

memory—even as page falls on page—because underneath there is little urgency, but a kind of academic foreplay with what one day will be Dr. Hudson's original contribution. Perhaps the main point that lingers is the plainest one:

In a highly competitive and stratified school, boys are saturated with convergent reassuring. They assume that this and the ability to get good examination marks are one and the same; and the more successful they are, the more perceptive about each other's powers of convergent reasoning they become. Conversely; the more successful they are, the less sensitive they are to each other's capacity to diverge.

In that, one can see the image of those working-class boys on Dr. Douglas' sample who survive only by focusing their minds downwards and so thread their way from 11-plus to Ph.D.—and in time (who knows?) become good second-line scientists, technologists, or mathematicians at Harwell, Porton Down, or the market research division of Unilever.

It is not easy to say how we can begin to open up the education system—"equal chances to be equal"—and at the same time nurture a finer and more energetic sense of purpose in living ("where does all your go go?"). We could, if we cared, get the material side right—better housing, adequate diet, decent schools, enough well-trained teachers. That by itself would be enormous contribution—though *Shelter*, the *Child Poverty Action Group*, and almost all the educational pressure groups remind us how far we are from achieving it. But as Professor Vernon shows in his measured, modest study,<sup>3</sup> huge barriers would still remain. For one thing, the defensiveness of teachers and their resistance to change. For another, the very pith and style of language in which the child's intelligence matures. Professor Vernon reports his studies of deprived Indian, Eskimo, African, and Jamaican children—and internationalises what Basil Bernstein has shown in Britain—that the inadequacies of the mother tongue, whether that of a whole society or that of an underprivileged class, can in themselves be the most invisible but the most tenacious of barriers. To change the culture is to change the language.

A NUMBER OF AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS which attempt to do just that—with breathtaking energy and directness—are reported in Maya Pines' vivid, journalistic survey.<sup>4</sup> She describes, at times unforgettably, American "pressure cooker" schools for 3- or 4-year-old Negro children: schools which are not content to let child-

<sup>3</sup> *Intelligence and Cultural Environment*. By PHILIP VERNON. Methuen, 45s.

<sup>4</sup> *Revolution in Learning*. By MAYA PINES. Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 35s.

ren paint, dance, sing, shovel sand—especially children lacking the "hidden curriculum" of the middle-class home. The emphasis is on cognitive skills, taught early, taught fast and taught hard. ("The first grade is hurtling towards that child like an express train.") Well, it may be that we are too uncritical about the concept and value of "play." And it probably is true that deprived children would gain from a more structured approach during nursery and infant years.

But much of this American zeal seemed basically barbaric to me. One of their most successful methods was *Verbal Bombardment*: perpetually-talking teachers directing a stream of questions and comments at the children throughout the day. They say it produced a dramatic growth in intelligence. One wonders, as always, what this "intelligence" was. And I, for one, only cheered up when one of the verbal bombardiers recalled "the kids came up to me and tried to close my mouth—I got the message."

## The Educational Gap

By Tyrrell Burgess

I SUPPOSE IF Sir Robert Peel's father were alive today he would be greatly astonished at the progress of education. Peel's *Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, 1801*, enjoined factory-owners to provide adequate instruction in reading and writing during the first four years of a child's seven-year apprenticeship. The Act remained a dead letter. Today, of course, things are very different. Nearly three-quarters of all British children can read and write reasonably by the time they leave school. Half of them have had a full five years of secondary schooling. One in ten gets some form of full-time education after A level. Fewer than

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one child in seven is taught today in buildings put up before Disraeli bought the Suez Canal. As the Secretary of State for Education and Science said on television the other night, if you put things in perspective you can see that great strides have been made.

What is more, these things have not happened by chance. The extension of education to all classes in the nation has been the urgent determination of Governments since Lord Grey's administration. Mr. Forster, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Fisher and Mr. Butler laboured manfully, and the chances are that they will have a successor in the next administration: we are due for another Great Education Act. Again the land will ring with calls for the extension of opportunity, the end of deprivation and disadvantage, the uplifting of the people through legislation. And few will pause to ask why the educational achievements of the last century or two, viewed from any other vantage point than that of Peel the elder, have been a failure.

There has been only one basic need: to create an educated people. The vision of a literate community seems old-fashioned now, but it was never more urgent. The task gets no easier; indeed the longer you leave it the harder it gets. The gap between the educated and the uneducated is widening, and no reform is worth the name which does not narrow it. Victorian phrases like the education of the working classes ring oddly now, because we have largely given up the attempt. But to every legislator, every educator who makes any new proposal, there is only one relevant question: what about the workers?

The answer from the past is deplorably familiar. Listen to J. W. B. Douglas: "We show in this book<sup>1</sup> that... the middle-class pupils have retained, almost intact, their historic advantage over the manual working class." Or Olive Banks' textbook:<sup>2</sup> "One of the dominant themes in educational reform in both the 19th and the 20th century has been the extension of educational opportunities to wider sections of the community... Increasingly, however, we have come to realise that the provision of formal equality does surprisingly little to eliminate educational privilege." Only that "surprisingly" is surprising. Then there is William Taylor:<sup>3</sup> "A series of official reports and sociological enquiries have spelled out in great detail the lack of success we have had since 1944 in providing genuinely open access to higher education, and

<sup>1</sup> *All Our Future*. By J. W. B. DOUGLAS, J. M. ROSS and H. R. SIMPSON. Peter Davies, 42s.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sociology of Education*. By OLIVE BANKS. B. T. Batsford, 42s.

<sup>3</sup> *Society and the Education of Teachers*. By WILLIAM TAYLOR. Faber and Faber, 50s.

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a good deal of work is now being done to explain the mechanisms by which the family has succeeded in defeating these objectives." It's the poor, as usual, what gets the blame.

The process is venerable. In the early 19th century mechanics institutes were founded for the improvement of workers. They failed to offer what the workers wanted—practical instruction as well as theory—and declined into largely middle-class literary and philosophical societies. Between 1956 and 1966 ten colleges of advanced technology (many of which revered their own origins as mechanics institutes) were transformed from local authority technical colleges into technological universities. In the process their working-class students fell away. Today they largely serve the middle classes, like any other university.

Or take the history of "secondary education for all." This was an early slogan of the infant Labour Party; by the 1920s it had become an aspiration of official committees; in 1944 it was national policy. And we still do not have it. The reason is that after 1944 the Ministry of Education was allowed to invent different kinds of secondary education, one of which (the secondary modern kind) was secondary in name only. The failure was understandable: politicians could not secure the necessary resources

for genuine change; and educators quite simply lost their nerve.

THE CONSEQUENCES are clear. As Douglas found in what is arguably the only relevant educational research now progressing,

the social class differences in educational opportunity which were considerable at the primary school stage have increased at the secondary and extend now even to pupils of high ability. Thus nearly half the lower manual working-class pupils of high ability have left school before they are sixteen-and-a-half years.

What our secondary schools do is legitimise social privilege. The advantages of the middle-class child are held to be acceptable when they can be translated into "ability" as measured by tests and teachers. (Incidentally, the public schools, which middle-class socialists fritter their adrenalin on, merely "illegitimise" social privilege. Abolishing them overnight would not weaken one jot the opportunities of the upper middle classes. One of the more amusing Douglas findings is that, allowing for class and ability, children in state schools do academically as well as *or better than* those in independent schools.)

The general failure of educational change continues. In January 1968 Britain had a Labour Government, and that Government was being urged to "make devaluation work" by cutting its expenditure. It did so. In education the bulk of the specific savings came through putting off raising the school-leaving age. Given the choice, the Cabinet decided—hesitatingly, half-heartedly—that if anyone was going to lose any education at their hands it was to be those most desperately in need of it. Ministers are of course doing their best by their consciences by talking about the "extra" money for school building in educational priority areas. Unfortunately the building programme for raising the age had already decimated the normal amount set aside for improvements. This was not put back when the leaving-age money disappeared, and it is not made up by the vaunted priority money. This combination of treachery and incompetence was not the only achievement of January 1968. At the same time, local authorities were forced, through the working of the rate-support grant, to keep spending within narrower bounds. It caused little surprise when the chief victims of this restriction were seen to be those deprived children whose remedial education depended upon part-time teachers no longer employed, and those part-time courses in technical colleges which serve largely working-class students.

Statesmen are not the only trouble. Teachers

# C. S. Lewis

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are a bit of a problem too. Few of them actually want to teach the children of workers. Indeed the columns of educational journals are full of explanations why one should never raise the school-leaving age, because of the roughs who might thus be kept in school. This need not be too serious, since most teachers learn, in time, to adjust and cope. What is more serious is that most teachers quite literally do not know what they are doing. To those who might wonder whether this is an exaggeration, one has only to remark that William Taylor is a professor of education and a director of a university institute of education who has written a book called *Society and the Education of Teachers* which virtually ignores the social difficulties teachers face. The sentence quoted earlier is a very lonely one. Small wonder that it is entirely common to find teachers who do not know, let alone understand, the arguments for and against streaming by ability, who do not realise that there are objections to assuming that their own assessments of pupils are the last word on the subject.

Rosenthal and Jacobson<sup>4</sup> have done what they can. They gave every child in an (American) elementary school a test which they described as one that would predict "intellectual blooming." Then they chose *at random* about 20% of each class as the experimental group. The teachers were given the names of this group, were told that these children had scored high on the test for intellectual blooming and would show remarkable gains in intellectual development. In reality the only difference between these children and their classmates was in the minds of their teachers. At the end of the school year the "bloomers" duly did better in further tests. One may be forgiven for assuming that there is a hefty clue here to the mechanisms by which middle-class children prosper at the hands of middle-class teachers.

On the other hand school teachers have been brightly aware and open-minded compared with their colleagues in the universities. The subtitle of *Anarchy and Culture*<sup>5</sup> is "the problem of the contemporary university." And what is that problem? Is it that today the same proportion of university students as in 1928 are from working-class families? Is it that the universities have failed to imbue society at large with the values they cherish? Is it that the average university teacher can be generously said to produce 1.8 graduates a year? This figure is known as the Pratt ratio, after my colleague at

<sup>4</sup> *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. By ROBERT ROSENTHAL and LENORE JACOBSON. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 38s.

<sup>5</sup> *Anarchy and Culture*. Edited by DAVID MARTIN. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 35s.

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L.S.E. who first formulated it. If *Anarchy and Culture* is to be believed, the problem of the contemporary university is that it has students. There are some decent fact-packed contributions from Halsey (on dons), Layard and King (on expansion), Rudd (on graduates) and Eustace (on university government) but they seem out of place among the rest.

The depressing conclusion to be drawn from all this is that social change is difficult. There

are no short-cuts. If the working-class child is handicapped by his home environment, it is the home environment we must change. It is odd how many educators can talk for half-an-hour about the critical importance of the home and conclude we need more nursery schools. But changing the home involves changing jobs, income, housing, health—even, in affluent Britain, adult literacy programmes—before you can hope to get good results from the schools.

## Progressivism as a Reactionary Utopia

### *The “Counter-Cyclical” Trend — By C. B. Cox*

*“It isn’t nice having your bicycle stolen—however awfully healthy it is for the child to steal—and you have to be two people at once: one person who doesn’t like having his bicycle stolen, but the other one who is seeing that at that moment the child is feeling hopeful and is beginning to claim something. This provides tremendous problems of tolerance.”*

WHO SAID THIS? A character from the third book of *Gulliver’s Travels*? From Peacock’s *Crotchet Castle*? No, the problem’s too easy, the jargon too obviously modern. It is a contemporary educational psychologist speaking in 1965 at a colloquy on progressive education at Dartington Hall.

Later on this Dr. Winnicott poses a fascinating problem. A group of deprived children can be said, he tells us:

1. To need a Progressive School; and at the same time
2. To be most likely to break it up.

This is challenging, he says, but “it is important that this aspect of the progressive school work should be stated as clearly as possible, otherwise those responsible get disheartened,” and “there tends to follow a gradual change-over in the school towards being an ordinary school...” He has no other advice.

C. B. Cox is Professor of English at the University of Manchester and co-editor of *The Critical Quarterly*. Among his books are a study of liberalism in the novel, *The Free Spirit* (O.U.P., 1963) and (with A. E. Dyson) several volumes of poetry criticism.

Dr. Winnicott is my favourite character at the colloquy, which considered the relationship between independent progressive schools and the State system. The conversations are reported with a rambling commentary by Maurice Ash, in *Who Are The Progressives Now?*<sup>1</sup> The book ends with extracts from “research” papers prepared before the proceedings. Participants included Kenneth Barnes, Head of Wennington School, Dr. Michael Young, and various representatives from schools and research institutes. Not all of them, let it be said, talked as much nonsense as Dr. Winnicott. And they all disagreed completely about what “progressivism” means.

This document is of great importance, but not as Mr. Ash intended. It reveals the minds of some leading progressive thinkers when they are off-guard, honest, giving themselves away. The discussions show the uninitiated the kind of thinking now raging like a plague among lecturers in British Colleges of Education, inspectors of schools, and “with-it” teachers generally.

Mr. Ash makes the present situation quite clear. In primary education, he says, the battle for progressivism, if far from won, is at best fully engaged. Progressivists must now fight for power in secondary schools, must “push back the frontiers of society’s intrusion upon the person.” The secondary schools of today are “one of civilisation’s battlegrounds.” Already in parts of Britain (Leicestershire, for example), State primary and secondary schools are being built where formal teaching will be virtually impossible. In one of the research papers,

<sup>1</sup> *Who Are The Progressives Now?* By MAURICE ASH. Routledge, £2.