

Training for Individual Security

By William Bennett Bizzell

INDIVIDUAL security is a thing for which we strive. It is highly desirable that every child born into the world shall grow to manhood prepared to perform some useful work which shall free him from the anxiety of future dependence upon society. This is one of the purposes for which schools and colleges are established, and their objectives should be determined with this end in view.

Individual security is the ultimate goal of social effort.

But we are hearing very little these days about *individual security* and a great deal about *social security*. Dislocation of industrial enterprise and economic adversity have forced the American people to think more about social security than ever before. It would have been far better had consideration been given to the effect of adversity upon well-being in normal times. It is far easier to deal rationally with a social situation before it develops into a complicated problem of government.

But we failed to do this and when we were confronted rather unexpectedly with widespread unemployment accompanied by human suffering, we found it difficult to establish policies and provide adequate governmental machinery for dealing with it. We found ourselves some ten years ago faced with this problem; and in the haste with which we had to set up an organization and deal with a situation that was new to our experience, it was inevitable that we should make some serious mistakes and make unwise use of vast sums of money.

While much has been done to provide for the relief of those who have been called upon to suffer because of economic conditions beyond their control, we have signally failed in the constructive task of turning the tide of unemployment back into channels of private employment.

When the National Security board was first organized by Congress and state agencies were established for dealing with the unemployment situation, we heard much talk about "priming the pump," a phrase that was used to indicate that relief measures were designed to be more or less temporary and that the ultimate end of our social security program was to provide help for those who had been unexpectedly thrown out of work.

We were thinking in terms of our past experience when business and industrial recessions were rather brief and always followed by a rise in the curve of normal employment. It took us five or six years to realize that the depression which

began in 1929 was no ordinary social phenomenon. When we awoke to the realization that we had entered upon a new phase of social experience, it became necessary to think of it in terms of far-reaching governmental policy.

We have always assumed that every able-bodied man prefers to work at some useful occupation of his own choosing. The right to work has generally been accepted as one of the inalienable rights of men who live under a free government. Are we ready to discard this doctrine? Are we to assume that for the future a relatively large number of our citizens shall be expected to look to the government for support while performing some artificially created task?

To answer these questions in the affirmative is to ignore one of the most fundamental instincts in man and assume a fatalistic attitude toward the problems that a changing economic and political situation creates for us. I, for one, still believe that every man has a right to work at some useful calling of his own choosing and that it is far better for society to prepare him to perform some normal task efficiently than to leave him to the hazards of vocational dislocations in business and industry.

IBELIEVE further that governmental employment in artificial pursuits is economically unwise not only because of wastefulness in the expenditure of public funds, but because of the psychological effect on those individuals who are employed at such tasks. I am equally sure that the employment of able-bodied men on governmental jobs, even if they are useful, has a tendency to destroy the spirit of self-reliance and private initiative that have been such important factors in the development of our national life in the past.

For these reasons, I think the time has come when we should give more serious consideration to individual security. In comparison with social security, individual security is scarcely an element in our thinking today. Individual security is really a much more important concept than social security. I do not mean to imply that we could escape the consequences of unfavorable economic conditions that have confronted us in recent years; but perhaps if we had given more thought to preparation for individual security before the problems of social security were forced upon us, we might have been far better off than we are today.

Perhaps I should define these terms. By individual security, I mean the preparation that society should give to every one to insure him the maximum promise of being able to live a normal life under the changing social and economic conditions that confront him.

Social security, of course, is just the opposite of this, for it means the organized efforts of established agencies of society to supply the needs of people who find themselves unexpectedly unable to carry on in normal ways of living. We may regard individual security and social security as exactly opposite aspects of occupational opportunities.

I am not unmindful of the fact that policies of social security are inherent in our social order. Under the most favorable conditions, there will always be a variable percentage of unemployables, including those who because of the infirmities of age or other causes cannot provide for themselves. Society owes to those who come under this classification the right to live, and to live under conditions of reasonable comfort and freedom from those anxieties that often accompany old age. But after acknowledging this obligation of society, we should recognize it as a burden to assume rather than to think of it as just another way of living.

On the other hand, individual security is based upon a constructive philosophy of life, which implies that it is the duty of our social order to do everything possible to create conditions that will encourage initiative, self-reliance, the acquisition of skill, and pride in performing some useful private service.

Individual security has been recognized as one of the objectives of education, although we have given it other names. The entire educational process has been under scrutiny in recent years and much thought has been given to the adjustment of educational practices to the changing social and economic situation. The curriculum of our schools and colleges reflect a four-fold division of desired accomplishment.

(1) There is recognition of the importance of preserving bodily efficiency, such as health, physical vigor, and working power. For lack of a better name, we call this physical education.

(2) There is training to promote the capacity to earn a living; or expressed in social terminology, training to increase the capacity to perform one's share of the productive work of the world.

(3) Provision is made for education that

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is designed primarily to fit the individual to live in organized society in congenial and satisfactory relationships. This includes not only ethics, but education in civics, with a view to developing an appreciation of and right attitudes toward government.

(4) Provision is made to develop the intellectual qualities and aesthetic capacities of the individual, apart from any practical use to which they may be applied, to the end that every one may be able to enjoy life and to get the most out of it. In the old days, we called this "cultural education."

While we are inclined to think rather narrowly in terms of what we have called vocational education as training for individual security, I am very much of the opinion that it is a much broader concept and involves all the educational processes that I have outlined.

There was a tendency when we first began to adjust our course of study to the requirements for industrial and vocational education to think of the utilitarian ends alone. We forgot that everyone needed to live as well as make a living. This narrow conception caused educators for a time to restrict the scope of individual instruction to the particular vocation that the student wished to follow.

Experience taught us that this differentiation was both impractical and undesirable. In the first place, we found it impossible to provide the necessary equipment to train a student to follow one or the other of some three hundred vocations. In the second place, we found that industrial enterprises were shifting so rapidly that, even if we could have provided the means, it was likely when the student finished his course he would find little demand for his services. While we got away from this heresy, it seems we are now in danger of falling again into this error.

At a time when vocational guidance is so much in the minds of educators, there is need to recognize the hazards connected with it. It is entirely possible today for a student to enter upon a course of technical training that looks very promising at the time, but who may find at the end of his four-year course that the shift in social direction has left little opportunity for him to find employment.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of fundamental training rather than merely developing skill in one vocation. Education at every stage of life comprehends two processes—the acquisition of knowledge and its broad application in developing skill. After all, our schools can do little more for any student than to help reveal to him his aptitudes

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and impart to him a sufficient amount of information to make his latent talents effectively useful. When we have done that, we have gone a long way toward giving to the child a reasonable promise of personal security.

Individual security as an objective of education should cause us to consider seriously some important facts in our social situation. In 1938 in our national population of 130,000,000 people, 75,000,000 were adults. The adult population may be roughly classified as follows:

College graduates, including those with equivalent training	2,000,000
High school graduates	9,000,000
Elementary school graduates	32,000,000
Those with less than elementary school training	28,000,000
Total number of illiterates	4,000,000

If these figures are reasonably accurate, it is not difficult to understand one important aspect of our social security problem. We simply have too many people in our population who are not qualified for any kind of skilled employment. It happens that this large marginal group is inevitably thrown out of employment whenever the purchasing power of the people is reduced and industrial output is restricted. They are completely lacking in the resourcefulness that is necessary to adjust themselves to a shifting economic situation under conditions of stringency.

I have been interested in following our social security problems as they have been developed in recent years. Our Federal and state governments have heroically tried to create employment for this great marginal group, and the fact that people have not been permitted to starve under the distressing conditions which have prevailed deserves all praise.

But so far as I know, there has been little effort to survey the capacities of this large element in our population to see what they were capable of doing; and little or nothing has been done to train them for any kind of semi-skilled or skilled employment while they were earning a sufficient amount to keep body and soul together.

It seems to me that education of this adult group offers the most practical solution for relieving the unemployment situation and reducing the rapidly developing points of friction in our society. Professor Thorndike, as you will recall, has gathered convincing evidence which shows that adults are capable of assimilating a vast amount of knowledge. In my opinion, no road is open to the millions of adults in the lower vocational groups without providing practical education for them. In other words, we should attack the social security problem through education for individual security.

In Oklahoma, there are thousands of

Idea for a Campus Visit

Alumni coming back to Norman usually have a lot of persons to see in a short time if they are to enjoy the visit to the fullest. A pleasant way to renew contacts with faculty and student friends is to have your meals at the Union Cafeteria, where people you want to see can easily meet you. A full meal with drink and dessert can be obtained for as little as 30 cents. Quality of the food is watched carefully.

The Oklahoma Union Cafeteria

University of Oklahoma, Norman

high school graduates who are not attending any college or university and more than half of the students who have made the honor societies in the high schools are not enrolled in any institution of higher learning. As long as this gifted group of high school graduates is deprived of educational opportunities and economic conditions as they are today persist, the problems of social security will continue. Those responsible for formulating our national and state policies should give serious consideration to this situation. Social security will continue to be an increasing burden upon the taxpayers unless education for personal security is made a more effective agency of the social order.

Personal security should receive primary consideration as an objective of all educational effort for the future. Let every curriculum revision be made in light of this concept. Let every teacher have this ideal in mind in presenting the subject matter of every course that is offered in our public schools. Every child that goes out from our schools should be caused to feel that he has acquired some definite training that will help him to make an honest living and to live a happy, useful life. In no other way can our young people secure the confidence in themselves that will help them to feel a sense of mastery over the vicissitudes that every one experiences.

Somehow I believe that public education in the years that are just ahead will face its greatest test. For more than one hundred years now our schools have enjoyed the confidence of the American people. Through storm and stress our educational institutions have carried on and faith in their accomplishments has remained unimpaired, but we are today facing new problems that are strange to our experience. It is necessary for every social agency to function within the realm of its influence at maximum capacity. Let us see to it that our schools do not fail to fulfill the expectations of those who believe in them and who have trusted our teachers to accomplish the results expected of them.

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Lee given appointment

Senator Josh Lee, '17, was selected by the national administration recently to assume two important responsibilities. Senator Lee was chosen assistant whip of the Senate majority, and the late Senator James Hamilton Lewis of Illinois who made the appointment stated in a letter to Senator Lee:

"Both Senator Barkley and myself delight to feel that we should have you as the representative of the majority on the floor of the Senate in the discharge of these duties which oftentimes call for diplomacy, tact, good temper and particular judgment."

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