

Switzerland

The Swiss Junior Red Cross organized at Crêt-Bérard (Vaud) in 1968 a Seminar of French-speaking Swiss educators which was attended by primary and secondary school teachers to study methods likely to infuse humanitarian ideas into pupils whilst at the same time making teaching more lively, that is to say more related to life. Two lectures were given, one by Mr. Jean Pictet, member of the ICRC, on "The Geneva Conventions and the present role of the Red Cross", the other by Dr. Etienne Berthet, Director General of the *Centre international de l'Enfance*, on the subject: "Is the health of our children protected in school?". These lectures were followed, to conclude, by an address in which Mr. Charles-André Schusselé, then Director of the League's Junior Red Cross Bureau, outlined the main features of the debates which took place.

The texts of these lectures and address are given in a booklet of nearly 40 pages published by the organizers. Mr. Pictet first referred to the ICRC's current activities in various countries and he underlined that "the Geneva Conventions, in spite of the extension given them in 1949, do not cover every field of human suffering... There is a disturbing problem which is of concern at present to the ICRC, that is the necessary reaffirmation and development of the laws and customs applicable in armed conflicts".

He spoke also on Red Cross principles and on the "proportionality" principle, which might also be called "equity", he said:

"The Red Cross knows and can compare suffering. Unfortunately, the public does not give without stimulation, but only when moved by compassion. What must be done? The public must be informed. Already in the early days of the Red Cross, Madame de Gasparin, an outstanding humanitarian, wrote: News used to travel at a ponderous pace, so that what occurred at the ends of the earth was not known until after a year had passed. If blood were shed, the earth had time to absorb it; if tears were shed, the sun had time to dry them. Suffering which called out from afar left the heart

unmoved". Gustave Moynier, one of the Red Cross founders, when quoting this passage, added: "Every day, we now know what goes on throughout the world. Time no longer intervenes to blunt impressions. Descriptions by daily newspapers bring the dying on the field of battle to the reader's very eyes, as it were, and to his ears not only the sound of victory but also the moaning of the wounded who fill the ambulances"¹. This was written a century ago. Is it not more true than ever now, with television and radio? The world is shrinking. For the Red Cross, neighbours in need may well be distant multitudes. Progress in communications must be seen as a great humanitarian improvement because it brings knowledge of distress to us quicker. And relief arrives sooner too, and especially people who are fortunate, the "haves", can no longer remain in ignorance of the "have-not's".

Dr. Berthet stressed the importance for educators and all specialists in child welfare of considering all the complex biological, psychological and social aspects of the child personality. In every country in the world, the question must now be asked: "Is the mission carried out by the school adapted to the world of to-day; is it planned as it should be? I think that the mission of the school in the world to-day should be on a new dimension. Wherever it may be, in town or countryside, in the privileged or underprivileged countries, the school is no longer merely a place to spread knowledge as it was last century. The schoolteacher's trade is not only to teach children the "three R's", to pass examinations; it is to form their characters, to bring them to manhood. Manhood, according to Montaigne, means "a good head rather than a full head". To that I would add: physical and mental health which is the more necessary as the world in which we live becomes increasingly complicated. The aim of the school and of those concerned for children: doctors, nurses, midwives, child welfare workers, is to give to all children the opportunity to develop fully so that they may benefit to the maximum from their abilities.

Teachers, psychologists, sociologists, doctors, statesmen, planners and economists must all work with the same aim in view. All pursue the same objective with their human raw material, using

¹ Quoted by P. Boissier in *De Solferino à Tsoushima*, Paris, 1963.

different techniques of course, but all must be guided by the same fundamental principles, of which there are three.

1) The unity of the human being.

2) Unity of medical, social, teaching, economic and even political work. It is no longer possible for one man alone to deal with a problem which is serious for an individual. A doctor may treat influenza or measles, but when the case is serious—tuberculosis, poliomyelitis—other disciplines must be called upon; it is a multi-disciplinary work which must now be the basis of our action. In all the countries where we have an opportunity to teach, we tell doctors, teachers and social welfare workers: to carry out activities in your sector, contact all those in the community who are concerned with the development of man and child.

3) Unity of economic and social development. Every human being, every child, is of unique spiritual value, but what we must realize also is that a child represents capital, a human investment, and that is why we are now meeting; economists, planners and statesmen, to discuss these problems.

In many countries we are told it is a fine thing to save these children and to educate them, but that it is not a profitable investment. Economists tell us: found a school, build a hospital; that will cost money: but a factory, a road; that yields a return. We must prove to local and national authorities that work for children is also an investment with a yield. The child starting school to-day will be 40 years old in the year 2000. And the year 2000 is upon us! Now that child of to-day, in the year 2000, will be the man we have made of him by feeding and education; and he will assume political, social, economic and cultural responsibilities in his own country. We must not forget that social development in its wider acceptation is very closely linked to economic development. Hence the absolute need for co-operation among all those who are community leaders, and that co-operation must be ever closer and based on ever increasing trust."

Finally Mr. Schussel  defined where the Red Cross stood in the world. "In the Red Cross, responsibilities must be given to new forces in order for the community to be enriched by new ideas. But

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the strength of the Red Cross will always reside in the voluntary work carried out in class, in the community or town. No work is possible on a national and even less a world scale if, at the foundation, the Red Cross cannot rely on volunteer workers.

We have entered into the age of electronics and computers, and we cannot continue living according to methods which prevailed ten years ago, and even less to those of twenty years ago. Should we be discouraged for that? By no means! That should inspire us; it should compel us to stop for reflexion from time to time and recall Alexandre Vinet's words: "And remembering the insignificant value of so many men, never forget what a man might be worth". That compels us to return to those primordial and lasting values called friendship, respect for our fellow-men, and peace."