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EDUCATING MEN WITH REFERENCE TO SOCIAL LEGISLATION.

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I. *The subjective demand for the young men's class.*

Miss Jane Addams once said that the social settlement movement grew out of the moral demand of awakened spirits to have a share in the life of the multitude of working people. The new and increasing interest in helpful legislation has a familiar origin.

1. From the number of men in the vast throngs which witness the spectacular sports in our great cities, at enormous cost, one might well infer that the universal interest of youth is athletic achievement. But this is only a symptom of a deeper and wider movement. In late adolescence and early manhood there is naturally an enjoyment in the forth-putting of energy and in vicarious co-operation with feats of skill and the display of physical power. The instinct which calls for active exercise, and for deeds of risk and daring is inherited from the past and still has value in human life. The young man who has no joy in vigorous and competitive sports is by so much unfit for his function as father, bread winner, soldier and leader.

2. The young man who has foresight enough to keep out of prison or poorhouse has an absorbing interest in the question of *income*. The normal young man knows that he must not only make his own way in life, but that he must also provide for wife and children; and this discovery gives him a keen interest in craft, trade, manufacture and commerce. The average young man knows that if he fails to make money he will either fail to get a wife, or fail to keep her out of the divorce court. Any young man who has material in him to make a Christian must have the economic impulse strong and well developed.

3. To balance these partly egoistic impulses there arises an *altruistic* interest in healthy young men which generally takes the form of *political activity*. This is manifested in the multitude of clubs, almost all of which seek expression and influence through public agencies; i. e., in politics. Passive hearing of sermons and lectures and introspective speeches in prayer meeting cannot reasonably be expected to take the place of this genuine and natural joy in the game of politics.

4. The few morbid and neurasthenic young men who care neither for physical power, nor for business, nor for politics, are in danger of becoming parasites, mere driftwood, and probably criminals. Their lack of enthusiasm for these primary and

necessary concerns of humanity are indications of spiritual anemia; they need physical, intellectual and moral tonic and their case is often quite as hopeless as that of profligates.

It should, of course, be very easy, as it would be useless, to bombard healthy young fellows with the ethical platitudes about the sinfulness of sports, money making, and political trickery; a tirade against the manifestations of normal impulses is not sound ethical teaching. The true educator will seek to give a rational direction to these powerful currents of energy and rejoice in the fierce sport which under bridle and rein gives promise of achievement.

II. *The objective demand of the City, Commonwealth, and Nation.*

1. There is a call to every Christian young man to help make the law a source of security and order to all men, and to identify it with swift and exact justice for the most humble and obscure. At present only too frequently justice is a luxury accessible only to the rich who can hire lawyers and give bonds and carry cases to the Supreme Court through weary years of litigation. It is a matter of common knowledge and frequent comment that theoretically our law is equal to all, but practically its benefits must be purchased at a price which only the strong can afford to pay. This fact is at the root of some of the most anti-social and dangerous tendencies in our life.

2. There is a call to all Christian men to help make the laws of the nation and commonwealth express our moral demand in relation to *common welfare*. The powerful machinery of government, of legislation, of administration, has a task in promoting the physical health and productive energies of the people. Who can contemplate, without poignant regret, the frightful waste of child life which has made the nation bleed from every artery in the years gone by? Who can estimate the misery, pain, death and mutilation of strong and valuable workmen in mine, on the railroad, and in the workshop, without a shudder and a solemn protest? Who can rest easy in his mind in the presence of preventable diseases like tuberculosis, pneumonia and typhoid fever? The physical resources of a people are a part of its true capital without which its wealth of ore and fertile soil is poverty indeed. It is wise for us to look forward to the conservation of forests, water power and gold mines; but far more important is it to employ the administrative agencies of local and general governments to conserve the health and industrial efficiency of the people. The situation in our age distinctly requires that law should be identified with the protection of bodily vigor of the workers in all callings.

We are also coming to see that through local and general governments there are many ways of insuring an adequate and regular income for the multitudes of families, who left to themselves would ever live in the presence of economic ruin. Thus, for example, when the bread winner of the family is incapacitated for his ordinary labors by diseases which arise from the neglected sanitation of the work-place, or when he is disabled by a preventable accident in mill or mine, we see the necessity of legal provision for insurance. The experience of all modern nations demonstrates the fact that this guarantee of at least a minimum income during periods of industrial disability, can never be provided by individual or private action. All the great nations of Europe have admitted this fact, and today their laws, in one form or another, recognize the right of a workingman to income during periods of involuntary idleness. It goes without saying that the poor law is not meant in this connection, for it is a badge of social humiliation.

But all citizens have a right to a chance at the best things open to humanity. We must identify our legal institutions more and more with the opportunities of *culture* for the multitude of our citizens. We must believe in their capacity for culture; we must believe that they would generally respond to the invitation to a banquet of spiritual enjoyments; we must believe that they are our brothers of the same blood, not merely in things of sense, but also in respect to the finest flowers of art and literature. This belief is partly manifested in our system of public instruction; but that is thus far limited to little children even where compulsory attendance is enforced. The law must go further and open up pure springs of rational and aesthetic enjoyment to the entire population of men and women who are now chained to the grinding and monotonous tasks of production.

3. It is by this route that we are to tame the *spirit of lawlessness and litigation* which menaces our institutions and our progress. On every hand we hear the loud complaints of respectable citizens that there is no reverence for law and for courts. It is idle to rebuke this spirit without offering reasons. We can plainly see that in the practical administration of law there are causes of revolt; for, in many cases, the law itself provokes antagonism. For example, contrary to the published requirements of law, most respecting men conceal their investments in the form of mortgages and bonds, and they would conceal their stocks also if it were possible. They hide their securities in strong boxes, which will be opened to public gaze only in the last judgment day, too late to relieve our needs for

extending the public school buildings and trade schools in Chicago and elsewhere. But these same respectable sinners declaim vehemently against the lawlessness of the trade unions and of the vulgar crowd. Examples could be cited both in the North and South among the wealthy and the influential, the employers of men and the directors of great corporations.

In our cities we can find poor men who from boyhood up think of the law only as they have seen it embodied in the policeman who drove them from their only playground, the street, when they were children, and hindered their strike when they were men. The only political personage who has ever done anything for them which they can understand is a Johnny Powers or some similar grafter, who distributes a small part of the booty collected from corporations in payment for votes on franchises. Their experience with courts reveals to them a complicated and unintelligible procedure which grinds out a mockery of justice in damage suits after long years of strife and mind-racking suspense. These experiences have produced the spirit of anarchy and lawlessness which all of us so deeply regret. Anarchy as a social theory has little influence, but hostility to courts, statutes and penal codes, which is fed by real injustice organized in law and administered by solemn courts, is too deep and lasting to be dissipated by mere argument and exhortation to goodness. Here is a field worthy of effort by the most energetic of the young men in our churches, especially young lawyers not yet fossilized.

III. *The Duty of the Church.*

1. Unquestionably it is the social function of the church to *stimulate and inspire religious* interest in our common humanity; to generate electrical energies of the divine life in man. This is a task which the newspaper, valuable as it is, can never adequately fulfill. Leadership of the great congregation in worship and religious meditation must be the throbbing heart center of all that is holiest and grandest in social effort. Accepting all reasonable and fair criticisms of defects of church life we can still claim for her through all the ages, that she has performed this highest of all services continuously and effectively; and today there is not a splendid achievement of moral enterprise which cannot be traced back to that spirit of universal justice, reason and conscience which has grown out of church influence. This social function is permanent in humanity and leadership in it clearly belongs to the church.

2. It is the duty of the church to discover and indicate to its young men the most wholesome and effective *directions* for the transmission and utilization of this spiritual enthusiasm.

It is not enough to create religious and moral power; that force will either break forth as a cyclone to destroy, or it will be guided to useful ends by reason. It is in this function that the church has too often failed. It has awakened often the spirit of charity without taking pains to make benevolence beneficent.

IV. *Perhaps the one best method of fulfilling the duty of the church toward society is to provide for the discussion of social duties by classes of young men in connection with their religious education.*

The church must consciously and intelligently utilize the amazing energies of young men for the best methods of promoting human welfare in the earth. Their love of competitive sport, their eagerness for achievement, their intense desire to gain wealth, their joy in political activity must not be set aside and ignored, but directed toward unselfish and Christ-like ends.

It is true that there are various good ways by which a church can and should act. Nothing can ever take the place of the sermon as a means of inspiration and suggestion. Even ordinary preachers who are sincerely earnest and upright have a position of social power which no statesman or editor can ever hope to attain in a community; and in addition the church may have its library with modern books for the instruction and guidance of its members. The good women in the congregation have already done great good in works of kindness.

But the *best* way to take up and make fruitful for the Kingdom of God the inherent forces of human life is the *discussion of urgent social tasks* in classes of young men. Discussion, not debate for victory. There is a vast difference in the educational method and results between a debate and a discussion. In the latter every member of the class may add some thought of value without temptation to sophistry, to mere verbal or logical superiority.

Furthermore the discussion in the men's class is worth very much more than drawing up and passing resolutions which frequently commit the entire body to a position which they cannot rationally explain or defend. In the discussion each man retains, with all sincerity, his own personal position, but he is enabled to enlarge his views and to give his thought a wiser direction.

There is no call for political and economic *creeds* and *programs* to bind the individual conscience by the authority of a majority. We have had enough of that in the theology of our ecclesiastical past, and in this new social enterprise we must avoid the ancient blunder. The sense of personal responsibility

must be strengthened, not weakened, by the assumption of the group, by the craze of the mob, and by the domination of individual leaders. In war the superior officer gives a command and the soldier must obey without asking questions; but social service is not war and is under entirely different conditions. Out of the discussion young men come into a larger conception of life and with richer materials for the formation of their own arguments. It matters little after that what party claims their allegiance. Such men, so inspired and guided by knowledge will make all parties servants of the commonwealth.

The Range of Discussion.

First of all the young men's class will grow in knowledge of those *conditions of their own community* and of the state which hinder or help human welfare or progress. They will know the dangers to which working people are exposed, the temptations of political partisanship, abuses of legislatures and courts, or plots and schemes of unprincipled bosses in municipal affairs and the measures which have been suggested by the masters of social science in various departments.

The individual members of the men's class will instinctively seek to put into action the ideas thus gained and clarified by comparison of views. In young men of surplus vigor, aware of a hurtful situation, will awake the competitive and combative impulses. The class will not be advocates of social classes, will not go into politics, will not take sides with parties, will not identify themselves with any clique or organization; but each individual member will be charged with new enthusiasm and a purpose which will compel him to co-operate with the experts in different fields of social service.

Not without its educational value is that criticism of the movements in which the members are taking part. When young men are active in social work of various kinds they will bring back to their comrades reports of the things which they are doing, and will hear their methods criticized; they will receive further suggestions and in the light of new knowledge will go forward anew and be not less zealous, but more effective.

It will always be necessary to have some concrete basis of work administered and supported by the class itself as a practice ground for the expression of fellowship in service. Usually this work will be somewhat simple and local and free from controversial factors.