

screen, or stage. Because of the unusual physical conditions under which he works, his art must be unique both in form and in the skill which he brings to it.

In the same way, pioneering remains to be done in the evolution of settings for television plays. The area of a television set will be much smaller than that of the average stage and still less than that of the motion picture. Moreover, different sets used in the same play must be ingeniously placed to fit into a single studio and to permit the actors to get quickly from one to another. Design, dimensions, lighting, and color must be specially adapted to radio transmission. Even the technique of make-up cannot be borrowed without adaptation from the stage or from the screen.

All divisions of the production call for trained operators whose field is specifically television. Experience in radio, motion pictures, or theatre may help, but it will also give the television worker much to forget. The script writer will have to learn a basically new form which is neither legitimate drama, picture scenario, nor radio script; and he will have to learn the form through television experience itself. The television

actor will have to learn a fundamentally distinct mode of acting; and he will have to learn it in the television studio. Indeed, television must establish its own corps of actors, for unlike sound broadcasting, it cannot borrow the services of a stage or screen actor who can get ready to go on with an hour or two of rehearsal sometime before the performance. Finally, for reasons already discussed, television will need its own staff of scene designers and technicians.

VI

Without leaving the boundaries of academic sobriety, one may say that in all this there is excitement and promise and good work to be done. Certainly it is not too much to expect that after the war some of our colleges will find an opportunity to share in the development of television and in training the personnel that television will need. Up to the present, the cost of equipment has been high and the area served by a single station small, but this has not deterred some institutions from making a beginning, and it is to be hoped that technical and financial obstacles will diminish when the time comes to resume normal broadcasting operations.

THE PROSPECT FOR SPEECH EDUCATION*

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CAN any one of you doubt that America is now at the point at which the struggle of arms must share, and eventually yield, the stage to the struggle of words, and that words from America will have an important part in

deciding the fate of generations to come throughout the world? Do any of you doubt that in this struggle the spoken will be more effective a weapon than the printed word? As an authority here let me quote from a famous book. The author writes, "I know that one is able to win people far more by the spoken than by the written word." Please remember

* The President's address at the War Problems Conference of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEECH (28th Annual Meeting) at The Commodore, New York City, December 28, 1943.

that quotation, for I shall refer to it again. Suffice it here to say that this man apparently would agree with at least one of the important tenets of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEECH—that the tongue is mightier than the pen.

The American way of life embraces many principles. One of them is the principle of making available to *all* the knowledge, skill and discoveries of the few. It has been assumed that we will progress farther along the way toward a good life for all if we openly patent our inventions rather than hold them secret; or if we train others in the skill we possess rather than restrict such skills to the few; or, again, if we spread our knowledge as widely as possible rather than hold it for a small, intellectual aristocracy. Such has been the assumption. But suppose that today you happened upon the discovery of a death-ray that could be employed to destroy rats, insects, bacteria and all harmful living organisms, but which could also be employed to destroy men. Would you share your discovery with the world? Some of you would destroy your formula, and leave us still plagued by varmints rather than risk letting our enemies, present or future, have such a terrible weapon. But others would give the discovery to the allied governments. No one in his right mind would now share the discovery with the entire world. Not in wartime, you say! If not in wartime, why then in peacetime? Who can say there may not be another war? If such a ray were discovered, it should be the closely guarded secret of those who can be trusted to employ it only for humanitarian purposes.

Now it has been assumed by many of us that it would be a measure of political and social health if we spread as widely as possible the knowledge concerning, and inculcated in as many as possible of our youth, the skills of public speaking

and group discussion. Is this assumption any more valid than the assumption that we should share our death-ray with the world? Is the formula for public speaking less likely to be used for evil purposes than that for the ray? Both are tools that may be used for great good or for great evil, depending upon who uses them. If, then, we really believe that we can train young people to speak more effectively than they could without training, we should consider the responsibility we take when we accept for such training any and every student, regardless of what purpose he may have when he employs the technique we have taught him. The quotation I made above—viz., "I know that one is able to win people far more by the spoken than by the written word," was, I must here confess, not in the exact words of the author. I am sure that I have done no violence, however, to his intended meaning. In elaboration of his idea he said again, "For let it be said to all knights of the pen and to all political dandies especially of today: the greatest changes in this world have never been brought about by a goose quill. No, the pen has been reserved to motivate these changes theoretically. But the power which set sliding the greatest historical avalanches of political and religious nature was, from the beginning of time, the magic force of the spoken word alone." Again, they are not the exact words of the author—because the exact words would not be easily intelligible to many of you. The original text was in German and the author a man whose name in all probability has been uttered more frequently, in the contexts of more languages, by more of his contemporaries, than that of any other man in the history of the world. I am quoting from a book called *Mein Kampf*. The author glorifies the "magic force of the spoken word" as "die Zauberkraft des gesprochenen

Wortes." Training or no training, Adolf Hitler wrought a good share of the damage of his *Kampf* by his public speaking. It would be a terrible death ray that could do more damage than did his speaking before audiences of German citizens.

II

Believing, therefore, in the effectiveness of our teaching of speech techniques, I seriously propose that we all attempt to pick our disciples as carefully as did Jesus of Nazareth. We must not, of course, use as a basis of selection the criteria of religious creed, ethnic background, or political philosophy. I propose that, instead, we consider the following standards, encouraging all students who qualify under these heads, and discouraging in every legal way all who fall short.

1. *First criterion.* In his contact with others who are engaged in molding public opinion the modern public speaker should be cooperative. The world is growing too small and our interests are too interlocked to make room for the independent tongue responsible *only* to the conscience of its possessor. The student who gives promise of unbridled individualism must be denied the right to learn from us the art of public speaking. We must encourage the student who is willing to play on a team.

2. *Second criterion.* In addition to being cooperative, the modern public speaker should be willing to put his audience ahead of himself in importance. The audience should be flood-lighted, instead of the speaker's being spot-lighted. The speaker should not be egocentric; instead, to coin a word on the lines of our figure above, the speaker should be alteradiant. Those students who seem to us to enjoy too much the greeting, *Heil*, should be discouraged. Those students who have an abiding interest in under-

standing and expressing the needs of others should be encouraged.

3. *Third criterion.* In addition to being cooperative and alteradiant, the modern speaker must in his purposes be sane, emotionally stable, well-balanced, not a fanatic, zealot, or monomaniac. The speaker whose insanity never progresses far enough to land him in the hospital is far more dangerous than those who have clearly demonstrable delusions. The student who seems to live in this psychiatric borderland should be discouraged from continuing in public speaking; and the student who seems sane should be encouraged. Perhaps the best sign of sanity is a sense of humor.

4. *Fourth criterion.* In addition to being cooperative, alteradiant, and sane, the modern public speaker should be open-minded and inquisitive as to subject matter. He must enjoy testing his ideas by comparison with those of others. He should realize that, not since the days of Aristotle has the body of organized human knowledge been small enough to be encompassed by the mind of one man, and that today no one man can know all that is known about even one special topic. The student who scorns to find out what others think is a dangerous disciple to train; only those students should be encouraged in public speaking whose intellectual curiosity about a given subject increases with their discussion of it.

5. *Fifth criterion.* The public speaker of use to us in this modern world must be honest in his motives and decisions. Compromising the truth as the speaker sees it can build only the most transient of social and political structures. Dishonesty should disqualify the student from receiving the help of teachers of speech. Honesty, especially when it militates against the personal interests of the student, should be one of the most important marks of a person worthy to re-

ceive your help in learning to talk to others.

These, then, are the five criteria. The worthy student is cooperative, alteradiant, sane, inquisitive, and honest.

III

Now I have spoken largely about the worthy student of public speaking and public discussion, rather than the student of drama and interpretation. Our criteria are equally applicable to these students, but the danger of training the unworthy student in these fields is not as great as in the training of those students who may build social and political structures, or destroy them.

Some may fear that it will be difficult to appraise these qualities that I have mentioned. It is difficult to discover dishonesty in a student; and the adherence to a political creed different from that of the teacher may be mistaken for insanity. True! But that should not prevent us from making the attempt to apply our criteria. It is difficult to be sure of a given candidate to the freshman class of a university whether he is college material, but we apply our tests nevertheless.

The teacher of public speaking, moreover, by the nature of the activity in which the student is engaging is in a peculiarly fine position to size up the student in the qualities desired. Most of us, I am sure, are already applying these tests and are encouraging the students who possess them. What I am urging is a more drastic discouragement, or even rejection, of those who lack them. That is the forward step that we must take in these days when radio is pushing the press off the forensic stage. Hitler sees the point and sees to it that his people will get only the radio voice of the Nazi machine. We must see it, too, and we must do what we can to limit the numbers of those who are trained for the

radio to those who can be trusted to build safe public opinion.

Ask your medical school if only brains and skill are required of a prospective physician? Dishonest lawyers are not admitted to the bar, no matter how clever or versed in the law. The Army and Navy, both in peace and war, reject candidates for officer ranks for reasons of character, quite apart from military skill and knowledge. Why do these professions protect themselves? Because they serve the public in vital ways. My contention is that never before in the history of the world, was the fate of the public more dependent upon any one group of trained men and women that it is now dependent upon public speakers. We cannot dodge our responsibility by saying, "My job is to train students, not select them." If *we* do not select them, no one else will. We are the persons standing at the gates of the profession of public speaking. Many persons get in by going around the gates; but that does not excuse any laxity in our guardianship of the portal. Our leadership will fail if we neglect our responsibility and if consequently some future Hitler should arise who can say, "I got my training in public speaking at Wisconsin, or Michigan, or Cornell, or Wabash." And when such an American Hitler is finally destroyed, his alma mater will share tragically in his destruction and will inherit from him the odium of public disapproval.

Mind you, I have no fear for the ultimate triumph of truth over error under a system in which any one and everyone is permitted his say. My fear is for those whose life span happens to fall within the period when error is temporarily master of the field. I believe the time has come when teachers of speech can help in making the fight a fair one so that truth will prevail more frequently and the millennium will come the sooner.