

Dr. Rosenstock's Report on his visit to England
(Sept. 25th to Nov. 20th, 1925)

The journey which I undertook to England in the autumn of last year upon the invitation of the W.A.A.E. was very instructive.

Above all I owe the most hearty thanks to Mr. Fleming and Miss Jones of the W.A. for the solicitous care and extraordinary hearty hospitality which was tendered me everywhere in North and South, in town and countryside. This hospitality is certainly one of the most impressive features of English life, and no unimportant element in the structure of that which is known as Adult Education.

Thus I found in Manchester the tutoring Oxford fellow serving tea to the young fellows in the Settlement. I actually had to be served with my seventy-year-old hostess who insisted on shining my shoes. In a similar manner one waited with dinner for almost one hour in the Catholic Workers' College because I had lost my way. At another time, my host personally brought my breakfast to my bedside in order that I might enjoy a complete rest.

A feeling of gratitude is helpful in trying to understand new conditions in a foreign country; and accordingly, I believe, in the course of two months, to have received a truthful impression of the status of Adult Education.

(A) Adult Education in England can not without reservations be compared to Volksbildung in Germany; the reason for this is that we in Germany are just beginning to cultivate some of the old advantages of English social life (fair play in the debate, life in settlements, etc.) On the contrary, the social emergencies in England throw the people of this country into all the dangers and disease of the social pre-war status in Germany and in consequence the intellectual training is elevated to a higher plane and the manners of discussion become less 'gentlemenlike'.

(Note. The idea seems to be to compare the present social conditions in England to those obtaining in Germany before the revolution and that in debates there is evidence of increasingly bitter dissension in England)

In Germany the religious movement (notably outside the walls and channels of confessions (creeds) and dogma) is gaining an increasing importance for the Volkshochschule. In England it seems to be decreasing, because England faces for the first time the invasion of atheism to a somewhat important extent.

Germany is just emerging from a fifty-years' period of atheism. If the Volkshochschule is to be successful, it must appropriate for its instruction a subject matter so composed as to make an appeal to the elementary religious sense - in radical departure from the teaching of the universities about the 'soul', history, state, philosophy and economics. The situation in England seems to be very different.

Not until recently has an outbreak of atheism become noticeable in several places in England, through class-propaganda and lack of employment and the Russian revolution. Therefore, Adult Education in England, though having an old religious tradition, does not have the opportunity to lay its new scientific foundations upon a deep religious stream of experience, awakened by a rational catastrophe and therefore independent of the merely philosophical traditions of the Universities. Only in the field of economics there may be noticed the blessed influence of the tutorial class practice upon the research of the scholar. However, also here the view of the bourgeois-consumer is by far the predominating one, particularly noticeable in the Co-operative Movement Schools.

The amount of voluntary service which has been offered in many districts, for example, in Bristol, is astounding. The State support which is almost totally lacking in Germany seems to the German visitor to be of extraordinary importance in securing efficient teachers. Evidently where the tutorial classes are organised strictly according to principle, they show splendid results.

The foreigner is particularly struck by three things. In the first place the small number of youths, or, in other words, the comparatively advanced age of the students in Adult Education; secondly the lack of a youth movement as a parallel to the Adult Education Movement; thirdly, that the Continuation School seemingly has no point of contact with Adult Education.

It is to be feared, therefore, that the new popular education movement in England, because of economic conditions, is destined to imitate the course of the pre-war development on the continent (as Plebs League imitates the obsolete methods of German pre-war Socialism)

From England I have brought with me the desire to learn their practical ease of organising, their off-hand way of dealing with formalities, and the brevity and qualifying objectivity of English discussion.

The expenses of my journey were increased beyond our anticipation because my time was greatly crowded in those two months. Under such circumstances one must make use of all possible technical expedients, as taxis and otherwise allow oneself many other comforts. A longer stay with a less crowded programme might therefore prove cheaper, or, at least, not more expensive.

When our English friends explicitly request suggestions from me, although I am only a foreign visitor, I must limit myself to such wishes as naturally suggest themselves to a citizen of a foreign country. It lies in the nature of things, however, that these problems are of such a character that no single country can bring them to a satisfactory solution. Adult Education must be international in its methods even if it must remain national in its matter or aims, because we need contemporaneity for the adult. The most important of these methodical problems is the very question of teachers' exchange. We German's may learn much from the social life in the English settlements, and the English tutorial-class - and we must.

On the other hand, the present spiritual upheaval in Germany can be utilised by both countries for the necessary and urgent emancipation of the subject matter in Adult Education from the common or average conception of the academic special sciences.

A way out of the difficulties which both countries are facing, I see in a systematic reorganisation of the present amateur exchange of young people from both countries (by short trips, invitations, etc.) A German student who goes to England, without any knowledge of German Adult Education, and on the other hand, an Englishman in Germany who perhaps, is interested in our youth movement without having lived or worked in an English settlement or school, can be of little help in either cause. It were quite another matter, when both had been prepared in their own countries, and go across with the expressed approval of their elder countrymen, to render such help as may bring about a social and spiritual supplementation between the two countries. There young representatives may also, at the same time, give an indirect incentive to the tutors and Adult Education teachers of the country they are visiting. Travelling from one centre to the other and asking introductions, they can help to bring about the co-operation of small groups of tutors. The co-operation of the teachers of one centre is not the only form of grouping to be desired. It seems to be in most cases a merely formal unity of organisation. There are some extraordinary valuable exceptions, as the enthusiasm of the Nottingham staff. But the visitor has realised in other places the coincidence of splendid organisation, good personal comradeship and absolute isolation of thought and doctrines. In Adult Education one teacher is no teacher, one warden is no warden. Not only that, the splendid isolation will act in direction of nervous exhaustion - nearly everywhere we meet overworked men and women in Adult Education - but the efficiency of a couple of