

EDUCATION AS AN ART

By FRANCIS FRANKLIN

MORE than ever before young people are ready to listen to us. Confronted with the numerous problems produced by an outworn social order in the throes of general crisis, they are anxious to hear all whom they think may have answers to their questions.

At such a time, it is more necessary than ever in the past, that we pay attention to methods of approaching youth. Speaking and writing to young people are arts which many of us have just begun to learn.

How often have our comrades come before people and painted so doleful a picture of the world that they nearly frightened their listeners to death! It is true that our comrades usually eventually come to proposals for solutions; but long before, the world they have painted seems so black that it appeared there can be no solution except suicide. Because young people do not like to be depressed, most of them stop listening or reading, in such cases, long before the solution is ever presented.

A Cause for Which to Live

Is there this complete separation in life between the evils of society and the movements to change those evils? Of course not. The two are inextricably intertwined. We must so present them in addressing the youth. At the very outset of all our appeals to young people, we must show them a hope, something to live for; the movement which is rectifying evils. We must show them that there really is a great cause to which they may devote their lives!

Youth is by nature idealistic. It has faith in the world, and cannot endure to live without faith. It does not wish to have its idols shattered. Did not all of us actually try to hold on to our belief in Santa Claus even long after we had become filled with doubt? We must remember our own early dreams and not be too harsh with young people. Otherwise, we will drive them away from us. After all, our aim is not to make cynics, but to substitute a new faith based on science for the old faiths based on illusion.

Youth throughout history has desired a great cause for which to live. How many thousands of them have given their lives for movements which have elicited their devotion! We must not approach

young people as iconoclasts coming to shatter all their idols, but as people coming to show them something worthy of their devotion, people who can offer to them life with a purpose. A generation ago, young people by the thousands were fired with enthusiasm for the Christian Volunteer Movement. The ideal of "saving the world for Christ in our generation" captured their imagination. Great numbers gave their lives to service in the foreign fields to "save the heathens." Countless others gave their hard-earned nickels and dimes. It was all because these young people felt that they had a cause worthy of their efforts. I have heard many say that today the same type of young people who formerly gave their unstinted devotion to the Christian Volunteer Movement are now becoming Young Communists. This is true. All of us know that we have a cause deserving of all our sacrifices. We must so present our cause that all other young people will be moved with our enthusiasm. Let us not just point to the bleak and dreary future confronting youth, to the black storm-clouds that threaten, but let us point from the very outset to the new springtime of humanity that is rising, to that renaissance of the human spirit now transpiring in the Soviet Union and commencing under the People's Front. Let us point to the glorious opportunity for remaking the world in our own epoch. Let us emphasize that it is good to be alive today. Let us help re-awaken that emotion described by Wordsworth in speaking of the period of the French Revolution.

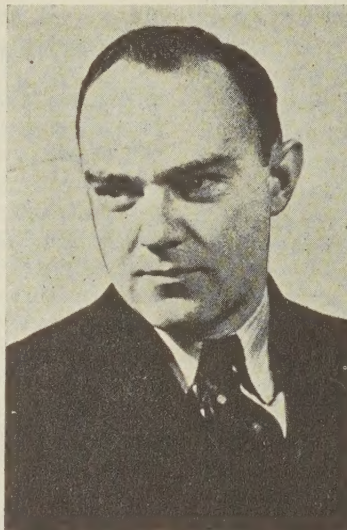
"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven."

We have recently been stressing the need for visual education. This need lies deeper than the use of lecture charts or movies. These are necessary. Nevertheless, we do still have to use language—at least at times. And we need to employ a method of visual education in our words themselves. By this, I mean that our words themselves must paint pictures. How drab and colorless at times seem the words of our comrades! How often do our comrades sound like parrots repeating old worn-out phrases! **We must learn to speak and write so that every sentence we utter evokes a pic-**

ture in the mind of the listener or reader. Only then will our words be perfectly clear. Only then will we fire the imagination and arouse the enthusiasm of young people.

How many speeches commence with the words, "Comrades, during the last period of time," or **how** often do we hear such expressions as "Comrades, it is no accident?" Many of our comrades are learning not to use the most glaring clichés. Nevertheless, there are still far too many hackneyed phrases. Young people are quick to notice such things, and frequently with much justification mock such reiterated expressions.

It is not only in speaking to the youth as a whole that we should be careful of our language, but even in speaking among ourselves, because even here we want to be heard. I must confess that in listening to the speeches of some of our comrades I find my own mind wandering. Yet never has this been the case while listening to Earl Browder. This is because Comrade Browder does not repeat phrases, but speaks with a language fresh and vigorous, and employs originality in all he says or writes. Our League members should emulate his example.



Francis Franklin

Although Marxism is a science, we must remember that speaking, writing, and teaching are arts. This means that all of us must become artists. Science is necessary for any art. Leonardo da Vinci and others have emphasized that he who would paint the human body must possess some knowledge of anatomy, and in their paintings artists have employed their knowledge of anatomy. Yet on the canvas it is the living body itself which we see and not the underlying bones and muscles. It must be the same in all our writing and teaching. All that we say must be illuminated by Marxist science. But the bare bones of scientific terminology must not stand out.

We can learn much from the recent speech of Secretary Ickes. Why was Ickes' speech so effective? It was not only because he is an important government official, but because he pictorialized what he said. His description of the "60 families," his contemptuous reference to "Henry Ford the beneficent" fired the imagination of the people. This

was a real Peoples' Front speech. I heard an old farmer down in Virginia the other day. This old farmer, whom I have know for a number of years, had never been socially conscious before, but Ickes' speech had moved him. "I tell you," he said, "things ain't balanced right. It looks like we're gonna have to get rid of them 60 families before we're gonna be able to do a darn thing."



laugh," and "Wisdom is a woman. She ever loveth the warrior only."

We need also to be more alert to the regional cultures of the United States. Wisconsin and Minnesota, New England, the South, and the Far West are all regions which have distinctive cultures of their own. The comrades in these regions are beginning to make use of their native traditions. The comrades

If we are to fire the youth with hope and enthusiasm, we must embody more of a spirit of triumph in everything that we say. We say that we are not a "lost generation." Then, we must not talk like one. American young people do not like what they call "gripes" or "crepe-hangers." There is nothing in Marxism to inspire gloom. Yet how many of the revolutionary skits, plays, and poems produced in our country embody almost altogether the spirit of pathos! Some of them fairly shriek. The works of Marx and Lenin are filled with biting satire. We know that we are the grave-diggers of capitalism, that history is on our side. Why then should we not feel triumphant? We do not merely hate the bourgeoisie. We feel a supreme contempt for them. We feel that they are unworthy of mankind, that civilization and culture are degraded by them. Why do we not embody more of the spirit of satire in our writing and speaking? I remember that when I first read *Capital*, I was constantly roaring with laughter at Marx's many cracks at the bourgeoisie. The same is true of much of the writing of Lenin and Stalin. Then, why are some of our comrades always so sober?

"Courage Desireth to Laugh"

Friedrich Nietzsche, a psychopathic bourgeois philosopher of whom we cannot think very highly, nevertheless in his poetic ravings, sometimes said a few good things. He once said, "And when I saw my devil, I found him earnest, thorough, deep, grave, sober. He was the spirit of gravity! Through him all things fall. Arise, let us slay the spirit of gravity!" Elsewhere he said, "Courage desireth to

in Connecticut were very pleased with the reference in a letter from Comrade Browder to their "native Yankee ingenuity." They had already been making use of the tradition of Nathan Hale. In Minnesota, the comrades are aware of the services that the epic hero, Paul Bunyan, can perform for the progressive youth movement. The comrades in California are continuing their native traditions of robust frontier democracy.

Regional folk cultures are part of the very daily lives of the people. In a little article in the Branch Presidents' Manual, I told the story of how on a picnic of textile workers in Roanoke, Va., the efforts of some comrades to interest the workers in German, Italian or Russian revolutionary songs left these workers cold. But when someone commenced singing "Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine" to the tune of an old Carolina hill song, these workers, who had come from the mountains around Roanoke, picked it up eagerly. It was a part of their own native culture. In paying tribute to Vernon Snow, one of our comrades who recently died in Spain, we described him as a "true Virginia gentleman, whose courtesy and kindness were not limited to a small group of selected friends, but whose courtesy and kindness were broad and deep enough to embrace all those whose toil has helped produce American wealth and culture." These are merely small examples of how we should make our own all aspects of our native folk-cultures, making them "socialist in content, while regional or national in form."