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THE BLURRED FRONTIER

THE difference between natural growth and growth which must at the same time cope with distortion and abnormality is very like the difference between health and disease. Exertion and some pain are involved in both situations, but when the surrounding conditions are unnatural, the struggle is doubly difficult. This comparison is necessary if we are to understand the problems of educational reform in the "advanced" societies. In terms of actual teaching, the difference is illustrated by contrasting the task of Socrates in the *Meno* with the "double ignorance" which confronts him in the *Gorgias*. In the *Meno,* there is a boy who wants to learn, and Socrates easily awakens his mind. In the *Gorgias,* he makes practically no headway at all against the confident opinions of Polus and Callicles. For these two have the support of the "practical men" of the time, and cannot be persuaded by Socrates, even though he draws on all his resources.

The issue between Socrates and his opponents is *power*. They hold that the possession of power is the highest good, while Socrates maintains that finding out what kind of a life a man should live is the prime consideration. This is still the central issue before mankind. The argument for endless technological development, as a good in itself, is the argument for power. The argument for continuing the Vietnam war is the argument for power. Many of the arguments for "revolution" are arguments for power, although they often pretend to be something else.

It is hardly necessary to show how the drive for power works corruption in the major sectors of society. The institutions relating to property and its protection are in time characterized by ruthless indifference to human welfare. Justice is warped in the service of power. The centers of higher learning are gradually placed in thraldom to the interests of power, and even elementary schools come to embody influences responsive to the credo of power and reflect the euphemisms and hypocrisies to which the service of power leads.

However, for reasons which are not obscure, schools and colleges are the places where revolt and the demand for a restoration of authentic human intentions and purposes first appear. While the young of a society may not be its wisest members, they are without question the least corrupted by the general tendencies of the age. They are not yet blinded by their own compromises to the infamies of the rule of power nor trained in the allegiances which camouflage its brutalizing influence.

There is good reason, then, for those who seek far-reaching changes in human affairs to begin by establishing schools. It is not long, however, before they realize that the "progress" of which many members of their society are so proud is itself the principal obstacle to reform in education. Technological advance has made simplicity a thing of the past. External, technical interdependence is no friend of fresh and simple beginnings. Even the requirements of the law are scaled to "bigness" and the heavy, institutional approach. There are zoning problems in both cities and suburbs, and building code and licensing requirements must be met. It is not impossible to start a school—many people are doing it—but there are many problems of a sort which did not exist at all a hundred years ago. Most good changes come from small beginnings, mainly for the reason that a venture which starts small gives opportunity to the founders to learn from experience about a great many things, but at a level where mistakes are not expensive and usually can be corrected with a little extra effort. Starting out on a large scale omits these lessons and may generate delusions of grandeur in people who

can't afford to be wrong. A small venture, moreover, has a better chance of limiting or controlling its relations with the existing institutions.

History leaves little doubt but that schools *can* exercise a transforming influence on human society. But it might be better to use some other term than "schools," today, even though none seems available. Perhaps we should speak of educational centers or networks, and let the word "school" rest for a while. Or, if we could restrict the word school to mean places to which children and the young come *voluntarily* to learn, this might be a way to restore it to limited use. A school, then, would be free in the sense of not being compulsory, and free in the sense of having no connection with power. It would not, that is, have anything to do with government. This is the Gandhian conception, and it is also the reason why, more than a century ago, Christen Kold called the first school he started in Ryslinge, Denmark, a "free" school. And today, young people of high school or college age would not need particular places to go to, if Ivan Illich's "network" scheme could be established widely enough for students to find the kind of help they need.

A couple of hundred years ago, preliminary education was provided by the clergy in many countries. Men trained in religion had more learning than anyone else. The students came to the parson's home to do their lessons. Later, if they showed promise, they might go to one of the universities. Preachers no longer do work of this sort, but, around the country, there are a few families which have undertaken the education of their own children, and in rural areas it is less difficult to start a school, if there are enough parents to swing it. What seems important to recognize is that, in one of the "advanced" societies, the problem is not simply education or teaching, but involves coping with conditions established by an already existing and omnipresent institution—dealing with Polus and Callicles. This means that there can be no over-all plan, but will involve instead a lot of ingenious improvisations by individuals. This would apply especially to the lower grades.

When the young reach an age at which they can get around by themselves, all of Illich's proposals become pertinent. Ivan Illich seems a kind of Edward Bellamy of educational reform. Arthur Morgan called Bellamy a "social engineer," meaning that he was the kind of a man who could think clearly about the needs and possibilities of large numbers of people, and devise means of seeing them. Illich seems to be doing just this in respect to educational needs. The crucial considerations of the initiative and independent vision of the student have primary respect in Illich's conception. In his "networks" plan, the idea is to place the educational resources of the world within the reach of the student, at the least possible cost, without any attempt to "lead" him. Libraries and their equivalents are all that have to be added to this plan, but we already have those. Also needed, of course, would be competent people to bring the networks into existence and to provide basic information about them through a little publishing activity.

One other idea that might work would be various sorts of schools in existing industrial installations. Many large plants have facilities for holding classes for in-plant instruction of employees. These premises could be used for night classes in general education. Industries involving special technologies might find it an interesting experiment to teach the scientific background which supports their undertakings and try exploration of related ecological issues. Numerous industries have relationships with design and the arts; these could develop a "Bauhaus" sort of activity in connection with their work, for employees who are interested. Even small plants which have experimented with programs of this sort on a modest scale have found them exciting and even practically rewarding.

The idea is to transform our industrial society into a better living environment for all concerned. In the long run, this will probably be accomplished by learning how to take the right kind and amount of technology back to the land, and working to restore the land through organic methods of agriculture, to which everyone who works the land must come, sooner or later; and also, by beginning to think of industry and technology as tools instead of the master-system of our lives. Such changes will have to be accomplished by people who are *in* industry as well as by others, and this means making beginnings, as soon as possible, with owners and managers who are open to ideas of this sort. Educational ventures are the best possible means of opening up minds to new possibilities. Only a very few pace-setters would be needed to start such activities going.

The Socratic theme is a practical necessity of all such undertakings. The goal of education is not success in the climb toward a position or role of power, but learning how to live a good life. This applies to everyone. "Upward mobility" takes on another meaning in the framework of such a philosophy. Reaching the top means doing well the work one most wants to do, and learning about the world in ways one finds most interesting.

Christen Kold, the great Danish educational reformer, conceived his schools for the common people in this way, and Gandhi regarded his basic education in this light. Both, you could say, started at the "bottom," Kold with Danish peasants, Gandhi with Indian villagers. They started with the very backbone of the population. Kold turned down opportunities to work in schools for the upper classes; his duty, he felt, was with the common people. He envisioned a great cultural revival for Denmark, through the study of history, Norse mythology, and classics of literature. The national idea was a theme of his instruction, but he had little use for nationalism, which he regarded as military and expansionist, and alien to his aims. His reform began with the liberation of the pupils from memorization, which was the universally practiced and officially approved method of instruction in the Danish state schools. He was widely attacked for this, but he had a distinguished ally in Bishop Grundtvig, an illustrious Danish reformer of religion, and when the pupils in his school were examined by a committee of visiting dignitaries, they found the young people better informed than children in the state schools and better, even, than the examiners in some areas of learning. The secret of Kold's success was his extraordinary enthusiasm linked with great common sense, and his method of vivid oral teaching. He used memory work little if at all. He found that the peasant youth were hungry to learn, and he operated his school for very modest fees. His second school was a high school—the Dalby Folk High School. This story is told of Kold during its early days:

> One day a farmer approached Kold in behalf of one of his laborers, who he said would like to come to the school. This young man could read and figure well enough, the farmer said, but it was spiritual enlightenment he needed. "And, as the Good Book says in regard to things of the spirit: 'Freely it was given to you and freely you shall give it to others,' I suppose it won't cost anything." Kold's keen eyes narrowed for a moment, then speaking tersely, he said: "You say it is spiritual food the man seeks; but tell me, isn't he bringing his body with him?" "Certainly," said the man. "And do you mean to say that you expect me to feed that gratis too?"

Yet it was close to Kold's heart to try to make his school self-supporting. As the enrollment grew, he conceived the idea of buying farm land and putting up a much bigger school, where the students could work the land in the summer and go to school all winter. He found a sixty-acre tract that should have good soil after drainage, borrowed some money, and made a down payment. Then he bought some farm equipment and horses and went to work. Within a year he had fifty-eight students who were working out their tuition on the land. Before ten years had passed the school was entirely self-supporting, and Kold had been able to open a large girls'

school, also, the first in Denmark for young women. The girls saw what the boys were learning and demanded similar opportunities. Again, growth was phenomenal, with over a hundred young women attending within a few years. The boys' school, meanwhile, now housed a total of two hundred, including guests and visitors who were welcome. Schools of the sort Kold had begun now sprang up all over Denmark, and together they came to be known as the folk school movement. It exerted an enormous influence on the peasantry and eventually helped to alter even conventional education, by the example set. By 1885 Danish folkschools had an enrollment of 7,000 students, and twenty years ago some thirty per cent of the adult population of Denmark was attending these schools. Danish immigrants to the United States have established folkschools in Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota, and one is said to exist in California.

There is surprisingly little in print about the work of Christen Kold, considering his stature as an educational reformer. There is no entry for him in the *Britannica!* Here we have drawn mainly on *Christen Kold* by Nanna Goodhope, issued in 1958 by the Lutheran Publishing House in Blair, Nebraska. Another good book is *Light from the North* by Joseph K. Hart.

Yet reading about Christen Kold will not help much concerning what to do or teach now. The importance of his work lies in the fact that it was a break-through and a radical change, that it grew out of the commitment and vision of a single man, and that he found a way to do what he knew ought to be done against the grain of the times. He gained the support of the young, and through them the support of parents, and he accomplished nearly everything he did with practically no money. In his favor was the fact that the changes he sought were in the air, but they were certainly not in the thinking of the representatives of the dominant institutions of Denmark, who tried to stop him, calling him a heretic and a corruptor of youth, like Socrates before him. He gave no tests or examinations and trusted the students to pay for the educational materials they used. He helped work the school farm himself and once was seen leading down the road a cow he had purchased for the school. The clergyman who saw him thought it ridiculous for a nationally known educator to lead a cow on a public highway, but Kold thought that was just the thing for an educator of the people to do.

In fact, the economic foundation of the folkschool Kold began may be its most interesting characteristic, from the viewpoint of present needs. Schools that accept no support from the state need to be self-supporting if young people without rich parents are to go to them. It is here that the technological progress of the United States turns into a barrier to reform, since the weight of technological systems is almost always on the side of conventionality and conformity. Agriculture was possible as a means of support of Kold's schools, since Denmark was an agricultural nation with a strong and numerous peasantry. The same is true of the vast rural areas of India, where the Gandhian scheme of education was closely related to the economic processes of each region. The "Children" article in MANAS for Jan. 6 of this year tells of a school modelled on Gandhian conceptions which is striving to become self-supporting through agricultural production. The school has become a center for adult meetings on agricultural methods and the young are taught methods of planting and animal husbandry with the expectation that they will return to the villages and teach others. This school in Bihar, Samonwaya Vidyapith, owns some seventy acres of wasteland which it is reclaiming and developing. "The plan for the future is that with the sale of agricultural and dairy produce the school will no longer need financial help from the outside. This adds the dimension of self-sufficiency to education." School projects include digging and enlarging existing wells, installing generators for electric power pumps for irrigation, and milling flour. A large orchard has been

planted and an effort is made to develop compost so that no inorganic fertilizer will be needed.

Maybe something like that is possible in the United States, but one would think that direct applications of industrial know-how would also be called for, to make products for the general market. In any event, ingenuity is required for educational ventures which are independent of subsidy to find an economic base that will provide stability and at the same time prove a vehicle for the practical side of education for life.

A great deal of human effort is now going into attempts to alter the policies of existing institutions of both government and economic enterprise, with much anger and acrimonious dispute being generated, but not much progress. If only a little of this energy were diverted into independent channels of constructive work, along Gandhian lines, the results might be dramatic. After all, the basic objective in the minds of a great many people, although with very different notions of how to reach to the goal, is the recovery from public institutions of a long list of individual responsibilities and functions. Why not stop arguing about these matters and simply try to do what needs to be done, on however small a scale? What is done well on a small scale will often grow to very large proportions in a very short time—witness the Danish folkschools. A century is not really a long time, considering what is accomplished in human terms by such changes.

This is not to suggest that Kold's inspiration is adequate for present needs. The point is that solutions adequate to present needs will never spring fully armed from the brains of planners. Matrices of cultural hospitality to social invention need to be developed first. Such matrices, again, will not be the result of writing "papers," but of the creation of community at various levels of human relationships. Not all communities need be "on the land." A community could be thought of as a conscious social aggregate brought into being by people who have determined to achieve certain common ends—such as starting a school, creating an Illich-type network, or holding classes in a print-shop or factory of some sort.

And over-all there is need for the Socratic conception of the purpose of education—to help individuals find out for themselves what is a good life to lead, and how to do it.

REVIEW
MAGAZINES FROM ABROAD

IN *Gandhi Marg* for January, 1971, George Lakey compares violent with nonviolent methods in revolution. He sets the problem:

> Violent revolution has for a long time been the last resort for men of social conscience who could no longer tolerate the exploitation and humiliation of their people. Men of many political persuasions, from Thomas Jefferson to Robespierre to Lenin, have exercised the right to revolution against a system of inhumanity.
>
> However, the revolutionist must today ask himself, "Do I want my country to become another Vietnam? Do I want my people to be subjected to campaigns of annihilation, my land poisoned, my families so broken apart that a whole generation of scarred persons is bred?"
>
> Clearly, the cost of violent revolution can be terrifyingly high, especially if it involves clashing with the arrogance and brutality of the American Empire. Yet a man of conscience cannot agree to the continuation of the status quo, for it is itself violent and subjects the people to more subtle forms of terror and want.
>
> This is the dilemma, then: should one launch a violent revolution knowing that it will bring horrible suffering in its wake, or should one accept the status quo, knowing that the psychological and physical suffering may be as high, although disguised in the orderliness of exploitation?

This is very largely a historical study, and it seems free of special pleading. Mr. Lakey willingly admits Frantz Fanon's claim that acts of violence may have a therapeutic influence on the one committing them, but he shows that the violence, *per se,* does not produce this effect, which results rather from the fact that for the oppressed individual the violence is an active assertion of human dignity. It is his motivation, not the means, which has the good effect. Action for one's rights without the use of violence may be much more fruitful, in broad human terms.

For one thing, commitment to nonviolent action involves one assumption not necessary to the use of violence. The nonviolent man assumes the humanity, however degraded or misguided, of his opponent. The successes which have attended the practice of Gandhian nonviolence seem mainly to have involved a vindication of this assumption. In one place Mr. Lakey writes:

> The major image projected by the revolutionary movement to the as yet uncommitted masses (in a nonviolent revolution) is moral superiority to the oppressor. This is itself a revolution of sorts because of the contempt the oppressed have for themselves. While the superiority of the cause may seem self-evident to the revolutionist, it obviously is not to the whole people, or they would have found their way to freedom long ago.
>
> The major impact which the struggle has on the oppressor's self-image is its revelation of his own violence. Hard as it may be to believe, exploiters have an almost infinite capacity for self-delusion, the ability really to believe that they are superior in every important way. Their own actions open their own eyes—they are taught by their life-experience that they are quite capable of atrocious behavior. A classic example happened in the American civil rights movement in the border state of Maryland, where a white segregationist restaurant owner furiously abused a participant in a sit-in action. When he saw himself on television that night he was overwhelmed by the picture which had never been a part of his self-concept. He was converted to the cause of Negro freedom.
>
> Needless to say, this new insight is less likely to develop in the course of guerilla warfare because the violence of the revolutionary movement provides justification for the oppressor's own violence. He therefore is able to retain his illusions about himself as a decent man except when threatened by violence, in which case he will respond by "self-defence."

Another interesting comparison is in the after-effects of guerilla action. As Lakey says: "The question must be faced by the serious revolutionist: Will violent struggle increase the problems to be faced after independence, and thereby increase the likelihood of dictatorship in order forcibly to suppress the tendency to settle difficult problems by violence?" He quotes at some length from Liddell Hart, whose studies of T. E. Lawrence's Arabian campaigns were closely followed by resistance leaders during World War

II. Hart, however, had some second thoughts about guerilla action in relation to general social welfare. While Spanish guerillas were more successful than Wellington's armies in loosening Napoleon's grip on Spain, finally liberated Spain knew no peace thereafter. An epidemic of armed revolutions continued for half a century and broke out again in the present century. This was Hart's conclusion:

> The habit of violence takes deeper root in irregular warfare than it does in regular warfare. In the latter it is counteracted by the habit of obedience to constituted authority, whereas the former makes a virtue of defying authority and violating rules. It becomes very difficult to rebuild a country and a stable state on such an undermined foundation.

On the other hand, nonviolent action may train the people in the use of social invention and is to be preferred since its effectiveness is not based upon skill in destruction.

Gandhi Marg is the quarterly journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, 221-223 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi, India. A year's subscription is $2.50.

In the January issue of another Indian magazine, *Sarvodaya,* a digest of Gandhi an thought, Jayaprakash Narayan writes on the long-term support that is needed for the land reforms achieved by Vinoba and others engaged in the Gramdan movement. After a summary of achievements thus far, he says:

> Gandhiji talked of economic and political decentralization not as an end in itself, but as a means to the creation of a nonviolent social order.
>
> Now I think that some of us are inclined to make the mistake of thinking that by merely setting up decentralized industries, we have made full preparations for nonviolence. We think this work in itself prepares us for nonviolence, moulds our minds, and the minds of the spinners and weavers engaged in village industries. But this is not an automatic process.
>
> If the economy is decentralized, there is less violence; there is less concentration of wealth and less scope for exploitation of man by man. But please remember that for ages and ages the economy of society used to be decentralized. And yet there was terrible violence in society. All the princes, kings, nawabs and sultans of those days went on fighting all the time.
>
> Nonviolence did not automatically come into being because the economy was decentralized.
>
> The Greek city states were the ideal examples of decentralized political organizations. Yet they were perpetually at war among themselves. You know the history of Greece.
>
> We uphold the concept today of "Community ownership," as in Gramdan, and consider such ownership as conducive to nonviolent social relationships.
>
> We say Gramdan points the way to world peace. Again we take too much for granted.
>
> What I am driving at is that for nonviolence decentralization is not enough, common ownership is not enough. They are necessary, but not enough.
>
> The roots of violence are in the minds of men and it is there that the radical remedy has to be applied.

Jayaprakash Narayan goes on to speak of the role of Shanti Sena—or Peace Brigade—which provides training in nonviolence. "Not enough," he says, is being done in this direction.

Sarvodaya is published at Srinivasapuram, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India. Subscription is $2.50 a year.

A useful analysis of the conventional radical vocabulary occurs in an article by George Gardstein on "Work and Culture" in *Anarchy* 118 (December, 1970). He begins:

> A concern with "the working class" or with "workers" is not a humanistic concern, not a concern with real human beings. The term "worker" denotes not a full person, but a component in production, a part-person, a role. To be concerned with "the workers" is not to be concerned with men, but with abstractions. Industrialism treats men and women as mere functions, and is concerned with them only insofar as they play their roles properly. Socialism reveals its bourgeois basis by swallowing industrial jargon and the attitude to men that it denotes. When "workers" stopped playing the role allotted to them by the Bolsheviks, and marched through St. Petersburg in 1921, Lenin said they were acting against the

interests of "the working class" (which they were: they were acting in their own interests as people) and had them shot. Socialist workerism is bourgeois ideology and viciously antihuman.

From the same article:

In a society where the great majority do work which is uncreative and stultifying, a new invention is made art. Art is the symbol of a sick and sad society. Art never existed before capitalism: people used to call it "work." "We have no art," say the Balinese. "We do everything as well as we can." Art galleries are an apologia for insipid surroundings and the grotesqueness of the industrial city; paintings are an attempt to justify the despoliation of the countryside and the pollution of the biosphere. The Design Centre and the Craft Centre are agents of a system that forces millions to do deadening work and consume badly made and ugly objects. . . .

These are harsh words . . . with much truth in them. Something said by another contributor to this issue of Anarcky, Keith Paton, fits well here:

William Morris . . . defined art as "that which is, or should be, done by the ordinary working man while about his ordinary work." Morris looked for the *abolition of alienation in work,* not for the abolition of work itself. If we ignore side-assumptions about the *conquest* of nature and the *manliness* of work, we can groove just as much with the following: "Nature will not be finally conquered till our work becomes a part of the pleasure of our lives. . . . The hope of pleasure in the work itself: how strange that hope must seem to some of my readers! Yet I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies, and that even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body. . . . If we work thus we will be men, and our days will be happy and eventful."

Thinking along these lines, Keith Paton gets to an actual pattern for a "world of small, loosely-federated regions and communities":

One such pattern might involve a general one-step or two-step localization of functions, as compared with the present:

Level One: Increase in do-it-yourself, kit-construction, repairs: spread of domestic tools and machinery.

Level Two: Neighborhood workshops, redevelopment of craft work at high technological level: also communal task forces, e.g. build-it-ourselves projects for community centers, swimming baths, adventure play-grounds, etc.

Level Three: Small multipurpose community factories able to create a variety of products by flexible tooling (and/or prograrnming) on versatile machines over which men can remain in control.

Level Fonr: Medium-sized largely automatic factories for intra- and inter-regional relative specialization (and for export sector?), evenly spread throughout the country. For production both of finished goods, and for servicing of community factories and workshops and standardized materials and parts, machine tools, etc.

Such a system might be inefficient (in the short term especially) in raising every citizen's gross standard of commodities, but that would not be its purpose. Compared with the possibilities of world and nation-wide continuous flows, this system might conceivably result in definite failures of coordination, but never in irreversible breakdown. And so what if hundreds of men can't work because of a supply breakdown? It's a lovely morning, let's go for a walk. . . .

"Such a system" could also come into being, little by little, in response to a gradual increase in the number of people who want to live that way.

COMMENTARY
"EDUCATION WITHOUT SCHOOLING"

THE best available summary of the ideas of Ivan Illich is an article which appeared in the *New York Review of Books* (Jan. 7, 1971) and is reprinted in *Cidoc Cuaderno* No. 1013, a publication of the Centro Intercultural de Documentacion, Apdo. 479, Cuernavaca, Mexico ($3.00). In this article, titled "Education without School: How it Can Be Done," Dr. Illich alludes briefly to the worldwide dissatisfaction with present-day schooling and education, devoting most of his space to a detailed proposal of alternatives. (A summary of his four "networks" was provided in the editorial in MANAS for April 28.) At the beginning he says:

> In this essay, I intend to show that the *inverse of school* is possible. That we can depend on self-motivated learning instead of employing teachers to bribe or compel the student to find time and the will to learn; that we can provide the learner with new links to the world instead of continuing to funnel all educational programs through the teacher.

This is an article of more than twelve thousand words, and it needs careful reading. Illich outlines the four networks, discusses what they will do for students, meets objections, and indicates in a general way the broadly corrective effects on society as a whole that "de-schooling" may be expected to produce. Throughout there are perceptive anticipations of this sort, along with practical suggestions for coping with various problems:

> In a de-schooled society professionals could no longer claim the trust of their clients on the basis of their curricular pedigree, or ensure their standing by simply referring their clients to other professionals who approve of their schooling. Instead of placing trust in professionals, it should be possible at any time, for any potential client to consult with other experienced clients of a professional about their satisfaction with him by means of another peer network easily set up by computer, or by a number of other means. Such networks can be seen as public utilities which permit students to choose their teachers or patients their healers.

> As citizens have new choices, new chances for learning, their willingness to seek leadership should increase. We may expect that they will experience more deeply both their own independence and their need for guidance. . . . De-schooling education should increase—rather than stifle—the search for men with practical wisdom who are willing to sustain the newcomer on his educational adventure.

Illich's program is aimed at "the creation of a society in which personal acts themselves reacquire a value higher than that of making things and manipulating people."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NEW MEANINGS FOR ART

IN a paper, "The Arts and the Good School," published in the January issue of *Cultural Affairs,* Joseph Featherstone explores the role of art education for children. Mr. Featherstone, it will be remembered, writes on education for the *New Republic.* In this article he begins with a general survey of the symptoms of cultural unrest and dissatisfaction, remarking that "all professions are currently redefining their obligations; and that in many instances the new, emerging definitions are somehow bound up with education, taking the word in its broadest sense." Yet questions about education become doubly difficult to answer when the foundations of culture are being called into question. On what shall a man stand for the purposes of proposing change or reform? As this writer says:

> The truth is that our society is nearly as culturally polarized as it is politically divided, and the results have not been good either for politics or for art. Certainly they have been bad for thought and criticism. The art world is often a swirl of contending, equally smelly orthodoxies, the cult of the hip and the new vying with gloomy cultural bigotry and reactionary Old Guardism. And so, like politics, art gets reduced to a series of polemical gestures. Similarly, the visions of a new education to use as alternatives to the existing tedium of the schools are often little more than polemical gestures, relying for justification on the continued existence of a discredited establishment. They, too, count on an atmosphere heavy with contending dogmatisms. And they, too, with the exception of a few profoundly humane works like Herbert Kohl's *36 Children,* or George Dennison's *The Lives of Children,* have been almost entirely negative.

Interestingly, Mr. Featherstone uses A. S. Neill's Summerhill to illustrate the impoverishment of the times, suggesting that Neill's work is an achievement in community living rather than a landmark in education. Summerhill, he says, is an accomplishment in teaching children how to live together, and should be "assessed in terms of its value as a children's commune, rather than as a school." He adds:

> I'm not attacking Summerhill, which is, after all, a courageous experiment in a world where simply living together does seem an accomplishment. I'm only noting the minimal and negative character of this vision of schooling that so many American readers have embraced. It seems to me that a school where there is almost no art, music, literature, crafts or science where there is no importance attached to good teaching, and where adults are thought to have little to give to the children—that such a school is not ideal. It asks too little from the children, and from life. And yet to many in this country Summerhill is an idyll.

There are, of course, two ways to look at this judgment. One would be that the conventional cultural activities are too artificial to begin with, and a new start, such as Neill's experiment, needs to be stripped down to bare essentials. The other view would say simply that Mr. Featherstone has provided us with a good diagnosis of the culturally visionless condition of Western man. Getting around to the schools of the United States, he says:

> Our schools are, by and large, dispiriting, repressive places for children and for teachers. They do ignore the connection between feeling and thinking, they are bad environments for people. And one of the several ways in which they are bad environments is surely their systematic neglect of the arts.
>
> A number of people, some with long experience in the schools, plainly think that sentiments like those in the sentence I just wrote are irrelevant. Their conviction is that art, cultural change, the quality of school environments and all the rest is beside the point: to them the main point is that schools aren't adequately teaching the fundamentals—like reading and math—necessary for survival in this society. Why discuss frills and fringes when the basic fabric is so tattered?
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> Like so many questions about the schools, this one throws us back to purposes and human nature: philosophy. One reason to talk about the arts in the schools is that everything we know about human nature—and in particular the nature of children—points to the centrality of expressiveness. The arts are the language of human experience. John Blackie,

an Englishman who has taken a hand in the reform of his country's primary schools, is fond of pointing out that, although there are always some children who seem to have trouble learning to read, no young child has any difficulty learning to paint. (The power of the children's art in any good school for the "handicapped" is food for thought.) Adults are a different story, of course; many confess they can't express themselves with color and form, just as many have been trained by schools to believe that they have no head for mathematics. And Blackie notes that there are good grounds for thinking that the arts are more important than the 3 R's as conventionally conceived; after all, people have done without the 3 R's throughout most of the existence of the human race, but never at any point have they done without art.

Tacking on a few "art" courses to the conventional curriculum will not help at all, Featherstone believes. At issue is not piece-meal curricular reform but basic changes in attitude. The very buildings are ugly and uninviting. School lunches are notoriously poor, and lunchrooms "are chaotic places where frightened children get more upset, or else they are rigidly policed settings where human speech is unwelcome." What good can a little "art" do in such a setting? The arts arise and flourish naturally among people whose lives are harmonious and free, and *this* is the kind of art the children need as part of their experience. It might be better not to call it "art" at all, but something else. The ancient Greeks managed quite well without the term.

The fact that the reforms that we need seem almost unobtainable should not prevent us from recognizing what they are. The idea is to restore to the child's life the wonderful variety of expressiveness which is often spontaneous in a simple culture, but which in ours has been subdivided and turned over to specialists and professional performers, leaving human beings generally to be passive spectators of the hot-house excellence of the "performing arts," while feeling incompetent and shut out from any participation. What is wanted, then, is an environment for children such as Elwyn Richardson provided in his one-room New Zealand school and later described in *The Early World* (Pantheon). What Richardson did for those children certainly covered "art education," but was also much more.

Something said by Mr. Featherstone applies directly to the way Richardson worked. Here the *Cultural Affairs* writer is talking about recent reforms in child education in Britain:

> . . . it is important to note what the Plowden Report also suggests: that principals and teachers most successful in practice are often unable to formulate their aims clearly. . . . The British example suggests that it is a mistake to attempt to know and control everything that goes on in a learning situation. This is not said in any anti-intellectual or romantically mystical sense. It is said, I hope, in a true scientific and experimental spirit. We do not have precise information about children's learning—the best way to read for a particular child, for example. This, among other things, is an argument for having classroom environments where teachers can talk to children freely and watch them trying their hand at different activities. Such an approach puts a good deal of faith in teachers. In this country we lack that sort of faith. Our schools assume the worst of teachers as well as of children. One of the great problems with our educational system is that in all its workings it discounts the value of a teacher's own experience, to say nothing of a child's, and our cult of educational research ignores one of the main lessons of the British primary school reform teachers, like children, don't get any heavier by being weighed.

All the evidence points to the fact that good things will begin to happen in education when teachers are turned loose in small schools, under circumstances where they can work as teachers instead of monitors and administrators, and are permitted to function as the many-sided human beings that teachers need to be.

FRONTIERS

On the Home Front

GANDHI and others concerned with the liberation of India from British rule often spoke of "cultural imperialism" as being more oppressive by far than political invasion, since it affects the habits of thought of the people. As Jayaprakash Narayan has pointed out, Indians are still struggling under the weight of Western cultural assumptions in their educational system, established by the British. Ivan Illich has formulated a similar indictment of the educational and religious institutions of South America, which too easily become transmission belts for the standards and objectives of the acquisitive society of the United States. A gross distortion of the meaning of life results from placing so high a premium on material progress and the possession of "things."

But what, it might be asked, does a civilization which exerts this sort of influence on others do to its own people? This question has of course been asked before. Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* and Ellul's *The Technological Society* are books which attempt to provide some of the answers, and there have been various inquiries at other levels. Actually, very nearly every "problem" of major proportion now receiving public attention is an aspect of what we have been doing to ourselves through an excess of technological development and by related means.

In respect to drugs, for example, we might recall that an eminent psychiatrist labeled the present the Age of Addiction, pointing for evidence to the widespread dependence of adults on sedatives and tranquillizing medication. There seems to be increasing acceptance of the idea of dependence on drugs. A recent review identifies a book on drug use by the young as "against the hard drugs but approving of the psychedelics, at least in principle, and especially with reference to marijuana." Current fiction probably reflects this general tendency with great accuracy. In an adventure story set in time a few years from now, the cold war with the Soviets is still going strong, and an American flyer has been dispatched to obtain information for his government by flying over the border between Russia and China. In this tale, *North Cape,* by Joe Poyer, it is difficult to tell where existing technology leaves off and "science fiction" begins. While the observation plane is highly computerized, numerous complex decisions remain for the pilot, such as what to photograph. The flyer has to be unnaturally keyed up to make the split-second choices required. This is done by the use of chemicals:

> Teleman was trained in the use of certain psychic energizer drugs of the amphetamine and lysergic acid families that could boost his body system output to fantastic heights in relation to normal physiological response. The LSD derivatives extended his powers of concentration and, through their hallucinogenic effect, made him feel that he was actually part of the aircraft. They also increased his comprehension and ability to deal with a multitude of facts in a very short time.
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> The amphetamines provided the same effect for his bodily responses, increasing his reaction time and slowing his time sense to compensate for the demands of the aircraft's speed.
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> Teleman's physiological and biochemical status was monitored constantly during the mission through a specially tailored system of instruments blended together to form the Physiological Control and Monitoring System. At the start of the mission, an intravenous catheter was inserted into the superior venous cave vein through a plug implanted surgically in his shoulder. A glass electrode was brought into intimate contact with his bloodstream at this nearest acceptable point to the heart. Through the electrode a series of minute pulses set up by an electrochemical reaction with his blood, informed the computer continually of his bodily status. The computer was programmed to receive inputs directly from various parts of the aircraft's controlling instrumentation that, coupled with the *in vivo* status reports, determined the time and dosage of the drugs he received. If the instrumentation, directed by the flight plan or by instructions from Teleman, called for a state of physiologically alert and expanded consciousness, proper drugs were fed into his bloodstream through the catheter and his body responded accordingly.

When the plane could be on automatic pilot, the computer fed the flyer barbiturates to make him sleep. While he was preconditioned for all this with a high tolerance for drugs, the flyer usually found that "he was thoroughly poisoned at the end of a mission." He was indeed a technological man—constituting the sensitive nervous tissue at the heart of a very complex machine:

> In short, Teleman was carefully tailored to the aircraft and its missions. The reach the drugs allowed was marginal, yet enough to provide the control needed to handle his craft as no other airplane had ever been flown. Drugs kept him awake or put him to sleep, instantly. Others kept him at the peak of alertness for as long as required and his mind focused on his mission, his instruments, and his aircraft.

He was a masterpiece of technological planning and execution, and of course, in the story, he triumphs over the wily Russians, who could be no match for him.

Well, they don't really do things like that, do they? Probably not. Not yet. But as Peter Schrag remarks in a *Saturday Review* (April 17) editorial, the Orwellian conception of a society completely watched and controlled by government surveillance (in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*) is rapidly coming into being, and a few years ago we thought *that* was just fiction. Private agencies now have vast files of credit information, which includes a great deal of material which is personal and private (and sometimes quite inaccurate), and although credit bureaus are not the government, it is quite possible for all these data to be made centrally available, since, as Mr. Schrag says, "during the last generation (and most precipitously in the past three or four years) agencies of the government have created an extensive apparatus for the collection, storage, and exchange of what we once regarded as privileged information about the most intimate details of our private lives." Dossiers are maintained on millions of Americans by various agencies (which Mr. Schrag lists), and when these sources are supplemented by the enormous stores of information and misinformation collected by credit bureaus (which Ralph Nader writes about in the same issue of *SR*), there seems hardly a limit to the kind of "spy system" that could be set up. Science fiction, in other words, has an unpleasant way of being realized in practice.

Cultural imperialism, quite evidently, begins at home.