



THE FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION, INC.

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YOU CAN TAKE NO ONE'S WORD FOR THIS

No person can reform another.

Disparagement of others only worsens matters.

DO YOU BELIEVE these declarations to be true? A few do. More do not. If you are among the dissenters, it will be impossible for you to hold similar convictions until you have thought them through for yourself and personally concluded their rightness, anyone else's say-so to the contrary notwithstanding. Such conclusions, if really embraced, must be a part of one's own experiences, of one's own digestive processes, so to speak.

- Is it true of all education that one must think through an idea for himself in order to "know" it? It would seem that each idea must at least be intellectually experienced. If this is true, what can the role of the teacher then be? The role of the teacher is not to impose his notions upon another but rather to conserve energy. There are, as most of us have learned, countless ways to be wrong; few ways to be right. The role of the teacher is to gain such competency that he can single out the right ways and present them as hypotheses for others, thus saving them the pains of having to examine personally all the wrong ways. The fact that many wrong ways are presented by those who pretend to be teachers does not modify the role of the teacher; it only disqualifies their pretensions.

- If the idea, "no person can reform another," is valid, it is of the utmost importance that each person who has a distaste for socialism accept the nonreforming idea as an hypothesis

and examine it carefully. For, if this idea is right, then nearly all effort against socialism is wrong. It is wrong because nearly all such effort is based on the reform of others as distinguished from the improvement of self. If this idea is right, most antisocialistic effort and money is wasted effort and money. This is a serious charge.

- The point here presented argues that one can reform only self and not others. True, one can influence others destructively, such as killing or stealing from them or otherwise depriving them of their freedom. But we are

"And so I hold it is not treason
To advance a simple reason
For the sorry lack of progress we decry.
It is this: Instead of working
On himself, each man is shirking
And trying to reform some other guy."

concerned only with influencing others creatively, in their upgrading, in the advancement of their understanding. As it is obvious that water cannot by itself rise above its own level, so it seems obvious that one cannot give to another

an idea which he does not possess or cannot explain. Even if one does understand an idea and can explain it, he cannot force its acceptance upon others. They reform themselves precisely as you and I reform ourselves. Only those who have something to give, who in varying respects are stages above one's self, can be of any value to us in our personal reform. One's influence over others creatively is limited to the power of attraction, and attraction stems from understanding and the manner of making the understanding available.

- The most powerful influence against the improvement-of-self method is the widespread fear that it is an impotent process, that nothing could come of it. People seem to entertain