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| C:\Users\CESA\Downloads\image002.jpg | **COMMERCIAL EDUCATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA**  **PERIODIC DISCUSSION PAPER No.55[[1]](#footnote-1)\*** | **October**  **2023** |

**HUMAN NEEDS IN EDUCATION UNCHANGED:**

**HAPPINESS NOT GUARANTEED**

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**Reproduced from the Presidential Address to the 1973 Annual Conference of the CESA**

**Held in the Ballroom, Hotel Menzies, Sydney, Australia[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**Introduction**

People suffered from ignorance when they do not know where to turn for help when it is needed, or they suffer from not knowing the rules of living. People also suffered because they could not get on with their associates, being in a job that they found unsatisfying, and from all of the other everyday situations that arose in clashes between the person and his surroundings. Things did not change: there could be no change to the needs of people.

A man who was more aware of this than most others was Sir Leslie Herron[[3]](#endnote-1), an Honorary Vice-President of this Society, who died recently. I shall not dwell on his passing. It is sufficient to say that we were touched by his wit and wisdom, humbled by his perception, and encouraged by his reminder of the need to have a set of true values against which to measure our efforts and achievements.

It is worth noting that Sir Leslie’s serious comments were well laced with humour. As one sage said in the 18th century, “the most wasted day of all is that on which we do not laugh”.

Those of you who had the privilege of being here last year will recall Sir Leslie’s concern for the observance of the law, spiritual and temporal. I wonder whether he knew then that his health was so seriously threatened at that time. Two weeks before his own death Logan Pearsall Smith, the American-born British essayist and critic, was asked by a friend whether he had found a meaning to life. “Yes,” he replied, “there is meaning – for me at least: there is one thing that matters, and that is to set a chime of words tinkling in the minds of a few fastidious people.”

**Chime of Ambition**

One of Sir Leslie Herron’s blows to set tinkling the chime in our minds was his reference to **ambition**. “Set your students on a course of self-improvement,” he said. “This will make them slaves to ambition in the service of the community.

The whole of the efforts of the Commercial Education Society of Australia are directed to that end. It seeks to give men and women of all ages, a chance to improve themselves. This is particularly important when they have neglected educational opportunities, and now found doors closed to them. You have heard me say this many times, but it bears repetition, for the message must be got through to those who, daily, find that they need more from life and want to give more to it.

In most countries scientific knowledge has made possible great wellbeing, better education opportunities, better health and a higher standard of living. Yet it is doubtful if our capacity for happiness and peace of mind have increased. There is an old saying that ‘happiness is with people’, which means that satisfaction in life springs from good relationships with our fellows. Wealth, health and a good education will not guarantee happiness – no matter how important these things are in themselves.

The word “person” was derived from a Latin word, *persona*, meaning a mask worn in a play. But life is not a play when it comes to the real needs of man. Persons suffer from other problems which are hard to define, but broadly it can be said that the problem was in the man or woman concerned. You know what I mean: if a person is unhappy with a job and leaves it for one that he like, you can say it is a case of right man, wrong job. However, if a person goes from one job to another, never finding the right one, then surely there is something wrong with the man. The Commercial Education Society, in keeping open the doors of opportunity, gives some people the chance to achieve the happy state of right man, right job.

**Happiness**

Happiness, it was once said, is the state of going somewhere. It was no coincidence that the suicide rate dropped in time of war. For war, despite its horrors, supplied three emotional needs felt by all normal people. They were the needs

* to be appreciated, or the need to belong, as it was sometimes put,
* to be useful, and
* to have an aim in life.

There seemed to be a dramatic relationship between the lack of an aim in life and human misery. These comments may seem to be a bit wide ranging, but I assure you that they are directed specifically at the aims and objects of this Society. We may be able to write into our syllabuses the needs of the examiners – but what about the needs of the student?

* Where can we say don’t worry for worry is a waste of time? Where can we say worry is dangerous: try not to concern yourself about the dead past or the unborn future?
* Where can the Society remind its students of the importance of working well, and of Bernard Shaw’s dictum that the secret of being miserable is to have leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not?
* Where can it say that the best approach is to help others – and not to expect too much of them in return?

**Selfishness**

It is appropriate for the organization to keep reminding students that nearly all depression was a form of selfishness – and that in the last analysis one’s troubles are never determined entirely by circumstances. As the ancient Roman, Marcus Aurelius, said: “Our life is what our thoughts make it”.

From combing through the Presidents’ reports for the last twenty years or so, I found that each year those reports contained special thanks to particular persons who made major contributions to our work. The Commercial Education Society is made up of persons. The Society might be bigger than any one of them, but it was nothing without the detailed effort and understanding of individuals. It is fair to say that those persons who have worked for us have themselves been striving for self-improvement as well as to provide opportunities for others.

In 1964, John Kenneth Galbraith wrote a book called *Economic Development.* In it hesaid that people are the common denominator of progress, and that no improvement is possible with unimproved people, but advancement is certain when people were liberated and educated. It is wrong to dismiss the importance of roads, railroads, power plants, mills and the other formal furniture of economic development. But we are coming to realise that there is a certain sterility in economic monuments in a sea of illiteracy. Societies like CESA make a contribution to that philosophy!

1. **\* These papers are for internal discussion within CESA on topics related to the CESA Mission.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **This is another ‘blast from the past’, which complements the theme in the September discussion paper.** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sir Leslie James Herron, *KBE, CMG, KStJ, KC, LLB (Sydney), Hon LLD (UNSW), FCES*,

   Lieutenant-Governor of New South Wales;

   Chief Justice of New South Wales;

   Chairman, Australian Rugby Football Federation;

   Chairman, International Rugby Football Board; and

   President, Australian Golf Club. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)