

Braziers Park Programme

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BRAZIERS PARK SCHOOL OF INTEGRATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH

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Braziers Park is a non-profit-making educational establishment, registered under the Friendly Societies Acts, 1896-1948, and recognized as a charity by the Inland Revenue for income tax purposes. The membership consists of persons serving the School in some responsible capacity approved by the Committee of Management. Attendance at lectures and discussions is not in any way limited to members but is open to all interested in the future of mankind.

Fruitful Relationships

"BRAZIERS PARK ... is thus a centre from which, by the interpenetration of ideas and experience, fruitful relationships may be newly perceived or created, and new forms of thought emerge,"

Since these words were written, early in 1950, in the opening paragraph of the Braziers Park brochure, much has been contributed, by many different people, to the changing pattern of thought and activity at the School; and not the least valuable of these contributions have come from members of other organizations pursuing similar lines, who have from time to time used Braziers Park as a conference centre, or participated with us in joint conferences. We have gained, too, by what our members have brought to us from their contacts with other creative groups.

This issue of the *Quarterly* is in a sense an acknowledgment of some part of these debts. Alfred Cannon has expanded for publication the brief account that he gave at our Summer School of his recent experience with the New Education Fellowship; and Caleb Gattegno contributes a report of the International Seminar held jointly with the International Training Institute, under his leadership, at Braziers Park this summer.

To integrate differing approaches has always been an aim of the founders of the School, but it may be argued, from a study of our programmes, that we do not sufficiently often seek out the truly different, the controversial, the opponent of integration. It has appeared, however, that even between those who meet with good will and a desire to resolve differences the existing techniques are not always adequate to achieve complete mutual understanding, and the problem of communication has come again and again to the fore. One of the most interesting sessions of this year's Sensory Summer School, of which a detailed report will shortly be available in duplicated form, was devoted to an attack on the "sound barrier" that seems to separate the intellectual from the poetic approach; and Dr. Gattegno's report in this issue does not conceal certain differences that appeared during the International Seminar and were discussed there with sincerity but without reconciliation.

We have much to learn about how best to become open both to our own experience and to that of others. Braziers Park can contribute to this understanding; and this issue of the *Quarterly*, at first sight appearing to deal mainly with the work of other organizations, presents aspects of an activity that is central to our own growth.

R.G.F.

Creative Writing

DURING the 1952 Summer School at Braziers Park, as a pendant to an account by my wife of her experience in guiding the painting group at the 1952 New Education Fellowship Summer School, I spoke for a few minutes on my experience in the creative writing group there. That contribution has led to this short account's being written of what membership of the writing group meant, and what it may prove possible to gather from it in our developing activity at Braziers.

Of the dozen or so in the writing group, led by Miss Marjorie L. Hourd, author of "The Education of the Poetic Spirit" and "Some Emotional Aspects of Learning", the majority were native to this country, the others consisting of four Danes (one a woman), one Australian woman, one native of Nigeria, and one Norwegian. The group met from 10 till 1 on each of the seven working days of the conference. With the exception of myself, all participants were whole-time members of the teaching profession.

After some introductory remarks by Miss Hourd, inviting us to introduce ourselves to one another and to indicate what had led us to enter the group, these introductions were effected. There followed an invitation from the leader to us all to write on the spot anything that was then "in us" waiting to be expressed; and this drew forth a number of very brief contributions, of which an unforgettable poem on a searing personal experience (written by the Norwegian) stamped itself, I felt, on the heart of everyone. Of that first session I remember very little else (inclining me to wonder whether there may have been in it something I still need to keep down), except that we talked far more freely than might have been expected, noticed the relevance to the general human condition of the experience of the poets—especially when the leader read extracts to us—and were invited to leave available for Miss Hourd anything that "got written" by us, so to speak.

The character of the ensuing days' "work" (both in the group and in private) can be best approached through mention of its main patterns, and an attempt at this follows; but in the forefront I feel bound to emphasize how a peculiarly difficult challenge was made an occasion for a real triumph. The real coming together—or rather, growing in coming-togetherness—of any group is inevitably an unpredictable business. When to that universal experience is added the real language difficulty for half the Danish contingent it will be appreciated that we had to learn—and did—the significance of the (as we came to call it) creative silence of the strangers in our midst.

Until that level of understanding had been reached, we were swimming against the stream; for our "concern" for the handicap of our Danish friends was visited on them as preoccupation with our concern!

From the second morning onwards—and here I sketch the pattern of our sessions—we had the rich experience of being an audience for one another's writing: poems and prose renderings of experience (often of childhood) read to us by our leader, followed by comment from her, from us, and from the writer, with readings by Miss Hourd and by us of poems aroused in our recollection by the writing we had done and heard.

The toing and froing of comment was very lively, though we learnt also to experience silences as a part of the whole experience as nourishing, if not more so, than the things said. We were taken aback (I think that generalization can stand) by the confirmation we found again and again in our foray into the territory of Wordsworth (especially "The Prelude"), Keats, Marvell, Eliot, and many others, of the awareness of our living selves yielded by contemporary psychological insights into our nature; and it was in that dimension that we pin-pointed the obstacles to the re-connexion of our feeling and our thought, and thus to the cost of the journey of writing "from ourselves", creatively, as we have acquired the habit of saying. How true I found this in my own meagre encounter with the writing of something that Miss Hourd described as "coming on" towards a poem, and in the setting down of a holiday experience in Greece that I had never previously felt the urge to incarnate in words! The common denominator of all this and the level from which we have been working at Braziers in attempted philosophical formulations, in painting, dance, drama, and music, will need no underlining for those who have participated in our many weekends there.

A word more on the excitement of entering into the written material as it flowed: it was excitement when, unmistakably, the writer had been grasped by the experience; then the fire was released, and the fitness of the words, their cadence, the colour, the shape of the passage, carried, convinced, I am going to get—I can't help getting—more and more out of reading of creative writing, I found myself reflecting, and, a twin thought: this is where the barrier is—until one is recessed enough, transparent enough, to be grasped by what one would compass in one's writing—Shelley's "careful observation of the inspired moment". I even rashly decided to see what could come out of this experiment in my work with Borstal boys, and have just commenced that job.

Yes, it is "On Not Being Able to Paint" in the writer's key; and what was I groping for when some months ago I "had a go" at our first poetry reading at Braziers? Was it meant to lead to creative writing at Braziers? The Summer School felt we ought to embark, there and then if possible, and I am sure it won't be long before we do.

We all wrote a word on what the experience had meant to us, the Dane as movingly as any. After speaking of my own deeper recognition of the price of

liberation into creative expression, I found myself saying that my trust had been deepened in the "treasures of Africa" we have within us, and that the terrors of those treasures had been made more bearable. The spreading of this approach seems to be limited largely by the number of those able to "hatch" such groups and (in the world of schools) the resistance of the educational hierarchies, the encounter with which is after all part of the game of life. What are the toes of hierarchies when it is a case of stopping offending against "these little ones"?—to say nothing of coming to terms with the child in oneself; for that is the core of the experience I have tried to describe.

A. CANNON.

The International Seminar

July 29 - August 12. 1952

(ORGANIZED by the International Training Institute with Braziers' participation as an experiment, this international course was the 47th of the I.T.I, and the 8th held at Braziers Park since March, 1951. People, mainly teachers, come to these courses from Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, and other places, first because they want to visit Great Britain, secondly because the terms offered are satisfactory, and thirdly because the theme of the seminar appeals to them. But once at Braziers they find something very different from what they expected. The atmosphere takes them immediately, they undergo the new experience of not needing time to settle. The group is so quickly a unit that by the second day everyone feels he has been there for weeks. Another interesting experience is that the people who arrive very tired, barely out of their schools after the hectic weeks of end of term or end of session, do not need more than one day to feel fresh again and partake fully of the course.

The programme of the fortnight is the outcome of many experiments with programmes for such courses, and has acquired a pattern that is unanimously recognized as satisfactory: two sessions a day of discussions, experiment, rarely a talk; five days a week of work and two of excursions. The discussions last two hours, sometimes a little longer. The rest of the time is the really useful time for personal contacts and exploration either of the neighbourhood or of one's soul. The studio, the reading rooms, the walks, the free talks round the table or during washing-up, all contribute to the discovery of oneself. Few fail to have during that fortnight an illuminating experience.

The I.T.I, international courses are organized with the purpose of doing

pioneering work in the field of international education. Their programmes, therefore, are not of the information-giving type. Little knowledge is imparted, as such, to the participants, and it is assumed that there is as yet no authority in this field. To discuss x's or y's ideas one does not need to travel so far: the true value of such a gathering is the varying experience available, so that everyone has something to give as well as to take, and the give is stressed.

The technique that has been found after years of investigation springs from the discovery that what we have to educate is not intellectual understanding but awareness. In fact, only when people are made deeply aware of what is the matter with a problem is there any hope that they, personally, will share in its consideration. And this is what is meant by education.

The themes are important, too, and this year the course was concerned with two questions: education for service contrasted with education for leadership, and the British mode of thought.

On the first topic the discussions were often difficult. The various aspects of the question seemed to take people by surprise. For instance, the discussion on: "Are we creating a new class distinction through the Intelligence Quotient?", i.e., are we replacing a money or a birth hierarchy by a hierarchy based upon the numerical value of this quotient?, was very difficult because it seemed so natural that the posts of responsibility in society should go to the ablest citizens, and people took for granted that ability is measurable absolutely and with impartiality. To make people aware of the way they accept ideas and use them is always a lengthy and elaborate job.

We experienced some difficulty also in the discussions concerning the model we use in making our judgments. It is usual to be unconscious of one's model. We therefore had to bring to light that models were being used, and what they were. It was then pointed out that most models are either spacial or concerned only with the past history of a situation, and that it would be profitable to have models that use time explicitly and in both directions, past and future. A spacial model is, for instance, one in which the main tool is integration, or an instinct; while a model using time in one direction will only enable us to explain the present situation as arising out of historical development, and will not explain where it can lead us. Now what is needed of education is that it should prepare people for their future, which in a changing world cannot simply be deduced from the past. Thus the service for which we have to educate is different from the leadership that can be based on known qualities: it is a capacity to give others a light on what their future will be. We agreed that this was a new problem, requiring for its

solution different modes of thought from those available.

The second week was devoted to an experimental study of what a mode of thought is; how it depends upon social habits, language, and traditions; and what can be done to elaborate a mode of thought more comprehensive than those existing and represented in the group.

A mode of thought is not easy to define, but it can be made evident in certain experiments. We shall mention only one of the several performed during that week. One of the participants told us how easily she could get along with the British whom she had met at B.P. for the first time, and how difficult she had found it to make contacts with the Germans in Berlin for the first 16 years of her life and after that for years with the Swiss in Zurich. We then asked what people thought of her statement, gathering opinions by countries rather than individually. The answers were most revealing, and the participants agreed that there were common features of approach to the statement that hinted at differing habits of thought. One difference was extraordinarily clear; the non-British members of the group stressed that the speaker had no right to express an opinion about the British after such a short acquaintance; while for the British her experience was sufficient reason for expressing it. The French mode of thought, we found later, is such that it applies the rules of abstraction twice running, while the British applies them once on concrete material, and the German requires a historical perspective for its satisfaction,

This, so briefly said, may mean little to the reader, but it is full of life and meaning to those who partook in the experiments. The wealth of knowledge gathered by all during the course was stressed in their concluding remarks on the last day. It was a new sort of knowledge, an awareness, a profound experience that established Braziers Park for all as an important stage in their growth.

C. GATTEGNO.

The New Synthesis or Creation

Following are some of the verses written under this title at the Creative Learning and Teaching weekend held at Braziers Park in June and reported in our last issue.

Merge, merge into one— Thoughts, feelings, colour, and pride:
Merge into the lovely light
Of day and clouds and green
That would induce my mind

In the making of a picture.

Alone, I am free, arbitrary, capricious;
But hidden hands guide an unthinking will. Laws against me limit, oppress,
deny, But there is relief in responsibility surrendered. Where shall I be
commanded, yet command;
Act freely, yet universally?

Archimedes got in the bath
To wash his dirty feet.
He saw the water level rise
As he lowered in his seat,
He suddenly yelled "Eureka"
And he rushed out in the street.

Something old and something new,
The adage tells of something blue.
These the outward signs that show
A marriage of the things we know.
This brings life and this new thing
Brings creation in the Spring.
It is too true that of old
We all did what we were told.
Synthesis, to be new,
Must know what it must do.
Many minds together must think
How to draw all back from the brink.

We and something more
We and something to adore
Learning and teaching
Far beyond our stretch.
Let us create and in creating
Express our fears, our love, our pain.
Let us create and then, having created,
Go further and create again,
Lest that which we create becomes profane.

Associates. Those whose interest has been aroused by what they have seen or read of our activities may become Associates of Braziers Park on payment of an annual subscription of one guinea. Associates receive copies of the *Quarterly* and all weekend programmes, and are entitled to special rates on visits to Braziers Park (see page 2). Those other than Members or Associates who wish to receive the *Quarterly* regularly should write to the Secretary.

Contributions to the *Quarterly*, and suggestions for its improvement, are always welcome. They should be addressed to Mrs. E. Fisk at Braziers Park.

Accommodation. Braziers Park is occasionally available for conferences of other organizations. Particulars of charges are obtainable from the Secretary. We are also pleased to offer accommodation to those wishing to spend a holiday in the country, and to students and others seeking a quiet place for private study, research, or writing.

HANDBOOK OF LECTURES AND COURSES AUTUMN, 1952

This list is an outline only of our programme. If any of the titles interest you, do please write for a detailed syllabus, with time-table and reading list. This will place you under no obligation to attend, but will show you the full scope and intention of the Course.

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| OCT. 3-6 | Experimental Painting and Modelling, Jeannie Cannon |
| OCT. 10-13 | Looking Back from the Year 2000, A discussion on Edward Bellamy's book of the same name Jointly with Friends of the Future Harold Walsby; Glynn Faithfull; John Rowan |
| OCT. 17-20 | Learn to Learn a Foreign Language, Glynn Faithfull (German Tutor), Eric Dawson (Italian Tutor) |
| OCT. 24-27 | Experimental Painting and Modelling, Jeannie Cannon |
| OCT. 31 | Hallowe'en Party |
| NOV. 3 | Square Dancing. Caller: John Glaister |
| NOV. 7-10 | Anniversary Exhibition and Tea Party |
| NOV. 14-17 | Experimental Painting and Modelling, Jeannie Cannon |
| NOV. 21-24 | A Technique for Solving Difficulties, J. Norman Glaister |
| NOV. 28 | Creative Destruction |
| DEC. 1 | Harold Walsby |
| DEC. 5-8 | Manners and Conventions: New and Old, J. Norman Glaister and Others |
| DEC. 12-15 | Creative Learning and Teaching, C. Gattegno and Jeannie Cannon |

DEC. 19-22 Music and Drama—Nativity Play, Eva Faithfull and Kathleen Russell

DEC. 24-27 Christmas Party

Those who wish to spend Christmas at Braziers may book for the week Dec. 19-26 if preferred

PROVISIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO MARCH

DEC. 31 What Shall We do with Our Lives?

JAN. 12 Holiday Conference for Juniors

JAN. 23-26 Square Dancing and its Tradition

JAN. 30 - FEB. 2 Great Ideas

FEB. 6-9 National Language and International Language

FEB. 13-16 Getting One's Own Way

FEB. 20-23 Experimental Music Group

FEB. 27 - MAR 2 The Logic of Irrationality