

Further Education

We are much less familiar with the concept of further education than countries in western Europe where any school leaver who for one reason or another may not have had opportunities of going to college may in private pursue higher course. He may aim at a degree if he so desires, or may study on his own to satisfy the desire to educate himself better. Apart from the open University, there exist in Britain hundreds of institutes and libraries to cater for this demand.

These facilities for further education outside of the framework of traditional colleges and universities, serve, inter alia, two useful purposes: They reduce the pressure on places, enabling the colleges and universities not to bow to the demand for lower academic standards, and secondly, irrespective of whether degrees are sought or not, they improve the quality of manpower employed in industries.

Our way of dealing with the craze for degrees has been for years past to create more colleges whenever there is a demand for higher education, without bothering to insist on a reasonably high standard either in the matter of staffing or in the matter of equipment and books. There are many colleges of this kind which do not have a home of their own and function in rented accommodation in circumstances which by no stretch of the imagination could be seen to promote education of any kind. Such however is the pressure for degrees that few dare oppose the founding a college on the plea that it may not be capable of serving a good purpose.

The other thing worth remembering is that these colleges do not provide what we mean by further education. They aim at a kind of high degrees, whereas further education is primarily education whose purpose is to make it possible for a person to improve his competence in the line of work or profession he has chosen.

We do not suggest that we can overnight create the machinery for further education that exists, say, in Britain. But we do think that to begin with we may allocate some resources for the establishment of local or zonal libraries which will not be replicas of the National Library but aim at providing the population in each area with means of reading material which will improve their skills. Libraries hitherto have meant places stocked with cheap fiction alone. Not that fiction has no value, but we need books for craftsmen, carpenters, weavers, mechanics, attractively written in simple language, which could open their eyes and be an inspiration to them. We believe that the idea, once given a fillip by authority will catch on and redound to the good of the community as a whole.