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## THE COMING ERA OF ADULT EDUCATION PREPARING THE ELDERS FOR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

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ADULT EDUCATION is in the immediate foreground of the field of American and European education. It is particularly alluring because the educator deals with a matured and questioning mind voluntarily seeking information and because the problem per se involves issues that challenge our educational and civic ideals and concern the national welfare.

Too long have public school officials dodged the responsibility of educating those adults in their communities who as potential citizens are unable to share in the responsibilities of citizenship because of a lack of an elementary education in reading, writing and speaking of English and civics. It is appalling to consider what a fourth grade reading test in English would reveal if applied to the adults of our Eastern cities, those upon whose intelligence our Democracy depends. And then add to those "American illiterates" the forty-nine per cent of the electorate who fail to vote! Under the irreducible minimum of education used by the United States Census Bureau to define an "illiterate", those of that description over twenty-one years of age who have had no schooling whatsoever, would have outvoted the combined votes cast in the last election of Maine, Pennsylvania, Michigan, California and Alabama. Are we efficient in the scope of our public school education?

Adult Elementary Education is the first step in a program of adult education that is beginning to stir the imagination of even the more deeply entrenched educational mud-turtles.

While the actual figures of the native and foreign born illiterates are appalling, facts are more convincing. Facts and figures are not entirely the same. It is a fact that twenty-one states are now carrying on state programs of Adult Elementary Education; that

some 300,000 pupils were registered last year; that eleven states have normal training courses for teachers; that courses of study, texts and methods, etc., have been printed in numbers, and the work is not only recognized as a technical and specialized work for which teachers must be trained, but in many states it is accepted as an integral part of the public school curriculum. Adult Education is now a recognized department of the National Education Association.

Adult pupils learn with great rapidity, they are voluntary pupils, the teacher and pupil are often a source of mutual inspiration. There are related problems at present of far-reaching importance—the hundreds of thousands of aliens who will not attend school, the registration of aliens, the pitfalls of naturalization, social adjustment, the retardation in school of children with non-English speaking parents, the immigration problem, etc.

One step higher and we find adult education in the evening high schools, vocational classes, business courses, and yet higher, in University Extension work, Business Colleges, Libraries, Chatauquas, public Forums, all sources to which men and women earning their daily bread may have recourse after working hours.

There is at present an attendance of adults in the evening schools in London, England, of five times the number attending these schools in New York City. One asks why the demand for such education? Probably the desire for self-expression in a mechanical age which offers the observance of machinery by day and motion pictures by night, the desire to match age against experience, to philosophize, to specialize, to apply a critical analysis which was not desired in youth's training under a mere amassing of facts under compulsory education, and very possibly a desire to acquire useful information to apply to better citizenship and life, and even possibly the very human desire to obtain the badge of an educated man, i. e.