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Reading, Understanding, and Poverty

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Editorial Comment

Reading, Understanding, and Poverty

President Johnson has declared war on poverty. Against whom is the battle to be waged? Henry George proclaims, "The more progress we have the more we suffer from poverty—that is, some of us. Great riches seem nearly always to bring extreme poverty." Would our President take from the wealthy to build up the poor? How long would this remedy suffice?

Is it not advisable to consider some of the causes of poverty? Who are the poor whom we always have with us? Are they high school graduates? Are they emotionally mature and emotionally stable? Do they have work which they enjoy doing? Can they secure a job and maintain it? Do they worship God and respect mankind? Are they interested in the problems of our time? Do they enjoy reading a good book? The answer to most of these questions is no!

These people are a product of our world and a by-product of our society. They need more than money, more than jobs and even more than training for jobs. They need a new way of life. We and our society have helped to create this need. Worthy institutions such as the home, the school and the church have been busy with things other than with the real issues of life. In many homes, for example, parents are more concerned with money, things, social prestige and pleasure than in being teachers of their children. Their boys and girls are neglected. In our schools we teach about learning and have not stimulated and incited our students to think and act creatively. We stress the superficial such as diplomas, sports and fraternities. In many congregations of church and synagogue there is a bee-hive of activity exploited by social climbers and only a meager interpretation of ancient dogma into living principles of human behavior. For many, socialization supersedes Holy Communion.

Our society should work, study and strive for a renaissance, a transition from the materialistic to a higher way of life. Poverty of understanding can contribute to physical need, and a lack of money and even food can be a hearty challenge to greater endeavor. There is much written for our learning. "Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them" so that we

can put first things first. This is reading and this is learning. Adjustment through learning is the duty and responsibility of the individual who should not be made dependent upon the state. We need teachers and leaders who understand and love their fellow men.

“Greeting his pupils, the master asked:

What would you learn of me?

And the reply came:

How shall we care for our bodies?

How shall we rear our children?

How shall we work together?

How shall we live with our fellow men?

How shall we play?

For what ends shall we live? . . .

And the master pondered these words,

And sorrow was in his heart, for his own

Learning touched not these things.”

Homer L. J. Carter

Editor