

**WHEN LABOR GOES TO
SCHOOL: A STORY OF THE
WORKER'S EDUCATIONAL
MOVEMENT**

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When Labor Goes to School: A Story of the Worker's Educational Movement by Genevieve M. Fox

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A Story of the Workers' Educational Movement

By GENEVIEVE M. FOX

Research Worker, Industrial Committee

National Board
Young Womens Christian Associations
New York
1920

FOREWORD

More and more thinking men and women are realizing how largely shortages in people's lives are due to shortages in their education. A large percentage of the membership of the Young Women's Christian Association consists of women whose education has been cut short at an early age, and who are for this reason seriously handicapped not only in the business of earning a living, but also in the business of living. To enable these women to bridge over the gaps in their education is, therefore, becoming an increasingly important concern of this organization, especially now that women are assuming heavier responsibilities as citizens than they have ever shouldered before.

If this organization is to continue to be a pioneer in supplying to women supplementary opportunities for education, it must keep informed as to what efforts wage-earning men and women are making to educate themselves, and must be able to give intelligent information to those of its members who are seeking further opportunities for education.

It is the aim of this pamphlet to give an idea of the spirit and purposes of recent movements on the part of labor organizations and universities to educate their members; what subjects they are most wanting to study and by what means, and in what spirit they are going about studying them. It is a subject which concerns not simply one group in the organization, but the entire membership, inasmuch as it deals with the efforts of hundreds of men and women to obtain fuller and more abundant lives.

FLORENCE SIMMS.

"There can be no true democratic community which has not adopted the ideal of education for all according to the needs of all."—ALBERT MANEBRIDGE, Contemporary Review.

WHEN LABOR GOES TO SCHOOL

A Class of Students Who Wouldn't Go Home

A class that refused to be dismissed after a two-hour session but adjourned to the sidewalk until they were accused of interfering with traffic and thereupon followed their teacher to the railway station and even took the train with him to his home! No, this is not a pretty piece of fiction; it actually happened. But it happened not in the public school or in some big university, but in a school conducted by a group of working men and working women. These men and women were going to school not because they had to, nor even because they expected to get a better job by so doing, but simply because they wanted the power and the fullness of life and the broadened vision that knowledge alone can give. They were not studying something someone else thought they ought to learn but were seeking to learn those things which they had found through experience that they needed.

This is only one instance of the many working men and women in this country and in other countries who are squeezing into seats designed for school children, or gathering in some vacant room of a public library or at the headquarters of some local trade union to study English or economics or international law or political economy or public speaking or anything else that they want to learn and can find a teacher to teach.

THE BEGINNINGS OF A WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

The urge for education of their own choosing, on the part of working men and women has been felt in England for several years. Among the very earliest expressions of this need are the classes of the Rochdale Cooperative Society, that pioneer venture in consumers' cooperation which was started by some poor flannel weavers of the little town of Rochdale in 1844. From the first year this little band of cooperators gave two-and-one-half per cent of the profits of their cooperative store for education. In those days when there were no public libraries and reading rooms and when newspapers cost from eight to twelve cents, they opened libraries and reading rooms of their own and in order that all might enjoy the books and newspapers they established evening classes. Thus they were pioneers not only in cooperative selling but were also pioneers in bringing libraries, news-rooms and evening classes within the reach of wage-earning men and women.

To-day the British cooperative societies have study classes for men and women of all ages; summer schools; literary and dramatic circles; lectures on varied topics, and social entertainments. In addition to the classes which they themselves organize, cooperative