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## Education for Citizenship in a Democracy\*

CHARLES H. WESLEY

The program of the schools now being given definition and practice in "Education for Citizenship" has deep significance for Negro citizens, as well as for other citizens, of the United States. The distinctions already made in the rights and responsibilities of citizens on the basis of race and color, particularly in the Solid South, have caused thoughtful Negroes to ask themselves what form such an education for them and their children may take. Is this citizenship program to consider the rights, duties and privileges of political life? Is this program to concern itself with the processes of making a living? Or is it to embrace comprehensively one's entire social life as a member of a community? In the case of Negroes, is there to be a neglect of political activity and an emphasis upon the wider civic activities? In fact, is Education for Citizenship to mean the same for Negro Americans as for Americans of other ethnic origins?

The basic consideration for citizenship in the United States is birth within the allegiance. This was a principle of English Common Law. Those who were born in the realm were subjects of the king and owed allegiance to him. This principle of citizenship by birth prevailed in the English Colonies. When the constitution was

adopted the word "citizen" was not defined, although recognition was given to "citizens of the different states" and to "citizens of the United States." As a result of a lack of definition until the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, the whole question remained an unsettled one.

The Fourteenth Amendment affirmed the principle of birth within the allegiance and defined citizenship with the statement that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the United States and of the states wherein they reside." This amendment recognized the acquisition of citizenship in two ways, by birth and by naturalization. Decisions of the Supreme Court have further established the fact that, irrespective of ethnic origins, all persons born within the United States and subject to its jurisdiction are citizens of the United States. This principle has been expounded either directly or indirectly in the Slaughter House Cases (1873), in Strauder v. West Virginia (1880), in Ex parte Virginia (1880), in Neal v. Delaware (1881), in Elk v. Wilkins (1884), in Yick Wo v. Hopkins (1886), in United States v. Wong Kim Ark (1898) and in Hodges v. United States (1906).

It is interesting to observe the language of the Court in two of these cases. In *Yick Wo* v. *Hopkins*, it was stated:

These provisions are universal in their application to all persons within the territorial jurisdiction, without regard to any

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differences of race, of color, or of nationality, and the equal protection of the laws is a pledge of the protection of equal laws.

A more direct application was made in *United States* v. *Wong Kim Ark*, when it was declared that,

No one doubts that the Amendment as soon as it was promulgated applied to persons of African descent born in the United States, whatever the birthplace of their parents might have been.

In *Hodges* v. *United States*, the phrase, "citizens of African descent" was used.

The second avenue of Negroes to citizenship was established by a statute of July 14, 1870, which provided for the naturalization of persons of African descent. This law provided that a declaration of an intention to obtain naturalization papers could be made only by an alien who was "a white person or of African nativity or African descent." This wording implies the exclusion of Asiatics, and the courts have so ruled. Decisions growing out of California statutes have excluded Asiatics from eligibility to citizenship and the Supreme Court has declared in Takoa v. United States (1922) that citizenship in the United States was restricted to persons of European and African descent.

These legal definitions and court expressions are only paper guarantees of citizenship for Negroes. The states continue to pass laws and maintain customs which make differences in the rights and privileges of its citizens, while often insisting that their duties are similar. In spite of the present state of race relations, which provides for the inferiority, subordination and separation of Negro-Americans from other Americans, the conclusion is inevitable that Negroes were citizens

of the United States and of many of the states wherein they resided prior to 1866, when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted, and after this period.

When, therefore, we teach citizenship in our democracy, we are teaching it, with its fullest meaning, to all citizens and their children. We are not teaching a kind of circumscribed citizenship process, nor are we omitting the suffrage from consideration merely because the legalists inform us that it is not necessarily an aspect of citizenship in the United States. Citizenship should be taught with all of its implications for the training of a socially useful person.

The development of citizenship was a major object of education in the United States even prior to the Civil War. As a concept in education, therefore, it is not new today. Throughout most of the nineteenth century it was known under the guise of patriotism and love of country. The modern expression of citizenship was found in the period following the Civil War. It was then that the theory of states rights versus national rights was settled by a victory of the North in 1865. Nationalism then began its greatest development. Industry, business and labor followed its influence. Everywhere there was a new appreciation of the contributions which local communities could make to the national spirit. In many parts of the country, the program of Reconstruction which included the integration of Negroes into civic life, was another indication of a national control of local situations. The period also witnessed the gradual change from an educational system supported

church and missionary influences to one supported by the states, counties, and municipalities. The result was a school curriculum in which the state was interested. This change was not immediately reflected in the schools and certainly not in those for Negroes.

The study of citizenship found its first expression through instruction in courses in history and in particular through the history of the United States. During the four decades after 1860, twenty-three states placed laws upon their statute books requiring history to be taught in the public schools, and the purpose back of these requirements was the encouragement of patriotism. In addition to history, the course most frequently added was civil government. Between 1860 and 1900, the certification of teachers was based upon a knowledge of United States history and government by the laws of thirty-six states. The twentieth century saw the more conscious development of this idea through the keynote of "preparation for citizenship in a democracy." From 1900 to the first World War, thirty-two states passed laws making history, civics, and historical studies parts of the public school curriculum. This was a large increase over the number of states which had legislated along these lines from 1860 to 1900. Flag legislation and observance days were designated. Shortly after the first World War had opened the United States was faced not only with the problem of organization for war but with the consolidation of public opinion. Agencies were created for this purpose. One of the most important was the Committee on Public Opinion. Pamphlets were prepared, speakers and writers were used.

Legislation then followed in many

states reflecting war-time patriotism. One of these laws, a New York statute, commonly known as the Lusk Law, and the most publicized of these laws was as follows:

In order to promote a spirit of patriotic and civic service and obligation and to foster in the children of the state moral and intellectual qualities which are essential in preparing to meet the obligations of citizenship in peace or in war, the regents of the University of the State of New York shall prescribe courses of instruction in patriotism and citizenship to be maintained and followed in the schools of the state. The boards of education and trustees of the several cities and school districts of the state shall require instruction to be given in such courses by the teachers employed in the schools therein; all pupils attending such schools over the age of 8 years shall attend upon such instruction.

Ohio, in 1904, made civil government and history required subjects in elementary education and a statute of 1923 required the teaching of United States history and the Constitution. In West Virginia, laws in 1916, 1919 and 1921 were enacted which demanded a knowledge of state history and the state constitution as requirements for teacher certification. A statute of 1923 legislated the teaching of United States history and the Constitution in the schools, and another statute demanded of teachers an oath to support the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the state. Several states passed similar legislation in the endeavor to encourage the conscious development of citizenship.

In the meantime, throughout this period the teaching of citizenship was either insistently concerned with the acquirement of historical facts or was concerned with the theory, structure and the development of government or the administration of oaths to support

the constitution. In other words, Education for Citizenship was concerned with the mastery of the mechanism of government. The study of Civics gave the pupil an acquaintance with governmental machinery rather than the development of citizenship qualities. Closely associated with this type of instruction was the teaching of the virtues and characteristics of good citizens as found in patriots of the past. Our great statesmen and military leaders were extolled and their virtues described. Stress was laid upon honesty, industry, initiative, vision, thrift, which had made it possible for many an American to make his way from the lowest places to higher ones. "From the log cabin to the White House," "From fifty cents a week to a million dollars," were common slogans in these periods of our history, and they captivated the imagination of our youths. They were supposed to love an America which was the land of free opportunity and which made possible these individual developments.

Within recent decades, however, life has very greatly changed. These changes make it difficult for instruction in citizenship to be continued on the old basis. A few decades ago, the West was still the beckoning land to the youth of the nation. Cheap cultivatable land could be found in abundance, but by the dawn of the twentieth century it was no longer possible for a young man to make his stake and develop into the individual success of the past. The popular mind began to change and attitudes towards traditional institutional life were different from those of the past. These were reflected in changed attitudes towards religion, the home, the school and government. Older formulas and creeds were questioned and among these were the sanctity of property, the efficiency of the capitalistic system, the intervention of God in the affairs of men, the practicability of the present democratic way of life and the infallibility of the Church.

Society has been changing rapidly in the twentieth century. When such a generalization is made, it is evident to all and scarcely needs implementation. A half century ago, our population was about fifty millions, the mineral wealth of our Western lands was not entirely utilized. With the dawn of the twentieth century, America began to apply its intelligence to nature and there came in an age of iron, steam and electric power. Prosperity was built upon an expanding industry, extensive railroad construction, and the exploitation of mines and forests. America continued to be the land of opportunity. Ofttimes in the midst of the triumph of capitalism, there were hard times and ruin for some of the people. Farmers and laborers had serious grievances. With 1929, we found ourselves in a serious economic depression. Millions faced insecurity and unemployment. Want and starvation stared others blankly in the face. Lowered standards of living were general. In 1932, there were about 15,000,000 unemployed. One year later, there were over 12,000,000 and four years later there were 10,000,000. This was a gigantic problem for a democracy to solve, while fascism and communism seemed to be effectively solving similar problems. Millions were beyond the age when they could enter new fields of labor and learn new industrial processes, while youth willing to work seemed to face a future with closed doors. In

many parts of our land, there was maladjustment, dissatisfaction frustration. We had created a machine age which could either make us or break us. We have now the added danger of the threat of disaster occasioned by modern warfare and a return to barbarism. However, it is erroneous to assume that democracy has failed because of these shortcomings. The fact is democracy has never been tried and we are suffering from too little of it, rather than from its failure. We must improve our democracy and extend its influence and practice, or when and if war comes, there may not be very much democracy to save.

The objectives of education in this period of social change have been effectively stated by John Dewey. He pointed the way continuously forward for education and for society, when he stated:

How can education stand still when society itself is rapidly changing under our very eyes? The sense of unsolved social problems is all about us. There are problems of crime, of regard for law, of capital, of labor, of unemployment, of international relations, and cooperation—all on a larger scale than the world has ever seen before. Anticipation of continued and large-scale changes in education is then not so much a prophecy as it is a warning. Unless education prepares future citizens to deal effectively with these great questions our civilization may collapse. It cannot give this preparation unless it itself undergoes great transformation.

With society changing and education finding it necessary to adjust to these changes, it has also become necessary for our goals of education to be changed and for us to seek a revaluation of our objectives.

It is clear that our social thinking has not kept pace with our machine thinking. A wide gulf separates our material culture and our social culture. We ride in 1939 automobiles but think in nineteenth century horse cars. We demand modern plumbing and electric lights in our homes, and the newer types of clothing and hats, but we refuse often to develop our ideas of democratic life from that known and practiced in 1789 or even in 1900. In an age where social life is thrown out of joint, we must think of processes which will regulate it. If democratic government is to be kept workable, we must be prepared to introduce sweeping changes in its practice.

There must be a wider extension of the suffrage, the abolition of poll taxes. the encouragement of participation in voting and the termination of popular indifference towards it, popular indignation against either the purchase of political influence or votes, or we shall have an oligarchy of cliques and parties controlling our democracy. Higher minimum wages to workers, price control in relation to purchasing power, and an extension of public works will assist in our unemployment problems. Labor union organization needs encouragement by legislation and active cooperation in a capitalistic society, so that labor may be able to bargain collectively with the large corporations and combinations of wealth. Favorable agricultural legislation should insure profitable income and raised standards of living for our farmers. Public ownership and scientific development of natural resources, social control of credit and banking, public regulation of corporations, graduated taxes on incomes, inheritance taxes, social insurance, old age

pensions, socialized medicine in some form, and consumers' cooperative enterprises are evidences that a new democratic spirit and citizenship outlook can operate effectively and prevent abuses from increasing in democratic life. Negro citizens as well as whites should look forward to participation in such a program.

The democratic way of life should make it possible for us to have physical well-being and raised standards of living for all. For our technological progress has led to enormous increase in consumers' goods. It has been estimated that with our machinery all of the food which we can possibly require can be cultivated with one-fifth of the workers now engaged in agriculture utilizing one-fifth of the land now reguired. Whether this calculation is exact or not, this is one among a number of illustrations which show how our machines can increase our capacities for production. With such plenty, a democracy should make it possible for all of its people to be well-fed, well-housed and well-clothed. Workers should not be called upon to exchange their feeling of respectability and independence once based on work for wages for amounts doled out as reliefwages. Interest on capital, land and consumer's goods should be distributed as equitably as possible. Teachers' salaries as well as workers' wages deserve consideration in connection with services rendered rather than in connection with the equilibrium of supply and demand in a world of laissez faire. For the spirit of democracy is the spirit of equality of privileges, the sharing of interests and responsibilities, the appreciation of freedom and the practice of altruism. All of these objectives are within our reach if we organize and work together as democratic citizens.

We are not fostering communism, nor fascism, nor socialism, when we demand that democracy make itself a workable program for all the people. We are not partisans of the New Deal when we urge that reforms must take place if democracy is to continue to succeed. In fact, we can make democracy work no longer by mouthing democratic generalities and listening to Fourth of July orations. Citizenship in a democracy is more than these.

Education for citizenship in a democracy must differ radically from education for citizenship in a fascist state, a communist, or an autocratic state. Such an education is not concerned with propaganda. Its objective is the presentation of truth. Such an education is not concerned with binding chains about the individual citizen. Its purpose is freedom—freedom of speech, press, pulpit and assembly. Along with these, are the right to strike, the right to a fair trial, freedom from unlawful search and seizure. Such an education will lead to the enoblement of the individual rather than his subordination to an allpowerful state. Absolute freedom, however, would lead to anarchy. The law of the jungle must not rule. We need the framework of law, the courts, the police and government. When these are unjust, the citizen should be permitted to attempt to alter them by his vote.

Whatever may be said of the dictatorships, there is one factor which the democracies should not overlook. They have an educational program, which works. The youth of Russia, Germany,

and Italy have been thoroughly "educated" in their political philosophies. These governments and their schools know what they want youth to have and learn. They have advanced their interests as much by the spread of their national spirit and ideology as by their military machines. The means by which this has been done cannot be defended but the fact is undeniable. This educational program has developed within two decades. What could the democracies do in the next twenty years, if they set themselves to the task?

This program is not only a formal teaching process in the classroom, but our children should live in a free atmosphere, in democratic homes, democratic churches, democratic schools, and participate in democratic organizations. Lip service alone will not create and maintain democracy, however eloquent it may be. We must be as serious and as active as are the anti-democratic forces.

Teachers can lead the way by making democracy the guiding philosophy in our schools, and by giving it the opportunity of working itself out in real life situations. Injustices, inequities, unemployment, bad health, poor housing, crime and delinquency should not be permitted to continue as the accompanying music to our song of democracy. Realism must be introduced, then, into a democratic society. Twenty years ago, we went to war to make the world safe for democracy. We hear echoes of this shibboleth today. It is high time that we who are educators insist that democracy also be made safe for the world before it attempts to make the world safe for it. In this sense, we

who are teachers can be the reformers of society. Chapman and Counts in their Principles of Education have paraphrased briefly this view: "The abilities required in the teacher," they write, "are not different from those found in the reformers and inspirers of all ages. The teacher's mission is to reform, his vocation is to inspire." True democracy in a changing society can be found only through change and reform. This need not mean the discard of the fundamental principles which have been the genius of our progress but it does mean a reevaluation of them.

In short, all of this leads to the suggestion of the following goals for a philosophy of a program of education for citizenship:

Development of an intelligent appreciation for the Democratic Way of Life.—Since our young people are born into a democratic life they are often prone to fail to appreciate it. There can be no inherent or inborn appreciation for democracy in each new generation. It is only as a new generation obtains a clear understanding of the development, the process, the purpose and the objectives of democracy that there can come an appreciation for it. The rehearsal of past events or the praise of great men and their deeds will not accomplish this purpose. The mouthing of such words as "democracy," "the democratic way of life," "liberty," "equality," and "freedom" will not do it. They are meaningless unless related to life. In this sense education becomes not only a preparation for life but education is life. There are group problems within the school and the community which can be the immedi-

ate business of democratic practices. These experiences can make democracy real in the life of the pupil. The idea that democratic citizenship is made by one being born in a democracy or naturalized is good law in terms of the Fourteenth Amendment, but it does not operate automatically to good effect. The idea that good citizenship results can come from the reading of the history of the nation is false, particularly when history is taking on the aspect of truth-seeking. Such reading has its value, but good citizenship must come in some other way. To expect this, is like reading about football in order to learn the game. Such reading may be helpful but the real value is in playing the game, and in seeing it played. We can develop book experts in this way but rarely life experts.

Citizenship, therefore, can secure its best appreciation in actual life situation-school assemblies, class organization, clubs, and school groupings. Why describe polling places when a real poll could be set up in the school? There could be candidates, parties, and speeches. We can vote for an imaginary mayor or governor, rather than describe such elections; and bevond this, our students could vote for their own governing representatives. There could be real elections, real conventions, student jury trials, and such similar developments. Paper problems could then become real life problems and the school could become a laboratory of life.

Moreover dictatorships and autocratic types of government are actively powerful realities today, and they are not mere historical episodes alone. The practices of fascism and communism can be presented through courses in current topics and compared with democratic practices, where educational law and policy do not conflict. The teacher can avoid taking sides by leaving conclusions to be reached on the basis of the facts. Germany, Russia, and Italy can be shown as the opposites of democracy and the students can learn to appreciate democracy, as contrasts appear. The contrasts are numerous and at times may not be entirely complimentary to the democracies. For instance Naziism has its policy of Jewish antagonism and semitic repression. Fascism pursues a narrow racialism and regards several minorities within its realm as inferiors. It is also true, however, that Britain has its India, its Africa and other peoples dominated and suppressed under the heel of an "Anglo-Saxon" superiority; and the United States has its color line with its segregation and discrimination of the darker peoples within its realm.

Let us then embody our ideals and our program of citizenship in action. Educational administrators must avoid in practice autocratic and oligarchic government in connection with the institutions with which they are connected. Very often, superintendents, principals, deans, heads of schools, and teachers in their classrooms may talk about democracy in abstract terms, while they themselves are little autocrats, little Hitlers and Mussolinis and monarchs of all they survey. Such attitudes may be displayed toward teachers as well as toward students who readily conclude that, in spite of wordy speeches about democracy, "theirs is not to reason why, but only to do and die." Unless

teachers and school administrators reflect democracy in their own lives, it is difficult to use educational materials or methods skillfully enough to cultivate democracy in our pupils.

Development of the capacity for cooperation in a Democratic Society.— The very essence of democracy is cooperation, and not cut-throat competition among individuals. One of democracy's goals is the ennoblement of the individual through cooperation. Fascism glorifies the state; and the individual, it is said, exists for the benefit of the state, while the state offers him its protection. Communism as known in Russia exalts the dictatorship of the proletariat through an aggressive leadership. Democracy works its way up from all the people. Unlike Naziism, Fascism, and Russian communism, it cannot be handed down from above. It is of the people, by the people, and for the people. This calls for cooperative endeavor, with those at the top setting the example. Modern business has become increasingly cooperative. Industry has followed the same program. Interdependence has mainifested itself throughout the recent years of our history, so that the nation itself has become more cooperative. One section must cooperate with the other section; one race must cooperate with other races. If democracy is to survive, there should be more cooperation in all avenues of life. What happens to the farmers in Iowa and the Dakotas will affect the consumers of bread in New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans. What happens to the miners in West Virginia or in Northern Alabama may affect the maintenance of the subway in New York City.

The schools can cooperate within themselves in student activities and they can cooperate with the community in clean-up campaigns, recreational work, lyceums, and lecture courses. Prizes can be offered at the commencements for those who have best practiced the art of citizenship based largely upon cooperative activity. For instance, the high schools of New York City give a Frank A. Rexford Medal for cooperation in government. The purpose of this program is to reward citizenship in the schools and to encourage a program of citizenship after graduation through the cooperation of those who receive the medals. There is a board of directors for the medalists, composed of prominent men in the city, and a forum is also maintained.

A democratic program of government must be based upon the idea of cooperation among citizens for the benefit of all. The happiness and welfare of all must become the concern of each. Such cooperation calls for unselfishness in school organization, administration, and pupil evaluation. It can be deliberately taught and practiced as a major objective in modern society. Our schools have numerous opportunities in community contacts through such life phases as housing, consumer cooperatives and public safety to create a program of cooperative democratic activity. No injustice is too great, where a community cooperates. The Negro community can remove many injustices and inequities through cooperative activity and organization. School needs can be met whenever a community unites to demand them. Let us make our school needs known, arouse the community to

want them and organize to get them. For citizens make their own democracy.

Development of the Character Most Needed in Democratic Society.— Traits of character were once talked about by teachers in terms of individuals. Character was so developed in actual teaching and in platform addresses. Such references were frequently heard in the classroom and the public assembly, and as frequently forgotten. It was also true, however, that academic training was emphasized to the exclusion of character training, and this has not always brought good results for our society. However, the schools have played a major part in emphasizing such character traits as honesty, integrity, reliability, truthfulness, and sincerity. As individual character traits they were important, and they are still. But we should go beyond the individual, for those who have these traits as individuals also have contacts with men and things and are parts of a democratic society. The individuals trained in our schools will ultimately come into control of banks, utility companies and community activities, municipal, state and national. There are numerous instances of the misuse of natural resources and public funds for personal gain by individuals who were trained in the schools and who had heard all of our preachments about good character. There are those who will not do an injustice to an individual person, but who would not hesitate to pad a financial statement. There are those, also trained as individuals of good character, who would not hesitate to raise the cost to the people for the service of public utilities, in order that the dividends of the company in which they share may be increased. Numerous examples of such activity are evident to all community workers.

If the democratic ideal is to survive and the racketeering for individual gain in democracy is to terminate, we must develop the character that is social as well as character that is individual. This is related to individual morality but too often our conception of character begins and ends with this. Such a conception does not begin and end with the blind acceptance of a dogmatic religious faith and attendance at church, however desirable these may be in character making. It does include fair play for all the people instead of exploitation of the people. It means openmindedness toward all instead of prejudice toward the few. It means a common interest in the good of all rather than individual gain. It means an intelligent analysis of propaganda and the work of pressure groups which are active in democratic society, and the courage to challenge them. It is not the glorification of great men who have ruthlessly crushed lesser ones on their way to the top of the ladder of success. It is individual but not exclusively so, for it has a social end. As Professor Edward A. Ross has said:

A democracy, then, will use its schools to counteract the antisocial spirit that too often radiates from the big masterful figures of commercial life. It will rear its youth in the ethics of brotherhood, teamwork and responsibility. In educating for social service, it aims at something greater than lessons in kindness and consideration. It presents life from a new angle. It meets current notions of success and reward with more exacting ideals growing out of a new vision of social welfare.

Such a program is one for all citizens, majorities as well as minorities. Since we ourselves are directly interested in our minority, our Negro American citizens, it is well for us to consider citizenship matters also in special relation to them. There were 59,557 free Negroes in a white population of 3,172,006, according to the First Census of 1790. These Negro-Americans in many localities were participating in the various aspects of American life as citizens. They bore arms, they labored, they purchased homes and lived just like other persons in the American democracy of that day. Various measures have been used since then to annul, deny, limit and delay many citizenship privileges of Negroes. However, in Northern states, Negro citizens have had the opportunity of exercising political privileges. The political leaders of our group in these states have often demonstrated that they were statesmen and not politicians. They have often acted upon long-run principles rather than short-term prizes for the few. They have taken the schools out of politics and kept politics out of the schools.

In the Southern states, there is much which can be done to stimulate the desire for the ballot, and to arouse those who are dissatisfied with their disfranchised condition. The subject should not have a veil of silence thrown around it because it is not popular there for Negroes either to participate in party organization or to vote.

Teaching citizenship, however, should not be permitted to degenerate into teaching politics. This teaching

procedure should result in the development of civic pride, love of home, ownership of property, pride in the maintenance of it, interest in the community health, and sanitation, the church, the school, concern over the problems of poverty, charity and crime, and faith in the future of the city, the county, the state, the nation. It is then more than the right to the ballot. However, our pupils can be led to know the value of the intelligent exercise of the suffrage as well as other privileges of the citizen, so that they shall not in later years become the pawns of a political party.

Let us then exercise our teaching privileges in reference to citizenship with intelligence. Let us also urge Negro citizens to participate in political party councils, public forums, parents meetings, adult education programs and every form of citizenship activity. The goals of good citizenship can be taught and practiced by educators so that democracy's program can be extended and the nation become increasingly democratic. As the teachers of Negro youth, let us make good citizens of our pupils and through them influence their parents to be good citizens, so that we can make our democracy safe for the future, and so that the last of the governments of the people, by the people and for the people shall not also perish from the earth. The world is now at the crossroads, the sign posts point, one way to democracy and the other way to dictatorship. We believe in democracy and should be pointing our pupils along this highway by word and by deed.