

differs from every other in organization, in the content of its courses, in the point of view from which the subjects are taught, and in its understanding of the purposes of the classes. The old conflict between cultural and utilitarian ends is waged as violently in the workers' colleges as in the orthodox educational institutions of the country. And the balance between the two is variously struck as always, either by chance, or by the demands of the students, or by the peculiar bias of the director. The relation of the classes to the various types of trade union organization also shows a great range of difference. In a few cases the classes are the creation of a single international union; in others the parent body is a central labor union; and in still others there are no formal affiliations of this kind at all. Similarly none of the groups derive their financial support from the same kind of sources. A few are subsidized entirely by a trade union; some are supported by private gifts; others require small fees from students; and in practically all a portion of the expense is borne by the municipality through the offering of special courses in which only members of the workers' classes are eligible for membership. With regard to the purposes of the classes the differences that exist may still be said to be due to confusion and uncertainty. Whether the conception of a class struggle should be accepted or not; whether the American Federation of Labor should be discussed in a spirit of hostility or of sympathy, are issues which cannot be intelligently settled until they have been more carefully thought through. Until this is done, therefore, procedure in the classes will differ and apparent conflict in ideals and goals will arise.

Because these differences in method and in opinion exist, it is a wholesome sign that workers' education is at the same time being undertaken under auspices other than those of the trade unions themselves. Only in the past year four interesting undertakings in workers' education have been launched. Two have already had the experience of a season's operation and the other two are about to start. In the fall of 1920 Amherst College opened classes for workmen in Springfield and Holyoke. Last summer Bryn Mawr conducted its summer classes for working women. This fall there will be opened a resident college for trade unionists at Katonah and classes for workmen at the Labor Temple in New York City. The Amherst and Bryn Mawr classes represent the first formal affiliation of the American college with labor education. The success of these colleges in enlisting students, the manner in which they treat contemporary problems involved in pop-

ular prejudice and discussion, and the character of the support which they receive from their administrations will in a few years go far to determine the availability of the American college for workers' education.

It is still too early to make predictions or even to detect tendencies within the movement towards workers' education in this country. Its sponsors have so far been cautious and not unmindful of difficulties and dangers. In those few instances where the problems have appeared most clearly, the leaders in the experiment have not hesitated to protest against dogma and bias. And in the discussion of controversial social issues, where previously abstract and unreal propositions had sufficed, these same leaders have insisted on a scientific presentation of realities.

Have We No Critics?

IN Mr. H. L. Mencken's efforts to stir the animals up he has rarely succeeded so completely as with his recent disparaging remarks concerning Henry James. In the course of an article in the *Nation* Mr. Mencken, filled with zeal for righteousness as usual, gave it as his grave and considered opinion that Henry James was preoccupied with the "furious study of the wings of butterflies: that there were also jackasses, hyenas, codfish, Congressmen, lice, cobras, and scorpions in the world apparently never occurred to him."

As Mr. Mencken had doubtless hoped, knowing so well this world's enormous and unimpaired pugnacity, his words had an instantly irritating effect on the admirers of Henry James. One of these excellent Jacobites, Mr. Conrad Aiken of Boston, has not waited long to denounce Mr. Mencken's abhorrent words. In an article in the *London Mercury* he confesses at first to "the blindest astonishment"—a little as if a gas-main had blown up under his innocent and somewhat tender feet. Then, collecting his feet and his wits, he exclaims: "To see James as nothing but a biologist obsessed with a furious study of the wings of butterflies is to see him not at all. To indict him for artificiality and superficiality is to betray a total, a blinding lack of understanding. If it were necessary to refute so absurd a notion one could do so out of the very earliest and most immature work of James . . ."

Sparing us the earliest and most immature James, Mr. Aiken passes from the impious Mencken to the great, sore, buzzing, fly-blown monster of American philistinism. "What we encounter here," in Mr. Mencken, "is not merely a disastrous

ignorance of the whole 'idea' of James: it is, more importantly, a light on a critical attitude, common in America, toward the novel." That common attitude is, he confesses for us, the confusion of "the social value of the work of art with its aesthetic value. Mr. Mencken, when he expresses his annoyance with Henry James for his 'furious study of the wings of butterflies' means by implication, of course, that he wants the diagnostic novel."

This, it may be said in passing, is a cruel misunderstanding. Mr. Mencken's preferences are vociferously anti-diagnostic, as his love of Joseph Conrad, his praise of Cabell and Hergesheimer, proclaim. But this trifling fact does not impede Mr. Aiken. Everything serves for him "to emphasize somewhat hideously the naïve bewilderment of our critics." And then, putting his head in Mother England's lap, he blurts out the painful truth: "We have no critics, no criticism." But he takes heart. "As we have worried along in the past without criticism (except that of Poe and James) we shall probably worry along in the future, and have, none the less, now and again a Whitman, a Hawthorne, a Poe, a Melville, a James. We isolate, we exile our great men, whether by ignoring them or by praising them stupidly. And perhaps this isolation we offer them is our greatest gift."

It sounds almost unbearable, this negligent America, but we wonder if the present day is quite as bad as it sounds. Take Mr. Conrad Aiken's hero Poe, for example. Who, in the good old days, echoed that same colonial cry, "we have no critics, no criticism"? We fear it was the estimable James himself. While he was still Henry James Jr., at any rate, he found for Poe's performance as a critic that ugly word "provincialism" which is apparently the lowest word in the Jacobite vocabulary:

There was but little literary criticism in the United States at the time Hawthorne's earlier works were published; but among the reviewers Edgar Poe perhaps held the scales the highest. He at any rate rattled them loudest, and pretended, more than any one else, to conduct the weighing-process on scientific principles. Very remarkable was this process of Edgar Poe's, and very extraordinary were his principles; but he had the advantage of being a man of genius, and his intelligence was frequently great. His collection of critical sketches of the American writers flourishing in what M. Taine would call his milieu and moment, is very curious and interesting reading, and it has one quality which ought to keep it from ever being completely forgotten. It is probably the most complete and exquisite specimen of *provincialism* ever prepared for the edification of men. Poe's judgments are pretentious, spiteful, vulgar; but they contain a great deal of sense and discrimination as well, and here and there, sometimes at frequent intervals, we find a phrase of happy insight imbedded in a patch of the most fatuous pedantry.

This is a nice problem for Mr. Aiken. If Poe was a great critic and James was a great critic, which is a great critic here? Was James right to pick at Poe in this manner? Was he right to speak of Poe's "very valueless verses"? Was he right to say that "an enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection"? These, we submit, are questions for the enthusiastic Mr. Aiken's private bosom. And when he has worried out a solution as between Poe and James he should find another tangled problem in Henry James's contemptuous early criticism of Walt Whitman.

That James should have gone so wrong on Poe and Whitman is not, in the nature of things, extraordinary. It was the fashion of colonials then, as it is now, to apologize for American literature abroad, to meet the charge of provincialism more than half way, to be a little masochistic. Not until France and England took a mandate for Poe and Whitman did they become reputable for the timid aesthete in America.

We do not wish that Mr. Aiken had kept to himself his grief and anger at Mr. Mencken's emulation of Arnold Bennett in the brash criticism of James, nor do we wish he had denied himself the luxury of describing to the London Mercury the plane of hopeless provincialism and moralistic fatuousness on which America is floundering so ungracefully. He believes these things, forgetting his own critical labors, and he has quite properly exercised the privilege of confiding his belief to just the audience which is likely to agree with him. But during these confessions of our disastrous ignorance about the "idea" of James, our naïve bewilderment, etc., we should have liked some hint from Mr. Aiken that he knew how old this game of depreciation is. It strikes us, incidentally, as having an exquisite provincialism of its own.

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Federalism in China

THE newcomer in China in observing and judging events usually makes the mistake of attaching too much significance to current happenings. Occurrences take place which in the western world would portend important changes—and nothing important results. It is not easy to loosen the habit of years; and so the visitor assumes that an event which is striking to the point of sensationalism must surely be part of a train of events having a definite trend; some deep-laid plan must be behind it. It takes a degree of intellectual patience added to time and experience to make one realize that even when there is a rhythm in events the tempo is so retarded that one must wait a long time to judge what is really going on. Most political events are like daily changes in the weather, fluctuations back and forth which may seriously affect individuals but which taken one by one tell little about the movement of the seasons. Even the occurrences which are due to human intention are usually sporadic and casual, and the observer errs by reading into them too much plot, too comprehensive a scheme, too far-sighted a plan. The aim behind the event is likely to be only some immediate advantage, some direct increase of power, the overthrow of a rival, the grasping at greater wealth by an isolated act, without any consecutive or systematic looking ahead.

Foreigners are not the only ones who have erred, however, in judging the Chinese political situation of the last few years. Beginning two years ago, one heard experienced Chinese with political affiliations saying that it was impossible for things to go on as they were for more than three months longer. Some decisive change must occur. Yet outwardly the situation has remained much the same not only for three months but for two years, the exception being the overthrow of the Anfu faction a year ago. And this occurrence hardly marked a definite turn in events, as it was, to a considerable extent, only a shifting of power from the hands of one set of tuchuns to another set. Nevertheless at the risk of becoming a victim of the fallacy which I have been setting forth, I will hazard the remark that the last few months *have* revealed a definite and enduring trend—that through the diurnal fluctuations of the strife for personal power and wealth a seasonal political change in society is now showing itself. Certain lines of cleavage seem to show themselves, so that

through the welter of striking, picturesque, sensational but meaningless events, a definite pattern is revealed.

This pattern is indicated by the title of this article—a movement toward the development of a federal form of government. In calling the movement one toward federalism, there is, however, more of a jump into the remote future than circumstances justify. It would be more accurate, as well as more modest, to say that there is a well defined and seemingly permanent trend toward provincial autonomy and local self-government accompanied by a hope and a vague plan that in the future the more or less independent units will recombine into the United or Federated States of China. Some who look far into the future anticipate three stages; the first being the completion of the present secessionist movement; the second the formation of northern and southern confederations respectively; the third a reunion into a single state.

To go into the detailed evidence for the existence of a definite and lasting movement of this sort would presume too much on the reader's knowledge of Chinese geography and his acquaintance with specific recent events. I shall confine myself to quite general features of the situation. The first feature is the new phase which has been assumed by the long historic antagonism of the north and the south. Roughly speaking, the revolution which established the republic and overthrew the Manchus represented a victory for the south. But the transformation during the last five years of the nominal republic into a corrupt oligarchy of satraps or military governors or feudal lords has represented a victory for the north. It is a significant fact, symbolically at least, that the most powerful remaining tuchun or military governor in China—in some respects the only powerful one who has survived the vicissitudes of the last few years—namely Chang Tso Lin, is the uncrowned king of the three Manchurian provinces. The so-called civil war of the north and south is not, however, to be understood as a conflict of republicanism located in the south and militarism in the north. Such a notion is directly contrary to facts. The "civil war" till six or eight months ago was mainly a conflict of military governors and factions, part of that struggle for personal power and wealth which has been going on all over China.