

Cooper Union

May 17, 1949

Professor Johnson E. Fairchild
Division of Social Philosophy
Cooper Union
Cooper Square
New York 3, New York

Dear Professor Fairchild:

I am enclosing the outlines for two talks which I mentioned to you in a previous letter.

If they should fit in with your program of lectures at Cooper Union, I should be very glad indeed to discuss either one or both topics indicated in these outlines.

Sincerely yours,

S. R. Slavson

SRS:mk

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PRESENT DAY WORLD

Democracy is more than an administrative procedure or an organizational pattern. It must be rooted in the attitudes, values, and especially the psychological constitution of those who participate in the democratic process. The "democratic frame of reference" as a psychological attitude is achieved through the experience of participation and the status in the family, play group and school from earliest childhood.

Democratic attitudes are determined primarily in the family and the process is continued in the school, in recreation, in industry and in association with others in democratic groups. There is a vast difference between mass-mindedness and social mindedness.

The bases of democracy are freedom, status, participation and responsibility. The democratic personality is one in which the advantage of the group is placed above the aggrandizement of the individual. It is characterized by flexibility and capacity to accept difference and progressive change. No person is truly democratic who is motivated by personal aggrandizement and who exploits others for his own progress.

Freedom must be differentiated from license and unbridled liberty. It is conditioned by the constructive relationship with others and guarantees their full development and growth. Status in a democracy arises from the ^{worth} ~~mark~~ of an individual not because he is a member of a special group or rank, but because of what he is. Participation is the basic condition for a dynamic society and is the only means of developing responsibility, which in turn acts as a check upon abuses of freedom.

The place of youth in the democratic social pattern requires particular attention and the changed function and status of labor is of utmost importance for an evolving democratic society.

TRENDS IN SOCIAL CHANGE

The trends in social change are discussed in the areas of:

- A. Economic and industrial development with the emphasis upon legal restraints upon interlocking directorates, labor-management relations and the hegemony of labor.
- B. Social relations such as human rights, intercultural relations, interdependence of nations, world mindedness vs. caste and tribalism, the function of the family in developing of attitudes.
- C. Personal relations as exemplified by the change in the status of men in relation to women, women's usurping places that in the past were considered as men's domain, the emergence of the "third sex" (Carpenter), women's economic ascendancy through the possession of majority of wealth, women's predominance in purchasing power, man's increased inability to support a family.
- D. Education for change: organic vs. social evolution; tendency toward mergence of the individual with the group; the meaning of progressive education in social change; integration of knowledge as a major need in our culture.
- E. Trends in religion: the passing of theistic religion and emergence of deism and sociocentric religions.