

Fabian Tract No. 187.

# The Teacher in Politics

By Sidney Webb.

Price Twopence.

The Fabian Society, 25, Tothill Street,  
Westminster, London, S.W.1. September, 1918.

SA L12754—14/8/1

# THE TEACHER IN POLITICS.\*

By SIDNEY WEBB.

"Prodeegius," we may imagine Dominie Sampson exclaiming, if anyone could convey to him the news that one professional teacher was the official head of a nation of a hundred million people; and that another was the King's Minister responsible for the whole educational system of England and Wales. "Prodeegius" would Dominie Sampson have thought not only the extension of education, but also the rise in status and salary, in influence and public esteem, of the teaching profession during the past hundred years. Yet we all feel that there is much justification for the conclusion that it is because we have not sufficiently heeded the teacher, not given sufficient scope to education, not got the best out of the brains with which the nation is endowed, that we have so far made only an equivocal success of our national struggle. When we come to face the difficulties of peace the need will be still more apparent. It is plain that systematic education must play even a larger part in the world during the generation to come than it has during that which is past. And as systematic education is now more and more predominantly a Government function, and the bulk of the teaching profession is enrolled in one or other form of public service, we have necessarily to treat all educational projects as being, in the strict sense of the word, politics, and as politics of the highest national importance.

## The Teacher's Entry Into Politics.

Now, it is into politics in this sense that the teacher claims to come. The claim cannot be resisted. I venture to predict that during the ensuing decade (during which the public expenditure on education will almost certainly be doubled) the teacher in politics will play an increasing, and presently, so far as concerns the conditions under which education is carried on, it may be even a dominating part. The 300,000 men and women in the United Kingdom who, for the Census of 1911, described themselves as engaged in teaching, nowadays feel themselves to constitute, not

\* An Address prepared for a meeting of teachers.

only a substantial fraction, with their families, something like 2 per cent., of the whole community, but also a distinct profession, conscious of itself as such; with its own peculiar service to render to the State, and its own exceptional needs, about which its members realise that they possess special knowledge. It has, consequently, a claim to exercise a professional judgment, to formulate distinctive opinions upon its own and upon cognate services, and to enjoy its own appropriate share in the corporate government of its own working life.

### The Organised World of Teachers.

This is a new social phenomenon. Organisation in the teaching profession was slow to begin and slow to extend. Half a century ago it can hardly be said to have existed. A quarter of a century ago it was still only sectional and fragmentary, struggling for bare recognition. Even now public opinion is unaware of the extent to which the profession as a whole is organised and corporately self-conscious. Confining ourselves only to England and Wales, where there are possibly a quarter of a million teachers of all sorts and grades (and omitting the one-fourth of them who are merely private tutors or governesses, or the music, dance, and drawing teachers paid by individual clients, and at work in their own or other people's homes) we discover that of the real "World of Teachers" in educational institutions at least 70 per cent. are already members of one or other professional association. On the one hand there stands out the powerful and now almost ubiquitous National Union of Teachers, with a membership approaching 100,000, claiming to comprise (besides other grades) about 90 per cent. of the elementary school teachers eligible for admission to its ranks. On the other hand, in a more complex organisation, but possibly including in its enrolment an equally large proportion of the aggregate of teachers in secondary schools, we have the Federal Council of Secondary School Associations, uniting the separate Headmasters' Conference, the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, the Headmistresses' Association, the Association of Assistant Mistresses, and—largest of all—the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, the whole representing a membership of some eight or nine thousand. There is, in addition, a bewildering array of small associations of specialist teachers and separate interests. But more important than all these in its promise for the future of the profession as a profession is perhaps the statutory body known by the inadequate title of the Teachers' Registration Council, in which the whole world of teachers, including all the separate associations referred to, has been given an officially recognised representative organisation, empowered, not merely to construct a Register of Teachers, but also to voice the opinions and exercise the influence of the profession as a whole. If the teachers are behind the lawyers in their achievement of professional self-government, they are, in their possession of a statutory representative Council, in a position to put themselves presently on a level with the doctors and the pharmacists; and, at

any rate in constitutional form, they may claim to be in advance of such other professions as the architects, the various kinds of engineers, and the chemists.\*

Why do I recite these facts? It is because what we have to realise is that it may to-day be said that the Teaching Profession in England and Wales has at last become an organic whole, conscious of itself as a profession; that it is now organised, throughout, practically all grades and kinds, as constituting a single profession; and that the time has come when it is both willing and able to assume a greatly increased measure of corporate responsibility for the conditions under which its services are rendered to the community. What is claimed by the Teaching Profession, in agreement with other professions in all countries, is that on the one hand, in mitigation of bureaucracy, and on the other in bringing before public opinion the distinctive needs of the profession, professional intervention and professional responsibility are, in themselves, distinctly serviceable and advantageous to the community as a whole; and are, indeed, as we now see, necessary elements in Democratic administration, indispensable to the attainment or maintenance of the highest efficiency of the service which the profession has to render. This, and nothing less than this, is the meaning of the increasing participation of the organised teachers in public affairs. This, and nothing less than this, must be the sphere of the Teacher in Politics.

### **The Sphere of Professional Organisation.**

Now I do not propose to embark on the whole philosophy of Vocational Participation in Public Administration, on which there is much that is interesting to be learnt and taught; nor yet to bore you with erudition as to the origin and the historical development of the claim of those engaged in each occupation to have a voice in the conditions under which it is carried on. More practical it seems to map out the proper sphere of action of a professional association; to make a hasty survey of the ground on which the influence of the Teacher in Politics is likely to be most useful; and to suggest some of the methods by which it may be most beneficially exercised.

### **The Protection of the Standard of Life.**

The sphere of action of a Professional Association falls into two departments.† There is, first of all, the protection of the

---

\* Detailed particulars of the origin, development, and present condition of the associations among teachers of all kinds and grades, with a statement of the problems before them, will be found in the monograph by Mrs. Sidney Webb, "English Teachers and Their Professional Associations," published as Supplements to *The New Statesman* of September 25 and October 2, 1915. (Fabian Bookshop, 25, Tothill Street, S.W.1, price 2s. 2d. post free.)

† A detailed study of the Professional Associations of England and Wales, with a critical examination of their aspirations and achievements, will be found in the two Supplements of *The New Statesman* of April 21 and 28, 1917. (Fabian Bookshop, 25, Tothill Street, S.W.1, price 2s. 2d. post free.)

position of the individual member of the profession. We may frankly admit that, among the teachers, exactly as in all other professions, and all varieties of Vocational Organisation, an improvement in the status—usually taking the form of an increase in the remuneration—of the individual members assumes a foremost place. Teachers are human beings even as others are; and there is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to apologise for, in the claim of their Professional Associations for a more adequate (and periodically rising) salary scale. One result of the general apotheosis of wealth and of the almost universal acceptance of pecuniary profit as the test of worldly success, which dominated the nineteenth century, has been the tendency, in all public bodies, acting in the spirit of the capitalist employer, to cut down salaries and wages to the lowest possible figure. The public is callous; it is glad to have its State and Municipal services done as cheaply as possible; it is not aware of the tyranny or the oppression of which it may be guilty; and the influence of "The Treasury" of the nineteenth century has gone far to make a cheeseparing parsimony the ideal of public administration. The result is a permanent "downward thrust" of the community as a whole, against which the lowly and less well-organised classes of employees struggle in vain; often succumbing to remuneration so low and to conditions of employment so onerous and unfair, as not only to injure their own health and shorten their own lives, but also to make quite impossible any high standard of efficiency in service. Along with this is apt to go an autocratic tyranny, fortunately only sporadic and, we may hope, exceptional, against which the individual is practically defenceless. I need not remind you how severely the teaching profession has suffered in the past from such enormities. The time is not so far gone when the country clergyman treated the elementary school teacher as his menial servant; or when the humble "usher" in the contemporary secondary school was the most downtrodden of wage-slaves. Things are, even now, not by any means what they should be, in the more remote country schools, or among the lowlier grades of assistants. It is emphatically still necessary for the professional associations of teachers of all grades to formulate their own standard salary scales and their own standard conditions of engagement, dismissal, advancement, hours of service, freedom from extraneous tasks, holidays, etc.; to endeavour to get all teachers to adhere to them; to press for the universal adoption of these standard conditions by all employing authorities; and to use all their Parliamentary and local political influence to make them compulsory, as minima, from one end of the kingdom to the other. There is nothing "against Political Economy" in all this. There is nothing against the public interest. There is nothing derogatory to the dignity of a learned profession. We may agree that it is not legitimate for the Teaching Profession, any more than any other section of the community, to extort from the public the utmost reward for its services that its economic strength may enable it to obtain. That is now rightly stigmatised as profiteering; and it is

encouraging to find such conduct denounced, to the bewilderment of the average shipowner or trader, as a disgraceful act of treason to the State. But it is, as we now see, not only legitimate, but actually a matter of public duty, for each profession very forcibly to point out to the community how gravely the public interests are suffering from every case in which a member of the profession is prevented from rendering his full service to the community by underpayment or oppression; to insist, in season and out of season, on the greater advantage that would be gained by the community as a whole, if the circumstances under which the services of the profession were rendered were such as to promote of their greater professional efficiency; and to propose, at every suitable opportunity, whatever widening of opportunity, whatever increase in influence, whatever rise in status is believed to be likely to promote the greater efficacy of the profession as an organ of the community. It is therefore not only permissible, it is actually the bounden duty of every profession to see to these things. There is no more honourable, as there is no more useful, work for any teachers' representative in Parliament or on Local Governing Bodies, than in persistently upholding the prescribed professional Standard of Life, whether as regards salary, pension, conditions of service, security of tenure, or the resistance to oppression or tyranny. No case ought to be too obscure, no injustice too trivial, no victim too lowly for this persistent defence in the interests of the profession as a whole.

### **The Development of the Profession.**

The other legitimate field for the operation of the Professional Association is in the development of the service of the profession. It is, for instance, distinctly the duty of the teachers, through their professional organisation, to do what they can to promote national education. I need not remind you that each profession is an organ of the community, existing for the purpose of rendering to the community its own peculiar and specialised service. As a profession, it can have no object but to serve, no purpose but to increase its public usefulness. The community does not exist, and is not organised into a State, for the sake of the lawyers, the doctors, or the teachers: all these, and other vocations, exist for the benefit of the community, and therefore to serve the State. Social well-being depends on a duly proportionate allocation of the means and energies at the disposal of the community among all its varied needs and functions; and therefore upon the due apportionment among the several professions of opportunity for the exercise of their respective services, and upon the efficiency with which, taken as a whole, these services are rendered. Now, it is an old observation that the shoemaker thinks there is nothing like leather. The community is not prepared to take teachers, any more than lawyers or doctors, at their own valuation. We can all see how biased the other professions are in their estimate of the importance of their services to the community. Depend upon it, we are

likely to be just as much biased about the value of our own! This is why no community can properly grant, or is ever likely to grant, to any profession or vocation, either the right to determine how much of the means and energies of the community can be allowed to be put at the disposal of that particular calling; or what shall be its rights and privileges in comparison with those of other callings; or in short, anything like complete powers of self-government. But it is now coming to be generally recognised that, whilst no profession can be allowed to decide these things for itself, because it is, by its very nature, incapable of forming a correct opinion of the needs of the community as a whole, yet no proper decision is likely to be arrived at, nor is the fullest advantage for the community likely to be ensured, unless the profession or vocation has a very full and free voice in the matter. We are slowly learning what an elaborate and complicated piece of social organisation is Democracy. A hundred years ago the best possible governmental machinery seemed (as to Bentham and James Mill) to be exclusively lay in its nature; to be, indeed, nothing more than an array of directly elected councils of popular representatives, controlling the policy put into execution by an exiguous and practically unspecialised bureaucracy. The ardent Socialists of a generation ago, with all their magnificent ideas as to the functions of a Collectivist State, had scarcely a more adequate vision than Bentham and James Mill of the government they desired; and often, indeed (as with William Morris, and I suspect also, in his hours of ease, Karl Marx) saved themselves the trouble of precise thought about so dull a subject as administrative machinery by toppling over into a Utopian Communism. We see now that even the most logically formed hierarchy of directly elected Councils, and the most perfectly equipped bureaucracy of salaried Civil Servants, will not, in themselves, give us either the general Consciousness of Consent or the universal Sense of Personal Freedom that we look for in Democracy; and, therefore, as we infer, they will not, in themselves, ensure us, in the long run, that aggregate maximum of personal development which alone can be accepted as the utmost civic efficiency. Accordingly, we nowadays look, for the most perfect democracy, to a higher degree of complication than either James Mill or Karl Marx ever contemplated—to a perpetual interaction, in council and in administration, between the representatives of the community of citizens or consumers, on the one hand, and on the other, the representatives of each vocation or profession, organised as producers of commodities or services.\* The nation, organised as a united community, will necessarily insist on taking the final decision. But the community, great or small, is not itself endowed with any corporate consciousness, and its organs and instruments, whether popular legislatures or executive bureaucracies, are neither omniscient nor inaccessible to bias. They can decide only on what comes before them. Experience accordingly shows it to be necessary for each vocation or profession, like every other separate "interest," to

---

\* *Industrial Democracy*, by S. and B. Webb, pp. 818-823.

stand up for itself; to bring vigorously to public notice the importance of its own particular function; to explain to a necessarily uninstructed public opinion or to an official secretariat, what are the conditions of the fullest efficiency for its professional work; to emphasise the claim of the profession to be allowed to render to the community all the service of which it is capable; and, in particular, to demonstrate, as promptly and efficaciously as possible, the new developments and novel applications of its science and art, which the profession will be constantly discovering.

### **Service of the Entire Community.**

On this point I have an observation to make which is applicable to all professions. It is, as I understand, the community as a whole that a profession has to serve, not merely those members of the community who happen to be its most profitable clients. As the brainworking professions successively arose, it was perhaps inevitable that their members, originally remunerated always by fees, should think of themselves primarily as serving those who paid them, and the classes to which these clients belonged. We do not find the lawyers—with honourable exceptions—troubling themselves much about how to make the law more serviceable to the poor who could afford no fees. The architects have sought, I am afraid, rather to improve the architecture of the relatively small proportion of buildings ordered by wealthy patrons, than to insist that the skill of the architect should be brought to bear on the common run of workmen's cottages, or on the mean streets hitherto put up by the speculative builder. Even the doctors, in their professional associations, have not been the most clamorous advocates of the sanitary legislation that would secure the health of the poor, or the most persistent agitators for such an organisation of the medical service as would guarantee to every family in the land, and not merely to those who can pay fees, the best available preventive and clinical attendance, and the most effective institutional treatment. We see now that it is the duty of each profession to take the needs of the whole community for its sphere, the whole kingdom for its province. It must claim as its function the provision of its distinctive service wherever this is required, irrespective of the affluence or status of the persons in need. It must emphatically not regard itself as hired for the service only of those who can pay fees; and it must therefore insist on being accorded, by public authority and where necessary at the public expense, the opportunity and the organisation that will enable this full professional service being rendered wherever it is required. In view of the devoted and valuable services rendered to the poor without fee or reward by so many professionals of all kinds and grades, it would be manifestly unfair to describe the brain-working professions as the servants of the wealthy. But what I have seen of the activities during the past half-century of the professional associations of the lawyers, doctors, and architects in particular—to name no others—leads me to the suggestion that, in their corporate capacity, these typical professional associations



have not been sufficiently alive to what is distinctly their obligation to the community as a whole—namely, to insist on their right and duty to be enabled to render their professional services to all who need them, irrespective of wealth or poverty; and to be accorded the means and the organisation permitting this to be done.

### **The Danger of Class Fission.**

The Teaching Profession is far less subject to this reproach than the lawyers, the doctors, or the architects. The Professional Associations of Teachers have been, almost from the first, honourably distinguished by the claims they have made for the extension of education to the very poorest. They have always been foremost in pressing for its improvement, and for its provision irrespective of wealth or status. Teachers have always wished to be permitted to take the whole community as their pupils, and to enrol in their schools all sections and even all ages. This is as it should be with every profession. What the Teaching Profession needs, perhaps, to be on its guard against, is a tendency to class fission, leading, unconsciously, to the assumption that some kinds and grades of education may legitimately be restricted to those families which can afford to pay for them at rates yielding to the favoured professionals who serve this class higher scales of remuneration, and more agreeable conditions of service than are accessible to what tend to be invidiously regarded as humbler grades of the profession. Let us strive to insist that genuinely effective access to the whole field of education shall be the common heritage of every member of the community.

### **The Demand of the Labour Party.**

This is the note struck by the Labour Party, which has, during the past few years, passed more resolutions, more insistently demanding specific educational reforms, than all the other political parties put together. It is, unfortunately, not the educated classes of this country, taking them as a whole, who are the advocates of educational progress. Resolutions demanding new Education Bills have not been favourites at either Conservative or Liberal Conferences. It is the newly reconstituted party of the workers "by hand or by brain"—not the Conservative or the Liberal Party—that nowadays supplies the Minister of Education with the driving force of educational reforms. What the conference of a thousand delegates from the branches of the Labour Party all over the country declared in June, 1918, was as follows:—

"That the Conference holds that the most important of all the measures of social reconstruction must be a genuine nationalisation of education, which shall get rid of all class distinctions and privileges, and bring effectively within the reach, not only of every boy or girl, but also of every adult citizen, all the training, physical, mental and moral, literary, technical, and artistic of which he is capable, and with due regard to its physical welfare and development, but without any form of military training.

"That the Conference, whilst appreciating the advances indicated by the proposals of the present Minister of Education, declares that the Labour Party cannot be satisfied with a system which condemns the great bulk of the children to merely elementary schooling, with accommodation and equipment inferior to that of the secondary schools, in classes too large for efficient instruction, under teachers of whom at least one-third are insufficiently trained; which denies to the great majority of the teachers in the kingdom, whether in elementary or in secondary schools (and notably to most of the women), alike any opportunity for all-round culture as well as for training in their art, an adequate wage, reasonable prospects of advancement, and suitable super-annuation allowances; and which, notwithstanding what is yet done by way of scholarships for exceptional geniuses, still reserves the endowed secondary schools, and even more the Universities, for the most part, to the sons and daughters of a small privileged class, whilst contemplating nothing better than eight weeks a year continuation schooling up to 18 for 90 per cent. of the youth of the nation.

"The Conference accordingly asks for a systematic reorganisation of the whole educational system, from the nursery school to the University, on the basis of (a) social equality, (b) the provision for each age, for child, youth, and adult, of the best and most varied education of which it is capable, (c) the educational institutions, irrespective of social class or wealth, to be planned, equipped, and staffed according to their several functions, up to the same high level for elementary, secondary, or University teaching, with regard solely to the greatest possible educational efficiency and free maintenance of such a kind as to enable the children to derive the full benefit of the education given, and (d) the recognition of the teaching profession, without distinction of grade, as one of the most valuable to the community."\*

The Teacher in Politics may, according to his knowledge or his temperament, belong to any political party. But when he presses for further advances in Education, or improved conditions of service for the profession, there can be little doubt on which side of the House of Commons he will find the greatest support.

### The Duty of the Teaching Profession.

The resolution of the Labour Party is necessarily couched in general terms. It demands for the students of all ages and classes, and for the teaching profession, the very best that the nation can give. But what is the very best, and how can it, in actual fact, be given? This, as it seems to me, is where the Teacher in Politics should come in. One of the most important duties of the Professional Organisation of Teachers is to instruct those who move for educational reform—whether belonging to the Labour Party or to any other—what exactly it is that they should demand and press for. It is, as I have suggested, not for the Professional Association to decide the policy of the nation, and therefore the Professional Association must not presume to dictate the programme of reform, even with regard to its own service. But it is the standing duty of the Professional Association, as it seems to me, to tender advice—to counsel the legislature and the nation as to what the decision should be, and therefore to counsel those who seek reform as to what should be their programme. I can imagine each Professional Association vigilant about projects and proposals

\* Labour Party Conference, June 26, 1918.

with regard to its own service, from whomsoever emanating; prompt to study every problem as it presents itself, so as to be prepared to formulate the conclusions, for the time being, of the profession as a whole; ready, therefore, with its advice and practical assistance to every reformer or political party prepared to take up the subject; and influential in its authoritative public criticism of every programme of reform that is not in accordance with its own conclusions. Can we say that the Organisation of the Teaching Profession yet discharges these duties? Where is the authoritative criticism of the Profession upon the various projects of Educational Reform? Why is it left to the Workers' Educational Association—essentially an organisation of manual working wage-earners—to formulate almost the only programme of reform of the nation's educational system which is at once comprehensive and detailed? Why is the eager Labour Party—to say nothing of the more stolid Liberal and Conservative Parties—left unsupplied with a statement of what the Teaching Profession believes to be required for the improvement of national education? How can we wonder at the blindness and the ignorance of the politicians, or be surprised at the blunders of our Town Councillors, with regard to the needs of all the professions, if the professions themselves do not take the trouble to supply the desired programme?

### Unsettled Questions in Education.

Such a conception of the Teacher in Politics points to the need for more systematic and more continuous corporate study of the requirements of the educational service than the Professional Associations of Teachers have commonly yet undertaken. And the task cannot with impunity be neglected. Bills will be introduced, administrative changes will be made, worse still, defects will remain unremedied, and urgently required alterations will not be effected—none the less because the organised Teaching Profession is silent, or speaks only with discordant voices. Generation after generation of little ones passes beyond our reach, imperfectly taught, inadequately equipped, too often actually maimed and scarred by the experience of what should have been to them a positive enlargement of faculty and development of emotional impulses, because our educational system is not what it should be. With the Teaching Profession, which has the knowledge of what is lacking, must rest the blame, until the Professional Associations have cleared themselves by at least informing the nation of the reforms that are required. And the survey needs to be a comprehensive one. I should like to see the Teaching Profession determine, by a series of investigating committees and professional conferences, what is the deliberate judgment of the Profession upon all the unsettled questions of educational organisation. What, for instance, is required in the way of Nursery Schools for the millions of children "below School Age"? What is needed to make the Infant Departments more efficient? What can be done to redeem the Elementary School from its present almost invariable ugliness; to make it a place of really educational sense-impressions in form

and colour, cleanliness and beauty; to make it positively attractive to the pupils? Are we satisfied with the condition of the school-room atmosphere—not to say also the condition of the pupils' minds—at the end of the day's work, and if not, what ought to be insisted upon in order to make children's sojourn in the school-room—they spend there quite a large proportion of their waking lives—actually healthful to them; and not, as is at present too often the case, an adverse influence on their physical well-being, to be counteracted by open-air games and exercises? What is the real function of the Open-Air School? What changes are required in the school hours, the lesson intervals, and the term holidays to make the work most efficient; what in the curriculum; what in the school equipment and materials? What more is needed in the way of books, maps, pictures, specimens? Which is the best arrangement of subjects and classes, and how can the teaching of each best be organised? Is the distribution of functions (to say nothing of salaries!) between the Headmaster and the class or form or subject teachers exactly what it should be; and what is to be said for a periodical rotation of duties among the entire teaching staff, coupled perhaps with equality of salary scales? How should the school life, from entry into the Nursery School right up to departure from the University or the Technical College, be divided among a hierarchy of different institutions; at what ages should the transfer from one to another commonly take place, and what alternative roads for the student should be provided? What is to be done for the 5 or 10 per cent. of the non-adult population which is, in one or other way, sub-normal? What, on the other hand, should be our course with regard to the like percentage which is distinctly super-normal? Do we at present get as much as we should for the nation out of our Secondary Schools? And if not, what ought to be done to secure them a much larger recruitment, a longer average period of attendance, and more effective articulation with the Elementary School below and the Technical College or the University above?

### **Do We Teach the Right Subjects in the Right Way?**

Are we quite sure that the curriculum of our Secondary Schools and Universities comprises all that with which the nation's brainworkers need to be provided; and whether the slowly changing distribution of time—say, among the Latin and Greek classics, mathematics, the physical and biological sciences, geography and anthropology, and the languages, literatures and histories of the nations of the modern world respectively—is to-day, by some happy chance, precisely that required in the preparation for life of the citizen of the third decade of the twentieth century *anno domini*? What is required for the best professional or technical training of the doctor, the dentist, the pharmacist, the midwife, the nurse, the lawyer, the teacher, the historian, the scientific researcher, the social worker, the statesman and Civil Servant, the architect, the surveyor, the engineer, the journalist, the accountant, and the manager; and how far do our existing institutions supply it?

These are but examples of the issues which present themselves to the educational administrators, local or national. Are we, as a profession, sufficiently alive to the new discoveries and fresh developments that are being made outside our own country, and sufficiently prompt in considering the lessons to be derived from them? Would it be too revolutionary an idea for the Professional Associations, not merely to appoint committees, but also to establish Travelling Scholarships, which would enable selected members of the profession to take a year off in order to survey what is being done in particular questions in other parts of the world, and present to the Profession a detailed, critical report of what they have seen? I do not think that either the Teachers' Registration Council or the Federation of Secondary School Associations or the National Union of Teachers is at present doing as much as might be expected to assist the Local Education Authorities, the Minister of Education, and the House of Commons to come to the best decision and to take the appropriate action in the matters with which they have necessarily to deal.

### **The Professional Association as Scientific Society.**

I have suggested that the Professional Association ought to be, on one side, something in the nature of a Trade Union, protecting the Standard of Life of its members, and on the other side, something in the nature of a Political Association, promoting changes in the public organisation of the State—strictly confining itself, in both these aspects, to the service which it is the function of the Profession to render to the Community. Ought the Professional Association to be also that in which it in many cases began, namely, a Scientific Society or "Subject Association," aiming at the continuous improvement and extension of the science and art with which the Profession has to deal? We have, on the one hand, such examples as the Institution of Civil Engineers, which combines in one and the same organisation the protection of the interests of its members, the promotion of such changes in public organisation as are conducive to the development of the Profession, and the advancement of the science and art of engineering. On the other hand, we see in the medical profession the Royal Society of Medicine pursuing its special science and art, apart from the British Medical Association, which looks after its members' interests, and promotes or resists Governmental changes.

On the whole, I do not suggest that the Professional Associations of Teachers should, in their corporate capacity, aim at the promotion of Pedagogy, or investigate the possibility of improved methods of teaching languages or arithmetic. I think that experience shows that science is best pursued entirely for its own sake, in a spirit of detachment from the interests of persons or professions. A Professional Association cannot escape a bias in favour of its own profession, in favour of the technique to which its members have become accustomed, in favour of the result which the Profession has been trained to achieve. This bias is no drawback

to its Trade Union aspect—the Community, which develops astonishing powers of resistance, needs to have such sectional claims forcibly pressed upon it! It is no drawback to what I have called its political aspect—so great is the inertia that nothing is accomplished without a certain amount of exaggeration in the zeal of its promoters! But such a bias is a distinct drawback to a Scientific Society, which ought to be quite free to pursue lines of investigation that look like leading to entirely revolutionary discoveries, which would be destructive of existing technique, and subversive of customary objects or results. Moreover, it is not only one Profession that is interested in a science or an art, and not even a group of Professions alone. Other professionals, and even lay amateurs, need to be admitted to a Scientific Society, of which they often constitute the most useful members. Thus, the advancement of pedagogy, or of the art of teaching, is, or ought to be, of interest not only to school teachers, but also to psychologists, prison administrators and prison reformers, nurses, medical men, and the directors of large establishments of all kinds; and some of these could throw very useful light upon teaching problems. My conclusion is that the Teachers' Associations are well advised to leave the work of the Scientific Society to such "subject associations"—mainly composed of teachers, but open to all who are interested—as the English Association, the Classical Association, the Mathematical Association, the Modern Languages Association, the Geographical Association, and the Historical Association, with which there should be associated an independent Pedagogical Society.

### **How Can the Teachers Influence Politics ?**

In what way, it will be asked, is the influence of the Teacher in Politics to be exercised? There is, in the first place, the direct participation, in council and in administration, of the Teachers' Representative, whether as an elected member of the County or Borough Council, or of the House of Commons, or as a co-opted member of the Education or of the Library and Museums Committee. During the eighteen years that I sat on the London County Council there was always on the Council, as an elected member, an officer of the London Teachers' Association; and I am sure that all the Councillors came to appreciate the high value, to the Council itself as much as to the teaching profession, of Mr. Gautrey's services. When the Council took up Technical Education and appointed its Technical Education Board, it invited the Headmasters' Association, the Headmistresses' Association, and the National Union of Teachers to nominate, as full voting members, their own representatives to this Board, to which large executive powers were entrusted; and the influence of these members proved of the utmost value. There will, no doubt, be an increasing number of such teachers' representatives on all educational bodies, whether elected or co-opted. But it is not by this method that I expect to see the influence of the Professional Associations of Teachers most effectively exercised.

## Statutory Advisory Committees.

What I propose, for the improvement of education, and the increasing participation in its government of the teachers themselves, is a very great development of Professional Advisory Committees, to be attached to all Education Authorities, national and local. The Teachers' Registration Council should evolve into a Standing Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Education. Every Local Education Authority should be statutorily required to appoint a Local Advisory Committee, genuinely representative of all grades and kinds of teachers in the locality, to be nominated, as far as possible, by the local branches of the Professional Associations. These Advisory Committees—which ought to exist for other professions also, especially the medical—should be given no executive powers. Their function would be to advise and warn, to initiate and criticise, but not to decide. But they should have a statutory right to be consulted on all important changes which affected the profession or its service. They should be authorised to appoint Sub-Committees and to conduct investigations (a small sum being allowed them for expenses); and to report in whatever terms they chose, either confidentially or publicly. And they should not be prevented or restrained or hampered by any censorship, in reporting publicly to the ratepayers or to Parliament, whenever this was deemed necessary, however severely they felt called upon to criticise the Ministry of Education or the Local Education Authority, upon anything done or undone within the educational sphere. I believe that such a series of Professional Advisory Committees, constantly conveying to the official Authorities the responsible judgment of the Profession, would be of the greatest value. It would give a priceless education to the Councillors. It would greatly mitigate the undue authority which the Director of Education or other professional bureaucrat is apt to exercise over a lay committee. It would inform the Town Council and the House of Commons of the opinion of the main body of the profession, in contrast with the views of particularly prominent individuals. And if the officials—perhaps even the Minister himself—found this expert criticism inconvenient, whether in connection with administration or with legislative proposals, the remedy would be a more explicit argumentative justification of the official proposals, a public battle of wits between the bureaucracy and the profession, upon which public opinion and the Legislature would decide.

Here, then, is room enough and to spare for the Teacher in Politics, without once approaching the party struggles between "Blue" and "Yellow" which some people, fondly deeming themselves educated, still imagine to be the whole matter.

# THE FABIAN BOOKSHOP

---

## NEW FABIAN TRACTS.

- No. 186. **Central Africa and the League of Nations.** By R. C. HAWKIN. 2d.
- No. 185. **The Abolition of the Poor Law.** By MRS. SIDNEY WEBB. 1d.
- No. 184. **The Russian Revolution.** By JULIUS WEST. 2d.
- No. 183. **The Reform of the House of Lords.** By SIDNEY WEBB. 1d.
- No. 182. **Robert Owen, Idealist.** By C. E. M. JOAD. 2d.
- No. 181. **When Peace comes: The Way of Industrial Reconstruction.** By SIDNEY WEBB. 2d.
- 

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

- The History of the Fabian Society.** By EDWARD R. PEASE. 1916. 5s. net.
- The Restoration of Trade Union Conditions.** By SIDNEY WEBB. 1s. net. A statement of the nature and extent of the nation's pledge to the Trade Unions, coupled with an explanation of the revolution in factory conditions which makes a literal fulfilment impossible.
- Towards Social Democracy?** A study of Social Evolution during the past three-quarters of a century. By SIDNEY WEBB. Second Impression. Paper covers, 1s. net.
- Great Britain after the War.** By SIDNEY WEBB and ARNOLD FREEMAN. Third Edition. Paper covers, 1/3 net.
- 

## BOOK BOXES.

**Book Boxes**, containing 20 to 30 Books on Social and Economic subjects supplied for 10s. a year to any Study Class, Club, Trade Union Branch, &c. Write for prospectus and full catalogue to:—

THE FABIAN SOCIETY, 25, Tothill St., Westminster, London, S.W.1.