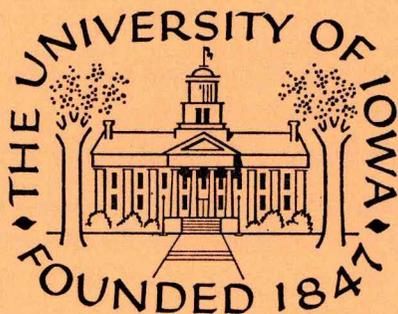


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WORKER EDUCATION IN DENMARK

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by **Robert E. Belding**



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CENTER FOR LABOR AND MANAGEMENT

College of Business Administration

The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

The research and information on comparative adult and worker education between Europe and the United States, while developing, is still meager. However, there is a growing body of literature, and Professor Robert E. Belding of The University of Iowa's College of Education is in part responsible for this growth. Professor Belding is vitally interested in the practical possibilities and potentialities of the lessons that can be drawn from the field of comparative education.

In recent years, this author has turned his scholarly endeavors to the study of various aspects of Scandinavian education. This publication is a reprint of three of his articles on young adult and worker education in Denmark. They are, in the order of their presentation:

"Danish Industry and The Updated Folk High School," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 1965.

"Denmark's Up-Dated Folk High School and Youth Training," *Journal of Secondary Education*, October, 1965.

"Worker Education in Denmark," *Education*, January, 1966.

The Center for Labor and Management is pleased to reprint these articles and thanks both Professor Belding and the publishers for their permission.

Anthony V. Sinicropi
Associate Director
Center for Labor and Management

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Ed 8

DANISH INDUSTRY AND THE UPDATED FOLK HIGH SCHOOL

During our depression years of the Thirties, American educational journals devoted considerable ink to articles on the Danish folk high school. Danes had, for years, given much credit to their very own educational innovation, the folk high school, for their country's prospering economy. In our struggle for adequate training of youth, Denmark's experience became one of our popular centers of attention.

Prosperous times are upon us now, and rarely does literature mention the folk high school. One might erroneously conclude that it no longer exists; in reality it has been updated in Denmark, often renamed, and in its contemporary, industrialized form it fulfills a number of the pragmatic demands of that compact European state.

It is the purpose of this article to indicate how industries and unions and the government in Denmark have adjusted the venerated folk high school to meet their urbanized needs, and to suggest lessons pertinent to shaping our secondary schools to the needs of our own technology.

For years the banner of the organized labor movement in Denmark has borne the words "Knowledge Is Power; Ignorance Is Bondage." As a body, federated unions there were the first institution to see the need for complementing the young laborers' basic education. Unions grew in power as the socialists gained places in the government, and, in the spirit of world-famous Danish cooperation, leaders of the two adapted the existing folk high schools to the further education of laborers. They started by offering evening courses, but today the effort has spread into an impressive variety of implementations, always with the residential institution for crowning workers with a realistic liberal arts program (the folk high school) at the core of their efforts.¹

A Sample Folk High Today

The unwieldy variety of manifestations of folk high in Denmark necessitates the description of a few examples of existing schools. The institution at Esbjerg has been serving as a stable example of one form of academy appealing to the young vocational masses. It has been established on the west coast of the Danish peninsula through the cooperation of private individuals, industries, and unions, and is the result of a resolution passed by the Congress of the Democratic Party. Called a "labor school" from the start, it has dispensed a socialist education with a curriculum of economics, history,

¹ Fridlev Skrubbeltrang, in his book *The Danish Folk High School*, devotes Chapter XI to describing the varieties of post-war implementation of the folk high movement. Copenhagen: Det Danske Selskab, 1952.

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natural science, and social affairs—each considered of utmost importance in the struggle for emancipation of the working classes.

Purposes of this school from the start have been twofold: to present a general education to workers of high school age, and to organize short courses for union members and their leaders. The most persistent goal of the Esbjerg Labor School has been to encourage personal and independent thought from each pupil—more *how* to think on their own than *what* to think.

Such school features as learning responsibility by taking it, self-government, sharing in the learning experience, imposing a minimum of regulations—these are aspects clearly inherited from the original folk high school concept. While the Danish language, one modern tongue, and basic mathematics are the only required subjects, there is an even score of electives.

A few years back Esbjerg encouraged both lectures and discussions which denounced capitalistic societies, and a favorite subject was an analysis which highlighted the defects of money-oriented economics. Now that the country's form of socialism has matured, the curricular offering has become more constructive. Students today take ten hours a week of trade subjects designed to refine vocational skills within their fishing or harbor employment. In order to perpetuate the appeal to students from outlying areas, instruction in crafts for small-town artisans has been retained.

Varieties in teaching methodology are reminiscent of John Dewey's diverse pragmatism and have been reiterated by M. Erling Jensen, present director of the school.² Often techniques stand in sharp contrast to the usual formal lecture of Danish preparatory schools as well as to many American classrooms today. Large student enrollments have consistently been cut to small, manageable groups for discussion, into compact committees, into dramatizations, and all with copious use of blackboards, film strips, sound movies, and tape recorders. At the same time, practice is assured in the concise and enviably well-equipped laboratories. Financing of much of the realia is underwritten as the government's portion in the cooperative enterprise.

Efforts in the Capital

A different type of vocational folk high school has been established at Roskilde, just outside Copenhagen. Its appeal is structured mainly for city youths bent on an industrial career, yet the setting of the school is in the countryside. During the depression years, union and municipal organizations had joined hands to help make the school a useful place for city unemployed youths to spend their time. The effort has been compared to the

² M. Erling Jensen, *Ecole Populaire Superieure d'Esbjerg*. Esbjerg, Denmark, 1961, p. 3.

establishment of a permanent educational C.C.C., or to Sargent Shriver's more recent work as field marshal over America's poverty trenches. From the start this residential open-air campus has been more like the original folk high than such overtly trade institutions as Esbjerg, for the curriculum has tended toward humanistic subjects offered in a healthy, rural setting. Awakening student interests, widening their mental horizons, and developing an appreciation for beauty and contributing a richness of life to youths who otherwise would have had a confined and sunless life in Copenhagen slums have been the intention of the school formulators, especially as the institution's functions have been streamlined by the two most recent headmasters. Both of these men have been well suited to their posts, for they have taught at the secondary-level Labor College in the capital city and at outlying labor folk high schools before assuming their responsibilities at Roskilde.

Together, the Esbjerg and Roskilde institutions form the best known of the labor-school efforts which have remained under the general framework of the folk high schools. The west coast school is to the Danish provinces what Roskilde has been to the metropolis. Both are supported by government subsidies, yet each is legally constituted as an autonomous institution, governed by a board representing cooperatives and political and educational bodies, as well as the related trade unions.

Another type of vocational residential high school for youths has come into being as a direct result of the population shift. This so-called Labor College, established at the secondary level, started with an emphasis on the lecture method, but has expanded and matured into a model for round table discussion. Subject matter there forms a well-balanced combination of vocational theory and liberal arts which complements the workers' factory responsibilities. The humanities fare is intended to assist youths to live beyond the factory in adequate family, community, emotional, and recreational facets of their lives.

Like other countries, Denmark has reduced the working hours of its labor force so that those in particular on an hourly rate of pay find themselves with a considerable block of leisure time on their hands. The Workers' Educational Association has been formed with the avowed purpose of emancipating the laborers through formal enlightenment. Demonstrating all the fresh vigor often identified with a neophyte organization, it has taken the initiative in establishing study groups as well as larger lecture audiences on a broad scale.

As the rural population diminishes and cities expand, the folk high school becomes more and more a responsibility of urban enterprises. Trends which emerged in the late Fifties have already been clarified and labeled. Employers, organized labor, and the government have demonstrated growing interest and support for the folk highs, so that these schools are by no

means decreasing in importance. A number of firms have found it to their advantage to allow young workers to take time off for attendance at folk high schools; equally, industries are discovering benefits to taking on youths who have already attended a folk high for its two-year or even its single-year sequence of courses. An adjunct of the folk high school has opened within some factories to allow young people to participate in evening discussion circles, often with library facilities made available.

Conclusion

As the Danish government has given increased support and recognition to the folk high schools, it has become increasingly apparent that in one form or another these realistic institutions are here to stay. Despite the decline in the amount of literature available on this venerated movement, the labor-oriented type of institution is destined to grow.

Danes are internationally famous for their cooperative enterprises, and their own creation for popular education has been constantly reinforced by the joining of industrial, union, and government hands. Isn't there a possibility, on the American scene, for some increased understanding between similar agencies, with the objective of a developing and broadening and complementing school, especially for teenagers who have not had an opportunity to plan and to comprehend their extra-vocational lives?

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DENMARK'S UPDATED FOLK HIGH SCHOOL AND YOUTH TRAINING

Any educational statistician impressed with curves would be struck by the pulchritude and symmetry of the line formed by the graceful increase in the number of articles appearing in American educational journals on the Danish folk high school, then the equally graceful decline in the number of articles on the same topic. The curve reached its crest in the 1930's, just when a number of American educators were scouring Europe for ideas which would put youths to effective use during the depression years.

The author here proposes that the Danish folk high school has been sufficiently up-dated to warrant our continued study, despite the drop in interest as reflected in the aforementioned curve. Indeed, the present Danish folk high, geared to modern industry and frequently supported or encouraged by organized labor, might well contain lessons applicable to contemporary problems of our early school-leavers as they run, head on, into a bewildering labor market.

A dozen decades ago Bishop Nicholai Grundtvig conceived a school for youths who had been deprived of the opportunity for more than a rudimentary education. Once his idea for a *Folkhogskola* (a people's high school) had gotten off the ground, it attracted youths between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who had lived and worked on farms and who, belatedly and of their own volition, wished a non-vocational education which would improve their status as common men and equip them with the armament for good citizenship.

They would attend the Grundtvigian folk or people's high school which, according to its inventor, was intended to "make accessible to youths a place where they may become better acquainted with human nature and life in general and with themselves in particular, and receive guidance in all civil duties and relationships and recognize the real need of their country." In short, here was a cultural school, created to give the underprivileged peasantry its first taste of initiative and a feeling of belonging in the Danish democracy.

As will presently be seen, the clientele attracted to the school has undergone such severe changes that some conservatives have declared the folk high school has lost its value to the Danish state. (8, p. 76) Yet certain features dreamed by its originator and later implemented by practitioners are still very much with the urbanized folk high school.

First, the appeal of the school continues to be principally to the underprivileged masses. Grundtvig himself had never declared the school should be alone for rural youths. Furthermore, its founder indicated his school would lack not only the familiar, unisexual air, but exams and texts and memorization should be replaced by the spoken work of narrative and con-

versation. His suggested curriculum placed emphasis mainly on the social studies, for Danish culture and history and contemporary social conditions, together with its linguistic and literary heritage, should form the academic program. Students would grow into the feeling of rapport between community and school, and would partake in the augmented family life of this homey board-and-room establishment. To this day these features of the original folk high school persist and mark it unquestionably as the school intended by its innovator.

The transition from a school for farm youths to a labor-oriented industrial attraction has undergone a series of steps important to the full understanding of the present *Folkhøgskola*. Following its war with Prussia and its loss of the rich, grain-producing land of Schleswig, Denmark was faced with the alternative of wrestling with increasing agricultural competition with such trade-hungry nations as the United States, or developing novel and attractive industries of its own. The latter course was adopted, and it took mainly the form of new cooperative dairy enterprises. The appeal of the folk high school shortly turned from its original adduction of serfs on the land to a cooperative and economy-oriented emphasis. In retrospect the Danes see this shift as a turn from a feudal pattern toward the modern, scientific and prosperous civilization that compact country presently supports.

The folk highs are often given credit for establishing the frame of mind for the development of leaders who have made their political, social and cooperative enterprise a success. Properly equipped individuals were graduated as the snug, family-sized schools grew and student councils and responsible leaders were shaped within the confines of the school. The folk high is equally credited with broadening attention from local, farm considerations to community, national and even international concerns. (12, pp. 29-32)

For some time the growing labor movement in Denmark had inscribed on its banners "Knowledge is Power; Ignorance is Bondage." So there came a time when organized labor would take the initiative in getting under way suitable training in the cities. More than any other group within their ranks they felt the need for even the most rudimentary education.

The socialists gained strength as the cities developed, and this politically oriented group established study circles to discuss the current social problems of the Danish democracy. This move in itself seemed ripe for application to the existing folk high schools. At about the same time the University Student Association initiated evening classes for workers, and these soon attracted as many as fifteen-hundred students. Subject matter comprised the three R's, but concomitant reading and lecture societies also did much valuable work both in Copenhagen and in outlying industrial communities. A lack of enthusiasm on the part of many workers slowed the program, for

they themselves were ignorant of the freedom and responsibility that accompanied an education.

So it was actually the leaders of the political and trade-union movements who were most alert to the need for worker enlightenment. Presently it will be seen how they took up the already established folk high school and adapted it to the exigencies of the laboring masses.

In 1871 Louis Pio, one of the pioneers of Danish socialism, outlined a program for worker education. As one of the first socialists sensitive to the important place the working class would take in the urbanized society, he sought to do for city workers what Grundtvig and his disciples had earlier done for rural youths. In part, to counteract the dehydrated and ineffective lectures which had marked many of the evening labor circles, he created the "Workers' Reading Club." To get this society underway he lent books to members, thus antedating in his effort the Danish public library movement. Next he organized their ubiquitous lectures, leveling them to the workers' understanding; furthermore, he advocated and arranged visits to museums for the laborers, again adapting sensitively to the language and comprehension of the participants. By no means was such activity divorced from the folk high and its transition to a metropolitan appeal.

By the turn into the present century even the rural folk high schools were shifting their programs toward a small-town or city appeal. Technical and realistic industrial courses were being injected to lure metropolitan youths who would counteract the decline in attendance of young farmers. Artisan branches and options were created in the outlying schools, and later some of these craft-oriented branches were to break away and form independent, technical folk schools of their own.

The Vallekilde Folk High is but one example of this type of fission. In 1915 it detached its technical stream and moved to Holbaek as a school for builders, joiners and painters. Its aim was to resurrect a better type of building construction, based on traditional patterns. Many years earlier Bishop Grundtvig had built into his folk high school idea a reverence for Denmark's past, so the new school for building trades was clearly a reinterpretation of the folk school founder's original intent.

Schools for training in the clerical subjects were established, and later some assumed the name of trade schools, but whatever the nomenclature and emphasis behind the label, they conserved the characteristics of the folk high school. A few hours a week might be used for trade subjects, but the courses in appreciation of Denmark's heritage, together with newer courses in the economy and politics and responsibilities of the modern citizen, formed the core of the offering. Furthermore, the growing school size perpetuated the student government of many aspects of the school's administration, and these institutions continued to turn out leaders equipped

to understand and to handle some of the cooperative industrial undertakings of their country.

A number of the labor leaders who undertook to adapt the traditional (Grundtvigian) folk high to mass metropolitan demands had themselves been products of the school; indeed, as graduates they served as evidence that the school did produce excellent leaders, not only for the labor movement but for refashioning their own *alma mater* to serve the needs of craftsmen and workers.

Just as variations of human beings fan out in childhood and youth to make each adult quite different from every other adult, the mature folk high school has become an institution reflecting its own variation on the original theme. Within the century there have been so many manifestations of the folk-high principle that each school must be seen as a peculiar institution with its very own sub-goals. Fridlev Skrubbeltrang, in a compact volume on *The Danish Folk High School* (12, p. 53) spends a chapter indicating what diverse forms the folk-high movement took during the early years of the century. Thus workers' education and the labor high school have been but manifestations in a variety of twentieth-century fulfillments of Grundtvig's dream.

The Folk High School at Esbjerg has served as a stable example of one form of school appealing to the modern vocational masses. It was established in western Jutland through the cooperation of private individuals, industries and unions, and is a result of a resolution passed by the Congress of the Democratic Party. Called a "labor school" from the start, it has dispensed a socialist education with a curriculum of social affairs, economics, history and natural sciences—each of utmost importance in the struggle of the working classes for emancipation.

Purposes of the school from the start have been two-fold: to present a general education to youthful workers and others of the town and countryside, and to organize short courses for union members and their leaders. The most persistent goal of the Esbjerg Labor School has been to encourage personal and independent thought of each pupil—not telling each *what* to think as much as *how* to think on his own.

School features of learning responsibility by taking it, of self-government, of sharing in the learning experience, of creating a minimum of regulations—these are aspects inherited clearly from the Grundtvigian institutions. While Danish language, one modern foreign language, and basic math are the only required subjects, there is an even score of electives.

Some courses in the Christian Ideal which had been intended by Bishop Grundtvig were replaced at Esbjerg with discussions and lectures which denounced capitalistic societies, and a favorite topic was an analysis which highlighted the defects of money-oriented economics. On the more constructive side, the folk school in this port town has included ten hours a week of

trade subjects for refining student skills within their fishing and harbor vocations. Classes in crafts for small-town artisans were also included, to perpetuate the appeal to students of outlying areas.

Varieties in teaching method are reminiscent of John Dewey's diverse pragmatism and have been reiterated* by M. Erling Jensen, the school's present director. (4, p. 3) Often they stand in sharp contrast to the usual formal lecture of Danish preparatory schools as well as to the methods used in many American classrooms today. Large student enrollments have consistently been cut into manageable, small groups for discussion, into compact committees, into dramatizations, all with copious use of blackboards, film strips, sound movies and tape recordings. At the same time, practice is assured in the concise and enviably well-equipped laboratories.

A different type of people's vocational high school was established in 1930 at Roskilde, just west of Copenhagen. Its appeal was structured mainly for city youths bent on an industrial career, yet the setting of the school was in the rural open air. The Workers' Educational movement joined hands with the Workers' Educational Committee of Copenhagen. This was done during the depression years to help make the school a useful place for city unemployed youths to spend their time. The effort has been compared to the establishment of a permanent educational C.C.C. From the start this residential campus has been more like the original Grundtvigian schools than such overtly trade institutions as Esbjerg, for the curriculum has tended toward humanistic subjects in a healthy, rural setting. Awakening student interests, widening their mental horizons, and developing an appreciation for beauty and contributing a richness of life to youths who otherwise would have had a confined and sunless life in Copenhagen slums have been the intention of the school, especially as its function has been streamlined by Hjalmar Gammelgaard, the recent headmaster. Gammelgaard had been eminently suited to his post, for he had taught both at the Labor College in Copenhagen and at labor folk high school before assuming his responsibilities at Roskilde.

Together the Esbjerg and Roskilde institutions form the best known of the labor-school efforts which have remained under the general framework of the folk high schools. The west-coast school is to the Danish provinces what Roskilde has been to the metropolis. Both are supported by government subsidies, yet each is legally constituted as an autonomous institution, governed by a board representing cooperatives, political and educational bodies, as well as the related labor unions. It is anticipated that in the near future this realistic variation on the folk high school theme will expand into creation of a newly established campus near Elsinor.

Another type of vocational residential high school for the people came into being at about the same time. This was in Copenhagen itself, and was called the Labor College. During the First World War its efforts were rounded out in cooperation with the Workers' High School, and their com-

bined method was one of efficient lecturing to reach a large body of the masses.

In the Twenties the Labor College expanded its daytime efforts into evening study circles for discussing and strengthening the socialist youth movement. Cultural as well as vocational courses became especially popular during the depression years following 1929, and youths flocked voluntarily into these educational halls.

Some unemployed youths turned to the school to refurbish old skills or to get a running start on new ones. Even more inevitable, however, were the injections of the proud national—or even international—spirit which characterized the transformed school. At the same time worker lobbies were well established in the Danish parliament, and many leaders sympathetic to the laborer's cause, including some who were products of the folk high schools, found a voice in local governments. So labor was heard where it could affect mass education most, and the unions assumed their fresh responsibilities with grace.

Shortly after the First World War Denmark had reduced the working day to eight hours so that those in particular on an hourly rate found themselves with more leisure time on their hands. The Workers' Educational Association was formed with the avowed purpose of emancipating the laborers through formal enlightenment. Demonstrating all the fresh vigor often identified with a new organization, it established study groups as well as larger lecture audiences on a broad scale.

But the best educational performance of organized labor came about twenty years later, when, despite the anti-organized-labor attitude so prevalent among occupying Nazis, the Workers' Educational Organization conducted over a thousand study circles each year. Whether the organized labor effort assumed the formal garb of the folk high school, or rolled its collective sleeves in an evening study circle,* the two-fold effort was focussed on equipping workers with reading, writing, and computational skills so essential to a complex city life, and on arming youths with useful proficiencies for the pressing demands of a wartime economy.

As the rural population decreases and cities grow, the folk high school becomes more and more a responsibility of urban enterprises. Trends which emerged in the late fifties had, by the middle sixties, been clarified and labeled. Employers, labor, and the government alike have demonstrated growing interest and support for the folk highs, so these schools are by no means diminishing in importance. A number of firms have found it to their advantage to allow young workers time off for attendance at folk high schools; equally they are finding it advantageous to take on youths who

*For a description of the popular Scandinavian study circle see the author's "Study Circles in Sweden," *Adult Education*, XIV No. 3 (Spring 1964), pp. 146-150.

have attended the folk high for its two-year, or even its single-year sequence of courses. (5, p. 355) An adjunct of the folk high school has opened within some factories to allow youths to participate in evening discussion circles, often with library facilities made available.

Among the most vigorous efforts has been that of the newly established National Association of (Folk) High School Students. Its purpose has been to promote the folk high cause, which from the start has suffered from lack of respectability throughout the Scandinavian countries as they stand in contrast to the established university-prep secondary schools. The primary task of this neophyte organization has been to bring interested urban groups under the folk-high wing, mainly by disseminating information to the working youths.

As the Danish and other Scandinavian governments have given increased support and recognition to the folk high schools, it has become apparent that in one form or another those realistic institutions are here to stay. As cities expand it seems that the original rural setting and purpose of the institution is bound to diminish with an increased adaptation to urban-youth needs. Despite the decline in the amount of literature currently available on this venerated movement, the labor-oriented type of school such as has been established in Denmark is bound to grow.

Those Danish youths lacking the benefits of a well-rounded secondary education, and our own youths who dropped from school for some sparkling remunerative lure, have both been deprived of a complete, a pertinent, and a well-rounded secondary education. There may well be lessons for American educators in the content, the method and the philosophy of the evolving metropolitan folk high school.

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WORKER EDUCATION IN DENMARK

If Danes were inclined to celebrate fortieth birthdays, the year 1964 could have marked a sparkling ruby anniversary in the history of that country's worker education. It was in the year 1924 that a multiple marriage was realized. Oddly enough, it involved three parties; the bodies brought into union will be identified later in this paper. Together they became the Danish Workers' Educational Association (Arbejdernes Oplyningsforbund). It was hardly coincidental that in the same year the country's first Social-Democratic government was formed.

Lacking the fireworks and the frosting to celebrate the special occasion, it seems appropriate to review the overall efforts for the formal education of workers and to see how each organization and channel for teaching workers fits the total pattern of offerings.

Folk High Schools

Actually the two Danish qualities of cooperation and of international understanding have grown up as close kin, both essential to the Danish economy. It is highly pertinent to note that the most venerated aspect of Danish adult education, the folk high school, introduces both these qualities to the classroom and has rightly taken its share of credit for the astonishing economic success of a country deprived of the natural resources usually associated with a high living standard and a flourishing economy (7, pp. 72-76).

Adult education, with a special attraction to labor, is so venerated an institution in Denmark that it has served as a model for adaptation to a variety of cultures around the world. It was within the first half of the last century that Bishop Grundtvig felt so keenly for the plight of the feudal, serf-like status of Denmark's rural population that he planned a high school for uneducated, predominantly rural youths. This was to be a folk or people's high school, an extra-vocational institution which would educate young people off the farms in a family-like residence.

Today, as rural population has rapidly shifted toward the city, industries and trade unions have joined to revamp the folk high school to supplement the workers' vocational activities (2, p. 1445).

The first non-rural folk high school was established at Esbjerg on Denmark's west coast, and complemented the worker apprenticeships offered in that fishing port. It was founded in 1910 through the combined assistance of industries and charitable individuals, and was soon recognized by, and gained support from, the government as an up-dated adaptation of the original, Grundtvigian institution (4, p. 5).

To this day this school is called a labor high school, and within its walls students from eighteen to twenty-five years of age pursue courses in such social sciences as contemporary political and municipal developments, mod-

ern industrial techniques, time studies, piece rates and analysis of the work process. In the tradition of the folk school's founder, classroom technique is based more on *how* than on *what* to think.

That same year, and independently of the West Jutland effort, the Social Democratic Worker School was established in Copenhagen. Today that institution is especially well known for its night classes for workers.

Labor-oriented conferences sponsored by the urban folk highs now embrace such useful programs as courses for homemakers on child rearing, on household budgeting and other aspects of domestic management, lectures and discussions for trade union members on domestic and social issues, and conferences for youth leaders. As many as sixty of these conferences are scheduled, especially through the summer months, and the average attendance at each gathering is seventy participants (9, p. 10).

Workers' Educational Association

The folk high schools had gained strength as they became recognized both as respectable and worthy of government support. By 1924 they were ripe to be meshed with newborn political philosophies. That year saw the Social Democratic government come to power, and it was only a few years earlier that working hours had been legally reduced so that laborers finally had time available for leisure or study. Pertinent to the emergence of the party was the establishment, also in 1924, of the all-union enterprise to arrange for the formal enlightenment of organized laborers.

From its inception this Workers' Educational Association has been the most effective resource for labor education in Denmark. In true Scandinavian fashion, it was founded through the cooperative effort of the federation of Danish trade unions, the party coming to power, the Social Democratic Youth Movement, and the Federation of Urban Cooperatives. All these organizations are today represented on the governing council of the Workers' Educational Association, and to this day the education of *laborers* is its main task.

Cooperation Key to Success

Without a togetherness in purpose the mass education of laborers in Denmark would long since have been a failure. It is clear that no single organization carries any facet of the adult education program in isolation from the others, but that the unions, both singly and combined, the folk high movement, the party in power, and the federal government all contribute their own part to the configuration of formal enlightenment of the laborers.

Nor are the named bodies the only ones cooperating to implement the program. Together they work with the Council for Danish Popular Education, a group which represents all national organizations that entertain popular education as their primary concern.

Denmark for years has been realistically alert to its dependence on other countries for its survival. So the Workers' Educational Association in particular has conferred often with other Scandinavian labor organizations as well as with the flourishing British Workers' Educational Association.* UNESCO and the international labor movement have been assisting a combined Scandinavian labor-education effort by helping the Nordic Folk High School to become international-conscious. The Nordic School holds its annual session each summer for two months in Geneva.

The Workers' Educational Association is by far the largest and most influential Danish organization for adult enlightenment, so its representatives serve at all significant occasions, either at national or at local levels, when the education of adults is involved. It sends representatives abroad to study adult education practices, and, as this writer can attest from personal experience, has been most gracious in hosting foreign guests seeking information on the way of Danish life.

Classroom Methods

Thus far this article has tried to demonstrate what a compact country can do in behalf of worker education when the enterprise is undertaken in the spirit of give-and-take. Another facet of the enterprise, of special interest to any educator concerned with the formal schooling of workers, is the special classroom technique applied to large masses of students who have left school early either for monetary or academic reasons. A special effort has been made to adjust teaching methods to the level and type of student represented in the Danish worker classroom.

In fact, it was discovered early in the process of developing worker education that the common lecture and reading technique traditionally used in Danish secondary schools and universities was not applicable to workers who had left school without any exposure to liberal education beyond the 3 R's. When Grundtvig wrote of "the spoken word" as appropriate to farm youths coming to his planned school, he was not speaking of the lecture method so familiar to university environments, but of the sharing of ideas which goes with discussion in a well-managed family. Secondary schools had been characterized by development of student skills in taking classroom notes, in listening for important points in lectures, and in self-expression through formidable oral and written examinations (5, p. 18).

Worker education has realistically by-passed these familiar devices, and has consequently suffered from a persistent lack of respect by those who inherited a traditional faith in the public college-prep schools (*gymnasie-*

*For a report on the contribution of this imaginative and unique group in England, see the author's "Union Efforts to Educate Workers in England," *Adult Education*, XV No. 2 (Winter 1965), pp. 109-114.

skoler) and the universities. Some educators tried applying the lecture technique, but it was soon discovered that workers needed the patience and understanding which goes with a small, family-sized environment.

Discussion, based in lectured or read facts, was developed as a compromise between the formal academic lecture and a bull-session. The folk high schools have perfected round-table discussion, and the new type of metropolitan folk high, as well as other expressions of worker education, have adopted the seminar table.

Study in the Round

Denmark hardly invented the "study circle" as a method of enlightening its workers, but it has borrowed the setting of small-group meetings, often conducted in the informality of a home parlor, to facilitate discussion. One characteristic which emerges as common to the varieties of study circles in action is the freedom of selection of leaders as well as for topic of discussion.

In a domestic environment the circles are insulated from any controlled political agitation. Although the Central Planning Office for W.E.A.-sponsored circles is maintained in Copenhagen, the 150 local unions of the Workers' Educational Association run their own circles. Leaders are usually part-time volunteers, and only the larger cities maintain a full-time, paid staff. Finances come mainly from local sources, so the community determines the method and subject of circle discussions.

Peripatetic Lectures

Whereas university lectures have been by-passed in organized efforts to school workers in extra-vocational subjects, selected individuals have been chosen by the government, as well as by the combined unions, to level their speeches on popular and worth-while topics to the masses of laborers. As with so many gatherings on the Continent, there is a formal protocol to arranging lectures for worker gatherings. About two hundred lectures are scheduled annually, and provision of meeting places is the responsibility shouldered by the community where each lecture is to take place. Audiences are kept at about thirty participants—not too large to discourage discussion following the speech.

Some American communities might find difficulty in providing a school auditorium, without cost, to such a visiting lecturer, but Danish central control and financing, as well as the country's attitude of cooperation, prevail in the arrangements for lecture hall, complete with heat, light, lectern, projector, and any other necessary amenities.

Developed Aids for Teaching

While several organizations responsible for the continuing education of

workers have developed texts and films and tapes for distribution to classes, in whatever form, the Workers' Educational Association has refined such realia through extended experience. In fact the Association was still bawling from the trauma of birth when it produced the first Danish text ever written for study groups. Subsequently, the maturing organization has published an impressive succession of syllabi and texts which stimulate discussion and questions and provide references and supplementary reading as well as study tips.

The labor movement supports its own publishing house (*Fremad*) which has provided sizable editions of inexpensive books for dissemination among the workers. In its production of fiction it has done much to encourage laborers to maintain reading skills and to expand their horizons.

The educational union for workers possesses a library of classical music which study circles and evening schools may borrow for classes in music appreciation. It also lends films and has been responsible for sending projectors to far corners of the country.

Conclusion in Questions

A report such as this would indeed prove barren for the American reader if there were no possible applications to American practice. What are some of the questions which, if answered, might indicate possible American implementations?

1. Are American unions in a position to assume forceful leadership in their worker education?

2. Could or should they effect the same attitude of inter-institutional cooperation which the Danes find an ingrained part of their make-up?

3. Can or should unions pull together with political parties, with the government, or with established educational agencies to produce a balanced program of education for workers?

4. Could unions help maintain and extend reading skills by publishing low-cost fiction and cultural realia for workers?

5. How comparable are the existing institutions for implementing worker education here and there? For example, we have few folk high schools, but have we the need for them? (6, p. 43)

Such questions can be considered soberly while realizing that there *are* cultural differences between Denmark and the United States, and that these should remain. Any borrowing exercise should be performed not so much in an infantile posture of mimicry as in a spirit of mature adaptation.

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