

THE RAVEN 10

ANARCHIST QUARTERLY



on Education

JOHN SHOTTON · MICHAEL SMITH · ZEB KORICINSKA
PAULE PYM · LYNN OLSEN · JOHN R DOHENY · COLIN WARD
PLUS GEORGE WOODCOCK ON THE ENDING CENTURY

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Subscriptions

Four issues of *The Raven*

Inland: Regular £10, Institutions £12, Claimants £8.

Abroad: Surface £11, Airmail £16, Institutions (surface) £14 (airmail) £19.

Joint subscriptions

The Raven (4 issues) and **Freedom** fortnightly (24 issues)

Inland: Regular £20, Institutions £30, Claimants £15.

Abroad: Surface £24.50, Airmail £37, Institutions (surface) £34.50 (airmail) £47.

Editorial

Anarchists and anarchist journals have always had a lot to say about education and schools. *The Raven* is no exception. Its second issue contained David Koven's account of the Walden Centre and School in America, its third had Tony Gibson's story of Burgess Hill School, and its fourth reprinted John Hewetson's thoughts on sexual freedom for the young. Number six included a conversation with Nellie Dick, a veteran of working class anarchist free schooling in the East End of London before the First World War.

How do these chance items link together, and in what way can these and endless other experiences be joined in an anarchist approach to education?

The task of this issue of *The Raven* is to make these connections. We have first John Shotton's article on 'The Authoritarian Tradition in British Education since 1870 and its Libertarian Critique'. This has been written as the introduction to a book called *Libertarian Education and Schooling in Britain 1890-1990* which will appear sooner or later. The most important aspect of his researches is that they reveal a previously unexplored world of poor, working class people, rebelling against the official school system with their own kind of libertarian education. We eagerly await his book. John Shotton is, as many readers will know, a co-editor of *Lib Ed*, subtitled as 'a magazine for the liberation of learning' (three issues a year from The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Lutterworth, Leics LE17 5HL).

Our second item is equally provocative and relevant. Michael Smith, who is head of learning resources at Kingston Polytechnic, wrote the best ever concise book on the anarchist contribution to educational theory and practice. This was *The Libertarians and Education* (Allen & Unwin, 1984). This book was endlessly ignored in the educational press, but its author was not disheartened. He delivered at one of the History Workshops, a sparkling paper on Kropotkin's views on technical education, reproduced here and in the History Workshop volume *For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice*, edited by David Goodway (Routledge, 1989).

Contrary to popular belief, the law in Britain does not demand that parents should send their children to school. It does require that they

should receive an education. Every so often, parents who want to teach their children at home are persecuted and prosecuted by local education authorities who interpret the law their own way and choose their own definitions of education. It is usually conscientious parents, not neglectful ones, who find themselves in court. The organisation Education Otherwise exists to help and advise them, and this is the topic that Zeb Korycinska discusses.

Paule Pym's vignette of actual classroom experience is a reminder that in the never-ending discussion of education, the daily interaction between individual teachers and individual children and the relationship of both to the institution is seldom described. When it is examined, the results are usually disturbing.

John Doheny of the University of British Columbia contributes a critique of higher education, and finally comes Colin Ward who has written three school books, two books about children, two handbooks for teachers, and even a manual for school architects, but doesn't trust the education system.

He has written for every kind of educational journal, and the only occasion in his life when a contribution was rejected was, paradoxically, when he was asked to review the book by Michael Smith mentioned above. So, anxious to do justice to the work of the historians, he begins his five-part contribution to this issue of *The Raven* with his rejected review.

He throws in some comments on rural school experiments, on William Morris as an anarchist educator, and a lecture given to the good and the great in 1977 which envisages the dilemmas of the 1980s and the post-Thatcherite 1990s, as well as a comment on the current proposals for a National Curriculum in history. This issue of *The Raven* on education is written entirely by people with experience of how hard it is to teach anyone anything and who cherish anarchist educational ideals. It's a presentation of the breadth and depth of the anarchist approach and we hope that the readers will take the topic as seriously as the writers do.

*John Shotton***The Authoritarian Tradition in British Education since 1870 and its Libertarian Critique**

Britain presents a paradox to historians of modern education systems. The first to industrialise, it lagged way behind other Western European countries in terms of state intervention in the education enterprise. Compulsory universal education was founded in Calvinist Geneva in 1536. Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia made primary education compulsory in 1717 and regular school attendance was required in France as a result of a series of ordinances of Louis XIV and Louis XV. In 1833 the British Government did set aside money from the Treasury which was paid to philanthropic groups for the purposes of educating the poor; however the government was reluctant to become directly involved. This is borne out in a Parliamentary Committee report on the State of Education in 1834. In a section entitled 'Education as a Private Venture with Public Help: The Case against Free Compulsory Schooling', the response of the Lord Chancellor to a series of questions about establishing a national state system of education is quoted at length:

I think that it is wholly inapplicable to the present condition of the country, and the actual state of education . . . suppose the people were taught to bear it, and to be forced to educate their children by penalties, education would be made absolutely hateful in their eyes, and would speedily cease to be endured . . . I don't well perceive how such a system can be established, without placing in the hands of the Government, that is of the ministers of the day, the means of dictating opinions and principals to the people . . .¹

The ministers of the day clearly agreed with the Lord Chancellor for it was not until 1870 that the necessity of a national state system had become clear.

Between 1834 and 1870 Britain was faced with a growing population, a decrease in child labour, a massive increase in deprivation, and by 1870 with the first indications of world competition and industrial depression. It is no coincidence that the demand for a national state system of education accompanied these developments. By 1870

education was seen as the panacea for the social problems of the Victorian era:

There was a chorus of voices . . . raised in favour of the doctrine that education is the great panacea for human troubles, and that, if the country is not shortly to go to the dogs everybody must be educated.²

Poverty and crime were of special concern:

Pauperism cannot be checked until the children are nurtured in habits of self-reliance, independence and morality, and these qualities are only to be cultivated by a proper system of education.³

Would not the policeman be better employed in assisting the work of the schoolmaster by collecting together, for school attendance, the wilfully neglected children, who are springing up into recruits for the great army of crime.⁴

Education administered by the state was also seen as the means of producing the required labour force. The relationship between such a system and the economy became clear:

The more thorough primary instruction of such countries as Prussia . . . afford to foreign workmen advantages which ours must have in order to maintain a successful competition.⁵

In addition, an educated worker would realise that strikes were not in her/his own interest:

What would prevent the working classes from engaging in those vain strikes which end in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases in leaving them in a worse condition than before; what would keep them from habits of waste and improvidence, but some knowledge of the succession of events in life, such as education could supply.⁶

The provision of education also had to keep pace with the extension of the franchise. So-called democracy apparently needed an educated electorate. The Second Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised some men of the urban working class. Robert Lowe expressed his concern:

Political power is henceforth to reside in the poorest class of householders. We dare not place it in the hands of men who cannot read and write: The most ordinary principles of self-preservation will soon make popular education the first and highest of political necessities.⁷

It was also believed in certain influential quarters that the provision of elementary education would improve the efficiency of the army and the navy. Here it is important to be clear on the meaning of the term 'elementary education'. It was not simply education for all those of a particular age group: it was not synonymous with first stage or primary

education. Rather it was education for a class, for the 'labouring poor' as they were known for most of the century. The success of the Public Schools in producing Gentlemen had led to increased awareness on the part of many as to the type of individual that other schools might produce:

It is a great satisfaction to think that, though the distraction of momentous events now occurring abroad may continue . . . the machinery will have been definitely constituted for a system of National Education and thus rendering our people better fitted for any purpose and for any struggles, whether friendly or hostile which may await us in the future . . . We have been rather backward in our efforts to improve this elementary material of war.⁸

Putting all these tendencies together, the desire was clearly for more direct and successful means of social control. The massive movement of population from the country to the towns had the effect of displacing the church from its position of influential dominance at the same time as creating urban ghettos where subversive ideas could thrive. Whilst artisans lived in cottages scattered over moors and wolds there was only limited danger to the state. But in the concentrated populations of the towns danger lurked:

In the concentrated populations of our towns, the dangers arising from the neglect of the intellectual and moral culture of the working classes are already imminent and the consequences of permitting another generation to rise without bending the powers of the executive Government and of society to the great work of civilisation and religion, for which the political and social events of every hour make a continual demand, must be social disquiet little short of revolution.⁹

When he introduced the Elementary Education Bill in the House of Commons on February 17th 1870, W. E. Forster bore testament to the state's fears and change of will since 1833:

We must not delay. Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity. It is of no use trying to give technical teaching to our artisans without elementary education; uneducated labourers — and many more of our labourers are utterly uneducated — are, for the most part unskilled, notwithstanding their strong sinews and determined energy, they will become over-matched in the competition of the world. Upon this speedy provision depends also, I fully believe, the good, the safe working of our constitutional system.¹⁰

It may well be that men like John Stuart Mill believed that liberty depended upon the greatest possible degree of diffused social intelligence but the intentions of the state in establishing a National System of Education were clearly rooted in the belief that chaos would

prevail over culture unless the populace were brought under the disciplines of schooling.

As a result of the 1870 Act the country was divided into about 2500 school districts. In each district School Boards were to be elected by ratepayers with the brief to examine the provision by Voluntary Societies of elementary education in the district. Where provision was lacking an individual Board's responsibility was to levy a school rate and build and maintain a Board School. The Board could insist on attendance if they wished. The London Board, for example, made attendance compulsory for children between the ages of five and thirteen. Only in 1880 did the Mundella Act make attendance compulsory and only for children between five and eleven. Subsequently an act of 1893 fixed the school-leaving age at eleven and in 1899 this was raised to twelve. Since then, of course, the school leaving age has risen to fourteen in 1918, fifteen in 1947 and sixteen in 1971.

The fact that schooling became compulsory in 1880 and has remained so ever since is critical in understanding the authoritarian nature of the National State Education System. It also indicates how serious the state was in its intention to create a structure which aimed principally at social control and social engineering. School Boards and teachers did not need to look very far for appropriate models, there was the family and a series of already existing schools.

Historians seem to agree that it is difficult to generalise about the nature of the family in Victorian Britain. But, as James Walvin has demonstrated, from 1800 to 1914 more often than not the family was a tiny kingdom, an absolute monarchy.¹¹ Currently most of those people who talk angrily about saving the family or bringing back the virtues of the family do not see it as an instrument of growth and freedom but of dominance and slavery, a miniature dictatorship in which the child learns to live under and submit to absolute and unquestionable power. Such was the Victorian family. It was a training for slavery. As Bernard Mandeville wrote:

It is our Parents, that first cure us of natural wildness and break in us the Spirit of Independency we are all born with. It is to them that we owe the first Rudiments of our Submission; and to the Honour and Deference which children pay to parents, all societies are obliged for the principle of Human Obedience.¹²

Children in Victorian England owed their parents total obedience.

That schools after 1870 would be constructed upon such family values was hardly surprising given that teachers would be adults and

considering the nature of already existing schools. In the early Victorian Age young ladies were told:

When you go to school your teachers take the place of your parents . . . They ought therefore to be obeyed accordingly.¹³

This image of adult authority and its corollary, children's obedience cast a shadow across most schools in England before 1870. That shadow was to lengthen steadily after 1870. It has since become a permanent fixture.

Considering the nature of the state's intentions in introducing the 1870 Education Act it was the process of education in schools that was to be important. The Board Schools became havens of order and obedience. Given the power invested in adults over children, through unsophisticated means of reward and punishment, children were treated as passive objects condemned to be meek, submissive and deferential. As early as 1793 William Godwin had warned of the dangers of a National State Education System. It is worth quoting him at length:

The injuries that result from a system of national education are, in the first place, that all public establishments include in them the idea of permanence . . . public education has always expended its energies in the support of prejudice; it teaches its pupils not the fortitude that shall bring every proposition to the test of examination, but the art of vindicating such tenets as may chance to be previously established . . . even in the petty institution of Sunday Schools, the chief lessons that are taught are a superstitious veneration for the Church of England, and to bow to every man in a handsome coat . . .

Secondly, the idea of national education is founded in an inattention to the nature of the mind. Whatever each man does for himself is done well; whatever his neighbours or his country undertake to do for him is done ill . . . He that learns because he desires to learn will listen to the instructions he receives and apprehend their meaning. He that teaches because he desires to teach will discharge his occupation with enthusiasm and energy. But the moment political institution undertakes to assign to every man his place, the functions of all will be discharged with supineness and indifference . . .

Thirdly, the project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government . . . Government will not fail to employ it to strengthen its hand and perpetuate its institutes . . . Their view as instigator of a system of education will not fail to be analogous to their views in their political capacity . . .¹⁴

In the Board Schools after 1870 Godwin's predictions came to fruition. Attendance became compulsory, there was no right to dissent. Mobility in school was regulated by timetables and bells. Actions were monitored and either rewarded or punished. All autonomy of the

individual was undermined by the pedagogue. Only a particular set of values, religious, moralistic and capitalist Euro-centric were allowed.

However it would be a mistake to assume that the 1870 Education Act established the authoritarian National State Education System. On the contrary, it only really planted its seed. Already we have noted that compulsory schooling came later. Similarly it was the Education Act of 1902 that really established the kind of system that the twentieth century required. Further it was this act which condemned children to a never-ending life of misery at school. This Act was Arthur Balfour's contribution to domestic Unionist policy and was unquestionably one of the most important pieces of legislation passed by the Unionist government. As far as Balfour was concerned the education system at the turn of the century was chaotic and ineffectual. The old Voluntary schools run by religious societies had more children than did the country's Board Schools. Further, despite the fact that the Board Schools had local rates for their support, standards of equipment and furniture were much lower in these schools. There would have to be a change in their financing. Higher classes were being run by some Boards and Schools to cater for more able children whose parents were willing to let them stay on after the school leaving age. This was an illegal use of the School rate as was proved by the Cockerton Judgement of 1901. Something would have to be done about these illegal classes. County Councils set up in 1888 provided technical education out of funds obtained from the Science and Art Department attached to the Kensington Museums and from the Board of Agriculture. But there was no link between Board and County Technical Schools. There would have to be a reform to provide this link. Most worrying of all, not enough children were actually attending and there was little central control over the curriculum.

Balfour was clear in his own mind that it was not consistent with the duty of an English Government to allow that state of things to continue without adequate remedy. This was very much the language of the movement for 'National Efficiency'. This aspect of the educational question was most aptly represented by Sidney Webb who as chairman of the London County Council's Technical Education Board, and Robert Morant, an intensely ambitious officer of the civil service who since 1895 had been preparing a coup d'etat inside the Education Department to gain effective direction of its policies.

Webb and Morant agreed on the necessity of putting all forms of education under the direction of a vigorous central authority not merely for purposes of efficiency in administration but as a means towards a more successful propagation of a national ideology. They deplored the elective school board system, with its assumption that education should

be subject to democratic popular judgement instead of being controlled by informed expert opinion. To Webb and the Fabians generally, compulsory education was one of the elements in their project of a 'National Minimum' a set of standards in every sphere of life below which no member of society should be allowed to fall in the interests of the general social good. This was a view widely shared in circles at the time who stressed the need for more coercive and authoritarian modes of governmental guidance of well-meaning but ill-informed democracy.

What the Act actually did in 1902 was to abolish School Boards, create 140 Local Education Authorities run by county and county borough councils which were to be responsible for elementary education, technical education and secondary education and provide some of the money needed by the Voluntary Schools. The Act caused controversy for a variety of different reasons. When considering the authoritarian tradition in British Education the Act did one thing and one thing alone — it established that a national compulsory education system controlled centrally by codes of regulations and a system of inspection which propagated the interests of the nation was here to stay. For children the picture was bleak. The state was to decide what they were to do. They were to be compelled to do it. The best they could hope for was humane pedagogues but with teachers being paid according to their results it was the spectre of punishment and control which loomed.

It is of course impossible to deny that significant changes have been wrought on the system of national education since 1902. John Lawson and Harold Silver represent the consensus that exists amongst historians of education when they write respectively about schools in the modern age being more open, having more flexible school and time-table design, using more integrated curricula and developing more humane approaches to teaching and learning.¹⁵ It is, though, impossible to get away from the fact that in schools in Britain today children are expected to be submissive, passive, obedient, deferential to authority and to conform to the values inevitably implicit in any school controlled by the state. In this context it is illuminating to consider an article written by Brian Simon for *Marxism Today* in September 1984. Simon analyses the reasons behind Keith Joseph's strategy for centralising control of education during Margaret Thatcher's second period of premiership. He points out that the centralising tendency of government is nothing new in the history of education. He argues that what is new are the modes of control rather than the practice itself. His case is irrefutable and supported comprehensively by a series of extracts from statements by Department of Education and Science officials, the most significant of which reads as follows;

We are in a period of considerable social change. There may be social unrest, but we can cope with the Toxteths. But if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious social conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place.¹⁶

Although there have been many changes in education since 1870 the essential power relationship between the state, its teachers and children has not changed.

This is not to suggest, however, that there have been no radical critiques of the development of state education during the twentieth century. Nor is it to suggest that radical critiques have not had an impact on schools and schooling. There is a strong social democratic critique, an influential progressive one and varieties of socialist critique. They are though bound together by one fundamental flaw, a failure to address the issue of authority in education and the power relationship between adults and children. They focus on state education provision but not on the authoritarian nature of that provision.

At the beginning of the 1920's the Labour Party established an Advisory Committee on Education, ACE. It was a non-elected body consisting of experts from academic and so-called 'progressive' educational life. ACE became the mouthpiece of the Labour Party's philosophy of education which was rooted in an intention to transform education through raising the standards of mental and moral qualities and through the acceptance of programmes of education built on justice, rationality and wisdom. In 1922 Allen and Unwin published an ACE production, R. H. Tawney's 'Secondary Education for All' which claimed that:

Labour's policy is not for the advantage of any single class, but to develop the human resources of the whole community.¹⁷

It was this claim and this philosophy which underpinned the development of the social democratic critique of state education based on the principle of equality of opportunity.

Interestingly when the 1944 Education Act which established the tripartite system of education was passed, an Act which was really built on the 1902 Act in that it was efficiency centred and totally divisive, the Labour Party welcomed it as a giant progressive step. They were able to do this because state education was no longer to be separated into elementary and secondary sectors, a division actually based on class, but into grammar and secondary modern schools, a system of selection by ability based on testing and selecting at the age of eleven. As Ken Jones has written:

. . . this seemed to displace the issue of failure from a class to an individual

level. The eleven-plus took into each family the traumas of success or failure at school.¹⁸

The Labour government of 1945-51 rested on these laurels. Somehow this does not seem to represent a commitment to equality of opportunity, never mind any intention to challenge the relationship of the state to education or the basis of the pedagogy which existed in schools, the dominance of adults over children.

Of course the Labour Party and the whole social democratic bandwagon eventually became committed to the principle and practice of comprehensive education. Circular 10/65 was an important document but what has the social democratic critique of education bequeathed to educational radicalism? It has effectively jettisoned the principle of equality of opportunity or at least it has stopped campaigning for it and has chosen to focus on the relationship between education and economic expansion. In this context James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976 is critical but so are the Crowther and Newsom reports. In the 1970's the social democratic educationalists began to demand a general restructuring of education so as to produce new skills for the new economically stringent world. What this has meant is that in 1978 Chief Education Officers received a document setting out the part that schools were to play in the Labour Government's industrial strategy. This included:

. . . preparing pupils more effectively while at school for the transition to adult and working life, in particular by equipping them with a basic understanding of the functioning of the economy and of activities, especially manufacturing, which create the nation's wealth.¹⁹

Such is the bequest of social democracy to educational radicalism. It has failed in any way to address the authoritarianism that afflicts the national state education system.

Whereas it is possible to identify the social democratic critique of Britain's national state education system in and around the Labour Party, the progressive critique is much more diverse and difficult to locate. W. A. C. Stewart traces progressive critiques of education and progressive initiatives back to the eighteenth century.²⁰ For the most part though he indicates that progressivism has been identified with middle-class independent schools. There is a sense in which this is true but there have been many progressive schools inside the state system. R. J. W. Selleck, Ken Jones and more recently Tuula Gordon have demonstrated this.²¹ The need really is to consider what is meant by progressivism. Essentially it is a philosophy of teaching and learning which is child-centred. Many progressive thinkers are inspired by John Dewey who argued strongly that the child was to be the sun around

which schools would revolve. He also argued that teaching and learning should engage the whole child and that the teacher should see herself as a facilitator to learning. This philosophy in practice led to the emergence of certain characteristics in certain schools. Gordon has summarised the characteristics thus:

1. Mixed ability, flexible, vertical groupings working together and/or individually in an open plan classroom under a team of teachers.
2. The day is integrated, the curriculum problem- or concept-based.
3. A wide range of resources is drawn upon (audio visual equipment etc., but also the local community in various ways).
4. The teaching-learning is child-centred, based on the pupils' interests, needs and skills.
5. The teacher is a guide and supporter in the child's pursuit of learning.
6. Academic learning is balanced by social and emotional learning, emphasising creativity and self-expression.
7. Decisions in the school are made by all those involved in it.²²

The schools which developed some and not necessarily all of these characteristics were independent schools like Bedales, Abbotshulme and King Alfred's in the early twentieth century, a wide range of primary schools throughout the century and a number of secondary schools in the 1960's and 1970's. There were also a number of other schools which developed these characteristics and a lot more besides but these were the libertarian initiatives, a very distinctive series of initiatives with a more complex and incisive critique of the national state education system. Their significance and impetus warrants separate and later discussion. However, at this stage it should be noted that there is a considerable overlap between progressivism and libertarianism much of which is to do with the rhetoric of progressivism rather than its practice.

This is the case because whilst claiming to be child-centred progressivism in reality was and is teacher-centred. Admittedly, many of the progressive initiatives have explored the ways in which children learn and have demonstrated the pedagogical superiority of processes which are rooted in the child's own experiences but in the end the focus for radical change has been essentially on the role of the teacher. Michael Armstrong has noted those interpretations of the changing role of the teacher which seem to be implicit in many discussions of progressive theory and practice.²³ The first is that which sees the teacher as a resource provider and manager and monitor of children's learning. The second is that which sees the teacher abandoning her/his traditional authoritarianism by letting the pupil decide whether or not to attend lessons or courses without changing her/his style of teaching

when courses and lessons are actually attended. The third sees the teacher abandoning all forms of control in the progressive name of licence. Armstrong correctly identifies the hidden authoritarianism that lurks in all three of these roles but when he counterposes the need for teachers to develop genuinely mutual relationships with children in order to further their learning he falls victim to his own criticisms of the other models. He writes:

Guidance is paramount. Without the systematic help of tutors or pedagogues only a few students are likely to direct their own learning successfully.²⁴

Armstrong remains in the progressive camp and as such he represents the failure of progressivism to identify the overwhelmingly authoritarian nature of the national state education system. That system is not merely constructed on the foundations of what the state desires but is cemented by the maintenance of adult superiority over children.

Turning to the socialist critiques of state education it was the socialist Sunday School movement which developed a comprehensive socialist critique. The movement actually commenced in 1892 when the first school was started in London by Mary Gray, a member of the Social Democratic Federation. However, it was in Glasgow that the movement really developed when four or five schools opened in the late 1890's inspired by Caroline Martyn. From here the movement spread to London, Yorkshire and Lancashire in particular, bringing together socialists of many faiths. The schools adopted the form and methods of traditional schools but transformed the content. Instead of hymns there were songs and poems carrying a socialist and secular message, a song book being compiled.²⁵ The place of the ten commandments was taken by ten precepts preceded by a Declaration based on Justice and Love. The intention was to bring children to an understanding of the meaning of socialism as well as of the structure and nature of existing society.

By focussing on the need to change the content of what should be taught in schools the Socialist Sunday School movement set the tone for future socialist critiques of state education. Two such critiques which warrant consideration are those developed by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies²⁶ and by Ken Jones.²⁷ The research and analysis undertaken by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies constitute a devastating indictment of the social democratic tradition. Working from the sound base that schools are more determined than determining the analysis and prognosis identify the problem as being one of developing a politics of schooling on two fronts. The first front is indicated by a modified understanding of a Marxist functionalism. Schooling performs various tasks for the capitalist mode of production

and for patriarchal relations but this is not necessarily guaranteed. The key then to transforming schools in the first instance is to identify 'how and what and from whom will children learn about industry in a school'.²⁸ In the second instance the need is to construct a counter-politics of schooling that:

. . . tries to discredit and stand outside the specific class and gender nature of the processes currently presented as natural and eternal.²⁹

Sadly such a programme has little to say about the way in which the power relationship between adults and children can be similarly transformed.

Ken Jones' analysis and strategy for change are similarly incomplete. He argues that in the first instance the main point of purchase of any attempt to gain support and initial momentum for a socialist strategy for educational reform lies in the trade union organisation of teachers. This may or may not be true but a glance at the issues which Jones considers to be important reveals the weakness in his analysis when considering the nature of authoritarianism in education. He writes:

Three issues are important to the developing of a strong socialist current: the content of education, the winning of popular support, and the related tasks of accomplishing a further trade unionisation of the National Union of Teachers, while at the same time achieving a closer political relationship between the union and the labour movement as a whole. In each of these areas, a challenge to present attitudes is necessary.³⁰

The lack of a perspective on the experience of children at school is conspicuous by its absence.

To consider the social democratic, progressive and socialist critiques of national education together reveals a common thread. All three fail to consider the whole experience of state schooling from the viewpoint of the child, the user, the learner. There is an agreement about the purpose behind such schooling, a kind of consensus that is rooted in an awareness of the controlling and engineering tendencies of the state. And yet without a focus on the ways in which the meekness, submission and deference that is expected of children in schools can be thrown into an educational dustbin any transformation of schooling on social democratic, progressive or socialist lines will always be incomplete. In this context it is worth noting the final paragraph of the review of 'Beyond Progressive Education' by *Lib. Ed.*, a magazine for the liberation of learning:

In the end it seems that Ken's task (and that of others on the non-Libertarian left) is not so much to transform the education system as to gain control over it. As if power and authority are not themselves a problem, only who wield them.³¹

It is with this in mind that attention should now turn to the libertarian critique of national state education in Britain, a critique which chooses as its reference point the authoritarian nature of such education. Firstly, though, it is worth considering the whole theory and critique of libertarian education as it has emerged through libertarian theorists and practitioners.

A libertarian approach to education is highly distinctive for a number of different reasons but it is based upon an awareness of and opposition to the controlling tendencies of state education systems. In this sense there is a compatibility with the other critiques hitherto discussed. Again it is William Godwin who articulates the feelings held by libertarians in this area:

It is not true that youth ought to be instructed to venerate the constitution, however excellent; they should be led to venerate truth; and the constitution only so far as it corresponds with their uninfluenced deductions of truth. Had the scheme of national education been adopted when despotism was most triumphant, it is not to be believed that it could have for ever shifted the voice of truth. But it would have been the most formidable and profound contrivance for that purpose that imagination can suggest.³²

However, for libertarians education has to be freed from the authority of the teacher as well as from the state. It is in this sense that their critique takes on a fundamental significance.

It was Francisco Ferrer, founder of La Escuela Moderna in Barcelona in 1900 and of the International League for the Rational Education of Children in 1908 who described the relationship between the nation state and its teachers and was to be a great inspiration to the movement for libertarian education in Western Europe and in the first two decades of the twentieth century:

Much of the knowledge actually imparted in schools is useless; and the hope of reformers has been void because the organisation of the school instead of serving an ideal purpose, has become one of the most powerful instruments of servitude in the hands of the ruling class. The teachers are merely conscious or unconscious organs of their will, and have been trained on their principles . . . Teachers have inspired themselves solely with the principles of discipline and authority, which always appeal to social organisers . . . The children must learn to obey, to believe and to think according to the prevailing social dogmas.³³

Indeed a number of Ferrer Modern schools were established in Britain between 1907 and 1921 based on a completely alternative approach defying all such conceptions of state and teacher control. These schools were amongst the first libertarian initiatives in Britain in the twentieth century.

Inevitably the libertarian critique of national state education is also

rooted in a total opposition to all forms of coercion. For thinkers like Godwin and Ferrer learning could only flourish in a libertarian environment. Libertarianism sees education as a spontaneous process rather than something to be imposed on the child. Rote, memorisation, routine and the staples of conventional learning which characterise national state education systems do nothing but destroy the imagination and inhibit the natural development of children. A libertarian education is one which rejects such forms of coercion. Coercion enters into adult relationships with the young to a greater extent than adults suppose. It is evident in the peremptoriness and unkindness with which children are all too commonly treated as it is in the total lack of respect by adults for the young. As Godwin wrote in 1783:

All education is despotism. It is perhaps impossible for the young to be conducted without introducing in many cases the tyranny of implicit obedience. Go there; do that; read; write; rise; lie down; will perhaps for ever be the language addressed to youth by age.³⁴

However, whilst the libertarian critique might begin with perspectives on the intentions of the state in creating a national system, on the controlling urges of teachers and on the pernicious nature of coercion it is really underpinned by a fundamental respect for children as individuals. Adults usually approach other adults with certain assumptions. Namely that each are accorded powers of initiative, a capacity for discretion, a right to reject, an ability to think for themselves. Libertarians accord children the same respect. Godwin captures the essence of this respect brilliantly:

There is a reverence that we owe to every thing in human shape. I do not say that a child is the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with powers of reasoning, with sensations of pleasure and pain, and with principles of morality; and that in this description is contained abundant cause for the exercise of reverence and forbearance. By the system of nature he placed by himself; he has a claim upon his little sphere of empire and discretion; and he is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence.³⁵

This is not a charter for children's rights, it is a belief in equality including girls as well as boys! Libertarians were perhaps the first educational theorists to regard children as equal to adults with the same need for freedom and dignity. Children in this sense belong neither to their parents nor to the state. They belong to themselves.

Accordingly they must not be looked down upon as inferior beings but treated with respect:

As creators and not creatures.³⁶

as Max Stirner has put it. This means that the libertarian critique of

national state education is also determined by a faith in the essential goodness of human nature and by a belief in the capacity of the young to direct their own learning. Writing in the nineteenth century James Guillaume anticipated many of the libertarian educational initiatives that were to emerge in Britain after 1890:

No longer will there be schools arbitrarily governed by a pedagogue, where the children wait impatiently for the moment of their deliverance when they can enjoy a little freedom outside. In their gatherings the children will be entirely free. They will organise their own games, their talks, systematise their own work, arbitrate disputes, etc. They will easily become accustomed to public life, to responsibility, to mutual trust and aid. The teacher whom they have themselves chosen to give their lessons will no longer be detested as a tyrant but a friend to whom they will listen with pleasure.³⁷

Libertarian educational theory also extols the virtues of an integral education that cultivates physical as well as mental skills and develops all aspects of the child's personality. This notion appears to have originated with Charles Fourier whose theories exerted a powerful influence on the anarchist movement. Taking his cue from Fourier the French anarchist Proudhon advocated a combination of physical and intellectual learning whose elements would both complement and reinforce each other. He wrote:

Labour and study which have for so long and so foolishly been kept apart will finally emerge side by side in their natural states of union. Instead of being confined to narrow specialised fields vocational education will include a variety of different types of work . . .³⁸

After Proudhon the same idea was taken up by many radical thinkers, socialist and anarchist alike. The leaders of the Paris Commune of 1871, for example, sought to inaugurate an integral education so as to remedy the over-specialisation caused by the emergence of large-scale industry and the division of labour. During its brief life the Commune launched a number of educational experiments. It established schools of industrial arts, workshop schools, schools for orphans and schools for women. As far as its educational commissioner was concerned:

The main lines of an egalitarian education had been sufficiently mapped out for the idea to start to spread.³⁹

And spread it did with Louise Michel, a Paris Commune, establishing an International Libertarian School in Fitzroy Square in London in 1890.

Libertarian educational theory then is based upon a resistance to the whole notion of a national state education because of its servitude to a

state ideology. Thereafter it has a fundamental respect for and belief in the autonomy of the child and her/his ability to control and direct learning. It considers all forms of teacher and structural control to be illegitimate and pernicious and sees education as a widely ranging, integral process. In the final analysis it assumes a capacity on the part of the young and their parents and libertarian educational practitioners to decide and organise the kind of education they want. In practice in Britain this has meant the emergence of initiatives both inside and outside the national state system and it is a brief survey of these initiatives that is now required in order to understand the actual nature of the libertarian critique of Britain's authoritarian national state system of education.

Throughout the nineteenth century the working class was characterised as being apathetic towards education. This was one of the many justifications for the 1870 Education Act. More significantly it was the justification for later legislation which made schooling compulsory and subsequently pushed up the school leaving age. However, before and after 1870 the structure and speed of educational development were affected by conflicts of cultural value, understanding, significance and experience between those who provided education and those who were to receive it. This was the case because there was, in fact, a deeply rooted and important working class educational culture with its own values, aims and initiatives. Phil Gardener has drawn out this alternative educational culture.⁴⁰ He maintains that before 1870 there was a resistance to institutionalised schooling fed by the currents of this alternative culture which had its own network of independent practical activity. This was the tradition of working class private schooling. After 1870 this tradition was challenged and slowly working class private schools were put under pressure and eventually closed but the process took a long time.

Briefly, what were these schools, what were their characteristics and what is their significance to this survey? Where these schools have been discussed by educational historians they are 'dame' schools, 'inferior schools', 'common day schools' and adventure schools. As Gardener states:

They are denied the generic title of the independent schools of a distinct class — the people's schools.⁴¹

The schools themselves were private through the absence of financial aid and bureaucratic regulation and working class by the distinctive background of the children, their parents and usually the teachers. They were thus self-financing, beyond the reach of the state and their fortunes fluctuated according to demand, not supply. The schools were

rarely in a building designed for the purpose, usually being in the home of the teacher.

The significance of these schools, and of Gardener's extremely important book, to this brief survey lies in the fact that these schools constitute a forerunner to the libertarian initiatives of the twentieth century. They were not libertarian schools as such in that they did not necessarily have an explicitly democratic philosophy nor stated belief in the autonomy of the child. They were, however, products of a culture that despised formality, was secular and had little time for compulsory, regular attendance. They manifested:

. . . an education that was fully under the control of its users, it was an education truly of the working class and not for it.⁴²

Many held out against the State as the School Boards and Inspectorate closed in after 1870 but all were eventually consumed.

The actual history of libertarian education and schooling in Britain since 1890 which constitutes the libertarian critique of the national state system of education lies in three areas. Firstly it is to be found in a variety of free standing alternatives which were born of a particular culture and occupied the ground between the public and the private sector. They represent a complete challenge to the national state education system. Secondly it exists in a series of 'private adventures' in education, usually the inspiration of an individual or group of educational thinkers, many of which for a variety of reasons were recognised by the state. The history of these schools, though, is complex largely because it is mostly lost amidst the history of the more general independent progressive school movement. Thirdly it awaits discovery inside the state system, again similarly lost amongst more general histories of liberal and progressive education.

As far as the free standing alternatives are concerned they belong mostly to the early part of the twentieth century and the 1960's and 1970's. The school that Louise Michel established at Fitzroy Square in 1890 does not seem to have had a long life but between 1907 and 1921 a series of International modern schools influenced by the educational ideas of Francisco Ferrer emerged in London, Liverpool, Swansea and Cardiff. Most were in London in the Jewish East End and grew out of a working class culture that was turning its back on orthodox Judaism and on the demands made by the national state education system. One such school was established in 1907 in Whitechapel by a group of children led by a young girl of thirteen named Naomi Ploschansky, later called Nellie Dick, born in the Ukraine in 1893, and demoralised by national state schooling and by the lack of facilities for young people in the working men's institutes of the East End. To begin with she

helped set up a Sunday School which was to grow into a larger and more regular International Modern School later on. The history of such schools is largely unrecorded and constitutes a dissenting movement against the national state education system. It is a movement which is also surrounded by other initiatives which form part of the history of libertarian education and schooling in other schools and Sunday schools which were run largely by anarchists.

Also largely unrecorded is the history of the free school movement of the 1960's and 1970's. In the early 1970's there were over twenty such schools mostly in inner-cities and again rooted in an essentially working class culture although usually the inspiration of educationalists and teachers completely dissatisfied with the national state school system. The most famous of these schools, largely because it is the only one still in existence, is the White Lion Street Free School. It was born in 1972 in an old derelict house near London's Kings Cross Station. From the beginning the idea was to create a space in which local children could learn without the regimentation, boredom and fear that by the 1970's was the usual experience for most children in traditional schools. Many local children were involved in renovating the building and when the school opened in September 1973 a lot of the children had not only discovered the school themselves, many having just 'wandered in', but to some extent had physically created it.

Turning briefly to the private adventures in education there are a number of initiatives which warrant consideration. When the Little Commonwealth, a self-governing colony for so-called 'delinquent adolescents' appeared in July 1913 under the guidance of Homer Lane inspiration for various initiatives took root. Even before he broke away from the New Education Fellowship and the magazine the *New Era* to eventually set up Summerhill, A. S. Neill recognised the influence that Lane had on him:

There are two ways in education: Macdonald's with Authority in the shape of School Boards and magistrates and prisons to support him, and mine with the Christlike experiment of Homer Lane to encourage me.⁴²

Lane's was a private adventure, so was Neill's and there was a link between the two. Lane's initiative also had a great influence on a series of other initiatives which emerged after the 1920's. These were the 'schools for the unschoolable', self-governing communities like Red Hill School (1934) where a libertarian philosophy and practice developed for the supposedly 'maladjusted' children who attended them. These too were private adventures in many cases but they warrant separate consideration for there is a whole line of them and furthermore they were frequently to receive state approval. There is

something interesting about a state which will resist dissent in education at all costs except when there apparently seems no alternative. Other private adventures which warrant consideration are Dartington Hall (1926) and Beacon Hill (1927), the Forest School (1929), Burgess Hill (1936), Monkton Wyld and Kilquhanity (1940) and Kirkdale (1966). Some of these initiatives have had their histories written, others not, but what is definite is that they represent a series of libertarian initiatives which deserve to be pulled out of the more general progressive tradition where they currently exist.

The history of libertarian education in state schools belongs mostly to the 1960's and 1970's at Braehead (1957), Risinghill (1960), Summerhill Academy (1968), Countesthorpe College (1970), the Sutton Centre (1972), and William Tyndale (1974) but the issues are complex. None of the schools could be described as libertarian as such and in the main these schools were really the slightly unacceptable face of progressivism. However, all developed libertarian practices but most significantly the experiences of children at the schools often appears to have been libertarian. There is a sense in which all these schools stand outside mainstream progressivism. The same is true of Prestolee School in the 1920's and St George's-in-the-East School in the 1940's and 1950's. It is thus impossible to deny that there has been a certain amount of libertarian dissent within the system as well as outside it.

An enduring problem in a study of the history of libertarian education and schooling is the nature and availability of source materials. There is an abundance of worthwhile secondary material on some of the private adventures in education. The histories, for example, of Dartington Hall, Beacon Hill and Summerhill are well documented and there is little point in going over ground already adequately covered. The secondary source material is useful only insofar as it is possible to construct a picture of what the initiatives were like fairly quickly and to make a viable assessment as to how and with what success they challenged the state in its intention to control the process of education. Similarly there is considerable secondary material available on and around the state school initiatives. Prestolee, Risinghill, Summerhill Academy, Countesthorpe, the Sutton Centre and William Tyndale have all received the attention of an array of educational writers. Much of the writing available though is concerned with the politics of the struggles developed in those schools and between the schools and the authorities. It is actually difficult to build up a picture of what the experience was like for children in the schools.

It is in this sense that available primary material has to form essential source material for any study of the history of libertarian education and schooling. The primary material available for a study of recent state

school initiatives and some private adventures and free schools mostly takes the form of internal documents, Inspector's reports and internal and external enquiry reports. However, journals and newspapers and some local archives often throw up interesting and relevant material. It is these sources though that reveal the nature of many of the free standing alternatives. Especially significant here are the large number of labour annuals and newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth century which contain considerable information about the working class libertarian schools which existed before the first world war. It is in this area of study that localised investigation is important and the same applies to research about the vast majority of free schools of the 1960's and 1970's. The difficulty with the overwhelming majority of evidence from such source material is that it is often completely de-personalised and takes a 'distant view'. Nevertheless this material has to be greatly valued for it constitutes virtually the complete available stock of documentary evidence.

However, the position is such that there is little available personal material. This is not completely the case for there are various personal accounts of the state school initiatives written mostly by heads and teachers in the schools and there are some available personal accounts of children in the same schools. This is also true of some of the free standing alternatives. However, the need for oral testimony is critical. Here most of the initiatives in the early years of the twentieth century lie beyond the reach of old age but there are some accounts now available through the magazine *Lib. Ed.* which has conducted several interviews with both people involved in founding the schools and some who attended them. For the vast majority of the other initiatives it is possible to generate oral source material from those involved in beginning and working the initiatives, from concerned parties outside the schools both hostile and supportive and most importantly from the children themselves. Any study of the libertarian critique of Britain's national state education system and by implication of the history of libertarian education and schooling would be inadequate if it were not rooted in the experiences of children. It is the absence of such experiences which weakens the vast majority of the more generalised histories of education.

With this in mind much of the work that feminist research has led to has created a new and viable methodology which has implications for the study of children, especially in schools. Ann Oakley has written of the need, process, problems and consequences of using the personal accounts of women as source material in feminist research.⁴⁴ She demonstrates effectively that most research processes in the social sciences indicate that the motivation for carrying out work lies in

theoretical concerns. Naturally in consequence the research process appears orderly, coherent and mostly objective. By implication the personal tends to be at best negated but usually completely removed. Oakley argues that a feminist methodology, which seeks to legitimise personal experience and to make it possible by an awareness on the part of interviewers of the powerlessness of interviewees, applies to social science research in general. It is certainly applicable to a study of the history of libertarian education and schooling in Britain. For Oakley the requirement is that:

. . . the mythology of hygienic research with its accompanying mystification of the researcher and the researched as objective instruments of data production be replaced by the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias — it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives.⁴⁵

If children are to be a valuable source of material for understanding the experience of schooling then they have to be empowered. This means that an observation of them in school and a critical review of their work is utterly inadequate in revealing the nature of their experience. A history of libertarian education and schooling in Britain requires that the children who have experiences of either are able to give their account, on their terms, of how it is or was.

That there is a very distinctive history of libertarian education and schooling in Britain since 1890 and that it represents a critique of considerable importance of the national state system is undeniable. The temptation, of course, is to begin to talk of a 'tradition' of a 'movement' even. With the exception of a few initiatives there is little evidence that there are definite links between any of the initiatives. What is much more important is to consider the context in which each initiative emerged, the influences behind it, the nature of the experience for its users and how much success each had against the defined aims. In the final analysis this means that the need is to locate the initiatives, describe them and attempt some evaluation. All three of these aims are problematic. Location is complex because of both the lack of wide-ranging primary source material and because of the current siting of particular initiatives within already defined traditions. Description is difficult because of the inevitable need to legitimise, implicitly, the nature of the source material as provided by children. Evaluation is equally complicated because there is a need to get outside the evaluatory parameters that are already defined by the state as a result of the ideological stranglehold that it has on the terms for deciding upon what is good, bad and indifferent practice in education. It is though only with these aims in mind that any study of the history of libertarian

education and schooling in Britain from 1890 onwards can be undertaken.

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Michael Smith

Kropotkin and Technical Education: an anarchist voice

There are interesting parallels between the 1880s and the 1980s. Then as now the development of the economy was the subject of much debate, and then as now the explanation for perceived deficiencies was sought in terms of the inadequacies of the educational system. Vocational education was the object of particular attention in the 1880s as in the 1980s, and then as now the debate was conducted in characteristically narrow terms. One sees the same preoccupations and the same — wrong — answers emerging. It is particularly interesting, then, to look back at a contribution to the debate which offered a different perspective: Kropotkin's.

Kropotkin had settled permanently in Britain in 1886 and between 1888 and 1890 he published a series of articles which were much later collected into his book *Fields, Factories and Workshops*.¹ Among these articles was one on education in which Kropotkin addressed himself directly to the educational concerns of the day. What is interesting about his contribution is that in it he sets out for the first time in British educational debate a distinctively anarchist position. Godwin, it may be argued, had put forward years before ideas which later writers were glad to accept as anarchist, but his views were those of an individual. The views that Kropotkin was putting forward were not his own but to a considerable degree the received anarchist position. By this time on the Continent anarchist views on education had begun to crystallise. Education had been the subject of much discussion in anarchist circles and in such journals as *Le Révolte* and *La Révolté*. The ideas that Kropotkin expressed in his article were very much a reflection of that discussion.

What were these ideas? The first was that education should be integral. By this a variety of things was meant. It referred first to the all-round development of the human being. Human nature was many-sided, and traditional education which had hitherto concentrated too much on the cerebral and bookish left many sides undeveloped. Second, it referred to the gap between school and work. An education which was derived too much from the concerns of the grammar school was a wholly inadequate preparation for earning a living in a labour market which was, anarchists were only too well aware, stacked against

the ordinary worker. Third, it referred to the connection between educational specialisation and the division of labour, from which so many social divisions stemmed. What was wanted was an education which would integrate and not divide.

The concept of integral education has an interesting pedigree in terms of socialist thought.² The term is first found in Fourier, who used it to express the notion that education should aim at the enhancement of all aspects of a human being's potential (not just the theoretical or scholarly) and that this would best be done through a carefully designed programme of occupational development. The latter idea especially was taken up by Proudhon, who removed it from Fourier's utopian context and restated it in terms of the labour market. What was required, he argued, was an education which would equip the individual with a range of marketable skills so that he or she would not be totally at the mercy of an industrial system which required specialisation of its workers and then discarded them when the specialisation was no longer of interest to the firm. The child should serve, he suggested, an apprenticeship which was not monoteknical but 'polytechnical', a concept which, mediated by Marx, had a significant influence on the development of both the Russian and the Chinese educational systems.³

It is important, given British habits of thought, not to see 'polytechnical' in too narrow terms. For Proudhon, specialisation was not just job-related. Each specialisation also corresponded to one side of the individual's potential development. Human nature was many-sided, and each side needed to be developed if the individual was to realise her or his full potential. Occupational specialisation was a way of drawing out that potential. It followed that a range of specialisations was required. Proudhon's concept was, then, individual-driven, not market-driven. Indeed, he was at pains to insist that control over the training process should be located not in the firm or state but in a workers' collective or similar co-operative agency.

Proudhon's discussion of integral education gave the concept added currency in socialist circles, and the term was picked up by both Marx and Bakunin. In Volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx calls for integral education as 'the only method of producing fully developed human beings'⁴ and in *The General Council* he argues for 'polytechnical training' as a means of enabling young workers to have their 'many-sided aptitude developed to the full'.⁵ It would also relieve them from the monotony and dependency which the division of labour imposes on modern workers. Bakunin, in a series of articles he wrote for the journal *L'Egalité* in 1869, argued that differences in education lay behind many other social differences and in particular the difference between worker and intellectual. Education should be the same for all: 'par conséquent elle

doit être intégrale'.⁶ It should integrate and not divide. He advocated if not a complete common curriculum at least a curriculum which had a high degree of commonality and he wanted the curriculum defined in terms of the needs of the ordinary young worker. He saw the curriculum as having three main strands: scientific, industrial, and moral. The role of science in anarchist thinking about education is something that we shall turn to in a moment, and we shall find that for anarchists it had implications in terms of moral teaching. Bakunin's account of the industrial strand runs along lines which are already becoming familiar. The learner should be introduced to a variety of trades, thus developing latent capacity over a range of areas and at the same time equipping him or her for survival in the labour market. Bakunin saw integral education as significantly emancipatory: emancipatory in terms of human potential released and also in terms of the relationships of capitalist society.

An indication of the extent to which integral education had become part of anarchist — and socialist — thinking about education by the late 1860s is the fact that Robin drafted a paper on integral education for the International's Second Congress at Lausanne in 1867. The paper was not actually considered until the following year when the Third Congress met in Brussels but then it was adopted as policy.

When, then, Kropotkin introduced the concept of integral education into the British debate he was drawing on ideas which were already well established on the Continent. Integral education had formed part of the programme of the Paris Commune, and, although there had hardly been time in 1871 to put the programme into effect, it was not long before ideas of integral education were being tried out in practice. The key figure here was the French anarchist and educationist, Paul Robin, who throughout the 1870s kept up a stream of publications on integral education and in 1880 was given the chance to try out his ideas at an orphanage in Cempuis. Over the following decade his work there became well known, and it was certainly familiar to Kropotkin.

What, ultimately, was distinctive about anarchist concepts of integral education, especially in the British context, was the centrality it ascribed to vocational education. While the development of the individual child was important, it saw that development as occurring through vocational education, and as development was many-sided so vocational preparation should be. It should also be the same for all children. Technical education was not an inferior education, a training, to be given to just one class of society while a more restricted social group received the benefits of classical, grammar-school 'real' education. It was something for all children.

The other two key anarchist ideas on education need not detain us at

such length. The first idea was that education should be rational. There were three thrusts to this. In the first place education should be secular and humanist. Anarchist thinking on education had tended to develop in countries like Spain where education was predominantly a religious preserve. All the early practising anarchist educators had trouble with the Church. People like Robin and Sébastien Faure lived with it and fell foul of it. People like Francisco Ferrer in Spain fought it at every turn. For Ferrer this was the *first* requirement of anarchist education: it should be out of the hands of the Church. In the second place education should be practical, not bookish. It should be connected with real life and make use of real tasks in its pedagogy. People like Faure, Robin, and Ferrer drew their mathematical examples from real-life, often political, contexts. Workshops were an important part of the school, *the* most important in Robin's and Faure's case. Children were taken out into the environment of ordinary working people, and ordinary people were encouraged to come into the school. Ferrer attached great significance to the adult education which was associated with his Modern Schools. In the third place, however, education should be scientific. Many of the leading anarchist writers were themselves scientists: Robin was, Faure was, Ferrer was — so, of course, was Kropotkin. Science was seen by anarchists as liberatory, first in terms of emancipation from superstition and non-rational systems (such as religion, in their view), and second in terms of intellectual control. The danger of a vocational education was that it might be tied too much to the here and now (to the 'relevant' as we would say). But this was merely to exchange one mental prison for another. By giving children an education in terms of scientific principles educators would help them to see how their particular specialism or specialisms fitted in. They would understand the rationality which lay behind the processes of the specialism. Their own particular mental constructs would be placed in a wider context of rationality. Science, moreover, was an alternative world view (alternative to that of religion). It carried with it its own morality: honesty of reasoning, the availability of all things, including human relations, to reason, a kind of simplicity and purity. Finally, science was of the future; religion was of the past.

For the anarchists, then, education should be rational, and as the century wore on, and science itself developed, this rationalist strain became more and more pronounced in anarchist thinking. It is interesting, for example, that when Ferrer was obliged to flee Spain in 1886 (about the time that Kropotkin was settling in England) and began to involve himself in French anarchist circles in Paris, he became a member of the League for Human Regeneration, which Robin had founded and whose double motto 'Bonne Naissance. Education

Intégrale' reflected both Robin's approach to education and his later obsession with neo-Malthusianism. The very influential league that he himself later founded was called the International League for the Rational Education of Children. In the late 1890s and early years of the next century the word in anarchist circles was not so much 'integral education' as 'rational education'.

The third key educational idea of anarchists was that education should be emancipatory. There were shifts in the notion depending on what currently it was thought most important to be emancipated from: the Church, capitalism, ignorance (including sexual ignorance — that was also a feature of anarchist education), political dependency. At the heart of the emancipatory process was the view that proper vocational preparation would give the ordinary worker a flexibility and independence he or she lacked. It would strengthen their position in the labour market, reducing their dependency on a particular job or firm. Associated with this was intellectual emancipation. All the anarchist educators stressed what we would call raising the consciousness of the young potential worker. They sought to do this through engagement in political activity, through democratic participation in the running of the school, as at Faure's La Ruche, through joining in adult political debate in, for example, the adult educational circles often associated with anarchist schools, and also, perhaps most significantly, through the liberatory ideology which should pervade everything that went on in the school. Some anarchists held the view that every lesson should be a lesson in liberation. Examples, even mathematical or scientific ones, should illustrate that theme. In literature and history and geography it was easy. Ferrer expresses this spirit admirably when he says:

We do not hesitate to say that we want men who will continue unceasingly to develop; men who are capable of constantly destroying and renewing their surroundings and renewing themselves: men whose intellectual independence is their supreme power, which they will yield to none; men always disposed for things that are better, eager for the triumph of new ideas, anxious to crowd many lives into the life they have.⁷

So much, then, for the key background ideas which informed Kropotkin's contribution to the British debate on technical education. How did he interpret them in that new context?

His starting-point was the traditional anarchist one of the division between brain work and manual work. He pointed out that many of the early scientists had also worked with their hands, while ordinary workers in small workshops sometimes had the chance — and he cited several British examples — of creative discussion with educated men. The increasing division of labour had, however, changed all that.

Ordinary workers were now even more cut off from scientific education than their grandparents had been and in the new specialised workshops they were denied the stimulus of the older, smaller, unspecialised ones. As for the scientists, they had fallen back so much now on pure theory that they required intermediaries — the engineers — between them and those ultimately carrying out some of the ideas they had given rise to. The effect of this was a general decline in inventiveness, which was causing concern among industrialists, and which was the real thing prompting the whole technical education debate. Kropotkin accepted that there was a decline in the creativity which had originally fuelled the Industrial Revolution, and he argued that the underlying causes were the mental compartmentalism brought about by the division of labour and the general lack of scientific knowledge. He saw the remedy as lying in two things: more extensive education in science, and a better integration of knowledge. Scientific knowledge on its own was not enough. It needed to be combined with craft knowledge:

To the division of society into brain workers and manual workers we oppose the combination of both kinds of activities; and instead of 'technical education' which means the maintenance of the present division between brain work and manual work, we advocate the *education intégrale* or complete education, which means the disappearance of that pernicious distinction.

What would such a system of complete education look like? First, all children 'on leaving school at the age of 18 or 20' (think of that in the context of the 1890s — or the 1990s, for that matter) would possess a good general knowledge of science. Second, this knowledge would be such as to acquaint them with the theoretical bases of technical training. Third, they would have 'a skill in some special trade as would enable each of them to take his or her [this applied to girls as well as boys] place in the grand world of the production of wealth'.⁸ The last point to note is that Kropotkin saw this education as applying to *all* children. There should be no separate system for bookish children, or girls, or those identified for the professions. Every human being, without distinction of birth, should receive this broad, common education.

Now there are several things to be said about this account. First, on a technical point, Kropotkin's description of the vocational role of integral education is rather narrower than the usual one. He sees the youngster as being trained in one specialism only, not as being put through a series of them, which would draw out different sides of the youngster and increase his or her flexibility in the labour market. It may be that his phrase 'a general knowledge of what constitutes the basis of technical training' is intended to encompass some occupational sampling as well as knowledge of the scientific principles which lie

behind them. Or it may simply be that given the vast proliferation of skill areas in modern times he does not believe it any longer possible to take the youngster meaningfully through a series of very disparate skill areas. The best that might be done is to acquaint learners with the scientific principles which are common to all or most specialisms. He does in fact discuss this later in the article, where he suggests that certain broad scientific principles, such as modification of motion (e.g. transformation of circular motion into rectilinear motion), underpin most mechanical handicrafts. It is better to make sure that the youngster learns these, so that he or she is later in a position to apply them in a given context, than to teach more narrowly the skills specific to one area. The youngster who possesses the more general knowledge clearly 'knows one good half of all possible trades'.⁹

In a way the issue does not matter, except that it connects with another point which many anarchists would wish to put. That is, there is very little emancipatory thrust to Kropotkin's account. General Science, access to basic occupational skills (shades of YTS schemes!), training in a trade — it could all be taken from the Conservative Manifesto. Indeed, the tone of Kropotkin's remarks suggests consensus rather than revolution. He accepts the going definition of an industrial problem and offers solutions which are acceptable in terms of that definition. There is no hint of education as a means of liberation, whether economic, social, or political liberation. Now of course this is partly a question of the context in which the article originally appeared. However, many anarchists would be disquieted not just by Kropotkin's failure to challenge the existing social system (actually he does but puts it in brackets, as it were, for the duration of the article) but also by his lack of identification with the young worker. There is little feeling that he or she might need emancipation in any terms other than intellectual ones. This is most uncommon among anarchist writers on education, who are normally much more open to the charge of misplaced identification with the learner. There is typically a passion for liberation through education in anarchist educators which one does not find in Kropotkin's article. There is good liberal criticism of pedagogic practice (Kropotkin has some knowledge of contemporary educational thinking on the Continent, not just in anarchist writers) and common sense, informed by genuine knowledge, on the teaching of science. But for many anarchists if education is not defined in emancipatory terms it is nothing.

It is important, however, to remember Kropotkin's starting-point. His purpose was not to set out his radical wares in general but to address the specific issue of the division between brain work and manual work and put forward an educational remedy. Even here he

quite reasonably, and explicitly, limits the scope of his discussion. Much of his article is taken up in examining the possible advantages that would accrue if a system of integral education were introduced. He explicitly excludes from his discussion consideration of possible economic advantages, possible benefits in terms of social cohesion, possible benefits to the individual in terms of quality of life, and, in general, 'the great social question'. His focus instead is on what we would call cultural matters, and on this he has some interesting things to say.

His first point is that science itself has suffered from the division of labour. It has become the preserve of an increasingly narrow and increasingly isolated elite. He argues, interestingly, that scientific advance is less the product of individuals than is commonly supposed and much more the product of group work and group debate. Many people other than those currently defined as scientists could contribute to data gathering. However, if they are merely gathering and not contributing to data analysis the resultant outcomes are very likely to be narrow. The generation of hypotheses and their verification or falsification are best done in an atmosphere of open critical debate among informed, involved people. One of the advantages Kropotkin sees for integral education is that it would greatly expand the potential number of such people. Scores of societies would come to life, he argues, reflecting their interests and energies, and out of that would spring a critical debate which would itself stimulate new ideas and new work. The model Kropotkin has in mind is almost certainly the local scientific societies which were so much a feature of Victorian times, but it is also a model which is characteristically anarchist and contrasts sharply with the heavily institutionalised model of science which is dominant today. Organisations which have cultural vigour, according to anarchists, are those which spring up spontaneously to meet people's interests and needs. Kropotkin's argument is that this is actually a better model for the organisation of science than a centralised, institutionalised one, since it provides more readily for the shared, critical debate which in his view is what really generates advance in science. Science is the expression of a scientific culture. Widen (and deepen through systematic education) the culture and you strengthen the science.

Kropotkin's second point is related but slightly different. It is that the model of science which sees it as something abstract, pure and theoretical, which is then applied, is wrong. Practice in some form often comes before theory, he says. Theory arises out of practice, not vice versa. 'It was not the dynamical theory of heat which came before the steam engine — it followed it.' If science is too divorced from

practice it is cut off from a vital feed. There is a kind of knowledge, says Kropotkin, which is instinctive among those who work practically with it:

those men — the Watts and the Stephensons — knew something which the *savants* do not know — they knew the use of their hands; their surroundings stimulated their creative powers; they knew machines, their leading principles, and their work; they had breathed the atmosphere of the workshop and the building yard.¹⁰

When science is cut off from this kind of knowledge it is diminished.

Kropotkin's overall position, then, appears to be that a too stratified society restricts communication in ways which are ultimately damaging to intellectual debate. Science depends crucially on such debate and advances via a process, dialectical one might almost say, of interaction between theory and practice. Restrict that interaction socially and you restrict scientific development.

Kropotkin's definitions, of science to take just one example, are more elastic than we would allow today, and both science and technology have changed in ways that he did not foresee. Yet his central contention, that social division works against the development of science, retains some validity. The difference in status between scientist and engineer, with all the attendant implications, is an example of Kropotkin's which still has force. Where, perhaps, the real significance of his account lies, however, is in his appreciation of the subtlety of the process by which ideas emerge and are passed on, picked up, developed, and then articulated. For Kropotkin a weakness in a country's scientific effort was not something to be put right by a simple-minded management project coupled with an infusion of money. It was too bound up with the society's whole culture for that. It needed to be tackled in more fundamental ways. One of those ways, in Kropotkin's view, was to change education.

It is important to remember this cultural emphasis in Kropotkin's account when discussing his attitude to the more libertarian aspects of the anarchist view of education. Otherwise one is merely conscious of a major gap. Probably the most debated issue in anarchist educational theory is that of compulsion, and on this, apparently, Kropotkin has not a word to say.

The issue arises first in connection with the system of educational provision. Is the state to be the provider, and is attendance to be compulsory? If so then many anarchists would find it difficult to accept Kropotkin's position as an anarchist one at all. Anarchists, almost by definition, have a deep distrust of the state, and this applies *a fortiori* to the state's role in education. To take just one example: Stirner's

account of the relations between the individual and the state lays particular stress on the dangers of state control of education. Stirner, it will be recalled, approached the issue of freedom from the point of view of man's relation to the ideas current in society at that particular time. If people's values, beliefs and general world outlook are properly their own and not the product of conditioning, then they are free: if not, then they are not. Stirner saw the greatest danger in socially dominant belief systems such as that associated with the Church in the past and with the nation state at the time he wrote. Education he saw as the means by which the state inculcated ideas it favoured. The school had become a prime agent of social control; the schoolteacher, in his view, had replaced the priest. The curriculum reflected the state's interest. Even more significant was what we would call today the hidden curriculum of the school. It was in the school that children learned habits of obedience to authority, there that, in Stirner's famous phrase, the gendarme was installed within the breast. State control of education was, therefore, incompatible with the individual's true freedom.¹¹

Not dissimilar views were generally held among anarchists at the time Kropotkin wrote, and Kropotkin's failure even to touch on this issue is puzzling. Technical education raised the issue in particularly acute form. Control of provision by the state would ensure that what was offered would reflect the interests of employers, not workers. Moreover, if attendance and participation were compulsory no one would be able to escape. For anarchists it was almost a matter of definition that if the state was to be the provider then education could not be free, certainly not in the anarchist sense of freedom.

The issue of compulsion also arose in connection with pedagogy, and here, it may be felt, Kropotkin is on stronger ground. An extreme, Tolstoyan definition of freedom with respect to pedagogy implies absolutely no compulsion in the teaching pattern. Such a position was certainly held, and passionately held, by anarchists, but many of the most influential anarchist writers on education shrank from pressing the issue to the extreme. Educators like Robin and Faure, for example, took up a relaxed, liberal position whose characteristic features were absolute avoidance of corporal punishment, the imposition instead of social penalties, often communally arrived at, by other pupils as well as staff, and a general sensitive reluctance to breach the child's self-respect and dignity. Many anarchists would in fact take that line. Other anarchists would, however, insist on the child's absolute freedom to determine the pattern of his or her day, to decide whether to attend and what to attend, to initiate or omit activities in whatever form they chose. There is an interesting pedagogic debate on the degree to which self-motivation is essential to the learning act.

Kropotkin's position is clearly the liberal, possibly less distinctively anarchist, one. He deals with pedagogy at some length, actually, in his article. Again, he does not touch on the issue of compulsion, but he does say enough to enable us to get a picture of his general views. Broadly, he is in line with the progressive educational movement on the Continent. There was a general reaction at this time against bookish, grammar-school approaches to teaching and a general interest in starting from the practical and concrete and immediate. To this Kropotkin added some touches characteristic of the anarchists: valuation of *making* things as opposed to writing or talking about them, rejection of 'parrot-like repetition', and an emphasis on independent thinking, a general sense of the intelligence implicit in manual operations. The examples he cites are drawn from his own interest in science and his experience and observation. The whole is a wise blend of common sense and current theory; but it is not distinctively anarchist. The impression one gets is that the innovative scientist, not the committed anarchist, is speaking.

Pedagogy is, however, an area in which anarchists differ, and there is less agreement on the essential features of a libertarian pedagogy than there is over the issue of state provision. It is on that second issue that anarchists would take Kropotkin to task. My own feeling is that Kropotkin had accepted for the purposes of his article the context assumed by the general British debate. There were some points that he thought might be accepted and others that he thought would not be, and for the moment he was concerned to urge the former. It is, however, possible to extract from the article, and especially from his discussion of its cultural aspects of the hand-brain divide, the outline of an answer which he could have made if he had been tackled on the compulsion/state provision issue.

What he could have said was that the issue of compulsion becomes less significant when one is dealing with adults who are essentially free to come and go, and this is likely to be the case where technical education is concerned. True, his article assumes that the bases of technical education would be in school, but developing those bases — essentially, through a wide scientific school culture and through sampling one or more industrial occupations — is merely a preliminary to participating in a wider kind of vocational learning which is not institutionalised and which springs rather from the interests and efforts of spontaneous associations of people. What Kropotkin is passionately committed to is that wider kind of cultural learning. That, he insists, can only exist as a product of free, untrammelled action and debate. Formal instruction is merely a preparation for that participation.

Anarchists have always insisted on the superiority of real life to the

school as a means of education. There is a well-known passage in one of Tolstoy's pedagogical essays in which he describes a visit he made to Marseilles. Suppose, he asks, you had to form an opinion of the people of Marseilles based solely on what you saw of their children in school. You would surely conclude that they were rather dull, apathetic, and distinctly limited in mental capacity. In fact, the people of Marseilles are not like that at all. On the contrary, they are lively, intelligent, and resourceful. How is this to be explained? He found the answer, he says, in the streets of Marseilles, in its drinking houses, its cafés, its workshops, and its markets. Marseilles itself presented an unusually stimulating environment. Tolstoy draws the following conclusion:

The greater part of one's education is acquired, not at school, but in life. There, where life is instructive, as in London, Paris, and in general, in all large cities, the masses are educated; there where life is not instructive, as in the country, the people are uneducated in spite of the fact that the schools are the same in both.¹²

Kropotkin's argument is clearly similar to Tolstoy's. It is the culture that is important, not the school.

Yes, one might concede provisionally, but in the specific case of technical education is the argument even plausible? One might even be prepared to accept that at the time of Tolstoy's visit to Marseilles in the 1860s the kind of knowledge that was at issue was still a fairly straightforward kind of craft knowledge. But surely, by the time Kropotkin was writing, manufacturing processes in the industrial cities had become so complex and sophisticated that *some* formal instruction could not be dispensed with no matter how stimulating the environment. It is here, I think, that Kropotkin's account appears to advantage. Whatever may be anarchist theory, Kropotkin was enough of a scientist to believe that some formalised knowledge of scientific principles was a prerequisite for joining in the informal debate that he thought was crucial. At the moment the schools were not even providing that general knowledge. Until they did, ordinary people would be cut off from some key issues for living in a modern industrial society. The lack of such knowledge was a crucial restriction of their freedom. We return, thus, to the question of whether scientific knowledge is to be the preserve of an increasingly privileged elite or whether it is to be open to all, part of a culture accessible to everybody. What, Kropotkin might have asked, was the most important restriction on freedom in a modern industrial society? For traditional anarchist educators it was weakness in the market-place for labour caused by, among other things, restriction to one set of craft skills. For Kropotkin, writing later and with a greater understanding of the role of science, it

was being denied access to knowledge central to living in modern society. I am not sure that Kropotkin's understanding of freedom will not stand the test of time better than the traditional anarchist one.

A purely historical account of an educational issue always rings a little hollow in anarchist ears since it itself exhibits the divorce between the theoretical and the applied, the bookish and the real, which anarchists reject. I would like to conclude, therefore, by reinterpreting the ideas which Kropotkin put forward in the context of the 1880s into terms applicable to the context of the 1990s. Suppose Kropotkin were writing an article on technical education today for, say, the *Guardian*. What might he have written?

Not technical education, but education

British definitions of vocational education are commonly employers' definitions. They specify training in terms of skills relevant to and specific to one job or set of jobs. This is a conservative basis for definition and allows for neither technological change nor occupational mobility. Educating you to be in a job today by this definition is educating you to be out of a job tomorrow. What is wanted, Kropotkin might say, is an education which is general and not specific, is shared by everybody, woman and boy, and is geared to participation in a knowledge-based culture *either* through work *or* through life outside work.

There should be more of it

Kropotkin would not fail to point out that Britain has probably the least educated population of any developed country. This is especially true of adults, who have grown up in a society in which education was restricted largely to those under 16 (or 15), but it remains true of the young, a smaller proportion of whom continue education after 16 than in any other developed country. Employers register concern about the implications of this for the workforce; Kropotkin's concern would be for its effect on democratic debate. There should be more of it, but how?

Increase participation, not provision

One way *not* to increase it is by extending state provision, as both a state-socialist Labour Party and a dirigistically minded Conservative

government might prefer. The problem is not facilities but take-up. The British are so used to not having education that even when it is available they don't want it. Admittedly, this is partly a question of cash. Only partly. More fundamentally it is a reflection of educational structures which repel take-up rather than invite it. And here, Kropotkin might say, anarchists have something to offer.

What is required are educational structures which elicit participation. Some suggestions follow.

Enrol not to faceless institutions but to face-to-face groups.

A student is enrolled not to a college but to a group following a course of studies. The group is responsible for co-operatively managing its own programme. Acceptance on the course is conditional on willingness to participate in such self-management.

Adapt the Open University and the Open College

Make it a requirement, departed from only exceptionally, that only groups can register (i.e. you cannot register as an individual) but that any group can register. It is the group's business to run the course. The prime role of the College and the University is to provide materials. The group provides mutual support and feedback. It can hire support staff (e.g. teachers) if it wishes.

Tilt the balance toward self-help groups and associations

First, remove the power of examination from qualification-awarding bodies, and, second, give it to local testing agencies whose function is solely to test whether candidates meet specified criteria. Third, have candidates who can only be nominated for testing by small local groups which have acted as support groups for them in their studying. Fourth, use criterion-based assessment, not norm-referenced assessment.

Recognise the role of work groups and work teams in training

Make training a recognised part of the job of work groups and work teams. Require them to work out a programme with the learner; allow them to nominate the learner, as described above; and give them real responsibility.

Kropotkin may not, of course, have hit upon exactly these ideas, but it would certainly be in the anarchist tradition to try to redefine education in terms of co-operative actions by small face-to-face groups — and that, really, is my point.

Revisit integral education

Introduce overlapping Foundation Courses of the sort currently operating only in the field of Art and Design. At present, all students who go on to take a degree course in Art and Design first have to take a

one-year Foundation Course which introduces them (by trying it out) to the design areas they can specialise in for their degree and equips them with basic skills. Introduce similar courses for other occupational areas — these days one Foundation Course couldn't cover all the possibilities in the way that it perhaps could in Robin's day. A Foundation Course for Business, perhaps, and one for Science and Technology? And overlap them so that people could move from one to the other if it suited them better. The government is thinking about abolishing the Art and Design Foundation Course (it is administratively untidy). Do not let it. Abolish the rest of the system instead.

Try libertarian pedagogy

Borrow another practice from Art and Design: task-oriented project work. The whole course typically in the Art and Design areas is taught through a sequence of design projects. Try this in Science and Technology. According to libertarian educationists, people learn best by being confronted with real problems in real contexts in which the initiative is theirs. Projects would enable learners to see operations as a whole (in an integrated way, yes), thus offsetting both the limited focus of much industrial work and the bitterness of much of the present curriculum.

But . . .

- a. All of an Art and Design Foundation Course is taught through projects. The same would have to go for other Foundation Courses. None of these tame pseudo-projects which teachers presently set!
- b. Pedagogy cannot be divorced from the social structures in which it is set. If they are hierarchical, it will be too. At the moment there are a lot of good experiments in English Further Education, some of them associated (paradoxically) with the Manpower Services Commission: negotiated curricula, student-centred learning, integrative assignments, etc. Do not jettison these. Remember, though, that teachers can use any potentially liberative device in an unliberating way. Unless libertarian pedagogy is embedded in liberating structures of the co-operative sort outlined above, it will not liberate.

Make the most of the decentralising possibilities of the new technology

Kropotkin was interested in electricity and its implications and if he were alive today would be similarly interested in computers. What he

might have said about their implications for education is this: information technology has enormous potential for decentralising knowledge. It makes it possible to access knowledge anywhere. Thus in so far as education is to do with resources and materials it makes it possible to study at home or at work, in a public library, or indeed anywhere, and not necessarily in an institution with walls called a college or school or university.

In principle it is possible to develop the interactive possibilities of computers so that they will provide feedback to the learner (and feedback is the basis of all learning). What they will not do, however, is provide the psychological support which comes from people. This is very important to learners. In a learning context, therefore, computers need to be complemented by people. The people do not, however, have to be experts: they can be peers. The computer can provide the expertise. What the people are needed for is support and the shared benefit which comes from co-operative engagement and enquiry. This point is often not understood. It is too readily assumed that computer learning is best associated with individuals. (In the author's experience, certainly in a training context, this is not so.) There will be more need for social forms of learning, not fewer. Relate this, Kropotkin might have said, to what was said about face-to-face groups above and you might just see the outlines of a new approach to education emerge. I'll come back, he might have finished, in 2090 and update you.

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Zeb Korycinska

Education vs Schooling: the Case for Home Learning

In order to examine the differences between 'education' and 'schooling', it would be as well to define what is meant by each. The great traditions of education emphasised the development of the individual. Through learning, the scholar hoped to become equipped with a well-rounded philosophy with which to face the world and her/his place in it. Schooling, on the other hand, has always had a much more limited meaning, more akin to training. After all, you can school horses, dogs and circus animals — there is not necessarily much development taking place, but rather shaping of behaviour.

It is a measure of how well the school system has become integrated with society that the terms 'education' and 'schooling' are commonly seen to be synonymous. And yet elementary education was made compulsory just over 100 years ago. Secondary education became compulsory in 1902.

It is the distinction between education and schooling which allows home-learning to continue in Britain: the Education Act states that parents are responsible for their children's education, 'either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'. (The self-help group of people whose children are learning from home is called, appropriately, Education Otherwise.)

Obviously plenty of learning was going on before 1880: for the rich there were tutors and private schools; for the not so rich, cheaper private schools, church schools, governesses; but for the vast majority of people, they learned by doing, with perhaps a little rote learning got from a dame school. By working alongside their parents, or relatives,

children found out how to train for their working lives. Up till the time of the Industrial Revolution, adults would have useful skills to impart; once more and more people were turned into factory 'hands', thus denying their wholeness as individuals, the transmission of traditional skills began to break down.

In many ways compulsory education grew from the exploitation of child labour, and was indeed of genuine benefit to the children in factories, as can be found in Robert Owen's *On Education*. It was, of course, in the interests of the factory managers to have workers taught some basic literacy skills so that they could perform their tasks better, and while we might nowadays question whether this can really be called education, it was undoubtedly far better than nothing for the workers concerned. But it should not be forgotten that state schooling had its roots here, far removed from the education of the privileged classes. W. Kenneth Richmond states in his *Education and Schooling*:

Schooling, is the compulsory institutionalising of the young, is an invention of nineteenth century industrial mass production: an ersatz process, compared with the liberal education always associated with, and reserved for, a leisured class.

It is an interesting fact, too, that the only place an untrained person can get a teaching job nowadays is in private schools. In fact, it's difficult to get a job there if you have been through teacher-training college. How does that reflect on a) private education and b) teacher-training for state schooling? 'Education' needs a free agent, a willing participant; 'schooling' is imposed on a more or less captive audience.

The state school system has been examined many times as a system of social engineering — Paul Goodman in *The Present Moment in Education* shows how children are taught to conform to ideals which will re-establish the status quo. If they can learn to give the right answers, maybe they will become the ones in charge, in turn carefully guarding the established norms. But the questions are confined to discrete subjects — it's too dangerous to have children actually begin to question the whole system. Most of what is taught in schools has little relevance for day-to-day living, and this is quite deliberate. To preserve the status quo, the last thing the country needs is millions of children educated to think for themselves — they might just notice the inconsistencies. What it does need is to produce citizens who have been made aware of what layer they slot into. After all, few would choose a boring factory job if they hadn't been made to feel failures over and over again. School is full of 'cooling out' procedures, that is, methods by which children are made to see where they fit on the academic scale:

the way classes are streamed, for example. With the national curriculum, tests will be administered regularly, just to make sure everyone knows who fits where. It is a series of classifications with a few winners, and many losers. The problem is, the sort of work these children fail in at school bears little relationship to real life work. Many people, Albert Einstein being the prime example, have uncovered great talents in later life, although they 'failed' at school. Schools don't require children to think, just to answer the set questions asked.

It is a very artificial environment in which to learn: the only other comparable institution in Britain is the army — a number of uniformed young people, arranged in peer groups. No one's trying to say that military training encourages the recruit to think. The opposite is true, in fact, but is the set-up so different from school?

One question which people often ask learning-at-home families: 'What about socialisation?' Well, which is more artificial, being one amongst thirty-odd of your age peer group, plus a controlling adult, or being one of a family, where you are friends with the both sets of neighbours next door, where you have a working relationship with the library, the museum, and all the people in the food shops where you help do the shopping. Plus of course, friends whom you choose, to play with when they have free time. School teaches children how to get by socially in school, but that's all. It has more in common with total institutions, like the army, or some mental hospitals than real life. And if you don't go to school, you don't need it.

In fact, if you read the various articles in the national press about bullying in schools, it seems odder to want your child to go there, than to have them learn at home.

A study called *Disruptive Children — Disruptive Schools* describes teachers' views of why children are disruptive. They can see the problems, but still seek to solve them through strategies within the schooling system. They don't for a minute consider that the disruptive behaviour might signal a genuine malaise that needs to be dealt with on a greater scale than the individual school. In other words, the disruption might be perfectly valid.

In state schools competition starts early. Boys and girls are treated differently right from the start, with boy-orientated 'interest corners' and 'home-centres' for the girls. No one sets it up this way, but that is how it always turns out. Boys tend to dominate the space in both classroom and playground — have a look next time you're passing a primary school at break time. The chances are there will be several groups of girls around the edges, while the boys career across the whole width of the playground, playing football, tig (chasing), or whatever. Inside, the computer, building apparatus, science table, and so on are

boy-dominated. It's a well-researched fact that boys demand more attention. Even if the teacher is well aware of this, it's very hard not to teach to the boys, to avoid conflict, and therefore to allow the girls to make up over 50% of the class, but all the interests are geared towards the boys. Lest this sounds as if it is a sort of male conspiracy, it is worth remembering that most teachers, at least at the primary level, are women.

By and large, the girls seem to accept this, and just get on with their own activities, but it is an unhealthy situation for both sexes. Boys are stuck into forming a male hierarchy, whether they want to or not; a sort of pecking order of toughness. In boys' schools, certain boys become 'substitute girls' and have to bear the brunt of aggression. When you consider that a large proportion of MPs attended such schools, complete with the sort of behaviour they encourage, there are worrying conclusions to be drawn.

So — the drawbacks of state schooling are many and obvious. But what are the advantages of home learning?

1. Motivation

The child can follow her/his individual course of study. Education can be truly 'child-centred' so that it is relevant to their interests. The mechanics of education, like reading and maths can be used simply as tools to get at the information the child wants to find out about: the true educational aim. There is time to do 'real' things, like finding out how to mend your bike by taking it apart, using a sewing machine, learning to type, printing your own photographs and helping to fix your radio.

2. Freedom

Freedom from a standardised curriculum, from mindless 'busywork' designed to keep the child occupied, and from peer group pressure. Freedom to explore the subjects which are of interest, and freedom to spend time doing 'nothing': getting to know yourself, how you feel, how your mind works, what you think is important.

3. Self-determination

Home-taught children learn to think for themselves, to question the

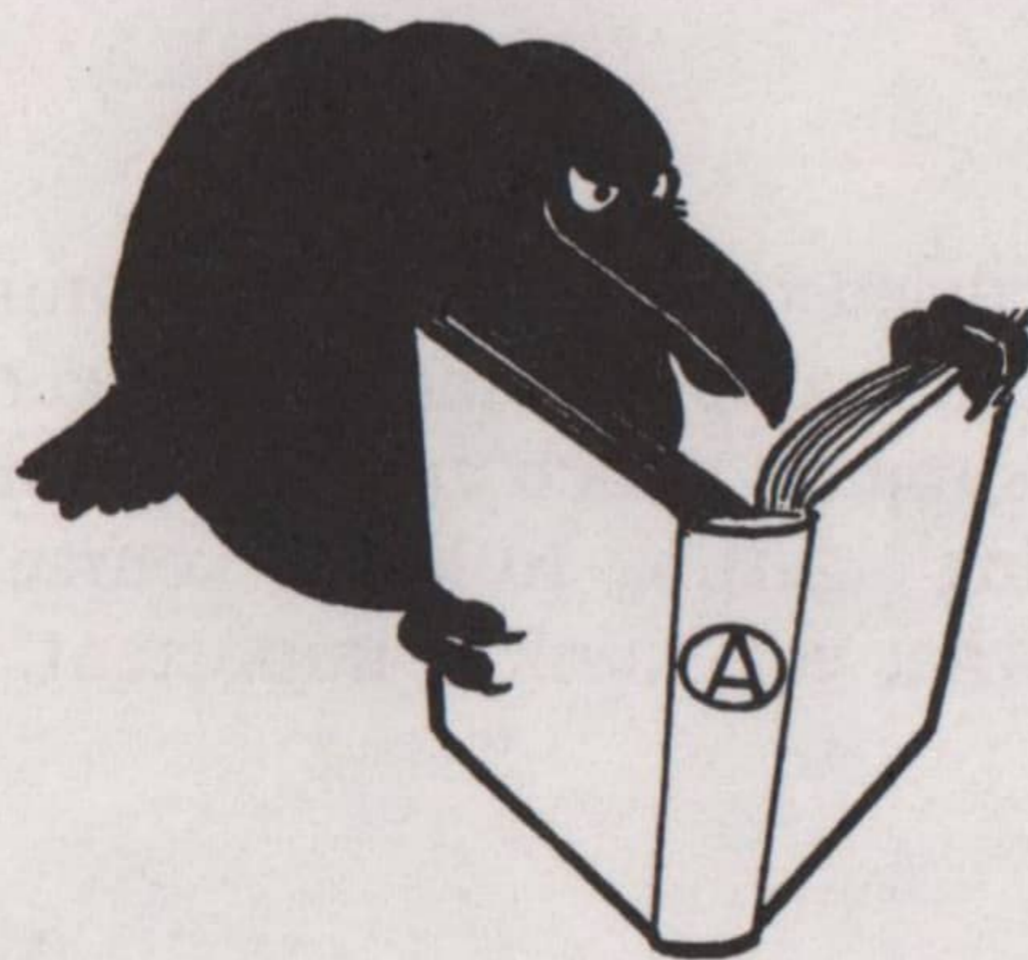
'authorised version' of things, and to have the courage of their convictions.

If you're unhappy with your child's schooling, and their education, don't moan because there's not a free school nearby. There is an alternative: 'Teach Your Own'.

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In order to find out more about home learning, send a sae to: Education Otherwise, 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambridgeshire PE18 9AN.



Paule Pym

No dead poet's society here —

I have always been surprised by the way in which an outside threat brings about consensus. I mistrust establishment and institutional thinking. I can only trust the thinking and feelings that come from inside.

These words of Bruno Bettelheim stuck in my mind as, a while ago, I found myself caught in an unhappy experience at school. Over the last decade I have been teaching on a supply basis for a local school. As a French educated woman, I have always appreciated and enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and relative freedom that exists in English schools. I felt that, whereas at home, education was essentially the accumulation of knowledge in order to secure a safe place in society, here at least there was also a genuine concern for the personal happiness of the child and an effort to understand what is of value to oneself and others. Or so it seemed.

Last year, I was asked to cover the lessons of second year pupils for several days in the absence of their form teacher. It was a class of mixed ability children who, because of the sensitive handling of their teacher, were more alert and responsive than normal. But, I was told that among them was a child who had reading and writing difficulties, associated with aggressive outbursts. He would cooperate most of the time then try to seduce other boys to join him in his own games, and suddenly, without warning and for no apparent reason, he would go into fits of rage swiping books and materials off the tables, kicking chairs, and throwing himself on the floor with unusual force. I was asked to be cautious and tolerant and, whenever necessary, to let him get on with his own things in order to create the least disturbance for the rest of the class. At first, everything went well, I rather liked Peter; he was a very sturdy boy with an engaging face and a disarming smile. On the third day, the class had been set English work and aware of Peter's struggle, I went over to help him. Immediately, I sensed a tension mounting; no matter how I explained, repeated or changed words around I could not get through to him, until finally, overcome with frustration he gave way to the full gamut of his temper. I took him in my arms in an attempt to calm him down but it made things worse, and it was while I was struggling to restrain him that the headmaster walked in and without a

word caught him by the waist and left the classroom with Peter still kicking and screaming. I looked back at the class who, a moment ago, had been watching the whole scene with great glee: sobered by the appearance of the headmaster, each child was piously seated at his own table, apparently engrossed in work. One of them, sensing my anxiety got up and said with great self assurance, 'Don't worry Miss he does that all the time'.

Two days later the headmaster rang me at home and asked me if I would do the school a favour: would I, as a regular supply teacher, write a letter to the educational authority complaining that I had been assaulted by Peter; 'it would help our case', he explained, 'we are trying to get Peter sent to a school for deviant children'. I was appalled; the whole fate of Peter depended on a letter of complaint written by a stranger who had been the 'victim' of a ten year old child: the outside threat. The whole school agreed. 'How would you like your child's education to be disrupted by the Peters of this world?' they said. His fate was sealed. REJECTED.

I tell this story because it raised in my mind several thoughts about our education; we believe in it, we believe that it can create a better world by granting each person his rightful place within it — if schooling is the preparatory ground that gives us meaning and purpose before entering the adult world, why can't we incorporate the good, the bad and the ugly? Accept whenever possible every aspect of a child's behaviour as true from his own point of view (Peter's outbursts were not as believed by the experts, pathological, but rather the expression of an extreme frustration at his inability to adapt to school expectations).

More important, why can't we encourage in the class tolerance and understanding of each others needs and problems through emotional disruptions (definitely not in the English tradition, this one — too embarrassing and threatening for a system based on producing 'well mannered, socialised kids out of well functioning schools').

What is the goodness of schooling if it only 'funnels into our ears' (Montaigne) like force-fed geese, learning techniques unsupported by feelings? How then will we seek comfort in life except through a gradual acceptance of the whole spectrum of relationships that exist between people? And finally, when has anybody who has achieved a sense of well being been able to say 'it happened when I realised the school was run for me'?

Lynn Olson

Education or Processing?

Articles, books and TV programs claiming to criticize education appear in a steady stream. Politicians repeatedly promise to 'reform education'. Those with a program to promote expect the schools to teach whatever will advance their program. When a special interest decides it needs more engineers, or more scientists then the schools are expected to produce more of the specialists. Those who would keep society exactly as it is expect the schools to preserve the status quo. Those who would re-build society argue that the schools should produce graduates capable of building that new society. All of these contend that 'education' is the answer. Education would seem to be everyone's vital concern.

Never suggested is that these complaints are really criticisms of the processing that goes on in the schools. The criticisms imply that students should be processed differently and presumably better.

To satisfy the demands of pressure groups school curricula are fragmented into a bewildering array of separate subjects. Students spend their time switching from one subject to another each of which is presented as a separate entity with little relation to the others. Since we are all products of this subject system of schooling and since the system is always labelled 'education' it is understandable that we should confuse this pedagogical processing with education. Even such status terms as 'higher education' are easily confused with the specialized type of pedagogical processing the universities dispense.

Processing puts pre-determined skills, attitudes and beliefs into the students. *Education* brings potentials out of students. While processing is a putting in, education is a bringing out. While processing repeats the past, education explores the unknown future.

The potentials of students are highly individualized. They are unique to the particular student and education will *not* bring the same potentials out of each student. Processing concentrates upon what can be put into all students alike. It treats each student as an identical receptacle to receive the same skills and attitudes. While processing recognizes that some of these receptacles may be larger than others each student reads the same textbook, works through the same exercises, fills in the same blanks, listens to the same lectures, takes the same

examinations and receives the same diploma. Since some students are more easily processed than others they receive the higher grades and honors.

Behavioral changes due to processing are predictable. Teachers are expected to produce a definite, pre-determined behavioral change in the student by applying systematic processing procedures known as 'teaching techniques'. Testing devices are then applied to measure and compare these behavioral changes. Recently politicians have chosen to confuse the measurement of pedagogical processing with 'accountability'.

Behavioral changes due to education are *not* predictable. Education occurs when a student recognizes a meaningful problem, proposes a possible solution, and then carefully tests and evaluates that proposed solution. That the student's proposed solution may or may not solve the problem is not important. What is important is that the sincere testing and evaluating changes the student's understanding of the problem. The student now sees the problem differently. The student's perception has changed. However small this change in understanding, this change in perception is the basic change in behavior that qualifies as educational change. From this change in understanding flows other changes such as increased interest, increased flexibility, expanded creativity, and most important — the ability to propose better solutions.

In the pedagogical processing plants — misnamed 'educational institutions' — the experience of education is eliminated by the simple expedient of removing all problems that might be meaningful to the student. The student never learns how to recognize a genuine problem nor even how to distinguish a problem from an exercise. The student never learns how to test and evaluate a proposed solution and so never experiences the behavioral change that is education. After all, if the student were to enjoy something as unpredictable as educational change then that student might not become properly processed. And if the student were to learn how to test and evaluate solutions then those preferred by authorities might be exposed as unworkable. And all the pressure groups would be up in arms upon seeing their special interests ignored.

In place of real problems the student is presented with solutions which have been pre-determined, pre-selected and pre-digested by the pedagogical processors — the administrators, curriculum planners, teachers and professors. The student is expected to memorize verbalized forms of these pre-digested solutions and then to repeat the verbalisms at examination time.

When the pedagogical processors talk of 'problems' they really mean

exercises. Real and meaningful *problems* are those for which no solution as yet exists. *Exercises* are the fossilized shells of problems that have already been solved and for which acceptable solutions have been approved. These exercises, with their approved solutions, make up the curriculum of the schools. The pedagogical processors deliver lectures and conduct demonstrations to present the solutions associated with the exercises. Students are expected to memorize the approved solutions. Processing requires exercises; education requires problems.

In processing the student is passive. In education the student must be active. Memorizing the verbalized and pre-digested solutions to exercises is relatively easy. Testing and evaluating proposed solutions to real problems is difficult, demanding and frustrating. There is no educational behavioral change without frustration. The capacity to deal with frustration is essential to education.

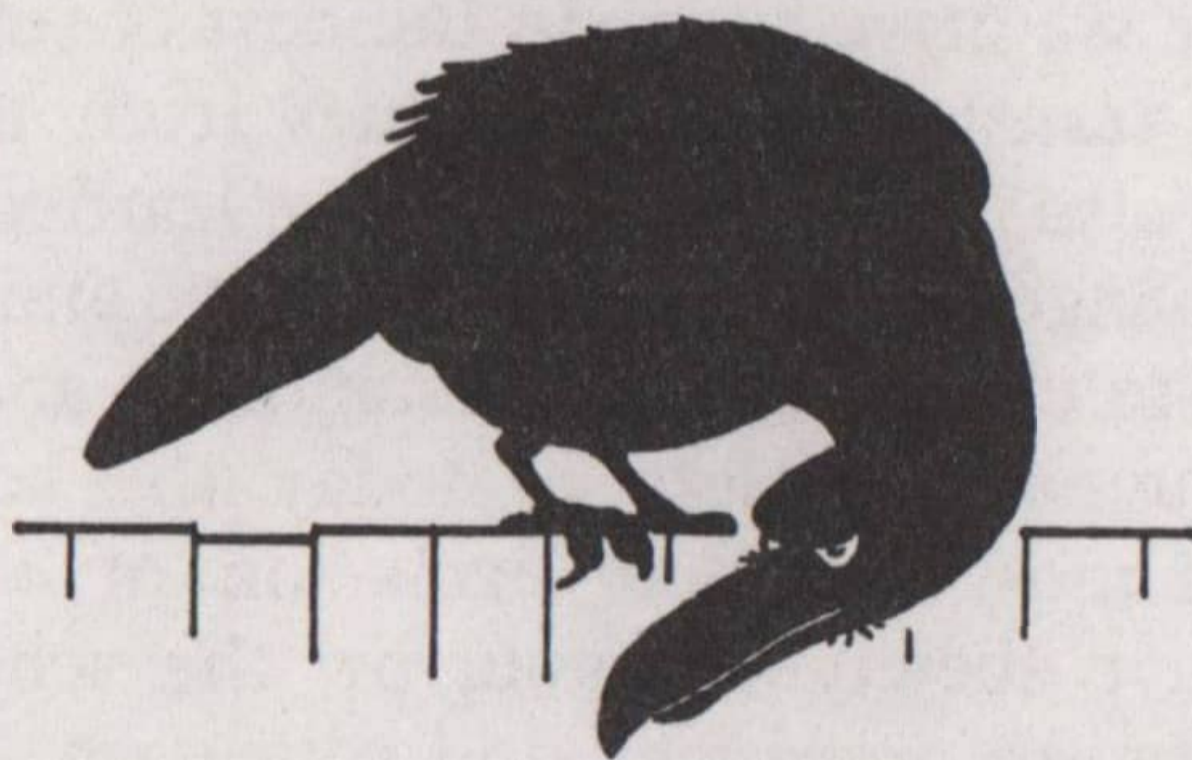
Pedagogical processors often refer to what they call 'intelligence' and by which they mean the ability to memorize verbalized forms of the pre-digested solutions to exercises. Intelligence is equated with verbal memory. In the context of education intelligence means flexibility — the ability to change behavior to deal with changing problems. Instead of the emphasis upon memory, flexibility includes the ability to forget obsolete, unworkable and repetitious behavior patterns.

Is all processing bad? Are there not many skills and abilities that we must learn if we would function in any society? Is not a knowledge of history necessary to avoid repeating the errors of the past? And is not pedagogical processing the best way to transmit many skills, abilities and the lessons of history? Yes, of course. There is no need to re-invent the wheel every time we drive a car. In the best of societies processing will be required to transmit selected values from the past. But the values from the past also include what we have learned about education and how behavior changes. In a dynamic, creative and changing society we must know how to change our understandings and perceptions. In the static, class-structured society of today the schools emphasize processing to the almost complete exclusion of education. In the class-free and creative society of tomorrow the schools will find an effective balance between processing and education.

Processing reaches far beyond the schools. Politicians never tire of trying to process us into accepting their worn-out and unworkable solutions. Advertisers process us into more and more consumption. Those who would re-build society frequently see their task as that of processing others into accepting their outline of the pre-determined society. These society processors fail to see how their detailed blueprints of the future society are only veiled repetitions of the past. Their need to seize power, whether by bullets or by ballots, so they can

process everyone into their blueprints, is another pattern of the past. Which suggests why revolutions, begun with eager enthusiasm for vital change, often end up with the old tyrannies under new names. The power-seizers of today become the power-Caesars of tomorrow.

As with educational change, significant social changes cannot be predicted or even planned. Real changes can only follow from our attempts to test and evaluate proposed solutions to real problems. Only through such testing and evaluating can our understandings change enough to ultimately recognize valid and workable solutions. No one can predict in advance which solutions will work. The problems change as we try to solve them. And we change as our understandings change — as we suffer education. Because it cannot tolerate significant change, the static, class-structured society of today processes people into repeating the mistakes of the past. Needed is a dynamic, creative and class-free society in which the behavioral changes of education can prevail.



John R. Doheny

Intellectuals and the Industrialisation of Education

It seems to me that in any discussion of visions of higher education, one very important question which needs to be asked about conditions in the second half of this century is: what is a 'university' and what is the place of the intellectual in it? Wolf-Dieter Narr asked (at a meeting in Vancouver, Canada, in 1988), can our present universities be a home for intellectuals? As I define intellectuals, North American universities aren't quite a home: the situation seems to me to be more like being allowed to have a room and to share the kitchen and the bathroom.

Universities are not yet corporations; however, they are often called 'institutions', and at their worst they feel to some students and faculty like madhouses, jails, bureaucratic structures functioning for the benefit of no one. Nor are there state police enforcing doctrine, no spies, and no bars on the windows; but in spite of all this, far too many institutionalised academics behave as if there were authoritarian agents looking over their shoulders. Of course, everyone inside these institutions knows that there are unofficial guidelines which lead to success in its various forms if one follows them assiduously enough, but this isn't a required activity, and it is fairly widely recognised that, humanly, this activity is pretty much a dead end. Intellectuals teaching in a university can do everything they want to do up to a point. And when they reach that point, they can stop long enough to find a way around the obstacles. The question remains, then, why don't they behave this way? Why do so many become so readily passive and obedient to the bureaucratic standardisation which is called 'education'? It is a question which can only be answered on an individual basis, and the act of explaining the failure of universities by finding the cause in the 'demands' of students defined as 'consumers' or in the constraining actions of ambitious, administrative scholar-bureaucrats, is simply avoiding the issue. The putative 'intellectual' becoming the helpless victim who can do nothing but compromise himself and his principles while fighting heroically against insurmountable odds is a comforting view to the quite comfortable academics who have made Harold Bloom popular (*The Closing of the American Mind*), and it allows them in this age of reaction and recrimination to find culpability everywhere, especially in long departed and now silent

students and bleeding heart liberal administrators of the 1960s, and to idealise the past and their own place in it as a golden age. This also is a dead end, at least partly because none of it is the whole truth. There were then and there still are intellectuals among us both inside and outside the 'institutions'; and since they don't wear labels or name tags, we need to try to describe the species.

There are many definitions of intellectuals, and their most important characteristic as they have been defined in the past is that they are independent; they are not beholden to anyone or to any group. Disagreeing with the definitions offered by George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi in their book, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism*, Alec Nove (*Telos*, 44, Summer, 1980, 225-233) defines intellectuals by making a distinction between the 'ruling group' or 'stratum' and the old (late nineteenth century) East European definition of the 'Intelligentsia', i.e. 'persons capable of critical and independent thought' or 'critically-minded persons with education'. It may be important to note one advantage we have in the decaying contemporary capitalist states is that no one would refer to our ruling stratum as intellectuals, not the elected nor the appointed branches of the stratum.

In 1953 Dwight Macdonald ('A Theory of Mass Culture') repeated an assumption commonly held at the time when he distinguished between 'brainworkers', i.e. 'specialists whose thinking is pretty much confined to their limited "fields"', and 'intellectuals', i.e. those 'who take all of culture for their province'. In two essays which appear in *Discovering The Present* ('The Intellectual and His Future', 1965, and 'Twilight of the Intellectuals', 1958), Harold Rosenberg's idea is more specific. Russell Jacoby refers to the 1965 essay in *The Last Intellectuals* (1987) and disagrees with Rosenberg, being himself less sanguine, he says, about the intellectual and his future. Rosenberg, almost congenitally opposed to groups and institutions, usually finds reason for optimism in his gloom in the independence of human nature which he finds everywhere except amongst the majority of academics. He looks for good news in a bad time, and accepts as natural the idea that the margins or the fringes are the intellectual's natural home. 'Traditionally', he writes, 'the intellectual was a type that might show up in any layer of society, but under one indispensable condition: that he be out of place in it' (187). The 'passion for originality' makes intellectuals a threat 'to the established order' no matter what that order is (188).

Rosenberg suspects that there are 'at least as many intellectuals', as he defines them, 'among cab-drivers and jazz musicians as there are among holders of doctorates' (194). They are a diverse and disparate lot

following their own lights no matter what the rest of the world is doing, and there is 'no sure way of getting rid of them'. Intellectuals 'may exist in a common situation', such as universities, but 'the experience of each is his own experience and his creation is his own creation'. Intellectuals are adept at finding the cracks in society through which to crawl around the obstacles, 'in universities, on a park bench or in an insurance office'. But as soon as intellectuals identify themselves with any group style, they are changing into something different: Rosenberg says, 'they belong to a gang, not to themselves' (193).

As institutions, universities aren't trying to open up to this sort of independent individual. They are trying to be the big bureaucratic institutions which well-paid and ambitious administrators desperately wish them to be. And, as Hannah Arendt said, 'the nature of every bureaucracy is to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of [men and women], and thus to dehumanise them' (*Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p289).

Russell Jacoby sees a situation where one or two generations of potentially independent, American public intellectuals from 1960 to the present have drifted into universities and learned to speak and write only to each other and for each other. They have, in other words, become 'brainworkers' and 'part of a gang' instead of intellectuals. But, for many important reasons, I suspect that they would have been brainworkers, joining up, even if the arena for the survival of public intellectuals had not disappeared, as Jacoby details. By nature and by choice, no matter what conditions they experienced, this particular group, or at least most of them, would have been looking for the main chance all along just as others did earlier; and while I believe that there is evidence that the intellectuals are still around, not many of them have found contemporary universities welcoming places. I'm convinced that Russell Jacoby's example (in a talk in Vancouver, Canada, November, 1988) of the deconstructionist from Yale was less blinded by environment than the questioner from the audience thought. Perhaps he or she saw the possibility of a 70 or 80 thousand dollar a year salary, invitations to exotic places to give speeches, the wining and dining and fawning which goes with status, and even the highest of all rewards, as John Sutherland describes it, a place of honour at an Institute of Advanced Research where there are not even students to interrupt the flow. Perhaps intellectuals are born and not made, and that the generation which Russell Jacoby speaks of were always organisational brainworkers.

The situation in universities is odd and unnatural, though its causes and historical development are probably clear enough, for it is students and teachers who make up the universities. Without them, universities

don't exist, whereas they can exist without professional administrators. If professors in the universities would choose to act, not as part of a gang but as independent intellectuals, the universities could become what they could make it: a loose and baggy collection of disparate, 'lone-ranging, dubious types' and 'underground originals', to use Rosenberg's terms. A university could be a hang-out for dreaming and sulking, for inefficient but original and creative individuals, even if it were not a bohemia, which can't be a requirement anyway. As I see it, this would be a way of exercising the critical spirit.

The concept of the critical university is merely an old ideal. It doesn't exist in reality now; perhaps it never did exist in reality. However, the critical spirit itself does exist in universities, but it is to be found in individuals who stubbornly pursue their ideals or who can't help it that what they see as truth and knowledge nearly always is also dissent, but the universities as a whole do not function as the critical organ of the community. During the fourth and fifth decades of this century, when the best liberal American administrators were speaking of the critical spirit which was the life blood of the universities, the universities themselves (the humanities in particular) were, for the most part, safely beginning to turn out cultured technicians in wholesale numbers who simply fortified the establishment. Psychology graduates became personnel managers, sociology graduates worked on surveys for the government, for example, and those idealistic few who took the rhetoric for truth were shunted out of the academic tenure stream when they got too noisy or too far out of line. And by now, 'critical spirit' has simply disappeared from the administrative vocabulary. Universities pander to big business and governments quite openly and try to become profit makers themselves. They also get tough with malingerers and dissenters, believing they must hold up their end of the struggle against inefficiency, the erosion of standards, and the consequent increase in lawlessness and waste of 'resources', including in this term, people.

Paul Goodman writes in *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals* (1964) that we educate people 'by giving them initiative to run things, by multiplying sources of responsibility, by encouraging dissent. 'This', he says, 'has the beautiful moral advantage that a [person] can be excellent in his own way without feeling special, can rule without ambition and follow without inferiority. Through the decades, it should have been the effort of our institutions to adapt this idea to ever changing technical and social conditions. Instead, as if by dark design, our present institutions conspire to make people inexpert, mystified and slavish.' (xvii)

Goodman, who wrote so much during the 1950s and 1960s, seems nearly forgotten now, less than 20 years after his death. His emphasis

was always on individual initiative and learning rather than teaching, and surely that is the mark of the intellectual and a message which education discussions should take seriously. He says (in *Compulsory Miseducation*, 1962) that the 'hard task of education is to liberate and strengthen' the initiative of youths and to see to it that they are allowed to know what is 'necessary to cope with the on-going activities and culture of society' in order that their initiative can be relevant. 'It is absurd', he writes, 'to think that this task can be accomplished by so much sitting in a box facing front, manipulating symbols at the direction of distant administrators. This is rather a way to regiment and brainwash.' (140)

Of course, those words cause less concern now in universities simply because it has become accepted that the need is for regimenting and brainwashing to provide efficient and industrious skilled white collar workers. For public, advertising purposes university spokesmen merely call regimentation and brainwashing by different names such as efficient training for careers in business and government. 'The chief obstacle to college teaching' quoting Goodman again, 'does not reside in the break with tradition nor in the lack of confidence and earnestness of the students, but in the methods and aims of the colleges themselves' (*Compulsory Miseducation*, 140). And that is why the genuine intellectual finds no comfort and little vocation in industrialised universities beyond the subversive one of encouraging natural scepticism with the hope that independent and critical thinking can grow in spite of the industrial pressure.

The view I wish to state is that if we look carefully we can still find small groups of teachers and students engaged in the absorbing close relationship of learning described by Goodman and unnoticed by the propagandists. Often, they are engaged at great inconvenience and expense to themselves, but we will also find that they are indifferent to or in opposition to the Organisation which calls itself 'the university'. In those small groups we will also usually find the 'critical university', and for me, that is the only one which can count itself as a home for intellectuals. However, to take on the Organisation in an effort to make *it* critical is, I argue, wasting energy in a futile cause. I would agree with the argument that there are times when it is necessary to fend off the Organisation in order to keep a few breathing holes open, to keep enough elbow room to perform the tasks Goodman speaks of and, that way, to take on the Organisation, but that is not the main task. If the critical spirit is to expand within universities, I think it can only do so through the growth from the bottom — from those small groups of teachers and students — and not through pressure from the top.

Colin Ward

Four Easy Pieces and a Hard One

1. Anarchist teachers

(a rejected review of Michael Smith's *The Libertarians and Education*, Allen & Unwin 1984)

When A. S. Neill's first book, *A Dominie's Log* was published in 1915, one reviewer was scandalised by the fact that the author seemed totally ignorant of a tradition in progressive education, and offered him, as teacher-trainers are wont to do, a reading list. It consisted of names like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Dewey. Michael Smith suggests that a more appropriate reading list for a teacher of Neill's turn of mind, would have been Godwin, Proudhon, Tolstoy, Robin and Ferrer.

This is very interesting for two reasons. Firstly because most teachers would not, then or now, have heard of most of these alternative gurus, and those they did know of would not be thought about in an educational context. Secondly because the author of this book is one of the very few to make a distinction between the liberal/progressive educators and the libertarian/anarchist ones.

The handful of people who have sought to put their ideas of 'free' education into practice have always been so beleaguered by the amused hostility of institutionalised education on the one hand and by the popular press on the other (with its photographers anxious to get shots of the children smoking, dancing naked in the dew or knocking nails into the grand piano) that they have tended to close ranks and minimise their differences.

Neill just couldn't stand the high-minded and manipulative progressives. By the 1930s he was writing to Dora Russell that she and he were 'the only educators'. As one of his mentors, Homer Lane, put it, "Give the child freedom" is the insistent cry of the New Educators, but then its exponents usually devise a "system" which, although based on the soundest of principles, limits that freedom and contradicts the principle'.

Lane was echoing the opinion expressed by William Godwin in 1797

in *The Enquirer*, where he found that Rousseau, even though the world was indebted to him 'for the irresistible energy of his writings, and the magnitude of his speculations' had fallen into the common error of manipulating the child. 'His whole system of education is a series of tricks, a puppet-show exhibition, of which the master holds the wires, and the scholar is never to suspect in what manner they are moved.'

Dr Smith's survey of anarchist approaches to education distinguishes the libertarian *position* from the libertarian *movement*. Very broadly, he says, 'libertarians of the position tend to be more interested in a non-coercive pedagogy, while libertarians of the movement tend to be more interested in an education which does not leave the individual politically helpless'. He begins with Godwin for the very good reason that his writings on education are not only interesting in themselves but were an 18th century forerunner of both the 19th century anarchist movement and 20th century anarchist educational ideas. These are clearly expressed in the education chapters of his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793, and available in the Penguin Classics) where his main objection to a national system of education is the way in which the school would inevitably be used as an instrument of social control. 'Even in the petty institutions of Sunday schools, the chief lessons that are taught are a superstitious veneration for the Church of England and to bow to every man in a handsome coat.' Even earlier, Godwin's *An Account of the Seminary that will be opened on Monday the Fourth Day of August at Epsom in Surrey* (1783) is a remarkable prospectus for a hypothetical free school. Godwin's criticism of Rousseau, and his observation that 'there is no subjection so perfect as that which keeps the appearance of freedom' is precisely, in Dr Smith's view, what separates the genuinely libertarian teacher from the liberal/progressive one, for this disguised coercion was a double affront to the child's autonomy. 'It denied him genuine independence, and it insulted the rationality on which the child's autonomy was based.'

Before moving to the concept of Integral Education developed by the French anarchists, Dr Smith visits Harmony, the utopian community envisaged by Charles Fourier, whose educational ideas were directed, naturally, towards social harmony and to the minimisation of the exercise of authority. In the primary years education was to be built around cooking and opera, these being activities which developed all the human arts and skills and which did not rely on booklearning. They were also fun. In the secondary years the unruly impulses of children were to be channeled into socially useful work. 'Fourier envisaged two main independent child societies: the Little Hordes and the Little Bands. The Little Hordes would reflect children's taste for dirt and excitement. They would keep Harmony clean, repair roads, kill

poisonous snakes, feed the animals and so on. Their tasks were menial in themselves but precisely because they were nasty and because they were performed for the community, the Little Hordes would be highly honoured. They would have special dress and badges of distinction, they would ride horses and would go about their work to the accompaniment of music. . . . The Little Bands would be more concerned with cultural matters, they would cultivate dress and good manners, would care for the sick and would tend the plants and vegetables.'

As the author comments, though it all sounds nutty, the psychology is not all that askew. He then looks at two celebrated 19th century anarchists, Bakunin and Proudhon, who are not generally seen as educational thinkers. Proudhon was the craftsman son of a peasant, and both his political and educational thinking reflected this:

Proudhon was always conscious of the fact that the children he was talking about were the children of workers. Work was going to be their life when they grew up. Proudhon saw nothing wrong in this. The work a man did was something to be proud of, it was what gave interest, value and dignity to his life. It was right, therefore, that school should prepare the young for a life of work, that is, an education that was entirely bookish or grammar-schoolish in conception, was valueless from the point of view of ordinary working-class children. Of course, an education that went too far in the other direction, which brought up children merely to be fodder for factories was equally unacceptable. What was required was an education which would equip a child for the work-place but would also give him a degree of independence in the labour market. This could be achieved by giving him not just the basis of a trade but, as well, a whole range of marketable skills which would ensure that he was not totally at the mercy of an industrial system which required specialisation of its workers and then discarded them when the specialisation was no longer of interest to the firm. Thus Proudhon was led to the idea of an education that was 'polytechnical'.

Of course, a great many people have had the same ideal since, but for him this approach to education was education for *emancipation* as opposed to education to meet the needs of industry or the state, which was education for *subservience*.

This leads Dr Smith to some of his most interesting pages, describing Integral Education in practice through the experience of the French anarchist Paul Robin and the school he ran from 1880 to 1894 at Cempuis. It was based on workshop training and the abandonment of the classroom in favour of what we would now call the resource centre. Cooking, sewing, carpentry and metalwork were undertaken by both sexes, and 'the Cempuis children, both girls and boys, were among the first children in France to go in for cycling'. Co-education, sexual

equality and atheism brought Robin's downfall, but another celebrated French anarchist, Sebastien Faure, ran a school called La Ruche (the beehive). 'Faure had learned one very significant lesson from Robin's downfall: to stay completely out of the state system and so be assured of complete independence.' Another disciple of Paul Robin was the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer whose Modern School linked the education of children with that of adults, while 'another reflection of the libertarian belief that learning was not to be confined to the school was Ferrer's use of the actual environment as a teaching medium'.

Ferrer himself was a political martyr (he was executed in 1909) but the idea of the Modern School had ramifications which continue to this day in the United States, where poor European immigrants, hungry for education and 'culture' made the Ferrer schools 'a genuine people's university'. This particular story is excellently told in Paul Avrich's *The Modern School Movement* (Princeton 1980).

The author's account of Tolstoy's educational philosophy starts with a statement very apt for advocates of environmental education. Before setting up his own school at Yasnaya Polnaya, Tolstoy gave himself a grand tour of the education systems of western Europe, reaching the conclusion that 'Education is an attempt to control what goes on spontaneously in culture; it is "culture under restraint"'. This was illustrated by his visit to Marseilles:

Suppose now, says Tolstoy, that you had to form an opinion of the people of Marseilles based solely for some peculiar reason, on what you saw of their children in school. You might well conclude them to be somewhat dull, apathetic and rather limited in mental capacity. In fact, however, the people of Marseilles are not like that at all. On the contrary, they are lively, adaptable, intelligent and rather knowledgeable. How does this come about? He found the answer, he says, when school was over for the day and he began to walk round the streets of Marseilles and to frequent the 'dram-shops, cafés chantant, museums, workshops, quays and bookstalls'. Marseilles itself presented an unusually stimulating environment where 'The education goes on independently of the schools'. This brings him to the general conclusion, 'The greater part of one's education is acquired, not at school, but in life. There, where life is instructive, as in London, Paris, and, in general, in all large cities, the masses are educated; there, where life is not instructive, as in the country, the people are uneducated in spite of the fact that the schools are the same in both.'

Kropotkin's opinions on the integration of brain work and manual work are discussed, though I should perhaps mention, since both he and Elisée Reclus were famous both as geographers and as anarchists, that their ideas about geographical education do not feature in this book. The interested reader should consult the excellent essays by Myrna Breitbart on Kropotkin and G. S. Dunbar on Reclus in

Geography, Ideology and Social Concern, edited by D. R. Stoddart (Blackwell 1981).

Indeed, the author has struck such a rich and continuous stream of educational thinking in the anarchist tradition, that it must have been hard to decide what could be left out. Max Stirner, from the 1840s is summarised, as is Herbert Read from the 1940s, but what Dr Smith does very effectively is to relate the varied traditions of libertarian pedagogy from the past, to the widely-read authors of the 1960s and 1970s who we lump together as the 'de-schoolers': John Holt, Paul Goodman, George Dennison, Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich.

This is a most stimulating book, and since it comes at a time when disillusionment among pupils is equalled by that among teachers, it ought to be read by those who continue to wonder what education is for. If education for employment no longer delivers the goods, while education for leisure seems to sensitive people an absolute insult to the unemployed, what about education for personal and social autonomy, which is the theme of this book?

2. Schools of Freedom

Sixty years ago, the green was so crowded that I couldn't see over the people's heads. At seventeen years of age I opened the school. They gave me the signal and I said, 'With joy and thankfulness I declare this school open to be forever a school of freedom'.

Violet Potter, at the re-enactment of the Burston School Strike, Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes, 1978.

The most remarkable challenges to accepted ideas about rural life and rural education have happened deep in the country. In 1914 the children of the Norfolk village of Burston came out on strike in support of their teachers, dismissed because they offended the automatic dominance of the sporting parson and the hierarchy of farmers. In 1924 Henry Morris, director of education for Cambridgeshire, challenged the accepted notions of rural schooling with the idea of the village college. In 1982 a handful of people in Hartland, Devon, set out to show that a tiny village secondary school was preferable for their children to a fifteen-mile-each-way daily bus journey.

Although the Burston school strike was the longest strike in history, since the alternative Strike School built by public subscription remained open until 1939, its story would have dropped out of public memory, even in the locality, but for the account of it by Reg Groves in his history of the farmworkers' union in 1949.¹ Bertram Edwards read the book in 1971 and felt ashamed that having been a member of the

National Union of Teachers for over twenty years, he had never even heard of the events at Burston. He took the train to Diss and walked there, following the route taken by Kitty and Tom Higdon when they arrived as village teachers in 1911. He interviewed twenty former pupils and saw the Strike School with its commemorative tablet telling the story: 'Mr T. G. Higdon and Mrs A. K. Higdon were unjustly dismissed from the Council School of this village on the 31st day of March, 1914. This building was erected by public subscription, to protest against the action of the Education Authorities, to provide a free school, to be a centre of Rural Democracy and a memorial to the villagers' fight for freedom.'

Edwards wrote his book on *The Burston School Strike*, published in 1973,² and this led to the television programme by surviving pupils, to the television play *The Burston Rebellion*³ and in 1983 to a revival of annual rallies by the trade union movement on Burston Green. The story of the Strike School has thus re-entered history through the media, though, with immense irony, by 1986 grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the original striking pupils were demonstrating in support of Burston County Primary School, threatened with closure.⁴

The story of the Higdons is a reminder of the absolute deference to the clergy and the farmers that was expected not only of village children but of their teachers too. Tom Higdon was the branch secretary of the Agricultural Labourers' Union — it was a frequent practice for the organisers not to be labourers because of the fear of victimisation. He was, like the pioneers of farm-workers' unions, Joseph Arch and George Edwards, a Primitive Methodist lay preacher, and the first of the new rector's grievances against the Higdons was that, like half the villagers, they attended the chapel and not the church. Then, at the parish council elections, Higdon organised the farm labourers to contest the election, something that had never happened before. 'The result was that all the old members of the council except one (who came bottom of the poll) were replaced by labourers or their representatives. Higdon himself came top.'⁵ The result was an astonishing campaign of vilification against the Higdons, leading to their dismissal by the county education authority on the recommendation of the board of managers. Then the children took the affair into their hands. Emily Wilby, one of the pupils, wrote at the time:

We came on strike on April 1st 1914. We came on strike because our governess and master were dismissed from the council school unjustly. The parson got two Barnardo children to say that our governess had caned them and slapped their faces, but we all knew she did not . . . Governess did not know we were going on strike. She brought us all some Easter eggs and oranges the last day we were at the council school. Violet Potter brought a paper to school with all our

names on it, and all who were going on strike had to put a cross against their name. Out of seventy-two children, sixty-six came out on strike . . . The next morning the sixty-six children lined up on the Crossways. We all had cards round our necks and paper trimmings. We marched past the Council school . . . Mrs Boulton, the lady at the Post Office, gave us some lemonade and sweets and nuts. She also gave us a large banner and several flags . . . Mr Starr, the Attendance Officer, sent our mothers a paper saying if they did not send their children to school they would be summonsed, but our mothers did not care about the papers; some put them on sticks and waved them . . . One day a policeman went round to twenty houses with summonses because we had not been to school . . . at Court the fine was half-a-crown each . . . The next day our mothers thought we might begin school on the Common while it was fine weather. We had school on the Common a little while, then we went into the very cottage that the Barnardo children had lived in for a year and a half. Our mothers lent stools, tables, chairs etc. Mr Ambrose Sandy said we could have his (carpenter's) shop for a strike school. Sam Sandy came and whitewashed it out and mended the windows. He put a ladder up so that we could go upstairs. Our mothers were soon summonsed again . . . Our parents did not have to pay a penny of the fine. It was all collected on the Green and in the streets.⁶

The Labour and trade union movements subscribed to the building of the new Strike School, which remained open until Tom Higdon's death at the beginning of the Second World War. He saw the struggle that had been thrust upon the pupils and teachers as epitomising 'the whole rural problem of the land and the labourer'.

If Burston was battling for rural democracy from below, Henry Morris engaged in it from above. He was a man of humble origins (which he concealed) and aristocratic tastes. Having been a 'temporary gentleman' as an officer in the First World War, he was appointed assistant to the chief education officer of Cambridgeshire in 1921. In the following year the chief died and Morris replaced him. He stayed until 1954, never dreaming of applying for 'better' jobs with larger authorities, spiralling up the hierarchy of educational administration. For Cambridgeshire (which did not then include the city) was a small, poor and backward county educationally, with low wages, antiquated village schools and a falling population.

At Christmas 1924 every county councillor received a beautifully printed pamphlet produced at Morris's own expense by the University Press. It was called *The Village College* and set out his plan for changing the whole nature of rural education, full of resounding phrases.

If rural England is to have the education it needs and the social and recreational life it deserves, more is required than the reorganisation of the elementary school system . . . There must be a grouping and co-ordination of all the educational and social agencies which now exist in isolation in the countryside

. . . The possibility of bringing together all the various educational and social services would find a habitation within the village college . . . We must do away with the insulated school. We must associate with education all those activities which go to make the full life. This is as important for the teaching of the young as it is for the teachers themselves . . . It is only in a world where education is confined to infants and adolescents that the teacher is inclined to become a pundit or a tyrant.⁷

Morris's memorandum anticipated a whole range of subsequent innovations and policies: the separation of junior and senior schools, the concept of education as a life-long experience, the whole philosophy of community schools and colleges subsequently developed by his disciples in the post-war years. Education was to be the means of rebuilding rural life. He even foresaw that, 'As we may not always remain predominantly an industrial country, it is necessary that the problem of the reconstruction of the village should be dealt with in good time'.⁸

Morris set about cajoling and bullying his county council into adopting his plan, getting additional sums from trusts and charities and persuading influential friends to donate their expertise. Sawston Village College was opened in 1930, followed by Bottisham, Linton and then Impington (designed by Gropius and Maxwell Fry and regarded as a landmark in modern architecture). The person in charge was called the Warden, to symbolise the fact that he or she was not the head of a school but the administrator of a resource for the whole community.

The colleges multiplied in the post-war years, but when Morris's biographer Harry Rée toured Cambridgeshire, he found that many colleges, and many people connected with them, ' . . . have stood still, and in some cases turned their backs on the hopes and ideals of the originator'. It made him reflect that, 'Simply to call a school a village college, or to change the name of a school to community school, is only slightly less effective than to tack a couple of squash courts and a public swimming school onto an existing school, and to think that community education will result. Nor is it enough to provide an adult tutor to organise evening classes in the school buildings. This makes little impact on the education of children in the school, and equally little on community development outside.'⁹

Times have changed. Harry Rée was alarmed at the halving of the numbers of 'community tutors', for 'The suspicion grows that, although at one time the landowner councillors supported Morris and community education wholeheartedly, the present generation of conservatives look upon community education with strong disfavour, because it is said to promote dangerous political and educational policies'. They have changed in another sense. Morris was an evangelist

of high culture and would simply have been shocked at the sight of village punks with multicoloured hair propping up the bar at the weekly disco. Yet it might be that one of the most important current services that some colleges could perform today is to provide a late-night café serving the needs of teenagers, simply as somewhere to meet. One or two of them do just this.

Institutions are not changeless. Morris claimed in 1924 that, 'The village college would not outlive its function, for the main reason that it would not be committed irrevocably to any intellectual or social dogma or to any sectional point of view. Intellectually it might be one of the freest of our English institutions.'

One of the Cambridgeshire village college wardens was Philip Toogood, who then moved to become head of Madeley Court Community School, Telford, resigning in protest against the policy of the local education authority. His conclusion after many years of teaching is that, 'The justification for "school" in its present form no longer exists. There is now no reason to take children into a large inhuman centre for 7 hours a day, 40 weeks a year, to be looked after and institutionalised by kindly teachers — "parent substitutes". We are depriving the community of its youth. There is another way. It is in community education. There is a need now to restore to the local community the children who are being stolen into daily containment in the classroom. We *need* the school-in-the-community.'¹⁰

Philip Toogood has now found his niche, teaching part-time at a school which has the ambition of becoming a model for education in rural areas, a small school rooted in the community. This is 'the Small School' at Hartland in North Devon.

There have been a number of ventures by rural parents disappointed by the closure of schools to set up their own. In May 1938 the inspectors reported on Michaelstowe School near Camelford, Cornwall: 'This happy little country school is attended by twenty-one children, seven of whom belong to one family. It has a charming homely atmosphere. The headmistress is devoted to her work and the children repay her interest in them as individuals with ready co-operation and eagerness to learn. They evidently enjoy coming to school. The different groups in which ages range from four to thirteen years are managed with resourcefulness that keeps all interested and busily engaged and ensures steady and good progress.'¹¹ Everybody's mental picture of the village school! But forty years later the authority closed it and put the building up for auction. An unemployed teacher bought the building for £14,000 and, after incredible difficulties over repairs and drainage, re-opened it in 1981. There was an immense local fund-raising activity, but the venture did not survive. Another Cornish

initiative of the same kind, Trevoy School near Launceston, has kept alive.

The Small School at Hartland is different from the others. It is a *secondary* school, started in 1983 by Satish Kumar, whose son was leaving the village primary school and would be faced with a daily thirty-mile round trip to the 1,800-pupil Bideford Comprehensive School. (Hartland's secondary school had closed twenty-five years earlier.) Other parents and pupils found Bideford an unattractive proposition too. A disused Methodist chapel was bought by selling shares in the building itself. By 1985 it was reported that,

In the past two years the Small School has raised a total of £80,000 for repairs, new buildings, equipment and teachers' pay. The fees are £300 a year. This is a lot for parents who are mostly agricultural workers, but payments can be made in kind — by providing food for school meals, for example, or fuel for heating, or by providing help of some practical kind. Unemployed parents can send their children free. The community is not an affluent one, but evidently a number of parents found paying for the unknown quantity of the Small School an attractive alternative to the free but distant and impersonal comprehensive. The school started with nine pupils, which was about half the number of leavers from the primary school that year. There are now eighteen pupils, and the intake of five years' primary school leavers should bring them to 40 or so.¹²

As I write, there are twenty-five pupils, aged from eleven to sixteen. The school is not meant to evolve into an independent fee-paying school. It is being monitored by Exeter University Department of Education with the aim of becoming adopted by the county council. The head teacher says, 'The starting point for the Small School is the children and their parents. We do not really choose them. They choose us. We have said that we will take any child who lives in Hartland and refuse others only on the ground of distance. Of course space may soon be a problem but still geographical criteria will prevail. They will have to if we intend to be seen as the secondary school of the village. The curriculum grows out of the needs of the children and the concerns of their parents.'¹³

What links the Burston Strike School, the concept of the Village College and the Small School of Hartland is the belief that rural education can be a creative adventure rather than an administrative headache.

1. Reg Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle: the History of the Farmworkers' Union* (Porcupine Press, 1949)
2. Bertram Edwards, *The Burston School Strike* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1974)
3. See Betka Zamyska, *The Burston Rebellion* (BBC Ariel Books, 1985) and T. G. Higdon, *The Burston Rebellion* (republished 1984 by Trustees of the

4. *The Times Educational Supplement*, 25 April 1986
5. Alun Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk 1870-1923* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975)
6. Emily Wilby, 'Our School Strike', quoted in Bertram Edwards, op.cit.
7. Henry Morris, *The Village College: Being a Memorandum on the Provision of Educational and Social Facilities for the Countryside* (Cambridge University Press, 1924), reprinted in Harry Rée (ed.), *The Henry Morris Collection* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) and in Harry Rée, *Educator Extraordinary. The Life and Achievement of Henry Morris 1889-1961* (Peter Owen, 1985)
8. Ibid.
9. Harry Rée, 'A Case of Arrested Development?', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 17 October 1980
10. Philip Toogood, *The Head's Tale* (Dialogue Publications, 1984)
11. Jon Wyand, *Village Schools: A Future for the Past?* (Evans, 1980)
12. Richard Boston in *The Guardian*, 28 August 1984
13. Colin Hodgetts, 'Reflections on The Small School of Hartland', *Resurgence*, September/October 1986

3. Morris as Anarchist Educator

I don't want to snatch Morris's bones from their Marxist tomb and re-inter them in an anarchist one; merely to suggest that his views on education belong in an anarchist tradition stretching from Godwin, Kropotkin and their disciples down to Paul Goodman in our own time. He was, in the language of today, a de-schooler, totally rejecting the school system in Ivan Illich's definition as the 'age-specific, teacher-related process requiring full-time attendance at an obligatory curriculum'.

He himself had been 'born well enough off to be sent to a school where I was taught — nothing, but learned archaeology and romance on the Wiltshire downs'. He did not see the institution of compulsory education as a harbinger of social change. If he was ever inside a Board School he was 'much depressed by the mechanical drill that was too obviously being applied there to all the varying capacities and moods', and was only consoled by the reflection that 'even our mechanical school system cannot crush out a natural bent towards literature (with all the pleasures of thought and imagination which that word means) yet certainly its dull round will hardly implant such a taste in anyone's mind . . .'

Morris's deepest convictions on the inutility of schooling were expressed in *News from Nowhere*. His time traveller, walking across Kensington Gardens, sees groups of children camping, and his guide explains that 'they often make up parties, and come to play in the

woods for weeks together in summer-time, living in tents, as you see. We rather encourage them to it; they learn to do things for themselves, and get to notice the wild creatures'. The guide doesn't understand the words school and education, and rather contemptuously the visitor explains that education means a system of teaching young people.

'Why not old people also?' said he with a twinkle in his eye. 'But', he went on, 'I can assure you our children learn, whether they go through a "system of teaching" or not. Why, you will not find one of these children about here, boy or girl, who cannot swim, and every one of them has been used to tumbling about on the little forest ponies — there's one of them now! They all of them know how to cook; the bigger lads can mow; many can thatch and do odd jobs at carpentering; or they know how to keep shop. I can tell you they know plenty of things.'

The visitor asks about mental education, and the reply is

'perhaps you have not learned to do these things I have been aspeaking about: and if that is the case, don't you run away with the idea that it doesn't take some skill to do them, and doesn't give plenty of work for one's mind: you would change your opinion if you saw a Dorsetshire lad thatching, for instance. But, however, I understand you to be speaking of book-learning; and as to that, it is a simple affair. Most children, seeing books lying about, manage to read by the time they are four years old; though I am told it has not always been so. As to writing, we do not encourage them to scrawl too early (though scrawl a little they will) because it gets them into a habit of ugly writing, and what's the use of a lot of ugly writing being done, when rough printing can be done so easily . . .? For languages, overseas visitors bring their children "and the little ones get together and rub their speech into one another". As to history or mathematics, those who have a taste to learn do so. Information lies ready to each one's hand when his own inclinations impel him to seek it, but it is no use forcing people's tastes.' 'Yes', said I, 'but suppose the child, youth, man, never wants the information, never grows in the direction you might hope him to do; suppose for instance, he objects to learning arithmetic or mathematics; you can't force him when he is grown; can't you force him while he is growing, and oughtn't you to do so?' 'Well', said he, 'were you forced to learn arithmetic and mathematics?' 'A little', said I. 'And how old are you now?' 'Say fifty-six', said I. 'And how much arithmetic and mathematics do you know now?' quoth the old man, smiling rather mockingly. Said I: 'None whatever, I am sorry to say'.

Morris himself was a most erudite man who revered learning as much as he despised schooling. He mastered a dozen crafts himself and instituted the Arts and Crafts tradition of training which the post-war reforms of art education had done their best to destroy. In the Morris firm, as E. P. Thompson relates, 'experienced craftsmen were engaged from the beginning, who taught Morris their business, and worked side by side with him in all experiments. When apprentices were taken on, a point was made of not seeking out the exceptionally gifted and

outstanding lad; it was taken for granted that any intelligent lad had the makings of an artist and a craftsman in him.'

Talking of an item he showed at the 1893 Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Morris proudly said

The people who made it — and this is by far the most interesting thing about it — are boys, at least they are grown up by this time — entirely trained in our own shop. It is really freehand work, remember, not slavishly copying a pattern . . . and they came to us with no knowledge of drawing whatever, and have learnt every single thing under our training. And most beautifully they have done it!

The same kind of claim could be made by all the Arts and Crafts pioneers, Gimson and the Barnsleys in chair-making or Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew in pottery. Leach's advice to anyone contemplating sharing a workshop with others, was to avoid 'self-conscious art students' and to 'choose untrained local labour' since 'likely boys learn the job quickly, enjoy themselves, and readily form a permanent team . . .' It was the message too, of the Barnstaple picture-framer's son, William Richard Lethaby, greatest of the Arts and Crafts teachers. He declared that 'those who believe in the condensed ignorance called Higher Education have succeeded with great difficulty in at last creating a dislike for that greatest of blessings, work'.

An account by Esther Wood of the early days of Lethaby's Central School of Arts and Crafts notes that 'Some curious varieties of personality and character may be seen in almost every room. Young and middle-aged men, strong manual labourers, refined and scholarly-looking craftsmen, quiet, earnest girls and smart little lads scarcely out of their fourth standard, are gathered together round the tables and desks or thinking out their designs plodding steadily on at some set task.'

Is there a school or college in this country today to which this eighty-year-old description could apply? Morris's educational ideal has been abandoned, quite deliberately, by the education industry in which we all have an enormous vested interest, disguised with phrases like 'the balanced curriculum' and 'academic rigour'. His deflationary criticism remains.

4. What is Going to Happen Yesterday?

It must be a sign of the demoralisation of political life in Britain that we hear scarcely a whisper of public concern about the paradox that the present Government, elected with rhetoric about freeing the people

from the dead hand of the state and its bureaucracy, is the first for a century to seek to impose a national curriculum on schools. History, more than almost any other subject, is vulnerable.

British educators used to smile at the alleged centralisation of education in France, and would tell us the tale (which was never true) that the Minister, in Paris, could look at his watch and say what every French child was learning at that minute. Or they could point to the grotesque version of history inserted into the German national curriculum by the National Socialist Party, so that one of the unexpected tasks of the Allied Control Commission in 1945 was to write new textbooks.

Think of the current dilemmas of history teachers in the Soviet Union. Their textbooks follow a national curriculum, and an old Russian joke asks 'Who can tell what is going to happen yesterday?' Last year's school-leaving exam in history had to be cancelled because, with the welcome arrival of *glasnost* and the message from above that the official version of the Soviet past consists of distortions, omissions and lies, new school histories have still to be written. They can't yet be written because the amount of historical truth it is permissible to teach keeps expanding.

Long may it go on expanding! My fear about Mr Baker's national curriculum is that it will contract the range of approaches to be found in school today.

You may think it absurd of me to suggest that his attitude to a national curriculum for history can be compared with that in other benighted countries beyond the seas. My response is that he is setting a very dangerous precedent (unforgivable, I would say, since he is a historian). He and his immediate predecessor, Lord Joseph, have the distinction of being the first holders of his office, which goes back a long time under various designations, to seek to tell history teachers what to teach.

Mr Baker's guidelines to his working group are expressed in suitably coded language which does not conceal the intention that the national curriculum should prescribe heritage history. This is appropriately symbolised by the appointment of its chairman, Commander M. Saunders Watson, chairman of the Heritage Education Trust, photographed in *The Times Educational Supplement* against the background of his ancestral home, said to date from the Norman Conquest. Sure enough, Mr Baker explains that 'the programmes of study should have at the core, the history of Britain, the record of its past and, in particular, its political, constitutional and cultural heritage'.

Decode this unobjectionable statement, as though you were an East

European historian, anxious to learn what was in and what was out, and you will find two significant omissions. The first is social history and the second is world history.

Now I've always assumed that the battle for the first of these was over and done with generations ago. I mean this literally, as my school life was back in the dark ages of 1929-1939. I was reared (at Gearies Junior Elementary School, Ilford, Essex) on the Piers Plowman Junior History books. These were admirable texts and there is not much about them that I, after a lifetime of concern with social history, would want to update. Much later in life I could recognise the sources drawn upon for key topics like the enclosures and the agricultural revolution (Slater, the Hammonds, Hasbach etc.) and of course I witnessed the rise of a revisionist approach (Chambers, Mingay, Yelling), which by now has, among the academics, been overtaken by a re-assertion of the conclusions I absorbed in the primary school (Overton, Turner, Snell).

In one of the few areas I actually know about, my primary teaching was excellent and well-founded. It's a pity that I switched off learning when I got to Ilford County High School, because my history teacher there was George W. Southgate. The only thing I can remember him saying to me was the justified remark, 'You are rather a lout, Ward, aren't you?'

Naturally today I relish this comment because Southgate was no fool. He was the author of half a dozen widely-used textbooks, continually reissued from 1930 until the late 1950s. His *Text Book of Modern English History* precisely fits Mr Baker's patriotic guidelines, but if you look in the archive collection of school books at the Institute of Education and compare editions, you can see him continually moving towards more of a social history approach. Already in 1936, he was explaining that 'the abridgement of military history has not been undertaken from any desire to belittle the importance of British achievements in this direction, but from a conviction that other aspects of modern history have not always received adequate recognition'. He went on to write his *European History* and his *English Economic History*, still a useful book. I wish I had met this worthy man at an age when I was ready to appreciate him.

My uneasy feeling is that successive Ministers, like Messrs Joseph and Baker, while evidently better students than me, were, in the private sector of education, less fortunate, since they grew up to regard ordinary social facts about our past as some kind of Marxist indoctrination. Social history reveals the actual experience of the vast majority of the population of these islands in the past. It is an essential key to the present. Heritage history is an evocation of the experience of a tiny and powerful minority, and is in fact a branch of the tourist trade, the stately homes business and the National Trust.

Nostalgia is big money, and a concept of the past built upon order, hierarchy and deference is a natural winner when it comes to bringing in the dollars, yen and deutschmarks. It is not a useful vehicle for giving children a means of understanding how we came to be where we are.

More serious than the implied rebuke to teachers for the emphasis they have given to social history is the coded message to all those people who in the past 15 years or so have been developing courses in World History as a GCE option, and have recently been busy in adapting them to GCSE requirements. There are urgent utilitarian reasons for spurring them on, rather than warning them off.

One explanation of the distressing fact that this country is riddled with an ingrained racial prejudice and xenophobia is that an overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens reached adulthood with an Anglocentric view of life which fails to recognise other peoples as truly human. Didn't we all grow up knowing that 'the Wogs begin at Calais'? Generations of the British were reared on the belief that the ridiculous inhabitants of other lands were Froggies, Krauts, Eyties and Dagoes, and it is a tribute to our imperial past that people from faraway countries once conquered by British armies were and are known to the descendants of their subjugators by names that it would embarrass this journal to print. (Of course the commanders of those armies had no hesitation in describing their own soldiers and sailors as 'the scum of the earth').

Contempt for outsiders is bred into the British psyche, even when those sub-humans happen to be British subjects. Does Mr Baker want a list of the words used by British soldiers today for the inhabitants of Northern Ireland, quite regardless of their sectarian loyalties? He must have been told that the residents of the Falkland Islands were known to their liberators as Bunnies, dim little creatures, hopping around in the scrub.

It would be absurdly ambitious for any school subject to be expected to undo the legacy of our empire-building past, but it's a worthy and overdue aspiration. For some people it is the most important justification for the study of the history of other nations in the first place. For others it is vital since there are many schools where the family history of a majority of pupils has no allegiance to the British past. For some it can be seen as an economic necessity as part of this country's integration into Europe. For many more it is the main route to comprehending the real issues behind the policies of the great powers in the world today.

Personally, I was delighted to learn that in 1988, the first year of GCSE, more than one third of all history entrants (about 90,000 candidates) were in fact entered for World History syllabuses.

We certainly exaggerate the role of history or any other school subject in the life and learning of any pupil. The important thing is that every school should make its own choices so as to take advantage of the experience, wisdom, and above all the enthusiasms, of any particular teacher. This is as true for the secondary fourth and fifth years as for the infant class.

Mr Baker wants teachers to 'recognise and develop an awareness of the impact of classical civilisations'. I would like to assume these include classical China and the Incas. But if he means Greece and Rome, it is important to remember that the justification given by classical scholars for their subject is that it enables us to transfer the wisdom gained to any historical situation. Precisely the value of examining the history of, say, Denmark or Tanzania.

It is well known that entrants to the teaching profession tend to repeat in their practice, not what they learned in teacher-training, but the chance experience of their own schooling. I can't help thinking that Mr Baker, with the awesome authority of the boss of the education industry in a centralised state, is simply abusing his office in demanding that all schools and all teachers should be obliged to teach the way he was taught. History has taught him nothing.

5. Towards a Poor School

The technological society has deliberately cultivated a careless, consumptive, egoistic and slovenly human being. The frugal society . . . must start with redirecting our attitudes and re-educating our values.

Henryk Skolimowski 'The Earth and its Friends'
BBC Radio 3, 26th November 1976

Perhaps the best-known contribution made by John Dewey to the endless debate on education was his remark that 'what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children'. But perhaps the best and wisest of parents are the very ones who are least able to specify their hopes in this respect, and the more they perceive and acknowledge the uniqueness of each child, the less likely would be their hopes for any particular child to have any general relevance. Unless, that is, they take refuge in generalities of universal application. They might want their child to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be autonomous, or to 'make a contribution'. But who doesn't? What guide to individual or collective action could we derive from such aspirations?

I have a friend, a Paraguayan anarchist, whose children were named according to parental convictions. Regardless of sex or custom, the first

was named Liberty, the second was called Equality, and the third was named Fraternity. (If you are wondering what the fourth child of the family was called, I have to tell you that he was called Ché.) It is hard to guess which of the family would grow up most embarrassed by this imposition of ideology on nomenclature, and I have no idea whether he sought for each child an education compatible with the slogans with which he labelled his offspring. He would be in trouble if he did, because the resounding catch-phrases we have inherited from the eighteenth century may go together marvellously on French postage stamps, but do they go together in life, or in educational policy making? Dr Ronald Sampson of Bristol recently gave an address with the title 'The choice between inequality and freedom in education' and that title at least draws attention to one of our most agonising and unresolved educational dilemmas.

For it often seems to me that people's social and political attitudes are determined, not on the conventional left-right spectrum, but on the relative values they place on at least the first two characters in this holy trinity. There is a quite different continuum which shapes their approaches to the politics of education as to everything else: that between authoritarians and libertarians. In terms of the ordinary crudities of party politics, you can, for example, place our representatives in either of the main parties on this continuum, and you might very well find that in one of those two parties the egalitarians are always on the back benches, while in the other the libertarians are usually to be found there. In the politics of education in Britain, people's devotion to one or other of these principles leads them into some very sterile posturing, and it often lays them open to uncomfortable charges of hypocrisy since sometimes what they want for their own children is something other than what they want for all the community's children.

The pathos of the battle for equality in education is that it revolves around the principle of the quality of opportunity to be unequal. The last word on this particular issue was said many years ago in a deceptively modest little book, disguised as a satire, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, by Michael Young. This book looks back from the twenty-first century at our own day as the period when 'two contradictory principles for legitimising power were struggling for mastery — the principle of kinship and the principle of merit'. Kinship implies that you are the child of your parents and consequently have access to the opportunities they can provide. In Michael Young's satire, Merit wins in the end, with the perfection of intelligence testing, and consequently with earlier and earlier selection a new, non-self-perpetuating elite is formed, consisting of the 'five per cent of the

population who know what five per cent means'. The top jobs go to the top people, and Payment by Merit (M equals IQ plus $Effort$) widens the gap between top and bottom people. The people at the bottom not only are treated as inferior, they *know* they *are* inferior. But to select the few is to reject the many, and in the meritocratic society new tensions arise. By the end of the twentieth century, although the new working class no longer includes people of outstanding intellectual capacity (since they have all been creamed off by meritocratic selection), a populist movement arises, consisting of dissident intellectuals, mainly women, allied with the disruptive proletariat, declaring in the Chelsea Manifesto of the year 2000 their belief in the classless society.

Needless to say, the manifesto cuts no ice with the meritocrats of the year 2000, though it becomes a rallying point in the bitter insurrection in 2033.

The Chelsea Manifesto declared that

The classless society would be one which both possessed and acted upon plural values. Were we to evaluate people not according to their intelligence and their education, their occupation and their power, but according to their sympathy and generosity, there could be no classes. Who would be able to say that the scientist was superior to the porter with admirable qualities as a father, and the civil servant with unusual skill at gaining prizes superior to the lorry driver with unusual skill at growing roses? The classless society would also be the tolerant society, in which individual differences were actually encouraged as well as passively tolerated, in which full meaning was at last given to the dignity of man. Every human being would then have equal opportunity, not to rise up in the world in the light of any mathematical measure, but to develop his own special capacities for leading a rich life.

Well, my own experience is that the same people who would give an enthusiastic ideological assent to the propositions of the Chelsea Manifesto complain most bitterly when they discover that their children can earn more working for the district council's cleansing department than they can in the lower ranks of professional employment; yet in the strike of toolroom workers at British Leyland in February 1977 they would bitterly criticise the strikers who asserted that with their years of training and immense skill they would only earn the same as foremen of the lavatory cleaners. Other people's defence of pay differentials is always marked by sordid self-interest: our own is always above reproach. Education is not a path to social equality.

What do we say about liberty, the first of the holy trinity? As a political issue this is construed as parental freedom of choice in schooling for their children. As an educational issue it means, among a great many other things, the absence of coercion of the child: the goods are displayed in the educational supermarket and the customer selects

or rejects. I am afraid that, with the exception of a few heroes, known by name to most of us, we are as guilty of hypocrisy in the name of this great abstraction as we are in the name of equality. In the publicly provided education system we have a book of martyrs to make the point, among them Mr Duane, Mr MacKenzie, and Mr Ellis. In the privately provided sector we know how, at some stage in adolescence, parental interest in the sacred freedom of the child diminishes until the child is removed suddenly to attend a cramming establishment to achieve whatever educational qualifications are necessary to keep open the doors to a growing number of adult careers.

Martin Buber, looking into the candid eyes of a rebellious pupil, remarked, 'I love freedom, but I don't believe in it'. His remark epitomises the position of the modern progressive parents. They do love freedom so long as it does not interfere with the chances of their children in the occupational status race. It is nothing to do with the education system or with the philosophy of education, but it is a fact that in most high-status jobs the qualifications for entry as well as the length of training have been raised and extended to a ludicrous extent in order to up-grade that occupation. I need only to mention one occupation, that with which I am most familiar, the profession of architecture. To be accepted for professional training involves at the outset, in terms of the English education system, three O levels and two A levels, preferably in approved subjects, followed by six years of professional training, after which the successful aspirant finds himself preparing schedules of doors and windows for some building in the design of which he has had no hand. Now within living memory — and I think you will probably agree that architecture has been of an aesthetically and technically higher standard within the lifespan of some living people — it was totally different. Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, confided to Sir Edward Lutyens that he spent a term at the Architectural Association in London, learning his trade. 'A term', said Lutyens, horrified. 'My dear fellow, it took me three weeks.' Was Lutyens a better or worse architect than the people who by a restrictive Act of Parliament are today exclusively entitled to call themselves architects? The first architect I ever worked for learned his trade at an age when we still by law imprison children in the compulsory education machine, drawing full-size details in chalk on brown paper on a barn floor here in Devon, for the building of Truro Cathedral for the man to whom he was apprenticed, Sir John Loughborough Pearson, RA. Go and look at the building and see if it leaks.

What I say of an occupation of which I have intimate knowledge applies, I am certain, to the whole range of employment. I deliberately mentioned various architectural knights to indicate that I am not

generalising from the experience of the riff-raff of the architectural profession who all, no doubt, have been through the academic treadmill. In this I am saying, as in so many other spheres of life, professionalism is a conspiracy against the laity, and if it is the reason why we have tacitly abandoned our educational belief in liberty, we need to be quite clear that it is these external circumstances rather than our educational ideas which have forced us into this position.

For motivated families, the belief in liberty has been modified by the requirements of occupational entrance, and this view has spread from the intelligentsia to the skilled working class. Anyone from a city like Glasgow, Newcastle, or Belfast will tell you how the educational qualifications for an engineering apprenticeship have risen to impossible heights within the last decade. You need two O levels to be employed with a car-washing machine in South Shields. No doubt you occasionally wash the cars lent by the Department of Education and Science to members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate so that they can get around to schools and tell teachers about the need to encourage children to aim at jobs in Britain's manufacturing industries.

Poor families and poor children interpret liberty in education quite differently. When the sociology graduate from Keele University drifts into teaching because we are overstocked with sociologists, and announces to his class that he wants them to feel free to express their own view of the situation, those amongst his conscripts who can actually hear his voice conclude with resignation that he does not really care about *them*. They conclude that in his opinion they are not worth teaching, and in their minds this is why he adopts his *laissez-faire* attitude. 'He didn't care whether we learned anything or not', is their verdict on the now-departed teacher. We have written off liberty as an educational goal.

What are we to say about fraternity as one of the aims of education? Fraternity is a concept even harder to define than the other two. Looking for a way of coming to terms with the idea, I am helped by a passage I read recently from André Malraux's book, *Lazare*. He says,

People think they understand Fraternity because they confuse it with human warmth. But in point of fact it is something much deeper, and it was belatedly, and almost apologetically, that it was added to the blazon of the Republic, whose flag at first bore only the words Liberty and Equality . . . The word Liberty has still the same ring to it, but Fraternity now stands only for a comical utopia in which nobody would ever have a bad character. Men believe that Fraternity was just tacked on, one Sunday, to feelings like Justice and Liberty. But it is not something that can be tacked on at will. It is something sacred, and it will elude us if we rob it of the irrational element that lies hidden within it. It is as mysterious as love, it has nothing to do with duty, or with

'right thinking'. Like love, and unlike liberty, it is a provisional sentiment, a state of grace.

I am sure that Malraux betrays some ignorance of the history of ideas in his own country in making these remarks, but that is not my concern. Can we get closer to the meaning of fraternity? Peter Kropotkin chose to define it as 'mutual aid', and in his book of that name he remarks that

to reduce animal sociability to *love* and *sympathy* means to reduce its generality and its importance, just as human ethics based on love and personal sympathy only have contributed to narrow the comprehension of the moral feeling as a whole. It is not love of my neighbour — whom I often do not know at all — which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague feeling or instinct of human solidarity and sociability which moves me It is a feeling infinitely wider than love or personal sympathy — an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, and which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life.

Well, he's right, isn't he? But when the sense of fraternity, or solidarity, is cultivated in educational institutions, it is frequently in opposition to the institution itself. Teachers know that the fraternity is that of the peer group and that the values it represents are profoundly anti-educational. 'I have the greatest difficulty in restraining them from tearing up each other's work at the end of the period', a hard-pressed secondary school teacher told me. Indeed, the closer we get to the classroom, the more diminished is our faith that the school can be the agent of social change or the vehicle for social justice. In many parts of the world there is still a hunger for schooling. Immense sacrifices are made by parents to achieve it for their children. They and their children would find unbelievable the size of education budgets in the schools of the Western world and the low esteem in which our schools were held by their scholars.

Thirteen years ago I wrote an article called 'A modest proposal for the repeal of the Education Act', and it was later blessed in the symposium 'Children's rights' as 'the first time anyone in England had dared to formulate out loud, even to a possibly friendly audience, what many of us had begun to hear as a question in our heads'. That reference to a friendly audience is important because it is easy to be misunderstood. At a time when teachers are joining the ranks of the unemployed, and when their unions as well as those of students are demonstrating under banners reading 'Fight the Education Cuts', am I

not grotesquely misjudging the present climate of education in putting on my banner the slogan 'Towards a Poor School'?

Let me declare my vested interest in having rich schools. I earn half my living producing a bulletin for teachers called *BEE, the Bulletin of Environmental Education*. It costs £4 a year — a modest sum — and in the last year the curve of circulation growth has completely flattened, as our renewal notices keep getting returned with sad little notes saying, 'We like it very much. It's marvellously useful, but we have had to cut our spending drastically.' I always say that they ought to ask their classes to subscribe their pennies, on the grounds that getting our bulletin will improve the quality of the teaching they are subjected to, but no one takes me seriously because it is a basic educational principle, isn't it, that no one should raise a penny for his own education?

I earn the other half of my income running a project for the Schools Council, which is the body concerned with curriculum development in England and Wales. Our project is called 'Art and the Built Environment'. Can you imagine anything more frivolous, while the nation's economy goes down the drain? Not only is our project one of those marginal frills, by the standards of the education industry, but its sponsor, the Schools Council, is itself vulnerable. The notorious Yellow Paper — the report to the Prime Minister from the Department of Education and Science, which was leaked to the press — described its performance as 'mediocre'. So I have a strong interest in an education system rich enough to support marginal activities — or activities which in the eyes of the system are marginal.

In what sense do I see virtues in the idea of a poor school? There is a Polish stage producer, Grotowski, who wrote a book called *Towards a Poor Theatre*, implying that the theatre would get a new lease of life if it shed all the expensive trimmings of the proscenium, elaborate lighting and equipment: all that audio-visual gear. (Actually there is a parallel in school here. Do any of our great drama teachers — people like Dorothy Heathcote in Newcastle, for example — have any use for the elaborate theatre equipment with which many schools encumbered themselves in the days when we thought we were rich?) Similarly there is a movement, as I understand it, in the Christian church, known as 'Towards a Poor Church', a kind of echo of all those religious reformers who have haunted that religion, with their bare feet and shaggy beards, urging their fellows to abandon all that expensive architecture and ecclesiastical silverware in order to free themselves to become receptive to the Message. (Actually there is a parallel in school here, too, with those earnest members of the Church of England who think that the only thing that can save the church is disestablishment — the severing of its official connection with the state. Many teachers of what we call

religious education in school believe that the only thing that can save the reputation of their subject — which in this country is the only school subject established by law and at the same time the only one we can opt our children out of — is the ending of its statutory existence as well as that of the common act of worship which is supposed to take place in morning assembly.)

Whatever we may say when we lobby against cuts in educational spending, let us reflect between friends on the implications of educational poverty. And before we get self-righteous about it, let us think about the implications of the Houghton pay award to teachers a couple of years ago. Cause and effect there may or may not be, but before Houghton, when teachers were complaining of their poverty, there was no job shortage, there was a teacher shortage. Many schools had a terrifying turnover of staff every term. In 1974 many urban schools were sending children home because there was no one to teach them. I read two items about the same city in the same newspaper on the same day that year, one of which reported the sending home of school-children for this reason while the other reported the rounding-up by the police of truants collected off the streets. After the Houghton pay award, the huge staff turnover stopped: the oldest inhabitants of the city school became the staff once more instead of the fifth-year conscripts, and the supply of jobs dried up. As the schools became poorer, they became more stable as institutions.

The truth is that in the boom period, now over, education was oversold. Every additional bit of expenditure, every increase in student numbers at the upper and more expensive end of the system, every new development in educational technology, was a step towards some great social goal. But it has not delivered the goods. Professor A. H. Halsey, writing in *The Times Educational Supplement* (21 January 1977), remarks that

We live today under sentence of death by a thousand cuts (that is, of all things except the body of bureaucracy). In education the position is one of extreme relative deprivation, not only because of the financial background of a sudden halt to previously mounting largesse, but also, and more seriously, because of the collapse of *belief* in education either as the best investment for national production, or the great redistributor of chances to the traditionally disadvantaged.

Nor is this simply a British phenomenon. Fred M. Hechinger, the author of *Growing up in America*, also writing in *The Times Educational Supplement* (5 November 1976) says that, 'America is in headlong retreat from its commitment to education. Political confusion and economic uncertainty have shaken the people's faith in education as the key to financial and social success.' Among the people or trends which

he blames for this changed circumstance are the right-wing backlash and what he calls the 'destructive' influence of the deschoolers like Ivan Illich and the views of critics like Edgar Z. Friedenberg, John Holt, and Christopher Jencks. I think, on the contrary, that these people have had an immensely liberatory effect on our ideas about the way that the intelligentsia lapped up the deschooling literature of a few years ago — the works of Paul Goodman, Everett Reimer, and Ivan Illich — but when, at the same time, the schools were sending home pupils for lack of teachers, they failed, with a few exceptions in the 'free school' movement, to make the connection. The community did not seize the occasion to use the wonderful resources of the city to provide an alternative education for the kids who were wandering the streets. They just waited for the statistics for such offences as shoplifting, vandalism, and taking-and-driving away, to rise — which they did. At the same time in the universities, well-educated Marxist lecturers were explaining how the education system in our society was simply a device for preparing us for our particular slot in capitalist industry. The government, as though anxious to prove them right, has set off a moral panic about the failure of the education system to meet the needs of industry.

My friend, Stan Cohen, wrote a book about the shaping of stereotypes in the public mind on such themes as 'mods', 'rockers', 'skinheads', and 'greasers', and gave it the title *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. I would extrapolate from that title the notion that whenever you have a moral panic you have to find a folk devil. We have a moral panic about the state of education, so we find a folk devil in all those soft options that the kids are fiddling around with instead of bashing away at literacy and numeracy and getting ready for the world of work. This particular moral panic was set off by a speech from the Prime Minister, but the process that Cohen calls media amplification has been at work, so that what he actually said was considerably less denunciatory than the accompanying chorus off-stage. When Mr Callaghan made his speech at Ruskin College, enormous attention was focused on the occasion. This was not because of the nice irony that that particular college was founded to give a liberal education to working men, thus ensuring that they would never go back to what Eric Gill called the 'subhuman condition of intellectual irresponsibility' to which we condemn industrial workers, but because of the leak to the press in the previous week of that Yellow Paper — the document prepared by the Department of Education and Science to brief the Prime Minister — which swiped away at all the sacred cows of education except, of course, the Department of Education and Science and Her Majesty's Inspectorate. I must say that I found nothing objectionable about the

Prime Minister's speech, but I cannot help feeling both cynicism and anger at the timing of this particular moral panic.

Is it because the government feels conscious that the rival party seems to be stealing its thunder in the public discussion of education? Or is it part of a smokescreen to divert attention from the fact that the cash is running out of the budgets of local education authorities? Well, never mind chaps, let's concentrate on the basics. It's back to 1870, the year of the Act of Parliament which made schooling free, universal, and compulsory, and also the year which marked the beginning of Britain's universal decline. 1870? Well, just ask an economic historian. Isn't the educational industry, in fact, just the latest scapegoat for the state of the British economy?

The Prime Minister in his Ruskin speech said that he wanted to open a national debate on education, and remarked that 'the debate that I was seeking has got off to a flying start even before I was able to say anything'. Too true. I found it hilarious to learn from *The Guardian* on 14 October 1976 — the week *before* Mr Callaghan's speech — that 'a multi-million pound emergency programme to monitor standards in primary and secondary schools has been started by the DES', just at the time when the schools themselves are being obliged to make multi-million pound cuts in their own spending, and just when education committees are solemnly debating reducing the calorific value of school meals as well as raising the price of them. Professor Halsey was absolutely right in suggesting that the last thing that would be cut was the educational bureaucracy. I read that week in the Sunday papers that the Welsh Secretary, Mr John Morris, has also pre-empted the result of the debate by giving 'clear uncompromising guidance . . . circulated to every head teacher in the Principality', saying that 'The priority must be tilted towards the engineer, the scientist and the mathematician. And in addition our children must be taught the languages of Europe to such a degree of proficiency that they can sell and service our products in the countries of our trading partners . . .'

I am deeply suspicious of this talk. I do not believe that the roots of or the cure for our chronic economic malaise are to be found in the education system and, if it is true that the young do not like the industrial jobs, at either a shop-floor or a graduate level (and it is symptomatic of the superficial nature of the debate that it fails to distinguish between the two), I think it ironical that instead of wanting to change the nature of industrial work, of wanting to make it an adventure instead of a penance, we should want to change the nature of the young. Actually it is not even true that we are short of graduate engineers and we are certainly not short of shop-floor fodder.

There must be many teachers who went through the boom years

without even knowing they were in them: they found themselves committed to a policy of make-do-and-mend as usual, and never got their hands on the money because it was being spent somewhere else. No one here who is a teacher will deny my assertion that the characteristic situation is for the teacher to say all year that he would like this or that set of books or piece of equipment, and be told that there was no cash, while three days before the end of the financial year the head of the department would say, 'You've got four hundred pounds to spend by the end of the week. Let me know what to order before the end of the afternoon because otherwise we'll lose the money'. I was in a school the other day, in an Art and Design Department, where thousands of pounds were available to spend on machinery, but the art teacher had only £38 to lay out on paper, paint, and other expendables. He could have kilns but no clay. As an advocate of the use of the local environment in education, I have often come across the situation where the teacher can easily get an illuminated terrestrial globe to suspend from the ceiling, but found that it was not in order for him to buy a class set of street maps of the locality.

One of the ways in which hierarchical systems work is by withholding information on the budget. We see this at a national level where the Chancellor of the Exchequer has it all in his black box to reveal to a waiting nation on budget day. Secrecy is made into a fetish and politicians have been disgraced because of budget leaks. But should not the nation's budget be the subject of earnest discussion throughout the country for months before? It is the same with the education budget and the budget of the school itself. I am willing personally to join in the scramble for slices of the diminishing cake, but which group of supplicants, all shouting 'me too', do I join? This is what is happening at the ludicrously stage-managed regional conferences being held by the DES and the ministers around the country, where every kind of special and sectional interest is being given the opportunity to say 'me too'.

I would rather join a different campaign. My bit of graffiti would say 'Open the Books'. Just what is the school's budget, and how is it to be allocated? What subject interest is starved just because it does not use a lot of prestige equipment? Just what is the authority's budget and how much of that goes in administration? Just what is the nation's education budget and how much of it is spent by the DES on itself? A year ago, John Vaizey, in one of his provocative little contributions to the education press, asked, 'Do we really need the DES?'. Exactly what function, he asked, has the department, when the local authorities themselves have inspectors and subject advisers, and when we have a theoretically decentralised education system? Her Majesty's inspectors are always blandly telling us that they have no control over the

curriculum. If you took a conspiratorial view of politics you might think that the Yellow Paper is the department's attempt to assert, in the face of Lord Vaizey (who is, after all, one of our foremost authorities on the economics of education), that it *has* a function, or is going to make one for itself.

Some people will remember a frivolous little book called *Parkinson's Law*, whose author commented, among other things, that, as the Navy had fewer and fewer ships, the Admiralty had more and more employees. Much more recently there is the instance of the National Health Service, which is the largest single employer in Britain. In the ten years before its reorganisation, its staff increased by 65 per cent. Its medical staff, however, increased during this period by 21 per cent, and its domestic staff by 2 per cent. The truth is, unpalatable as it must be for those people who believe in government action and government funding for every task which society has to fulfil, that the governmental mechanism develops a momentum of its own: it secures and guarantees its own future. You will have seen photographs in the papers (e.g. *The Sunday Times*, 6 March 1977) of the new office blocks for the administrators and the old Nissen huts for the patients, and you will have read that the staff of the consultants, McKinsey's, who advised on the reorganisation of the Health Service two years ago, now believe that they gave the wrong advice. You may have heard on the radio Mr Tatton Brown, who was chief architect for the Department of Health from 1959 to 1971, reflecting that the advice he and his colleagues gave to the Regional Health Authorities was not the right advice on hospital design. As you know, the pundits of hospital organisation were advising the closing of those little local hospitals in favour of huge regional complexes like Addenbrooke's and Northwick Park. Now suddenly they have swung around to praising the local cottage hospital as being manageable, friendly, community-oriented, and economic. But the machine they set in motion is still condemning local hospitals to death. There is an exact parallel in school planning. A series of obsolete assumptions about the size of the sixth form generated the idea of the huge unmanageable comprehensive school, and the rationalising out of existence of small secondary schools is still in process, long after any teacher believes that there is anything to be gained from doing so, just as the war against selective secondary schools is still being fought long after we have given up the hope that the education system can be used to promote social justice.

The person who worships the state and thinks that any other mode of provision is a let-off for the state or a cop-out from the state, when faced by the politics of retrenchment, can only protest and wave his banner. There is, for example, in the world of preschool education a deep

ideological division between those who believe in the provision of day nurseries and nursery schools by local education authorities, on principle, and those who believe on principle in baby-minders and parent-organised playgroups. Every now and then there is a scandal about illicit baby-minding, but it was left to an outsider, Brian Jackson, to think up the idea of courses in baby-minding for unofficial baby-minders. Now, as part of its education cuts, one English county has decided, reluctantly, to close all its nursery schools. The customers are helpless. If the local community had developed its own unofficial network of provision for the under-5s, it would have been better off today.

I was walking through a country town the other day when I passed a building with that little-red-schoolhouse look and, sure enough, there was a stone let into the wall saying, 'These two classrooms were built by public subscription on the occasion of the coronation of King Edward VII, 1901'. Well, I am not enthusiastic about commemorating him or his descendants, but I do think that in education as in many other fields of life we have thrown away a huge fund of energy, goodwill, and popular involvement, in abandoning the principle of voluntary self-taxation to improve facilities, in the name of universal publicly provided facilities. Dependence on government means that we become powerless when some centralised decision-making system says, according to priorities which may be wise or foolish, that we are not going to get what we want through the system. The rediscovery of the voluntary ethic can happen quite quickly: I read earlier this year that parents from the Sussex villages of Ferring and Findon have offered to put up two prefabricated classrooms at Angmering Comprehensive School, because the extra classrooms have been axed by government spending cuts. The *Evening News* (7 January 1977) says that the council's schools committee has recommended that West Sussex County Council accepts the 'revolutionary' idea. As I have indicated, the idea is not all that revolutionary. In the poor world, it would be taken for granted. Illiterate poor parents in the shanty towns on the fringe of a Latin American city would take it for granted that they should build a primary school for their children. However, one of the cuts that Essex County Council has decided on is that no further swimming instruction or maintenance should be provided in pools run by parent-teacher associations. Now that really is a foolish gesture because it will deter other parent-teacher associations from providing swimming pools. The council should have leant over backwards to fulfil its part of the bargain, just to show how valuable it thought parent and teacher initiatives are.

In the situation of a 'no-growth' economy, which to my mind is our

situation today and which we are faced with in any conceivable future, there are certain priorities which are self-evident to me. I find, to my horror and amazement, that they are all totally revolutionary. My first priority is that we should put our money at the bottom end of education rather than at the top. Now this really would be a revolutionary change in the order of things. For the greater the sums of money that are poured into the education industries of the world, the smaller the proportion which benefits the people at the bottom of the educational, occupational, and social hierarchy. The universal education system turns out to be yet another way in which the poor are obliged to subsidise the rich. A decade ago, Everett Reimer found that the children of the poorest one tenth of the population of the United States cost the public in schooling \$2,500 each over a lifetime, while the children of the richest one tenth cost about £35,000. 'Assuming that one-third of this is private expenditure, the richest one-tenth still gets ten times as much of public funds for education as the poorest one-tenth.' In his suppressed UNESCO report of 1970, Michael Huberman reached the same conclusion for the majority of countries in the world. In Britain we spend twice as much on the secondary school life of a grammar school sixth former as on a secondary modern school leaver, while, if we include university expenditure, we spend as much on an undergraduate in one year as on a normal school child throughout his or her school life. The Fabian tract, *Labour and Inequality*, calculates that 'while the highest social group benefit seventeen times as much as the lowest group from the expenditure on universities, they only contribute five times as much revenue'. No wonder Everett Reimer calls schools an almost perfectly regressive form of taxation. In the scramble for dwindling public expenditure on education, you may be sure that the universities are going to be almost obscenely successful by comparison with the preschool education lobby.

In re-ordering our expenditure, I would invest heavily in preschool education, and in the infant and junior school. My aim would be the traditional, and currently approved one, that every child should be literate and numerate on leaving the junior school at 11. All right, it will take up to the age of 14 to achieve this for some children, but I want to assert that the compulsory prolongation of schooling beyond such an age is an affront to the freedom of the individual and has nothing to do with the aims of education, even though it has everything to do with the restrictive practices of the job market. I mentioned earlier the entry qualifications demanded by the architectural profession. A month ago the RIBA Council solemnly sat and discussed how to make it harder still — like demanding four A levels — so as to restrict entry still further. Do we have to wait until two A levels instead of two O levels

are needed to get a car-wash job in South Shields, or do we say enough is enough: this is not what we have teachers for?

I quoted earlier the brilliant satire, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, written by Michael Young in the 1950s. He was interviewed by one of the Sunday papers this year and explained why he feels that there is no future for secondary schools as we know them. He said,

I think secondary schools in their present form are doomed. They haven't yet managed to reflect the new kind of family. The father used to be the fount of authority. Today, that authority is greatly diminished partly because it's shared. Schools and universities borrowed authority from the authoritarian father and now that it's no longer there to be borrowed, children in secondary schools are not going to accept it. There has to be a reduction in the school-leaving age and a move over to half-time education. People will be learning at home, at the workplace and not forced into institutions which use a bogus authority.

Dr Young has the honesty and the poor taste to bring up the subject of the crisis of authority in the secondary school: a crisis that ensures that much of our expenditure on teachers and plant is wasted by attempting to teach people that they do not want to learn in a situation that they would rather be involved in. A poor school could not afford such waste and frustration of both teachers and taught. The school has become one of the instruments by which we exclude adolescents from real responsibilities and real functions in the life of our society. We have in the last year of secondary schooling pathetic attempts to give 'relevance' by providing 'work experience' courses aimed at acclimatising the young to the shock of going to work, or by providing courses in colleges of further education with such titles as 'Adjustment to Work', for the benefit of those unable or unwilling to hold down a job. The Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry have joined forces in backing a project for informing school-children about industry. Arthur Young, the headmaster of Northcliffe High School in Yorkshire, has for years been trying to find the right equation between learning and earning. He values the efforts of his pupils to earn money for themselves and has sought, within the narrowly prescribed limits of the law, to provide opportunities in and out of school for them to do so. He remarks of work experience projects that they

have never really got off the ground because of the legal, insurance and trade union problems that hedge them around. I have always thought that the schemes proposed were phoney — the most important aspect of work experience is being neglected completely — the wage at the end of the week.

Like Michael Young, Arthur Young sees an urgent need to change the relationships in the secondary school. Describing the efforts made

to provide actual cash-earning experiences for the most unlikely lads at his school, and the effect it has had on their attitudes to running their own lives, taking decisions, budgeting, fulfilling obligations, dealing with strangers, as well as such mundane things taken for granted by the middle-class child as using the telephone, he remarks,

We have to overcome the ridiculous idea that giving children the chance to earn money in school is somehow immoral . . . In the changing situation in education, pupil-teacher relationships and roles are the essence of much heart-searching and debate. We might do well to compare the differences in an earning-learning situation between master and apprentice and in the traditional school situation, captive scholars facing chalk and talk across the barrier of the teacher's desk. The comparison of relationships between newsagent and paperboy and between paperboy and schoolmaster might also be revealing.

The carelessly rich school, greedy for resources, has no need to be a productive institution. The poor school could not afford not to be a productive workshop and belongs to a society in which every workshop is an effective school. Don't think I am denigrating or down-grading the teacher. Far from it. A poor school could not afford to have its spending kept out of the individual teacher's hands. A poor school needs to know what it is paying for. In the 1960s educational spenders were swept away on a tide of commercially inspired expensive options like programmed learning and teaching machines, which are greeted with a cynical laugh in the 1970s. The expensive hardware of educational technology has become an irrelevancy and an embarrassment in this decade. I want the school to have a clearly stated published budget with a personal allocation to each member of the staff to spend as he or she sees fit. The teacher should be responsible for his own spending. He can do it wisely or foolishly on such materials and equipment as he desires. He can pool it with others, he can carry it over to next year.

The poor school would be self-catering. Why shouldn't the school meals service be in the hands of the pupils? Why shouldn't every secondary school include a day nursery run by the pupils? The poor school would be too valuable a community asset to be open for a small part of the day and for a restricted age band. Already we are feeling our way towards such an institution through the concept of the community school and the community college. When we consider how little the massive educational spending of the last decade did to enhance the lives or life-chances of the children in what is known as 'the lower quartile of the ability range' in secondary education, we may perhaps hope that the new age of frugality will lead us to devise appropriate educational experiences in a climate where we make fewer grandiose claims for what the school can do. By settling for less, we might even achieve more.

Nicolas Walter

Comment on *The Raven* 9

As someone who was involved in the editorial work on most of the issues of *The Raven* (1-7 and some of 9), I would reply to several of the points in the editorial in *The Raven* 9 if I thought that this would do any good; and I should at least like to make a few general comments.

It is wrong to suggest that the material in the previous issues of *The Raven* 'appeals in the main to academics and historians'; few of the articles were written by or had much appeal to academics, and history appeals to many people who are not historians. It may be true that 'anarchist history is of relative importance except when it provides us with valuable lessons for the future': but one of the valuable lessons of history is that its lessons don't emerge until the historical work is done. It may be true that 'detailed biographies' have 'even less importance'; but again the importance of an individual's life and work doesn't emerge until it is described in detail — and it is wrong to suggest that all the subjects of the biographical articles were considered as 'comrades' or that there was any kind of '*Raven* pantheon'.

It is wrong to suggest that *The Raven* has ever been anything other than 'a journal of anarchist theory and practice' and 'an anarchist propaganda magazine' at the same time; all its material has been concerned with anarchist theory and practice, and the best form of anarchist propaganda is surely to give all the facts as impartially as possible.

Finally, it is a pity that the editorial contains no hint of appreciation for the editorial work done on the first seven issues and much of the ninth issue of *The Raven*. We all regret that the frequency of publication and the quality of material were not satisfactory, but we hope that the work was not a complete waste of our time and trouble, even if it is now considered to be a waste of the funds of the Freedom Press. In wishing *The Raven* good luck for the future, I also wish that the 'Freedom Press group' had begun its new departure in a more positive style.

January 1990

George Woodcock

The Ending Century: Prospect and Retrospect

I am not a devotee of cyclic theories of history, but like many other people I cannot help being impressed by the fact that waves of rebellion, if not of revolution, should have broken out at such regular intervals during the greater part of the twentieth century. With a little chronological juggling one can see a regular 30-year pattern emerging, particularly if one treats the Bolshevik counter-revolution of October 1917 as the climax to a movement that began in the 1900s with the genuine popular uprisings of 1905 in Russia. Thence a leap of thirty years takes us to the 1930s, the Spanish civil war and the spread of militant labour unrest in the Americas and in the parts of western Europe not pre-empted by the dictators.

Superficially, at least, the radicalism of the 1960s seemed of a different kind from that of the 1900s and the 1930s. It was highly sectionalized, with little real cohesion, a revolt of minorities: privileged university-educated youth fighting over moral rather than material questions; women extending the militant struggle of the suffragettes in the 1900s; blacks and other racial minorities continuing the abolitionist struggle, now for greater genuine equality; native peoples demanding a return to the land and the political sovereignty that had been taken away from them by generations of exploiting whites; disabled people demanding above all their rights to the full dignity of human beings. Unlike the 1930s, when ideologies of the Left (Stalinism, Trotskyism, Social Democracy) faced ideologies of the Right (Nazism and fascism) in epic antagonism, there were no real unifying ideologies in the 1960s. The Old Left was as discredited as the Old Right in the eyes of the militant young and the militant minorities, and though the civil rights movement early in the decade, and opposition to the Vietnam war later on, gave rallying cries to the movement in North America, perhaps the only occasion when one had a real sense of unity of feeling and outlook was during the few weeks of 1968 (in some ways a predecessor of recent events in east European cities) when the students, the intellectuals and the workers of Paris came together in a struggle that temporarily paralysed the processes of De Gaulle's government. But even in 1968, as in Paris at the time of the Commune almost a century before, the unity of rebellious impulse and action was limited to a single place, for

the rural and small town majority of French people withdrew into their traditional shell of conservatism, and the days of the Paris struggle, when the black flag of anarchism flew over the Paris bourse, withered into a romantic memory, a splendid might-have-been.

There are of course important historic links between what happened in the 1900s, the 1930s, and the events in Eastern Europe with which the 1990s are beginning. The emergence of the Bolsheviks as a significant party during the 1905 'revolution' in Russia began the long and terrible process by which Marxism-Leninism was put to the test as a working socio-political programme and failed both in ideological terms and in practical terms of socio-economical arrangement. It offered bread and circuses at the price of freedom and delivered none of them.

The political rivalries of the 1930s, translated into the confrontation of totalitarian order and imperial powers led to World War II, and the situation in which the Bolsheviks could be both dictators and imperialists and, despite their own failure in Russia, seize control of eastern European countries from the Baltic states down to Albania, as well as China and, eventually, North Korea and the countries of Indochina. It was against this background of a world divided between old and new imperialisms — their conflict manifested and symbolized in the Vietnam war — that the radical movements of the 1960s emerged.

It would indeed be stretching history somewhat to claim that what happened in North America and western Europe during the 1960s had very much influence on recent events in eastern Europe and China, for the traditions of student rebellion that create the greatest similarities between the 1960s and the present go far back into the history of 19th century Europe. It would be a foolish piece of historicism to treat the present situation except in its own terms, and indeed what strikes one immediately are two basic differences between events now and events in the 1930s and the 1960s.

First, the rebellions which toppled governments from Warsaw down to Bucharest (and may well lead before long to the collapse of that in Beijing) were not 'revolutions' according to the Marxist-Leninist-Blanquist model, led by party elites intent on establishing a fictional dictatorship of the proletariat or any other elect class. Indeed, all the so-called revolutionaries were on the wrong side, discredited power brokers. The Eastern European insurrections, like the rising in Beijing of the population in support of the student militants, were upheavals without visible leaderships, and were as near as one might imagine to the first stages of a libertarian uprising as envisaged by Kropotkin and the other old anarchist theoreticians. A major difference from the

movements of the 1960s was that now it was no longer specially aggrieved sections of the population that were involved, but whole peoples, regardless of age, sex, or, as Rumania dramatically showed, racial background.

But mere rebellion, however widespread, and even the overthrow of authority are not enough, as anarchists have always argued. If new authoritarian structures are not to be imposed, the people must set about creating their own voluntary networks of mutual aid, and above all — as Kropotkin stressed in *The Conquest of Bread*, they must ensure that the revolution is fed by putting under the direct control of the people the production and distribution of food and other consumer goods.

So far as is evident up to the day I write, the leaders and the spokesmen of the largely ad hoc groups that have coalesced out of the popular revolt in the Communist countries have ignored these truths, even if they are aware of them.

It is all very well to preach, which is what I am starting to do. Anarchists have always tended to do that, shielded as they have been by the fact that anarchism is the one major political theory that has never been proved ineffective because it has never been tried out on any conclusively large scale. But one can ask where anarchists stood and what they have really done in the rebel decades of this century, and speculate on what they might do now.

In the series of Russian events that led up to the Bolshevik coup d'état in 1917 and the civil war that followed it, the anarchists played a scanty role, for though the two most famous anarchist theoreticians Bakunin and Kropotkin — were Russians, the movement flourished mainly in exile and in Russia was eclipsed early on both by the Social Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks alike) and even more by the populist Social Revolutionaries with their strong peasant base. It was only in the special circumstances of the civil war in the Ukraine that Nestor Makhno and his rebel army sustained for a few years a considerable area of libertarian communes, defending it against both the White and the Red armies.

By the 1930s anarchism had also been thoroughly repressed in Italy, where it had once been so active, and also in Germany, while in France it had lost ground to the communists, who had converted enough of the militant syndicalists from their anarchist allegiance to take control of the major labour union organization, the Confédération Générale du Travail. In Spain, however, the syndicalists had remained faithful to their libertarian traditions, and the CNT, the most numerous labour organization, was still controlled by the anarchist militants of the FAI. During the early stages of the civil war in Spain, Catalonia and large

areas of Andalusia were mainly controlled by the anarchists, and during this brief period the factories and public services of Barcelona and the other large Catalan towns were operated by the workers' syndicates, while in Andalusia and Valencia many villages turned themselves into agrarian free communes which a great deal of evidence suggests were successful within their limited area. It was perhaps too brief an experiment to be called a complete success; on the other hand, it did not fail from the inner defects of the system of free communism, since the village communes flourished until they were overwhelmed by Franco's advancing troops in Andalusia and elsewhere by the communist columns behind Republican lines, which were equipped by arms sent from Russia and denied to all non-Stalinist groups.

During the 1960s the role of anarchism was markedly different from what it had been in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Vestigial groups indeed remained — or revived in countries like Italy and France — that claimed to be the heirs of older movements, and quite impressive international conferences were held in places like Carrara and Venice, but in Spain itself, even after the dictatorship ended, no mass movement developed with the power and membership of the CNT in the past; a small, divided CNT did emerge, but appears to have spent far more time on internal disputes than on renewed industrial militancy.

But while the anarchist *movement* walked again into the middle of the present century as a tenuous ghost of its past — deprived of its mass following but still often clinging to the old mythology of dramatic revolutionary action — it was the *idea* of anarchism that re-emerged most notably and claimed attention. Bakunin appeared beside the 'young Marx' in the confused debates of the New Left, which — perhaps fortunately — never developed its own consistent ideology. Anarchist groups as such may not have made a great showing among the *groupuscules* of Paris 1968, but the whole student movement at that time was permeated with libertarian ideas, and the black flag at the Sorbonne had as legitimate a place as the red flag in other parts of the city.

In every way the anarchist *idea* was disseminated during the 1960s and the 1970s. The first real histories of anarchism appeared, and serious biographies and other studies of important anarchist thinkers were published. The theoretical writings of Kropotkin, Bakunin and Proudhon were reprinted, and no longer by groups of militants with scanty funds, but by publishers who distributed them widely. Anarchism became for the first time a serious subject of academic study, and anarchist viewpoints gained a more serious hearing than they had ever done before.

All this might be dismissed as a matter of academic fashion — which it partly was — if it had not been accompanied by some important shifts in the attitude of anarchist thinkers, a kind of neo-Kropotkinist movement in which some of the more fertile insights of *Mutual Aid* and Kropotkin's other works were re-examined in a way that is still relevant in the 1990s. This involves an acceptance — which Kropotkin himself never entirely achieved — of the fact that nineteenth century anarchists (with the possible exception of shrewd old Proudhon) had been beguiled, though to a lesser degree than their socialist and communist rivals, by two contemporary illusions. One of these was the bourgeois myth of the inevitability and necessary desirability of material progress. The other was the transfer from Judeo-Christian-Islamic religion to utopian and neo-utopian movements of the eschatology first developed by Zoroaster; the concept of a continuing struggle between the forces of good and evil in which — at the end — good is destined to triumph. Secularized, this prospect terminated not in the kingdom of God but in the perfect earthly society of utopia.

The classic anarchists tended to be ambivalent about this prospect with the echoes of the era of barricades still ringing in their ears, they rather looked forward to the period of struggle, though they regarded the utopian future with proper distrust, since they recognized the end of change as death, moral if not physical, and thus we find Kropotkin thinking in terms of an insurrection that will bring about a complete social transformation, and thinking also of the means to safeguard it, but refusing — as he does in *The Conquest of Bread* — to do more than sketch out the possible lines on which the people in the liberated future will shape their communal lives.

I have always believed that this reluctance on the part of Kropotkin — and of most other anarchists — to think in terms of a planned and laid-down structure is connected with his desire to find in society the natural tendencies that will guide man, once he is liberated, to develop — without the direction of revolutionary planners — a free and fulfilling way of life based on co-operation rather than coercion.

The implication of those searches is really that anarchism is not a revolutionary doctrine in the millenarian sense of offering, like Christianity, a New Heaven and a New Earth. It is rather a restorative doctrine, telling us that the means by which we can create a free society are already there in the manifestations of mutual aid existing in the world around us.

This, it seems to me, is Kropotkin's great message for the 1990s, and it was developed already in the 1960s and early 1970s by some of the best new anarchist thinkers, notably Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action* (1973) and Paul Goodman in a whole series of books of the 1960s like

People or Personnel, Growing Up Absurd and *New Reformation*. What Goodman and Ward and others at the same time told us was that there was no need to wait for the great day of revolution, the apocalyptic moment; in fact, if we waited we might be caught unawares. What we should do was to recognize how far in society anarchistic relationships actually exist, and to begin now to build on those relationships, nourishing and encouraging voluntary initiatives based on mutual aid as distinct from official initiatives — in welfare and other directions — based on paternalism and leading to dependence.

These arguments, I think, have a very great bearing on the 1990s and the extraordinary events with which the decade begins: popular movements — undirected by authoritarian parties or any parties — which destroyed autocratic governments that for more than forty years had been thought impregnable. With surprisingly little violence — almost all on the side of the panic-stricken oppressors — the people of the eastern European countries have shaken themselves free. In some ways they would seem to be in an astonishingly favourable position, since the old so-called revolutionary elite, in the shape of the various Communist parties, is at present in total disarray and discredit, and — except for Poland where Solidarity has long proclaimed itself a party rather than a movement — the triumphant opposition is not yet well-organized in a political way. The eagerness with which the defeated Communist leaders in these countries seem to be accepting the idea of multi-party systems clearly reflects their idea that a return to conventionally 'democratic' political forms gives them their best guarantee of keeping some of their power and winning more of it back. How far the insurrectionary people in the various countries are aware of these dangers, how far they are creating their own alternative forms of administration, their safeguards against deceit and exploitation, we do not yet know. And that will always remain dependent on the vigilance and the initiative of workers, peasants, intellectuals in the various countries.

But there is a great deal we ourselves can learn from observing the situations in eastern Europe, and the insurrectionary situation that is sure to mature very shortly in China. We can learn that when a whole people crowds the streets in anger, the powers of even the most ruthless government are immediately weakened and with continued resolution can be swept away with no more than accidental violence. We can also learn how watchful the people must be, in the hour of triumph which joy can turn into weakness, to prevent another herd of power seekers starting the evil process of government going all over again. And to develop that theme will require someone to write another *Conquest of Bread*, adapted for the 1990s.

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