

THE PRACTICE OF A LIFE

THE combination of wisdom with helpful kindness is so rare in practice, and so difficult to speak of except in abstraction, that the best way to get at exceptional behavior of this sort is by finding examples. In cases where fondness is an element, kindness may lead the person helped only to self-indulgence, in contrast with other relationships in which a careless indifference may prove a form of cruelty. A few years ago, we came across a doctor, a psychiatrist, who found out how to govern his desire to help his patients by teaching them to learn, little by little, to practice self-reliance, while depending on the doctor for the help they needed along the way. He worked out a system in which, after psychiatric treatment, they continued to heal themselves through tough-minded self-examination.

He was Abraham A. Low. Working in the Psychiatric Institute of the University of Illinois, and in his private practice, Dr. Low developed a method by which patients became able to catch themselves when they were relapsing into the habits which had made them sick, and to use the simple techniques he taught them for regaining balance. In principle they had to develop "*the will to bear discomfort.*" He taught his patients that getting well cannot be made *easy*. It is bound to involve some pain.

Here is a brief case history related by one man that Dr. Low helped.

George: When I was little I would get myself worked up so much that I would take my fists and hit myself on the head. All through public school and high school and college I made life miserable for myself and my parents. I practiced the angry and fearful temper. I must mention that I could never hold a job before Recovery training (Dr. Low's method). In December I was working for a Loan Company and again I felt like quitting because I didn't like the work. I stayed home and thought I should call the boss but I didn't. But the next day I

asked Frank to call the office and tell the boss I was too sick to work. But Frank talked me out of this. He said that is sabotage. And when it came to me that the doctor said if you fear to do something you do not fear the thing but your sensations; you fear being embarrassed or self-conscious. And the cure is to do what you fear to do and brave the sensation. So I phoned the office and the boss just asked me to come back soon. That only proved that the doctor was right and that I was afraid of my own embarrassment. After that I felt embarrassed on several occasions but faced it and did not try to ease out of it.

Frank of course was a fellow patient of Dr. Low and a member of Recovery, the self-help organization that the doctor had organized. And "sabotage" was a term for the excuses patients devised in order to indulge their weaknesses. Dr. Low wrote a book for his patients to study—*Mental Health Through Will-Training*, the contents of which were for general lay use and the guidance of groups. This book was first published in 1950 by Christopher, in North Quincy, Mass.

The book, however, had little popularity except among Dr. Low's followers. In those days practically no one trained in the various branches of psychological science used the term "will" or even acknowledged the will's existence, but Dr. Low had made this word a part of his title. And he said in his Preface:

The author rejects the psychoanalytic doctrine both as philosophy and therapeutic technique. In point of philosophy, he cannot share the view that human conduct is the result of unconscious drives, sexual or otherwise. To his way of thinking, adult life is not *driven* by instincts but guided by Will. . . . Quite proudly he claims . . . to echo the voice of common experience and common sense. Whatever may be meant by drives, be they instinctual cravings (the favorite psychoanalytic term), or emotional trends, desires, wishes, yearnings and [earnings, they all eventuate in impulses. acting or ready for action. To the author it is inconceivable that adult human life can be ordered without a Will holding down impulses.

Feelings and sensations, Dr. Low maintained, are beyond the control of the will, but the thoughts or impulses which lead to feelings can be either accepted or checked. He said:

Suppose an idea lodges itself in the brain suggesting danger. It is then for the will to judge and decide whether or not danger exists. If the Will accepts (says "yes" to) the idea of danger, then the thought of danger will mobilize feelings of insecurity and will release in their wake rebellious sensations and vehement impulses. The total experience will then be that of insecurity. Conversely, if the Will decrees that no danger threatens the thought of insecurity will be discontinued and feelings, sensations and impulses will retain their customary equilibrium.

Dr. Low adds in explanation:

If a person is seized with grief or stimulated by joy it would be senseless for the Will to claim that the joy is false or the grief impossible. Feelings are either experienced or not experienced. Their existence, wisdom and probability cannot be denied or affirmed. The same holds for sensations. If the head aches it would be absurd for the Will to object that, "No, this is no headache. It is unwise, untrue or improbable." Clearly, if the Will is to intervene in order to control the total experience of insecurity, its "no" cannot be directed to feelings and sensations. Instead, it must address itself to thoughts and impulses.

It is folly, Dr. Low says, to glory in being "right" in a dispute, or indignant when your view is not accepted. To be disturbed at the rejection of your righteousness is too big a price to pay. The "right" and "wrong" of an issue is trivial compared to maintaining one's mental health. This is the fundamental consideration that Dr. Low proposed to his patients. The patient is to watch the drift of his thought and to "spot" a tendency that will lead to a relapse. Most of all he must guard against acts of "Sabotage" which excuse him from using his will.

At Recovery meetings the members help one another by describing their psychological experiences and telling how they dealt with them. They study together the art of "spotting" and how to watch for sabotage. They learn to use the simple "Recovery" language in talking with one another. Dr. Low says:

The most important parts of its vocabulary are the words "sabotage" and authority. The authority of the physician is sabotaged if the patient presumes to make a diagnostic, therapeutic or prognostic statement. The verbiage of the temperamental lingo ("unbearable," "intolerable," "uncontrollable") constitutes sabotage because of the assumption that the condition is of a serious nature, which is a diagnosis or, that it is difficult to repair, which is a prognosis. It is a crass example of sabotage if the claim is advanced that, "my headache is there the very minute I wake up. I didn't have time to think about it. It came before I even had a chance to become emotional. How can that be nervous?" A statement of this kind throws a serious doubt on the validity of the physician's diagnosis and sabotages his authority. Likewise, it is a case of self-diagnosis and consequently sabotage to view palpitations as a sign of a heart ailment, of head pressure as meaning brain tumor, of sustained fatigue as leading to physical exhaustion. Once the physician had made the diagnosis of a psychoneurotic or post psychotic condition, the patient is no longer permitted to indulge in the pastime of self-diagnosing. If he does he is practicing sabotage. Patients are expected to lose their major symptoms after two months of Recovery membership and class attendance.

The point of this counsel needs illustration. During one meeting of a Recovery group in Southern California a woman told of her fear of heart trouble and how she took a brisk walk of eight blocks to show that she had overcome it, and then, after what she thought was a little flutter, walked two blocks more. The others in the group congratulated her on taking a vigorous walk to prove her health, but one of them pointed out that she might be diagnosing herself. Had she been to a doctor to find out if she really had some heart trouble? No, she said, "I just couldn't do that!" Then another member said, "But you can, you know. I went to a hospital and spent seven thousand dollars for those doctors to *prove* to me that I was organically sound—nothing wrong with me." Self-diagnosis is a bad thing if it opens the way to self-indulgence in sabotage.

Dr. Low gave an example of a woman, Mona, with neurotic tendencies who relapsed into a disturbed condition when another woman who had come to the meat counter of a market after

she did was served first by the butcher. This woman explained that Mona was "asleep." Analyzing, the doctor said:

Mona knew she tended to be preoccupied, inattentive, dreaming. In the preceding five years she had amassed a prodigious record of tasks neglected, things forgotten, remarks not heard. She knew her defect of not hearing, seeing and recalling properly. When at the butcher's she missed her first cue her first thought should have been that something went "wrong" because of her nervous condition; that her attention had wandered again as it had on so many previous occasions. Instead, she jumped to the conclusion it was "that woman" who caused her to lose her "rightful" place. You see, even in this "clear-cut" case there are two sides to the story, and it would take a very wise judge to decide which was the right and which the wrong side. Mona looked at her own side of the story only. The part of the story which could have been told by "that woman" was thoroughly neglected. It is the distinctive mark of the so-called intellectual to emphasize or over-emphasize one side of an issue only, usually his own side, and to look away from the other side.

Dr. Low comments:

The abiding distress of the nervous patient is precisely his inability to trust the validity of his thoughts or to have pride in the vitality of his feelings and sentiments. . . . Then comes the temperamental spell. It works a miraculous transformation. All of a sudden he is aroused to a fit of anger. He fumes and raves; he is indignant and fairly panting for a fight. What else can that be but strength, vigor and vitality? And that insult that was hurled at him by "that rascal" was clearly and undoubtedly an injustice, an unprovoked attack. That he is right and the other fellow wrong cannot possibly be questioned. In a "clear-cut case" of this kind, who but a fool or a knave could challenge his premises and conclusions? The temperamental spell reestablishes as with magic his intellectual claim to validity and his romantic claim to vitality.

Dr. Low's method began to take shape in the middle 1930s with the advent of Dr. Manfred Sakel's treatment of schizophrenia with shock by doses of insulin, and the Metrazol treatment of Dr. Ladislav Meduna, which also produced shock. Improvement in the patients was dramatic but it did not last. Shock treatments, Dr. Low found, broke the circuit of obsessive thought, giving the

patient a respite during which he could be trained. Without this training, he was likely to revert to his former condition.

A full account of this development is provided in *My Dear Ones*, a book by Neil and Margaret Rau published in 1971. The title is the phrase by which Dr. Low described the patients, for whom he greatly cared. The rationale of the training is given by the Raus:

From his years of study he had evolved the conception of the duality operating in nature. Everything that had life and movement was made up of a pair of opposites, he had discovered. Even language was so constructed that the meaning of one of the pair could not be understood until it was linked to the other. How could "Above" be understood without its counterpart "Below," or "Right" without "Wrong," or "Comfort" unless contrasted to "Effort"?

"All human thinking is built on the twosome principle," he would explain to his staff. "You can't have love without hate."

The opposites, he would continue, were always in a state of tension, and whenever one moved to meet the other, a tug of war would ensue which would result in victory for one or the other. In his efforts to bring understanding to his patients he made full use of this basic law of opposites. . . . Once the patient realized that for every negative force there was a positive tool with which to combat it, he could overcome abnormality with sanity. This was later to be an integral part of the Method he was to evolve: a positive force to overcome every negative condition. That is why the techniques of the Method consist of such homely tools as "Excuse don't accuse," to keep one's feelings of aggression in control; "Move your muscles" to overcome inertia; "Control your muscles" to control impulse; "Take the secure thought in place of the insecure"; "Do the thing you fear to do." . . .

"Keep it simple," he was always telling his patients. One of the most important tenets of his Method was the dictum "Simple but not easy." He never promised them a magic pill but only that if they continued doggedly through difficulties and failures to practice the rules he was giving them they would achieve health. A complete cure was the goal he set for all his patients.

The Raus says in comment:

In that day, when permissiveness was the hallmark of most psychiatric counseling, Dr. Low's approach was looked at askance. There were

complaints that he had brought a Prussian attitude into the field of psychiatry. His "Do it because I say it is right" struck many in the profession as too arbitrary. . . . The young student nurses who worked under him were filled with awe, not unmixed with fear, because this forthright doctor wouldn't accept slackness in the least particular, especially where his patients were concerned. They were the most important persons in the world to him and his main goal in life was to return them cured to the outside world.

One patient, Joe Janis, was a medical student who had flunked an important test and was overcome by complete despair. An instructor saw his condition and suggested he see Dr. Low, who took him as a patient. The doctor gave him shock treatment followed by psychotherapy.

There was no beating around the bush, no drawn-out delving into the world of the unconscious. This doctor used the classical rational approach which had long since gone out of style. He cut through to Joe's problem with the lucidity that was his particular genius. He not only had the ability to diagnose, but he could also convey his insights to his patients.

Only a few sessions with the doctor brought the impact of what Joe had been doing to himself plainly home to him. His trouble was a consuming drive for power. He craved the triumph of being a superman, of excelling in everything. His persistent depressions were the result of the unrealistic goal of perfection he had set for himself. Since fulfilment was impossible, his goal was causing him frustrations and tensions that burned up energy, frayed his nervous system, and left him sluggish and confused.

But the doctor never let any of his patients rest on insight alone. He told Joe that to cure himself of his depressions he would have to build up a whole new set of habits. It wouldn't be easy but he could do it if he made up his mind to work at it.

The doctor was a firm believer in the free will of every individual. It wasn't an intellectual conception, it was a vital part of him, as natural as breathing. A person had the choice of changing his habits and bringing himself back to mental health, if he would only exercise his free will.

It was the doctor's compelling personality that gave Joe the incentive to work on himself. But it was Joe himself who did the work, and he was well equipped for it. In his vain striving for perfection he

had at least acquired the habit of application. Now he concentrated on getting well. . . .

When he felt tensions mounting he trained himself to examine his thoughts carefully. Such examination was called "spotting" by Dr. Low. It meant turning the spotlight on one's mental activities to discover the unrealistic thinking that had slipped in and was creating the turmoil. Once spotted, it could be corrected by exchanging it for a more realistic appraisal.

It should be said that Dr. Low didn't think much of "medicines" and had more faith in the curative power of nature left to herself than in "all the drugs of the pharmaceutical houses." His daughters, partly bragging and partly complaining, said: "Our father's a doctor and here we're the only kids in our group who haven't been given any antibiotics."

In his lectures to the Recovery members Dr. Low would sometimes tell them that he had himself been through their ordeals, saying, "sometimes I lie down and daydream and then I have all kinds of fantasies how important I will be some day."

"Well, that's all nonsense, why should I dream about greatness and glamor and fame and fortune and so forth and then I stop because it seems ridiculous to me. I have applied a sense of humor." . . .

More than once he was to admit frankly that he had at one time been a nervous patient himself and to express wondering gratitude for his own escape from the torments of such an illness. He had, he said, been one of those, so few in number, and so fortunate, who had experienced a spontaneous cure.

So he established himself as the leader who knew the way because he had been there himself and felt no stigma about admitting it. It was this sense of camaraderie, coupled with uncompromising authority, which drew his patients to him.

My Dear Ones is a remarkable book, telling the story of a man who made himself fit to be an altruist in the full meaning of the term, and made it the practice of his life.

REVIEW

WHAT OUR FOUNDERS BELIEVED

THE book, *In God We Trust*, of 463 pages, edited by Norman Cousins, was first published by Harper & Row in 1958, and has been reissued this year by the same publisher with a new title, *The Republic of Reason—The Personal Philosophies of the Founding Fathers*. This valuable work has commentary by the editor and a helpful introduction worth reading by every citizen. In his foreword Richard B. Morris says:

Debates are currently being waged in courts and legislatures, on the federal level and in state and town governments, in pulpits and the media over the degree to which the First Amendment forbids government aid to religion. Advocates of some form of prayer in the schools (even "a moment of silence") and a variety of devices to fund parochial and private education have argued that "the wall of separation" between church and state that Jefferson described was a "metaphor" that few of the Founding Fathers shared with him. Similarly the "creationists," who demand equal space or time in textbooks and classroom teaching with the advocates of evolution, pose a test to the government's neutrality in the conflict between science and revealed religion.

In a recent newspaper article (*Washington Post Weekly*, June 20-26), Amy Gutmann, on the faculty of Princeton University, wrote of the importance of teaching in the schools what she calls "democratic humanism," saying that neither the liberal view, that schools should be neutral concerning religious and moral values, nor the claim that the schools should teach religion, have served us well. She goes on:

A step toward a more sensible approach was taken recently by a coalition of 14 religious and educational groups. It issued a report arguing that religion is "essential to understanding both the nation and the world" and that textbooks should include a fuller discussion of religious issues.

Amy Gutmann then says:

But we should go further. There is a religion—a civic religion, best described as "democratic humanism"—that ought to be taught in our public schools. It embraces the virtues and habits that are

necessary for a flourishing constitutional democracy. Those traits include religious tolerance, mutual respect, free inquiry, honesty and self-discipline.

The alternative to this explicit embrace of moral education will be continued confusion in our public schools. Liberal neutrality, to be consistent, could lead to banning not only books that teach religion, but also ones that teach evolution, sexual equality or independent reasoning.

Conservative moralism, in contrast, would convert public schools into a battleground of sects, each insisting on either exclusive or equal time for its doctrines. Exclusive rights for any sect would destroy public schools. Equal time for all would make a mockery out of both religion and education. But if schools do not teach religion, conservatives reply, how else can they morally educate our children to be upstanding citizens?

We should not dismiss this question. A democracy cannot flourish without morally educating its citizens. But neither can it survive if moral education rests upon sectarian religion, which in its intolerant forms respects only the faithful and rejects the virtues of free inquiry and mutual respect.

We go now to Norman Cousins' Introduction, in which he points out the diversity of the beliefs of the people of the time of the American Revolution. There were differences among the Puritans and also among the Calvinists. He says:

New England was a reflection of the crosscurrents that gave motion and unpredictability to all sections of America. New York and Pennsylvania were both the main melting pots and the main population distribution centers. The favorite regions for the non-English-speaking peoples after New York and Pennsylvania seemed to be the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland. French Huguenots who fled persecution came to Massachusetts, Virginia, New York, and South Carolina. There was a major German migration to Pennsylvania, already the home of the Quakers and the related German sects. There were also Mennonites and some Anabaptists and Waldenses. The Dunkers, a German Baptist group, arrived almost in their total membership in Pennsylvania. Other Germans settled in New York and the Carolinas.

Jews came from Spain by way of Holland and there were Presbyterian settlers from Ulster, Ireland, many of them coming to Pennsylvania.

The Dutch came to New York, originally New Amsterdam.

Now comes a generalizing statement by Mr. Cousins which we have italicized by reason of its importance:

All these groups had their own religious experiences and outlooks, divisions and subdivisions, branches and sub-branches. Far from representing any weakness of the whole they provided strength. As Jefferson and various others have pointed out, *what was true of America politically was true in the reverse spiritually. In politics it was thus: United we stand, divided we fall. In religion Divided we stand, united we fall.*

The importance of this book lies in the way in which Mr. Cousins gives us the thinking of the Founding Fathers, which shows their intuitive perception of this rule. He says of these extraordinary men:

It is significant that most of the Founding Fathers grew up in a strong religious atmosphere; some had Calvinist family backgrounds. In reacting against it, they did not react against basic religious ideas or what they considered to be the spiritual nature of humanity. Most certainly they did not turn against God or lose their respect for religious belief. Indeed, it was their very concern for the conditions under which free religious belief was possible that caused them to invest so much of their thought and energy into the cause of human rights.

As a group, they reflected a fair degree of diversity in their individual creeds. Certainly, Samuel Adams's Puritanism was in stark contrast with Thomas Paine's Deism. Where we find a large measure of unity is in the position or attitudes of the Founding Fathers toward religion in general. It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between their personal articles of faith and their historic role with reference to the development of religion in America. . . . the founders believed that religious experience was intensely personal; they were mindful of the ease with which religions tended to be arrayed against each other, often at the expense of religion itself. Therefore, if the natural right to religious beliefs was to be upheld, the individual had to be protected against both the authoritarian anti-religious state and religious monopoly. . . .

Hence the emphasis of the founders on the need to keep the power centers of government under careful scrutiny and control. . . . In any event, the men who brought this nation into being were

determined to design a structure in which, so far as was possible, human error in the operation of government would occur in the open and its effects carefully contained. They were utterly disdainful of the best-man theory of government; i.e., get the right people into positions of authority and the government will take care of itself. History was littered with the wreckage of governments headed by good people gone wrong. . . .

What then could be done by law?

Constitutional provisions might not provide absolute guarantees, but they at least defined the standard and fixed the responsibility of the state. In the relationship of government to religion, for example, there was a solid ring of conviction that tied the Founding Fathers to each other.

The fact that there was to be no state church did not mean that the Founding Fathers did not respect the right to spiritual belief. They were aware of the persecution and discrimination that had existed in the colonies whenever the state sponsored its own church and arrogated to itself the right to legislate against dissenters. As a practical matter, it therefore became necessary to underwrite religious freedom for all. How, otherwise, to avoid an almost inevitable conflict for power among the various denominations? The right of an individual to worship in his or her own way or not to worship at all was part of the protection to be afforded in a free society. If worship became compulsory, it would be only a matter of time before the state could decide what the form and place of worship were to be.

The Founding Fathers were none of them atheists. They all had highly developed personal beliefs.

It was only when a church, demanding freedom for itself, sought to deny it to others that they expressed opposition to religious organization. . . . The language of the Constitution is clear enough—at least on two points. No one who aspires to public office should be required to hold any particular religious affiliation or conform to any particular religious views. Also, no official seal of approval is to be placed on any religion. . . . If the arguments cannot be definitively resolved by reference to documents, then the obvious recourse must be to the intentions of those who inspired the documents. What were the religious views of the American Founding Fathers?

Norman Cousins put together his book to answer this question. Out of the hundreds of men who might be listed, he chose the most eminent. They included George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Samuel Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Tomas Paine, and John Jay. These men, Cousins says, were "supremely representative of the composite leadership of the period." They were mostly young men—many in their thirties—who "believed it entirely natural that a human being should seek and achieve the broadest possible personal development."

The American Founding Fathers—to the extent that they can be regarded as a group—believed deeply in the ability of human beings to take part in self-government; in the capacity of people to make sense of their lives if given reasonable conditions within society itself; in the responsive power of people when exposed to great ideas. . . . in the right of human beings to make basic decisions concerning their religions or anything else—again given the proper conditions.

Mr. Cousins' book shows this to be the case.

COMMENTARY
DARE WE RELY ON NATURE?

THIS week's lead article affords a useful study of human nature. It illustrates both the weaknesses and strengths of human beings. Dr. Low saw the folly of trying to do without the idea of free will in human life and worked out a program of self-help for his patients which combined submission to expert authority—the doctor's diagnosis—with rejection of excuses and self-justifications. Here, one could say, is a serious contradiction, except for the fact, and it is a fact, that really good doctors are often found disagreeing with other "expert" opinion. How is one to know which expert is right?

In the case of Dr. Low, we have a basis of judgment. He offers his understanding of how to apply the will. The will, he says, is effective against the tendency to habit formation. Once a habit is formed, the will tends to be weak, but those inclinations and impulses which shape habits can be controlled if one is watchful of them. If you think about it, you will probably decide that this conclusion is based upon observation and common sense, and this is likely to lead to the view that Dr. Low's ideas can be relied upon.

This sort of analysis would be useful in all those cases in which we are obliged to rely on the judgment of experts. How do these experts form their opinions? To what extent are they conformists to group opinion and in what way are they independent?

There is no infallible guide in choosing an expert—whether a doctor or a lawyer or some other kind of counselor—but the more self-reliant a person is, the better his judgment is likely to be. Yet even here there is no sure thing. In the days of the Founding Fathers, for example, Benjamin Rush, one of the founders of our country, and highly respected by his countrymen and associates, was a medical doctor who believed in "bleeding" his patients, sometimes to great excess. Today any doctor who proposed this treatment

would frighten patients away. And it is worth noting that Dr. Low's daughters said: "Our father's a doctor and here we're the only kids on our group who haven't been given any antibiotics." He was probably right, one may think, that the curative power of nature left to herself is greater than "all the drugs of the pharmaceutical houses." But how many of us are really ready to stop taking pills?

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves UNUSUAL CHILDREN

A FRIEND of homeschooling, visiting Sweden with his two sons, sent this letter to *Growing Without Schooling* No. 60:

After we arrived here, the boys decided to try Swedish schools, so we went to the school authorities and Michael (15) and John (13) interviewed them. They asked a lot of questions about courses, schedules, school locations, etc. In turn the school authorities asked them why they wanted to go to school, what they wanted to gain from the experience and what they were interested in. Michael and John told them that they wanted to learn Swedish, and to study music and art and sports. They also said that German and math might be worked in. To my great surprise, and to Michael's and John's delight, the school people listened.

At this writing they have had a full month of "schooling" I put schooling in quotes because their experience is rather unique. They are taking only the courses that they want to take. John at first only had one art course, but he did not think that was sufficient, and he wanted a class that guided rather than dictated. He discussed this with his prime teacher and the next day he had four art classes, some of which he can do what he wants in and receive the guidance he wants.

Socially they are doing very well. They seem to be very much in demand. The Swedish culture stresses the democratic ideal so the girls do not stand on ceremony. Michael and John have received invitations from the girls as well as the boys. The schools here do not have the problems with alcohol and drugs that the U.S. schools do, the streets are much safer and the buses are safe and reliable. This has given them and me a much greater degree of freedom.

Their performance in school has been outstanding. They started three weeks behind the others and have already exceeded the classroom expectations. The teacher said, "They are wonderful boys. I look forward to seeing them. They come every day and they are always smiling, eager to learn, attentive, and they have such remarkable memories. They learn so fast. They are very polite and not at all troublesome." She was surprised to learn that I do not

get them up and drive them out to school every day, nor do I demand that they do their homework, though I am available to assist them. She said, "It is hard to believe that they have never been schooled before in their lives."

How many homeschoolers are there? Apparently no one really knows, although there are figures. Some statistics have been compiled by Peter Kilgore:

Number of Home Study Programs in Maine:

81-82: 4
82-83: 10
83-84 15
84 85:121
85-86 217
86-87: 210

(figures as of October 27,1986)

The extent to which these figures accurately reflect the actual number of homeschooling programs is subject to debate. One must remember that these figures only reflect those programs "officially approved" by the state and filed with the State Department of Education, Curriculum Division. . . . In a recent telephone conversation, Wallace LaFountain, consultant, State Department of Education, Curriculum Division, suggested that the number of "underground" programs is probably equal to the number of approved programs.

. . . A second limitation to the credibility of the figures concerns the extent to which the state was able to maintain its records in the face of such unexpected growth in the homeschooling movement.

A Portland newspaper remarks that "the state doesn't have the exact figure, but LaFountain estimates that about 40 families with 60 children are conducting schools in Maine. Later, in another paper, LaFountain said: "We thought the number had leveled off last year (1984) at 60, and that's how many we thought there were this year until we decided to count them . . . and to our amazement there were 130 children now (April 1985) being educated at home."

A woman in Washington wrote to tell that she spoke before a Libertarian Conference on homeschooling.

The audience at the lecture was very enthusiastic, asked many questions, and expressed the

usual surprised acceptance for the logical sense of Natural Learning. I discussed why parents choose to homeschool and about how natural learning works. When I described how children learn by doing, by apprenticing to their parents for the basic skills of life, they asked, "But without curriculum won't they just want to play all day?" I told them about Jerome Bruner's experiment with children who solved a problem twice as easily when they were allowed to just play with the materials than the children who were taught the theory or drilled in the skills necessary to solve the problem.

A girl wrote:

I am 11 years old and in the sixth grade, and this is our third year of homeschooling. Counting pre-school and kindergarten, I went to public school for five years. I loved the first and second grade, but third seemed terrible.

I had two really nice teachers, but when it was time to switch to the other room next door, I couldn't take the work from the one room into the next, and as a result I stayed up most of the night trying to finish my homework.

In the mornings, I had to get up very early to stand outside and wait for the school bus. I wasted an hour and a half of my life, five days a week, riding in the school bus. I did try to study on the bus, but it was really impossible.

Also, half an hour every day was for "The Juice Garden." You buy a pint of orange juice for 50¢. Then you go outside and sit on the cold cement and drink your juice and eat chips or snacks which you buy from the school, also. Once a week we went to the art room to paint or learn about different kinds of art. We did art for half a year, then had music class for the rest of the year. There really weren't any opportunities for creativity in the public school.

A mother in Georgia reports:

Recently Lindsey (5) was asked by her grandfather, who was obviously in a teasing mood, "When are *you* going to school Lindsey?" Lindsey shot back without a moment's hesitation, "I don't need to go to school. I learn new stuff every day and I don't even know I'm learning it." The answer was totally unrehearsed. For the first time I backed off when my father threw a curve at Lindsey, and she knocked it right out of the ball park.

Nancy Wallace, a frequent contributor to *Growing Without Schooling*, said in a letter to the

New York State Board of Regents objecting to proposed standardized tests for homeschooled children:

For me, one of the most exciting aspects of homeschooling has been its experimental nature. By remaining as flexible and responsive to my children as possible, I have learned and continue to learn how my children grasp concepts and how they build upon their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. I continue to be amazed by their remarkable intellectual and creative capacities. Yet their learning has never followed a standard, or what would be considered normal, time line or sequence. My son Ishmael learned to write before he could read and to write music before he could play it. He learned to read whole lines in books before he ever had a clear picture of the phonetic sounds that make up individual words. He learned how to use a French/English dictionary long before he could alphabetize a list of words.

We decided to delay teaching our daughter Vita formal arithmetic until she had had enough experience working with numerical values concretely to be able to intuit the abstract principles on her own. Instead of teaching her borrowing and carrying in the first grade, we worked on mathematical puzzles, did carpentry work, banking and cooking, and allowed her time to discover that numbers are the language best suited to describing spatial and temporal relationships.

As could have been expected, in those early years Vita would not have done well on the math section of a standardized test. But by age 10, and with no drill or memorization work, she simply knew her multiplication tables.

Formidable children!

FRONTIERS

One Human Family

PATRIOTISM, according to John S. Spong, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, "has become a destructive force that cannot be allowed to survive." He said this at the beginning of an article, "The Twilight of Patriotism," in the *Witness* for September, 1987, supplied to us by a reader. Bishop Spong begins by calling the tribe the origin of what we now call patriotism, since the tribe "provided its members with identity, worth, and the ability to cope in a dangerous environment." Then, as the patterns of society grew more complex, "tribal units came together to form larger entities, first organized as cities and later as nations."

To the nation fell the traditional tribal responsibilities. Survival was the first task, and the need to defend itself against all external threats still lies behind every nation's armed forces and arsenals. The second task was to insure the well-being of the tribe's internal life. Today's various national social welfare programs are the modern versions of this ancient tribal duty. . . .

Most people cannot imagine a world without nations. We are unable to define identity apart from the ingrained feeling of the tribe. Our citizenship tells us who we are, determines in large measure our values, sets our limits and shapes our world view.

Today, however, the needs that brought into being the nation-state are fading away. The impacts of experience are no longer merely national but come from all over the world. Technology and transport have enormously enlarged the area of our action and popular means of communication have brought home to us "such things as the tragedies of Vietnam, African starvation, and the international scope of our covert operations." The nations are forming combinations such as the European Common Market, giving reason for regional thinking to take the place of national thinking. Big business has become multinational. Air travel has made the world more and more our living area, bringing the people of diverse continents together.

Bishop Spong says:

The final human bonding experience that will apply the Coup de grace to nation states will be an awareness of the threat to the environment that will dawn as we recognize that all human beings share a common destiny in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the oceans that feed us, and that no nation state is capable of addressing these concerns alone. When the world's ozone layer is damaged by the chemical gases from the industries of any nation, all life is at risk. When a nuclear accident occurs in Pennsylvania or in the Ukraine, all the people of the world are endangered. When polluted rivers empty their poisons into the oceans, the ability of the sea to feed the world's population either directly or indirectly is called into question. Suddenly, we begin to be aware that nation states cannot fulfill their purposes. They can no longer do the things they were created to do.

When any institution loses its purpose it is doomed to death. The death of nation states will not be instantaneous because deeply ingrained cultural needs attached to that institution will continue to carry the concept for some long time, but death is nonetheless inevitable. Nation states will quickly become an anachronism and will not survive in a radically inter-dependent world. As states' rights gave way in this country to national needs, so national sovereignty will finally give way to international needs.

War meanwhile becomes useless.

All wars of the past have been fought to insure the vested interests of the tribe or the nation state. Today, however, no nation's vested interests can be served by a war. No nation today can guarantee its people protection against the threat of an enemy. There is no one villain we can oppose when destruction comes to our environment, our atmosphere, our food supply and even to the safety of a nursing mother's milk. A nuclear accident pours radioactivity into the common atmosphere.

This means that my life and my survival are now radically dependent on someone else in a nation halfway around the world. My destiny is human destiny; it is no longer American destiny.

Simply because it is a blinding emotion, patriotism will have to go. It has become the folly of the people of a nation. Bishop Spong gives the necessary reasoning:

Patriotism, that emotion that feeds our tribal thinking must die if the human enterprise is to survive. What we need is a world consciousness, a world agreement, a worldwide security, a sense of human interdependence that transcends nation, race, ethnic origin, religion and every other defining human barrier by which we have in the past determined who we are. To achieve that requires an enormous leap of consciousness that will ultimately be required of all of us. The ability on the part of all the people of the world to make such a leap is the prerequisite to survival of the human enterprise.

It should be evident that an example of making this leap will need to be given by people in the "advanced" industrialized countries, for only in those countries are there individuals with both the experience and the sophistication to see what must be done. And among those, the bioregionalists and the new farmers of the character of Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry, have made a real beginning. Required is another kind of loyalty, a genuine replacement of patriotism, which binds people to the earth instead of a political organization, to the community instead of the state.

There is one other change-making factor which may play a part—some degree of disaster, to which Bishop Spong gives attention:

Throughout history it has often been a disaster that has caused the development of such new consciousness and created the context in which new values can arise. We have now had Three Mile Island and Chernobyl jolt our security. The AIDS epidemic shows a capacity to leap every barrier that we hoped would enclose it. Scientists warn us that the earth's atmosphere is heating up at an alarming rate due to the burning of fossil fuels and the release of chlorofluoro-carbons into the ozone.

Inevitably, another devastating ecological disaster will afflict the earth; a disaster severe enough to create a worldwide willingness to lay aside the barriers of the past and to seek a new understanding of our common destiny. The victims of that disaster may not be able to rejoice in this benefit but perhaps in time those who survive will begin to realize that this is one world, with one human family, in which all nationalism is simply inappropriate. It is strange to imagine that only an ecological calamity might save a portion of humanity. It is also a depressing

prospect. I wish I thought my government in Washington had even the slightest inkling of this reality.

This seems one of the clearest and best expressed accounts of the human condition at the present time.

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DIANE LAWSON, Mgr.