

## "Social Sciences in Schools" by Bertrand Russell

The dependence of human beings on each other has been increasing with great rapidity throughout the last 150 years. Primitive peasants, who grow their own food and use only simple tools, are scarcely affected by what other men do, but they purchase this freedom at the cost of penury and periodical famine. Modern technique has enriched all classes, but has at the same time created a need of co-operation which did not exist in simpler ages. The social sciences are, therefore, far more important than they used to be, and to give them their due place in schools is one of the most urgent of educational reforms. 5

A commission appointed by the American Historical Association has investigated this subject, and published a volume of *Conclusions and Recommendations* (Charles Scribner's Sons, \$1.25) which deserves to be widely read and very seriously considered. The Commission begins by pointing out that "American civilization, in common with Western civilization, is passing through one of the great critical ages of history, is modifying its traditional faith in economic individualism, and is embarking upon vast experiments in social planning and control which call for large-scale co-operation on the part of the people." "In the United States as in other countries", they say, "the age of individualism and *laissez faire* in economy and government is closing and a new age of collectivism is emerging." 10 15 20

If the unavoidable public control is to be associated with democracy, and not, as in many European countries, with some form of dictatorship, it is necessary that education should teach an understanding of the modern world and its needs. This requires, as the Commission points out, an improved status for the teacher, a less pedantic and pedagogic training, and a greater degree of independence of sectional and corrupt interests. It requires that pupils should learn what actually happens in government and economics, without concealment of the less edifying aspects. It requires a diminished reliance upon "intelligence tests" and other pseudo-scientific methods of giving an appearance of quantitative accuracy where quantitative accuracy is impossible. It requires a revivifying of the universities, making them have more contact with the needs of the time; they should also, so the Commission contends, be amalgamated with the Colleges for the training of teachers, which ought to stress the matter of instruction more than they do, and pay much less attention to the technique of teaching. 25 30 35

All this, to my mind, is true and important, not only for America, but for all civilized countries. Teachers, being servants of the State, are too often expected to be subservient to the momentary holders of power; when this happens, they cannot exercise the special competence which they ought to possess, or teach the young to form a critical judgment upon current events. The only way of avoiding this danger is through a defensive organization of the teachers, to protect their intellectual independence and resist all attempts at wrongful dismissal for opinions offensive to ignorance or bias. 40 45

The world looks to America in these unstable times, and if the Commission's suggestions are adopted it will not look in vain.

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3 simple] the simplest MS. 6 of] for NY Amer. 10 commission] committee NY Amer. 12 (Charles Scribner's Sons, \$1.25)] (Scribner's) NY Amer. 17 and control] om. NY Amer. [The quotation as Russell had it is correct.] 25 This] ¶This NY Amer. 29 without concealment of] not concealing MS. 30 It] ¶It NY Amer. 43-6 The ... bias.] om. NY Amer.