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THE HUMAN FACTOR IN EDUCATION

BY

JAMES PHINNEY MUNROE, S.B., Litt.D.

VICE-CHAIRMAN FEDERAL BOARD FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION;
SECRETARY OF THE CORPORATION, MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY; PRESIDENT (1910-11) NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION;
CHAIRMAN (1908-18) MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
AUTHOR OF "THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAL," "NEW DEMANDS IN EDUCATION," "THE NEW ENGLAND CONSCIENCE," ETC.

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PREFACE

The extraordinary conditions surrounding social and economic life to-day have forced even the most indifferent to consider some of the fundamental questions which lie at the root of real national efficiency. Abnormal profits in certain industries, serious stagnation in others, the cost of living mounting by leaps and bounds, wages following after with a rapidity never before experienced, and the man on a salary distracted in his effort to make both ends meet: these and other untoward things have brought about a state of unstable equilibrium pregnant with danger.

While the United States is infinitely richer than in 1870, while, moreover, its currency system and its business credits are on a much firmer foundation than they were fifty years ago, there is nevertheless so close a parallel between the conditions of to-day and those immediately following the Civil War as to call up to older men uncomfortable recollections of what was perhaps the most far-reaching of American panics, that of 1873.

At that period, moreover, the United States was practically self-contained industrially, politically and socially; whereas to-day it is not only a member, but for the moment the dominant member, of a vast inter-
related industrial and financial organism in which a
country that in 1873 thought locally in terms of thou-
sands, is now thinking internationally and in terms of
millions of dollars.

Some of the leading questions which industry, wit-
nessing such devastation as never before was possible
asks itself, are these:

(1) Will the after-peace period bring an unprece-
dented rush of men and women fleeing from militarism
or will it bring a further depletion of an already insuf-
ficient labor supply, in order to build up the wrecked
industries of Europe?

(2) Will the cessation of hostilities find the great
nations of Europe so occupied in meeting their own long-
suspended industrial demands that, for several years at
least, they will care little for foreign trade; or, on the
contrary, will they at once flood the markets of other
countries with vast quantities of goods?

(3) Will this country remain on its present compar-
atively low tariff basis; or will it, under the fear of this
flooding, return to high tariff?

(4) Will the war have so intensified the industrial
training of the European nations that they will out-
strip us even in fields formerly our own; or will their
people be so unnerved and unsettled by the strain of war
as to require another generation for the recovery of even
normal efficiency?

(5) Will the United States be wise enough to mo-
bilize its intellectual and industrial forces in such a way
as to make science and education effective servants of
civilization; or will it go muddling on in the wasteful
ways of laissez-faire?

(6) Will New York remain the financial centre of
the world, retaining a dominant share of the gold sup-
ply; or will that supply rapidly make its way back
to London, Paris and Berlin, restoring the London
“square mile” to its old commanding position?

(7) Will the hoped-for fall of prices be rapid or
slow; and, in either case, how can the necessary reduc-
tions in the present wage-scale be made without induc-
ing widespread labor troubles?

Whatever may prove to be the answers to these grave
questions, those answers will bring with them compli-
cated problems of finance, of manufacturing, of legis-
lation, of education, of the relations between employer
and employee, that can be solved only by meeting them
in the spirit in which modern science meets complex
problems of engineering or of public health. The day
of dealing with such matters by rule of thumb has for-
ever passed; and the attitude of mind of the trained
engineer, applying the teachings of pure and applied
science to specific problems, must be that in which these
hard questions of the next ten or twenty years should
be resolutely faced.

It is significant that these great problems are, in the
final analysis, almost purely human ones. Questions
of immigration, of industrial relations, of labor efficien-
cy, even of the tariff and of finance, can be solved
only through crowd psychology, through sound educa-
tion, through improving the relations between man and
man, through permanently influencing the composite point of view of thousands, and indeed millions, of human beings. Consequently, in far greater measure than ever before, the welfare of the United States during the crucial time following the Great War will depend upon the efficiency with which are handled the infinitely complex problems of modern human relations.

If the United States is to maintain the financial and industrial leadership which has been thrust upon it by the extraordinary conditions in Europe, it must, among other things, handle the immigration question as a scientific problem, not as one to be treated without thought or system; it must establish relations between employer and employee based, not upon the self-seeking of both, but upon their common needs and upon their loyalty the one to the other; it must develop its public education in such a way as to make efficient workmen and men competent to lead; it must deal with the tariff question not, as heretofore, at the behest of selfish interests, but on grounds of sound social economy; and it must seek out and give authority to men big enough to handle complicated financial questions as statesmen, not as tools either of those who, though equally greedy, are forever denouncing Wall Street greed, or of Wall Street itself.

Immigrants are badly needed in this country, but they should be of the right sort, they should be distributed where they are needed, and they should be systematically trained to become true citizens of the United States. Capital cannot exist without labor and labor cannot exist without capital; therefore neither can long main-
tain itself in enmity: their common salvation depends upon wise cooperation and mutual loyalty. Efficient workmen cannot be developed without a widespread education in efficiency, beginning with the primary school. Foreign competition cannot be successfully met unless those efficient workmen are officered, from the lowest foreman up to the company's president, by men who know how to buy, how to manufacture and how to market, and who appreciate what teamwork really means. And even attainment of these ideal conditions will not save the country, industrially and socially, unless we see to it that the intricate questions of legislation and of foreign relations are handled by educated men determined to serve, not themselves or their party, but above all else, their country. The crucial problems of the next twenty-five years depend for their solution upon the strength, the integrity and the wise patience of every human factor; and this means that each of those human factors must be sanely educated for his particular responsibility towards the common task.