Eduard Lindeman

Eduard Christian Lindeman was born in St. Clair, Michigan, on May 9, 1885, one of ten children of Danish immigrant parents. Orphaned at an early age he worked in a series of laboring jobs in agriculture, shipbuilding, and construction, attending formal schooling only intermittently. At age twenty-two, however, he managed to gain admittance to a special program for "sub-freshmen" at Michigan Agricultural college, later Michigan State University, in East Lansing.

Biographers all agree that on his entry to college Lindeman was, if not illiterate, at least well below the average in terms of reading and writing abilities. With the help of a sympathetic college secretary, and a series of jobs on the college farm Lindeman persevered with his studies to the extent that while an undergraduate the authored essays, poetry, editorials for the college newspaper and a four act play. While at the college he met and married Hazel Taft, the daughter of the Chair of the Horticultural Department at the college.

For nine years after his graduation, from 1911 to 1920, Lindeman was employed in a series of different jobs. For a time he was editor of a Michigan agricultural journal, The Gleaner, in which some of his earliest published writings are contained. He was also assistant to the minister of the Plymouth Congregational Church in East Lansing, 4-H Club extension director based at Michigan Agricultural College, and instructor at the YMCA George Williams College in Chicago.

In 1920, Lindeman obtained his first university teaching post at the North Carolina College for Women. He remained in university life, apart from the interruption caused by World War Two, until his retirement, serving nearly all his years as a professor at the New York School of Social Work, later part of Columbia University, which he joined as a professor of Social Philosophy in 1924.

It was soon after joining the New York School of Social Work that, in 1926, he published his major work on adult education, The Meaning of Adult Education. In the twenty-four years between the publication of this seminal text and his retirement in 1950, Lindeman published approximately 204 articles, 107 book reviews, five books, sixteen monographs, and seventeen chapters in other works. He edited four books, shared joint authorship of another, and gave at least 44 lectures of which some written record remains.

Lindeman was a member of the National Child Labor Commission and director of the Workers' Education Bureau of America from 1926 to 1937. He was editor of Workers' Education while also serving as trustee at the New School for Social Research in New York. He held visiting professorships at Temple University (1934-1935), the University of California (1936 and 1938), Stanford University (1941), Columbia University (1941-1942), the University of Wisconsin (1943), and the University of Delhi, India (1949-1950). He was advisory editor to Mentor Books, educational advisor to the British Army of Occupation in Germany (1946), and chair of the American Civil Liberties Union Commission on Academic Freedom (1949).

At the occasion of a testimonial dinner for Eduard Lindeman in 1953, the last year of his life, a letter of tribute from the American Civil Liberties Union declared that "a catalogue of De. Lindeman's activities during this first seventy years

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might lead a careless visitor from Mars to believe that he was not a man but a syndicate."

On the same occasion a letter from Malcolm Knowles, written on behalf of the Adult Education Association of the United States, addressed the Association's tribute to Lindeman with the words "you have been the one 'elder statesman' in the field to whom the younger organizers of the new Adult Education Association have consistently and confidently turned for inspiration, moral support, and wise guidance."

Select Bibliography


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