



THE FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION, INC.
IRVINGTON-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK 10533 TEL. (914) 591-7230

EDUCATION versus PROPAGANDA

ANY TIME I get it into my head that my role is to set others straight or any time we as a people believe we should run the world, then count on it, we'll brush up on how to become effective propagandists rather than concentrate on how to become proficient educators. This latter term is seldom used, possibly because we rarely reflect upon its implications. Yet, education versus propaganda poses a fundamental issue of our time, perhaps of all time.

If this is indeed the great issue, then we may infer that, by and large, we are authoritarians at heart. For, wherever one turns, the emphasis is on propaganda, as much by clergymen, teachers, and other platform lecturers as by radio, TV, press, and government spokesmen. Countless would-be leaders concentrate on how best to "reach the masses," in order to make us over in their images.

Reflect on the distinction between propaganda and education.

Propaganda is "any organization or movement working for the propagation of particular ideas, doctrines, practices, etc." In a word, it is an out-going exertion, an ideological or philosophical injection type of endeavor; it's the influencing-of-others ambition in practice; it reveals the little-god syndrome.

The term education cannot be used as the antonym of propaganda; it is more a synonym, especially these days!

Eduction, not education, is the true antonym of propaganda. It has its root in the Latin *educere* which means "to draw out; elicit; evolve . . . to deduce; infer from data." Education is an extracting process, a talent-developing exertion; it is a self-realizing type of endeavor.

Propaganda can be likened to a spraying

operation, each propagandist attempting to invest numerous others with his assumed knowledge and wisdom. Education, on the other hand, is a stimulative or catalytic effort, each educator attempting to maximize enlightenment from its sources, wherever and whatever they may be.

PERHAPS the folly of propaganda and the virtue of education can be highlighted by reflecting upon the ways of Nature.

Next to Creation itself, the sun is our source of energy. Observe how trees and other forms of earthly life reach out for the sun that they may better extract its life-giving forces. And water is vital to existence. Note how plants, rooted in the soil, drink the moisture, an ingathering maneuver.

Were Nature to perform as do propagandists, we might expect that trees, instead of reaching for the sun, would attend to the photogenic needs of other trees—and die in the process. Each blade of grass would concern itself with the moisture content of other blades of grass—the end of grass. Nature, instead, seems to expect the individual to educe and evolve and survive through fitness, to the upgrading of the species.

I suggest that this recourse to Nature is not far-fetched; there are lessons here for us. Man, no less than other forms of life, if he is to grow, emerge, evolve, must reach out for the sun; his eye has to be searching for sources of enlightenment—each man his own educator! Nothing is more absurd than man the propagandist: each man trying to make other men carbon copies of himself. No wonder so many of us are smudged!

Select any one propagandist; then of a sud-