



RECONSTRUCTION
PROBLEMS

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MODERN
LANGUAGES
IN BRITISH
EDUCATION

TWO PENCE

MINISTRY OF
RECONSTRUCTION

1919

*This Pamphlet is based on the Report of the Committee appointed
by the Prime Minister to enquire into the position of Modern
Languages in the Educational System of Great Britain.*

*Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office.
(Cd. 9036, price 9d.)*

*The information contained in this pamphlet
is subject to any modifications that may be
made subsequently to the date of going to press,
June 24th, 1919.*

Modern Languages in British Education

I.—PAST NEGLECT AND FUTURE NEEDS.

“**A** DEMOCRACY cannot afford to be ignorant” is one of the *obiter dicta* which are scattered throughout the pages of the Report of the Prime Minister’s Committee on the position of Modern Languages in the educational system of Great Britain of which this pamphlet is a summary.

This conviction is restated in an expanded form in the first of the fifty-five conclusions in which the Committee record the results of their investigations. This runs as follows: “In democratic countries, above all, education is a national necessity, as well as a profitable investment. The best education is the best bargain, and well worth the time, trouble, thought, and whatever else may be required for its purchase. For reconstruction and recuperation after the war improved education is a vital need for all national and individual ends; the highest as well as the humblest; and the humblest as well as the highest.” They go on to say that no part of our national education has remained so far below the standard of national and individual requirements as that which deals with foreign countries and foreign peoples of the present day and which employs living languages as its instrument. This contention will hardly be denied in any quarter and, incidentally, one may admire the courage of this Committee in interpreting so broadly the terms of their reference. Appointed to consider the “Modern Languages,” they translate that term into Modern Studies and use that term as signifying “all those studies (historical, economic, literary, critical, philological, and other) which are directly approached through modern foreign languages. ‘Modern Studies’ are thus the study of modern peoples in any and every aspect of their national life, of which the languages are an instrument as necessary as hands, and feet, and heart, and head.” It cannot indeed be said that any satisfactory opportunities for such study existed before the war, which has served to make the nation realise its ignorance of foreign countries and their peoples. This ignorance affected all



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classes of the community, and arose partly from a lack of intellectual curiosity about foreign affairs, which the training of our educational institutions failed to remove. The Universities, though they had found a place for Modern Languages in their curricula, had done it grudgingly and in a spirit too narrowly antiquarian and philological. "The growth of French from Low Latin was of infinite importance; the growth of the French people from the ruins of Roman Gaul was ignored during the pursuit of Romance philology." In many of the public schools Modern Sides, it is true, had been established, but they were too often regarded as the refuge of the intellectually destitute. Their course had no imaginative aim nor any clear and well defined outlook. Non-Classical boys who had ability turned rather to Mathematics and Science and hardly any attempt was made to create out of modern literary studies a discipline equivalent to that supplied by Classical training. The absence of a command of foreign tongues was not generally felt, for, great travellers as we are, on our travels we found our language spoken over a large part of the globe. So far as such knowledge was needed for our commerce it was supplied by foreigners eager to learn our tongue. The working classes, up till then intent on their struggles at home, were only just beginning to establish relations with the workers of foreign countries and to feel the need of a ready interchange of thought with those who spoke a language other than their own.

THEIR VALUE IN COMMERCE.

But, in the new life which opens out to us with the coming of Peace, international relations will play a larger part and, admitting the neglect in the past, one may proceed to the consideration of the value of Modern Studies for different ends and to different sections of the community. We need not hesitate to give the first consideration to those whose main concern is with the increase of wealth, both private and public. It was generally admitted that British ignorance of foreign languages had actually hampered business, and it was asserted that the distributing trade of South America had largely passed from English to German firms, even where British goods were concerned, because the Germans took the pains to learn Spanish. There is abundant evidence of the need of foreign languages in business and it may be confidently assumed that a knowledge of languages, of foreign countries and foreign people will be directly and abundantly remunerative. But to secure it the support of British men of business is essential and the material conditions offered to properly equipped clerks must be improved.

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Modern Studies are needed for the increase of knowledge, for no modern nation can be self-sufficing in this regard. The man of science, the technologist, the lawyer, the historian, the economist and the philosopher are all dependent on discoveries and ideas which come to fruition in other countries, access to which is to be gained not only through the reading of books but must be sought through intercourse with foreign scholars. But not only in these high regions of science and learning are intercourse and knowledge needed. A diffused knowledge of the life and ways and modes of thought of foreign people is necessary for the well-being of the world. Modern Studies alone can provide men and women who will interpret with insight and sympathy the ideals of contemporary foreign nations so as to give enlightenment to their countrymen.

IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES.

A very large field for the fruitful application of the results of Modern Study is opened by the consideration of the Public Services. The Foreign Office naturally stands out as the Department whose need is greatest. It was no part of the Committee's business to sit in judgment on the organisation of the Foreign Office or on the equipment of its staff. It was accepted as self-evident that a mere knowledge of one or two languages was not sufficient before entry to the Service, that the systematic study of one or two countries with their history, economics, etc., should be added. It was felt even this requirement might not be sufficient to provide all that is needed, and it is urged that in the Foreign Office every country should have its own expert, capable of reading, digesting, selecting, summarising and appraising information from books, newspapers, treaties and reports. Care must be taken at every point that the acquisition of languages be not regarded as an end in itself. They should also be studied as a means to valuable knowledge and as a key to the national psychology of the peoples speaking them. In the Diplomatic and Consular Services there is ample scope for this wide use of foreign languages.

In the scheme of examination for the Home Civil Service put forward by the Committee appointed to consider this matter by the Treasury, Modern Languages have full and equal recognition with all other main subjects of university study, and thus no one who has graduated in Honours in Modern Languages will be placed at a disadvantage. It will therefore be possible, if this scheme is adopted, for those Government departments which recruit their staff through this examination to look forward to securing an adequate number of Modern Language scholars, if

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the universities rise to the level of their opportunities. Throughout the Civil Services a great diffusion of a knowledge of at least two modern languages is eminently desirable.

In the fighting Services, too, the Committee concluded, from such evidence as they were able to procure in a time of war, that in both Services there was room for a large number of officers who were able to read foreign works on the technique of their profession. The difficulties of securing sufficient time for Modern Languages amid the insistent demands of professional studies were fully recognised, and credit must be given both to the Admiralty and the War Office for the excellence of the arrangements for the provision of interpreters. The present defects, which can only be remedied by the co-operation of the Services, are the necessary result of the unsatisfactory position which Modern Languages have held in schools. But the schools alone cannot bear the blame; the main cause has been the indifference and apathy of the general public. This disregard of education was most marked in the world of business, but politicians, journalists, and almost all whose function it is to instruct the public have shown an equal lack of interest.

GENERAL CULTURE.

Prominence is here given to these practical applications of a knowledge of Modern Languages because nothing has contributed more to depress Modern Studies than the lack of opportunity, in public or private service, for those who have been at pains to acquire foreign languages. But the Committee were not insensible to the idealist value of these studies. The following passage sets forth their conception, and shows that the new discipline must be inspired by the same ideas as the old Classical training:—

“The idealistic aim of education is to enable men to live better. We are not here concerned with the moral side of education; that is a separate and all-important province. All study has some moral value; Modern Studies are the study of man in all his higher activities, and thus may have a special moral value; but we need say no more of that. We are, and must be, concerned with Modern Studies as an instrument of culture; and by culture we mean that training which tends to develop the higher faculties, the imagination, the sense of beauty, and the intellectual comprehension. Clearer vision, mental harmony, a just sense of proportion, higher illumination—these are the gifts that culture ought to bring. It cannot bring them to all; in their fulness they can be possessed by few; but in some measure they may be shared by all who desire them.

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“ It is in the possession of such an idealistic aim that the strength of Classical studies lies. The life and thought of Greece and Rome were revealed to the men of the Renaissance. They said, and rightly said : ‘ This life was better than ours ; these thoughts are higher than ours ; let us see what we can learn from Greece and Rome.’ They studied ; and modern civilisation, modern culture, spring directly from their studies. What began as an inspiration became a system. Schools sprang up in which Greek and Latin were taught, at first consciously as a means to higher illumination, afterwards, perhaps too often, as an end in themselves. But, in spite of all human imperfections of men and methods, the old ideal never died out. It still inspires the best of our teachers, the best of our students. A Classical education does not mean Latin and Greek. It means scholarship with its passion for accuracy, discipline of taste, training in form and order ; but it means more than that. It means intimate study of all that is best in what has come down to us from the greatest minds of two great races ; but it means more than that. It aims at an imaginative comprehension of the whole life of two historic peoples, in their art, their law, their politics, their institutions, and their larger economics, and also in their creative work of poetry, history, and philosophy. Such aspirations raise the whole level of study in school and University. There are dreary stages unrefreshed by any distant prospect. But the best teachers do not lose sight of the whole meaning of Classical learning and culture even while they are grinding the gerunds. The best pupils early begin to catch the inspiration ; before they leave school they are on the way to become scholars and to construct their own scheme of humane knowledge. They pass to the University fit to make full use of all its opportunities. Among them are afterwards found some of the best historians, the best critics, the best professors of English literature, and, above all, men in every walk of life with the widest outlook, the most balanced judgment, the finest taste. The best product of a Classical education is very good, and all that is best therein comes from the high ideal. Modern Studies need a like ideal.

“ In conclusion, the national needs which call for satisfaction by the development of Modern Studies may be summed up and classified. For the public service and for business—and we must once more emphasise the national concern in the prosperity of private business—we need clerks, travellers, foreign agents, directors and managers of firms, and administrators, each group possessing according to its functions adequate knowledge of

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foreign languages, foreign countries, and foreign peoples. To produce these we need improved instruction; and improved instruction is only possible by the provision of more highly competent teachers for secondary schools, evening schools, and day and continuation schools. For the improvement of teaching in schools we need an improvement in the Universities. But the function of Universities is not alone the training of teachers but also the increase and systematisation of knowledge. The Universities should train up for the service of the nation an abundant supply of men and women capable of acquiring, digesting, arranging, and imparting the vast amount of knowledge concerning foreign countries which can be obtained by study, and travel, and personal intercourse. This knowledge comprises not only philology and imaginative literature, which have held too exclusive a monopoly in the past, but also history, economics, sociology, politics, art, technology, and philosophy. And finally we need an enlightened public, desirous of general and of expert knowledge, capable of using and valuing the work of those who are masters in the several provinces of learning."

II.—THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEVERAL LANGUAGES.

The Committee emphasise the imperial responsibilities of this nation by giving the first place in their consideration to the non-European languages. No country has occasion to be familiar, for administrative or commercial purposes, with so many Eastern and African languages as ourselves, and yet the Committee see no reason to doubt our capacity to supply able students in sufficient numbers. These languages cannot be taught at school, but it will be a great advantage to the adult students who pursue them, if their school course has included the successful study of one or two languages. In many cases the difficulties are such that the language can only be satisfactorily mastered in the foreign country, but almost all admit that there is a great gain in learning the rudiments before going out. Particularly desirable is a thorough training in Phonetics. For these reasons the State and the business community should extend increased support to the London School of Oriental Studies, to the newly established Institute of Phonetics and other similar institutions.

Of European languages the Committee do not hesitate for a moment to give the first place to French, which they maintain is

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by far the most important language in the history of modern civilisation, and they justify their conclusion thus :—

“ France was ahead of Italy in the mediæval revival of learning. The University of Paris was the chief source of light to Europe from the days of Abelard for three hundred years. Italy took the lead in that later revival which is known as the Renaissance, and when she fell a victim to the discordant political ambitions of foreign powers, of the Papacy, and of her own princelings, it was France who with her help carried on the great tradition. The continued progress of France was never arrested by civil discord, by unlimited autocracy, or even by the convulsive crisis of her great Revolution. For three hundred years France was the acknowledged leader of Europe in the arts, the sciences, and the fashions. In literature alone among the arts has she an equal or a superior in England. In the actual bulk and volume of her scientific work France may, during the last half century, have fallen behind Germany, but by vivifying and pregnant ideas she has made the whole world her debtor, and in the lucidity and logical consistency of her interpretation of life she has no rival. We are her debtors above all other peoples, for England was during four centuries the pupil, and afterwards the enemy and rival, but always in some degree under the influence of France. Even for practical purposes the great majority of our witnesses give French the first place. Not only is French the language of diplomatic intercourse, but in countries where English has not established itself French is found most commonly useful as an intermediary between any two persons of different nationality. Physical propinquity also gives French a special value for Englishmen ; and recent calamities confronted and endured together should create an eternal bond of sympathy between the two nations. Fundamental diversity of character and temperament render mutual comprehension difficult, but once established it should serve to correct some of our national defects. In mere matter of language, as in other things, the two nations seem destined to serve as complementary one to the other. Our careless articulation may be corrected by the precise and studied utterance of the French ; our modes of written expression might gain much from study of the perspicuous phrasing, logical construction, and harmonious proportions of their prose. From every point of view French is, for us above all, the most important of living tongues ; it has, and it should retain, the first place in our schools and Universities.”

The Committee evidently have some difficulty in dealing with German. They admit its practical value from the point of

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view of business in Russia and the Balkans, but refuse to discuss the comparative value of its literature or the contribution which it has made or can make to the civilisation of the world. They agree that it may be wise and provident to extend the measure of German taught in school beyond that to which it had attained before the war. But this is based solely on political expediency.

A place in the schools should in their opinion be found for three other European languages—Spanish, Italian and Russian. As regards Spanish and Russian this has, in a small measure, already been done. But in the case of Russian the work is frankly experimental and it has yet to be proved that its educational value is as high as that of the other two. It is, therefore, a matter of regret in many quarters that the study of Italian has been so much neglected by the schools. Perhaps the interesting revival now in progress in Cambridge may, by providing the schools with the chance of securing well-equipped teachers, contribute something to the enlargement of the schools' interest in this language.

For the rest of the languages of Europe it is not suggested that they should be matters for study at school. They are needed, however, in varying degrees for different purposes, and the suggestion is made that they should be dealt with in an institution similar to the School of Oriental Studies. This will require careful adjustment with the work carried on by University Institutions. It is right that academic bodies should interest themselves in the needs of commerce, but concentration in an institute of the kind suggested might be the least wasteful way of providing the varying types of instruction which will be needed.

III.—SECONDARY EDUCATION AND MODERN STUDIES.

The national needs for Modern Studies were summarised at the end of the first section. How are these needs to be met? Mainly through the secondary schools and the Universities. The elementary schools have other duties, and perhaps more important duties, to perform. Though international enthusiasts may call for the study of one another's languages in all the elementary schools of Great Britain and France, few schools in either country would be in a position to give effective teaching in a modern language. Even if the schools had the time, it is well to remember that there is not a sufficient number of qualified teachers to cover all our present needs.

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Both in our secondary schools and in our Universities wide reforms are needed, but it is idle to attempt to decide whether the improvement of secondary schools or the improvement of the Universities is the more important for Modern Studies. It is unfortunately true, as the Committee point out, that the gravest weakness of our system of national education at the present time is the insufficiency of higher secondary education, meaning thereby the facilities for the prosecution of those more specialised studies between the ages of 16 and 19, which should lead either to practical careers or serve as a preparation for higher studies at a University or technological college. It is stated that this lack of adequate provision is more noticeable in the case of Modern Languages than of any other branch of the curriculum. The Board of Education, however, have taken an important step which will materially assist the development of the kind of instruction here indicated by offering special grants in aid of advanced work in the last years of the secondary school course. This matter is dealt with more fully below.

The advanced work at the top will not prosper unless proper preparation has been made in lower parts of the school. Here much remains to be done to secure the conditions necessary for the effective teaching of Modern Languages. In the newer secondary schools which have been provided by the Local Education Authorities under the Act of 1902 and also in many of the Grammar Schools which are now in receipt of state grants great difficulties are caused by the irregular entry of pupils at all stages of the course and at various periods during the school year. Similar disturbance is also made by the considerable number of early leavers. Where the instruction is given on the Direct Method it is essential that this class should be homogeneous in its composition at least at the start of the school year. It is manifestly absurd to look for good results from a class in which six pupils have been learning French for less than a year, 13 between one and two years, seven between two and three years, four between three and four years, and three for more than four years. Much of this difficulty might be overcome if School Authorities would resolutely refuse admission to any pupils who failed to come at the proper date of entry and at the normal age, unless they could show at an entrance examination that they had reached the standard proper to their age. Efforts should also be made to interest parents more widely in the work of the schools and to give them an understanding of the nature of the school course and of the need for ordered progress.

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THE QUESTION OF AGE.

But even if a regular practice in this regard were established, it would not get rid of all the difficulties of school organisation. There are many schools which have two groups of entrants—(a) those who enter straight from home or through a kindergarten at about the age of eight or nine, and (b) those who come from an elementary school at about the age of 11 or 12. The existence of these two streams cannot but have a disturbing influence on the school organisation and the arrangement of the curriculum. Unless there is to be a constant dualism in the school (which has nothing to recommend it) it is inevitable that all language teaching shall be postponed in these schools till the age of 12. Such a conclusion has the support of the Committee, and it was urged upon them (particularly by reformers from Scotland) that there was little to justify the maintenance of two different types of school, one beginning languages at nine and the other at 12. This administrative consideration is reinforced by psychological argument, which advocates the postponement of the foreign language until the pupil has acquired a reasonable mastery of his mother tongue. Moreover, other matters such as the early stages of history and geography and nature study are more suitable to the mental development of the child who is not ready for the reflective effort which the serious study of a language demands. On the whole, the majority of the Committee inclined to recommend the postponement, fully conscious of the far-reaching effect it would have on the Public School system, of which they acknowledged the great importance.

But their consideration of this particular point was governed by their dominant conception of the purpose of language instruction. The standard of attainment which they set before the schools is a high one and worthy of the effort which they demand. They point out that language teaching should train the mind, the taste, and the character; it should not only explain the laws of thought, through the accurate comparison of modes of expression and the close observation of the finer shades of meaning, but also, by attention to the graces of expression and to the rhythm and melody of the language, it should train the aesthetic senses and, through the effort necessary for mastery, develop character and will power. Thus, what they term the full discipline of a language can only be acquired after prolonged and earnest study. The main conclusion they draw from their consideration is that the number of languages which a pupil should learn should be generally limited and this is applied with

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special emphasis to the case of the Public Schools. They deprecate very strongly the practice of teaching Greek in the preparatory schools, and here they have the support of those members of the Committee who were unable to accept their earlier conclusion as to the postponement of all language teaching till about the age of 12. The Committee also urge very strongly that there should be no bias in favour of Latin as the second language in the preparatory school stage, or indeed in any school. The majority go further and maintain that Latin should not be a compulsory subject of study either at school or at the University. The minority equally dislike compulsion but are not prepared, at the present time, to admit that all would follow the right path, were it not staked out with hurdles here and there. The majority would hold that a full and complete course in Modern Studies can be obtained without Latin. So far as this is intended to apply to the study of History this contention would not commend itself to Professor Firth, Mr. Ernest Barker and other notable teachers of History. Nor has the doctrine been accepted by the Board of Education, who find a place for Latin in the Modern Studies Group of the Advanced Course system.

ADVANCED COURSES.

Reference has already been made to the importance which attaches to a right development of the higher work in secondary schools. In Classics, Mathematics, and Science the traditional courses which had been evolved during the last century, if not altogether satisfactory, have secured a high standard of work and afford an adequate preparation for University study. The same is true of Modern History, though it has been allowed to develop both at schools and in the Universities without any sufficient connection with Modern Languages. In their isolation Modern Languages did not receive either an adequate position in the schools or sufficient encouragement at the Universities to attract good students. It is hoped that the issue by the Board of Education of new Regulations for Advanced Courses will establish Modern Languages in their proper place. Three types of courses of advanced instruction are recognised—A., Science and Mathematics; B., Classics; and C., Modern Studies. The following is the Board's definition: "Course C. must include the advanced study of one modern foreign Western European language and literature with the relevant history, together with the History of England and Greater Britain. It must also include either the study of a second modern foreign language or work of good scope and standard in English Language and Literature."

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Opportunity is given for those pupils who can carry the study of two modern languages up to an advanced stage to do so, but it has been found in practice that this was not always compatible with due attention to other studies within the course. For the Board insist that, while predominance may be assigned either to History or to Language and Literature, neither must be neglected. Thus the Board's view of the Modern Humanities Course harmonises fully with the definition of Modern Studies prefixed to the Committee's Report. Further, the Committee have rendered a signal service to the cause of Modern Studies by stating the aims which should inspire such a course :—

“ We want our best pupils who specialise on Modern Studies in the higher forms of well-equipped schools to read great masses of the best authors ; not only drama, poetry, fiction, but also history, travels, memoirs, letters, perhaps some philosophy, and works of general information. They should read them with an eye to scholarship and incidentally with an eye to scholarships, but also because they love them and are eager for knowledge. In a school thus organised a rich, catholic, and well-selected library of modern literature, history, and auxiliary works, will be the most important part of the institution.

“ The pupils who elect to specialise in Modern Studies should not confine themselves to authors whose merit has been approved by time ; they should read chiefly the best, but the new as well as the old. To restrict students, for instance, to the classical period of German literature is to fill them with a false idea of modern Germany, to mislead them by a presentation of extinct manners and discarded standards. If they read the authors from various periods with a receptive mind, they will insensibly acquire that important part of historical knowledge which consists in familiarity with the manners, the ways of thought, the ideals, and all the atmosphere of a people as conveyed by its literature. But they should also receive by instruction the continuous story of the people since it began to be a people. The historical instruction will dwell more especially on the ages when the people had literary expression, for the history of a people that has no literature can only be imperfectly known. But, to take France as an instance, the pupils who pursue higher studies in French should receive some coherent notion of the age that gave us the French castles and cathedrals, of the history of the Church in France, of the French nobility, of the growth of the French monarchy and of the rise of the *Tiers Etat*, of the Revolution, of Napoleon, and of the developments of the nineteenth century.

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The last four centuries will be illuminated by a literature which reflects the undying but ever-changing spirit of the nation, preserving its identity through every metamorphosis. The history will present the outward fortunes, the inward evolution, the efforts and stresses, that moulded that spirit to its successive phases. Thus treated, the history and the literature of a modern people may do for our pupils what the history and literature of Greece and Rome have done for many generations of their most enlightened ancestors; it will enable them by degrees to build up for themselves an organic conception of an alien but a cognate civilisation, of the thoughts and works and aspirations, the successes and failures, of the people which framed that civilisation to satisfy its own higher needs. The like is possible for Italy, for Spain, and for Germany. It is true that the history of Germany is more chaotic and confusing, that the age of its literary expression is briefer and less fruitful than others, yet both the history and the literature are worthy of intelligent study and comprehension. The vain ambitions of the medieval empire, its destructive career and its fall, the beginnings of a better way of life within the armed circuits of the German cities, the turmoils of the Reformation and the devastation of the Thirty Years' War, the slow revival of the eighteenth, and the vast outburst of energy in the nineteenth century, form a sequence which can be envisaged as a whole, and which in its last two stages is sufficiently illustrated by literature."

It is well recognised that this programme will tax severely the resources of the schools. Though at first they may have to work with poor equipment and teachers whose qualifications are not always of the right character, yet the high aim which is set before them will compel the effort needed for its realisation.

METHOD.

The Committee disclaim any authority or special competence to deal with methods of teaching modern languages, still less to sit in judgment on the controversies which are still current. That is the task of professional teachers and experts. They recognise that there is no one royal road which all must follow and that the way of approach must vary with the special end in view. They sympathise with the hopes of progress which the Direct Method has brought to Modern Language teachers and present an accurate statement of the principles on which the method is based. With regard to the question of translation, a practice which some reformers condemn root and branch, they give their support to the practice of free composition but also hold that translation when wisely directed can be made an

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effective instrument of culture. The dangers of the Direct Method are admitted—the tendency of the teacher to leave too little to the pupil and to let him lose the discipline which comes from personal effort. The lowering of the standard of knowledge and accuracy which was reported from different quarters as a result of the use of the direct method is attributed to the misuse of the method by ill-qualified and incompetent teachers, and the remedy the Committee recommend is wider knowledge and better training. Though the method of teaching in one school may with profit differ from that in another, it is important that in one and the same school there should be general uniformity, and to this end it is desirable that the headmaster himself, if a specialist, or the chief modern language assistant should be responsible for the modern language instruction as a whole.

The Committee view with approval the work of the Joint Committee on Grammatical Terminology, and without committing themselves to all the details of the scheme urge its careful consideration. They regard uniformity within each school as eminently desirable and, in view of the passage of pupils from school to school, would welcome the widest possible acceptance of the scheme.

With greater fervour the Committee urge the use of Phonetics, for without them the best results that can be obtained in the schools will be missed. To them, "barbarous pronunciation of any of the chief European languages of to-day is as certain a mark of defective education as false quantities in Latin or Greek were in an earlier age." As to the use of phonetic script by the pupils they do not dogmatise, contenting themselves with drawing attention to the advantages that will accrue to any pupil who after his school days are over attempts without a living teacher the study of a new language.

IV.—THE UNIVERSITIES AND MODERN STUDIES.

The most striking fact revealed by the enquiry into the University resources for the teaching of Modern Languages was its almost universal inadequacy. Though French is the language which at all Universities has a large quota of students following the Honours Courses, yet at the time the Report was issued six British Universities had no professorship of French. A still more illuminating comment on the esteem in which Modern Languages are held is the fact that on the average the salary of a Modern Language professor is below that of his colleague who holds a chair in one of the Ancient Languages or in some branch

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of Science. The subordinate staff was equally insufficient and the teachers who bore the burden of the Honours work had their attention distracted from their proper task by the necessity of ministering to the needs of the pass students. Since the Report was issued it is satisfactory to note that Chairs of French have been established at Oxford, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and of Italian at Oxford and Cambridge, and that there is every prospect that the appeal on behalf of French from Cambridge and of Italian at Manchester will meet with success. But while improvement must be gradual, as the Committee point out in their pregnant warning against undue haste in making appointments, there is every reason why funds should be assembled for use directly the opportunity occurs.

In connection with the discussion on the nationality of the Modern Language teacher, the Committee express the opinion that Modern Studies have greatly suffered in the past through the absence of British control and direction. To the foreign influence which has been so strong they ascribe the excessive philological and antiquarian bias which has so long prevailed. To remedy this and to develop a school of thought more in harmony with our ideals of scholarship, the Committee recommend that the direction of Modern Studies in the Universities should be in the hands of British scholars. The acceptance of this principle would do more than any other proposal to encourage and maintain an adequate supply of competent scholars. There would still be a place for the foreign teacher, either as a professor or lecturer in some special branch, or as an indigenous assistant who would give that help on the purely linguistic side which no Briton can supply. But the realisation of these newer ideals of Modern Language study will not be achieved merely by the increase and improvement of the teaching staff. However eminent the professor, he will not be able to establish a "school" unless he has a following of able and devoted students. In the intimate business of the creation and communication of knowledge teacher and taught must be united in a sympathetic and intelligent appreciation of the task in hand. It has been a matter of frequent comment that the students of Modern Languages do not compare favourably in ability with their fellow-students in other departments of University study. In Scotland it has been said that the young Scotsmen do not consider Modern Languages to be a man's job. If this implied that it was the deliberate opinion of Scotland's youth that Modern Studies could not offer satisfaction to a vigorous intellect, then the discipline would indeed be in a

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bad case. But the correct interpretation of the phrase is no doubt that at the present time these studies fail to offer a promising career and are in themselves conceived in too narrow a spirit. It is unfortunately true that few material inducements are offered to students to take up this branch of study, scholarships are few in number and usually small in amount, and, for whatever reason, it is clear that Honours Schools in Modern Languages are not getting their fair share of the best brains.

ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIPS.

The Committee assert the claim of Modern Studies to their fair share with no uncertain voice. They maintain that, so long as the present system of scholarships and bursaries remains, Modern Studies should ultimately have an equal share with Classics. At Oxford and Cambridge in 1911-12, out of 440 scholarships awarded only eight were given for proficiency in Modern Languages. It is possible that this recognition corresponded to the talent then displayed, but no schoolmaster will risk his pupil's future by encouraging a boy, unless of really marked ability, to enter on a course of study which may develop into a blind alley. The Committee desire to call in the State to provide the remedy in the shape of State Scholarships, few in number at first but ultimately rising to about 200 a year. The Local Education Authorities may be expected to take their share in this work, but it is understood that State aid will be forthcoming.

COURSE OF STUDY.

Equally important with the supply of better students is the improvement of the University courses of study. With the expansion of the national needs comes a demand for wider conception of Modern Studies and for a school of thought which shall aim at something more than the production of teachers and experts in linguistics. Cambridge has taken the lead and has remodelled her scheme for the Modern and Mediæval Language Tripos in such a manner as to allow a student when he has acquired a sufficient mastery of a language to study those matters which most appeal to him, whether they be literary, historical, economic or social developments. Ample provision is also made for those whose interest attaches mainly to philological studies. It is a matter for regret that, notwithstanding their own realisation of the weakness of their courses (as set out in the Memorial presented to the Committee by 31 University professors) and despite the encouragement given to their ideals by the Report, the other Universities so far appear to have taken no step to

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remodel their schemes in harmony with the newer ideals. That the fresh body of students now pouring into the University should there discover an unprogressive spirit in the department which above all others should have received new inspiration through the war is calculated to dishearten those supporters of Modern Studies who had looked for a fuller response to the suggestions of the Report.

This widened scope of Modern Studies renders it impossible for the old staffs to compass the work of instruction, even if they were strengthened on the most liberal scale. As these studies embrace other disciplines than that of language, there will be need to call upon the services of the teachers of other departments. Only by active and close co-operation can a satisfactory course be devised. The historians, the economists, the philosophers will have to come to the aid of the Modern Language teachers, not merely by admitting students to their lectures, but by assisting in the development of organic courses of study.

EVENING SCHOOLS AND ADULT EDUCATION.

The schools and the Universities cannot satisfy all the needs of students of Modern Languages. There will always remain some who during their period of whole-time instruction have never studied any foreign language. To them the need of such knowledge has only come after they have entered upon their occupation. This group will include not only those who require this knowledge for some practical purpose but also those whose object is to satisfy their desire for wider culture. Both classes deserve to have their wants met by public funds, and special experiments in the best methods of teaching such groups are eminently desirable. The methods will probably differ with the group, for those who work for their personal development will in most cases be satisfied with acquiring the power of reading, while the others will desire to add to this a capacity for writing and speaking the foreign tongue.

Other students who have had a preliminary training in language at school (including those now coming from the newer Central Schools) will want to apply their skill to the acquisition of new languages, particularly of those which are not normally taught in schools. Although provision is already made for these students it does not appear to be satisfactory or sufficient. Private institutions are able to compete successfully with low-fee public schools, mainly because of their greater adaptability and the interest they take in the after-careers of their pupils. Both

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these defects should be remediable. More serious difficulties are the supply of qualified teachers and the shortness of the course. Better remuneration and a greater fixity of tenure would no doubt do much to remove the first, but the second, which occasions a suspension of work during the summer months, is perhaps insuperable, since the remedy would run counter to some of our national habits. It is love of fresh air and exercise that is responsible for the emptiness of the summer classroom. The needs of the future may call for greater persistence and assiduity. At any rate, the Local Authority should assist those who are purposed to make the necessary sacrifice.

CONCLUSION.

The claim of Modern Studies to a greater public recognition may be held to be established. In order that the content of these newer studies may be made as rich as possible, the co-operation of those interested in them must be secured. In particular it is desirable to enlist the sympathy of Classical scholars, and it is hoped that many of the teachers of these Modern subjects will have had a Classical training. It should be realised that the Classical and Modern Humanities have a common service to render to the nation, though working through different materials. Their interests are not antagonistic, though they may not be identical. The problems of the new world receive illumination from students of the old, and the new studies will develop most fruitfully if they remain in close co-operation with those ancient disciplines.

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