

Education and the Defense of America

ERNEST O. MELBY



IN THE years since World War II the free nations of the Western world have largely lost the peace. We have had five years in which to convince the people in the less well-developed areas of the globe that democracy brings social justice, physical well-being, and spiritual freedom to mankind. Yet, freedom as we know it is not stirring the minds and the hearts of men and women in the less fortunate areas. The tragic realities of the situation are that we have allowed ourselves to be maneuvered into a position where we are associated with the defense of oppressors rather than with the liberation of the oppressed. Freedom and free institutions are on the defensive. One example is the apparent low morale of the South Korean soldier who evi-

dently feels he has little for which to fight. At the same time we Americans are disturbed to note that North Korean soldiers appear to be fighting with fanatical zeal. One naturally asks the reason for these conditions. Have we not been in Korea as long as the Russians? Have we not had as good a chance to teach democracy to the Koreans as the Russians have had to disseminate Marxism? What explains the appeal of Communism in such areas as Korea and China? Is there some inherent weakness in our philosophy of freedom which handicaps us in furthering its acceptance?

The writer believes that democracy is infinitely stronger than Communism from the standpoints of both theory and practice. He holds that the free nations are losing the peace primarily

because of strategic weaknesses in the areas of education and community life. They have failed to make an accurate and realistic appraisal of the important problems of the postwar world. In America most of our international actions have been taken on the assumption that our major world problem is Communism. Accordingly, we have based most of our foreign policy on its containment. The truth of the matter is that Communism is not our fundamental problem. The really fundamental world problem is the alleviation of human suffering, want, and oppression. We are morally right in desiring to contain Communism, but we shall certainly not finally defeat Communism unless we first conquer human suffering, want, and oppression.

We Americans are prone to believe that if only we can destroy the power of Communism we shall have attained the purpose of our own survival and the success of our way of life. Therefore we attack Communists at home and abroad through witchhunting and spend huge sums for the economic support of free nations and for the military support of our own and friendly armies. Since the advent of the Korean crisis, we have more and more resigned ourselves to the idea that a military solution must be found for the problem. Although we have declared ourselves against aggression, we do not deny the possibility that we shall find it necessary to fight a series of police actions in various parts of the world. It may be well that such military ventures are morally and ethically inevitable for us. But we shall make a tragic error if we assume that the future of free institutions in our country and in the world can be



—Pach Bros.

Ernest O. Melby

FEW men have had as varied experience in education on all levels as Dr. Ernest O. Melby, dean of the School of Education of New York University and guest editor this year of *SRL*'s education issue. In the twenty-seven years since he was graduated from St. Olaf College in Minnesota, Dr. Melby has been a high-school teacher and principal in several small Minnesota towns, a professor and dean of schools of education (Northwestern University, New York University), and president and chancellor of state universities (Montana State University and University of Montana). While chancellor at the University of Montana, Dr. Melby conceived a plan for "the Montana study" — a study "to improve the quality of living in the State of Montana." The story of how a number of small Montana towns used his scheme to arrest their disintegrating community life has been told in "Small Town Renaissance," by Richard Waverly Poston, published by Harper (reviewed in *SRL* July 8, 1950). During 1937-40 Dr. Melby served as secretary of the American Council on Education and in 1947-48 as president of the John Dewey Society. He is serving as chairman of the board of consultants to the Connecticut Fact-Finding Commission on Education (see page 22). He is the author of half a dozen books.

established by military victories alone.

It is important to remember that the Korean action is but a single battle, so to speak, in a long and bitter conflict of ideas. It is a war fought for the minds and the hearts of men. Communism and other forms of totalitarianism are ideas. Ideas cannot be destroyed by guns. Democracy and freedom are also ideas, and they in particular cannot be made secure by military victories alone.

One can visualize the error of complete dependence on military measures by asking oneself the following questions: Suppose today we had just concluded a successful war against any and all nations that oppose us and that every foot of land on the globe were controlled by American soldiers or the soldiers of friendly nations. How safe would freedom be in such a world? Is it conceivable that the Western nations, even if they maintained their unity of purpose, could induce the rest of the world to accept the Western conception of democracy if the great masses of people did not desire it? Assuming that we possessed this police power, what chance would we have of forcing Western democracy upon unwilling hundreds of millions in China, in India, in Africa, or in Russia? A partial answer can be found in our efforts to democratize occupied territories since the war. Even under fairly favorable circumstances we have not been too successful in Germany, Italy, and Japan. What reason is there to suppose we would do better with the Russians or the Chinese?

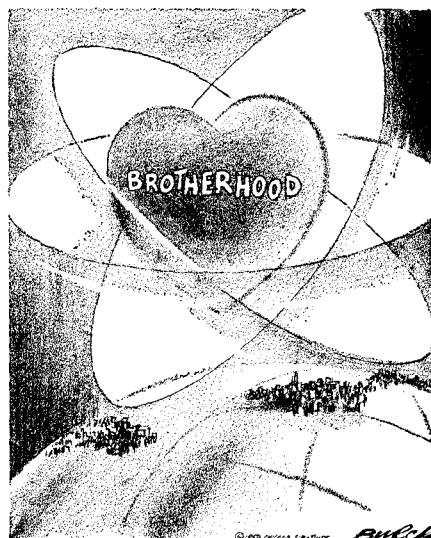
Another reason we are losing the peace is that we have made the tragic mistake of allowing our enemies to seize the initiative and thereby place freedom and democracy on the defensive. Today, in retrospect, it seems almost unbelievable that we Americans, with our long tradition of freedom and respect for individual human beings, should have allowed ourselves to be maneuvered into so defensive a position. In spite of a long history of liberal achievements, we have become known around the globe as a highly materialistic nation. Though we have a wonderfully rich religious and political tradition, we have permitted ourselves to be thought of as imperialists and materialists. The situation has been succinctly stated by Charles Malik, Minister of Lebanon to the United States: "To the superficial observer who is unable to penetrate to the core of love and truth which is still at the heart of the West, there is little to choose between the soulless materialism of the West and the militant materialism of the East."

If freedom is to live, we must now seize the initiative. We have the truly



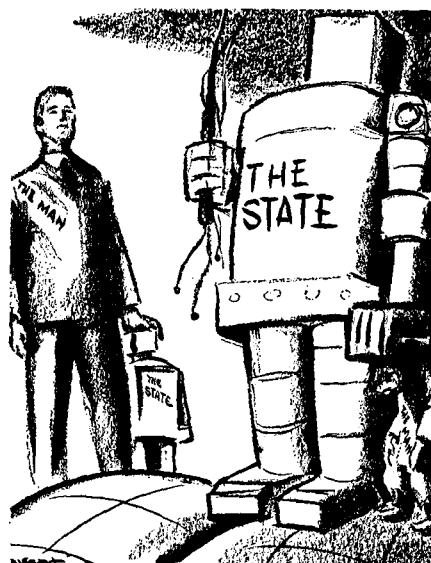
—Scott Long in the Minneapolis Morning Tribune.

"Guns Are Not Enough."



—Burck in the Chicago Sun-Times.

"More Powerful Than the H-Bomb."



—From The San Francisco Chronicle.

"The Man or the State, Which?"

revolutionary culture. Respect for individual human beings is deeply rooted in our Judaic-Christian religious tradition. We are evolving patterns for a society that will be able truly to repair itself. Our amazingly productive economic plant is potentially capable of bringing comfort and well-being to the masses of our people. On this front our successes have been miraculous. We have made failures, too, and we must not gloss them over or cease in our efforts to make freedom meaningful to our minority groups and to every underprivileged person. What should be remembered, however, is that the story of America is a great epic. American civilization will, I am sure, go down in history as one of the great civilizations of all times. With all its trial and error, with all of the disappointments and failures, American life is still a magnificent story. This picture of our way of life must be brought to the hundreds of millions around the globe—not in words alone but through action and inspiring leadership.

It is a tragic fact that we have largely failed to make freedom a vital force in the life of the typical American community. Thus our failure successfully to propagandize our cause throughout the world is in reality due to a failure to vitalize our democratic processes at the grass roots and to make our own philosophy a real dynamic in our own lives. In other words, we are ineffective in furthering democracy abroad because we are relatively indifferent and inactive about it at home.

Only a dynamic and resurgent democracy here in America can commend our way of life to the depressed hundreds of millions who are trying to make up their minds between the ideological offerings of the East and the West. But we cannot have a dynamic and resurgent freedom in America without far greater vitality in the life of our local communities. The growth of our great cities and urban areas has weakened the ties of men and women to one another, ties that were strong in the smaller rural and village communities. In the present century we have allowed power to become unduly concentrated in big business, big labor, and big government. More and more we have come to depend upon these three "bigs" for that which we used to do ourselves as individuals or as groups locally in the various communities. Our initiative has been weakened, our imagination has been dulled, and our willingness to take risks has been replaced by an unthinking quest for security. If this trend continues, we shall

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New Colleges for a New America

DWAYNE ORTON

THE COMMUNITY college has made the front page! When the report of the President's Commission on Education was released, *The New York Times* ran a top center headline on page one: "Free Two-Year Colleges Proposed in Communities."

On the same day that national attention was focused on this new educational institution, the New York State Commission on the Need for a State University submitted its recommendation for a statewide system of community colleges rather than a huge central campus. Educational planners in Illinois have called for ninety community colleges. Texas and California recently raised their already generous state subsidies for the thriving group that are serving community needs untouched by centralized, public, or exclusive private higher education. The University of California now urges students to take their first two years' work in the community colleges. Its most spectacular development has taken place in California where eighty community colleges enrolled 162,059 students in 1948-49.

Although old-line colleges and universities, fearful of competition for students, threw up barriers against these institutions and often looked down on them, students flocked to their doors. In 1918, 4,504 students were enrolled in forty-six junior colleges—now more realistically referred to as "community colleges" and "city colleges." In 1940, 196,170 were studying in 575 of these institutions. The 45 per cent that were publicly controlled enrolled seventy-one per cent of the students. In 1948-49, 465,815 were registered in 648 community colleges.

This significant educational movement has arisen in response to social needs. It will become the American folk school, the people's college of the greater democracy we are building. Of it, former President Wilbur of Stanford said: "We can look upon the junior-college movement which is now spreading throughout the United States as the most significant occurrence in American education in the present century." The establishment of Federal aid for vocational education, the increase in high-school enrollment, the partnership of government, industry, and higher education in research, the rediscovery and application of individual differences in

progressive education, and the introduction of democracy into school administration are outstanding among the educational advances of the past fifty years. But the community college is more indigenous to America and more fundamental to the American way of life than any of these movements.

In proposing Federal influence to establish community colleges, the President's Commission of eminent educators and laymen acknowledged the achievement and future promise of an institution that began in Fresno, California, and Joliet, Illinois, thirty-four years ago. The term "junior college" was applied to this institution for three decades because its original purpose was to provide two years of public college education for youths in their home communities. From that restricted start many of these public institutions are becoming the educational centers for the varied educational and training needs of all the people—youths and adults—of the communities they serve. The community college is providing programs and leadership for the practical application of T. J. Watson's observation that "there is no saturation point in education."

No conventional academic definition fits the community college. We must tear down the time-honored fences of yearly gradations, semester-length terms, divisions into primary, secondary, and higher education, accrediting straight jackets, and other restrictive forces of education to understand the place and work of this institution. The community college is concerned with meeting human needs for educational services wherever they are found; at whatever age and status of previous education. The anatomy of secondary and higher education has been made up of formal divisions of knowledge kept inviolable by the influence of German specialization and entrenched vested interests of academic departments. The community college attempts to apply knowledge to the service of the whole person in the complex social setting of modern life. It recognizes the fact that the person cannot be divided into a biological man, an economic man, a

vocational man, or a civic man. Rather than focusing the student on knowledge in its depersonalized or cloistered state—a proper function of specialized or professional training—the community college focuses the searchlight of knowledge on the student.

In reality the community college is not confined to the two-year "ex-junior college" classification although most such institutions are of this parentage. Actually, it is an attitude and a movement which may and does permeate many fine municipal universities that were never conceived as junior colleges. The University of Houston and Los Angeles and San Francisco City Colleges are fine examples of community-minded institutions that emerged from junior colleges in large cities. The College of the City of New York, many of the land-grant college schools of agriculture, and schools of home economics, and the metropolitan and extension colleges in such universities as University of Southern California, University of Wisconsin, Syracuse University, and many others are examples of higher institutions identified with the infinite variety of educational needs in the complex American community.

THE community-minded college is not content to have its students study the city or region as detached observers of theory in action or even as "cases." They conceive of their students as participants in the community. A project for learning must be a practical activity in action as well as a systematic study. For example, in the community college a project to survey traffic is not an academic exercise; it is

a clinical problem worked out by students for actual use by the city government. The principle of learning by doing is carried beyond the progressive classroom of the elementary school into the citizenship education of the adult. The practice of internship in medical education, the cooperative education program in engineering education, and the practical shop or store project in vocational education are all given far wider application to all types of education and training in the

community college. Whereas it has been traditional to think of a college program being unified through a finely balanced curriculum and scheduled sequences of courses, the community college achieves its integrity through its ability to apply the disciplines of scholarship and the knowledge of the ages in an educa-

