

The After-School Problems of the Deaf and Dumb

By J. P. BOURKE

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ADULT DEAF SOCIETY OF VICTORIA
101 Wellington Pde. Sth., Melbourne East, 3

No. 1

THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING A
CENTRAL MEETING PLACE
FOR THEM

No. 2

THE PROBLEM OF MINISTERING
TO THEIR SPIRITUAL AND
RELIGIOUS NEEDS



PRICE · ONE SHILLING

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No. I.

The Problem of a Central
Meeting Place for Them



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Unless Hearing People with Understanding Hearts Take up their Cause and Fight Their Battles for Them, the Lives of the Adult Deaf and Dumb will be Turned into Tragedies. The Greatest Service we can do Them therefore is to Learn Something About Them.

PRICE SIXPENCE

:: FOREWORD ::



This Booklet explains the reason for the founding of adult deaf and dumb societies.

The condition of affairs with regard to the after-school welfare of the majority of the deaf and dumb of Australia is in a deplorable state. The movement for their uplift, which at best was a feeble thing, has come to an end in some States. They have been divided into two hostile camps, and are a distracted and worried people. The author's purpose is to give the cause, to educate public opinion about them, to broadcast a message to humanity on their behalf, and to try and get rid of the long-established doctrine that anything is good enough for the deaf and dumb.

Up to now, everything on the subject of the deaf and dumb has been voiced by hearing men. These men have only a superficial knowledge of them and their problems. They never consult them as to what they shall say about them, and are, therefore, not competent to put the views of the deaf before the public or to voice their desires and aspirations. In one State the whole subject has been misrepresented.

As will be explained, the deaf and dumb themselves, on account of their limited education (due to their affliction), and their inability to express themselves intelligibly in written language are debarred from stating their own case. This book, therefore, written by one who is himself deaf, is an attempt to put their case from the viewpoint of the deaf and dumb themselves.

Though I write as one of them, I did not lose my hearing till I was twenty years of age. I am what is known amongst the deaf and dumb as a speaking deaf man—that is, one who becomes deaf after school age, but having lived amongst them for fifteen years I have acquired a first-hand knowledge of their problems and learnt their difficulties by bitter experience in the battle of life.

The deaf and dumb, not being sufficiently well educated, cannot manage their societies alone. They have, therefore, to stiffen the governing directorates of their societies with a few hearing men who are used to business management. These men are supposed to do

this out of kindness and sympathy and with a desire to be of service to the deaf and dumb. Of our many grievances, the principle one is that these men pack our committees with their friends, take the control of our societies out of our hands, govern us according to farcical constitutions framed by themselves, which allow us no voice in our affairs and no power in the government of our societies, and end by ignoring us altogether and treating us as a subject people. The Victorian Society is governed according to two distinct and separate constitutions, one for the deaf and one for the hearing subscribers. In two cases the societies are governed by autocrats who are kept in power by governing bodies, the members of which are appointed by themselves. The only cure for this state of affairs is an outraged public opinion.

If this book should meet with public favor it is the author's intention to give the country some idea of the problem of ministering to their spiritual and religious needs, and of the problem of the impotent deaf.

Our isolation and our difficulty in attracting public attention has made it possible for a hearing man to hold the whole of the deaf and dumb of a State in subjection; do as he likes with their society; treat the deaf as he pleases; stand in the way of their happiness, and deny them any sort of progressive life. How such a system can be brought into existence and the tragic lives led by the deaf under it ought, for the sake of the deaf and dumb, to be told also.

The system under which our societies have been governed by hearing directorates is founded on the principles of the English Poor Law and on the Workhouse system. With regard to the aged, the infirm and the afflicted, we Australians have substituted liberal pensions, humanitarianism, and the industrial system for the old-world policy of workhouses, doles, and degrading and humiliating charitable rules and regulations. We have shown a disposition not to tolerate conditions which are responsible for poverty, misery and degeneracy. The author thinks, therefore, that if Australia can be shown the real needs of the deaf and dumb she will insist that their problems can be solved only by new methods—a system of social uplift that will coincide with the natural conditions and disposition of Australians.

As the deaf and dumb are taught to speak as part of their education, it is customary in these days, when writing about them, to refer to them simply as the deaf. For brevity's sake I shall do the same.

J. P. BOURKE.

Victoria, 1933.

THE PROBLEMS OF A CENTRAL MEETING PLACE



"Now the deaf as a whole form a very honorable class of the community. In spite of far less opportunities than others they attain a standard of uprightness which will compare favorably with that of the hearing. Their cross, in all truth, is heavy enough to bear, but they shoulder it with a marvellous patience, adjusting it so that its weight may be most tolerably borne, and set out with a cheery smile and no word of complaint along an uphill road of life strewn with hard boulders of isolation, misunderstanding, unfairness, and often tyranny."

The Rev. A. H. Payne: "King Silence."



THE subject of the deaf is in its infancy here in Australia. The average hearing person knows very little about them beyond the fact that they talk on their fingers. Their after-school problems are known only to a select few. Lack of knowledge of them and their problems on the part of the general public has led to the lives of thousands of deaf people in all parts of the world being turned into tragedies. This is especially the case here in Victoria.

Deaf-mutism, like death, is no respecter of persons, and the deaf are the issue of people in every walk of life, from the king on his throne right down through every grade of society, to the casual unskilled laborer. Many of the deaf are born of wealthy parents, and are of independent means; but the majority of them depend on the kindness and sympathy of the hearing from the cradle to the grave.

In ancient times the deaf were treated in a harsh and savage manner. Greek and Roman custom demanded their death, and they were pitilessly destroyed, being thrown into the river, or otherwise killed, without causing any comment but that so many encumbrances had been got rid of. With the advent of Christianity they were

allowed to live, but were thought to be mentally deficient and classed with idiots and lunatics. St. Augustine declared that the deaf could have no faith, "since faith comes by hearing only." So the deaf drifted down the centuries despised, hopeless and pathetic figures, till benevolence in the shape of a kind-hearted French priest (the Abbe de l'Epee, 1712-1789) took them to his heart and inventing a manual alphabet for them, gave them a language. Having given them a language, a way was found to educate them. Having educated them, it was found that 90 per cent. of them were not mentally incompetent at all, but if taught a trade or calling where hearing is not essential, they could be turned into as capable artisans or farmers as the hearing.

The adult deaf may be divided into two classes:

1. The skilled adult deaf;
2. Those whom, for brevity's sake, I shall refer to as the impotent deaf.

These latter consist of those who, besides the handicap of deafness, suffer through no fault of their own. They comprise the mentally deficient deaf, the unemployed and the untrained adult deaf.

The skilled deaf are apprenticed to trades in the same way as hearing boys and girls are. When they have finished their time they take their place in factory and workshop, and work side by side with the hearing, receive the same pay, no difference being made to them by their employers on account of their deafness. The industrial employers of Victoria have been very good to the skilled deaf workmen. Here in Australia they are trained to become carpenters, joiners, bootmakers, french polishers, and skilled hands in boot factories. Some are farmers. The girls become tailoresses, machinists, white workers, and employees in the millinery trade. These skilled deaf workmen make homes for themselves, marry deaf girls, have children, and live as useful a life as the hearing.

It is a fallacy to suppose, as many hearing people do, that the children of deaf mute marriages are born deaf. In a few cases this is so, but the majority of them are the offspring of hearing parents. A minority of these children are born deaf, but most of them lose their hearing in babyhood through infantile ailments and accidents. The deaf children of deaf parents are intelligent above the average as deaf mutes go.

The intelligent deaf are in no respects inferior to the hearing in natural talents and acquired skill, but they

cannot be educated up to the same standard within the same period of time as hearing children can. This is due to the fact that before you can begin to educate them you have got to give them a language. When one mixes with the deaf and dumb it is startling to observe what a lot the faculty to hear has to do with the ability to understand and with the acquisition of language. With them this is a slow and tedious process, "because they have to begin at the age of six to learn laboriously and artificially what an ordinary baby has unconsciously and naturally discovered at the age of two." The difficulty of the deaf in acquiring language is explained by the Rev. A. H. Payne in the following clear way:—

"The six-year-old child, born deaf, stands before his master in school. This baby—he is hardly more—does not know his own name; he does not know that he has got a name; if you write it down he does not know that it represents himself; he does not know that it is a word; he does not know what a word is; he does not know that such a thing as a word exists."

Next to giving them a language, the chief goal in their education is to teach them to write and talk grammatically. The deaf have to acquire English in the same way as the hearing schoolboy acquires Latin or French. It takes a long time for the deaf to learn to use language well. Their greatest difficulty is to express themselves intelligibly in written language. Only those who know their modes of expression can understand their letters. A good number of the deaf are artists, painters and sculptors. Some enter the higher professions. Some, under higher education, graduate from colleges and can write M.A., B.A., B.Sc., after their names, but not here in Australia. If anyone needs higher education it is the deaf. We are right behind the times in this respect. Ignorance about them on the part of the general public and the lack of the right type of hearing men to guide them is the cause. In America they have a special college for the higher education of the deaf, the Gallaudet Deaf Mute College, Washington.

It is just as difficult for the deaf to express themselves in correct English as it is for the hearing to learn to express themselves in the language of the deaf. I do not mean the manual alphabet. This can be learnt in twenty minutes. The deaf have a language of their own—the language of signs. It takes years of constant association with them for a hearing person to talk to the deaf like the deaf talk to one another. This tends to isolate them.

The deaf are, therefore, an isolated people living in a little world apart by themselves (adult deaf and dumb societies), like a foreign community in a country not their own. They know what goes on in the world, because they are a part of it with the hearing. To know what goes on in their world you have to learn their language; and, what is more difficult, how to read it. To do this you must live with them, talk with them, play with them, and be of them—that is, you must become a deaf mute. Only thus will you be able to understand their mentality, their needs, their problems, difficulties and helplessness. Added to the language difficulty is the fact that their affliction produces on the hearing who meet them for the first time a shyness and an embarrassment that few can face. This creates a gulf between the hearing and the deaf that few can bridge.

There is no doubt that blindness is a worse affliction than deafness. A blind person, however, is on the same mental plane as the seeing. He has his books, his work, and his music, can take his place in the family and social circle, and bear solitude. Things are different with the deaf. Music, concerts, lectures, the opera, the variety theatre, drama, "talkies," wireless, and all the social amenities that the hearing take as a matter of course are not for the deaf. They are out of place in the family and social circle since one has to speak to them in a language that few hearing persons learn and fewer still can read. Since they cannot understand language very well, the pleasure of reading is denied them. The thrill and stir of poetry, since it depends on sound, has no meaning for them. Their deafness produces an awkwardness on those who do not understand them or on those who meet them for the first time. They shrink away from the hearing, and take refuge in solitude, and loneliness happens to be their curse. They, therefore, need and seek the companionship of those afflicted like themselves. This companionship they find at adult deaf and dumb missions or societies. The headquarters of these societies serve as a social club and a central meeting-place for them. These missions and societies are established by the deaf themselves.

Being cut off from most of the social pleasures that the hearing take as a matter of course, these societies play a large and important part in the lives of the deaf. They are absolutely lost without such a meeting-place. If they could support their societies out of their own resources they would not ask the public for one penny. They are just as high-spirited and independent as their hearing brethren, resent

charity, and hate charitable homes just as much as anybody. Not charity, but justice, a friend, and a helping hand is all that the deaf and dumb ask of their country. Not being able to pay for the upkeep of their recreation centres they appeal to the public for financial support, and the generous-hearted public take them under their protection and try and compensate them in some measure for what they lose by their affliction. That is all that 80 per cent. of the deaf ask of the public. Beyond this they do not ask, and would be ashamed to accept, one penny's benefit from any money subscribed by the country except when out of work. If money could have made the deaf of Australia happy, then they ought to be the happiest people in the world, for no country has been so generous financially to her deaf as Australia has. If the Commonwealth had known more about them, and had insisted that the money she subscribed to help their cause be used in the spirit of benevolence in which it was given, their adult societies would have been the greatest things of their kind and an inspiration to the world as to what uplift societies for the deaf should be.

The deaf are capable of great sacrifices to help their cause and one another. A great number of them are subscribers to their societies. They get up socials, card parties, picture entertainments and bazaars to help their unemployed mates, and to help support their cricket, lacrosse, tennis and hockey clubs. They also give their time and their service to benefit their cause.

Most of the public give subscriptions to help the deaf under the impression that they are miserable just because they are deaf. This is not so. Never having been able to hear, they do not know what they miss. It all depends on their after-school treatment whether you make good or bad citizens, or miserable and unhappy men and women of them. Happiness is a noted feature of the character of the deaf when they are assembled together. Nature, as if in remorse for her injustice to them, has made the deaf mute a great talker. There is nothing he loves like a good talk. There is nothing he hates so much as to be referred to as "dummy." He is not as dumb as the hearing think he is. On social evenings round the card table at their headquarters they frequently growl at one another for holding up the game to talk. We (the author included) have too much to say at times. In fact, they have a special sign for the loquacious deaf mute.

No. II

THE PROBLEM OF MINISTERING TO THEIR SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS NEEDS

THE PROBLEM OF MINISTERING TO THEIR SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS NEEDS

"The patrons of livings, being now checked by neither Bishop or Presbytery, would have been at liberty to confine the cure of souls to the most scandalous of mankind. It was generally felt that, without some such precautions,* the country would be overrun by ignorant and drunken reprobates bearing the name and receiving the pay of ministers, but for the arbitrary intervention of Cromwell."

—Macaulay's History of England.

THIS is written from the viewpoint that the mission of the Church is "to cultivate the decencies of life and to inculcate that ordered, practical and measured virtue which is most conducive to the welfare of nations."

The casual and irresponsible way in which the spiritual and religious needs and the moral welfare of the adult deaf in some of the States have been catered for up to now is a fine example of the doctrine that anything is good enough for them. Just like some hearing men and women, some deaf men and women have a strong vein of genuine religion in their characters, but are out of place at an ordinary church service, since they cannot hear what is going on. They, therefore, need special ministers who are experts in the sign-and-manual language to conduct their religious services for them. Ordained clergymen who are capable of conducting a church service in the language of the deaf are very rare in the old world; and, because those who are supposed to look after the welfare of the adult deaf have made no attempt to interest the Church in their religious needs, are unobtainable in Australia. The deaf have, therefore, to fall back upon laymen missionaries. These missionaries are the hearing sons of deaf marriages. Reared in homes where only the deaf language is used, they pick it

* Commission of "Triers"—men empowered to reject scandalous ministers from livings and promote good ones.

up in a natural way from their parents, and become expert interpreters in the sign language. It is these men who bridge the gulf that stands between the deaf and the hearing world. Not all missionaries to the deaf are the hearing sons of deaf parents. Some pick up the language in other ways. Of the four superintendents (missioners) in charge of the adult societies in Australia, two are the sons of deaf marriages, one is the step-son of a deaf man, and one married a deaf girl. The former picked up the language from his step-father, the latter learnt it from his wife.

It is a noted feature of the character of the deaf that they become very dependent on those hearing people who understand their signs and can interpret them to the bystanders. They look to these men in all their difficulties, lean upon them in all their troubles, rally round them, and love and follow them blindly right or wrong. The power of such men over these half-educated people is nearly absolute, and their influence great for good or evil. If they are honorable, sincere and conscientious men, to whom money and vanity make little appeal, their influence on the deaf is elevating and ennobling, but if they happen to be men of the opposite type their influence is a debasing one, and the harm they can do the deaf is almost beyond repair. With regard to the religious services for the deaf, these are supposed to be conducted by an ordained minister with these missionaries interpreting the service to the deaf in the sign language. Another function of these missionaries is to look after the moral welfare and build up and strengthen the characters of the deaf.

The school-leaving age is fraught with danger to the moral wellbeing of all boys and girls; but much more so to deaf boys and girls, as, by reason of their slower mental development, they have not the understanding of hearing boys and girls of the same age. The deaf enter the adult world from the school for the deaf where they have been isolated in a boarding school, sheltered, protected and carefully guarded, and it is agreed by all who understand them that they need careful handling. Some teachers of the deaf say that the girls need protecting and guarding during the years sixteen or seventeen to nineteen and twenty, and all are agreed that they need careful watching.

To strengthen their characters, boys need men around them whom they can love as well as respect. Their tastes and their outlook on life become more or less moulded by those whom they associate with and take as their ideal men. If hearing boys get their inspiration from men whom they can love as well as respect, this is much more so with deaf boys, because of their habit of following hearing

interpreters blindly, and because they succumb to the influence of stronger minds than their own more easily than the hearing do. The deaf as a whole are ordinary, decent men and women, just like the majority of Australian men and women. They are very docile and well-behaved, and if taken in hand when they leave school, can be taught to have a high sense of moral conduct; but, if neglected, are liable to go to the other extreme.

Professor Mangold, in his book, "Child Problems," says: "The period of life, including the years from twelve or sixteen to seventeen, is marked by the practical completion of habit formation, and trains the child for an ascending or descending career. . . . It is significant that the religious impulse is strongest in this period. . . . The religious impulse has its counterpart in the wayward and criminal instincts of the boy, and these come to the surface during this period."

The majority of the deaf boys and girls, on leaving school at the age of sixteen, make straight for their social centres to seek the companionship of their elder school-mates. They lack the understanding of hearing boys and girls of their own age, and need special instruction, more careful attention, handling and guiding to fit them for the responsibilities of citizenship than the hearing do. One would think, therefore, that missionaries (superintendents) who have to act as spiritual advisers to, mould the conscience, build up and strengthen the characters of half-educated adolescents would be selected with scrupulous care by those who are responsible for the moral well-being of the deaf; that they should be well-educated, cultured, refined men—men of high qualifications and of the soul of honor, since they have the oversight of girls as well as of boys. Nothing of the kind! The only qualification sought in a superintendent of an adult deaf society by the average hearing board of management is that he should be able to talk on his fingers!

Excuse me for digressing. Adult deaf and dumb societies belong to the deaf, but they are not sufficiently well educated to manage them alone. They elect committees of management from amongst themselves, but these need stiffening with a few hearing men who are used to business management. These men are supposed to join these committees (boards) out of kindness and sympathy and with a desire to be of service to the deaf. This service consists in helping the deaf to solve their problems; carrying out suggestions re buildings and improvements in the societies; being responsible for and directing finances, and advising the deaf when

difficulties in connection with their societies crop up. The board should consist of from ten to twelve deaf members and five or six hearing members. The deaf members of these boards form themselves into a sub-committee to look after the domestic and social side of the work at headquarters. Since they know their needs and difficulties better than the hearing men who join their boards, all suggestions in regard to their social and industrial betterment and improvements in their societies should come from the deaf, and be discussed in a patient and helpful way at board meetings. They should be encouraged to shoulder responsibility, and those who show administrative ability should be advised and helped.

Members of the boards, both hearing and deaf, are supposed to be elected in a legal and constitutional way by the subscribers to the societies, for most of these societies are incorporated—that is, they are registered under Charities Acts. In return for certain privileges the Government insists that the administration of the societies shall rest upon a constitution; that the members of the boards shall be subscribers to the societies they represent, and that they shall be elected according to Parliamentary principle. The Acts lay down rules and provisions for the proper governance of these charities, forbid any member from taking a seat on the boards without being elected thereto, and insist that everything connected with them shall be conducted in a legal and legitimate way. The Victorian and New South Wales societies are incorporated under such Acts. These give the subscribers the right to control the members of the boards, and to change the government of the societies by means of the ballot-box if they are not satisfied with the way the societies are being administered.

The rule of law and constitutional government, however, seems to have no meaning for the average hearing member of boards of management of adult deaf and dumb societies. One or two of them get on the boards by any but legal means, and proceed to pack them with their friends and business associates. The New South Wales Society, for instance, is dominated by a member who is a printer by profession, and most of the members of the board are printers also. The Victorian society is dominated by the superintendent, and for twenty years he has been electing his own board.

Having joined the boards they soon find out that the language difficulty imposes a barrier between them and the deaf members, and that the deaf are on a different mental plane to themselves. They come to see that the deaf have needs and problems peculiar to themselves, and that

the difficulty of solving these problems or of doing anything for their industrial and social betterment is overwhelming. Instead of trying to surmount the language barrier by learning the manual alphabet and how to read it, and talking to the deaf as man to man and friend to friend, and thus gaining a knowledge of their needs, problems and difficulties by personal contact, they go along the lines of least resistance and do, not what is best for the deaf, but what is easiest for themselves. They either allow themselves to be dominated by the superintendent and leave the administration of the society entirely in his hands, or they take up an antagonistic attitude towards him, dismiss him and muddle along by themselves. They get control of the boards of management, turn the deaf representatives off them because it makes too much trouble for them to explain to the deaf members what is going on. They turn the deaf representatives (keeping two or three of them on the boards as a matter of form) into a separate committee, and give them charge of the domestic and social side of the work at headquarters, depriving them of all administrative power and all authority. They take the control of the societies completely out of the hands of the deaf, ignore them altogether, treat them as a subject people, and leave them with no authority to appeal to against their misuse of power. They insist that the members of the deaf committee shall be elected in a legitimate way by the deaf subscribers to the societies, but are themselves a bad example to the deaf by taking seats on our boards without deriving their authority from anyone. They govern the deaf without their consent; form themselves into a sort of legislative council, and, though they have no right to interfere in our affairs at all, since they were not elected to the boards by anyone, they make themselves the supreme authority in the societies. Having done so, they institute a system of government that we of Saxon blood hate so much, and against which our forefathers have fought against and shed their blood and died on hundreds of battlefields all down the centuries to put an end to—the government of bureaucrats kept in power by governing bodies, the members of which are appointed by themselves. And the strange part of it all is that, of the men who govern us in this fashion, one is a member of a Legislative Council, two are justices of the peace, and two are city councillors! I have been told—and I can believe it—that one of these men imposed his will on the whole of the deaf of one of the States by refusing to allow them to play cards and hold dances at the headquarters of their society, because such things were against his religious convictions.

The board of each society, like Parliament, "should be representative of the opinions of the nation. The various ideas, aspirations, and discontents which are circulating in the community should find an expression within its walls," but this will be impossible until the deaf get control of their societies again and manage them according to constitutions framed by themselves on the experiences of the past. At present, hearing men voice public opinion on the subject of the deaf. These men have not encouraged the deaf to give expression to their ideas and aspirations. Indeed, those hearing men who are really interested in the deaf have declared that the opinions of the deaf are deliberately ignored. All board meetings are held behind closed doors. All members are bound to secrecy, and not a whisper of what goes on at board meetings is allowed to reach the deaf. When we show resentment at the way we are repressed, or voice our discontent or complain about the treatment meted out to us, these men sneer at our mentality and call us rebels and Bolsheviks. We are not allowed to do anything in connection with our cause without first asking the permission of board members. They take up the attitude that we have no rights except those that they care to grant us, and nothing to do with our societies except to obey the rules that they have made for us. They say to us, in effect: "You take what we give you, and not what you want." They demand unquestioned obedience and humble submission from us. If we write to the Press they will take advantage of their position to discredit our statements. Consequently, the public hears of our affairs by the voice of these men. They are not authorised to speak on our behalf, and the views expressed by them about our cause are their own and not those of the deaf. At the annual meetings of our societies the public hears a great deal from these men, and nothing at all from the deaf.

These self-elected boards of management are the curse of our societies. The majority of the deaf are very bitter at the way they have used us, and are up in arms against them. They have wrecked three out of the four adult societies. Not one of these men possesses any vision or statemanship or has insight enough to see that there might be a nobler future for the deaf of Australia. They place their dead hand on us, and we cannot rise. Their autocratic rule makes it impossible for us to get any reform from within the societies, and they take advantage of their standing in the community to block every avenue by which we might reach the public with our grievances. Under the system of government established by these men, the whole

of the deaf of one of the States have, for many years past, been crouching under the tyranny of the paid servants of their society. The following is an example of the ways of members of boards of management:—A few words of explanation. At the beginning of 1929 there were four welfare societies for the adult deaf—one each in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

In 1927 the society of the last-named engaged a Mr. H. V. Hersee, the hearing son of a deaf marriage, as its superintendent. The board failed to get on with him, and on May 8th, 1929, dismissed him. The majority of the deaf of New South Wales had learnt to respect, and had grown very fond of him. They took his part, and at a meeting the same night made an angry demonstration as a protest against what they considered the board's high-handed action. They relieved their pent-up feelings by turning an enlarged photograph of the president of the society to the wall, and slashing and smashing the photograph of the deputy chairman. The police were called in to keep order. As the majority of the deaf would not submit tamely to the arbitrary methods of the board, it locked them out of their headquarters. If a body of hearing people had shown the same high spirit as the deaf did on this occasion, they would have won the applause of all Australia.

The Sydney branch of Toc H. allowed those of the deaf who had been locked out of their centre to use its headquarters as a central meeting-place, and there, with the help of a few sympathetic hearing men who understand the deaf, the majority of the deaf formed themselves into a separate welfare organisation called "The New South Wales Association of Deaf and Dumb Citizens," and engaged Mr. Hersee as their superintendent. The Association has prospered, and has its own headquarters now. The deaf live under a constitution framed by themselves on the experiences of the past. It is framed so that it will never allow the Association to get out of the hands of the deaf. They have found that peace and happiness they could not find under the board of the society. It is a shameful thing that this could only be obtained by a revolt caused by bad government.

A minority of the deaf remained with the society. So there are two welfare organisations for the deaf in New South Wales—the New South Wales Association of Deaf and Dumb Citizens, comprising a majority of the deaf of that State, and the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society, comprising a minority of them.

In 1931 the board of the Queensland Adult Deaf and Dumb Mission dismissed its superintendent. The majority

of the deaf took his part, followed him out of the Mission and formed an association round him called "The Queensland Deaf and Dumb Citizens' Reformed Association." A minority of the deaf remained with the Mission.

Like New South Wales, there are two welfare organisations for the deaf in Queensland—an association comprising a majority of them, and the Mission comprising a minority.

During Xmas week, 1931-32, an Interstate Carnival of the Deaf was held in Melbourne. In a report of this Carnival which appeared in a paper that circulates amongst the deaf of the New South Wales Society, is the following item:—

"On Thursday (31/12/31) the Victorian Board assembled and discussed with the honorary welfare officer of the New South Wales Society some very important problems of deaf and dumb work. The discussion will, no doubt, lead to a big forward movement in the course of a very short time."

That announcement in January, 1932, was the first intimation the deaf had that such a meeting had taken place. It was held secretly and behind locked doors. The only deaf who attended the Carnival were those from the New South Wales Society and the deaf of Tasmania. Not only did the Victorian Board not have the courtesy to invite a deaf representative from these two States to the meeting, but it ignored the three deaf representatives on the Victorian Board. The big forward movement consisted of appointing two young hearing men to the Victorian Society to be trained in the board's system of governing the deaf and dumb. The deaf were not consulted in the matter at all.

Early in 1932 the deaf of the New South Wales and Queensland welfare associations, and a good number of the deaf of Victoria, decided to form a national organisation. A constitution was framed, and by July of that year the Australian Association for the Advancement of the Deaf had come into being. Everything with regard to its formation was discussed openly in "The Deaf Advocate," a paper that circulates widely amongst the deaf in all the States, and branch committees composed solely of deaf members elected entirely by the deaf in a legitimate and constitutional way were formed. A Federal Executive, comprising seven deaf and two hearing members, was appointed, one of the latter being Mr. Hersee, who was elected Federal President.

The deaf all over the world form such organisations. Their chief objects are to advance the interests of the deaf,

to protect their rights, to see that their schools are properly supported and fostered by the State; to raise their social and industrial status; to voice public opinion on their needs and problems, and to prevent social abuses and injustices to them.

One would think that no one could object to the deaf forming an organisation to advance their interests, and that those hearing men who claim to be their friends would teach the deaf that their first duty is to their cause and their class and encourage them to stand by one another; yet not only are the boards of management discouraging the deaf from joining the Association, but some of these boards are doing their best to break it up.

The Rev. A. H. Payne, writing of the way the deaf are suppressed, says:—"They are a 'feeble folk,' as one of them pathetically remarked; they are struggling to rise, but they have no influence; they are deaf and we can afford to smile contemptuously.

"Do they never make their voice heard? Yes, they have an organisation of their own (The British Deaf and Dumb Association), and now and then—very seldom—a pitiful squeak therefrom reaches the ear of the somnolent outer world. They say they are handicapped by the present method of education; they would be greatly benefited by the Combined System. And at last someone hears the voice of the deaf. Ah, that won't do! We must not allow that! Pull a string, and lo! the jaws of a star in the firmament of a great profession move—pardon the mixed metaphor! Pull another string, and the voice of a plutocrat is heard abroad. It is not quite clear what connection exists between the profession aforesaid and the education of the deaf. Indeed, the link is so filmy that the average man only gets a frightful headache if he tries to trace it. But then, the world argues, the star has a long tail of letters after his name—like a comet, in fact—so he must be right. On the other side you have only people who are 'down on their luck'; they are deaf. They must be wrong. Leave them in their misery and let us go to sleep again!"

Our societies have been taken out of the hands of the deaf and have become the playthings of a lot of irresponsible business men who make no effort to solve our problems. Some of us could see that there was no hope of doing any good for the educational, social and industrial betterment of the deaf until we could get the control of our societies out of the hands of these men, and give the deaf the right to say how the deaf shall be treated. We found, however, that these men could not fight harder for their

livelihood than they fight for the right to do as they like in our societies. In some States they have done their best to break the spirit of the deaf. Appeals were made to the Governments in three States to hold an inquiry into our treatment at the hands of these men. The Queensland Government held an inquiry, the New South Wales Government could not see their way to do so, and the Victorian Government turned a deaf ear to all our appeals. So the majority of the deaf in three States formed The Australian Association for the Advancement of the Deaf, to free themselves from the domination of these men and to enlighten public opinion on the subject of the deaf from the viewpoint of the deaf themselves, but certain hearing men determined not to allow this if they could prevent it, as the following will prove:—

The boards of management ignored our Association for nearly a year. In March of this year (1933), Mr. Hersee was to visit Melbourne, and the Victorian Branch of the Association decided to hold a public social in his honor. For many years past the society here has been seething with discontent, and the board suspected that we would use Mr. Hersee's presence to make our voice heard, and they were not going to allow that if they could help it. They resurrected the Interstate Committee that had met in Melbourne during Xmas week, 1931-32, and gave it the name of "The National Council of Deaf and Dumb Societies of Australia." The members who formed this committee elected themselves the Federal Executive of the so-called Council, appointed a hearing member of the board of the New South Wales Society as its honorary secretary, and sent him over to Melbourne.

The visitor from Sydney could claim to represent only the small minority of the deaf of the New South Wales Society. It is doubtful if these were consulted. Even if they were they did not know what the Council was for or what it was going to do for the deaf. The so-called secretary advertised that a public meeting would be held "to inaugurate a National Council comprised solely of deaf members for the advancement of the interests of the deaf and dumb of Australia." And held his meeting the day before our social to Mr. Hersee.

Members of the boards have the ear of the governing and civic powers, of Parliament, of the Churches, of authority, of the Press, and public opinion is behind them, so they took advantage of their standing in the community to fool the public through the Press. At his meeting, the visitor said nothing about the situation of affairs with regard to the adult deaf of Australia or that there already

existed a national organisation to advance the interests of the deaf. He claimed that he represented the adult deaf of New South Wales, and that he had come over to unite the deaf of Australia. Although at this time there were four deaf presidents and three committees, composed of deaf officials connected with different phases of the movement for the welfare of the deaf, he took advantage of the fact that the Federal Executive of our Association had a hearing president to tell the meeting that "the Council will have deaf officials, the president will be deaf." For months previous to this meeting, certain hearing men in the Victorian Society had been going about amongst the deaf and telling them that there was no need for an Interstate Association, yet these same men and all the members of the board helped the visitor to divide the deaf of Victoria against themselves by forming a rival organisation, for, influenced by these men, many members deserted the Association and went over to the Council.

The State president of the Victorian Branch opposed the motion for the formation of a branch of the Council, because there already existed a national organisation to advance the interests of the deaf, and not only did the hearing men in charge of the meeting try to gag him, but the visitor from Sydney kept trying to push him off the platform.

Had Mr. Hersee not been visiting Melbourne, there would have been no Council of Deaf and Dumb Societies, and no meeting about it. We deaf are sure of that. In any case, the boards could have held their inaugural meeting in Sydney. There was no need for them to waste the public's money by sending a man all the way to Melbourne to hold it the day before our social to Mr. Hersee.

Just as there are two State welfare organisations in New South Wales and in Queensland, so there are to be two national organisations for the advancement of the deaf: one composed of a majority of them (the Australian Association for the Advancement of the Deaf), and one composed of a minority of them and the boards of management of the four societies (the National Council of Deaf and Dumb Societies).

The Council can claim to represent only a small minority of the deaf in New South Wales and Queensland. These never thought to form such an organisation. If left to the deaf whom it claims to represent, it would go to pieces. Hearing members of the boards are the power behind it. They use the deaf as puppets for reasons known only to themselves. They stay behind the scenes and work the wires. It is such a farcical affair that some of the

boards who have joined it do not know its name. One lot call it "The Council of Deaf and Dumb Societies," and others "The Australian Deaf and Dumb Federation." Those principally responsible for its formation are also responsible for this statement:—

"The deaf community," says the annual report of the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society of Victoria for 1931, "mainly of the artisan class, includes all sorts and conditions, and embraces all religious beliefs, all degrees of mentality and morality—the good, indifferent and viciously bad. . . With few exceptions they are of the artisan class, and the main avenue of mental development—hearing—being closed, it is not surprising that they are not as developed intellectually as normal people."

That statement was made without rhyme or reason, and behind the backs of the deaf and by men who make themselves responsible to Victoria for the moral welfare of her adult deaf. And we are supposed to be loyal to and form an organisation round men who traduce the deaf like that! A small section of the deaf of Victoria, under the influence of these men or through timidity, remain on their side, but most of the deaf have lost all respect for them. Yet the system they have created has left us completely in their power.

The members of the boards are not a bit concerned about advancing the interests of the deaf, for the simple reason that they could have done through the societies what they claim they are going to do for the deaf through the Council. Their whole aim has been to drive the members of the State welfare associations back into the societies again by any means in their power. In order to achieve this, they have done their best to isolate this section of the deaf and keep them isolated. They found that these were gaining strength by reason of the deaf of Victoria joining up with them through the National Association, and might make their voice heard. So they formed the Council for the purpose of drawing into it all the deaf who are under their influence, in order to prevent them joining up with the National Association.

The Council is not to be "composed solely of deaf members" after all. It is to be governed in the same way as the societies are governed. It is to have a hearing council and a deaf council in each State. The hearing council and the boards of managements of the societies are one and the same thing. They are to derive their power from and be responsible to no one, but are to be the supreme authorities. Their members are to be appointed and not elected, but by whom they do not say. The deaf

councils are to be elected in a legitimate way by the deaf. They are to advance their interests and protect their rights through their own councils if it suits the hearing councils to let them. "The deaf" (of the deaf State councils), says the annual report of the Queensland Mission, "are to consider amongst themselves questions of common interest, which their respective supervising committees can help to give effect to if thought desirable."

In one State the board sends officials of the Society to visit the parents of the deaf to try and turn them against our Association and to induce them to prevent their deaf children joining up with it. Some of those who do so are browbeaten by members of the board; others dependent on it for unemployment relief are intimidated to prevent them from becoming members or are victimised if they do so; all those under the influence of the board are discouraged from having anything to do with our Association; and the members of this so-called council take advantage of their standing in the community to play it off against our Association if we gain a little publicity. The board refuses to recognise the Association, and does everything it can to belittle and discredit it and misrepresent its aims. The members of the council are determined not to allow the deaf to make their voice heard.

These men are not new figures; but there have always been men like them in every Anglo-Saxon community. Dickens trounced them in *Oliver Twist* (the Board of Guardians), and Lord Shaftesbury, the philanthropist, fought them for thirty years.

It has been brought to my notice that the deaf of Queensland owe a great debt of gratitude to some hearing members of the Board of the Mission, and that many of these men have won the respect and affection of all who were connected with it, and these strictures do not apply to them nor to those hearing men of the New South Wales Society who have thrown in their lot with the State Association.

Some hearing men join our boards from a religious impulse. Everything with regard to the teaching, instruction and industrial training of the deaf is very difficult. Hearing children get plenty of opportunities to learn and understand their moral duties. Numerous instructors come forward with offers to look after their spiritual needs and to teach them the necessity for honour, honesty, truthfulness, self-respect and manliness. The language barrier makes it difficult to find hearing instructors to attend to the moral uplift of the deaf. Yet if we are to turn

them into desirable citizens their moral training and character-upbuilding is of vital importance, because, with their propensity for leaning on hearing men, they seem to come under the influence of stronger wills than their own more easily than the hearing do. Such duties are generally left in the hands of a recognised minister of a church. This is understood by everyone; yet boards of management make the deaf into a distinct religious sect, give them a church without a creed, and allow their religious needs to be attended to in a way that is the exact opposite of that which is customary amongst the hearing.

It is a recognised fact that a minister of religion, in order to be ordained, must be a man of sufficient learning, assured virtue and specially trained, and must conform to certain standards of conduct befitting his calling. If he belongs to the Established Church he must be licensed by a bishop and conform to religious discipline. If he is a minister of the Free Church he must be licensed by the spiritual heads of the particular Church of which he is a minister.

It is such a man as this that caters for the spiritual and religious needs of those hearing men on boards of management who happen to be religiously inclined. They insist on "religion clean and undefiled" for themselves and their children. One would think, since they make themselves responsible for the moral welfare of the adult real, that they would insist on the same sort of religion for the deaf. Under no circumstances would they allow their children to attend a church service conducted by a layman with no special qualifications for the office who has usurped all the functions of an ordained minister. Nor would they allow such a man to administer Communion, act as spiritual adviser to and mould the conscience of those near and dear to them. Yet, not only has this been going on for many years under one of the boards, but it is training two young hearing men under this very man to perpetuate this system of religion. This particular man, when challenged publicly for the right to call himself a chaplain, answered that "his board had conferred the title on him."

Such a system has led to serious consequences in lives of the deaf of this particular State, and the country will have to step in and put a stop to it. To cater for the moral uplift of the deaf is a special and difficult work, and needs a special agent. Ordinary men are not suited for such a task; extraordinary men of very high and very decided moral character, with special knowledge and training are essential. Members of boards of management make no attempt to study and understand the deaf, and it does not seem to have occurred to them that the deaf being of

slower mental development, have not the understanding of the hearing and therefore need more careful advice and guidance than hearing adolescents.

The way out is to interest the Church in the spiritual and religious needs of the deaf and to ask that one or two ministers be taught the sign-and-manual language so as to be able to conduct their religious services and look after their spiritual needs. Then place the religious care of the deaf entirely in the hands of the Church. At present the religious and social sides of the work of the societies are mixed up in a way that would not be tolerated anywhere else.

In the Manchester University in England there is a special course for the training of approved persons to become ministers to the deaf. Professor Roe, in his book, "Peeps Into the Deaf World," states that in no country do the clergy take more interest in the deaf than in Germany. "It is no common thing," he writes, "for the clergy to spend a school session amongst the deaf studying the methods, oral and manual, in order that they might be able to give spiritual instruction to them after leaving school." The Deaf Mute College at Washington also has a special course for the training of missionaries to the deaf. All of them are ordained ministers, some being deaf and dumb.

The subject of the aborigines has come prominently before the public within the past few months (August-September, 1933). The problem of the aborigines and the problem of the deaf and dumb is almost identical in every respect (i.e., of making them good and happy citizens and an economic asset to the nation). Australia has developed a conscience with regard to the aborigines. The Church goes to a great deal of trouble to look after their spiritual and moral welfare; the different Governments understand enough about them to try and solve their problem by allowing them to live the life that nature intended that they should live, and lays a kindly and protective hand upon them. Consequently, no one could treat them in the way the adult deaf in one State have been treated. Until Australia knows as much about the deaf and dumb as she does about the aborigines there is no hope of doing any good for them.