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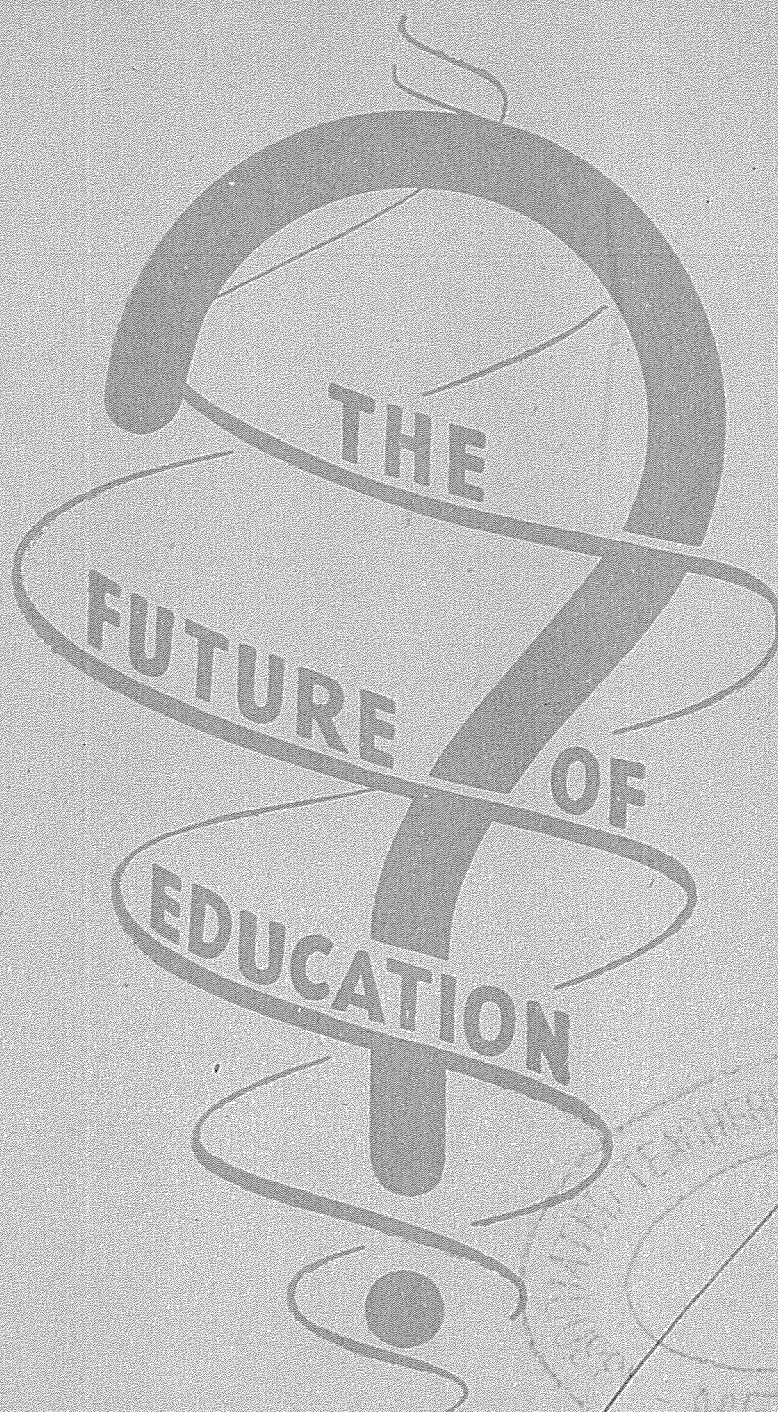
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No. 8

**ADULT EDUCATION IN POST-WAR
AUSTRALIA**

C. R. BADGER

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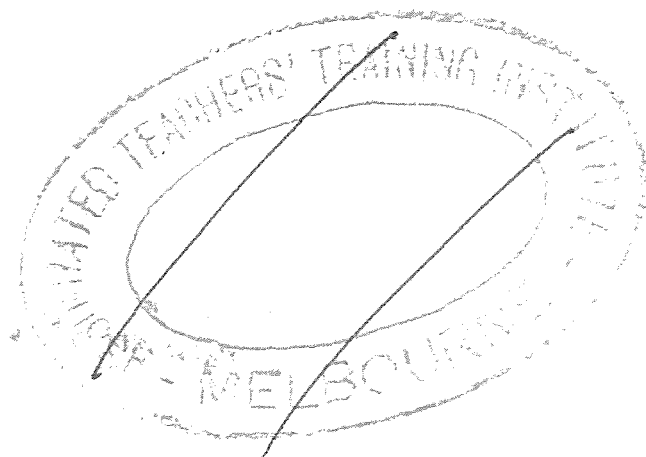
No. 8

ADULT EDUCATION IN POST-WAR AUSTRALIA

BY

C. R. BADGER

*(Director of University Extension,
University of Melbourne)*



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH

1944

ADULT EDUCATION IN POST-WAR AUSTRALIA

'The pressing problem is to give the masses of the nation some higher education, which will include that study of human ideals and achievement which we call literature, history and politics and that study of the material universe which we call science. In some form these are essential to the full development of all human beings, but at present the majority of the nation has no chance of studying them.'

Sir Richard Livingstone.

Preface to *The Future in Education*. C.U.P. 1941.

IT was an astonishing building to find in a small town. Nothing else about the place was particularly noteworthy. The commercial buildings were no better and no worse than they usually are in small towns in the Australian countryside. The civic buildings, town hall and offices, were not so much above the average as to call for comment. But at the back of the town hall, well set in a beautiful tree-shaded open space, set about with lawns and flower beds, was a first-class building. Delightfully planned, of a good modern design, plain even to the point of austerity, yet full of light, and giving an impression of gaiety and charm, it was a building that positively invited you to come in. It was so much a public building, a community affair. You knew you would be welcome inside.

So in I went. This really was an exciting place—a community centre for a community with ideas. I was taken in charge by the librarian, who was also

director of the whole place, and who gave me a full account of the work being done. I learned from him, incidentally, that he had been in the Army Education Service during the war, on his discharge had wanted to take up work in which he could find an outlet for the interests he had developed in that service, and had finally decided that this particular job was made for him.

The work of the centre is based on the library, which occupies a splendid well-lit room in the main building. It is not a large library, as such things go, containing about ten to fifteen thousand books. As it is linked, however, with the main library in the city of X, some distance away, a large part of the book stock changes every three months or so, and only standard reference books and books of particular interest to residents of the district stay permanently on the shelves. All the books in the library can be borrowed, free of charge, by residents. Special books, reference works and so on, can be obtained through the library from the regional library at X, which carries a much larger and more specialized stock. I was particularly interested to see the number of young people, boys and girls from the High School, I suppose, who were choosing books from the shelves and reading at the magazine tables. The librarian told me that when the library was first established, it was a firmly held conviction in the town that people there would not read good books. The problem now was how to get enough books to meet the demand!

Apart from the library, the centre has a first-rate canteen, run by a committee of townsfolk who have

made themselves responsible for its management. It is the central meeting place for the centre and is used by both adults and the younger people who attend the boys' and girls' clubs.

The rest of the building consists of a lecture hall, seating about 200-300 people, fitted with a stage and all necessary equipment for producing plays. It has an excellent electric gramophone, for music recitals, and also a 16mm. cinema projector for showing documentary films. The hall, at the time I saw it, was being used to display a collection of pictures on loan from the National Gallery, illustrating the growth of Australian painting from 1900. I was told that such displays were held frequently—not always pictures, but collections of prints, photographs, exhibitions of design and so on, from all sorts of sources. I was very sorry to have missed seeing another exhibition that had just closed. It was a show of books, photographs, letters, plans and so on, got together by a class from the High School, to tell the story of the old days in the district. It included, I was told, some first-rate material on the methods used in agriculture by the pioneers who opened up the district.

As well as this main hall, there are three smaller lecture rooms, used for discussion groups, committee meetings and for other purposes. A very good gymnasium, used by the local committee of the National Fitness Council for its work and for a very enjoyable folk dancing group, in which all take part, two large rooms for boys' and girls' clubs, and a large studio-work room, for craft and hobby work,

complete the centre. In the craft room, I saw a group at work making the scenery for a play to be produced in the little theatre, but I was told that the room and equipment is mainly used for work in conjunction with the boys' and girls' clubs. The painting and the modelling groups work there, but they do a great deal of outdoor sketching as well.

The primary purpose of the centre is educational, but it is by no means a school in the accepted sense of that term. None the less, its educational aims are very serious indeed. It is non-vocational and does not compete in any way with the technical school at X; it does not attempt to teach typing, or book-keeping, or accountancy, though classes in economics are quite often held. The educational emphasis is twofold. In the first place, it stresses citizenship in the widest sense, the aim being the development of a sense of responsibility and self-discipline, the stimulation of a desire to know more about current affairs, economic, political and social. In the second, it emphasises quite naturally the idea of self-training for intelligent use of leisure. The strong growth of interests in the arts in this community, the almost universal interest in music, painting and in literature in the town, are evidences of success in this second aim. Success in the first is perhaps best shown by the strong attacks which have been made from time to time on the centre, because it was held to be disseminating 'radical' ideas!

The programme followed is something like this. There are two formal lecture classes, one of which meets under the leadership of a lecturer sent to the

town under the University Extension Scheme, the other under the leadership of a local lecturer, who happens to be the town doctor. The University class is studying International Affairs, particularly the problems of the Pacific. The other is following a course of reading and discussion on English and Australian literature and is also doing a good deal of writing. This class edits the centre journal and has written and produced two quite good plays. There are three smaller study circles, one on parent education, consisting largely of young people with young children, another studying economics, and another natural history. The latter group was making a collection of the fauna and flora of the district and had got together an impressive display. Some of these groups change year by year; others maintain continuity of purpose and interest and carry their studies to an advanced stage. One very popular feature is the Open Forum, which meets on Saturday evenings, at which speakers from neighbouring towns, political leaders and orators from the city are invited to put their views and to run the gauntlet of rapid-fire comment and criticism from the audience.

I was told that the educational programme, and indeed the whole centre itself, was by no means haphazard, but was the result of very careful thought and planning. It all had an air of delightful informality and improvisation, but this was rather deceptive. What happened was that long before the centre was established a group of citizens had been called together to see what could be done for the employment of young people of the district. They

found a twofold problem. First, there had been a steady drift away from the district, which it seemed could not be stopped because of the poor opportunities offering for young people. Secondly, the young people who did remain, it was felt, were not being helped to become good citizens. There was simply nothing for them to do during their spare time. They could go to the cinema, lounge around the streets, go off to Y to an occasional race meeting, drink at the hotels or stay at home. That was all. Once they left the schools, nothing more was done about their education. The committee felt that this was not good enough. In the cities there were many attractions—libraries, concerts, art galleries, educational classes; in their town there was nothing at all. There was no club for young people, no way of helping them in the most critical years of their lives, no way of interesting them in their town or their country. After a survey of the town and district, which brought out some pretty dismal facts about housing conditions and social welfare generally, the committee decided that something really had to be done. It interested the local press, brought pressure to bear on the Municipal Council, secured assistance from the State Government, and began to plan. The programme, originally designed for young people as a remedial measure, quickly broadened out to include all the people of the district. It was found that the centre met a need which had not hitherto been suspected; it became a response to demand which was quite inarticulate but nevertheless very real.

The spectacular success of the project demonstrates the wisdom of the method of approach. This centre really grew out of a need, and is therefore soundly established.

There are many points which I should like to tell you about the centre. I ought to tell you about the annual summer school and camp which is held in the town, which attracts a great many people from the outlying district to spend a week or so during the 'off season,' living in the centre and carrying on their studies, but I think you will by now have grasped what a remarkable centre this is and what good work it is doing.

Where is this centre to be found? What town has been enterprising enough to look to the real welfare of its citizens in this way? Unfortunately, there is no such centre, there is no such city or town in Australia. Other countries have such centres and will have more of them, but we have not yet had the wisdom to experiment with them. My purpose in elaborating this sketch of an imaginary community centre is to show in a simple way what the modern educationist is thinking about when he talks of adult education. To some people that term has frightening associations. It conjures up visions of dullness and boredom. It means heavy books, uncomfortable surroundings, cheerless halls and prosy lectures. It means uplift dispensed by professionally anaemic and polite uplifters. It is not felt to be vitally related to community life, not concerned with the urgent and current problems of living. But adult education could and should be just that. It should

grow out of and relate to the actual conditions of living.

It cannot be denied that we will need more and more adult education in post-war Australia. There are many encouraging signs that the people of Australia are becoming aware of the deficiencies of their educational systems, and that reform and reconstruction, long overdue, will be brought about by the steady pressure of public opinion. There is a strong demand for a general raising of the school leaving age, for revised and better curricula, for better professional training for teachers, and for far more liberal provision of school buildings and equipment. And there is, fortunately, an increasingly strong demand for adult education. The universities and the Workers' Educational Associations all report that the demand for their own type of adult education is increasing beyond their capacity to satisfy it. Discussion groups spring up on every side, the demand for books and pamphlets has become clamorous, there is a quite new vigour and determination in the talk about education itself. One thing is perhaps especially significant. Before the war, plans had been laid in N.S.W. for a great expansion in the provision of libraries, and it is to be hoped that these plans will be carried into effect when the war ends. In the other states, too, something has already been done, and still more undoubtedly will be done, to provide libraries which form the basis of any good system of adult education. Beyond this we have not gone, and the task before us is to plan and build an adult education system which will be very wide in its

scope and will provide means and opportunity for all the citizens of the Commonwealth to increase their knowledge and understanding.

No one will seriously dispute the need for widespread adult education to-day. Indeed, on all sides, the need for it is being more and more clamantly expressed. The case for widespread adult education is more powerful than ever before, because the problems which confront modern societies, especially in the democratic countries, are extremely difficult and complex and demand an educated population for their solution. Modern democratic society requires from its citizens a very high degree of responsibility and a quite unusual combination of judgment and knowledge. Democracy is still on trial. It is a vast experiment in which the qualities of the average man will be tested to the uttermost, and a society which attempts to govern itself by democratic methods and neglects to educate its citizens risks failure—indeed, is foredoomed to fail.

‘If we want every citizen to have the chance of the fullest development of which he is capable,’ writes Dr. C. E. W. Bean in his excellent recent book, *War Aims of a Plain Australian*,¹ ‘it is obvious that we must provide a system of education capable of so developing him; but that is not the only, or, perhaps, the most urgent, reason why education is vital. It is essential if we are to maintain the social or political framework of democracy, which alone can furnish its citizens with equal opportunities. If

1. *War Aims of a Plain Australian*, C. E. W. Bean, p. 93. Angus & Robertson, 1943.

our democracy is to be founded in any degree on private enterprise, education of the future employer to an increased sense of trusteeship for his workers and fellow citizens is the paramount condition, failing which that system will break down as surely as the sun rises. If our democracy is to be based on socialism, education of all citizens in their responsibility to the State is equally vital. If our representative system is to continue, we must educate the electors sufficiently to enable most of them to understand the issues and principles of life in a co-operative society.'

The sort of education demanded by Dr. Bean and readily recognized as essential for the citizen of to-day is an education which can be given to adults, which, indeed, in the fullest sense, can be given only to adults. As Sir Richard Livingstone has forcefully pointed out in his brilliant book, *The Future in Education*, genuine education in citizenship can be given only to those who have had some degree of practical experience of life or its problems. 'We have,' he writes, 'wholly overlooked a vital principle in education. Its neglect is largely responsible for the limited success of the education we have; and the great problem of national education will never be solved until we take it into account. The principle is: *That almost any subject is studied with much more interest and intelligence by those who know something of its subject matter than by those who do not: and, conversely, that it is not profitable to study theory without some practical experience of the facts to which it relates.*'² The acceptance of this

2. Sir Richard Livingstone, *The Future in Education*, p. 7. C.U.P., 1941.

truth, as a principle of educational practice, demands that the most important part of education—that which fits a man for active and intelligent participation in the life of his community, that which enables him to understand the world he lives in, that which helps him to decide for himself the complex and confusing issues presented to him by social and political life—shall be given at some stage decidedly later than the normal school leaving age. The education given to children is not adequate for these purposes, so provision must be made for education when the recipient is ready to receive it.

The vast majority of our children leaves the elementary schools at the age of 14; a small number receives secondary and technical education after this age, while proportionately only a handful is able to continue studying up to and beyond the university level. Very few receive the sort of education which is a genuine preparation for life. Nobody seriously supposes that the child who leaves the state school at the age of 14 has received all the education from which he can benefit, or that the education he has received is enough or of the right kind to fit him for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. Yet we do no more. Failure to provide for further education means that the effort expended in the preliminary stage of education is partly wasted. As Sir Richard Livingstone forcibly says, 'The chief uses of our present elementary system are to enable a minority to proceed to further education, and the rest to read the cheap press. . . . Consider what a child has learnt by the age of 14.

He can read and write and do arithmetic. He has made a beginning in many subjects, and received a training which enables him to use an opportunity of learning more. But of history, except in a superficial sense, he knows nothing; of the forces that affect the fortunes of the country, which as a voter he will help to determine, he knows nothing; economics, historical traditions, political theories are a closed mystery to him; he will have opened the great book of literature but he has had little time to turn its pages; of science he is even more ignorant.³

Our present denial of opportunity for further education does not mean that the child thereafter ceases to learn. Learning is a life-long process, whether we will it or not. The denial of opportunity for well-planned education means that the teachers hereafter are the street corner and the racecourse, the bar-room, and the sports ground, the radio, the press and the cinema, the political meeting and the chance book or pamphlet. There are other educators too, other teachers, such as the factory, the office, the trade union, the sports club, the church association, and innumerable other agencies. Some of these are good and train men in the ways of co-operative living, some are bad, none are adequate. The education they give is haphazard and unsystematic, neither controlled by social purpose nor enlightened by reflection. It is certainly a responsibility of any civilized community to see to it that there are other teachers, and other means of education, helps and aids of many kinds, to help make the citizen and build the community.

3. *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.

There are indeed other reasons, of an even more practical kind, for advocating a great extension of adult education. It is often, and quite wrongly, assumed that education, except of a very specialized sort, imposes an economic cost on a society, and that the benefits it gives are not economic, but social. The fallacy of this view is easily exposed. It can readily be demonstrated that the great economic advances of the 19th and 20th centuries are due to increased knowledge. It is, in fact, the rapid increase of knowledge which sets the most difficult problem for modern economic societies, problems of adjustment, of standards of living, of men to new kinds of work and of supply to demand. Wealth and welfare increase only as man's control over nature becomes more direct, more conscious, more understanding. The modern world could not function at all, at its present level of efficiency, without mass education. As new knowledge becomes available and as new techniques of production are evolved, a corresponding rise in the educational level of the people becomes imperative. Not only is it necessary to have a more highly educated working force, managerial, accounting and technical staff; it is essential that the whole population should be better educated, or many of the benefits of innovation will be lost. With an increased power of production and with more efficient forms of production, the character of demand changes. Some part of these gains in productive technique is taken out in increased leisure—and economic opportunity is created in the multitude of agencies which now seek to enable men to

employ their leisure with greater satisfaction. New industries, meeting new wants, spring up; older industries decay or change their form. A progressive society is a changing society. But a society composed of people whose minds are inhibited by defective or too limited education will invariably prove to be conservative and unwilling to change. Alertness, flexibility, quick understanding of the relationship between cause and effect, the significance of a general trend or movement, these are produced only by the best and highest forms of education, and it is upon the development of these qualities that we must depend if economic progress is to be maintained. There is no space here to expound or expand this view and to show all its implications, but the interested reader would do well to consult Professor A. G. B. Fisher's book *The Clash of Progress and Security* (Macmillan).

In this context it is important to observe that the contemporary demand for adult education is itself a symptom of this economic process. It is because our economic advance is already providing the possibility of greater leisure and of greater income that the masses can now enjoy something of what a minority has always enjoyed—i.e., an opportunity for civilized living. The attempt to satisfy that demand has immense economic implications. It means increased welfare, in the strict economic sense. It means increased employment and greater economic opportunity. Those who doubt this should consider the growth of broadcasting—considered a tertiary industry by A. G. B. Fisher. The full economic benefits of a broadcasting system can only

be realized in countries which already have a relatively high standard of education. Alertness, flexibility, adaptability, are the conditions of economic success. Adult education is the most important single economic factor in the modern world.

Our failure to make adequate provision for the education of our young people after the school leaving age would not be so serious as it is now, if we had a well endowed, well equipped and widespread system of good libraries, art galleries, museums and other such centres, actively interesting themselves in education. But we have none of these things. None of our large cities or towns, except the capital cities, has a good public library. Even in some of the capital cities in the Commonwealth the libraries are very poor when measured by overseas standards, and when judged by the needs of the cities they serve. Outside the capital cities, there are only Mechanics' Institutes, so-called Free Public Libraries, which deal mostly in poor fiction. There is no national theatre, there are no good concert halls, no art galleries, museums, nothing which might help to make good the deficiencies of our backward educational system.

What systematic adult education there is in Australia is on a very small scale. It is carried on by the universities and by the voluntary body known as the Workers' Educational Association, which works in close co-operation with the universities. The influence of this education is very limited, scarcely extending beyond the capital cities, though the universities have all made strong efforts to maintain some form of adult education in the country, by

correspondence courses, by group discussion schemes or by sending extension lecturers. This work is itself seriously hampered by the lack of good libraries, and of suitable halls and lecture rooms, especially in country towns. There are, of course, many other agencies which are carrying on some type of adult education work, of a less systematic kind. There are church groups and societies, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., the National Fitness Council, debating societies, Mechanics' Institutes and many others. One relatively new and very important educational agency is the Australian Broadcasting Commission, which has done most important work. The A.B.C. has provided excellent series of concerts, it has sponsored radio plays, and its fine series of talks on the arts, on literature, science and other subjects have been a very great contribution to general adult education. It has also pioneered several series of talks on current international and social topics for listening groups. After many setbacks and disappointments, this scheme is meeting with some success.

The universities and the W.E.A., however, are the principal agencies, and it is not to deprecate their efforts in any way to say that their work is inadequate in view of the enormous need for adult education to-day. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? The total fund available to the combined Universities of Australia for adult education purposes is not more than £20,000. The grant to the W.E.A. is less than £1,500. The full-time staff engaged in the work does not amount to more than a dozen, and the field of their activities is the whole

Commonwealth! The difficulties are immense. In the capital cities, where the majority of the work is done, lectures and other functions have for the most part to be held in very unsuitable rooms, with a minimum of modern educational equipment. The libraries are not large enough for their purpose. They have limited book stocks, practically no bibliographical aids, few periodicals and not nearly enough space for the accommodation of readers. Admirable aids like 16mm. documentary films, film strip material and other modern devices cannot be used as they should be, because the adult education grants are so small. Administration costs have to be cut to the bone and every new development is checked because the staff cannot be provided. Outside of the capital cities, there is only one established adult education centre with a full-time officer (Newcastle, N.S.W.), and there is little likelihood of rapid expansion until further funds are provided. Despite these handicaps, excellent work is being done, both by the universities and the W.E.A., and the ever-increasing demand for their services and for the type of adult education they offer is some measure of the real need of an expanded system.

Further development of University Extension and W.E.A. work is certainly necessary, but a simple increase in the grants made to these bodies will not solve the adult education problem. It is doubtful if they could become the agencies for a nation-wide scheme of adult education. They were not in fact founded with this object in view but for more limited purposes, and although they have undergone considerable change and modification, they have still

an important function to perform within the range of their original purposes. The Tutorial Classes and Extension Departments of the universities were intended to provide opportunities for study of subjects normally coming within the university curriculum, for people who had otherwise no opportunity for advanced study. It was never intended that they should provide adult education for all comers, but only for a limited few, and these within a restricted field. For some years—and this is still true in Great Britain—numbers attending such classes were deliberately restricted, the courses were designed to encourage intensive study, written work was demanded of the student, who was held to be bound to follow a specified course of study over a number of years.

The W.E.A. was founded to try and forge a link between the universities and the organized labour movement. Encouragement was given to the serious student who wished to further his knowledge of subjects such as economics, political science, history and the like, which were of direct concern to him, not so much as a citizen, but as an active member of the working class movement. 'The new movement,' says a recent writer in the Bulletin of the World Association for Adult Education, referring to the W.E.A., 'set out to organize the union of knowledge and working class experience. Disinterested knowledge was felt to be the indispensable means for enlightening that experience and for satisfying the needs, both cultural and social, revealed in that process. It demanded that systematic educational facilities of the highest attainable order—generally

recognized to reside in the universities—should be made available for worker students.⁴

Gradually, however, new needs and a greater demand for adult education of a more general type, quite often unrelated to any specific social purpose beyond that of self-improvement, have made themselves felt, and to a greater or lesser degree the universities and the W.E.A. have responded and altered or modified their policies. The process of adjustment has been made with some difficulty and not without reluctance. It is by no means complete. Many of those actively concerned still think that the W.E.A. has its own special function to perform, and that entirely new forms of organization are required to meet the insistent and clamant demand for general adult education, which now threatens, not so much to destroy the W.E.A., as to transform it completely.

Likewise the universities, faced with an ever growing demand from their Extension Departments, have begun to question whether they can accept responsibility for providing to all comers universal light and leading upon a tremendous variety of subjects, many of which do not come within the normal scope of university teaching at all. There is, and probably always will be, a place for the sort of adult education which universities are able to give—for Tutorial Classes, open to non-matriculate students, for Extension lectures, and the like. The increasing demand of the whole community for adult education of a different kind from these faces universities with extremely difficult problems, not only of finance, but of policy.

4. *Bulletin*, 2nd Series, No. 34, 1943.

A Commonwealth-wide scheme of adult education, which is urgently needed, will certainly demand different machinery, different principles and much wider scope than the existing adult education agencies. Its range should be quite explicitly the adult community as a whole, and its methods should be dictated by the actual problems it will have to solve in a community as under-educated as ours. It will in fact have to use many different methods and to cater for many different tastes. It will have to innovate and experiment, making use of all the techniques which are now available—radio, film, exhibition, library and class room, the forum and the discussion group.

What is it that we need for the education of adults? Primarily, of course, it is the means to educate themselves. That is the main thing to be secured and it ought to be high on the agenda of any post-war programme. Some of the means are so immediately desirable and so obviously needed that there is some hope that they may be provided. In the forefront we should place libraries. There should be an adequate functioning library system for the whole Commonwealth. Each capital city, each suburb, each town should have its library, well equipped, well stocked, staffed by trained and competent librarians. Libraries should be rapidly developed on a regional plan, providing a full range of bibliographic service for the whole community. The library service should be free to all citizens, provided by Commonwealth, state and municipal grants.

Only second in importance to libraries are the community centres. They should be closely linked with libraries. They should incorporate or have associated with them all the various phases of education which are basic to the full and healthy functioning of society. They should provide a theatre, opportunities for making and hearing good music, facilities for physical education and for boys' and girls' club work, places for exhibitions of the arts, lecture rooms, discussion rooms, and a meeting place for the community.

In some places it may be possible to adapt existing school buildings to meet these new needs, and very great advantages could be gained in this way. In many centres, however, new buildings especially designed for the purpose must be built. Along with these things, there will be an increasing need for trained adult education staff, the teachers and inspirers of the whole range of activities which can be evolved within the community centre.

These are largely machinery matters, important in themselves; they will not be attended to, however, until an effective adult education system is set up, its aims defined and its policy decided upon. The following section of this pamphlet is devoted to a brief discussion of the sort of machinery which is required for a Commonwealth adult education system. It is hardly necessary to say that these ideas are brought forward as a basis for discussion only. At this stage one cannot foresee all the possible contingencies and it will be necessary to do a great deal of experimental work before a satisfactory plan can be evolved.

In view of the importance of adult education to the community in its threefold aspect, intellectual, cultural and social, the Commonwealth is the natural, and indeed the inevitable, authority to look to for any system of adult education which has Commonwealth-wide scope. It is not desirable, however, that the Commonwealth should of itself undertake the whole task. What is needed, rather, is that the broad lines of policy should be decided by the Commonwealth, and that separate bodies should be set up by the state governments to carry out the detailed planning and to do the actual teaching and organising work.

It is also necessary to make provision in any organization for adult education, for the close co-operation and help of the 'consumer.' No adult education scheme will work properly if it is merely imposed from above. Hence, in whatever plans are made, it is essential to allow a large place for the voluntary bodies, both in the formulation of policy and in the management of the institutions which are set up.

It is suggested, therefore, that the Commonwealth should institute a Federal authority for adult education. A small bureau of expert people would be the most suitable form for it, with a staff recruited from the small body of existing adult education administrators, especially from those who have been engaged during the war in the Army Education Service.

The functions of the Commonwealth Department should be:

(1) *Control over Commonwealth grant for Adult Education purposes.*—It is suggested that disbursements from the grant should be made to the state authorities on the 'grant in aid' principle, either on a £1 for £1 basis of the total state grant or with a minimum sum allotted to each state, supplemented by grants in aid on a subsidy or grant earning scheme. The Federal Department would also need its own fund for its own special purpose, to be discussed later.

(2) *Publication.*—Some magazine for adult education with Commonwealth-wide circulation is needed. At the moment, *Highway*, published in Sydney and largely directed by the W.E.A. of New South Wales, serves this purpose. This journal, however, has general circulation only in N.S.W. and Victoria, a few copies going to the other states, which have largely ceased to take part in the Federal W.E.A. organization. A journal is needed somewhat along the lines of the Army Education journal, *Salt*, to be at once a journal for circulation to students and to contain discussions on technique, information about experimental work and the progress of the movement in the various states.

(3) *Discussion Material.*—Standard types of discussion group and box scheme material should be prepared and distributed, through state agencies, to country groups out of the reach of organized adult education centres. This function is now undertaken by each state for itself, but could be undertaken much more efficiently and cheaply by one authority.

(4) *Films.*—Acquisition and distribution of films for adult educational purposes.

(5) *Research*.—Research into adult education methods, publication of books and material on experiments abroad, and publication of theses and investigations conducted in Australia should be undertaken.

(6) *New Projects*.—Projects for new types of work submitted by state agencies should be investigated, and recommendations made to the proper authorities for grants in aid.

It is suggested that the Federal Department should not be a providing body in the sense in which the state agencies would be. On the other hand, there are quite a number of experimental projects like those undertaken by the British Institute of Adult Education, which might very well be begun, if not entirely carried on, by the Federal Department. The Federal Department would be in a good position to undertake such tasks as the distribution of art exhibitions throughout the Commonwealth, using loaned or imported material. These are tasks upon which the state authorities could not venture.

It is also desirable that the Federal authority should undertake work within the A.C.T. and in other areas which come within the scope of Federal powers. Only the Commonwealth government, for example, could help the scattered population of the Northern Territory and the population of territories outside Australia but in Australian possession or under Australian administration.

While the Federal Department would not maintain its own officers in the various states, it would certainly be desirable that it should have at least one officer who would be in close touch with all the states. The Federal Department would also best

be given the power to convene annual or biennial conferences of adult education specialists and interested workers and supporters, for interchange of ideas and plans and for the formulation of common policy.

State Adult Education Organization

The machinery needed for the conduct of adult education in the states requires most careful consideration in the light of past experience and future needs. If the arguments advanced in the earlier sections of this pamphlet are valid, it would appear that the universities are unable to accept full responsibility for a greatly extended programme, while voluntary bodies like the W.E.A. certainly can not do so. It will be necessary, therefore, to devise a new type of organization for the states. It is desirable that there should be some uniformity of pattern, even though the details differ, as they certainly will from state to state.

There are many advantages in the close association of the universities with adult education work and these should not be lightly foregone. From the point of view of university administration, the adult education activities now carried on are sometimes thought of as being something of a nuisance, in cases where the funds for them are only paid at the expense of other departments within the university, these departments being almost invariably understaffed and underfinanced. It is true, too, that with the widening scope of adult education, the connection between the Extension Board or the Tutorial Classes Department and the university proper is not always

immediately obvious. This has led to the view put forward by many university men, and those by no means hostile to adult education as such, that there should be a demarcation of responsibility and that the universities should cease to be the principal bodies organizing and providing for the whole system. Let the universities, it is urged, stick to their last. They are properly concerned with university teaching and research. Let them by all means train those who will be employed as teachers in this field, let them conduct research into methods and techniques and theories, but do not allow them to be distracted from their main work, already inadequately performed because of a multitude of cares, by undertaking an extended responsibility for adult education. If the larger grants for the purpose are forthcoming—as they must be if the work is to be done on the required scale—the universities will be in danger of being swamped. The adult education departments, once quite small affairs, will absorb a quite disproportionate amount of administrative and other time.

There is a great deal of truth in these arguments and it is possible that in the long run it will be necessary for entirely new machinery to be set up. No one suggests that there should be strict separation. The universities will always play a most important part in the whole work and will influence it at every stage. But it will be necessary to define the exact nature of that part rather more narrowly than at present.

For some time to come, however, it is probably necessary for the universities to accept a much

larger share of responsibility and to continue to act as the principal source of adult education, to continue in fact to organize, inspire, provide and guide it. No other agency exists which is capable of undertaking the work, and none which, like the university, has the necessary freedom from political control and the understanding of educational techniques and standards so vitally important for good pioneer work.

Both these points are important. An extended and widening system of adult education would inevitably have political repercussions. Such a system (or rather the teachers engaged in it) would be under fire from both the right and the left in politics, unless they were prepared to talk the merest platitudes. Adult education deals with life and it is invariably controversial, if it is good. It must have freedom to produce results. Perhaps it is paradoxical to demand that the state should subsidize adult education and leave it free to teach or to enquire into what will frequently be unpopular and may be regarded as 'subversive' doctrines. It is hardly to be expected that if such education is directly under political control it will escape the inhibiting effects of that control, or be free, as it must be, from the taint of propaganda. Universities are given a good deal of genuine freedom in these matters and so far have succeeded, even in the face of criticism and opposition, in maintaining their right to free enquiry and discussion. If new organizations are set up for providing adult education, it will be necessary to preserve their independence in every possible way against political control. And that is not easy to do.

It is also important to safeguard the quality of the education given and to try to ensure that it is genuinely suited to the needs of adults. The idea behind the W.E.A., that of a partnership between knowledge and experience, was basically sound. In any community the universities should be centres of knowledge. Their standards should be high and the ordinary man should be able to ask guidance from them with a remarkable degree of confidence that they will be able to give him the facts he requires in an impartial and unbiased manner. The universities are probably the best authorities not only to train those who will teach in the adult education system as tutors and instructors, but they could very usefully be given the power to select such teachers. In the transitional stage, it would be well to extend the adult education functions of the universities as widely as possible, giving them the greatest possible freedom for experiment, with the implied intention that new and improved machinery should be set up at a later stage. If adequate funds are forthcoming and the task is tackled with enthusiasm and vigour, this transitional stage might not be more than five or ten years. In that time a very valuable body of knowledge and experience could be built up, a trained staff recruited and the main lines of future policy established.

For the initial period, something like the following pattern might be adopted in each state.

There should be established an Adult Education Board, preferably constituted by the state university and under the general control of the university authorities. Such a Board could consist of repre-

sentatives of the teaching and administrative staff of the university, the state Public Library, Art Gallery and Museums, the Broadcasting Commission, state Education Department, representatives of societies interested in physical fitness, music, the theatre and the arts. It should have power to co-opt to its number representatives of organizations actively concerned with adult education, such as the W.E.A., Trade Unions and other such bodies.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Board should be the Director of Adult Education, who would for the time being be a university officer, having his own teaching and administrative staff.

The Board would be financed by a grant from the Commonwealth Government in the first instance, together with supplementary grants from the state Government. It would have sole control over its own funds, the grant being made to the university merely for convenience and not being regarded as part of the university budget.

The Adult Education Board would be the main providing body for adult education in the state and would itself conduct classes, lectures, week-end schools, correspondence courses, discussion groups, and all other activities which come within the scope of adult education. It should also be empowered to make grants in aid to other organizations undertaking adult education work, to assist them with advice and expert guidance in the development of their own work.

In country centres, particularly in large towns and provincial cities, Adult Education Committees would need to be set up, on somewhat the same lines as

the Board itself. It is highly desirable that in all provincial cities and large towns there should be a resident adult education officer. It will be necessary to secure municipal support to enable such officers to be appointed, and the principle of grant in aid should be invoked for this purpose, the municipalities contributing both to the salary of the officer and to the cost of maintaining an adult education programme.

If such a system were established, it would not be difficult to divorce it from university control when necessary. The Adult Education Board could then be set up under a Minister or given a statutory independence, along the lines of the Broadcasting Commission. The initial stage of trial and experiment under the aegis of the university would, however, be very desirable.

It would, of course, be quite feasible to establish a different type of state Board concerning itself with policy and the making of grants to voluntary bodies engaged in adult education. The difficulty about this proposal is that very few such bodies now exist. The Board would need to create most of the organizations it wished to endow or to encourage. It would also be unduly restrictive to the Board, especially in the early stages, to be forbidden to provide any form of adult education, except through approved organizations. The need is so urgent and the task so large, that what is most necessary at the moment is energetic action. Given the right men and the necessary funds, there is no reason to doubt that the work would not be vigorously forwarded by a plan of the kind proposed.

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

"THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION" SERIES

The Australian Council for Educational Research is publishing, under the above general title, a series of pamphlets aiming to show the need for, and to provide a plan for the reconstruction of education in Australia.

Pamphlets already published are:

1. 'Education for Democracy' J. D. G. Medley
2. 'A Plan for Australia' A.C.E.R. Staff
3. 'Education for Some . . . ' J. A. La Nauze
4. 'The Primary School'
J. M. Braithwaite, C. R. McRae, R. G. Staines
5. 'Universities in Australia' Professor E. Ashby
6. 'From School to Work' W. M. O'Neil
7. 'Education for Parenthood' Zoë Benjamin
8. 'Adult Education in Post-War Australia' . . . C. R. Badger

The following are in course of preparation:

- 'Twelve to Eighteen' Professors Browne and McRae
(Education of the Adolescent)
- 'The Pre-School Child' Miss C. Heinig
- 'Child Problems and Clinical Work' Dr. I. Sebire
- 'Individual Variations in School Pupils' . . Dr. H. S. Wyndham
- 'Physical Education' B. F. G. Apps and K. M. Gordon
- 'School Buildings and Equipment' A.C.E.R. Staff

It is proposed also to publish pamphlets on other subjects, including the School Leaving Age, Technical Education, and Libraries.