Oxford for three years, during which time he would be supported by his father and separated from Frida, who was in Scotland, with the understanding, by his family, that the marriage would be ended at the expiration of the three years. It is the contention of Laski's good friend, Kingsley Martin, that Laski developed fainting fits at this time and that his doctor prescribed a normal conjugal relationship as a proper remedy. Though Martin neglects to elaborate on the matter, there is the distinct impression that Laski became well acquainted with Glasgow.

Laski read science for a year, but then shifted to history, studying under H. A. L. Fisher and Earnest Baker. The teacher who influenced Laski most, however, was F. W. Maitland, an influence revealed to even a casual reader by frequent references to Maitland throughout the body of Laski's published works. He joined the Fabian Society at Oxford, a work in which his wife was interested. While engaged in the work of the movement he became acquainted with H. W. Nevinson and George Lansbury, then editor of the Daily Herald.

Laski won his First Prize, and the Beit Essay Prize, in June, 1914, and immediately went to work on the Herald at the invitation of Lansbury. During the summer's work he wrote articles on Ireland, and constitutional problems from the trade union viewpoint. When war began in September of 1914 he tried to enlist but was refused on medical grounds. A few weeks later, he accepted an offer, secured through

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[1] Kingsley Martin, Harold Laski (New York: The Viking Press, 1953), p. 11.

friends, from McGill University in Montreal and he and his wife sailed for Canada.

In 1916 Laski moved to Harvard University where he taught for four years. During this time his reputation was established, for the most part because his social and political beliefs ran counter to the prevailing Boston attitude which may be described as early Calvin Coolidge. During the famous Boston police strike, in which Governor Coolidge sent the militia into Boston, Laski defended the policemen before a group of police wives and gained for himself the implacable dislike of the Boston Establishment. He was attacked relentlessly in print and even President Elliot, who publicly defended academic freedom, was constrained to let it be known that there were bounds beyond which a teacher went at his own peril. In 1920 Laski, again through the good offices of friends, returned to London and the famous London School of Economics where he remained the rest of his life. He died in 1950.

From 1914 until his death Laski wrote numerous books, pamphlets and articles on the issues of the Twentieth Century. At various stages of his career he embraced varying schools of thought, but his liberalism was fundamental and never challenged. In the last half of his life he was a Marxist and his influence in leftist circles went far beyond that of the usual professor of political science. The force of his philosophy was particularly felt in England and the United States. In the 1930's, the decade of social and economic change in America, he was widely praised or damned, depending on the commentator's social and political philosophy, as one of the most influential thinkers of the era. He was prominently identified with the British Socialist Party and throughout

the years of Fabin prominence he was closely allied with the Webbs, Attlee, Morrison, Bevin, and others of the labor movement. Laski maintained an enduring friendship with Justices Holmes, Frankfurter and Brandeis in America.

There is a considerable body of Laski's commentary and criticism of education. For the most part it is revealed as a social viewpoint, and allows education, within the schema of his own social "pluralism," a significant role in what he hoped would be a new order. Apparently Laski did not believe that an educational system was an adequate dynamic of social and economic change, in the sense that many American educators believe. His educational pronouncements are not a construction of systematic proportions and there is little of the metaphysician about Laski. One has only to consider this statement from An Introduction to Politics to ascertain the flavor of his "here and now" concern:

> An act of Congress or Parliament, that is, presses for acceptance in the legal sphere merely because it is an act of Congress or Parliament. If it seeks acceptance upon other grounds, because, for example, it is wise, or just, the source from which it emanates is, upon this footing, irrelevant. For it is then presenting itself in terms of a theory of value the justification for which cannot be found in the pure realm of law.[1]

That there is logic in his commentary no one would deny, of course, but in the main, Lask's range of interest is too sharply focused on political and economic themes to attempt an educational structure of systematic treatment.

It is true that Laski makes numerous gestures toward the efficacy of educational endeavor in solving the pressing human problem,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

but these are of a secondary nature. In a letter to his American friend Maurice Firuski in August of 1920 he makes the following statement:

> Given fifty years of adult education and I am sure that from what I've seen of the W.E.A., that the people could be schooled to a sense of the responsibilities they have assumed. But I doubt if we have fifty years.[1]

Clearly, he calls for direct action at the political levels and believes that education will both change with the alteration of the socio-economic foundation and justify itself as a conveyor of the justice of that new order.

It is difficult to adduce a pattern of educational thought from such diverse and inferential commentary that one finds in Laski. He is Progressive, in the American sense, in that he links in cause and effect relationship the socio-economic order and the methods of education. He calls for a "unified principle" in education,[2] but poses on educational dichotomy when he comes to the content of education. The matter is further complicated by the fact that Laski spent his career as a teacher, was famous for his work in calling for left-wing social and political action and yet never developed an educational theory wholly consonant with that action.

It remains to do two things: develop as best one can the philosophical matrix of his educational thought, being careful to assume little competancy as a political scientist and economist, where Laski was a master, and to take his educational thought as it is with the sole

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[1] Ibid., p. 48.

[2] Harold Laski, The American Democracy, (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 323.

purpose of marking off avenues which he himself felt to be worthy of comment. To attempt more than this would be unwise.

Comments on Laski's educational thought will be as follows: 1) "The Philosophical Matrix of Laski's Theories of Education," including biographical data pertinent to his development from a precocious youth to a world figure, to his own survey of the historical setting of economic and social deprivation. 2) "Laski, The Teacher," involving material descriptive of Laski's career at the London School of Economics and his estimation of the profession, both as it is and as he views it ideally. 3) "Laski's Perspective on Contemporary Practices in Education." Because Laski was English, we shall necessarily need to assess his comments on the English educational structure and its underlying philosophy. Comment on the American perspective is made necessary by Lask's long association with things American and his extensive survey of American education in The American Democracy. 4) Finally, we shall need to develope "A Critique of Laski's Educational Thought," questioning his overview of education and the role it plays in the present social arrangement; whether, in Laski's judgment, education is a sufficient dynamic of the social and economic changes for which he contended and, if not, where is the locus of such a dynamic.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHICAL MATRIX OF LASKI'S THEORIES OF EDUCATION

From Manchester to Harvard

Harold Laski was born into a liberal family. His father, Nathan Laski, was a prominent member of the Jewish community of Manchester, a cotton shipper of some means and a man described by Kingsley Martin as a Liberal.[1] The term is historically conditioned, of course, since Winston Churchill who was a friend of the elder Laski as well as his son was, at the time, a liberal of the same stripe. In that Edwardian era, described elsewhere with such nostalgia by Herbert Hoover, anyone was a liberal who would admit that God was not his private property. At any rate, the young Laski was reared in a "liberal" atmosphere and he had the additional benefit of being Jewish and of learning early that an accomodation to human relationships in which the fate of one group was bound to the fate of other groups was not only desirable but necessary.

Laski began his schooling under a Miss Holland whom Martin describes as a progressivist teacher who took her charges to the various cultural institutions of the city. Laski also read, at the age

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[1]Martin, Harold Laski, p. 6.

of ten, the Manchester Guardian, and it is reported that he often read aloud its editorials to the other students. On one occasion Miss Holland, whose educational progressivism had not yet reached her politics, objected to the tone of a Guardian editorial and she was told by her precocious student "to give up that rag, the Daily Dispatch, and to take the Guardian."[1] In the face of such an attitude, it is difficult not to assume that Laski was born liberal.

At Oxford Laski joined the Fabian Society, but friends describe him at the time as a liberal as much as a socialist. He collected money for certain workers on strike at the time, but his main interest and activity during the period was work in the suffragette movement. His wife, Frida, had such deep feelings concerning the movement that it would have been difficult for Laski, to remain indifferent.

It was during this period that Laski composed a small work which he titled The Chosen People. It has been described as an adolescent work, but its autobiographical flavor is important in showing the rebellious nature of Laski toward entrenched orthodoxy where reason is available to call it into question.

> After the pages of comparison between the rival virtues of Greek, Jewish, and Christian civilizations, we learn that this young prodigy (Laski's Jewish hero) who has dedicated his life to evolving a new philosophy of universalism which would supersede and embrace all former faiths, has met a woman older, purer, more spiritual than himself, who, after a period of ennobling friendship, finally admits her undying love for him.[2]

The same work revealed Laski's disbelief in the Zionist movement. His

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.

[2] Martin, Harold Laski, p. 17.

argument was simply that a Jewish nation depends on the unity of a Jewish religion which cannot be re-created.[1]

In June of 1914 Laski finished his career at Oxford and began a summer's work on the Daily Herald. The Herald has been described as the nearest thing to a syndicalist paper ever produced in England. At the time it reported all the trade union activities and had as its remedy for the world's ills the growth of the trade union movement. During July and August some of its leading stories were written by young Laski.[2] The question of Irish independence was then at its most explosive stage and Laski did not fail to fish in those troubled waters, castigating the King, among others, for alleged partiality in dealing with some Irish issue of the moment. By late July the impending war dominated the thinking of everyone and the Herald advocated a general strike as the most propitious means of stopping the warmakers. The warmakers were not stopped and the Herald wisely referred to the conflict that was to take an entire generation of young Europeans as "a sordid, commercial business."[3]

While at McGill, Laski performed his first and only ghost writing job. The incident probably adds nothing to an explanation of Laski's developing social outlook, since added income to a starvation salary paid by McGill seems to have been the prime motive. At any rate, Laski was asked to edit the papers of Joseph Fels of the Philadelphia soap family. Joseph Fels lived in London and looked after the European

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[1] Ibid., p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 19.

[3] Ibid.

end of the business. Oddly, he had a soft spot in his heart for social reform and had at one time financed the return home of delegates to a Bolshevik conference in London. At his death his widow wished to publish his papers and Laski was induced to do the job.

During the four years at Harvard, 1916 to 1920, Laski is described by Martin as still liberal in the American sense.

> He was for the underdog, for trade unions and collective bargaining, mildly socialist in a fashion that lay between a liberal pluralism tinged with Fabian ideas and the Guild socialism then fashionable among progressive intellectuals in Britain.[1]

At the end of his American stay, he had moved considerably to the left on the political spectrum.

Laski's part in the Boston police strike had been a minor one and in a more sane era his sympathetic speech before the police wives might have passed unnoticed. However, the vituperative and irrational attacks made on him, including a shameful one by the Harvard Lampoon, had the effect of compelling Laski to a deeper study of the relationship between property and power. Since the change in his outlook was somewhat decisive, it seems well to quote Martin at length.

> The rulers of Boston proved when they were challenged to be a class which acted together, not a collection of important individuals of varying political and social sympathies and opinions. They held power because individually they owned property, and any threat to property united them. In this respect Boston was a microcosm of the world; the threads ran from business to politics, to the churches and schools, to the government of the state and to the great university, which would have liked to think itself above all political battles. Trade-union wages and academic freedom were apparently separate,

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[1] Ibid., p. 21.

> unconnected questions, but either of them might suddenly expose the hidden class struggle. From this discovery it was not a long step in logic for Harold to argue that if labor as a whole was to improve its conditions it must engage in a united and organized struggle with this fundamentally united ruling class. In short, Harold discovered at first hand the weakness of the liberal philosophy in which he had been brought up and took a long step towards a predominantly Marxist view, the examination and elaboration of which was to be the principal substance of his future thinking.[1]

The foregoing is an attempt at a brief chronology of development of a socio-economic position. It is not intended to say that here Laski arrived and here Laski stayed. It is intended to bring one to a consideration of what Laski himself had to say concerning the condition of man and his own observations concerning a remedy which both reason and the exigencies of a savage age demanded.

The Business Man and Civilization

If indeed Max Weber and other socio-economic writers have made a connection between the religious orientation of the Reformation and developing capitalism,[2] no such connection is attempted by Harold Laski. Laski simply contends that the schism created in the religious world of the Reformation had a sectarian force and ultimately produced room for skepticism in all matters, even religious ones. Out of this skepticism there grew the seeds of liberalism.

Back of the rise of liberalism was the fact of the rise of national states and a growing secularism that tended either to court

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[1] Ibid., p. 37.

[2] Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

the sanctions of religion or disclaim the right of religion to interfere with mundane affairs. The capitalist was born and, in pursuing his way, sought two things: to transform society and to capture the state.[1] His transformation of society served the purpose of adapting habits and customs to an economic situation suited to his purposes and his capture of the state gave him coercive power to adapt the state to his own ends. He accomplished both ends with a success that was practically total and with the power increases of the Industrial Revolution and the technology of the Twentieth Century he could and did gain power of such proportions that at best he was indifferent to human need.

The overthrow of much of what stood opposed to liberal attitudes began in the scientific outlook of Bacon, Descartes and others. The Reformation created a milieu in which the authoritarian Church was questioned and dogma was no longer accepted as the final answer to the problems of life. The opening of new continents and the possibility of a "new life," and increased material wealth shook the religious, intellectual, and economic torpor that had held sway for so long. Man began to be interested in "this" world and to care less about the promises of the world to come.

Important though all that preceded was, liberalism in that economic sense bearing upon the present age, began during the period of the French Revolution. The industrial revolution that followed by two or three decades served to emphasize the need for economic reform by exhibiting in its sweatshops, slums, child labor and incredible disparate

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[1]Harold Laski, The Rise of Liberalism, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), p. 17.

economic well-being one of the most calloused attitudes toward human welfare ever recorded.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century England was primarily an agricultural country, with manufacturing restricted in the main to the handloom weaver in his cottage. But the "opportunities" for large-scale production led to the building of factories and an urban movement somewhat like that of the United States in the 1940's and 1950's. The population of Manchester rose from forty-one thousand in 1774 to one hundred seventy thousand in 1831. In addition, there was a population growth that doubled by 1850 the 1800 figure. Much of the labor was by children who worked in mines and factories from an age as low as five! It was regarded as a staggering reform when in 1802 it was made illegal to employ pauper children more than twelve hours a day. The act did not affect, of course, those children who were sold into virtual slavery by poverty-ridden parents. In Manchester fifty-seven percent of the children of the poor died before the age of five; twenty percent of the children of the upper classes died before the age of five.[1] The accounts of the inhuman treatment of helpless children during the latter part of the Eighteenth and early decades of the Nineteenth centuries makes for some of the most painful reading in the history of man. One must quote Laski at length to gain both the flavor of the sordidness of the era and the sarcastic calmness with which he tells it.

> In a century and a half the social attitude to the poor and to the unemployed turned from one in which they were recognized

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[1] British Prose and Poetry, ed., Lieder, Lovett & Root, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), p. 4.

> to have a claim upon the resources of the community to one in which their position was overwhelmingly regarded as due to some perversity which caused them to prefer charity and laziness to thrift and work. Hence, with but rare exceptions, the literature is mainly a mass of pamphlets directed to the discovery of how they can be forcibly disciplined to effort. 'The reason why so many pretend to want work,' wrote Daniel Defoe, 'is that they can live so well with the pretense of wanting to work, they would be made to leave it and work in earnest.'
> . . . one writer in the Gentlemen's Magazine speaks of the poor in 1731 as 'rogues too lazy to work, squandering one's charity in drink.' Dean Tucker, in 1751, asked 'whether the manufacturing poor in any country are so debauched and immoral as in England? Is there not therefore greater danger that the English should corrupt the foreigners than be corrupted by them?'
> . . . An anonymous writer, in 1767, criticises indignantly the foolish weakness which forbids the imposition of hard labour upon children; and he condemns with vigour any effort to teach them to read and write since it makes them less ready for heavy toil. . .
> . . . The incredible Richard Wakefield cannot see why proposals to keep children at work 'for at least twelve hours a day' are not regarded by the parents as aggreeable and entertaining.[1]

The thinkers of that era forward, from Thackeray to Sinclair Lewis, drew pictures of a grim life for the masses of mankind and at the same time called for humanitarianism and the application of rational thought. And for the first time in history the masses, no longer held in bondage by the soporific of religious dogma, began to consider their own need. Upon some grand scale of history, the ensuing changes came about with great speed. But it was still possible for Harold Laski to pose the question in 1930: "Can Business be Civilized?" His answer may, of course, be anticipated.

Prior to the business man, says Laski, if we wanted to know the mind of, say, Germany, we should be forced to consider Luther, just as we should be forced to consider the mind of Voltaire if we were to know

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[1]Harold Laski, The Dilemma of our Times, edited by R. T. Clark, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952), p. 131.

the society following 1715 that marched on to its own self-destruction. Upon such men we built our pre-Nineteenth Century character and institutions. But then came the business man to set standards and their institutions, to determine the structure of thought processes and to reinforce the acquisition of such power with the concomitant promise of his beneficence. He is the true king of the earth, known, says Laski, as few statesmen are.

> Men like Mr. Ford . . . live upon the same exalted Eminence that the Middle Ages reserved for their saints. There is no sin that may not be forgiven, no honor they may not receive. They are patrons of churches, founders of universities, creators of new aristocracy.
> . . . Their appearance becomes almost a sermon, and their speeches take on the solemn form of a religious liturgy, a gospel according to smiles that, in the end, they came to believe themselves.[1]

The most tragic element in the whole farce was, according to Laski, that society believed itself to be a partner in the enterprise. He likens the business man's performance to a minuet, ". . . with society as an obedient and enraptured partner."[2]

The belief that could produce such a willing partnership was borrowed from the context of a hundred philosophies from the Stoics, to Moses to Jesus to Adam Smith. Its commandment was simple, unassailable and, for Laski, fallacious: "the protection of the rights of the business man was the guarantee of the protection of the rights of the community." When the commandment was challenged, and it often was, press and state joined as inquisitors to suppress the heretic and his

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[1]Harold Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1930), pp. 265-266.

[2]Ibid., p. 266.

blasphemous questioning.

> When Belgian business men transform the Congo into a nightmare of unspeakable horror, that is the profit-making motive. When a great steel company sends a gatling gun mounted upon an armored train through a Colorado village at night, that is the profit-making motive. When business men persuade the president of the Board of Education to abandon an attempt to give children education beyond the age of fourteen, that is the profit-making motive. When the Ohio gang uses the public authority of the United States corruptly to line its own pockets, that, again, is the profit-making motive.[1]

The fallacy of the business man's arrangement lay in the fact that there was a mistaking of means for ends. Wealth is measured not by the personal quality of its owner, but by accident and the ability of wealth to perpetuate itself apart from any moral principle. Involved in the fallacy is the belief, amply illustrated by some of the foregoing statements, that men in wretched conditions are agreeable to those conditions and might well change them by an exercise of will which is taken to be equitably distributed among all persons. Laski's answer is "that we have learned from experience of social legislations that there are certain minimum conditions of wages, hours of labor, education in the absence of which men cease to be men."[2]

For Laski, the answer to the question of the business man's susceptability to "civilization" lies in the socio-economic arrangement where the business man is a functionary in utilitarian effort and not the master of men and their livelihood.

> Those who labor in business, that is to say, must regard themselves not as merely concerned with personal gain, but

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[1] Ibid., pp. 268-269.

[2] Ibid., pp. 270-271.

> as servants of a function the purpose of which is the release of society from the conflict with nature . . .
> To serve a function is to admit that the property one receives, the orders one issues, are all of them explicable in terms of reason.[1]

The arrangement must, of course, be in terms of governmental intervention because the government is answerable to the will of those whom it governs. The business man may conduct his business without regard for the common good. He has one imperative: make a profit.

With cool logic, and regardless of one's agreement or disagreement with Laski's assessment of western economics in the mid-Hoover era, he turns the argument from an estimation of the harm done society at large by the business man's state of civilization to an assessment of the harm the system does to the business man himself: The business man is both cause and effect of the institutions he has created. He is a slave of the routine he has created and not the least of the deleterious results is ignorance.

> He is grossly ignorant of our intellectual heritage; he rarely reads at all, and, if he does, it is rather to drug himself than to enlarge his mind. For the most part, he is incapable of conversation about principles. His talk consists of gossip about his business, scandal about his neighbors, his scores at bridge or golf, and the exchange of queer facts he amasses as information to none of which can he attach a scheme of values. As he conducts his life, most of the essence of civilized existence escapes him.[2]

Laski says that his "faltering body of half-truths would disgrace a first year student of economics in the correspondence class of a business college."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 274.

[2] Ibid., p. 278.

[3] Ibid.

Governmental intervention in this situation would return property to the performance of creative work. Business could and should be organized as a profession, as opposed to mere money making as the supreme criterion of its worth. We have learned from the professions to require certain standards of achievement and performance and to pass laws insuring the enforcement of these standards. The professions are compelled by the terms of their practice to consider service first and profit afterwards. Laski does not mean to allow that no doctor or lawyer, not to speak of engineers, may not become rich. But their wealth, when gained, is a by-product of their service.

This is naive, of course, and Laski recognizes the fact when he says that even where professional standards civilize business, we cannot destroy slackness or selfishness by the stroke of a pen. This gesture is short lived, though, when the little Manchester Jew returns to the high seat of his "objectivity," refusing any longer to be seduced if only briefly by instutionalized qualification of rational assessment. He insists that

> The visitor to Newport or Monte Carlo, to Palm Beach or Canne, the observer who scrutinizes the social columns of a London newspaper, the critic who watches the preposterous competition between those who collect rare books and pictures--these would, I think, find it difficult not to conclude that this world is, in fact, the lunatic asylum of the planets.[1]

The whole mess will be amenable to its own salvation only if it is willing to consider that

> It is not an insignificant thing that every thinker of the modern time to whom the prophetic gift has been vouchasafed,

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[1] Ibid., p. 280.

> Emerson and Carlyle, Thoreau and Ruskin, Marx and Tolstoy, has been driven by his inner vision to demand a transvaluation of our values if the gift of civilization is to be preserved.[1]

In spite of the fact that the business man "cannot be civilized" except on those terms which seem most agreeable to Laski and his logic, Laski does not intend at this juncture to deny the right of private property!

> I am not arguing that there is anything inherently unjust in the idea of private property, nor do I deny that it can be so held as creatively to express personality and continuously to enrich it. But if it is to be so held, it must be derived from personal effort so organized as to add to the common welfare.[2]

This further capitalist gesture is short lived also.

Again and again Laski returns to the business man, his philosophy, the implications of which he is ignorant, and the effect that corporate capitalism has on society in the creation of its values and institutions. Though he was not consistant, Laski believed, with Marx and others, that the social order was a product of its economic arrangement. He believed, as have many intellectuals in all times, that the dominant group not only shapes the environmental order but that it has never nor will ever agree to modifications, no matter how enlightened or humane, that threaten its dominance.

In England, such dominance was embedded in the more or less rigid class structure, the apex of which was monarchy and hereditary privilege. In America, according to Laski, capitalist dominance came about as a result of numerous factors, historically revealed in two antagonistic patterns stemming from the period of the Confederation.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 293.

[2] Ibid., p. 291.

[3] Laski, The American Democracy, p. 433.

> The one begins with Jefferson and John Taylor and reaches out, through Andrew Jackson, to Lincoln, thence to William Jennings Bryan and to the elder LaFollette, and from them to Franklin Roosevelt and Henry Wallace . . .
> The first is the emphasis upon the rights of personality as superior to the rights of property . . .
> The other pattern begins with John Adams and Alexander Hamilton. It passes through the tradition imposed by Marshall upon the Supreme Court to the men who fought Andrew Jackson over the Bank and financial centralization, thence to the New York merchants who sought to 'appeasement' of the Southern slave owners on the eve of the Civil War . . .
> After Appomattox it is shaped into a theory of the State by Francis Lieber and his disciples, through whom the State power is made a principle of action both separated from and over the will of the people . . .
> It acquires the status of something like 'natural law.'[1]

From Grant, onward to the election of Franklin Roosevelt, the dominance of the business man on the American scene was something approaching absolute. In this period fortunes going even beyond the point of vulgarity were piled up, the masses became if not poorer in fact, one of the embarrassingly weak points in socialist argument, at least poorer in comparison to what was avilable, and the rich sanctified their rapaciousness by philanthropy. That it took a good deal of ignorance on the part of the public to accept this situation and to see it in honorific terms is, of course, the minor theme running through the whole of Laski's argument.

The answer to the culmination of these historical forces was, for Harold Laski, Democratic socialism. By 1930 it was socialism in the British Fabian fashion; in later years it was to move further to the left. But in all, it was an answer in which "men are recognized to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 434-435.

possess an equal claim upon the common stock of welfare."[1] Any alternative proposal would carry with it the seeds of its own downfall. "No society can hope to be democratic that is divided into the two nations of rich and poor."[2]

The justification for such an answer is, for Laski, both the lessons of history and impassionate reason. "Its (the State's) claim to allegiance must obviously be built upon its power to make the response to social demand maximal in character."[3] Again, in writing of his great and good friend, Justice Holmes, Laski, according to Martin,[4] reveals a facet of his reason and its justification.

> . . . he alone sought in all his work to see law in the context of a dynamic society. He was a realist . . . because he saw, like the soldier he had been, that those who controlled the state power usually employed its authority to legislate in their own interest . . . what remains remarkable is that, conservative as he was upon almost all matters of social constitution, he remained the passionate advocate of the right to experiment.[5]

The real problem of a man with his foot in two worlds, one which he hopes to help overcome with a reasonable blending of the "best" of both, is best expressed by Laski when he quotes from Heine's Lutetia.

> . . . two voices that are raised in my breast in its (socialism) favour, two voices which will not be silenced and are perhaps after all only devilish incitements, but

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[1]Harold J. Laski, The Danger of Being a Gentlemen (New York: The Viking Press, 1940), p. 234.

[2]Ibid., p. 235.

[3]Harold J. Laski, An Introduction to Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.; New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1962), p. 23.

[4]Martin, Harold Laski, p. 212.

[5]Laski, The American Democracy, pp. 442-443.

> however that may be, they dominate me and no power nor imagination can hold them in check. For the first of these voices is logic . . .
> I am ensnared by a terrible syllogism, and, if I cannot controvert the premise 'that all men have the right to eat' I am forced to surrender to all its consequences . . .
> The second of these two tyrant voices . . . is that of hatred, of the hatred which I have for the party whose most terrible antagonist is Communism, the party which for this reason is our common foe. I mean the party of those professed representatives of nationalism . . . those sham patriots whose love for the Fatherland is only a foolish prejudice against foreigners and neighboring countries. I find comfort in the conviction that Communism which will find them its first enemies in the way, will give them the coup de grace.[1]

This, in brief, is a part of what Harold Laski taught in his classes and through his books for thirty years. It touches the mainstream of his social, political and economic vision. Whether he taught it with a consciously defined philosophy of education or simply drew unconsciously on the vast reserves of his undoubted genius is a matter to be seen. What seems already evident is the reason for his friendship with the great and near great, his awe-inspiring fund of knowledge, his influence on events of his lifetime, and his popularity as a teacher at London.

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[1]Harold Laski, Faith, Reason, and Civilization (New York: The Viking Press, 1944), pp. 185-186.

CHAPTER III

LASKI THE TEACHER

Laski in the Classroom

It was in a burst of pessimism or, perhaps, if one wishes, impartial analysis, that Laski wrote in 1940[1] of a sincere conviction concerning two things: no matter how one strives, he achieves very little, and the defeats he suffers in making his small achievements call into question the worth of the whole undertaking. More significant than these pronouncements is a parallel statement concerning the particular awareness of the teacher of the limited force of education in effecting changes that seem to him to be of significance. In a seemingly unmarxist statement that reminds one of Carlyle, Laski "sees the academic generations pass with such stark swiftness, (and one) is not tempted easily to exaggerate the influence of any save the outstanding personalities of history."[2]

Whether upon some larger scale Laski was correct in his judgment, or whether it was some dark mood on the eve of the second World War and the inevitable sense of mortality of the middle years, Laski was wrong concerning his place in the history of politics,

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[1]Martin, Harold Laski, p. 249.

[2]Ibid., p. 249.

economics and education, if the judgment of his friends and students at London have some validity in the perspective of a few years. When he died, his old students from every socialist stronghold in the world called to mind his greatness as a teacher and lamented his passing. It is the contention of Martin that Laski's influence at the London School of Economics will prove as great as that of Jowett at Balliol.[1] The Clare Market Review, the student publication of the School of Economics, published a memorial issue in 1950 in which there were tributes to Laski's greatness as a teacher. The common denominator of these tributes was that Laski had a genius for friendship with his students.

Martin emphasizes the Laski-student relationship by saying that until the later years in which he was sapped by illness and overwork, he genuinely loved to see the scores of students who came knocking at his office door each week.[2] The quality, while not unique, was and is in sufficiently small supply on a large campus as to reveal in Laski a generous attitude toward those who were, at least at the time, far below him in intellectual attainment. It is all the more generous when one remembers that he was famous almost from the moment he accepted the London chair, a man with international connections of the highest level and one of the most fascinating lecturers in the English speaking world. He was a participant in the whole gamut of student problems, from academic to emotional. Among the examples which Martin gives in his chapter on "The Influence of Harold Laski" is the following:

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[1] Ibid., p. 249.

[2] Ibid., p. 250.

> Take, for example, the case of the student who writes to say that she first met Harold when she took the chair for him at a Labour League of Youth meeting; he talked for two hours, left his audience spellbound, and afterwards wrote asking her to come to see him. He urged her to go to the London School, and when he learned that she hadn't even matriculated and had to earn her own living he gave her precise instructions about how to get through the qualifying examinations, made all the financial arrangements for her first classes . . .[1]

It is in the context of these student relationships that Laski reveals a part of his philosophy of education. He is quoted by Martin as saying "Don't bother to go to tutorials as the regulations suggest, Come see me . . . and I'll suggest other people you can see; but I believe in the lonely scholar . . ."[2]

Martin has suggested that Laski was not without the usual amount of vanity, especially with a group that was responding warmly to his remarks, but he had an irreverence that lent itself to humility and he was capable of deflating pomposity with devasting wit. Students responded to this youthful characterism with its analytic penetration of pretentiousness. (In a letter to Justice Holmes dated February 19, 1933, Laski reported that he had dined with a minister in the House of Commons. The burden of the conversation concerned England's war debt, a sum in excess of 11 billions of dollars.

> I had never quite realized before the importance of imagination. He had a debt-plan and I think he sent for me in the hope that I would give him unctuous confirmation. I had to say (1) there really is an American point of view which you had better try to understand (2) you must not think, even to yourself, that

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[1] Ibid., p. 250.

[2] Ibid., p. 251.

> Great Britain has been called by God to act as his instrument . . .[1]

Laski concluded his report of the incident by saying that the Minister received his comments with the force of novelty and that the man was quite unable even dimly to realize that there was an American point of view.) It was a quality much appreciated by the students of London, and his ability to summon the appropriate anecdote for the moment in part defines his popularity as a teacher.

Laski began each school year by announcing that he was a socialist, but indicated that during the course of the year he would provide some antidote to his poison. This blend of candor and humor did not keep him from arguing political and social theory with students on an "equal" basis. He made no pretense of impartiality and the student who came to challenge him on the issues found all the forces at Laski's command marshalled against him.

> He thought it (impartiality) an impossible ideal which 'meant either the suppression of the teacher's personality or more often that he had suppressed the main premises of his thinking and equated his results with universal truth.' His own practice was to tell his students exactly what he thought and at the same time 'make them see all the difficulties inherent in his position'.[2]

Laski's ability and willingness to "give" himself to the intellectual enlargement of his students is also illustrated by Martin in his reference to the British Institute of Adult Education.[3] Laski,

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[1] Holmes-Laski Letters, ed., Mark DeWolfe Howe, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 1432.

[2] Martin, Harold Laski, p. 252.

[3] Ibid., p. 255.

Lord Haldane and a few others had established the Institute in 1921. Laski held several official positions with the Institute, but his contribution was most richly displayed in his journeyings to outlying places for meetings and weekend schools after a demanding week of regular work at the School of Economics. Martin contends that Laski's immense popularity with the working classes was due to his treatment of them as equals during these lectures and discussions. ". . . he enabled them to discover within themselves they knew much more than they were aware they knew, while they discovered in him an intellectual who was nevertheless one of themselves . . ."[1]

When the war began in 1939, the London School of Economics was moved to Cambridge and remained there until the end of hostilities. Though the war, as one might imagine, put a great strain on the normal habits and activities of academic life, Laski, having found an office near an apothecary's shop on King's Parade, continued his work with his students. In this period of war-restricted activity, Laski took on the burden of added duties in administrative work, and he has been described by Martin as the most influential and dominating figure at the school, with the exception of the director, Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders.[2]

In spite of being the Labour Party's most radical intellectual and having a unique opportunity to influence student politics in a socialist stronghold, Laski stayed, perhaps uncharacteristically, clear of "internecine squabbles." Martin[3] says that he knows that Laski gave

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[1] Ibid., p. 256.

[2] Ibid., p. 125.

[3] Ibid., p. 126.

some advice to the labor party group of students who formed a separate student organization in reaction to the Communist party group, advising them not to run away from the challenge by forming a splinter group but to stay in the main Socialist Society. But, in the main, he stressed the fact that they would have to make their own decisions and mistakes. Martin says that

> On one occasion, before the Nazi attack on the U.S.S.R. had brought a change in the C. P. line, Harold did go so far as to make an open onslaught on C. P. policy in a lecture, partly, I believe, to offset the hold which the C. P., whose defeatist position at this time was wholly repugnant to him, had upon many students.[1]

The classroom Laski is a tale better told perhaps by any student who had the opportunity of seeing and hearing him and of sharing some intimate moment of academic guidance and counseling than by anyone who must share only the formalities of his logic and the testimony of others. But, then, it may be argued that even so the picture of a man at work is not complete until one has looked at him at his task and gained the benefit of his attitude toward himself and his vocational pursuit. Laski was both honest and sensitive, and he had a great deal to say about teachers and teaching and the relationship of many of them to his antagonist, the business man. And he said it unequivocally and with high good humor.

Laski as he Looked at the Teacher

It was the contention of Harold Laski that civilizations develop their legends for the purpose of hiding from themselves the

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[1]Ibid.

the truth of their defects. The philosophical framework of these legends is one of contrasts. Those civilizations characterized by their material poverty tend to mythologize concerning the contemplative aspects of life. A materially rich civilization, such as our own in the western world, and particularly American, has many myths to stand over against its bewildering array of material wealth. Chiefest among these, says Laski, is the legend of useless Knowledge.[1] This legend is surrounded with temples standing architecturally somewhere between a factory and a cathedral. Its books are counted by the square mile and its teachers are numbered in the thousands. It is the habitation of the seeker of eternal truths and we ourselves would join them in their quest if only we could spare the time from Wall Street. But alas, we are but the acolytes and the priesthood of the legend is a fulltime job.

> But it is deep comfort, in a grimly acquisitive society, to know that the priests move at their task. They are--it is the convention of their profession--socially awkward, pathetically unpractical, inevitably underpaid. Secretly too, we may feel that, at bottom, they are not unakin to the court jesters of an earlier time, men paid to banish the wordly cares which pain by their obtrusiveness.[2]

Naturally, such childish naievete must not be allowed to roam outside the bounds of common sense, no matter how valuable the truth may be. So, we sorrowfully abide our inability to join the fraternity and content ourselves with two things: endowment and control.[3]

The foregoing is an indication of one of the most humorous opinions ever delivered on the subject of teachers and teaching. It

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[1]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 121.

[2]Ibid., p. 122.

[3]Ibid.

is an extraordinary mixture of truth and hyberbole, detachment and passionate involvement. It represents a kind of humorous analysis of a situation in which a sensitive soul has long suffered from its absurdities, but who, nevertheless, retains sanity and balance by his ability to laugh. It is pure Laski.

What kind of a teacher does Laski want for the universities? He wants the kind of whom it may be said that the quality of a university is, at bottom, in direct proportion to the quality of the teacher. Laski derides the notions often held that a university consists of buildings, numbers and books. The great teacher is "one of the rarest of human beings,"[1] and it is this great teacher who determines whether the university shall be a true center of education and fulfill the true purpose of its pretentions, or whether it shall constitute a sham. When a university secures the services of a great teacher, it has occasion only for humble gratitude, and should, as its contribution to his work forget that his views may possibly be dangerous and that he is often lacking in the finer social graces.[2] It should keep him at all costs and make only the most necessary demands upon his valuable time.

Laski admits that most university teachers are, like members of other professions, mediocrities striving to be sublime. But he adds that it is no small part of the university's business to maximize their sublimity. And to do this the essentials must be met: teachers must be rewarded in a way that gives them the basic comforts of life. To do

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[1] Ibid., p. 109.

[2] Ibid., p. 110.

less than this is to contribute to a situation in which there is a proliferation of hack-work texts and a dissipation of energy. He slyly indicates that underpaid teachers also show an inordinate interest in summer work!

There must be, too, what Laski calls "generous categories of qualifications and promotion."[1] Where the degree alone is considered as a criterion, routine becomes a sorry substitute for insight and longevity for ability. A doctor of philosophy may have an imposing store of minutiae, but this is poor proof of wisdom. Teaching always suffers when it is tied to a system that exalts card indexes, reports, neatly-rounded curricula and endless committee assignments. These things may be a boon to the organizational executive, but they are soul destroying to a good teacher.

> For the effective teacher, almost always, wants nothing so much as to be left alone; and the university administrator likes nothing so much as the making of endless rules and regulations and schemes which entrap both teacher and student into service of habit, which irritate and inhibit this emergence of intellectual freedom.[2]

Laski draws the clearest distinction between the teacher and the educational administrator, and it becomes abundantly clear that his sympathies and his professional aspirations lie with the teacher. Perhaps this explains his criticism of teachers; he apparently feels that there is hope for the teacher by the exercise of his own powers. He has little if any hope for educational administration short of a redefinition of the entire social and political order and a change in its application.

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[1] Ibid., p. 111.

[2] Ibid., p. 112.

The teacher, says Laski, has three obligations: there must be continuous research, he must keep a fresh mind and he must know his students as individuals.[1] Research, like most other intellectual activities, is subject to abuse. Teachers bend to the will of the "system" and make of research an ugly and useless thing--coming from and contributing to the myth--for personal advancement and aggrandizement. Laski is emphatic in calling for research that reexamines the principles of a subject so that the subject may be expanded by the resolution of its problem. Research (and publication) of platitudes defeats its own purpose. No scholar should publish unless he has something to say of significance, or at the very least, interest!

A second obligation involves freshness of mind. No teacher can go on year after year regurgitating the same material without undue loss to himself and to his students. He ought to be given and to take advantage of the sabbatical. He ought to be given the time to use for travel if he can afford it; certainly, he should study and meditate on the involvement of himself in the field of his interest. Without the means of this freshening process, he goes stale and lacks what William James called the power to develop a second intellectual wind.[2]

As a third obligation, there is the imperative for personal acquaintance with his students. Laski says that the teacher must count his students as his friends, though there is often an attitude that looks upon the student as an enemy to be overcome. The teacher cannot

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 114.

be a friend to his students if he feels that his obligation ends when he has left the dais. The casual atmosphere of the lecture room may reveal much of the teacher to the astute student, but it reveals little of the student to the teacher. This is a perversion of the teaching process as Laski sees it. It is much more important for the teacher to know the student, his ambitions, his thoughts, his conflicts, than it is for the student to know the teacher. Laski calls for the teacher's home to be an annex of the class room, thus preventing a compartmentalization of his life into academic areas some of which the student may not enter. There is no suggestion that the teacher's home shall become a public house, of course. Laski is calling, here, for a commitment of interest in the life of the student.

That teachers often fail to measure up to standards of good teaching is explicable by even the most cursory examination of the social medium in which he works. ". . . a new spirit of education is not a factor independent of the material environment,"[1] says Laski. And again ". . . there is a vested interest in the perpetuation of ignorance which is endemic in our civilization."[2] The attainment of good teaching and the training of good teachers is directly related to society's willingness to attack with rational clarity the vested interest of the "practical" man. And it is a part of Laski's unvarying theme that the "practical" man will defend himself.

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[1]Harold Laski, Reflections on the Revolution of our Time, (New York: The Viking Press, 1943), p. 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

What is the prevailing attitude of the "practical" man toward the professor? It is, says Laski, one that gives lip service to the teacher by praising the esoteric nature of his investigations, insofar as they are designed to remain esoteric and not to intrude into the realities of the market-place. The practical man sees the teacher as dealing only with "theories."

> For he is then like a valuable tapestry . . . in a drawing room. Like Kant to the citizens of Konigsberg, his habits will become traditions to be carefully preserved. . . . Practical men who know nothing of James the psychologist have infinite tales of the mediums who deceived him.[1]

In short, the teacher is an ornament of civilization. After all, Wilson failed at Versailles because he was an academician!

But in the midst of these impracticalities, the professor had some role to play in the scheme of things. The wedding of science to industry forced the business man to make some grudging gesture toward the lecture room and the laboratory. He needed experts to help him unravel the growing complexities of the market place. And

> As the problems accumulated with the evolution of an electorate which passed from doubts of the Divine Right of Kings to doubt of the Divine Right of business men, he found that he needed the academic mind in problems of national frontiers . . banking and currency . . . (etc.)[2]

In this increasing acquaintance with the professor, the business man found that he--the professor--was convinced that he had some offering to make in the shaping of public policy.

> When, as the apotheosis of the academic mind, he met the professor at his Rotary Club, the practical man must have

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[1]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 126.

[2]Ibid., p. 129.

> felt that his monopoly of common sense was threatened at its strategic center.[1]

As the business man incorporated the professor into the affairs of his private money machine, he did so at the expense of the scholar's intellectual virtue. While many purists remain, and doubtlessly will continue to remain, the seduction had the effect of turning out, of all things, the "practical" professor. This practitioner of the teaching art is characterized by two things: either he will be a writer of text books or an expert in his subject. If his text book is adopted, he will rank in the income tax returns as a successful business man; if he succeeds as an expert, he will be able to prove incontrovertably the facts of the business man's bias.

For Laski, all of this has a recidivistic effect on the teacher and is both cause and effect, producing in the long run a tiresom mediocrity that better men are at pains to overcome. In speaking of the stultifying effect on teachers that much of our "anti-intellectual" social system produces, Laski draws two portraits: one is the pontifical professor. He settles upon the canons of orthodoxy early and it is worth the student's academic life to call them into question. These orthodoxies are never changed, never revised and constitute a system of unvarying categories.

> It may be laid down with some conviction that the pontifical professor is mentally dead. Some accident or other, a trick of eloquence, a power of dubious simplivication, a youthful promise which colleagues still pray may be fulfilled, has prevented his burial. His mind has intellectual sclerosis, and the harder its outer shell, the greater the degree of his pontificality.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 130.

[2] Ibid., p. 144.

The second is the political professor. He is the organizational man of the faculty. He loves card indexes, committees, and the incredible minutiae that constitute the university's unfailing gesture toward the democratic process. Laski says that he is a melliflous speaker, stands well with the trustees, but stands apart from any possible controversy, and loves the intrigues that better men abhor.

> He has real genius in appointing his students to suitable posts, and his colleagues must take care not to offend him. He is methodical, quick to take points, full of zeal for organization. He is comforted by increased endowments and bigger buildings. He does not like dangerous academic minds, since these prevent the flow of manna from the Heaven of the practical man.[1]

Laski's answer to the problem of such men and the situations in which they come into being is compatible with his own negative bias concerning the business man: get the business man out of education. If this is accomplished, the academic mind will play a great role in the future of civilization. It will perform the task which cries for solution, "the cutting of fundamental principle from the raw material."[2] It will do this by searching for iunpredictable results and, if it has the courage of its convictions, it will announce its insights, no matter how unwelcome they may be. But this will come about only when control--if not endowment--is abandoned by the business man.

> What, then, should be the relation of the practical man to the academic mind? The answer is that the relation should be as distant as is compatible with academic efficience.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 146.

[2] Ibid., p. 147.

[3] Ibid., p. 148.

In attitude, Laski managed over the years to achieve some distance between himself and the businessman. But he would have been the first, perhaps, to admit that most teachers accommodated themselves, not unwillingly, to the business man's educational scheme. He would have maintained, however, that the accommodation perpetuated the legend of useless knowledge.

The reasons for Laski's pessimism concerning the ability of a teacher to achieve a marked influence on the affairs of social arrangement, his own career standing somewhat as a contradiction, lie in the broader perspective of the inequalities of capitalist dominance and not in the "conventions" of teachers. For a working socialist, the economics of the state are not derived from some more fundamental category of the human situation; economics determine the situation. If the teacher feels an overwhelming sense of futility and frustration, it is not because of some craven quality inherent in his nature, it is because he is the victim of forces he purports to understand but cannot stay. Like Herodotus, he might say

> Of all the sorrows which afflict mankind, the bitterest that one should have is this: consciousness of much but control over nothing.[1]

Contemporary practices in education in England and the United States reflects in some measure the broader perspective.

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[1]Herodotus, The History, Box IX 16.

CHAPTER IV

LASKI'S PERSPECTIVE ON CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND

The English Perspective

It is not the business of a university to turn out students who are fountains of knowledge or to make them expert in whatever work they may choose to do in life. It is the business of the university to show the student how the facts, insofar as they are taken to be facts, can be synthexized into a semblance of truth, and related to the structure of the universe. An educational process which adheres to such a method produces a skeptical attitude which Laski takes to be the supreme achievement of the mind. A student fortunate enough to undergo such a program is forced to fight his way through tradition and dogma ". . . which are indifferent to any particular convictions and interest in the principle by which convictions can be justifiably held,"[1] but he becomes receptive to novelty and is capable of that wisdom standing over against a plentiude of "facts," idiot savant!

Laski's aim for the student is that he shall learn to think in a way that connects, with meaning, the various branches of learning.

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[1]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 91.

All of the various fields are rooted in the structure of the universe and it is the student's job to be concerned with the connective tissue of relational thought. In this connection, Laski strikes out at the specialist and the "practical" man. Every subject is related to every other.

> Their juxtaposition corrects and balances what might otherwise possess false perspective . . . the student learns that knowledge is, after all, a seemless web . . .[1]

When learning proceeds in any other manner, it produces the specialist, one whose mind is contracted because he fails to think beyond his own subject or, the practical man, one who proceeds upon assumptions that he has never tested. He has, says Laski, "habit without philosophy."[2]

The university shall in this process arrange the course of study in such a way that the student can learn the art of thought and make use of the implied universals, extracting truth from the minutiae that may otherwise lend themselves to error. If the teaching technique is narrow and rigid, the result is either the specialist or the practical man. Neither is education, says Laski. The university, but not the student, shall be indifferent to the claims of ultimate validity of this belief or that, but it shall seek to confer habits of thought which allow the student to weigh the significance of facts from the standpoint of philosophy.[3]

In this process, the teacher is aware of his own ignorance concerning the character undergoing training. He is greatly limited in

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[1] Ibid., p. 92.

[2] Ibid., p. 93.

[3] Ibid., p. 109.

his claims upon the attention of the student; he never knows the measure of the ideas, prejudices and aspirations that are formed, and he rarely if ever has time to deal with them; he cannot, says Laski, like the tutor in Rousseau's Emile, devote all his time to one student; and he will never know the extent of the doubts and certainties he has called into play; the great university teacher would ask no more than to have it said that he failed splendidly.[1]

Whatever failures in the English system Laski is able to point out, Oxford and Cambridge are for the most part excepted. Their tutorial system stands unchallenged, though one must believe that the failures of the English system were considerable. There is no corpus of commentary on the intricacies of English education by Laski, such as he produced concerning the American system. One is obliged to glean such commentary as there is from the context of his writings on economics, political science and those having no national identification but, presumably, valid for both nations as centers of capitalist democracy.

Laski notices the fact that about ninety-eight percent of English children go to school up to the compulsory age of fourteen. After that age only about half as many as in New York, for instance, continue their education. In university training, only about one-third of English youth, as compared with those in the United States, matraculate.[2] Elsewhere,[3] Laski comments bitterly on the low compulsory age,

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[1] Ibid., p. 95.

[2] Laski, The American Democracy, p. 331.

[3] Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 220.

stating that while it may conquer simply illiteracy, it deprives most young people of ". . . the necessary tools of intellectual analysis," while "knowledge and the power to make experience articulate become the monopoly of the few."

Laski calls to mind a statement by Dibelius concerning the sad state of English social arrangement: "The Englishman's social ethic is less deep and exacting than that of other civilized nations, because it deliberately includes only a fraction of the common human ideal."[1] He is moved by the statement to remark that "We are the only people in the modern world whose system of education is deliberately built on class distinction."[2] It is the children of the economically privileged classes who have positions of command in English society and the number of children of the working class who are able to pass the barriers into authority in the bar, medicine, officership in the armed forces, the foreign service, and the hierarchy of the Church is small indeed.

> Even when trade unions nominate their members to the House of Commons, there is a strong age-differential in favor of aristocracy; and despite the post-war changes (World War I), the diplomatic service still remains, in an astonishing degree, the preserve of a small number of public schools. An unequality based upon economic privilege still lies at the very heart of our society.[3]

Laski calls to mind, also, the report of the May Committee of 1931. This committee had said in substance that the nation should call to a halt the rising expenditures in education because the level of

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[1]Dibelius, England, trans. from the German by Mary Agnes Hamilton, M. P., (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1930), p. 165.

[2]Harold Laski, Democracy in Crisis, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1933), p. 220.

[3]Ibid., p. 221.

education provides for the children of the poor was already superior to that given to the child of the middle-class parent. Laski's answer to this pronouncement, while somewhat at a tangent, insisted that it might have occurred to Sir George May and his committee that middle-class education was somewhat inadequate.[1]

Effective participation in public affairs requires adequate intellectual training and Laski felt that he was at no pains to find a wealth of evidence that too few were able to obtain such training. The cries of the privileged that full education was too expensive was answered by Laski when he called attention to the fact that armament expenditure was twice the expenditure for education.[2] At another time, Laski said

> We cannot conceive of a state in Western civilization which does not tax its members to support a system of national education. Yet, less than a century and a half ago it would have been unthinkable that any state should have compelled its members to contribute to such a purpose. A demand which was then ineffective has become in the process of time, irrestible.[3]

Laski's comments concerning the quality of graduate education in England are, in the main, contrasted with graduate education in the United States. By and large, his comparisons, with the exceptions of the field of law, show a decided preference for the English. It may be said that his complimentary attitude toward the American law school is one of the few areas in which he found himself able to be complimentary.

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[1] Ibid., p. 223.

[2] Ibid., p. 225.

[3] Harold Laski, Politics, (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1931), p. 20.

In contrast to American practice of selecting eminent teachers of law for the highest positions on the bench, (a practice which Laski would have been interested to learn has declined in the past few years), men of the highest reputation in English law seldom reach the bench.

> Blackstone and Dicey, Sir Frederick Pollock, and that greatest of all English historians, since Gibbon, F. W. Maitland, were all for many years professors of law. But of them all, Blackstone was the only one to reach the Bench, and that was less because he was an eminent Vinerian Professor at Oxford, than because, in between, he was a member of Parliament and Solicitor-General.[1]

Laski records with respect the practice in America of selecting promising law students from "name" schools for clerkships in the offices of the federal judiciary. No such practice is prevalent in England.

The weakness of English educational practice, Oxford and Cambridge apart, are only a little less virulent than those in America. If the United States has a misguided plenitude of opportunity, the English system suffers from a poverty of opportunity and the additional barriers of class distinction.

One of the more modern statements of influence concerning the direction that English education shall take, and therefore the most hateful, is that of T. S. Eliot. Eliot has brilliantly contended for a return to class order that is held together by family, cultural heritage and a sense of obligation which, in Laski's view, are undergirded by a continuity of privilege and money. When Eliot writes that the aims of contemporary education is "jacobinism," he is able to draw the following conclusion:

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[1]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 370.

> It is an ideal which can only be fully realized when the institution of the family is no longer respected and when parental control and responsibility passes to the state. Any system which puts it into effect must see that no advantages due to the foresight, the self-sacrifice or the ambition of parents are allowed to obtain for any child or young person an education superior to that to which the system finds him to be entitled. The popularity of the belief is perhaps an indication that the depression of the family is accepted, and that the disintegration of classes is far advanced.[1]

To this, Laski retorts that Eliot is equating the growing zeal for equal educational opportunity with cultural breakdown.[2] Laski is obliged to show the relationship of such an attitude and that contained in the Republic, with the general Greek view which excluded the handworker from the higher expressions of civilized life.

But another answer to Eliot is an appeal to logic in the immediate situation and not to historical analogy. Laski refers to the Barlow Report which had examined the British manpower situation in the light of anticipated needs for a technological society. There was a gap, and Laski had ventured the suggestion that the gap was in no way the result of an inherited inability of intellect on the part of the English worker. Rather, he indicated three causes, all of which were at variance with Eliot's assessment of social need. One, the English were unwilling to tax themselves sufficiently in order to provide an adequate educational system; two, the ruling class had been complacent concerning its future in international trade; and, three, the ruling class feared that the opening of the gates of education to all would jeopardize its authority.

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[1] T. S. Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 41.

[2] Laski, The Dilemma of Our Times, p. 117.

> When Mr. Eliot speaks of the demand for equality of opportunity in education as a proof that there is no longer respect for the institution of the family and that the state has taken over the responsibility of parents, with the result, in his view, that the 'disintegration of classes is far advanced,' he does not mean that any more by this formidable phrase than that we have reached a situation in which the kind of society he desires is no longer possible.[1]

Eliot's fear of the half-educated, to him a phenomenon of the modern era because prior eras educated only for the proper function of the various classes in an arrangement which permitted little if any upward mobility, also gave Laski considerable pain.

> To train a man to be a 'skilled agricultural labourer' does not mean that we waste our energies and our substance if we teach him also to appreciate the beauties of Shakespeare or Dickens, to recognize why Goya was a greater artist than W. P. Frith, to realize that the music of Bach and Beethoven can bring things into his life more precious than he will find in the music of Sousa or George Gershwin . . .[2]

The fact is, he felt that Eliot was out of touch with the realities of the age and that he displayed an undue lack of confidence in the qualities of the common man.

> He belongs to that esoteric group of thinkers in our time who, hating its disorder and violence and scepticism, find no release save in the rejection of seeking to pilot their craft down the mainstream where everyman journeys, and, in their despair, seek some back eddy of the stream where the boat may lie quietly at anchor. 'The centre,' to quote Yeats once more, 'does not hold' for them. So the poet writes for poets, the novelist for other novelists, the philosopher for other philosophers, admitting to their private worlds those critics who can luxuriate in the refinement of their different specializations. . . . They watch life, they do not live it.[3]

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[1]Laski, The Dilemma of Our Times, p. 127.

[2]Ibid., p. 129.

[3]Ibid., p. 135.

Laski's philippic on Eliot is but a continued statement of his hatred of the difficulties of educational practice based on class privilege. At its highest and best levels Laski believed, one supposes, that it had no peer. The main job was to transport its excellence across the barriers of social strata. He made a clear call for transport in 1940.

> The way to victory lies in producing the conviction now among the masses that there are to be no more distressed areas, no more vast armies of unemployed, no more slums, no vast denial of genuine equality of educational opportunity.[1]

The American Perspective

American educational practice in the secondary schools presents for Laski a dreary vista. For him it is an inversion of its stated purpose: the extra-curricular has become its major interest and even this is based on the false assumption that it has a curriculum. The schools have elevated athletics to a claim rivaling that of religion; the social paraphanalia with which they adorn their activity is an accurate replica of the larger society from which they spring and to which they give unswerving loyalty. The "curriculum," with fine ignorance of the social arrangement, betrays the minority student who goes on to college by bringing him inadequately prepared for matriculation, and the majority student who does not attempt a college career by teaching him a "vocation" or subjecting him to the rigors of dress-making, shorthand and bookkeeping.[2] For Laski, who could urge his schoolmates

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[1] Harold Laski, Where Do We Go From Here? (New York: The Viking Press, 1940), p. 132.

[2] Laski, The American Democracy, p. 341.

at the age of ten to read the Manchester Guardian and to "give up that rag, the Daily Dispatch,"[1] and who, throughout his life, could prove his quote or reasonably accurate paraphrase by citing the volume and page number, the American secondary school fell a great deal short of education and much of its ministration was pure nonsense.

As Laski analyzed the American secondary school scene and his own feelings toward it, he fastened upon several of its failures which he evidently took to be representative of its larger failure. There is the matter of athletics which we have mentioned on a previous page. Others were: 1) clubs, both social and academic, 2) curriculum weakness, 3) indifference to learning and, 4) the parents role. These are minor themes but, in the main, these are points which he presses.

The highschool has its fraternities and sororities, though they may be called by some other name. These are organizations with immense social prestige and they constitute, with surprisingly little variation, an accurate index of the parental role in the community. Membership in these clubs is sought with "surprising ardour; perhaps nothing matters as much, except great athletic distinction, to the boys and girls."[2] It is true that they do not do much--a party at Christmas, two or three formal dances--but they are taken with a seriousness which Laski finds astonishing. The point to be made by a working socialist is that they reflect parental income since parental income is an indice to parental social standing.

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[1]Martin, Harold Laski, p. 6.

[2]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 337.

> It is not easy for a boy or girl from a poor home to confirm to the conventions of a group accustomed to dress well or to spend money freely; the exceptions tend to be those who are prominent in the school for other reasons, athletics, for example, or because their father is a popular preacher in a Church of high standing, or is an important official in the municipal service. . .[1]

Other organizations may be closer to the curriculum such as debating teams, literary societies and dramatic clubs. These groups stand lower on the social scale than those organized purely for social reasons, but they have a diverse life of their own and they manage to create an "enrichment" of the hard core curriculum.

All of this has two meanings for Laski: The present age attaches an importance to education not found in any previous period of American history and American boys and girls do not seem to attach importance to intellectual distinction.[2] Latin and Greek have little if any place in the curriculum and such language as is taught is so elementary and so lightly pursued that the colleges assume a beginning ignorance on the part of the student. Literature is rarely read for its own sake, though Laski calls to mind exceptions to the rule.[3] Students have their American history heroes, know who is in the White House, are able to state that they are Democrats or Republicans with as much precision as their fathers, read the sports page and the "funnies," and nearly always have a course in civics, in which the duties of patriotism, the width of opportunity and the sacred right or property are placed beyond question.[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 337-338.

[2] Ibid., p. 338.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 339.

The places of the parent in this educational scheme is, so far from being mysterious, obvious. Laski doubts that parents know, at least in any intimate detail, the program of study in which their children are engaged. He outlines in some detail the hurried pace of American life and applies it derogatorily to the educational system. He notes in passing that parents take pride in their children's accomplishments, but both accomplishment and pride are misplaced when they are the result of a belief that secondary education builds character as its most important contribution. "They (students) get to know what it means to be an American, and the rough edges of personal idiosyncrasy are smoothed away."[1] The result is that they are driven to a "social average," an intellectually mordant state in which they cannot deal with non-conformity or skepticism.

> They go out in the world with a set of stereotypes which little save an earthquake can persuade them to examine critically.[2]

They are a microcosm of the larger society.

Educational practice in the higher institutions is inevitably affected by the quality of preparation of those who come to it. But the diffusion is on such a broad scale in such a large country that, except for certain practices which Laski found necessary to call into question, it becomes a selective process. Mediocrity is the rule, but excellence is not hard to find.

Laski says that most American institutions of higher learning fall into one of two categories: those which limit themselves to undergraduate programs based on the humanities and the sciences, and those

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[1] Ibid., p. 340.

[2] Ibid., p. 342.

which add to the staple undergraduate program such professional courses, taught in separate schools, as are requisite for public need.[1] In schools of both categories, one inevitably finds the superior student and there are schools in both categories which uniformly excel in training. However, Laski finds the typical American student much less mature intellectually than his European counterpart and he is not hesitant to assign reasons for this failure.

Entrance requirements in American colleges are generally lower than those in Europe. This is a reflection of lower standards of preparation. But it is also due to less emphasis on individual intellectual effort, too many lectures, note-taking of "retailed facts" for the purpose of giving the impression on the quiz of serious endeavor, and the inability of the student to probe the mind of the teacher instead of a graduate assistant.[2] Laski's opinion of the graduate assistant is that he is a poor substitute for the teacher, and one ". . . to whom the task of taking the classes or marking the 'twenty minute test' paper is probably a nuisance necessary on economic grounds while he ploughs his way forward to his doctor's degree."[3] With his opinion of text books, referred to on a previous page, it is characteristic of Laski to deplore educational practice in which students read survey books and avoid "great books" and whole books.

> . . . which makes him form the habit of making his mind a receptacle for bits and pieces of books which he is

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[1] Ibid., p. 360.

[2] Ibid., pp. 363-364.

[3] Ibid., p. 364.

> rarely shown how to fit into a pattern, much less a pattern with a significant historical background.[1]

Laski admits that there are schools which try to correct the impression that education consists in getting a requisite number of credits with an acceptable grade average by means of orientation courses, majoring in special fields and the requirement of what he calls "reading periods." (The context of his argument, and not the terms used, leads one to believe that he was referring to the practices of "honors" programs.) But these fall short of the advantages of tutoring, as practiced at Oxford and Cambridge; they do not excite the interest of the student sufficiently, and the tutor, a person of considerable importance at the English institutions, is on the bottom of the American scale. All of this means that most professors have not taken into account the fact that the printed book has made much of the lecture system obsolete,[2] and the result is the same lecture on the same work in the same way. Laski relates the failures of the system to the inability of the usual student to write acceptable prose.

> . . . it is important to note that, in spite of the immense energy spent in most colleges in teaching English composition, an undergraduate with a 'style' is as rare as one who, on his own initiative, has sought to explore something of that cultural heritage the significance of which the university is supposed to impress upon him.[3]

If Laski writes of other aspects of the American education system with a certain sense of sad urgency, his survey of the doctorate and its thesis can only be described as elegiac.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 364-365.

The drama begins when the aspiring candidate chooses the subject of his dissertation, a process which ". . . goes through a physiological rhythm almost as regular as the circulation of the blood."[1] The student will rarely know what he wants to write about, indeed, he probably does not know anything worthy of putting on paper. Nevertheless, in consultation with his teacher, he selects a subject, compiles a bibliography of whatever exists on the subject, taking special care to include old newspapers and other esoteric minutiae. If some desired material is in the British Museum, he will cast about for a scholarship to London, or if it is in the Bibliotheque Nationale, he will mortgage himself for a trip to Paris.[2] Once having compiled sufficient notes, he will undertake the writing of the paper, frequently amending it in consultation with his teachers.

> As he writes, he will support each statement he makes with a footnote showing the source from which it is taken, until, not seldom, the text itself seems like a small island, surrounded by a veritable ocean of references.[3]

When the exercise is finished, it will be supported with a bibliography which, according to Laski, would "evoke a smile of approval from the shade of that ingenious librarian who invented the Dewey decimal system."[4] The thesis and its author are then entrusted to a small committee of professors who examine his and its merit.

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[1] Ibid., p. 376.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

It is Laski's contention that not even in Germany has such an intricate and terrifying system evolved.[1] The protests against it are almost universal, but nothing has yet been done to supplant it with education, and Laski calls to mind, duly footnoted, William James' essay: "The Ph.D. Octopus," in Memories and Studies.[2] But this is only in passing and he then moves to statistics.

> Out of 459 numbers in the Johns Hopkins series, which represents the best work of all its graduate students in the social sciences for sixty years, only fifty-four are out of print. Out of 380 numbers in the well-known Columbia University Studies in History and Economics and Public Law, published between 1893 and 1903, only nine appear to be out of print, and only one volume seems to have gone into a second edition.[3]

Aside from the fact that it seems useless to Laski, ". . . the system develops habits of its own."[4] There is the obligation to avoid a subject already in the process of doctoral mastication, no matter how important the subject may be; it fosters the conviction that no statement, not properly footnoted as a reference to what someone else had to say, could possibly contain wisdom; and it becomes a source of what Laski calls "bibliographical elephantiasis."[5] There is an occasional paper of superior quality and there are supervisors whose work with a student is a ray of intellectual light which no system can extinguish.

> No one who worked with Frederick J. Turner or with Carl Becker, but must have felt the excitement of seeing how the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 377.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

> great artist hews from the rough stone a portrait which comes to life, just as no one can have submitted an idea for critical examination to William James, or to Morris Cohen, without the joy of seeing how a great swordsman can cut it to pieces.[1]

Laski concludes that the whole scheme and its apparatus could be gotten rid of without diminishing the quality of education.

> Nothing invented since the Inquisition has had so sterilizing an effect upon the habit of free speculation and eager debate of first principles out of which the scholar is most likely to transform information into wisdom.[2]

The practices of English education have been and still are somewhat class conscious. Laski poses no problem in his criticism of a system that sends the rich up to Oxford and Cambridge while the poor remain on the slag heaps of Manchester, without the intellectual attainment necessary to escape. But when Laski disdains specialization in a technically orientated society, he is not striking a blow against "habit without philosophy," he is assuming specialization without the leaven of liberal learning, even in a world when it is impossible for a man to know everything. And he is at odds with reality when he calls for broad liberal training at a secondary level to the exclusion of vocational pursuits when, in fact, the dispossed need such training to overcome the economic disparity so hateful to Laski. It is difficult to see how one can rightfully castigate Eliot for his upper class bias and prescribe the education system for which he contended.

Laski is not far afield in his summary of American education when he calls the system a social microcosm of the larger society. It

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[1] Ibid., p. 278.

[2] Ibid., p. 379.

is infantile and immature in many respects, but it really is not the system that bothers Laski; it is the socio-economic order that produces it. If the order itself could be brought into a socialist focus, economic and social equity would be a fact. Education would reflect the "maturity" of such an arrangement. Colleges would raise their standards, the secondary schools would better prepare the student for college, lectures would give way to the lonely scholar and text books would go the way of the saber-tooth tiger. Even the doctorate would undergo some educational metamorphysis or, still better, be allowed to die. Or, so Laski believed.

CHAPTER V

LASKI'S PERSPECTIVE ON CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIES IN EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

The English Perspective

The shortcomings of education on the English scene lie, at the root, in the inequalities of the social arrangement to which most Englishmen have been passionately devoted for the past several centuries. This is but a restatement of Laski's continuing theme. And to understand these shortcomings, embodied as they are in the class arrangement, one must survey that remarkable creature, the English gentleman. It is Laski's contention that the English boast of the peculiarity of the gentlemen to their culture and he contends that the boast has both substance and, as an ideal, the merit of simplicity.[1]

The English gentleman cannot be defined by what he does, though he is quite active in a round of unvarying pursuits. He simply is.[2] For Laski the meaning of such a definition lies in the fact that the gentleman is a propertied drone whose position of privilege would suffer irreparably should he suddenly go to work for the purpose of making some worthwhile contribution to the world in which he lives. This prospect

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[1]Laski, The Danger of Being a Gentleman, p. 13.

[2]Ibid., p. 14.

being practically nil, Laski then proceeds to define him by the discipline to which he subjects himself.

There is a certain sordidness about working and "old" money, at least to the third generation, is positive proof among the upper class that not a hand has been turned. A gentleman may have hobbies and even eccentricities that presumably add nothing to the attempts at definition, but he may not work. The marketplace, which he may control, is like a mistress; necessary but unacknowledged. The real connection between the gentleman and the marketplace is the middle class employer who thereby becomes the connection between the gentleman and the worker. It is one of the peculiarities of working Englishmen that they rarely admire or respect their employers but they have a deferential respect for the class that does not have to work for a living, if Laski's between-the-wars analysis is to be believed.

> He (the English working man) may have doubted Lord Rosebery when he published a book, but he admitted his title to the Premiership when he won the Derby. Between a self-made man like Mr. Lloyd George and a squire whose mind, like that of Mr. Henry Chaplin, is unstained by thought, the Englishman has seldom hesitated to choose the latter type.[1]

The combination of these social ingredients had preserved, until the very last years of Laski, a structure of enduring quality, unchanged since the middle of the eighteenth century.

Laski's definition of the gentleman by what he is, provides an interesting survey, though it is impossible to quote him at length and unfair to deal too briefly with a subject to which he had devoted a great deal of thought.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

It is desirable that the gentleman should have been exposed to the educational rigors of a limited number of schools, such as Eton or Harrow. It is necessary that he shall have attended Oxford or Cambridge. He must know how to ride, shoot and fish, have relatives in every branch of the Establishment, be a member of the Conservative Party and possess ideas that coincide with those of the Morning Post. His favorite authors should be Surtees and Kipling; in music he should appreciate the "fine sanity" of Gilbert and Sullivan, but be devoid of any profound concern for Mozart and Beethoven. He should know nothing of political science and equate bolshevism with original sin. He must never be a free-thinker, but it is equally necessary that he never get too enthusiastic about religion. When the gentleman dines out he must either not talk at all or in such a way as to indicate a full knowledge of worthwhile gossip without it becoming an index to profundity. He must find speech difficult and eloquence impossible, says Laski, and if he travels abroad, he must return without having suffered the deformation of a broader mind.[1] In all of this, however, he is not without great qualities.

> He believes with ardour in playing the game with those of his own status. He has the habit of graceful command. Save to Indians, Socialists, trade-union organizers, and poachers he is almost uniformly tolerant. He is courageous and, to woman of his own class, chivalrous and deferential. . . He enjoys the exercise of power; and since he rarely knows how to make money, it is still more rare for him to be corrupted by it. Having, in general, received a classical education, he has, like Shakespeare, as a rule, small Latin and less Greek.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 15.

[2] Ibid., pp. 15-16.

And so it goes, or went, at the time of Laski's observations and writings. No perspective can be adequate, however, unless it relates the chief cause, no matter how passive, to that which is judged to be effect. Laski does this by saying that the English upper class maintained its supremacy for a hundred years following the Industrial Revolution because there was nothing to challenge it. Property was unchallenged and there were no great international upheavals of such magnitude as to cause concern. Internally, education could be maintained at a level calculated to produce only efficient foreman and national health at a level just above an outbreak of cholera. "To the theory that a little learning is a dangerous thing, he invented the reply (which England, at least, accepted) that much learning is ungainly, and in any case drives men mad."[1] Those few who did pause from the loom and the coal pits long enough to register a protest were, by definition, unsuccessful men.

> ". . . exiled scholars like Marx, dyspeptic prophets like Carlyle, thin-lipped and poverty-stricken agitators like Philip Snowden, poetic craftsmen like William Morris . . ."[2]

In the face of the difficulties of the years between the great wars, Laski concluded that the gentleman is, in no small way, greatly to blame for the sad state of affairs. He had grace, even a certain virtue, but the fact was that he was an amateur and the world of the Twentieth Century cannot afford leadership at an amateur's level of competence. Only a scientific approach to the problems by men who have a capacity for analysis could save the day.

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[1] Ibid., p. 19.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

Again, one of the striking contradictions in Laski's argument, one that bears directly upon his educational outlook, comes to the surface. Over and over again, Laski decried the "expert" as an opinionated, half-educated ass. Yet, he devoted an entire essay to the thesis that the upper class Englishman was unfit to rule, not because he was badly educated, but because he lacked an expertese.

It was Laski's contention that there is greater skepticism now concerning Democracy than at any time since the French Revolution.[1] Its ideal as the supreme dynamic in western affairs has been lost; its inefficiency has become a self-defeating factor. Above all, its myth of equality has been exploded, unable to stand the impartial examination of science. And equality, if it could be realized, would merely lower the claims of the best of society to the level of mediocrity. Fraternity is impossible where ruthless struggle has become a law of life.

All of these claims are nonsense, says Laski. Democracy is not a historical accident, but the fruit of intelligible causes and, still referable to intelligible principles. Democracy arose as a protest over the brute fact of inequality that existed for so long, and in the process gains have been made of inestimable value. Men have discovered that when they are excluded from privilege they are excluded from benefit, that power and privilege in the hands of a few have always resulted in a grand confusion of personal interest with that of the interest of the state. And having made this discovery, men have labored for an extension of political democracy to the benefit of those who share it.

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[1] Ibid., p. 22.

The fact is, however, that democracy has thus far been limited to the political arena; the state is democratic, but society is not. Society as a whole fails of democratic attainment because wealth is unequal and education, which would if it could redress the wrongs of inequality, is also unequal. And without equality, there can be no liberty because liberty depends upon the process of humanizing the spirit of man. A few strong men may be goaded by the very condition of their deprivation to overcome it; most men, however, are brutalized to the exclusion of hope or will to deal with their condition. It is Laski's contention that aristocrats never really understand this fact, that they believe that men are in wretched conditions because they find it an attractive way of life. Laski believed that the sense of frustration fastened upon the lower classes by wretched economic, social and educational conditions precipitated an abyss between the classes and that the end result has always been revdlution.

> An untutored people can never be great in any save the rudest arts of civilization. Here, again, we have the elements upon which to base a limitation of power. No state can through its instruments deny education to its members. It must provide them, that is to say, with means at least adequate to a full perception of life; for, otherwise, the purpose of the state is at one stroke negatived for them.[1]

Nevertheless, Laski maintained that where economic difference among men was less, the possibilities of fellowship were increased. And any attempt to ameliorate economic differences by philanthropy and even social legislation only exacerbated the conditions of the poor. These

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[1]Harold Laski, Authority in the Modern State, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), p. 59.

gestures, universally accepted as just by the upper class, only amount to taxes which the rich are willing to pay as a part of their privilege. The system which permits these gestures continues to weaken itself by its own inadequacies and by 1) the decline in religious authority, and 2) the growth of education. Laski says that it is necessary to continue the growth of the educational systems because the worker needs education in order to work in a social order of growing complexity and because it is a condition of social peace.[1]

Yet, the first result of education for the masses is the recognition by them that the inequalities of economic and social arrangement cannot possibly be justified. "The more we educate, in short, the more we reveal to the multitude the inadequacy of the moral principle upon which our civilization is based."[2] Since the multitude in democracy always wields the balance of political power, the institutions of democracy must be used to change conditions of inequality or run the risk of having them change to another institutional principle.

Inequality also means that the laws are applied in an unequal manner. Laski calls to mind the fact that we use different terms to describe and resolve acts that are equal in their immoral quality; when the righ steal, it may be referred to evphemistically as high finance; when the poor steal, it is properly called embezzelment. In the east end (of London) conduct may be called disorderly, while in the west end, it is simply high spirits. In Poplar, the word "theft" is darkly used to describe thievery; in Kensington, the word "kleptomania" is delicately

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[1]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 216.

[2]Ibid., p. 217.

used. Laski contrasts the fate of Sacco and Vanzetti with Thaw, whose money, he insists, enabled him to escape justice.[1] In short, Laski maintained that the justice one is liable to receive is measured not in equity and certainly not in the courts but in one's bank balance. This is a religion of inequality, says Laski, but it does not even have the advantage of mysticism. It is much too crude and brutal for that; it is devoid of graciousness and it fashions its adherents in its own image.

Inequality in education is shown by the relatively short educational span in England. Ending at the age of fourteen years, education of such limited scope means that the tool of educational analysis cannot be used effectively. The inability to state in articulate terms the needs and aspirations of life creates in the lower classes a degradation of the human spirit. These classes are out off from a knowledge of the cultural heritage of civilization.

> To deprive men of access to it does not destroy the impulse of curiosity; it merely deflects it into channels from which no social good can emerge. Education is the great civilizer, and it is, above all, absence of education which provokes the brute in man.[2]

One has only to see the slums of Manchester or their counterpart in Chicago, for instance, to see the price that society pays for its indifference to human ignorance.

> Above all, an inequality in this sphere is paid for by the inability of the ignorant to realize the fragility of civilization. They have a sense of angry despair or sodden disillusion; they do not know how to formulate the source either or their anger or their hopelessness. We

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[1] Ibid., p. 218.

[2] Ibid., p. 220.

> leave them to destroy because we have not taught them how to fulfil.[1]

To bring to the masses the benefits of education involves the payment of two commodities which, according to Laski, the rich are not happy to afford: money and the means of discontent with the status quo. Money is stingely made available, and

> The higher the general level of training in a capitalist democracy, the more difficult it is to maintain the classic division between rich and poor.[2]

The psychological result of inequity and inequality in which men are divided into givers and receivers of orders results in a lower class deprived of initiative and the freedom inherent in the possibility of choice. Men are slaves of a routine which they have had no part in making. To preserve such a pattern of mental experience, the rich control and manipulate the press.

> Owned by them, in a degree ever more concentrated, dependent for its profits on wealthy advertisers whom it dare not offend, it pours forth a stream of tendencious news the main purpose of which is to maintain a atmosphere favorable to the maintenance of inequality.[3]

The same is true of the education system. It is dangerous for an educational institution--or teacher--to gain the reputation of economic radicalism. Those who control the purse strings and appointments have, by the sheer possession of these instruments, means to prevent freedom of thought and inquiry. It was Laski's contention that one has only to see the long list of investigations by the American

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[1] Ibid., p. 221.

[2] Laski, Democracy in Crisis, p. 73.

[3] Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, pp. 222-223.

Association of University Professors and the history of teacher affiliation with trade unions for protection to realize the extent to which teachers are curtailed. He adds, with perhaps some justification, that the problem has been present in England to a lesser degree, but this is because teachers are more carefully selected and dismissal a priori less necessary.

> The limitations of such an outlook (fear of socialism) are, in this regard, most urgently manifest in things of the mind. Manchester, for example, has a single adequately-equipped library for a population of over three-quarters of a million; and its dramatic and musical preeminence are both of them due to the fortunate accident of a few rich patrons. Outside the technological sciences, for which commercial needs demand a somewhat fuller equipment than elsewhere, its university owes its main distinction, that in historical scholarship, not in any sense to a proper municipal endowment, but to the earnest zeal of two distinguished scholars who might equally well have been in Leeds or London or Oxford, for the municipal encouragement they have received; and it is noteworthy that little or no provision is made for the study or teaching of government.[1]

In the theological field, the same problem is present. At Oxford and Cambridge, the teaching of religion is the carefully and jealously guarded monopoly of the English Church. And the Church is careful to teach doctrines not incompatible with the existing order. As in Russia where truth means "communist truth," the actual institution of an unequal society are presented in such a way as to teach that they are inevitabilities of the social order.

> Our educational system is used not to train the mind as an instrument of critical inquiry but to bend it to the services of certain presuppositions profitable to the oligarchy which lives by their results.[2]

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[1]Harold Laski, The Foundations of Sovereignty and Other Essays, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), p. 51.

[2]Ibid., p. 225.

Again, the price paid for inequality is a heavy one. Personality must be cast in a mold that will satisfy the norms of the profit principle. The middle class is wrapped up in the worship of property to the exclusion of experiences of spiritual values; the rich pass their time in an aimless pursuit of pleasures. Even charity is thought of in terms of those who support it rather than its object. One who wishes to raise money for some organization knows full well that he will double his chances of raising the desired amount if he can get the Prince of Wales to lend his prestigious name to the undertaking. A theatrical performance in New York sponsored by the Junior League, which Laski denotes as "pathetic exponents," will produce a vastly greater sum than one sponsored by the Theater Guild.[1]

The unequal society is the father of standardized and uniform frames of reference which are the condition of its survival. It is fatal to individuality, to novelty and the unexpected. It is a religion which leaves unrequited the claims of beauty and knowledge. Education must, therefore, be provided on a limited scale in order to keep from the lower class the knowledge that they are slaves to a system which they had no part in creating and in which they will not have participation. In short, the maintenance of the system means that it cannot afford to educate.

The American Perspective

There are two principles, according to Laski, that form the philosophical background of American education, and these are never

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[1]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 226.

reconciled. One, the social value of the mind is disciplined by instruction. Laski attributes this to American faith in democracy and progress and the Jacksonion influence regarding our classless society. The second is the notion that once the child has learned reading, writing, and simple arithmetic, life itself is the best teacher. He attributes this to the frontier formation of the nation. In these latter decades,of course, education is receiving emphasis all out of proportion to the second, due no doubt to a fear psychology, but the two philosophical principles retain their reality and identification.

In surveying American education, Laski asserts that the social value structure of the American parent determines the kind of schools made available. Parents see in the school system a means of getting ahead; the schools become a means of satisfying the urge of "keeping up with the Joneses."[1] The worship of bigness and the naive faith that whatever is "American" is right, coupled with a keen sense of the competitive nature of the society in which the American will spend his life, creates a belief that modernity alone has value, while "old-fashioned" things are worthless. The sheer immediacy of such a philosophy reveals in the student a fragmented outlook on a more mature value structure. Laski says that the American student, with exceptions of course, thinks that the world began with his memory.[2]

The American student is a product of an immature society, by Laski's calculations, and an immature social and economic system produces

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[1]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 323.

[2]Ibid., p. 342.

immature students. More concretely, the American student suffers by comparison with his European counterpart. The most obvious reason is that American highschools give less rigorous preparation than European schools. Half humorously, Laski concludes that there is another reason: the student goes to too many lectures.

Laski's awe at the size of the American schools, libraries, monetary support and, above all, the emphasis on "amateur" athletics is practically boundless. His description of the devotion given to school supported athletics has a sense of wonder.

> There is a small elite who form the school team, an elite of whose prowness the rest are applauding spectators, who can count on the right to prestige, whose rivalry with the teams from other schools will absorb not only the eager attention of their own school-fellows, but of the general citizen body and even the local press . . .
> No inconsiderable part of the schools rating in the community will be derived from the athletic status it achieves in some popular game.[2]

With some exceptions, the American schools have not met the challenge of the Twentieth Century. Too many of those who leave high-school have not been made ready to cope with the problems which they must face as adults. They find it hard to make a living because they have not learned what they are fitted to do. Those who go on to higher education are often too immature to cope with the intellectual burden imposed by the colleges. The result, says Laski, is a large number who have no awareness of "the civic context of their lives and their own deep need to understand it for their own sakes."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 337.

[2] Ibid., p. 330.

As justification for these assumptions, Laski points to the vast array of educational literature which has challenged the American system, especially the work of John Dewey. One has only to read Dewey to see that the school curriculum is not flexible enough to meet the needs of students in the modern world. The schools have not undergone an adaptation to the social and economic realities in which they exist and of which they must be thoroughly conscious. So far, the schools have tolerated a gap between curriculum content and the great body of knowledge in the social and natural sciences which have shaped the present age.

A part of the reason for these failures, in Laski's estimation, lies in the fact that there is no agreement among educators, and still less among the public, concerning the aim of the schools. Laski points to the almost endless experiments and conferences, most of which begin with "fervent rhetoric," and conclude with the agreement that something must be done. However, it is at the point where precise definition of what should be done is demanded that a bewildering array of diverse opinions precludes agreement on a unity of aim and purpose. The failures lie also in the traditional provision of a system of state education, though Laski acknowledges the efforts of the federal government in recent years (1948) to bring relief to some of the most backward areas.[1]

Laski points to men like Kilpatrick and Counts, working under the intellectual aegis of Dewey, as proponents of an educational system that prepares the way for a new social order. But over against such

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[1] Ibid., p. 327.

attitudes are those which seek to preserve the present system of "American values." Others, like Hutchins and his followers, doubt that education can be truly democratic and restrict their interest to the training of an intellectual elite who alone can deal with the issues raised by fundamental data. Still others, especially in the religious realm, are convinced that the ethos of the modern world is one great mistake and that hope lies only in placing a tenacious hold on "eternal values" through education with large infusions of indoctrination.

The result of all this is that four-fifths of the students who do not go on to college are subjected to a curriculum which is designed for college preparation. Laski says that their real need is to learn how to fit themselves for life in a democratic society and to learn the skills of a vocation set against some humanistic background! Admittedly, the need is difficult to achieve. Technological direction is toward the increase of skilled workers, with the highly skilled craftsman, increasingly important, increasingly limited in number. Marketable skill involves the ability of the worker to make swift changes to equally swift technological changes, "the drift of which is to make the rapid learner of a repetitive and routine job the chief type of worker for whom there is a demand."[1] Laski indicates that the American school system has given little attention to the matter. Indeed,he indicates that the teachers who devised the curriculum did not have the clearest perception of the immensity of the industrial revolution since the twenties.

Laski's answer to the problem is contained in the facts of the situation.

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[1] Ibid., p. 332.

> Youth leaving school between fifteen and nineteen does not need, ought not, indeed, to be given some special technique which finds it immediate sale on the labor market and is thenceforward a frame within which it is enclosed until retirement from work. Youth needs a rough map of the universe, a training in the art of living with other people, a realization of what is meant by a world perpetually in flux, and an insight into the art of self-adaptation to the fact of change. Nothing is so ruinous either to mind or to character as premature specilization through an early emphasis on vocational training.[1]

The lower schools, then, should make preparation for earning a living little more than a grasp of the principles, economic and scientific, which underlie the opportunities to be encountered. The skill demanded by a special vocation will be the outcome of actual day to day practice and organized post-entry training. It is clearly evident that Laski wants the secondary schools to inculcate an awareness and understanding of the western heritage and to do this by means of humanistic teaching, leaving the matter of vocational training to practical involvement.

> The right to education does not mean the right to an identical intellectual training for all citizens. It involves the discovery of capacity and the fitting of the discipline conferred to the type of capacity made known. Obviously, it would be foolish waste to give an identical training to Meredith and Clark-Maxwell. But, obviously, also, there is a minimum level below which no citizen can fall if he is to use the necessary intellectual instruments of our civilization. He must be trained to make judgments . . .
> And it may be said here that any examination of the standards attained by modern States will reveal their inadequacy. The child who is turned at fourteen into an industry the organization of which rarely admits of mental creativeness in any save those few who direct it is unlikely, as a general rule,

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[1] Ibid., p. 333.

to have been provided with the equipment necessary to the proper use of his native intelligence.[1]

In higher education one finds the most lavishly endowed institutions in the world. Laski cites Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Chicago as examples of the great schools privately endowed and controlled; there are the state institutions which have the benefit of legislative appropriations and smaller schools with some private educational theory to maintain. Laski remarks that there is a sense in which anything is true of some college or university in the United States and that nothing is true of them all.[2]

He notes that there are certain distinctions about the American colleges which stand over against their counterparts on the European scene: Oxford and Cambridge apart, few European schools can compare with some one hundred American schools in buildings and equipment. This includes libraries in the well known schools, though Laski admits that many if not most schools have libraries which afford only a genteel intellectual semi-starvation. Alumni interest in and support of the American school stands in opposition to the usual English attitude. The gifts annually bestowed upon the alma mater by a grateful alumni such as money, professorships, scholarships, books, equipment, and special collections is hardly matched by anything of comparison.

It is in the government of the American university that one finds a true reflection of the larger community and the hand of Laski's old antagonist, the business man. The American university president is

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[1]Harold Laski, A Grammar of Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1929), p. 114.

[2]Ibid., p. 343.

chosen by a board of trustees or regents and it is to them that he owes his allegiance and from them derives his authority. The trustees are usually chosen from among the alumni who have distinguished themselves, that is to say they are wealthy, or they have chosen the right man in a preceding election to the state house. These persons meet regularly, take pains to see that the university shall not offend any important group from which help may be forthcoming, settle major financial matters and look after the public image of the institution. They also settle, at least from a legal standpoint, the matter of academic appointments, though they rarely know the worth of the man over whose career they exercise such power.

> As a rule, their view of academic value will be based on the estimate formed of any teacher to be considered by the report furnished by the President. They rarely participate in any decision of academic problems in which there is an interchange of mind between them and the teachers concerned with those problems.[1]

Their main concern is that the teacher not teach or make pronouncements in those areas on which the public has focused its attention and about which it has vivid ideas.

> They do not mind approving the appointment of an eminent physicist to a chair so long as he confines his radicalism, say to the nature of atomic energy, or of an eminent classical scholar whose views on the decline of Athens are fiercely denounced by equally eminent scholars in the Classical Review.[2]

The university president stands as a link between the trustees and the teaching body of the institution. Laski aptly describes the president as unique to the American education scheme. He also concludes

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[1] Ibid., p. 346.

[2] Ibid., pp. 346-347.

that the system is such as to produce, with some notable exceptions, a long list of ordinary men attempting to fill an impossible job. Since the president is expected to be a skillful administrator, a judge of academic reputation, maintain an awareness of developments in science and learning for the purpose of determining allocations, and to be a consumate laborer in the business of begging money, Laski concludes that the conception of him is that of a superman, and supermen have been exceptions to the job.

Laski ventures the opinion that the university government is too narrow for effective leadership of an academic community. It is bound both to reflect and inculcate public values and to support those things that tend to elevate still more the apex of the pyramid because these tend to enhance the presidential position.[1] It is a notable thing for some member of the faculty to get the Nobel Prize, or for some unknown member to distinguish himself otherwise in the pursuit of his field. These achievements make the headlines and there is reflected glory in which the school may take pride. The trustees, who hitherto had not known of his existence, may even invite the newly discovered scholar to lunch and amid the splendor of panneled oak allow him to be properly awed by a glimpse of the inner workings of power.

By way of further comment on the presidential position, Laski contends that the size of the average university prevents a personal relationship between the president and most of his faculty. Some unusually distinguished teacher may emerge as a definite person for

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[1] Ibid., p. 351.

him, but the younger ones remain a vague outline simply termed "faculty." This is a reverse on the need to know young scholars at a time when adequate judgment may be made as to their promise. Laski believed that the president's opinions are formed in part by those few who have his ear, and that many young teachers have missed their chance because of someone who did not like them or who disagreed with their theories.

Much of Laski's attitude toward the American university president has a familiar ring and it would put an undue strain on credulity to believe that it carried the weight of intellectual virginity. One has only to search the pages of "The Higher Learning" in Thorstein Veblen's The Theory of the Leisure Class to find a similarity of thought, if not language, regarding academic administration.

> As further evidence of the close relation between the educational system and the cultural standards of the community, it may be remarked that there is some tendency latterly to substitute the captain of industry in place of the priest, as the head of seminaries of the higher learning. The substitution is by no means complete or unequivocal. Those heads of institutions are best accepted who combine the sacerdotal office with a high degree of pecuniary efficiency. There is a similar but less pronounced tendency to intrust the work of instruction in the higher learning to men of some pecuniary qualification.[1]

It is true that Veblen's argument on administrative weakness carries over into the classroom, with its inevitable relationship to the administrative apparatus, and that he calls into question the soundness of some classrooms. But when his turgid, Nineteenth Century language invokes a vision of instructional whoredom, as indicated by the following:

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[1]Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class, (New York: The New American Library, 1953), p. 242.

> The scholar under patronage performs the duties of a learned life vicariously for his patron, to whom a certain repute inures after the manner of the good repute inputed to a master for whom any form of vicarious leisure is performed . . .[1]

he parts company with Laski. Not because Laski ignored the "mediocrities striving to become sublime," but because Veblen noted that "the maintenance of scholarly activity . . . has most commonly been the furtherance of proficiency in classical lore or in the humanities. This knowledge tends to lower rather than to heighten the industrial efficiency of the community."[2] Laski was certainly not opposed to efficiency, but even efficiency must be placed on a scale of values and the assignment of such a scale derives from "classical lore and the humanities."

On the matter of academic freedom, Laski is insistent and his argument recurrent. He believed that the centralized university administration was largely responsible for the "sad" history of academic suppression.[3] The president is obligated to satisfy his trustees and the sacrifice of an occasional uncomfortable teacher is a burnt-offering for their altar. He must also keep in mind the happiness of his alumni and maintain their good will to the point of generosity. The occasion of a socialist or other dangerous thinker on the campus is not calculated to improve the "image" of the institution or to secure financial help from wealthy alumni with personal or corporate funds to dispense.

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[1] Ibid., p. 246.

[2] Ibid., p. 247.

[3] Ibid., p. 356.

The matter is easily controlled by what Laski calls "availability."[1] The teacher, especially in the state supported schools, is likely to be appointed from year to year until such time as he has been adjudged "safe" and tenure is offered. If, during the period of his probation, he shows upsetting tendencies, his chances of finding a permanent place on the faculty are poor. Laski cites the case of Professor Herbert Hutton of Ohio State University who was dismissed from that faculty for making a speech at a nationalist meeting in India, "to which it is almost incredible that any reasonable human being could have taken exception."[2] Without naming himself, Laski refers to the action of President Lowell in 1919 in which he threatened to resign if a faculty member were dismissed for making a speech on a famous issue of the day, but he privately informed the faculty member not to expect promotion. Laski concludes that "just as the president is made a prisoner of the interested public, so the professor, unless tenure is permanent, is the prisoner of the president."[3]

Academic freedom would gain immeasurably in Laski's estimation if ". . . teachers abandoned that shabby genteel tradition which, with startlingly few exceptions, has prevented them from organizing trade-unions to bargain collectively about the conditions of their work."[4] Granted such an organization, there would follow a first-rate examination of outmoded American traditions and institutions and the classroom

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 357.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 359.

atmosphere would gain in terms of the critical inquiry so necessary to the education process. Only in these terms is it possible to explain the disparity between what the American professor says upon the occasion of a visit to Europe and what he writes at home, or his absorption in the liberalizing movements on the European scene as contrasted with his cynicism concerning the liberal stirrings in the United States.

> I cannot believe that the need for a constant avoidance of judgment, or so constant a softening of judgment, on basic social questions is a healthy frame of mind. It is at least as bad for students as it is for teachers. For it not only makes the university function under the shadow of vested interests; it makes innumerable undergraduates feel the gap between the real world and the picture of its nature that university department of social science are permitted to reveal.[1]

In such a restricted, and not unhypocritical, situation, the teacher must present a decorous image of himself to his charges who, numerous exceptions notwithstanding, have absorbed traditional attitudes, and to the university at large. He may be an extremist in physics or Scandinavian literature, but this is because the public--and the administration--has only a nodding acquaintance with them.

> . . . if he is in California, he would be wise to be discreet about the remarkable habits of the Giannini Foundation of the University of California; if he is at the University of Pittsburgh, he should refrain from examining the Mellon interests, if he is at Montana, he had better be silent about the relations between the State Tax Commission and the Anaconda Copper Company.[2]

This is Laski in a "muckraking" mood. And if one feels that he is inclined to soften these judgments, one has only to feel the sense of the uncompromising in his whole outlook on American society.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Laski, The American Democracy, p. 358.

> But I do not think any gathering of fifty liberal-minded men would fail to reveal a sense that, increasingly during the last fifty years, they have experienced the need to be silent where their conscience urged them to be forthright. . .[1]

What price, then, for academic freedom?

> We do not know the price paid for the present system because we do not know either the extent or the intensity of the suppressions it involves; above all, we do not know what is lost by what may be termed the prenatal control of research, which operates by warning off teachers, especially the younger ones, from entrance into critical fields of inquiry.[2]

A great deal of Laski's outlook on American education is shown by his attitude toward foundations, universities, and research. The social sciences, having taken their methodology from the physical sciences, have applied it willynilly for the purpose of making pronouncements upon every conceivable subject. The survey, denoting the unreasoned instincts of the man on the street, is taken as an instrument that invariably find the truth. Until, of course, a later survey is taken. What Eric Fromm calls "consensual validation"[3] is diefied; the quantative expression is paramount and, in the process, principle is forgotten.

Such an idea of cooperative research is, of course, part and parcel of the fear the American society has of an intellectually superior person. Laski is insistent, however, that most of the advances in the affairs of man are the result of an individual building patiently on the solid work of other lonely individuals. Beyond the accumulation of the facts by the investigator, and this is supreme for Laski, there is the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955), p. 14.

insistent need for such facts to be assigned a scheme of values. Such a scheme must always come from the personal philosophy of the investigator. It cannot and does not come from a cooperative body. In this regard, nothing reveals more clearly Laski's personal philosophy as the following:

> One begins to dig, and the mere process of digging by oneself is a definite means of illumination. One gets material, broods upon it, arranges it, dissects it, discusses it. It becomes a part of one's own personality. It becomes absorbed into the whole scheme of one's own philosophy. It gives point and color to the whole. It is intimately a part of oneself. The revelation of what it seems to imply is borne in upon one almost unconsciously by living with it. And the generalization is made,usually in a difficult solitude, and in a mood which, if it is akin to anything is essentially allied to artistic inspiration.[1]

Laski echoes, or anticipates, the high hilarity of Parkinson's law in regard to another aspect of research, but he puts it a bit more seriously.

> . . . it is extraordinarily difficult to see why there is need for elaborate institutes of research, with executive staffs and growing hordes of faded underlings. Anyone who has done investigation knows that their aid at the critical point is essentially a pis aller.[2]

Laski suggests that the hypocrisy of the big corporation that makes funds available is not without its counterpart among some of the research minded intelligentsia. It was his belief that much of the research carried on has as its prime purpose the spending of available funds and that, having no real intellectual motive, creates a situation in which trivia is raised to the level of serious consideration. Research foundations exert other deleterious effects on the American colleges, not

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[1]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 157.

[2]Ibid., p. 159.

the least of which is the college's propensity for developing its interest in the direction of the foundation's interest, and he noted that those problems regarded as dangerous were seldom investigated.[1]

The overall effects of foundation money for research on the various universities are two: one, there is a general shift away from the investigation of basic principles. By basic principles Laski means those postulates that give direction and meaning to the multifarious data of life. Instead, there is a pursuit of concrete facts that are easily indentifiable and capable of utility in the money society. Laski says that this is reflected in the education of the American student who, while as bright and able as any, regards the assimilation of unrelated facts as true education. This prevents him from developing an underlying philosophy of the life of which he is a part.[2] Two, foundation research creates a field of "practical" work for the undergraduate student. The result is study of data by means that leave it unrelated and compartmentalized.[3] Most American education is oriented toward the practical by a pragmatic outlook on life.

It seems clear that Laski is progressive in that he links in cause and effect relationship the socio-economic order and the aims of education. He wants education to serve in a creative role in the formation of a new order, and, in this, he is vigorously critical of the

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[1]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 223.

[2]Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, pp. 167-168.

[3]Ibid., p. 165.

Harvard Committee[1] whose distress concerning a lack of "unified principle" in education brought forth a call for an "ideal of cooperation on the level of action irrespective of agreement on ultimates!"[2] This is sheer nonsense to Laski. Cooperation without some agreement on ultimates is a logical contradiction.

> Cooperation on the level of action was possible in wartime between nations as different in outlook as Russia and the United States it is the 'agreement of ultimates' that became the vital matter the moment hostilities ceased.[3]

For Laski, a society that lacks the liberality necessary for it to accomodate the rapidly changing world of the Twentieth Century must reflect a passive educational system.

Oddly, from the standpoint of certain "progressives," Laski poses an educational dichotomy when he comes to the content of education. While education should be a means of social change, it must be built upon the indisputable principles that have created and, in turn, arisen from that civilization. In this he seems to have had an "essentialist" bent. One cannot escape the feeling that Laski yearned for the rounded, liberally educated man of the past, with full confidence that such a man would, by cold logic and inherent humanitarianism, look upon socialism as the only sensible answer to the problems of the day. That an educated man could feel otherwise, never seemed to occur to him.

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[1] General Education in a Free Society, Report of the Harvard Committee, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), p. 46.

[2] Laski, The American Democracy, p. 367.

[3] Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

A BRIEF CRITIQUE OF LASKI'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

The Inabilities of Education as a Dynamic of Social Change

It would be simple to quote a dozen or so instances in which Laski speaks of the dynamic role of education in the democratic process. Indeed, it would be surprising if no such statements would be cited from the extensive writings of a man who spent thirty-five years as a teacher and whose concern for education was matched only by his qualities as a teacher and his high literary ability to state his claims. From such statements as "It (the state) would have on the other hand, a clear right to ask from each member such contributions as he can afford to a system of national education . . .,"[1] in Studies in the Problem of Sovereignty published in 1917, to "And a new society needs a new philosophy of living which evaluates human beings and social institutions on a scale more proportionate to the new environment"[2] in The American Democracy published in 1948, Laski sought to impress upon his auditors the crucial role of education in the democratic arrangement.

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[1] Harold Laski, Studies in the Problems of Sovereignty, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), p.18.

[2] Laski, The American Democracy, p. 392.

But the fact is that such statements are meaningful only in the larger context of which they are a part, and their context is defined not only by the written work in which they exist, but in the whole context of one's activity. In short, it is too simple an approach to Laski's assignment of education's role in a society which he early saw in Pluralist terms and which he later saw in Marxist terms, with its call for direct action.

From his post-college days in 1914, when he went to work on the Daily Herald and contributed significantly to its labor representations, to his published statements in the late forties in which he linked American education to capitalism as effect rather than cause, Laski believed that only an examination and, consequently, a fundamental change in the socio-economic arrangement would suffice to meet the needs of the times. Though he felt that education might be a repository of a new scale of values, the scale itself would have to come from political action in another arena. For this reason he helped to furnish the brainpower for the English "left-wing" labor movement thoughout most of his distinguished career at the School of Economics. If Laski philosophized about education, and he frequently did, it may be said that he was only an occasional philosopher. For him, economics and political science, fields in which he operated his bias with masterly effect, were not sterile disciplines caught up in a circularity of academic daintiness, they were places and times in which people lived and moved and had their being.

Nothing in Laski's written work shows better his pessimism concerning the ability of education to bring about changes he felt to be necessary at least upon a time scale he felt to be realistic than the

following:

> An eminent American educationalist, George S. Counts, once posed the question whether the schools of the United States dare build a new social order. The answer, of course, is in the negative. No educational system, at any level, will ever transcend the general postulates of the community in which it works; and those postulates, in a broad and general way, will be set by the values accepted by the ruling class in that society.[1]

Five years earlier, he had written:

> Nothing has more decisively exhibited the negative character of freedom in capitalist democracies than the slowness with which their political institutions have moved in the realm of education; and this has been largely the case because the owning class has never been able to fully make up its mind between its fear of popular knowledge on the one hand, and its hope that its refining influence might mitigate the dangers of mobocracy on the other. The result has been a compromise everywhere . . .
> The vital fact, of course, is that the purpose of an educational system isnecessarily set by the role that the citizen is intended to play in the society, and a capitalist democracy has never been able to overcome, in its educational programme, the initial paradox that the drive of capitalist aims is in inherent contradiction with the drive of democratic aims.[2]

For Laski, the task of overcoming the "inherent contradictions" by education would always lie in the unwillingness of education to examine the sub-strata of its social postulates. Over and over again in his writings concerning education on the American scene, Laski refers to the Harvard Committee and its call for an "ideal of cooperation on the level of action irrespective of agreement on ultimates"[3] as an example of educational myopia. Indeed, no formal statement concerning American

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[1] Ibid., p. 382.

[2] Laski, Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times, p. 402.

[3] General Education in a Free Society, Chapter 2.

education received more of Laski's attention. His repeated treatment of it indicates an attitude of incomprehensibility.

If one is tempted to identify Laski's education outlook wholly with that of Dewey, Kilpatrick, Counts, and others in the progressivist-scientific camp, he has only to consider the following pronouncement:

> I frankly think that historic experience since 1914 makes the liberal educationalists' philosophy a simple optimism of which the outcome, in the end, is catastrophe. Its real result is not to convince the business man of its validity but to warn him against its dangers.[1]

In view of the social and economic goals which he sought, Laski may have been correct in his analyses, but simple awareness in the perspective of the twenty years following the Second World War would indicate that he was only partly correct in his remedy. Despite the dire warnings of the Marxists, democratic capitalism has been able to shift to the left in a conscious concern for the deprived and to achieve a more equitable distribution of its productivity. The intellectual drive for the shift has, in the main, been supported by elements in the academic community. Kingsley Martin speaks of Laski's "growing interest and excitement in the achievements of the New Deal," and the fact that America had found a leader ". . . who made up for any deficiencies in theoretical understanding by . . . his readiness to listen to 'intellectuals' and 'braintrusters'."[2] It makes little difference that this attitude, held apparently in the first half of the Thirties, also included the belief that Roosevelt's shift to the direction of a mild

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[1]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 391.

[2]Martin, Harold Laski, p. 85.

socialism would serve the purpose of saving capitalism. The fact remains that the shift was made and that teachers had much to do with it. If this has been true in America, even to a degree which Laski saw in terms of disappointment, it is even more true in England. In the past few decades, Oxford and Cambridge not only produced new Torys for the Establishment but leadership for the Labor Party whose success, if intermittent, has been more sweeping in its socialist aims. It, therefore, leaves room for disagreement when Laski speaks of the social impotence and capitalist seduction of the academé. In a society where every other professor is suspect and by common consent most university campuses are looked upon as hotbeds of bolshevism, it would seem that the socialist camp would admit some kinship even if direct action is reserved to practical political involvement.

These exceptions to Laski's views on education as a force in social change are, admittedly, taken from an American perspective. The American scientific-progressivist school recognizes the fact that it has objectors from the left as well as from the right. As the center of belief in the social dynamism of education, it is willing to chronicle the objections of those who stand to the left of democratic liberalism.

> This concern is exemplified by the fact that our outstanding experimental schools have been supported, almost without exception, by the liberal segments of middle-class and upper-class communities. The curriculum of these schools seem, accordingly, to avoid penetrating study of economic maladjustments that might derive from economic controls largely vested in their own class.[1]

It is also willing to defend education as an agent of democratic planning.

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[1]Theodore Brameld, Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1955), p. 172.

> Few, if any, progressivists would defend the familiar view of essentialism that education is inevitably and chiefly not the refashioner but the reflector of cultural tradition and habit. Those who urge community-centered schools would strongly agree that, while education must always recognize and respect the milieu within which it operates, it can and should criticize social weaknesses, make clearcut proposals, and act strategically to bring about improvements.[1]

The latter is dynamic. It is purposeful, open, tentative, hypothetical, and experimental. It is willing and eager to examine the postulates of the community in which it exists. It is not positioned safely--as the business man's kept woman--from the "abyss which separates the intellectuals of the main world of scholarship, above all in the academic world, from the main problems of their time . . ."[2]

The essentialist-perennialist schools have never expected any other judgment upon their philosophy of education from the political left. But it is interesting to note that Laski, not without contradiction, contended for educational beliefs that cut across both schools, and yet embraced elements of both. While Laski called into question the class consciousness of T. S. Eliot's approach to education, it is difficult for one to escape the conclusion that St. John's liberal arts would find perfect rapport with Laski's distaste for the survey course and the educational arrangement in which "the student is allowed to roam at large over the whole of knowledge."[3] "For the experience that the student needs, only the classics will provide it."[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 154.

[2] Laski, Faith, Reason, and Civilization, p. 113.

[3] Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 96.

[4] Ibid., p. 108.

The fact is that Laski wanted every man to find educational and cultural fulfillment in the world freed of want. But he wanted it by a method that lay squarely in the camp of those whom he claimed as the frustration of his aims and with a content that, at least historically, has never come close to the demands of a mass culture. One can say that Laski only half remembered a salient fact: a genius, such as he was, is always in short supply.

Laski therefore spent a great deal of his life deeply engaged in the academic contemplation of politics and economics which he then passed directly to the activity about him and in which he was himself enmeshed. He was never content educationally, as with Dewey, to wait for evolutionary attainment, but as with Brameld, for instance, in a hurry.

The conflicts which seem to lie in Laski's view of education are well illustrated in arguments presented by John Dewey in the May 1937 issue of The Social Frontier, and incorporated in Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy by Joseph Ratner under the sub-chapter title of "Education and Social Change."

> One factor inherent in the situation is that schools do follow and reflect the social "order" that exists. I do not make this statement as a grudging admission, nor yet in order to argue that they should not do so. I make it rather as a statement of a conditioning factor which supports the conclusion that the schools thereby do take part in the determination of a future social order.[1]

It is Dewey's contention that to argue the reflective role of education in social change is to leave unanswered the question of whether society is in fact fixed and uniform. If the question be answered, and it must,

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[1]Joseph Ratner, Intelligence in the Modern World: The Philosophy of John Dewey, (New York: The Modern Library, 1939), p. 692.

then one must conclude that society is an ever-moving structure and that the fixed norms of a reflective educational system simply do not exist. With devastating logic, Dewey concludes that educational "conservatives" are, in fact, arguing for the position that the schools can do something about the social order.

> What they are really doing when they deny directive social effect to education is to express their opposition to some of the directions social change is taking, and their choice of other social forces as those with which education should throw in its lot so as to promote as far as may be their victory in the strife of force.[1]

This is not to say that Laski contended for a purely reflective system of education, or, certainly, that he was not intimately concerned with societal changes. Quite the contrary. His arguments are long and, in some respects compelling, as a judgment upon what he believed to be capitalist senescence and the necessity for social and economic reform. But when Laski indicates that "What it (the university) is seeking is the method whereby experience in any branch of knowledge can be connected with the structure of the universe,"[2] he is flirting with the postulates of faculty psychology and he is consumating a belief that the mind is logically related to the macrocosm in which it spacially exists. When Laski would deliberately exclude from the university undergraduate field "any thing intended to confer a technical equipment or to decorate the mind,"[3] and to imprecate "vocationalism" while passing no opportunity to decry the narrowness of the "expert," it invokes a vision of cultural

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[1] Ibid., pp. 693-694.

[2] Laski, The Dangers of Obedience, p. 91.

[3] Ibid., p. 98.

heritage which, at least historically, has lent itself to resistance to change. When Laski talks of intimate sessions with such great teachers as William James, T. H. Green, Frederick Turner, Morris Cohen, and F. W. Maitland in their superiority to the lecture as an educational method, he raises the question of how many such teachers exist and how many students could be accommodated in such a tutorial arrangement. He is not talking about mass education the growth of which "becomes increasingly destructive of the habit of deference."[1] He is talking about an ideal, a method and a content representing the best of upper class English and American education. He is not talking about education and its possibilities in social reconstruction.

Laski makes a curiously redundant statement when he says that ". . . education alone is not enough,"[2] not because of the statement itself, but because of the qualifying observation which follows:

> It may confer knowledge upon a citizen who the state yet denies the opportunity of using his knowledge . . . to this end, four rights are essential: he must be able freely to speak his mind; he must have the right to associate with others like minded with himself for the promotion of some end, or ends upon which they are agreed; he must be able to assist in choosing those by whom he is to be governed; and he must be able to take a part in the governance of the state.[3]

In a wordy sort of way Laski is saying that a man must have the right of free speech, assembly and association, the vote and the right to run for office. It may be pointed out that, in the western democracies, men

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[1] Ibid., p. 216.

[2] Harold Laski, A Grammar of Politics, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1929), p. 47.

[3] Ibid., p. 47.

speak freely, often whether they have anything to say or not. They assemble on every street corner for redress of grieviances, the exact nature of which is often forgotten. They vote regularly on issues, the importance of which they do not understand. And they run for public office, innocent of even the most rudimentary knowledge of its duties. In the exercise of these democratic rights education could be helpful. It might even possess the qualities of a dynamic.

A Principle of Social Change

If Laski was unable to accept the principle that education is institutionally qualified to act as a dynamic of social change as exemplified by the American Progressivists, at least those of an earlier persuasion, with the elements of their own valuational structure standing relative to each other, democracy-experience-growth alone being a constant, the question remains: what principle did Laski want? The Harvard Committee had agreed that the possibility for a level of action apart from agreement on ultimates would be an ideal of educational cooperation. Laski had recoiled from the statement as if he were David Hume reading Tertullian's "Credio Qui Absurdum."

> 'Cooperation on the level of action' was possible in wartime between nations as different in outlook as Russia and the United States; it the agreement on ultimates that became the vital matter the moment hostilities ceased. Mr. Churchill could lead a coalition government of Tories and Socialists until victory in Europe was won; afterwards, almost at once, 'cooperation on the level of action' became impossible simply because Tory 'ultimates' and Socialist 'ultimates' were too distant from each other. The Committee does not seem to realize that this is always what happens in life.[1]

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[1]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 367.

Laski wanted an ultimate, a principle, suitable as the solution to problems which were undeniable. For him, The Committee either could not or would not bring itself face to face with such a principle or the necessity for having one. For Laski, the reason was simple. The Committee would not probe the foundations of the American democracy under its capitalist system because it involved a challenge to premises already accepted. The parents of American children were not going to send their sons and daughters to schools from which they might return convinced that the premises might well be challenged.[1] Parents wanted their children to be kind and generous, gracious and intelligent, but more than any of these, they wanted their children to learn how to get on and to avoid the s tigma associated with oddity, eccentricity, and, possibly, intellectuality.

This conflict between the existant and the ought is reflective of a deep conflict in the American social structure and Laski assigns it reason to the lack of revelency of the Christian view of man.[2] The conflict that raged about theological orthodoxy has passed from the scene and the center of that conflict now involves the social sciences. There is a demand for orthodoxy in their interpretation and use,[3] and the forces marshalled for this purpose are no more transigent than those of a century ago. "A ruling class in any society will permit discussions of its fundamentals only when it can watch dissent from them with smiling ease."[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 367.

[2] Ibid., p. 368.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

Laski is sure that the conflict will continue because orthodoxy stands out in bold relief against questions so obvious as to be insistent. Students will continue to ask questions, he believed, concerning the successes of the Russians; they will wonder why the TVA poses such a serious threat to "sound" American principles; they will continue to ask why Roman Catholic pressure could prevent Bertrand Russell from teaching mathematics at City College of New York.[1]

Where then for Laski is the precise point at which the lack of ultimate principle prevents cooperation "on the level of action?"

> There cannot be a new education without a new society to sustain it. And a new society needs a new philosophy of living which evaluates human beings and social institutions on a scale more proportionate to the new environment. It is not just a matter of altering the curriculum in some more or less drastic way . . .
> What is wanted is a fundamental change in the spirit by which the present American system of education is permeated to its very foundations. I do not think that change can come save by an alteration in the values of the American way of life; and the only road to that alteration lies in recasting that way of life as a part of a reorganization of the principles of Western Civilization.[2]

Laski's answer is that ultimate principle is negated with capitalism and the business man's arrangement, and it takes on both substance and meaning in socialism. Laski's answer is not educational at all; it is social and economic.

This is not to say that Laski did not want for education a freedom of inquiry bound only by its own integrity. The fact is that he wanted these disciplines to examine society and he wanted society to find and follow a direction in the light of those findings. Superficially,

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[1] Ibid., p. 369.

[2] Ibid.

one might conclude that Laski believed that education unrestrained by ignorance and cupidity would somehow come to lead in social reorganization. This is not the case. For Laski, education must start from a new social and economic premise. Education will not furnish it.

> They think that education produces the open mind, the reasonable man, toleration, that instincts and sentiments can be made subordinate to the claims of reason. It is pleasant to think so; but one wishes that the Committee (Harvard) had some evidence to prove that the subordination has, in fact, been made.[1]

In the light of such statements, one may well conclude that a lack of unified principle in the American social and economic arrangement did not really bother Laski at all. What bothered him was the fact that the prevailing prinicple, quite apart from its possibilities of unity, undergirded property and the inequity which it entailed. For Laski, this was not reason; the Negro in the United States, North and South; the steel worker in Pittsburgh; the pecan-sheller in San Antonio and the sharecropper in Arkansas, these are no longer going to be satisfied with an arrangement which denies them a share in the produce of society, no matter what appeal is made to orthodoxy and its supposed relationship to "natural law."[2] Economic power, embodied in a socialist arrangement, was the unifying principle.

> Economic power can command knowledge out of all proportion to its own intelligence. It can afford to wait, and it does not find that the contours of its normal life are greatly altered by the need of waiting. But the organization of men who lack economic power has few of these advantages. Its main weapons are often so costly, as in a strike, that it cannot afford to use them. Its power to purchase knowledge is less . . .

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[1] Ibid., p. 367.

[2] Ibid., p. 390.

> Public opinion in an unequal society . . . cannot make its claims in terms of its moral character. . . . No social order, therefore, will ever satisfy the demands of its citizens equally, or even seriously attempt the equal recognition of their rights, so long as there are serious inequalities in the distribution of economic power.[1]

Economic power equitably distributed and diffused among all the members of society would be a unifying principle. Education then might find firm footing upon the foundation of social relevancy, the purpose for which it is intended.

The present arrangement, as exemplified by the Harvard Committee's approach is, for Laski, "an obvious specific for quiet times; and anyone who looks into the contents of that Pandora's box from which so much involving high passion has been liberated by the Second World War will not be tempted into the belief that the next thirty years are likely to figure as a quiet time . . ."[2] In the middle of a vicious and stultifying age with its decreasing control of itself and its increasing need for the possibility and sense of self-direction, Laski the socialist--not Laski the teacher--called for institutional revision on the following terms:

> It would mean the planned state instead of the State which regrets deviations from the principle of 'laissez-faire.' It would even replace the cash-nexus as the basis of economic relations on the ground that it condemns the great majority of human beings to live in a social and cultural vacuum incompatible with the dignity of human nature. They are asking him to subordinate the religion of private property to a collective social purpose which makes job in work, the adventure of creative living, even more fully open to the masses of mankind.[3]

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[1]Laski, Introduction to Politics, p. 73.

[2]Laski, The American Democracy, p. 391.

[3]Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

A summary of Laski's educational position, within the framework which we have arbitrarily set, includes the following: Laski had studied extensively the sordid background of economic and social deprivation. Unlike many others who assigned religious dogma in cause and effect relationship to the rise of capitalism, Laski simply notes the secularizing force of the reformation and the concomitant rise of liberalism. The same force saw the rise of the business man and his subsequent capture of the means of production. Class society based on economic means became dominant and it is to this that Laski would apply democratic socialism.

As a teacher, Laski gave of himself unsparingly to the betterment of his students and, indeed, regarded his duty to them as paramount in his academic career. He was hyper-sensitive to academic freedom and had un-feigned respect for their differeing views, though he was too honest to argue issues of the moment with them on the basis of a phony intellectual equality. Laski's long tenure in the chair of economics at London and his prominence as a world figure gave him an influence at the university equaled by few others.

Laski's opinion of the teacher in the business man's world is twofold. 1) The teacher, as a teacher, is never regarded as of much importance and his role in the community is regarded by the business man as somewhere between the ridiculous and the unnecessary. 2) The teacher is often seduced by the blandishments of the business man. Laski is contemptuous of the teacher who loves neatly rounded curricula, card indexes, and who writes textbooks.

Regarding contemporary practices in education, Laski defines his own view of the purposes of the university. The university shall equip the student to turn facts into truth; it shall not turn the student into a fountain of facts nor turn him into an expert. In the process, the university shall be indifferent to the various claims of validity, standing only with the bias of free inquiry.

Laski deals at some length with the quantity and quality of English education. He decries the difficulty experienced by working class children in passing the barriers of class and he calls to mind the difficulty of these children in finding a place in the upper ranks of the Church, the military and the foreign service. Laski strikes his most telling blow at T. S. Eliot because Eliot, in recoiling from the vista of his own "wasteland," had retreated into a philosophy of privilege and class distinction.

American education is generally admired by Laski for its quantity but not its quality. Among his comments are these: 1) much of public schooling is concerned with "superficialities," 2) the extra-curricular often seems to be central rather than peripheral, 3) the education system is a reflection of the value structure of the larger society, 4) higher

education places too much emphasis on the lecture and credits, and 5) the Ph. D. is a monstrosity.

Contemporary philosophies of education reveal, for Laski, the fact that capitalist and class-ridden societies find it wise to educate only to a degree which produces effective workingmen, but not to a degree which allows liberal thought. It is Laski's contention that economic differences contribute to ignorance and to the lack of true fellowship, both indicative of the class arrangement. When men receive education, their first result is a recognition that economic distinction cannot be justified.

Laski contends that American education has never really defined its aims and it cannot, therefore, know what it wants or how to get there. Somewhat surprisingly, Laski found no comfort in the work of men like Counts and Dewey, though by every other test he was a naturalist. For Laski, the educational philosophy of these men served only to warn the business man of danger. Generally, Laski found these things in American education objectionable: 1) the inadequate preparation of the student leaving the secondary schools, 2) "vocationalism," 3) the governing structure of the American university, 4) the lack of academic freedom, and, 5) the influence of foundations.

Finally, Laski sees education as reflective and somewhat passive because it will not examine the postulates underlying it. He discounts the dynamism of education as a force for societal change, and he is inconsistent when he calls for a content and method associated historically with privilege and makes a challenge to privilege the burden of his argument. His challenge to the Harvard Committee's report is a

challenge to capitalist economics and what he believes is the irrevelency of the traditional Christian view of man and the conflict in the orthodox interpretation of the social sciences. In the end, Laski's challenge is to capitalism as an ultimate principle of economic arrangement.

Conclusion

There are inconsistencies in the thought of Harold Laski. Perhaps it involves no great effort to point them out. In a detailed study of much material, one is liable to magnify out of proportion avenues of thought that were in fact peripheral and to synthesize elements by means of a curious logic. There is also the feeling that no matter how convincing one's critical exception to a great thinker's material may be, the learned man would if he could, demolish the exception at a stroke. The fact remains, however, that Laski's educational thought is not wholly consistent with his social and political philosophy and such written comment as there is contains only a survey which, to use Laski's own words in another context, "are peaks that he could hardly avoid." Kingsley Martin afford the following insight:

> . . . he wrote too much, repeated himself too often, neglected those periods of lonely thought out of which creative ideas spring, and so was less effective than he could have been.[1]

It is no criticism of Laski to point out an obvious fact: he was no philosopher of education in its more technical and systematic meaning. He never claimed to be. He was a profound and influential philosopher of politics and economics. And unlike all but a handful of

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[1]Martin, Harold Laski, p. 248.

men in the present century, Laski knew something of practically everything and very much about a few things. Those who remain his intellectual auditors are obliged to criticize with care less they castigate his thought because it falls somewhat short of omnicience.

The great value of Laski's educational thought lies in his ability to see education's obvious absurdities against the background of its pretentions and to challenge the biases which produce its shortcomings from the fresh context of his own bias. Much as Sinclair Lewis and a host of other commentators, analyzing the ridiculous everywhere apparent in contemporary life Laski could better recognize myth, ignorance and cupidity for what they were than to prescribe their specific remedy. And in common with many who urge a fundamental change in the social arrangement, he failed to see much of the good that the present arrangement affords. If the business man's society maintains the "myth" of sacred property, yet in the United States at least it affords a large degree of social and economic mobility; if it works to mold an educational system in its own image, yet it affords more educational opportunity than much of its citizenry is willing to use; and if a good deal of nonsense attends the national educational effort, yet it breeds a generous mind.

Whatever the value of Laski's educational insights, one thing is undisputable: he stated those insights well. Martin states that

> His writing undoubtedly suffered from speed and the lack of revision. The admirable force and clarity which characterized his best journalism became less frequent in his later writing. Sometimes he wrote in long sentences, in which the prolixity hid looseness of thought

> and laid him open to the severe criticism of an austere master of prose like George Orwell.[1]

Martin and Orwell notwithstanding, Laski wrote at times with such a rich expression and with such a fluid command of language as only virtuosity could produce. If his command of language is not simply due to genius, then it is his best argument for an Oxford education.

As a teacher, Laski was simply gifted. There seems to be no evidence that he was concerned with the techniques which are developed and hopefully transmitted by reason of conscious training. He loved teaching, he was committed to the intellectual welfare of his students and he had, to use that much abused theological term, a charismatic quality which separates the merely competent from the truly great. Martin quotes Laski as saying of his career in the classroom:

> Two goods which make the adventure endlessly worthwhile. The first is a sense that every active Socialist has of being what Heine called 'a soldier in the liberation war of humanity.' The second good is the glory of love and friendship.[2]

Laski died on March 24, 1950, in his fifty-seventh year. One of his students called to mind a quotation which he himself had used on some occasion:

> I never got so much good among all by Books by a whole day's plodding in a Study as by an houres discourse I have got with him. For he was not a Library lock'd up, nor a Book clasped, but stood open ready to converse with all that had a mind to learn. It may be truely said of him, That a man might alwaies come Better from him . . .[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 248.

[2] Ibid., p. 256.

[3] John Smith, Selected Discourses, from Sermon by Simon Patrick, (J. Flesher; for W. Moroen, Bookseller in Cambridge, MDCLX).

This is a fitting epitaph to the distinguished career of an eminent social thinker and a provocative educator.

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