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Birmingham is facing a serious educational crisis. Schools in the area have a great shortage of teachers and classrooms. Teaching facilities for immigrant children are especially scandalous. According to the NCLC bulletin *Civil Liberty*, although this was brought to the notice of the Ministry of Education the situation, far from improving, has seriously deteriorated.

Birmingham is an area which, from its industrial nature, attracts and employs many immigrants without providing for them adequate housing or for their children adequate schooling. In one school of 343 children, over 90% are now immigrants. The playground is too small and there are not enough lavatories. Only 180 can be accommodated in the dining room in two sittings, the dining room is also used as a *classroom* and a passage way for children using the playground. Specialist teachers are also not available for teaching the children English, and presumably no one thought of bringing over teachers who are bi-lingual. A reading test showed in another school that of 220 boys, only nine had a reading standard average for their age. Many teachers are leaving the area, thus worsening the situation.

The cruel immigration laws are to be blamed for this crisis. Children over the age of 16 are not allowed in with their parents, therefore there is a desperate rush (understandable as families do not want to be separated) to get the children into Britain before they are 16 and before their education is completed.

The Midland group of the NCLC is meeting in Birmingham and we urge our comrades to attend. In the meantime could they also examine the possibility of starting Free Schools for the children bereft of education. When the government and local authorities are so dilatory on such a vital matter anarchists should put their theories to the test.

The idea of the Free School as a voluntary project

THE SUGGESTION IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH of the item reprinted above, which appeared in FREEDOM towards the end of last year, made it seem appropriate to collect together some account of "Free School" experiments and projects so that anyone anxious to pursue the suggestion can have a fund of other people's experience of the possibilities and difficulties.

With the kind co-operation of the editors of the journals from which they are reproduced, we present them in this issue, together with Barnaby Martin's programme for voluntary action, which is probably an indispensable preliminary to any Free School project, and Martin Small's review of a study of the early history of the idea of popular education in this country.

A programme for voluntary action

BARNABY MARTIN

THERE IS A SET OF PROBLEMS that most of us are concerned with; war, hunger, housing, the growth of cities, and the problem of problems—apathy, which holds up any effort to cope with other difficulties. Apathy, I suspect, is largely the result of the feeling of powerlessness in modern citizens. Not that they necessarily crave power to dominate others, but they at least need power to control their own way of life and influence what affects it. People feel they haven't got this and can't be impressed with any problem-solving we are proposing unless it includes a method which avoids the apathy of powerlessness and irrelevance.

In trying to cope with any problem—in my case the first concern is war—we have to choose between two types of method; (1) those that build up some form of authoritarian power in order to overthrow the present authorities or force concessions through their fear of losing power, or (2) those that create circumstances in which the power of those who execute the evils we oppose is steadily reduced.

Although power may not be strictly arithmetic, Harold Wilson can only manipulate vast quantities of wealth and coercion because each of us has lost some power. Unless we want to leave our fellow citizens with their present near-zero power of self-control of life and grab the accumulated power of Harold Wilson, our path must be to subtract the element of our own power from the accumulation of the establishment. And we must try to do it in a way that makes a similar step easy for others.

So much for introduction; this is the project I intend to organise if others will join me in it.

A team of 16 volunteers visits a town for a month. Part of the day is spent in a variety of propaganda activities—films shown in schools (as in the successful film month organised at the Frodsham Peace Action Centre)—a bookstall in the town centre—talking to young people in coffee bars and clubs—talking to folk in pubs and other community centres—contact through songs and poems. Attention is focussed on war, hunger, apathy, community action.

However, much of the daytime is spent on a work project—in the

style of an ordinary voluntary work camp. There are numerous jobs that need doing, yet are not done by the commercial and welfare systems. We tackle these first. But we won't use the figleaf slogan, "non-political", to hide an acceptance of the status quo, as most service organisations do. The profit-motive produces high-speed cars but leaves many areas of poverty—mainly among old people and large families. The motive of response to human need must be put into daily practicable form. So we work at some useful scheme, probably doing building and decorating work, and talk to people about the need to change the economic structure, starting with the local situation.

Now the voluntary work programme interacts with the propaganda activities. We find people take an interest in our ideas because we are helping to cope with some local need. We find that people have a sympathetic feeling for what we believe rather than the resistance we usually meet when we propagate radical ideas. Again the experience at Peace Action Centre and on work camps confirms that this happens.

Since we are partly engaged in constructive activity which does not, in itself, involve any political commitment, we are in a good position to invite potential recruits and others to join in at weekends on the work site. Here, people can learn about our ideas in a much better environment than is provided by street leafletting or mass media publicity.

Work camp experience shows that most of the team's needs can be supplied voluntarily by local producers and retailers (e.g. farmers and market stall-holders) as mutual aid in recognition of the contribution we are making in our daily work. Apart from that, straight door-to-door collections will provide enough to purchase the remaining requirements. Strange to tell, political organisations are less restricted in money-collecting than charities; and we will not be a charity. It is important to note that although money is needed to start the team off with sufficient equipment, national money-raising to maintain the project will not be needed.

The main process of growth is not persuasion and verbal commitment, but full-time participation. So after each month's work in a town, we hope to leave with a few more team members, who will steadily absorb, and influence, the team's ideas. After several month-long projects, the team would be large enough, and experienced enough, to split into two teams, so that a reasonable group size is maintained. In turn these two teams grow and split—quite biological really!

Instead of relying on a national mailing system for news of where a work project is available, the teams will become able to hunt projects for themselves. This will mean that they will move from town to town in one area rather than jumping all round the country.

By this time the work of the teams is changing. Projects requiring more skill can be undertaken, under the guidance of the more experienced participants. Teams can also undertake social organisation rather than physical work; promote youth clubs, pre-school play groups, adventure playgrounds, peace action groups, War on Want branches, etc. The time a team spends in a town would extend, making it more difficult to

use the sleeping places usually had by work camps. Having gained experience of many sorts of physical and social work, a team can start looking for a permanent centre in some town where the same work can be developed on a long-term basis, still retaining the voluntary mutual aid principles. The static team work is clearly better than the type that is only involved for a month at a time in a town's problems.

So the scheme is intended as a way of life, not just a project. The objective is to enable as many people as possible to step out of conventional life into a life based on voluntary relationships. Providing this for families is more difficult, but the teams that have set up permanent centres and are no longer mobile should be able to involve families—if they haven't already produced their own.

* * *

I don't see the anarchist as being in a state of permanent opposition, never achieving his objective. I would think there was something wrong with my objectives if they were beyond human approach. Many anarchists have seen in non-violence a vital part of what is needed for a better society. If voluntary work could be seen as the closest type to anarchist ideas, then we can see the elements of a better society within the present set-up. I am not suggesting an isolated community, but a team working within the towns and villages, confining their relationships almost completely to those that fall within their principles.

There are a set of qualities of voluntary work that should attract us. The first is that productive effort is applied first where it is needed most, whereas in commercial work the rich tend to be provided with luxuries while the poor are ignored. Commercial work, whether looked at nationally or on a world basis, tends to polarise rich and poor, while voluntary work tends to create equality.

The main vehicle for authority, money, is absent. An organiser of voluntary service necessarily develops a two-way relationship with the volunteers. This also hinders centralisation beyond the stage of personal contact. Enthusiasm and involvement wane as the initiative is centralised. The lack of involvement may even help a system where the pay packet is the operational motive, but it destroys voluntary work schemes.

Also, the organiser of voluntary work automatically thinks of the satisfaction provided in doing the job. Whether the work is enjoyable or not has only recently become important to large-scale employers since it was suggested that happy workers might bring in more profit. The voluntary work organiser is rarely so unwise as to set up a barrier between himself and volunteers by sticking to the paper work while they get on with the job.

Can you think of any way in which voluntary service and mutual aid can be taxed? At any rate, the proposed project would provide little tax money for war and other purposes, even though the participants would be contributing more than most to the welfare of the community. Some of the money collected to buy things that can't be obtained as gifts may find its way to the Inland Revenue via purchase tax.

Voluntary work can help to answer the welfare state effect of encouraging isolated materially self-sufficient family units, which

extrude various categories of materially dependent people into separate institutions. The automatic family and community care that used to sustain the dependent is being lost and the welfare state tries to cope by providing separate institutions for the mentally ill, physically ill, mentally handicapped, physically handicapped, old, young without their original parents, spastics, and so on. I would include schools here, since I think that the separation between life and education is terrible in principle. However I have to be thankful that some children are influenced by good teachers before the normal commercial world applies its destructive miseducation.

As static and mobile voluntary service groups become more common, so the community spirit in our society will be revived. Commercial activities necessarily divide people into competitive secretive units. Voluntary work promotes involvement in the needs of others—witness the type of conversations you have with a driver when you are hitch-hiking, and the relationship developed with an old woman whose room is being decorated by an IVS weekend work camp group. Voluntary workers quickly appreciate the intertwined social and physical needs and don't make the separation that is typical of commercial work and over-specialisation.

Voluntary work usually gives confidence to people that they can do something to cope with their local needs. Work camps have sometimes unintentionally created permanent service groups. If a team tries hard to achieve this, and to maintain the radical element in the group formed, confidence in immediate, unauthorised, community response to needs will grow.

In the scheme I propose, more people will steadily be drawn from the commercial system (and acquiescence in the political system), less money will be paid in taxes, less attention will be paid to governmental and commercial activities. The ultimate object is to make these present systems irrelevant.

* * *

My plans are to leave my present job at Quaker Work Camps after the summer season and spend the autumn talking with any group in Britain that wants to hear from me. About a year from now I hope that 15 other people will join me to form the first team.

Apart from the need for volunteers who are ready to spend a period of their lives in this work, the greatest need is for work projects. It is essential, at least in the early stages, for people to invite the team to towns where useful work can be done. It's difficult to find suitable work projects (even for voluntary workers) outside your own locality. I can hunt round Camden Town, but can you tell me of possible projects in your district?

If you want further information about the development of this scheme, want to volunteer, or have a project to suggest, write to me at 65 Albert Street, London, N.W.1. When you've forgotten that address, write via ANARCHY.

BARNABY MARTIN.

The First Street School

GEORGE DENNISON

THE FIRST STREET SCHOOL was founded in 1964 by Mabel Chrystie and is in session now on the lower east side (or East Village) handling 23 children, mostly under ten years of age. The school was conceived of more or less as an antidote to the dehumanization of the public school system. Where the latter is huge, impersonal, and bureaucratic, the First Street School is small and informal and is oriented entirely toward the personalities of the students, the teachers, and the parents. Administration is handled directly by the teachers, who in all respects are absolutely free agents. This arrangement not only produces a high teacher morale but has proven to be marvellously economical: the cost per pupil, in classes of seven and eight, compares favourably to that of the public schools with classes of 30. The school's choice of facilities is also an important factor in economy of operation. At present we are leasing classrooms, a playroom, a gymnasium, an art room, and a woodworking shop at the Emanu-El Midtown YMHA on East Sixth Street. The Y itself had been lying idle during school hours. There are many such facilities in New York, and it is worth mentioning that nothing is needed to start a school but space, teachers, and students. Financing is a variable thing. First Street is very much in need of funds, but this is partly because one of the aims of the school was to bring quality education and experimental methods into an area which has seen very little of either. This means that almost all the children have been granted full-tuition scholarships. The school has survived so far on a loan made available by a private donor. We have been accredited by the New York City Board of Education and were granted a provisional charter by the New York State Board of Regents. Racially the school is integrated in exactly the way that the neighbourhood is: about one third Negro, one third Puerto Rican, and one third "white". Some of

GEORGE DENNISON'S description of the First Street School is condensed from the July 1966 issue of LIBERATION, by courtesy of its editors, who tell us, however, that "the First Street School is no longer open. It was unable to open this fall semester because it was about \$20,000 short of necessary funds".

the families are college-educated, though most are not. The children range from slow-normal to bright. Several of them came to us with learning problems. I would like to say a few words now about the philosophy of the school and its methods, and then describe the results we have achieved so far.

From the point of view of standard education, the First Street School is radical and experimental. There are no grades, no graded report cards, no competitive examinations. No child is compelled to study or answer questions when he does not want to. The children are free to consult each other, examine each other's work, leave the room, leave the school building itself, talk to each other and to the teachers at will. Several rules have been established by the students themselves meeting as a parliament (a parliament in which some very fine distinctions have been drawn by tots of six), and the parliamentary method is used frequently to decide upon outings and special activities. These are not common practices, even in private schools. Readers who are familiar with the writings of A. S. Neill, however, will have heard of this in a more radical form than we are able to exemplify at First Street. And perhaps from their point of view we are running a relatively conventional school. The differences are not so much ideological, however, as immediate functions of personalities and of the exigencies of operating a day school in New York. But let me give an example here, since only an example from life is capable of introducing the kind of irony that really obtains.

We believe—with Neill and many others—that going to school should be entirely voluntary; and that young boys, from say nine to 12, should have access to school as to a clubhouse, but should ideally spend their time roving about the city, observing, helping, annoying, adventuring—whatever they wish. Last year we had a group of five such boys. All five had been chronic truants and vandals in the public schools, and in varying degrees all five were on the route to Youth House. Now the ideological convictions of the teachers indicated that these boys should be given a great deal of freedom; and we felt compromised because we did not actually *want* them to go venturing, first because they would be fair game for truant officers, and second because we, in case of injury, would be fair game for lawsuits. But in fact the issue never came up. These chronic truants came to school devotedly and never once suggested a venturesome outing among themselves. After a few months we decided to risk our misgivings. The school had been donated bicycles. Each boy was given one, and each boy was given money for lunch: and then with a great deal of encouragement, they were turned loose. Rather, we tried to turn them loose. The fact is, they would not go. And we came to realize that for these particular boys—who had been characterized by the violence of the fearful—there was nothing in the city quite as attractive or as supportive as their own school. I do not say this to praise the school (it would be a foolish kind of praise, since school at best is only school) but to indicate the extreme needs and dependencies of these boys, not one of whom had developed the kind of independence normal to a boy of 12.

All the idealized hopes and practical misgivings of the teachers had been beside the point. It did not matter what our *policy* was regarding freedom—we were obliged to answer the needs of these particular boys. And as a result of doing just that, we have come to see that we do not exemplify policies at all. Some children are given great freedom (i.e. will accept it and use it), others are treated more strictly (i.e. demand the kind of firm guidance characteristic of very early childhood). Obviously there is a policy of sorts behind all this, an ideal of ego-growth and of supportive, broadly therapeutic responsibilities on the part of the teachers. But we have never spelled this policy out and see no need to. To the best of our ability we meet every child on his own terms. But conversely, the children must meet the teachers on *their terms*. There could be no reality of encounter if this were not the case. And in fact one of the familiar sights of the school is that of a six-year-old with his hands on his hips arguing heatedly with a teacher who towers over him. No child can be given more freedom than this—or can be given it only at the risk of entering an unreal environment in which teachers are not persons but are merely exemplifications of some desirable utopia. It follows, of course, that all but everything depends upon the choosing of the staff. But this is always the case. Ideals, in the abstract, count for very little. Much as we admire Neill—and I think we do not disagree with him on anything—we have made no effort to recruit teachers from his disciples, who all too often use his ideas as metaphoric expressions of their own needs. We have gone to great pains, however, to find teachers of ability, and of personal warmth and kindness, bearing in mind always that the child's desire to learn is nothing less than his total attraction to the world and that therefore teachers who are vividly *in* the world in their own right are the best persons for the children to associate with. There are considerable differences, then, from classroom to classroom. One room will be relatively orderly, relatively quiet, another relatively noisy and messy. This is the way it should be. Given the general agreement that coercion is pointless, competitive learning a violation of nature, and bureaucratic manipulation the high road, or low road, to slavishness, there is no need to unify the techniques of the various teachers. And since the students, the teachers, and the parents are all in close contact and make their opinions known, there is no possibility of incompetence going unnoticed.

FLEXIBLE GROUPINGS

The students are divided into three classes, and each class "belongs" to a particular teacher, though there are frequent re-groupings for special activities like dance instruction, music, gym, and so forth. Age, of course, is the chief criterion in the forming of classes, but other factors play a part. One little girl, for instance, a bright and boisterous Jewish-Italian girl of eight, wanted to spend time both with the younger children of five and six and with the children in the eight-to-ten year group. It was extremely beneficial for her to do this, since she was precocious and capable but also suffered many unresolved problems of

early childhood. She behaved quite differently in the two groups, tending to be co-operative and affectionate among the younger children and disruptive among the older. She obviously needed both, and we ourselves could not have devised anything better than the arrangement she brought about simply by expressing her own desires. The self-corrective, health-seeking powers of the young are enormous, and wherever possible we have tried to follow the clues given us by the children. Vincente, a diminutive, panicky, intelligent Puerto Rican of nine, was torn between wanting to be an infant and wanting to be one of the boys. It was essential to him that he identify with the older boys, and so this was the group he "belonged" to, but we allowed him to join the younger children pretty much at will—again, with great benefit to himself, not only because of his association with the children (who were his true peers in an important way), but because of the relationship he established with their teacher, who was a woman, whereas the teacher of the boys was a man. In his home life Vincente was not only without a father but was alienated from his half-brothers and sisters because he was the child of a love-affair—for which reason, also, his mother alternately pampered and denied him.

What is true of all children is especially clear in cases of extreme need like Vincente's: a child makes no distinction between school and life, or between learning and himself. His own identity comes to him through all things, and therefore he seeks reality of encounter and cannot help but balk when his true needs are denied him. The child's inborn desire to learn is best understood simply as his attraction to the world. He is at all times *in* the world and *of* it, and the regimen of a school is powerless to alter this huge fact. Many of the familiar crises of school children must be understood as attempts to create reality of encounter. I do not mean only encounter with persons, but with mental/sensual forms as well. The two difficulties most familiar in our schools today—"parroting" and rebelliousness—are nothing less than attempts to convert bureaucratic instruments, teachers, into persons of flesh and blood, unstructured information into persuasive whole forms, and the artificial solitudes of an organized crowd into a social body of boys, girls, and adults. The child who "parrots", who gives the answer he knows is wanted, gives it because he esteems the wanting, not the answer. He is willing to deny his own yearning for clarity in order to put himself in harmony with what he takes to be the way of the world. Typically he wins advancement and pays for it by sensual and intellectual losses. The rebellious child seeks reality of encounter in a different way. He is in closer touch with his needs and is loyal to them as best he knows how, which most often means blindly. He will not attempt to digest what cannot be digested, and quite correctly takes the conflict of wills to be the major reality of the classroom. His behaviour is such as to force this issue to a head. If he is organically more sound than the child who parrots, he pays for it by arrested growth and by the postponement or stultification of vital impulses of curiosity and emulation. He is starved for performance and is led down blind alleys of personal conflict.

Considerations of this kind have led us to seek reality of encounter and to base everything upon it.

But this is a relatively theoretical way of talking. What I would like to convey—though it is almost impossible—is the simplicity and downright homeliness of the real events: Vincente's wrinkled forehead straightening out as he comes to understand some vital little fact; the teachers laughing at the witticisms of the children; one child intently studying the behaviour of another and thereby learning an entire process the teacher had been powerless to teach him. We are so flooded these days by the elaborate formulations of experts that we have lost sight of the underlying simplicity of things, such as, for instance, that school is not *primarily* the relation of teachers and students, but of adults and children, and of course of children and children. The very phrase "natural powers" is enough to bring a sceptical look into (especially) sophisticated faces, though these same powers, once they are described in the jargon of academic psychology (they are presently the objects of vast inquiry) will be fully accepted by our sophisticates, who will now believe, however, that they have been invented by the experts. This situation is so deadly and pervasive that I would like to digress here from the First Street School and give some examples.

The most prestigious writer on problems of learning is Jerome S. Bruner, director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard. When I read his *Process of Learning* I was impressed by the lucidity and calm of his presentation and by the obvious importance of the material he was concerned with. And yet as I read on I became uneasy, and by the time I had finished the book I found that I was suspicious of Bruner and in fact had developed a downright repugnance for his thought. How was it that in reporting so many experiments which indicated the harmfulness of coercion, competition, and arbitrary order—really a mountain of evidence—he would recommend nothing in case after case but "more research"? Nor did Bruner's thought strike me as being so very philosophical, after all, for it conveyed little sense of consulting experience (in contrast with Dewey's thought, and especially with Whitehead's) but rather of consulting experiments and research. Certainly these are kinds of experience—but they are something less than it, too. The usual trouble with such deliberately structured samples of the world is aptly described by John Holt in his review of Bruner's latest book (*New York Review of Books*, April 19th, 1966). "When a movie of this experiment," Holt writes, "was shown at one of Bruner's colloquia at Harvard, nobody thought it worth mentioning that most of the time the child was not looking at the clay but at the face of his questioner, as if to read there the wanted answer." Bruner, like other researchers, tends to treat himself as an instrument of investigation. But the investigation and the subject can hardly be equated with the man and child of direct experience.

But *The Process of Learning* was presented explicitly as a report of the Woods Hole Conference, and so all of this was understandable, if not encouraging. Bruner had set out to collate the findings of many researchers and committees, and in fact his redaction was beautifully

done.

In his book *On Knowing* Bruner ranges over wider fields, drawing on art and literature as well as science. Yet strangely (or not) he sounds like he is collating the efforts of researchers again, as if all those poets and artists had presented evidence or points of view. Bruner speaks pietistically of "the tragic sense of life" but one hardly feels that by "life" he means the lives of men. It is, rather, a literary/academic conception, not unlike Lionel Trilling's ideas of conduct and manners. Bruner, in short, is not a philosopher, and he is not a psychologist in the sense that is classical to the modern period. He is an expert: enormously intelligent, extremely capable, unusually knowledgeable—yet flawed in the grain from top to bottom. I would like to suggest what this flaw consists of. My suspicion of Bruner is simply this: that where he is undoubtedly deeply concerned with his field, the nature of learning, he is not persuasively concerned with the experience of school in the lives of the young. His entire performance, for all the cogency of its central arguments, is in fact a deep obeisance before the bureaucracy that is stifling the vitality of this country. Let me quote Bruner's words here and make clear what I mean.

In his newest book, *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, Bruner describes the inborn motives of the will to learn, and numbers among them "the deep-sensed commitment to the web of social reciprocity".

"The conduct of our educational system," he writes, "has been curiously blind to this interdependent nature of knowledge. We have 'teachers' and 'pupils', 'experts' and 'laymen'. But the community of learning is somehow overlooked."

This is a good example of Bruner's observations. Taken by themselves these remarks are humane and potentially liberating. But let us see what he means—how he himself understands them.

"What can most certainly be encouraged," he goes on, "—and what is now being developed in the better high schools—is something approximating the give and take of a seminar in which discussion is the vehicle of instruction. This is reciprocity."

SOCIAL RECIPROCALITY

True, there is a kind of reciprocity here; and as a method it is far preferable to standard routines. But really, Bruner's application of the idea is an almost pathetic reduction of that high-sounding phrase, "deep-sensed commitment to the web of social reciprocity".

What does "social reciprocity" mean? It means that we are in this together; that every person's every motive and act partakes of the otherness that surrounds him; that I take you seriously, and vice versa; that your needs, wishes, and desires have a place in this world just as mine do; and so on. Now let us imagine those students in the high school seminar. And let us subtract from them, in imagination, the things which are in fact subtracted from them in life. They can neither choose nor refuse—not the time, the place, the instructor, or the subject. Nor is it a question of hours, days, and weeks, but of entire courses and years. Even the barest freedom of movement, simply to come and go

during the discussion, will have been denied them; nor will their interests in each other, both comradely and sexual, be given their natural obtrusive or unobtrusive place. *In all the issues which are truly social and on which the simplest peerage of existence depends, the students will not have been consulted.* How much reciprocity is left over? The give and take of a discussion! The trouble with Bruner is not that he cannot conceive of these things, but that he can *only conceive* of them. They seem not to exist in his thought in the way that they exist in life, that is, as the very quick of life itself.

"This is reciprocity. But it requires recognition of one critically important matter: you cannot have both reciprocity and the demand that everybody learn the same thing or be 'completely' well rounded in the same way all the time. If reciprocally operative groups are to give support to learning by stimulating each person to join his efforts to a group, then we shall need tolerance for the specialized roles that develop—the critic, the innovator, the second helper, the cautionary. For it is from the cultivation of these interlocking roles that the participants get the sense of operating reciprocally in a group."

Bruner ends the paragraph by recommending diversity and flexibility. And certainly all of this is going in the right direction—if, indeed, it is. One hardly knows what to make of it. It is enlightened, humane, considered—and then again, it is downright dreadful stuff. I don't mean simply that it's jargon. It's obviously jargon, but that's not necessarily fatal. No—I think Bruner believes that this is what actually happens in a classroom: that *roles develop*, that the boys and girls *get the sense of operating reciprocally in a group*. God save us if that were actually what happened! *Role* is a concept. *Operating reciprocally* is a concept. Both are terribly abstract (and incorrect) even as concepts. They are not facts of experience except when experts talk to each other. If an expert can say of a boy, "he assumed a role", the boy will have experienced anything *but* a role. He will have been fired by some idea, some stroke of inspiration or response, or of understanding, or of conviction; his real desires will have leaped toward some real object or person. And when persons "operate reciprocally" they are not *getting the sense of it* at all, but are vividly engaged—*for real*—with each other and with each other's ideas, feelings, passions, etc. No influence is deadlier than that of the benign bureaucrat urging live young creatures to develop their roles and operate reciprocally in a group. It is the worst kind of invasion of the very energies which if simply left alone would accomplish the real thing, not the image of it, all by themselves.

Here, then, are some characteristics of the contemporary expert. That his researches teach him the value of instinctual life, and that he explains its value to us in such a way that the instinctual life is made to count for nothing.

That his researches teach him the autonomy and the indwellingness of instincts, motives, patterned growth—and that he invades that autonomy by assuming the responsibility for the inculcation of these things.

That he cannot distinguish between facts of life and mere

conceptions, and therefore treats abstractions as if they were perceptually given in the experience of the live creatures.

That his researches bring him, time and again, to the truisms known to every mother, and that he hasn't the modesty or the wit to admit it. (What vast researches Bruner cites to establish that babies poke around and look at things—"curiosity is a prototype of the intrinsic motive"; that the three-year-old girl wishes she could chop up her food as well as her five-year-old brother—"desire for competence and aspiration to emulate a model"; and that nine-year-old boys are quick to run errands, suggest expedients, and love to be praised for their real as opposed to unreal contributions—"deep-sensed commitment to the web of social reciprocity".)

Last but not least, our contemporary expert, in spite of his addiction to experiment, can be depended upon to ignore such experiments as Neill's, which has gone on for 40 years now and must have *some kind* of pragmatic value; and Tolstoy's, which lasted three years and were observed by a master observer.

I hope I have made clear why I distrust Jerome Bruner and respond to his writing with repugnance. In fairness to myself as well as to Bruner, I must add that these brief remarks are not intended to measure the man or his work, which would certainly be presumptuous. Bruner covers a lot of ground and covers some of it extremely well: questions of curriculum structure, of the relatedness of knowledge, and so on.

I have tried to indicate what I take to be the flaw in the grain, and to explain why I am not personally hopeful that Bruner's contribution will lead to the liberation of young America's energies. His ideas will not be utilized, *they will be administered*; and the fault will be his own, for he has not addressed himself to teachers, parents, students, or philosophers, but exclusively, and right down the line, to administrators. *On the basis of what is known about learning at this very moment, vast improvements in the lives of our young could be achieved immediately simply by applying available monies toward the alleviation of conditions already recognized as critical.* But the mandarins of the universities speak the language of the bureaucracy. Furthermore, they staff the foundations. They have claimed the money for themselves—and we are being treated to the sickening spectacle of "more research" in the teeth of an avalanche of remediable catastrophes.

SOME PERSONAL IMPROVEMENTS

The one really necessary thing is to pay attention to the *big* problems by which children are beset. You cannot bypass these central issues and expect to accomplish much simply by improving the internal structure of the curriculum. In his *Aims of Education* Whitehead raises the question of whether any subject can be considered difficult in itself. The most difficult process, he points out, is the one that children accomplish without instruction, namely learning to talk. In my own experience I have found it to be invariably true that if a child is having difficulty learning, it is because something is impeding the natural activity of his facilities. This something is frequently the teacher himself,

the teacher's methods, the school itself; usually it is all these things plus emotional dilemmas originating outside the school. And yet it is not really difficult to alter these circumstances. At the First Street School we have done *no remedial teaching as such*, and yet some very striking improvements have occurred. And it is not as if we were a staff of extraordinarily dedicated teachers. We are not. I am sure that the same methods, in other hands, would yield results as good or better. . . .

THE QUESTION OF ORDER

All of this leads into the question of order—into what might be called the internal sources of order. (There are external sources, too, and we use them, though in a minimal way—there are no bells, no supervisors, no punishments, no threats.)

The day is alternately noisy and quiet. How do those quiet periods come about? The question is somewhat misleading, for the truth is that the noise is not chaos, it possesses the same elements that are observable during a period of calm when the children are bent over their books or are talking with their teachers. What seems like chaos is nothing but a multiplicity of actions, each one of which is highly rational and purposive. As much as the children enjoy these wild, sometimes merry, sometimes conflictive episodes, there is a built-in principle of transformation-into-calm. This principle is simply the fact that all creatures tend toward the completion of purposive actions, and progress from less defined toward more defined situational structures. The noisy periods are not the opposites of the quiet ones, but are the background out of which the quiet ones emerge. When this cycle is given its natural place in the routine of the school, the children tend to bring the vividness of their noisy play into the quiet of the more simply structured "lessons" (these too are social exchanges). The calm is not the oppressive silence of the disciplined classroom, but the electric ease of organic order. . . .

I have been talking about the learning and behavioural advantages of freedom. I would like to give an example now—a game period in the gym with the ten- to twelve-year-old boys—of the moral effect of non-intervention.

My presence in the gymnasium was not that of a supervisor, teacher, or coach. I held sweaters, stayed in the background, became nothing more than the authentication of the *place*, i.e., I could be relied upon to keep people out. This sounds like almost nothing, as indeed it was, but if one calls to mind the ordinary conditions of a boy's life in New York, not only at school, but on the streets, in the playgrounds, and at home, these little interludes of protected freedom will sound more like the rare occasions they really were. This will be all the more evident if it is borne in mind that four out of the six boys belonged to self-protective gangs, which tend to be as stifling as the organizations imposed by adults. Too, the non-intervention of an observant adult has a powerful effect on children who are used to prohibitions and supervision. It is not merely that they feel free to do and express things otherwise inhibited, but that they sense, quite directly, that the moral

reality has been shifted from the person of authority into the situation as a whole, of which they themselves are the most important parts. Let me make this clear by describing their behaviour, since it may sound like a large claim. I would like to make clear, too, that non-intervention is a very active kind of collaboration.

The boys are playing dodgeball. One of them repeatedly breaks the rule about stepping over the centre line. That is, he *sort of* observes the rule by anchoring one foot on the boundary line, but then when he throws the ball he allows the other foot to come a full stride into enemy territory. His opponents have been complaining and yelling, and now they lose patience. They know they are in the right, but they are afraid of being punched by the rule-breaker, who is also a bully. And so they appeal to me to arbitrate. "He keeps steppin' over the line!" This is quite true, and I nod. "Well it's against the rules, man!" Again I nod. "Well tell 'im to quit it, man!" I shake my head and shrug, conveying pretty clearly, "It's your affair, not mine." And so the boy who is angriest, the best player on the losing side, cries, "Shit, man, I quit!" and starts to walk off the court. The bully runs up to him with a raised fist and says, "You gonna quit, huh? Well I'm gonna break your ass." The other cringes, but stands his ground to the extent of saying, "I don't care, man." The bully is glaring at him, and he, mopingly, is staring at the bully. They are not only sizing each other up, but they are weighing the situation with great nicety and one can almost see the relevant wishes and fears in their faces. Both boys want to keep playing. The game was exciting—otherwise the argument would not have arisen. The rivalry was intense—otherwise the cheating would not have been so blatant, so much a deliberate insult. The bully knows very well that he cannot force the other boy to play. Even if his threats are successful, the boy will play half-heartedly, and the bully, who is a good thrower, is especially dependent on this boy, who is a good dodger. And so the bully sees his own pleasure in the game evaporating. He knows too that if he beats him up the whole game will be destroyed, partly because the excitement of competition really does depend on prior agreements and a fight would destroy the agreements, and partly because the loser's team-mates, though they are not fond of him, will be forced to show their loyalty, not only to a team-mate but to a fellow Puerto Rican, and they will certainly walk out. All of this is more or less visible on the quite intelligent face of the bully. And so after narrowing his eyes and sticking out his chin silently for a while, he punches him on the arm. The other boy mumbles, "Fuck you" and walks off the court. He hesitates a moment, and then leaves the gym. His team-mates yell to him to come back, and then they curse him, and then they yell, "Throw the ball, man! We can beat you anyway!"—though they had been losing from the beginning. And so the game goes on, but it is woefully lacking in excitement. The bully's team-mate, who is also his buddy, says nothing to him, but it is evident by his silence that his pleasure has been spoiled; and though the bully blusters and yells, as if the game were still at its peak, his face is wooden. The ball flies back and forth. The losing side is put out too quickly. The next

round commences. The boy who walked out appears in the doorway and watches. One of his team-mates yells, "Shit, man, come on!" He shakes his head and mumbles, "No, man." And then the bully's team-mate yells, "Come on, Becho, he won't cheat no more!" And the bully, who is holding the ball, yells, "That's right, chicken! Come on, chicken!" and hurls the ball at him. The boy catches the ball and hurls it back. The bully catches it, and screaming, "Come on, chicken, come on, chicken!" charges up to the line and hurls the ball at him. This time the boy dodges the ball—but he dodges onto the field of play, and immediately one of his team-mates cups his hands at his mouth and yells at the bully, "Come on, chicken, quawk, quawk, quawk" and in a moment the game is in full swing and all three Puerto Ricans, who are masters of derision, are flaunting themselves as targets and are yelling in unison through their cupped hands, "Quawk, quawk, quawk, quawk". The bully is grinning. He charges up to the line again—not stepping over—and yells, "Buncha fuckin' chickens over there"—and hurls the ball. The boy who had walked out dodges the ball, puts his hand at his groin and yells, "Yeah, man . . . you want a worm!" Once again the game is merry, obscene, and intense. And this time there is no cheating. It is worth mentioning, too, that the boys left the gym as one gang, talking back and forth.

Now what was their sense of me, their teacher? I had refused to arbitrate their quarrel—and by this very act I had put myself into relation with everything that transpired. Everything, in effect, was sanctioned—the cheating, the walking away—everything. But then what was I collaborating with? It seems to me that the boys were aware, each one—not conceptually, but with immediate intuition—that I was collaborating with his own attempt to make a workable union of egocentric and social needs, a union which is not possible when either of the two kinds is slighted. Each boy was able to experience the *necessary relation* between his own excitement and the code of conduct which joined him to others in a social group, and his sensing of this introduced a moral element into his play, for at bottom this is what morality is: the necessity of the relation between conduct and individual fulfilment. It is the indwelling of the *all* in the *one*—in the end a biological demand. When this relation ceases to be a necessary one, "right action" is no longer demonstrably good—and we are in the familiar quandary of empty forms, bankrupt laws, etc. Games and play, not only among children but adults as well, could not be so lovely and exciting if they did not refer our standards of conduct backward toward their deeper biological and passional bases.

Can there be Free High Schools?

PAUL SALSTROM

A VERY BASIC RETHINKING of the nature of education seems to be under way, largely on the American scene. Two of the books post-dating A. S. Neill's *Summerhill* and comparable to it—equally radical and thus equally stimulating—are John Holt's *How Children Fail* and Jules Henry's *American Classrooms: Learning the Nightmare*.

The following thoughts, laid out in the form of a hypothetical dialogue between a parent (asking questions) and the would-be founder of a "free high school" (answering them), represent a personal attempt to visualize as concretely as possible what it would mean for a high school to be "free". The school is visualized as college preparatory, but also as partaking of many of the qualities of Danish folk schools for adults. The school would attempt to function as a "community on the land" with economic support coming by and large from subsistence bread labour. One reason for trying to create such a school-community within the United States, but rejecting involvement in the US economic system, would be to demonstrate to citizens of countries considered underdeveloped that cultural and even economic development need not be a repetition of either the American nightmare or the Soviet nightmare. The school-community outlined below would be an experimental test of the thesis that the "communications revolution" which has swept over the world in the past 200 years—though originally dependent upon the industrial revolution—could now bring about a universal cultural enrichment in any society capable of breaking the bonds which render the "communications revolution" a slave of forces of economic and political centralization. Theoretically, one route to democratic decentralism and cultural enrichment would be (in parts of "the third world", if not in the already highly industrialized world) a popular movement to gain independence from all machines and centralized

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institutions which are not direct and necessary elements of communications systems. This is a thesis which I owe to Bill Coperthwaite, who is the source of many other ideas expressed here. (Mr. Coperthwaite's conceptions are not yet available in printed form, from his own pen directly, since he hopes first to found a school which can put them to a test.)

Parent's Question One: What would your prospective experimental high school and "community on the land" offer our youngsters beyond the programmes of existing schools—why should we send them there rather than to a boarding school which is already well-established?

Answer: Actually it would be a waste of time for any parent to send a child to the school, since the school would have a policy of never accepting students who come because they have been "sent" by their parents. Such motivation would be antithetical to a desire or ability on the part of the student to deal meaningfully with the challenges which would face him or her at the school. Here are some motivations which would be considered excellent on the part of an applying student: (1) admiration and affection for a member of the school's staff; (2) a strong desire to live away from home which is complicated by lack of money; (3) a desire to learn how to live on the land in a subsistence manner; (4) a desire to experiment with being a teacher as well as to learn in the usual capacity of student; and (5) a desire to practise basic, participatory democracy in social matters and total self-regulation in individual matters.

Question Two: Indeed, such a programme may not be available at any other boarding school or at home, but wouldn't a youngster have plenty of opportunity to follow such inclinations just a few years later in life—when, of course, it wouldn't cost tuition?

Answer: Yes. In many cases, however, the high school years are precisely the time when a student loses idealistic desires such as those mentioned above, and acquires in their place cynicism or materialism. Regarding tuition, the policy of the school would be to charge no tuition or fees whatsoever. In addition, there should be no need to solicit contributions from adults, but since some money would nonetheless be donated there could be three monetary funds helping to add diversity to the core programme of the school: (1) a "travel fund" for school travelling expenses (mainly gas and oil); (2) a "book fund" for the acquisition of books and other printed material as they are desired (gradually resulting in a school library); and (3) a "personal expenses fund", to be split evenly among students and staff members each year when school adjourns in June, with the hope that each share would be sufficient for summer travels. The staff members would be at the school on the same basis as the students, receiving no salary, only room and board.

Question Three: Even without the expense of salaries, wouldn't quite a bit of money be needed for necessities such as food, clothing and

shelter, simply for survival's sake?

Answer: Subsistence survival, living off the land, would be precisely one of the major subjects the school would be teaching. And the concern would not be merely for raw survival but rather for attainment of genuine comfort and a sense of security. (But in addition there would be a full college preparatory programme for all students anxious to academically prepare themselves for college.) There would probably be an initial period during which much of the school's foodstuffs would be purchased rather than grown on its land or caught in nearby waters—and perhaps a decision would eventually be made that there had best be several items such as wheat, oats, soybeans and fruit which the school should not struggle to grow. Such foods tend to be available for less than five dollars per hundred pounds. Sources of protein other than meat might not satisfy a percentage of the school (emotionally) and they would be free to embark upon livestock and poultry enterprises as well as fishing. For milk and dairy products, several goats would suffice. It would be income from the sale of school-made craft items which would constitute a fund expected to cover any food purchases—and also to pay for tools. (Incidentally, the best and cheapest tools available in certain parts of the country are early American items sold in antique shops.)

Question Four: Aren't few if any teenagers well-disciplined enough, even if in good health, to accept such a severe and unadorned physical environment?

Answer: If the students are accorded plenty of affection and approval, the dissatisfactions they might have should tend to be a stimulus for rendering the set-up less marginal—through ideas and work—not to serve as a reason for leaving. I think our society would find young people exercising much more self-discipline than at present were they urged to pursue the challenges they themselves find meaningful. Health can also be a crucial factor. The students and staff would tend to be not merely in good health but literally in a state of maximum vigour, both physically and mentally. The first four months of the school year, September to December, are months of gradually increasing climatic harshness. Among other outdoor activities during this period, the school's original inhabitants would be faced with the challenge of building adequate living quarters for themselves—individually or in groups, and with or without aid, as desired. On the staff would be experienced woodsmen who would frequently invite the students on overnight hikes and climbs which would combine nature study with pleasure.

Question Five: Since the facilities would be so simple—intentionally simple—why not locate the school where the winter climate would be moderate rather than harsh (such as in the South-west or on the coast of California)?

Answer: In addition to its main centre in a Northern climate, the

school would hopefully have a supplementary centre in the South-west or along California's coast—and a third centre in Mexico. After September to December in the North, the pattern of each school year could call for the first week or two of January to be spent at the second centre, followed by the remainder of January and all of February in the environment of a Mexican village. Then, on the way back North, there would be another stop-over at the South-west or California location, perhaps for up to a month. April and May, the spring months, like autumn, would be spent in the North. This type of schedule should bring out the best in a student by providing maximum stimulation. The period in Mexico which, as an inter-cultural experience, should act as a catalyst after the student's unbroken year or years immersed in US culture and the English language, would follow almost immediately after the climax of the physically hardening autumn months in the North. Thus this catalytic period would also be marked by greater than usual sensitivity and creativity due simply to the individual's natural reactions when a sudden change from cold to warm transpires.

Question Six: If the students are given total freedom in their individual lives, won't they tend to be sexually promiscuous?

Answer: Perhaps. Our culture is in the midst of what has been termed a "sexual revolution" and there is no way in which a school involving adolescents can magically settle the questions or "solve" the problems it produces. The hope would be that as a result of the general intensification of life-experiences which the school endeavours to provide, and because of the kind of youngsters it attracts, ideas of personal responsibility in all aspects of inter-personal relations would be helped to have natural development. I would think that the relative freedom at such a school would not result in sexual experimentation of the unfortunate sort which is so common among supposedly "controlled" youngsters who go to orthodox schools and live at home. The school can hardly contract to reverse such trends, but would rather attempt to overcome the obsession that "morality" is solely a matter of sexual behaviour. The school would hope for balance, here, as a consequence of the general symmetry of values it would seek to foster. (In general, on this question, it should be recognized that the attitudes which pervade adolescence are often extensions of feelings generated in the home during earlier years; meanwhile, the natural shyness common among high-school-aged youth is sometimes underestimated by anxious parents.)

Question Seven: Could studies, and particularly individual research, be carried on effectively without a sizeable school library?

Answer: Nature as such may well gradually become the foremost teacher for many students. However, the original three to five staff members would have to be persons well-grounded in a considerable variety of fields. Second-hand textbooks would be acquired in areas such as maths, Spanish, history, and perhaps literature and science. Courses would also be offered in composition, grammar, drama, art,

etc. Special course requests from students would automatically be accommodated, even if those interested must proceed as a committee due to the lack of an adequate teacher for the subject. Although classes would tend to meet regularly, assignments would be made only on the basis of individual student inclination, and class attendance would be optional (although a work quota would be required in regard to kitchen and maintenance tasks). Thanks to the innumerable facets of the world's on-going communications revolution, information not available at the school would not be hard to secure from elsewhere, as a rule via mail. Media of all kinds would be exploited, and likewise free services provided by agencies. In addition, each student would have an opportunity once a month to spend several days alone using a state library.

Question Eight: Could three to five teachers, even if fairly well-educated, actually teach a full range of college preparatory subjects?

Answer: An advantage in choosing the staff for such a school as this is that exceptionally intelligent and highly motivated individuals are attracted by freedom. Since the college board tests and their like have relegated the accreditation of high schools to relative unimportance in the eyes of college admissions offices, high schools willing to similarly place accreditation below achievement in their list of priorities find themselves able to tap the almost virgin supply of natural teachers who (due to a variety of reasons) have not concerned themselves with the acquisition of a B.A. degree. The ultra-intellectual atmosphere at our hypothetical school would arouse in most students a desire to participate. Thus the average level of mental *effort* should be quite high relative to any other type of school. It is also stimulating to teach—and all students would be expected to teach to a greater or lesser extent. Instruction in various languages—and in specialties such as astronomy, ornithology, guitar, poetic composition, voice—might when available be requested for a full year by some individuals and merely dipped into by others. Well and good. The committee system in addition to being used in some courses, would also prove helpful in other aspects of the school-community life, for it has educational value comparable to that of the "council" meetings which would make more important decisions. (The "council" would be open to all students and staff members and would emphasize decisions via consensus rather than voting.)

Education as revolution

MARTIN SMALL

THE CONCEPT OF POPULAR EDUCATION: A Study of Ideas and Social Movements in the Early Nineteenth Century. (London: MacGibbon and Kee 1965, 63s.)

THE EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE of a nation may be viewed as an inevitable task to be undertaken and to be directed towards the strengthening or at least maintaining an already existing social order; or it may be thought of as an end in itself, the essential constituent of a better social order which will replace the existing one. In his book Mr. Silver describes these two attitudes, the emergence of the latter in England towards the close of the eighteenth century, its flowering in the Owenite co-operative movement of the 1830's, and the counter-attack of the guardians of the established order by means of "derevolutionised" imitations of Owen's educational methods.

His first chapter (Some Eighteenth Century Attitudes) describes two ways in which "the concept of popular education" could be taken: either as liable to subvert the social order and therefore to be avoided, or as liable to subvert the social order but inevitable and therefore to be handled in such a way as to render it non-subversive. Dr. Johnson's friend, Soame Jenyns, described ignorance as the "opiate" of the poor, "a cordial administered by the gracious hand of providence". Fifty years later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, this argument could still be used against Mrs. Hannah More's irreproachably orthodox Sunday schools. In 1825 *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* looked gloomily on the newly established Mechanics Institutes: "We cannot be ignorant that hitherto, whenever the lower orders of any great state have obtained a smattering of knowledge, they have generally used it to produce national ruin" (quoted by Silver, p. 212). But gradually this argument or reaction lost ground to the more commonsensical reflections of, for instance, the Rev. Andrew Irvine who, in his *Reflections on the Education of the Poor* (1815), argued that to do nothing was to abandon the field to an already well-organised enemy: "Nothing is so hostile to good government as ignorance in the governed, who thus become an easy prey to seduction, and instruments of mischief in the hands of unprincipled and designing men." A third

approach, that of the rationalists, quite distinct from these two, looked upon education as an essential constituent of the rational life and upon the rational life as required in the interests of the individual's best use of his freedom; the rationalist "held that change could be effected and controlled in the world of men, that reason was not only the key to all knowledge and understanding—it was the key to human betterment" (p. 53). A foundation to the modern rationalist position was laid by John Locke in the seventeenth century. Locke pointed to (although he did not attempt precisely to define) the influence of education in determining a man's character; and he called for a more naturalistic approach to education—for the treatment of it, not as an alien substance to be imposed upon children, but as a natural development in which they can be encouraged—the teacher's job is "to give them a Liking and Inclination to what you propose to them to be learn'd, and that will engage their Industry and Application" (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1690; quoted pp. 58-9).

If all men are equally susceptible to education—and if the nature of a man's life is determined by the nature of the education he has—then all men are equal in a very important respect. The egalitarian implications of Locke's position were further developed in the next century by the French thinker, Helvetius. "Helvetius set out, in an extremely important passage, to answer, for example, those who insisted that there is a '*grande inégalité d'esprit des hommes*' on the grounds that such an inequality can be seen to exist between men who have had the same education. The fact is, Helvetius points out, that men only *appear* to have had the same education. It is not good enough to state that they have been educated in the same place by the same teachers. We must give to the term education a truer, wider meaning (*'une signification plus vraie et plus étendue'*) and include in it all the factors that contribute to our education: '*alors je dis que personne ne reçoit la même éducation; parce que chacun a, si je l'ose dire, pour precepteurs, et la forme du gouvernement sous lequel il vit, et ses amis, et ses maîtresses, et les gens dont il est entouré, et ses lectures, et enfin le hasard, c'est-à-dire une infinité d'événements*'" (pp. 61-2). ("And so I say, no one receives the same education as another; for each one has for, if I may so express it, private tutors, not only the form of government under which he lives, but also his friends, his mistresses, the people by whom he is surrounded, the books he reads, and above all chance—that is to say, an infinity of circumstances.")

The apologists of the status quo laid stress upon the dangerous, anarchic tendencies of individual man and upon the consequent need for a social order to protect men against these tendencies in themselves and in each other; the rationalist position emphasised the possibility in each man for a full and free and socially harmonious development of all his faculties, and the consequent necessity to encourage and not to destroy or stunt this potential. The foremost champion of the latter position in late eighteenth century England was William Godwin. In *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice* (1793) and *The Enquirer* (1798) Godwin stated that it was desirable and therefore

rational to act for the general happiness of all, that all men could be persuaded or taught to act rationally, and that the only method which could achieve this end was the unremitting and unalloyed (by threats, promises, or deceits, however "innocent") use of reason. "Godwin set his pedagogy against a backcloth of a philosophy of society. He was not concerned, as were Bell and Lancaster, with expedients and with preparation for a role in society, in habits of subordination, or in habits of anything except independent thought and attention to the happiness of others. The mainspring of correct social action, with Godwin, as with Helvetius, lay in a proper awareness of the self, in an understanding of how the happiness and well-being of others coincide with one's own happiness and well-being. . . . It was primarily through these two works, in the period, let us remember, of the expansion of the Sunday school and the beginning of the monitorial schools, that older and more expansive theories of human nature and of education returned most directly to the centre of ideological debate" (p. 89).

Chapter two (Principles into Practice) deals with Owen's early career and with the history of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. The Society was founded in 1781 and its founder and president, Dr. Thomas Percival, was the friend and correspondent of Voltaire, Diderot, Maupertius, Condorcet and d'Alembert, as well as of Dr. Joseph Priestley, towards the cost of whose scientific research he persuaded the society to donate £50; and although he could not persuade the society to send a letter of sympathy to Priestley when his laboratory was destroyed by a Church-and-King mob in 1791, he did organise the establishment in 1795 (the year in which Owen began to attend the society's meetings) of a Manchester Board of Health to investigate the causes of the outbreaks of fever in the cotton mills, and in the next year he published *Heads of Resolutions for the Consideration of the Board of Health*, which were severely critical of the conditions in the mills. There is no record extant of the books in the Society's library, but the catalogue of the books in the library of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (which was set up in imitation of the Manchester society) includes *Helvetius on the Mind* and *Helvetius on Man*, Godwin's *Political Justice* and Godwin's *Enquirer*, and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Women and Posthumous Works* (in five volumes). One of the members of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society was a close friend of Thomas Walker of the Manchester Constitutional Society, himself a close friend of Tom Paine.

"Locke, Rousseau and Godwin might in their different ways and ages have made education a firmly-held ideal for many liberals. It was Robert Owen who made it a mass issue" (p. 53). It was Robert Owen who observed the direct contradiction of the ideally rational education in the brutal conditions of the children who worked in the cotton mills; it was Robert Owen who saw, every day at work, that a rational education could not be said to be rational unless it was an encouragement of the whole being of all men; it was Robert Owen who understood and devised the new, rationalist battle-cry of democracy. "Perhaps no single sentence contributed more to the establishment of popular

education as one of the targets of mass action than Owen's formulation that men's characters were formed for and not by them. That it was a too unsubtle interpretation of social processes, that his rationalism led him into a mechanistic argument and trap, and that he did not have the sensitive grasp of the dynamics of social change as more agile thinkers like Bronterre O'Brien, or earlier thinkers cast in a similar mould, such as Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft—all these are true. But historically, Owen's dogged pursuit of his rationalist vision was an entirely relevant and socially liberating action, all the more so in that Owen had the opportunity to demonstrate, in terms of the early nineteenth century, its practicability."

Owen's aim—and his achievement, within the limited "experiment" of New Lanark—was not only to teach the people, but to teach them democratically—that is to say, each human being counting for one, and no human being counting for more than one. "A professor, visiting New Lanark, had been to see the infant school, 'and as the children were passing out, the kind-hearted Professor patted the head of a little girl, whose fair face and flowing hair had caught his eye. "Ah!" said Mr. Owen to him, "you are like all the rest, it is the good-looking only that you notice; but it is those that are least favoured by nature that most need the touch of a kindly hand"' (W. B. Hodgson, Address to the Watt Institute and School of Arts, Edinburgh, 1879). The child had a right to kindness and the benefits of society. A man had a right to work and to leisure, and to protection by the community of which he was an integral part. For Owen there were no outcasts" (pp. 235-6).

An idea may be ignored, or it may be attacked; it may be enthusiastically applauded, and attempts may be made to put it into practice; or attempts may be made to counteract its chief end whilst the outward form of the idea is maintained. The last was the fate of Owen's idea of an infant school when the idea was taken up by the established Church of England. In 1824 the Rev. William Wilson established at Walthamstow the first Church Infants' School; a year later he published *The System of Infant Schools*. "It is designed", says Wilson, 'to correct the moral feeling, the passions, and the heart; as well as to store the memory with that which is excellent and useful. . . . It gives the preference decidedly rather to the improvement of the moral feeling and the influence of true religion, than to the development of the intellectual powers.' Owen saw infant education as a self-contained period, offering enjoyment and general development within a context of affection and mutual understanding; Wilson injected into the infant school situation the function of *preparation*, preparation for entry into National Schools: "They will enter these establishments . . . prepared, at least, to think, to feel, and to obey. The ground will have been broken up, many of the obnoxious weeds removed"

A penultimate chapter, "Architects and Builders", takes its title from the constitution of the Grand National Guild of Builders drafted with the assistance of—if not actually written by—Owen, in September 1833; at a time when the acceptance, by the politically aware section of the English working class, of Owen's doctrine of the central importance

of popular education to the coming social revolution was at its height. The sixth proposition of the constitution read: "We shall be enabled to form arrangements in all parts of the British dominions to re-educate all our adult Brethren that they may enjoy a superior mode of existence, by acquiring new and better dispositions, habits, manners, language and conduct, in order that they may become such examples for their children as are requisite to do justice to all young persons whose characters are to be formed to become good practical members of society." And the seventh: "We shall form arrangements as soon as circumstances admit, to place all the children of the Brethren, under such instruction of persons and influences of external objects as shall train or educate the will, inclination and powers within each to induce and enable them to become Architects and Builders of the human character" (quoted pp. 193-4). Mr. Silver has collected together—and given ample quotation to—this Owenite enthusiasm for education which infected the trade union and the co-operative movement in the early 1830's. It is interesting to find a recurrence of the Godwinian hostility to a system of national state-aided education (on which point no doubt Owen followed Tom Paine and Adam Smith in their opinion that unaided and voluntary individual effort would be inadequate); at the Co-operative and Trades' Union Congress held in London in October 1833 James Rigby described how the committee of the Manchester Working Class School, earlier in the year, "had resolved to petition government for part of the money which had been voted in Parliament for the promotion of education amongst the people; but the scholars hearing of this intention, petitioned the masters to abandon their resolution, as it might subject the school to some tyrannical restraint . . . now we carry on successfully without any pecuniary assistance" (from the report of the congress in Owen's paper, *The Crisis*, October 19th, 1833, quoted p. 189).

It is difficult if not impossible to distinguish with unimpeachable exactitude between the two; but it is undeniable that the education of the people with no motive in view beyond that properly contained in the concept of education itself is one thing; and the education of the people when some object quite alien to the proper spirit of education is intended, is another. It sometimes seems that the security promised by the latter form of education has proved more attractive than the no less metaphysical promise of true happiness contained in the former. But to be a rationalist—and to be an anarchist—is to believe that a man is never so firm in his allegiance to an imitation as to be completely unsusceptible to the real thing; and that a man's capacity to delude himself that it is possible to enjoy security where there is no happiness—or that security *is* happiness—is limited by the inextinguishable flame of his desire to live rationally and freely. Mr. Silver's book describes the emergence of the idea of a true, a rational education of all men, and the first awkward attempts to put it into practice. He has thereby helped to make clear what still needs to be done—and, since education begins anew with each generation, what it will still be necessary to do even in the ideal society in which rationality has been seriously accepted as the measure of all behaviour.

The London Free School

PETER JENNER

THE NATURE OF THE FREE SCHOOL makes it impossible to write "authoritatively" about what it is doing, and since we have only recently opened, perhaps the best way to describe it is to look at the development of the ideas and activities as they have progressed to date.

The initial impetus for the idea was derived from the Free Universities in the United States, which were set up as anti-universities in order to counter the irrelevance and academic and political conservatism of many of the bigger establishments there. They aimed to teach out-of-the-ordinary subjects in a new form, and their success was due to the way they succeeded in breaking free from the sausage-machine approach of the mass universities which prevails in many places. Initially this seemed an attractive idea, but the more it was considered the more irrelevant it seemed to English experience and conditions. First, the student population here is, comparatively, an excessively pampered minority. It exists moreover, in smaller, freer and more creative institutions than their American counterparts. Hence, it seemed to us that if the students wanted a free university there was no reason why they could not do it for themselves. Secondly, the proportion of the student age group attending university in England is so much smaller than in the States. Thirdly, we were faced with the fact that the real educational divide in England is at 15 years rather than at 18 as in the States, and that in consequence the real need was not so much for a free university as a Free School.

But where to begin? We chose the Notting Hill area not only because many of us lived in the district, but also because it seemed the kind of underprivileged area that badly needed a new educational approach. It is also an exciting community with a tremendous diversity

PETER JENNER was asked by the editors of the magazine *RESURGENCE* (see inside back cover) to record his approach to the Free School idea, and they kindly allowed us to reprint it.

of human experience and it seemed probable that we would find the variety of experience we needed to make what promised to be an educational experiment work. It was, furthermore, an area that has the appearance of having been abandoned by the official educational and amenity systems. In many ways it seemed to us that the schools, for example, both for adults and children, were somehow apart from the life and experience of the district they were supposed to serve. An educational experiment could then scarcely find a tougher target than this poor, insecure, transient and delinquent district.

Initially we had hoped to try to present a new approach to education. We envisaged a system whereby the usual barriers between teacher and taught would be reduced to a minimum (an idea we borrowed from the Free University). We did not want to set out to teach people, rather we wanted to learn and explore, intellectually, visually and aurally, together with the people. This had the result of giving some of the academics involved a chance to discover some new or forgotten fundamentals of their own subjects simply by meeting the "cases" they theorised about. Artists, writers and musicians also discovered new uncertainties in their traditions, or themselves, and discovered too the extent to which their preoccupations divorced and alienated them from ordinary people.

The School was thus, in educational terms, envisaged as an attempt to communicate across the barriers of class and education, and in this way it was hoped that both teachers and taught would benefit in a refinement of perception and experience. Above all, it was an attempt to establish a common field of information and experience from both sides of the class barrier, rather than promote another middle-class attempt to put across middle-class attitudes and values. The teachers began by questioning what the people themselves, by their apathy, had rejected, for their rejection at least raised the question that perhaps the uneducated were right and that existing academic traditions and artistic forms were, if only partially, irrelevant or misleading. It seemed to us fundamental that education should relate to experience, and that economics and sociology should help people obtain a clearer view of their situation and hence, how they might try, if it was possible, to improve it. It was also important to us to relate art to everyday perception, if only to make life yield more fun. Similarly, we asked, why should not music be within the reach of everyone without necessarily being trite, repetitive, staid or pious? Why, for that matter, should it only be played by musicians? These are merely some of the ideas that were flying around in the planning stages; action and participation were clearly implied in all of them.

The word "Free" was included in the title because we wanted the freedom of the School to work both ways. The School was to be free to the student, and in return for his time the teacher was to be free to have a class on any subject of his choice with total freedom of expression; his subject matter was for him and his class to decide. Our only

proviso was that the teacher should accept that he should be there to learn as much as the students.

The initial steps were made by canvassing for a public meeting to gain support for the idea of a Free School. This was held in March with an encouraging attendance. Over 50 people from the neighbourhood came along and there was a fair degree of enthusiasm. But then nothing happened. Nothing had been properly planned and, what was worse, hardly anyone from the district came to the classes. Even when they did, nobody seemed quite certain how to start a class, and we all began to feel we had simply led ourselves up the garden path. There were two important successes, however, one was a playgroup for children and the other was an embryonic teenage group.

These developments led to the need to rethink our approach. There was no evidence that the community was just waiting for education to be taken to it, there was in fact no reason why they should accept us any more than they accepted anyone else. But at the same time, where we provided something functional and useful, such as the playground, we found the demand was considerable. This led us back to one of our original ideas, namely that the Free School should be a neighbourhood school. "Neighbourhood" then became a more dominant theme in our work than education itself, for we came to see that the failure of many aspects of formal education was only part of a much wider area of failure to meet real social need, and that, if education was projected in isolation from it, the people rapidly came to view it, as indeed they did most aspects of the state school system, as a luxury that entailed no real loss if it was dispensed with. Hence we felt that education through communication should be replaced with education through action, community action, which would also be an educational progress for all involved, both the people from the neighbourhood, and also for a number of us who are outsiders.

In this way we have found we are coming to gain the trust of the community and at the same time we are coming to understand, as well as to love more fully, the neighbourhood in which we have chosen to work. Fundamentally I see the Free School now as becoming an agency of community education and action through attempts to tackle real community problems, such as where the kids can play, what can be done about housing, how to persuade the local authority to take its responsibilities to the area more seriously, and how to make life in the area at least more tolerable, and at best more positively enjoyable. In this we find we are educating ourselves and the people to understand that the only way to get things such as this done is to do them, and that if the people group together they can get things done that they could not get done if they were acting as isolated individuals or if they merely expressed passive forms of discontent. In other words we are trying to help create a community. But the long-term aim remains, once there is the beginnings of a community, once there is trust, then education as originally envisaged can return. This may be in a few months or it may

be in a few years. We still feel that anyone who wants to start a class and can get people to come to it can do so under the auspices of the School, no one will try to stop him!

We are still unstructured, we have, for example, no committee although we have a secretarial group which does the necessary organising, and prepares the fortnightly *Grove*—the neighbourhood newsletter. We also have a financial group which raises money and decided how to spend it. But there are no elected committees, no presidents, no chairmen, no hon. sec., no votes, no political groups. We hope that this loose structuring will continue, for it is a fundamental view that if someone wants to do something he should be free to do it, and if he wants to call it part of the Free School he is entitled to do so. If any really important principle has to be decided then we have an open meeting to which anyone can come, and anyone who does come, is, by definition, part of the Free School, and since there is no provision for voting there is no problem of meetings getting “packed”, or any other of the normal, and boring political problems.

The Free School lives. It has a children's play group, we help in a Neighbourhood Service unit, it has a teenage group, an elementary English group, a music group, and a housing group, whilst another group organised a festival for the area in September. It is not really what we expected, and I am sure in a year it will belie our expectations again.

COMMENT ON ANARCHY 71: TEACHER IS TYRANT

I'M SORRY THAT John Thurston chose to pick me up on a section of my piece in ANARCHY 68 that was written *en passant* so to speak, as I was not writing a piece on authoritarianism in schools. Mr. Thurston unfortunately jumps to conclusions and this leads him to a sarcasm (it's easy to see that he *is* a teacher) that is rather wide of the mark.

I chose Mr. Barton's piece to represent the attitude of the typical secondary modern teacher because this expressed succinctly and horribly, what I believed to be true. My own experience (admittedly 20 years ago) was of a school where children were paralysed with fear and hatred of the staff; where they were caned for making spelling mistakes; for being late; for answering back (i.e. showing interest by asking a question or venturing to disagree with the tin Caesar standing at the front of the class). For years after this I had thought that things had improved, until, living in Lambeth, I carried out a rather unscientific investigation of some of the schools in South and Central London. Here I found that the caning and beating up of children was a regular rather than an occasional occurrence and received the impression that a great many of the teachers concerned positively enjoyed the admini-

stering of punishment and would create the opportunities to do so.

Although I was concerned mainly with London I used the Aldermaston March to interview some young people from other parts of the country. To give two brief examples: one young woman, just left school, at the age of 15 was held across a desk and beaten for fifteen minutes (in front of a mixed class) for wearing a sweater over her school uniform during that severe winter of 1962/63; another young woman was accorded similar treatment for dyeing her hair. These are *not* isolated examples, I could fill several issues of ANARCHY with them, and the conversations I had with David Wills and Michael Duane reinforced my belief that this sort of treatment was more general than I had previously supposed.

The result of all this was a piece published about three years ago in *Peace News*, “The Rule of Fear in Our Schools”, which brought letters from teachers all over the country again confirming my experience.

The problem today is that, like the police force and the prison service, teaching at secondary modern level tends to attract those who enjoy power wielding and pain inflicting behaviour, as well as those regarded by the system as academically second rate. The result, as Mr. Thurston rightly says, is that the teacher with a vocation finds himself struggling against almost insuperable odds. Nevertheless many of my friends find that struggle worthwhile and achieve something. Mr. Thurston's resignation will achieve nothing.

With most of what Mr. Thurston said I would not disagree. He may be right in saying I have never “been a teacher”, but for over a year I did teach, in a highly authoritarian school, where both teachers and pupils had been thoroughly brutalised. I had no trouble with those I taught, simply because I let them see that I was on their side. This did not make me popular with the rest of the staff but as I got results academically I kept the job and I intend to return to it when academically qualified.

Neither is Mr. Thurston's statement that “achievement by force of personality is a tragically laughable fallacy” true. The achievements of David Wills, Alex Bloom, and Michael Duane cannot be that easily dismissed. I sympathise with John Thurston's difficulties (they will be mine in a couple of years) but I would suggest that he has a look at the work of those who *have* achieved something by utilising non-coercive methods of education, and while he is about it, at the contents of ANARCHY 71.

Hull

JOHN PILGRIM

COMMENT ON ANARCHY 70: ANARCHIST ANTHOLOGIES

THERE IS A SHRILLNESS about Nicolas Walter's review of Horowitz' *The Anarchists*, and *Patterns of Anarchy* edited by Krimerman and Perry (e.g. calling Dostoevski's novel *The Underground Man* “little

more than a psychotic scream of hate against the ideas of humanity, progress, reason, and hope . . ."). This kind of stridence has characterised a significant minority of articles in both ANARCHY and FREEDOM over the past four years and has strained, but not broken, the credulity of several North American anarchists.

This is not to say that Nicolas Walter's estimation of the two books in question is not essentially correct, but his review ignores totally the importance of the publication of these books in the US and Canada at this time, and the special importance of these two books to the "New Left" and the "Movement" here in North America, despite his closing comments at the close of the article about the "recent revival of interest in anarchism". There is an embryonic, perhaps fetal, anarchist "movement" in the US and Canada centred primarily around the university communities and the activist resistance to the American draft (conscription) and the North American system of racial and economic inequality, and these two books have been of startling importance to this "movement".

The major "centres" of this "movement" (which is to say, points of physical density, not necessarily centres of activity) are Vancouver, San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, Toronto, Buffalo, Montreal, and New York City, and in all these places the two anthologies have been read, discussed, criticised, and finally *used*, together with other recently published books which are not "anarchist" by blatant definition and title, but which are, nonetheless, plainly libertarian in import, such as Erich Fromm's new collection, *Socialist Humanism* (Doubleday Anchor paperback #A529). In recent months, these books have to some extent directed, or at least influenced, the intellectual and activist ferment in North America and, together with ANARCHY and FREEDOM, have provided a framework for the task of re-formation of an American libertarian movement.

This re-formation was called for by C. Wright Mills, among others, in his *Letter to the New Left* in 1960. Significantly enough, this *Letter to the New Left* was reprinted by Students for a Democratic Society for general distribution three years later, and has been a beginning point for several of the young theoreticians of the North American New Left.

Nicolas Walter says: "It is time that we took advantage of it (the recent revival of interest in anarchism), and raised our voice again." There are several people who are doing just that, with the help of Freedom Press and the books which Nicolas Walter has reviewed, and the help of the many anarcho-pacifists and anarcho-activists in the US and Canada. There is a beginning being made; that is perhaps the most important item omitted from Nicolas Walter's review.

Buffalo, New York

JEREMY TAYLOR

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