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WARTIME PROGRAM OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE OF THE A. AND M. COLLEGE OF TEXAS
VICTORY DEMONSTRATION
SERIES NO. 2 THE POWER OF ORGANIZATION

RESPONSIBILITY OF CITIZEN GROUPS

By

Maggie W. Barry

Extension Adviser Rural Organization Work

Organization is the machinery which enables people working as a group to do something which cannot be done by working individually.

An organization then is neither the beginning nor the end of anything. It is merely a means through which a beginning proceeds to fulfillment.

Each part of the machine has its individual function but unless the parts can also function together harmoniously as a whole the machine has a lowered efficiency - and when made up of human beings may become a menace to society.

The principal source of power in human organization is knowing how to work together harmoniously as a group without regimentation of the individual members.

Such knowledge has its origin in something broader and deeper than obedience to a set of rules. It grows out of a right attitude towards others and is the fruit of a spirit of tolerance and unselfishness which permeates the minds and hearts of every member of the organized group.

Herbert Agar, one of our greatest thinkers, tells us the nature of the power which exists in the class of organizations discussed here. In his book, "A Time for Greatness", he says, that "citizen groups and committees, the trade union, the Rotary Club, the Ladies Aid, tax payers league, church socials and many others are the life blood of democracy". Agar is right. We know that the old New England Town Hall and the Quaker meeting houses of William Penn's Colony were the "life blood" of democracy and religion in the formative years of the Western World. We know by experience that an enlightened people can always be trusted to save that democracy and that religion. But people cannot be enlightened unless there is opportunity for a free exchange of ideas and organized groups working together to translate those ideas into practical, objective expression.

Such citizen groups as Agricultural organizations, Home Demonstration Clubs, County Home Demonstration Councils and State Associations, offer this opportunity.

These should promote full and free discussion of any subject which will make for an enlightened public opinion. Each of these groups should continually work together with the spirit of voluntary cooperation so that the ideals of Christianity and Democracy may be the dominant forces in building a new social order in the Post War World.

In times of war, which involves directly or indirectly the life and liberty of every individual of every race, color and creed, there must be a large degree of centralization of political power in the chief Executive as provided by the

Constitution. There must be some militarization of civilians, too, but this will not seriously endanger freedom in a democratic country provided that during the crisis democracy continues as a vital reality in the hearts of the people.

Whatever of democratic procedure is suspended in the emergency may be restored when the exigencies of the crisis have past. "We are losing our democracy", is only the scare cry of the timid and the reactionary. But we must not forget that the world has lost some of its greatest leaders and great cultures have been retarded because of the potency of that scare cry. For these reasons citizens should make a conscious effort to keep the "life blood of democracy" rich and abundant in every community.

In the history of civilization there have been four crises which threatened to destroy the great cultures that man had developed in some particularly favorable spot on earth.

This present world crisis, the fourth, differs from the other three in two respects: It is vastly more destructive and involves all the people in the world and the scientific use and control of all the natural resources such as land, water and air provided for the sustenance of the people.

During the past four years we have seen enough of the ghastly results of this ruthless destruction, and the misuse of scientific knowledge and natural resources to enable us to picture in our minds some of the conditions under which a new world order will have to be instituted.

These conditions are engaging the thought of many of our keenest observers and ablest analysts. One of these, Hiram Motherwell, has pointed out in two recent articles in Harpers Magazine some ugly realities in post war Europe. He says, "On Armistice Day over the most of Europe there will not be any effective government to make peace with. Instead, there will be only hundreds of millions of starving, desperate individuals. Because this is a total war, when the German armies finally crack all Nazi Europe will necessarily crash with them. The United Nations will have to take over the receivership of a bankrupt, anarchic continent!"

Motherwell believes that from unimpeachable reports we know that this World War has been far more destructive, and destructive in many more ways, than World War one. In the light of this, "we can draw up for Europe after this war a kind of prospective balance sheet - economic, moral and political - with the regrettable certainty that it can err only by being too conservative". There is time to mention only two items in Motherwell's balance sheet, the first and the last - Hunger and Hate.

On Armistice day there will be one thought uppermost in the minds of these millions of roving, dispossessed individuals in Europe who have been subjected for years to the physical, mental and moral degeneracy that is an inevitable result of chronic hunger. Food is an essential weapon in winning a peace as well as in fighting a war. North Africa taught us that. Citizen groups in America are recognizing this in their program of work. In every community, village, town and city they are promoting victory gardens. No one doubts that they will whole heartedly participate in obtaining farm labor and in recruiting the woman's land army asked for by the Food Administrator. Many will serve in that army helping to produce and harvest food with full knowledge that no political, economic or social order for stabilizing the world can be set up until the hungry millions in Europe are fed, and a continuous supply of food is guaranteed to them. This will be a tremendous task but nobody doubts we shall do it.

Most important at that critical stage will be the distribution of food. To whom shall food be distributed? There is but one answer: To every hungry human being on the face of the earth. There must be no discrimination between Axis or Allies or neutrals, no thought of guilt or innocence. A hungry man must be fed because he is hungry.

For two generations millions of persons have been persistently and continuously educated to hate. In defeat this hate will be intensified. No political or economic peace terms can be made effective with hungry people and souls warped by hate. To deny them food would only further intensify their hate and stimulate the desire for revenge. Food would assuage the fierceness of both these passions and make people more amenable to reason. Hate and revenge will not be entirely absent among allied and neutral nations who have personally experienced the brutality and devastation of this war.

To make this picture of the Post-war World of Europe and the needs of its people complete one must enlarge it to include the people of India, China, Japan and the islands of the Pacific.

Let us contemplate this picture in the light of one amazing fact: there is no spot on earth more than 60 hours from our local airport. Almost over night in this war science has reduced continents, countries, nations and states to the status of world neighborhoods. The vast waters that sweep their shores are no more protection from ruthless aggressors than is the "ole swimmin' hole". This fact alone makes the winning of a stable and permanent world peace as imperative as winning the war. War between these neighborhoods might destroy civilization and might even annihilate the people who created it;

A durable peace could not be made in such a world by any political, economic or military system which man could devise unless these were conceived, shaped and operated in harmony with the spirit of Christianity and Democracy which recognizes all men as children of God.

In the Post-war World I believe citizen groups will continue to meet any specific responsibility within the scope of their power and experience in organization. But above everything else they may do then will be this service in preserving the truth upon which this nation was founded, the brotherhood of man - "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". The belief in these truths is implied in the "certain common principles" of the Atlantic Charter.

If governments are instituted to secure these rights to its citizens then the government must function to the end that all may have equal opportunity to win for themselves freedom from want and freedom from fear; that all may have equal access to the opportunities that civilization offers for physical, mental and spiritual cultures and all may have equal protection not only from external aggression but from the misuse of internal power, political or economic.

Keeping alive these truths and the belief in democratic procedure as a way of life is the greatest service and the greatest responsibility though not the only ones of citizen groups in the present and in the post war world.

References:

In the study and discussion by citizen groups of Post-war responsibilities

of the people of the Allied Nations the following material will be helpful.

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