

of the worth and dignity of their own people and of all peoples. They have no longer any need to be either apologetic or belligerent about their own race or nationality. Children in the majority group begin to see themselves in some perspective.

No claim is made that the Springfield plan is a cure-all. The men and women working with it and eagerly watching its results do not expect to remove the blight of prejudice, with a surgeon's stroke, from the minds of the young generation. We cannot hope that all children exposed to its influence will develop into rational and tolerant adults. But the plan points a way to better understanding, toward civilized human relationships. In no way a rigid formula, it is sufficiently flexible to be adapted to many communities. Canadians should investigate the experience of Springfield.

What About the Adults?

If we consider tackling the problem of racial prejudice in the school, we must face the fact that the effectiveness of the program depends on the teacher, and, ultimately, on the parent. The teacher, like the rest of us, has been subjected to the influences which produce intolerance and bigotry. Perhaps she has not escaped unscathed. Unconsciously, she may bring an attitude to the classroom which will undermine all her textbook theory. Or she may be so fearful of the tensions in the schoolroom that she attempts to ignore them, shirks coping with them in the open. She may pretend not to hear when names like kike, nigger, hunky, chink or wop are called in the schoolyard. If she does, she fails to give the child who is discriminated against the support he badly needs. Lessons in racial equality then become meaningless words. The child is quick to detect the difference between precept and practice. Institutions for the training of teachers must provide guidance in this field. The teacher should be equipped to meet the problem with confidence. Her training should show her how to bring democracy to the classroom.

Any program for children is doomed to failure unless parent and community education go with it. To the child, the two most important people on earth are his mother and father. Their words, actions and attitudes mould his mind and colour his vision. A look, a sneer, an inflection of the voice may undo the careful work of months. Springfield has realized this fact. Forums, study groups, school projects, and parent associations, have brought to adults an understanding of the plan, and its significance for society as a whole. Canadian communities must remember that work with children involves work with parents.

What Can We Do About It Now?

The best way to drop a prejudice is to get to know the people we *think* we dislike. Members of different groups can come to know each other naturally through working together to do a job. If all groups in the community can join to plan a community centre, organize a playground, or to achieve some practical end they all want, a start will be made. Better community work will be done, and mem-

bers of minority groups will emerge as interesting and diverse human beings, instead of racial "types".

What can we do as individuals? We can check *ourselves* if we feel the stirring of prejudice and force ourselves to analyse our reactions. We can maintain an attitude of doubt when we hear stories which place any group in an unfavourable light. We can demand proof, and if none is forthcoming, pronounce the story a slander. We can see that organizations of which we are a member take action with the authorities in cases of race or group injustice. Similarly, we can challenge discriminatory conduct in such organizations and withdraw our support if the situation is not rectified. We can write to the editors of newspapers if we think that incidents have been reported unfairly, or in a way calculated to arouse racial animosity. We can join in public protest against the barring of racial groups from places of entertainment, or from the enjoyment of any civil right.

These are small things to do. But racial and group intolerance must be attacked by all the means we can find at hand. We must not neglect the practical and immediate, while we are planning larger action. The fight is a long and a hard one.

REPORT QUESTIONS

1. What kind of prejudice is most serious in your community? What causes it? Can anything be done about it?
2. Has your group any plans that it would like to pass along to other groups on how to deal most effectively with social and racial prejudice? Have you tried some ways of getting at it that really work? The main reason for sending in a report this week will be to pool our resources for a common attack on a big problem.

MORE INFORMATION

Probing Our Prejudices, by Hortense Powdermaker. Toronto, Musson, 1944. 90c. An analysis of race prejudice intended for school students, but of great value to all readers.


The Races of Mankind, by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish. New York, Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 30 Rockefeller Plaza, 1943.

The Problem of Race. The Democratic Way Series. Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship, 166 Marlborough Ave., Ottawa, and Canadian Association for Adult Education, 198 College St., Toronto, 1944. 10c.

Intercultural Education in American Schools, by W. E. Vickery and S. G. Cole. Toronto, Musson, 1943. \$2. Paper \$1. This is the textbook of the Springfield plan.

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Next Week: "PRISONS OR PLAYGROUNDS?"

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PROBING OUR PREJUDICES





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An American sociologist said recently that it is easier to smash the atom than to break a prejudice. This sounds at first like a smart quip. But the speaker was

in deadly earnest. What he wanted to make us see was that the most difficult material in the world to work with is the human mind. Racial and religious intolerance are not founded on reason. They are rooted in emotional attitudes. There is no magic formula for the dissolution of such attitudes. The mind which harbours them may be closed, unresponsive to unfamiliar ideas. Prejudice, like the atom, has its almost impenetrable nucleus. The hard core of prejudice can be broken only if we learn, by a process of re-education, something of its structure.

How Do We Acquire Our Prejudices?

There is no such thing as instinctive prejudice. We are born without it, and are completely free from it as very young children. But we acquire prejudice as soon as other people and their opinions become important to us, as soon as society begins to impose its controls. Chance words, at home or on the street, make pictures in our minds of people outside our own group. These pictures are often unpleasant or frightening. Our first childish contacts, may by chance, confirm some of these impressions. As time goes on, they become fixed, sometimes unalterable. When a member of another racial or religious group is mentioned, when we hear of an incident, or have an unfortunate encounter, our reaction is automatic. We press the button of that prejudice, instead of forming a separate judgment based on the evidence in the case. We see the act of an *individual member* of a group against which we hold a prejudice as typical of the *whole group*. The act becomes that of a Jew, a negro, or a French Canadian, instead of that of an individual human being. It serves as an occasion to reinforce a feeling against a whole section of the community.

Our newspapers aggravate the situation. We do not read that a crime has been committed by a man of Welsh or of Scottish descent. But crimes by negroes, Chinese, or Indians are labelled. The impression is created that race is a factor in the case. Although we cannot blame the paper, Polish, Ukrainian and Italian names stand out in the news. Their foreignness fixes them in the minds of the majority group. Many people come to associate certain patterns of conduct with nationality. The true figures and our own common sense should tell us that all crimes are committed by all elements in the population. But prejudice makes no use either of truth or of common sense.

Society is ultimately responsible. Our social system creates the insecure and frustrated people who pass prejudice along. Those who are maladjusted, fearful for their economic and social position, seek a scapegoat race or group to blame for their own inadequacies, and

for the dissatisfactions of life. Competition for jobs where too few are available, the struggle for existence, the urge to be recognized as superior to other people, are at the root of the trouble. The people who hold prejudice are just as much victims of unsatisfactory social and economic conditions as are those against whom the suspicion and dislike are directed. Increased security for all must be our weapon against prejudice.

The Myth of Race

The most bitter and ingrained prejudice in society has its origin in misconceptions about "race". The idea that there are inferior and superior races, that races must preserve their "purity", is at the bottom of much of the cruelty man has inflicted on his fellow man. Science has demonstrated the sheer nonsense of this myth. All peoples of the earth are a single family. They have a common origin. From somewhere in Asia, they spread to all corners of the globe. Physical differences, they are all superficial, developed slowly through diversity of climate and in conditions of living. There is no difference in the mental *capacity* of the races. Environment and geography have called forth different types of effort, and have produced widely varying cultures. Within our own civilization, discrimination, intolerance and under-privilege have affected the *development* of some races.

The negro, in North America, has behind him generations of subservience. It has been assumed that he was fitted only for the heaviest manual labour. For years he achieved a place in society only as the amusing and amiable servant of the white. He has been given no adequate education, no opportunity for stimulating contacts, no chance for social and economic advancement. Now that some doors are being opened, negro scientists, doctors, librarians, teachers, musicians, novelists and artists, are taking their place with those of the other races.

Until the European brought him civilization and disease, the North American Indian coped with his environment on this continent with skill and intelligence. The white man shattered the economic and spiritual foundation of his existence. He forced the Indian into a way of life alien to his every instinct, and did little to assist him to make the difficult adjustment. Now the Indian is said to be shiftless and incapable of learning to live in the modern world.

The Jews are not a race at all. They are people who practice the Jewish religion, and are of all races, even negro and mongolian. There is no "Jewish type". Jews are dark, fair and red-headed, and vary as much in appearance as any other group in the community. The idea that they present some sort of united front, have some sinister design to dominate world affairs, is the lie Hitler used to unify his people in a common hate. Jews have been accused of organizing a

world-wide "communist conspiracy", while at the same time they are charged as the ruthless capitalists who control international finance. The Jewish people have, of course, no single social purpose, and are radicals and conservatives, employers and employed.

Race Intolerance and Democracy?

Race phobia strikes at the core of democracy. It challenges the basic democratic concept of equality — the right of each man and woman to social and economic opportunity, to full participation in the life of the community. If we bar the negro Canadian from training as a nurse, if we put barriers in the way of Jewish Canadians in the professions, we are depriving Canadian citizens of their rights. We are denying the principle upon which our democratic system is founded.

The plight of the Japanese-Canadians shows what can happen when racial discrimination is carried to its logical extreme. Even before the war, the status of these people was that of second-class citizen. Now they have been deprived of practically all the rights of citizenship. No matter what justification is advanced, no matter what explanation given, an alarming precedent has been set. The democratic rights of all Canadians have been imperilled. If we can cancel the citizenship of one group today we can use this weapon against another group tomorrow.

What Is the Springfield Plan?

What attack has been made on race prejudice? What action have social scientists taken to develop more wholesome and rational attitudes? The Springfield project stands out among recent attempts to solve the problem.

Since 1939, the schools of Springfield, Massachusetts, have been a laboratory for a great experiment. Springfield has set itself to find out how effectively the school can combat the fear, intolerance and suspicion which poison human relations. The core of the new program is the conviction that the classroom is society in miniature — a small democracy in which the child can learn to live with others on a basis of equality. "Racial tolerance" is not *taught*. Rather, the child sees it in action. He lives it in his daily contacts. Children of all groups in the school community plan the projects and activities in which all join. There is no discrimination and no privilege.

Each school subject is used as a means of stressing the basic principles of democratic living. Courses in history, for example, describe the background, in the old world, of the peoples who came as immigrants to American shores. The child gains an appreciation of the contribution of negro and white, Jew and Gentile, Italian, Greek, Pole and Chinese, to culture and to progress. He learns to value what each group has done to build the community and the country. Children of minority groups feel a new pride in their origin, a sense