Workers' Education in Great Britain

by

John H. Nicholson

Professor of Education, Armstrong College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, University of Durham; formerly Director of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Bristol

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In pursuance of a decision of the Governing Body, the International Labour Office has conducted a world-wide enquiry into the relations between organised labour and workers' education, and has promoted the exchange of information on this subject between the leaders in workers' education in different countries. It is proposed to publish in the International Labour Review a series of articles, of which this is the first, arising out of the enquiry, on the state of this educational movement in several countries in which it has attained a high degree of development.¹

Great Britain was the first country to be industrialised. The aftermath of the Industrial Revolution produced its social effects earlier in the British Isles than on the Continent; both the Labour and the co-operative movements had their origins in England; and the beginnings of special effort for the education of industrial and other workers may first be seen there also.

It is difficult to appreciate the attitude of organised labour to workers' education in Great Britain without some preliminary description of the British adult education movement. While the movement has undergone profound changes in outlook and emphasis during the present century, the origin of many groups and tendencies must be sought in a history which stretches back to the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Those who wish

¹ An article of similar scope dealing with the movement in Belgium has already been published in the Review. Cf. International Labour Review, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, July 1931: "Workers' Education in Belgium", by Marie-Thérèse Nisot.
to study the earlier phases may do so in a historical survey by Mr. Dobbs, while a number of monographs have also been written dealing with different aspects of the subject. We are concerned here with the past only so far as it lives in present organisations and policy, but in Britain there is a deep-rooted tendency to avoid any sudden change in the structure of political and social institutions. This means that something of the past colours most innovations, while fundamental changes are often masked by continuity in the form of British institutions. There is also a wide-spread distrust of theoretical constructions—British workers and their representatives prefer concrete schemes to abstract speculations. They act vigorously, but philosophise little, as compared with their comrades of, say, Germany and Russia.

These tendencies must be taken into account in any estimate of British adult education. While some of the most important associations are of recent growth, they have arisen out of movements with a long history behind them. A full understanding of workers' education in Britain involves a study both of the trade union movement and of nineteenth-century humanitarianism and social reform. The present relationship between the State and certain associations which provide workers' education finds a parallel in many other fields: co-operation between official and voluntary bodies is a characteristic of the British social services to-day—the most striking example is the recognition of trade unions and friendly societies by the State as the channel through which certain forms of social insurance are administered. Local authorities have wide powers to grant financial assistance to voluntary associations for certain purposes. In particular, the British educational system involves partnership between public bodies and the managers of voluntary schools. The extension of this principle of co-operation into the field of workers' education (and adult education in general) is thoroughly characteristic of the modern British outlook. The character of the British adult movement makes classification of the various bodies concerned almost impossible, so great is the diversity of their relationship to the working-class movement, to the public authorities, and to each other. But the movement as a whole is so closely related to social thought and organisation, which have changed profoundly in the course of the last century, that

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a rough chronological division is perhaps the best basis for a working classification. Three periods suggest themselves: (a) the period before 1900; (b) the period between 1900 and 1918; (c) the period since 1918. In each period associations of widely differing types have been founded, but most of them bear the marks of the particular phase of the national life in which they originated, although, like most British institutions, they have shown a surprising power of adaptation to changing circumstances.

ASSOCIATIONS FOUNDED BEFORE 1900

The older associations, however, continued to exist, and in varying degrees adapted themselves to the conditions of the new century. It is not easy to give an account of a number of the movements which had their rise in the nineteenth century. This report is confined by its terms of reference to workers' education; but in Britain, while there are associations whose main object is the education of adult workers, there are also many agencies for adult education which, while not specially designed for workers' education, nevertheless include among the members of their classes a considerable proportion of adult workers. There are also working-class movements which include education among their aims, although the bodies concerned were founded in the main to serve other ends. The picture would be incomplete without some reference to these activities, but in a report on workers' education, the space allotted to them must necessarily be less than a balanced account of adult education—or of the working-class movement as a whole—would require.

The Adult School Movement

The founding of the Adult School Movement at the end of the eighteenth century was the first organised attempt at adult education. The "schools" were self-governing groups of men and women (generally in separate "schools"), meeting weekly (often on Sunday) for mutual improvement. The problem of illiteracy was the main objective of these early schools, and at their meetings thousands of men and women learned to read and write. The movement had from the first a non-sectarian religious background. With the development of the system of public education, the character of the schools changed, but their religious and social motive and their democratic character per-
sisted. The membership remains predominantly working-class. They are federated into the National Adult School Union, which in 1932 included over 1,300 "schools" with over 40,000 members. The Union publishes an annual handbook, giving outlines of a "connected series of lessons" as a basis for the weekly discussions, which are still preceded by a devotional meeting. The adult schools do not themselves provide class-work in the sense of continuous instruction by a lecturer or tutor, though certain schools arrange with the Workers' Educational Association for classes for their members. A full account of the Adult School Movement has recently been published.¹

The Co-operative Movement

Robert Owen, the pioneer of the British co-operative movement, laid great stress upon the need for education as an instrument of social progress. From early days, the British movement has conducted classes in co-operative principles and practice. Most local societies appoint an education committee, and devote a proportion of their funds to educational work. The Co-operative Union organises correspondence courses in a variety of subjects. Most of the classes are frankly propagandist in character, and aim at the instruction of the members in co-operative history and ideals. Members are organised into men's and women's guilds, while junior guilds or "comrades' circles" have now been founded by most of the larger societies. In recent years, the Co-operative Union organises correspondence courses in a variety of educational work, and in many centres classes in general subjects have been arranged in conjunction with the Workers' Educational Association, to which the Co-operative Union is affiliated.

Mechanics' Institutes

The philanthropic and educational movement of the middle of the nineteenth century took many forms. In the growing industrial towns, mechanics' institutes were founded, and were for a time centres of vigorous activity among the workers who attended them. While the instruction given in their evening classes was based upon a training in craftsmanship, many of the institutes also provided courses in general subjects, and the move-

ment did much to prepare the way for later forms of workers' education. With the establishment of more formal provision for technical instruction in schools and colleges of various grades, the mechanics' institutes declined, though there are still a few active institutes of this kind.

Evening Schools and Polytechnics

The middle of the century also saw a vigorous campaign for the establishment of evening schools giving general education (a development of the eighteenth century night school), mainly by voluntary societies founded for that purpose. These classes were largely attended by young workers, and have contributed greatly to the spread of literacy and of general knowledge. When, later in the century, Government grants were available without the restrictions which hampered the earlier schools, they extended both their activities and their membership, and so paved the way for the vigorous evening institutes now established in London and in many towns in the provinces. The polytechnics founded in London to satisfy the growing demand for technical instruction now provide a broad curriculum with a wide choice of subjects, both technical and general.

Colleges for Working Men and Women

The Working Men's College, founded in London in 1854, was the first of its kind. Its aim is "to place a liberal education within the reach of working men". The Morley College for Working Men and Women and the Frances Martin College (formerly the College for Working Women) are other non-residential colleges with similar general aims.

The Working Men's Club and Institute Union

This Union, which was founded in 1862, is an association of workers' clubs. In addition to its general activities, which include the promotion and defence of the clubs, the Union holds classes and week-end schools, in the main by arrangement with the Workers' Educational Association.

Settlements

The social settlements, established in London and elsewhere during the nineteenth century, included educational work among
their activities, as most of them do to-day. Regular class work
is generally organised by arrangement with one of the national
associations, while the settlement itself may conduct the more
informal activities.

The University Extension Movement

The University Extension Movement, founded by the Uni-
versity of Cambridge in 1873, was one of the most striking de-
velopments in adult education during the nineteenth century.
Oxford followed in 1874, and all university bodies in England
and Wales now organise extension courses. The aim is to pro-
vide teaching of university standard for those who cannot attend
the university itself. Each meeting of the course generally con-
sists of a lecture, followed by discussion and class work. Uni-
versity Extension was not primarily a workers' movement, but
those who petitioned Cambridge for the first classes included
members of the Crewe Mechanics' Institute and other workers'
representatives. These lectures, given by lecturers sent out by
the universities, were (and in many centres still are) attended
by large numbers of adult workers, although they are not
designed specially to meet their needs. The Extension Move-
ment marked the entry of the universities into the field of adult
education. The tutorial class is now a more usual form of uni-
versity provision for workers' education. The scope of this
report makes it inappropriate to describe the Extension Move-
ment at length, but its importance in the development of adult
education can hardly be over-estimated. ¹

This short account of associations for workers' education
which arose in the nineteenth century (and which, for the most
part, are still active) is by no means complete. It must serve to
indicate the fertility of invention and the enthusiastic purpose
which animated the movement at that time. Each of these asso-
ciations has contributed to the tradition and practice of British
adult education, while the variety of aim and organisation which
they exhibit makes it difficult to give a reasoned account of the
movement as a whole. Its relations with the social and economic
development at the time are at once so close and so diverse that
any attempt at generalisation would be misleading.

¹ For an account of the movement, cf. W. H. Draper: University Extension
While no definite date can be cited as marking the transition between the older and the modern phases of the adult education movement, the beginning of the present century saw many changes of emphasis, and the foundation of most of the new associations which are most characteristic of the present time.

With the inauguration of social insurance the State accepted responsibility for functions which had, till then, been considered as wholly within the province of voluntary associations. The trend of social legislation began to take what the late Professor Dicey has called a "collectivist" direction. The Education Act of 1902 established Local Education Authorities as the successors of the old school boards, and voluntary schools were brought within the ambit of the public system of elementary education. The State showed an increasing readiness to enter the field of industrial relationships, and to provide (directly or indirectly) for the regulation of hours and conditions of labour. The trade union movement strengthened its local position, and increased its membership. An organised Labour Party appeared in the House of Commons. These change were accompanied by a heightened confidence in the working-class movement. The times were favourable for the development of workers' education.

The Workers' Educational Association

The Workers' Educational Association (W.E.A.) was founded in 1903 by a group of working men under the inspiration of Dr. Albert Mansbridge. Like many of its predecessors, the Association aims at the extension of facilities for general education to adult workers, but its organisation and emphasis was from the first in harmony with the spirit of the new century. Its method was to organise classes of various kinds, university tutorial classes (24 meetings a year for three years), one-year classes, and, more recently, terminal courses. In connection with the first, it succeeded in securing the establishment at universities of joint committees, composed partly of university representatives, partly of representatives of working-class organisations nominated through the Workers' Educational Associa-
tion. Its classes were intended not merely to be gatherings at which university teachers would put their knowledge at the disposal of working-class students, but self-governing groups, where students and teachers would educate each other by free discussion and the interchange of ideas.

The Association is by its constitution non-party in politics and non-sectarian in religion. It has taken the view that its function is not to inculcate any particular doctrine, but to provide the educational facilities needed to enable working-class students to widen their knowledge and to be of greater service to the various movements in which they are engaged. It is based partly on individual memberships, partly on affiliated societies, such as trade unions and co-operative societies. Its units are branches linked together by district federations whose work is in turn co-ordinated by the central authority. The policy of the Association is directed by its annual conference; within this policy the districts have a wide autonomy.

The Association itself appoints the tutors of its one-year classes and terminal courses, while tutorial class tutors are appointed by, or on the recommendation of, the joint committees of the several universities and the Workers' Educational Association. Discussion in class is free and untrammelled. Particularly in the more continuous courses, serious study is a condition of class membership. Books are provided by arrangement with libraries, and (except in some of the shorter courses) students are required to write papers.

The Association is recognised by the Board of Education as a "responsible body" for the conduct of one-year classes and terminal courses, and grants in aid of these classes are paid by the Board of Education to the Association. Many local education authorities for higher education also make to the districts of the Association grants in aid of their work.

In addition to the classes, summer schools for short periods of full-time study are conducted by joint committees, and there is a summer training course for prospective tutors, held at Holybrook House, Reading.

The organ of the Association is The Highway.

Residential Colleges

This period also saw the beginning of the movement for residential colleges for working-class students. Among those
providing education on the same principles as the W.E.A., one of the most important is Ruskin College, Oxford. It is chiefly supported by trade unions, co-operative societies and the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, though there are in addition a large number of individual subscribers. The subjects taught include economic history, local government and the history of co-operation and trade-unionism, as well as English literature, French and German. There is also a most successful correspondence course. The college is tending to become an international institution for working-class students.

There are now a number of other residential colleges. Of these, Avoncroft College, near Evesham (for agricultural workers), Coleg Harlech, North Wales (closely associated with the W.E.A.), Hillcroft College, Surbiton (for working women), Fircroft College, Bournville, and Woodbrooke, Birmingham—together with Ruskin College—have recently associated themselves with certain national bodies interested in promoting residential adult education, and have set up a joint advisory committee for this purpose. Honorary advisers to intending students have been appointed in a large number of centres in England and Wales. Mention must also be made of Holyoake House, Manchester (organised by the Co-operative Union), and of the Catholic Workers' College, Oxford.

The National Council of Labour Colleges

In workers' education in Great Britain, the predominant method and attitude are somewhat similar to those which are represented in British working-class policies. A different attitude, which claims to be based on Marxian economics, is taken by the National Council of Labour Colleges. This association began with the foundation of the Central Labour College, London, in 1909, as the result of a secessionist movement from Ruskin College, Oxford. It was supported primarily by two large trade unions. Further groups of students with similar aims were organised in a number of towns, and the National Council of Labour Colleges was formed to give them a common aim and policy. The Council's general outlook and the trend of its efforts are indicated briefly in the following statement which has been communicated:

The chief aim of workers' education should be to equip workers for carrying on the class struggle, in other words, for carrying out
the work of their own organisations. That does not, of course, mean simply a kind of trade-union or Labour-Party technical education—the sort of education that would enable workers to deal with their day-to-day difficulties; we mean an education that does include that, but has a much wider scope, because it is directed to equip workers to carry out, in the old phrase, the historic mission of the working-class movement—the substitution of Socialism for Capitalism. That does not mean that workers' education is in the narrower sense of the term purely propagandist while orthodox education is not propagandist. Both types of education have a purpose behind them. The difference lies in the difference in purpose. Both, therefore, may be propagandist or both may be non-propagandist: it depends how one interprets the word.

With regard to the methods adopted, our main work consists of running trade union education schemes, which provide the following facilities: (1) Free access to classes; (2) Free correspondence courses; (3) Occasional branch lectures; (4) Free access to non-residential day and week-end schools. This is paid for by a capital charge and the union or other organisation has full representation upon our controlling committees.

The Council refuses to apply for financial aid from the State, upon the ground that such aid would interfere with its independence. For the same reason, it does not seek co-operation with the universities.

The organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges is The Plebs.

In 1929, the residential Labour College, London, had to be abandoned owing to financial stringency. The statement contributed continues:

Nevertheless, the Council maintains its position and insists that the trade union movement must realise that it "must pay for real workers' education; in other words, that its industrial and political opponents cannot be its educational friends."

The same principle of complete independence is emphatically asserted in certain articles of the Constitution of the National Council of Labour Colleges, as, for instance, in Divisional Rule No. 8: "All officials must accept the principle of independent working-class education, and therefore at all times be opposed to all other so-called working-class educational organisations which are not entirely under the financial and administrative control of the Labour and co-operative movement and its component parts."

The National Industrial Alliance

This body was founded in 1916 "to negative the idea that there is an essential and necessary antagonism between the interest of employers and employed". It includes among its activities the establishment of classes on economic subjects, "controlled by
equally balanced committees of employers and employed and conducted under university and other recognised educational auspices, for the training of employers and trade unionists”.

**Educational Settlements**

This movement is in the main a recent development. “Beechcroft”, the first educational settlement, was founded in Birkenhead in 1914. There are now seventeen settlements affiliated to the Educational Settlements Association, as well as a number of other “associated” centres of a similar type. Educational settlements generally organise a wide variety of classes and groups. The programme generally includes tutorial classes and courses organised by the W.E.A. Most of these settlements teach craft work of various kinds, and musical and dramatic classes are often an important part of the settlement’s activities. Six residential colleges for working-class students are also affiliated to the Association.

**Developments since 1918**

There has been a great expansion of workers’ education since the war, in the main through the growth and development of the older associations, though certain new bodies have also entered the field. Few of these are primarily concerned with workers’ education, but since their classes and other activities include a proportion of working-class members, some attempt must be made to describe them.

**The National Federation of Women’s Institutes**

One of the most rapid developments in the broader field of adult education is the National Federation of Women’s Institutes. The first institutes were founded in 1915, and the Federation in 1917, but the movement belongs essentially to the stream of development now under discussion. These institutes, which generally hold monthly or fortnightly meetings, have been organised in over five thousand villages, and have a membership of nearly 300,000. They arrange lectures on general topics, and hold classes in music and drama, while handicrafts, domestic science and hygiene have a prominent place in their programmes.
Rural Community Councils

These councils have been organised in twenty-three administrative counties, with the object of promoting co-operation between public bodies and voluntary associations engaged in social service, including adult education. In certain counties, the rural community council has achieved considerable success in the establishment of classes and lectures for adults in the villages, generally in co-operation with a university and with the Workers' Educational Association and other bodies concerned. Rural community councils are associated with the National Council of Social Service. Their activities cover a wide field, but their work for rural adult education is alone relevant to the subject of this report.

The British Broadcasting Corporation

Broadcasting is clearly one of the most important of the new instruments for the education of adults. The British Broadcasting Corporation (B.B.C.) has allocated certain periods of programme time—at present eight periods a week—for series of adult educational talks (including two periods for languages). These talks are arranged on the advice of the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education, which is composed in the main of representatives of national bodies concerned in adult education. Associated with the Central Council are area councils established in selected districts of Great Britain. The Central Council and the area councils promote the formation of "listening groups"—which may be formed in any part of the country—to hear and discuss the talks broadcast. The B.B.C. has appointed education officers for each district where an area council has been set up. The talks cover a wide variety of subjects, including a study of contemporary economic and social conditions. In addition to the "talks programme", "talks pamphlets" are published dealing with selected series of talks, as an aid to study.

Recent Developments in the W.E.A.

Since the war, there has been a remarkable growth in the membership and activities of the Workers' Educational Association. In 1924, the Board of Education issued special regulations governing the payment of grants for adult classes, and the Association has taken full advantage of the new position. Until
the enforcement of national economy in 1931, expansion in the number of classes was rapid; even under the present restrictions, there has been an increase in the number of classes, though the development of the longer (and consequently more expensive) types of course has been seriously hampered. In the year 1932-1933, there were 2,879 classes with 58,545 students. In addition, 1,400 students attended the 11 residential summer schools.

There has also been a broadening of the field of subjects studied. In the earlier days of the movement, economics (including economic history) accounted for a high proportion of the classes. Last year, 22.07 per cent. of the classes were in literature and drama, and 22.28 per cent. in economics, or economic, social and industrial history. Next in order came psychology (8.48 per cent.), general history (8.21 per cent.), science (7.48 per cent.), and political and social science (6.30 per cent.). The remaining classes were divided among a wide variety of subjects, including philosophy and religion, music, elocution and dramatic art and public speaking, languages, local and central government, and anthropology and human geography (in that order).

Another development worth noting is the growth in the number of courses of from 12 to 20 meetings. Although the number of three-year tutorial classes has steadily increased, there have been attracted to the movement thousands of new students who find satisfaction in these shorter courses, often attending regularly over a period of years and so studying a variety of subjects less intensively. There is no evidence that the standard of work in tutorial classes has suffered by the recruitment of these students. On the contrary, those who wish for more continuous study find their way later into tutorial classes, and are all the better for this preliminary training, while the movement has gained in flexibility and in its capacity to meet a variety of needs.

The W.E.A. was at first mainly an urban movement. Since the war, there has been notable progress in rural areas. Tutor-organisers (often called "resident tutors") have been appointed in many districts, either by the Association or under the auspices of a joint committee. A resident tutor appointed to develop a county scheme takes certain courses himself (particularly tutorial classes and "pioneer" courses in new centres); the rest of his time is spent in travelling round his area and organising classes which are then taken by other tutors. In 1931-1932, the W.E.A. organised 428 classes in centres with a population under 2,000
— for the most part in villages and the small market towns. In this work, as in much else, the Association has had the generous financial support of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.

Another feature of the most recent period has been the growth of local schemes of co-operation, particularly in rural areas. A number of these schemes are described in a recent report of the Board of Education.¹ There is no standardised pattern, but in most cases the scheme is based on a partnership between a university body and the W.E.A. district (associated in the joint committee) and the Local Education Authority, sometimes with the co-operation of other bodies concerned in adult education. In certain counties, a joint advisory committee for the "pioneer" side of the scheme has been constituted as a committee of the rural community council; in other counties an ad hoc advisory committee has been set up; in others, again, there is no special local committee. In some districts the W.E.A. has appointed area organisers to assist the district secretary in promoting classes.

The Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee

The relation of the W.E.A. to the trade union movement has been greatly strengthened by the foundation of the Workers Educational Trade Union Committee (W.E.T.U.C.) in 1919, the first union to join being the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. The following description of the origin and work of the Committee has been communicated:

The Confederation had long felt that trade unions should do something practical to stimulate among their members a demand for education, which, whilst cultural in the main, would assist them in preparation for various forms of public service, particularly in connection with the trade union movement. The Confederation sets aside every year £1,000 for its educational work.

This Confederation was subsequently joined by the Railway Clerks' Association and the Union of Post Office Workers, and to-day the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee has 13 unions connected with it, including some of the largest, such as the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

Last year, over £4,000 was contributed by the organisations concerned to meet the activities of the Committee. A difficulty which the trade unions experienced was that whilst they could provide money for education, they had not at their disposal the necessary national

¹ Board of Education: Adult Education and the Local Education Authority. Paper No. 11 of the Adult Education Committee. London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1933. 2s. 6d.
machinery. After full investigation, it was decided to work through the W.E.A., which placed its machinery at the disposal of the W.E.T.U.C.

The method is to arrange for trade unions whose organisations are affiliated to the W.E.T.U.C., day schools, week-end schools and one-year and three-year courses.

The subjects of study are diversified, as the following list will show: trade union history and problems, co-operative history and problems, industrial history, political history, history of social movements, problems of reconstruction, industrial administration, local government, political theory, economic theory, international problems, psychology, biology, social psychology, sociology, philosophy, literature, music, art.

In 1932-1933, 180 W.E.A. classes included a majority of W.E.T.U.C. students; 71 of these were tutorial classes. Thirty-seven "week-end schools" were arranged by W.E.T.U.C. divisional committees in the different areas. A number of unions in the W.E.T.U.C. offer correspondence courses.

Trade Unions and Workers' Education

This is probably the best place at which to offer some comments upon the attitude of organised labour to workers' education. The following statements have been communicated:

It is not surprising that trade unions have been to the fore in their advocacy of the extension of facilities of knowledge to union people. Interestingly enough, it was the organisation which catered chiefly for unskilled workers (now the National Union of General and Municipal Workers) which took the leading part in the trade union propaganda for extending the school-leaving age. As far back as 1898, a resolution including the following demands appeared on the T.U.C. agenda:

"This Congress emphatically condemns the education policy of the present Government, and declares—(1) That in this question of the education of the nation's children, the workers should ever keep in view as their ideal, the democratic principle of 'Equality of opportunity', and should not be satisfied until the highest educational advantages which the country affords are within the reach of all. (2) That as it is a duty which the community owes to posterity to see that no future citizen lacks the requisites to a healthy development of body and mind, a measure should be brought before Parliament which shall empower school boards to provide food for the many thousands of starving and under-fed children who are to be found in the people's schools throughout the country. (3) That the school age be raised to 14 years, and such maintenance provided by the State as shall place secondary education within the reach of every worker's child."

The next stage of development in the propaganda was the inclusion of day-time continuation classes in the trade union programme. The National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers was responsible for this, and the following resolution under its name appeared on the T.U.C. agenda of 1909:
That from the age of 16 to 18 years, classes shall be provided during the day-time to enable the students to learn thoroughly the theoretical and practical side of their work, and that employers shall be compelled to allow their employees the necessary time off to attend such classes.

Deputation after deputation waited upon successive Ministers of Education, and in the "Fisher Act" of 1918, both permission to local authorities to raise the school-leaving age from 14 to 15 years, and the day-time continuation classes, were included. Unfortunately, however, no progress has been made in these two directions owing to the "axe of economy" falling upon progressive social legislation.

Since then, continuous agitation has taken place upon these two points, but, so far, without practical success.

In due course a demand was made that the Trade Union Congress itself should become responsible for educational work of a different character. It now has its own Educational Committee which is responsible for the administration of the fund it provides. Its aim is to promote working-class trade union education, although it co-operates with other working-class educational bodies and with the older universities in extra-mural work.

In view of the extensive field covered by other agencies for cultural education, the Trade Union Congress has set itself to occupy, mainly, a restricted but extremely important field of activity. The fact is that the foreshadowing of fundamental changes in our social and industrial systems gives education a new meaning to trade unionists. It is realised that those holding executive positions of responsibility must have a wide range of knowledge regarding economic and political problems and their minds so trained as not only to enable them to come to prompt and right decisions for the immediate present but also to take a long view as to possible ultimate results. A new type of trade union official is being evolved, and his power will be largely dependent upon and guided by the enlightenment of those whom he represents.

The General Council realises, therefore, that the future trade union leaders must be equipped with a knowledge of all branches of administration. To this end, it has organised for the past two years a fortnight's summer school at Ruskin College, Oxford. The school can be considered to be a technical one inasmuch as it deals specifically with trade union administration, workmen's compensation, social insurance, factory legislation, etc., although it has special lectures on subjects such as international co-operation and so on. This method of training promises to be very fruitful of results.

Furthermore, the Trades Union Congress provides six scholarships to Ruskin College every year, and last year made it possible for four young trade unionists to attend the International Summer School in Bernau. The Council has its representatives on the executive of the W.E.A., the National Council of Labour Colleges and the governing body of Ruskin College, and is associated with the extra-mural bodies of Cambridge and Oxford Universities.

The Extra-Mural Work of Universities

Mention has already been made of the foundation of the University Extension Movement in the nineteenth century, and of
the formation of joint committees for tutorial classes. Co-operation between the University of Oxford and the W.E.A. led to the establishment of joint committees, first at Oxford, and later at all other universities in England and Wales. After 1918, certain universities established extra-mural departments, with a relation to the joint committees which varies in the different universities. There has been a great expansion of extra-mural work since the war, and most universities now regard themselves as responsible, in co-operation with the W.E.A. and other bodies concerned, for the development of the courses of higher standard throughout a definite area; in some cases the work includes pioneer schemes under the direction of resident tutors.

Certain universities—notably Oxford and Cambridge—offer residential scholarships to enable working-class students to undertake full-time study in the university.

*The Work of Public Authorities*

The relation of the State to adult education in England and Wales can only be understood in the light of the English tradition of co-operation between official bodies and voluntary associations. In elementary and secondary education, official provision has been built upon a foundation of voluntary effort which it has nowhere completely superseded. In adult education, if the evening schools of the nineteenth century be excepted, the voluntary movement was well established before the State entered the field. Except in London and a few large towns, there is little direct provision of adult education by the State (that is, by the Local Education Authority, with the assistance of grants from the Board of Education).

In London, the men's institutes, junior men's institutes, women's institutes, literary institutes, and general institutes have been remarkably successful, and many of them include a high proportion of working-class students. The total attendance in 1930 was 55,000. Among the provincial towns which make somewhat similar provision Birmingham, Bristol, Leicester, Bradford, Manchester and Hull may be mentioned. One or two County Education Authorities appoint resident tutors or make direct provision in some other way.

For the most part, however, Local Education Authorities assist the work of voluntary associations by grants, by the loan of premises, by providing books from the public libraries, and by
offering scholarships and bursaries to adult students. The extent and amount of this assistance vary greatly in different areas. A number of Local Education Authorities now co-operate in the joint schemes established in certain rural areas. Special mention must be made of the county libraries, established with the aid of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. Grants from local authorities are generally made on a class basis, but in some cases “block grants” are paid to W.E.A. districts and to other voluntary bodies.

The Board of Education assists the adult educational work of universities and of “recognised” voluntary bodies by grants graded according to the type of class and the number of “satisfactory” students. Classes aided by grants are open to inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectors, who are appointed by the Board of Education.

CONCLUSION

Adult education in Great Britain is rightly described as a “movement”, and it is difficult in a short report to do justice to its many-sidedness and at the same time to present a coherent picture. Statistics are apt to give a false impression; students must be weighed as well as counted if the importance of their activities is to be justly estimated. At first sight, it might seem that adult education in Great Britain touches only a small proportion of the workers. Statistically, that is true; yet the influence of the movement on working-class thought and activity is far greater than the figures would suggest. Its significance must be sought in the intimate relation between the classes and much of the formative thinking in the working-class movement as a whole. Nor is the influence of an association like the W.E.A. confined to class work. Many branches organise activities of a social and broadly educational kind outside the classes, and the democratic character of the association provides, in the branch and district meetings, a valuable if informal education in citizenship.

The movement owes much to the help and support of many bodies and persons to whom reference cannot be made in a report of this kind. In particular, the educational trusts have offered generous assistance on many occasions—in addition to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, mention should be made of the Cassel, Gilchrist and Thomas Wall Trusts.
This report has been confined to an account of the bodies which provide classes or grants. A fuller statement would make mention of the British Institute of Adult Education, the Tutors' Association, and other bodies with an individual membership which, by the issue of publications and the holding of conferences, have contributed to the formation of opinion and the shaping of policy.

Again, nothing has been said of special work for the unemployed. So far as the provision of classes for unemployed men and women is concerned, this is done in the main by the bodies whose work has been described. The welfare schemes which have been established in a large number of centres would seem to fall outside the scope of the present report, which is concerned only with workers' education in the accepted sense.

For somewhat similar reasons, the broadening of adult education in the direction of crafts has been passed over. Perhaps the time is ripe for fresh definitions of the scope and purpose of workers' education; but this is not the place to attempt such a task.