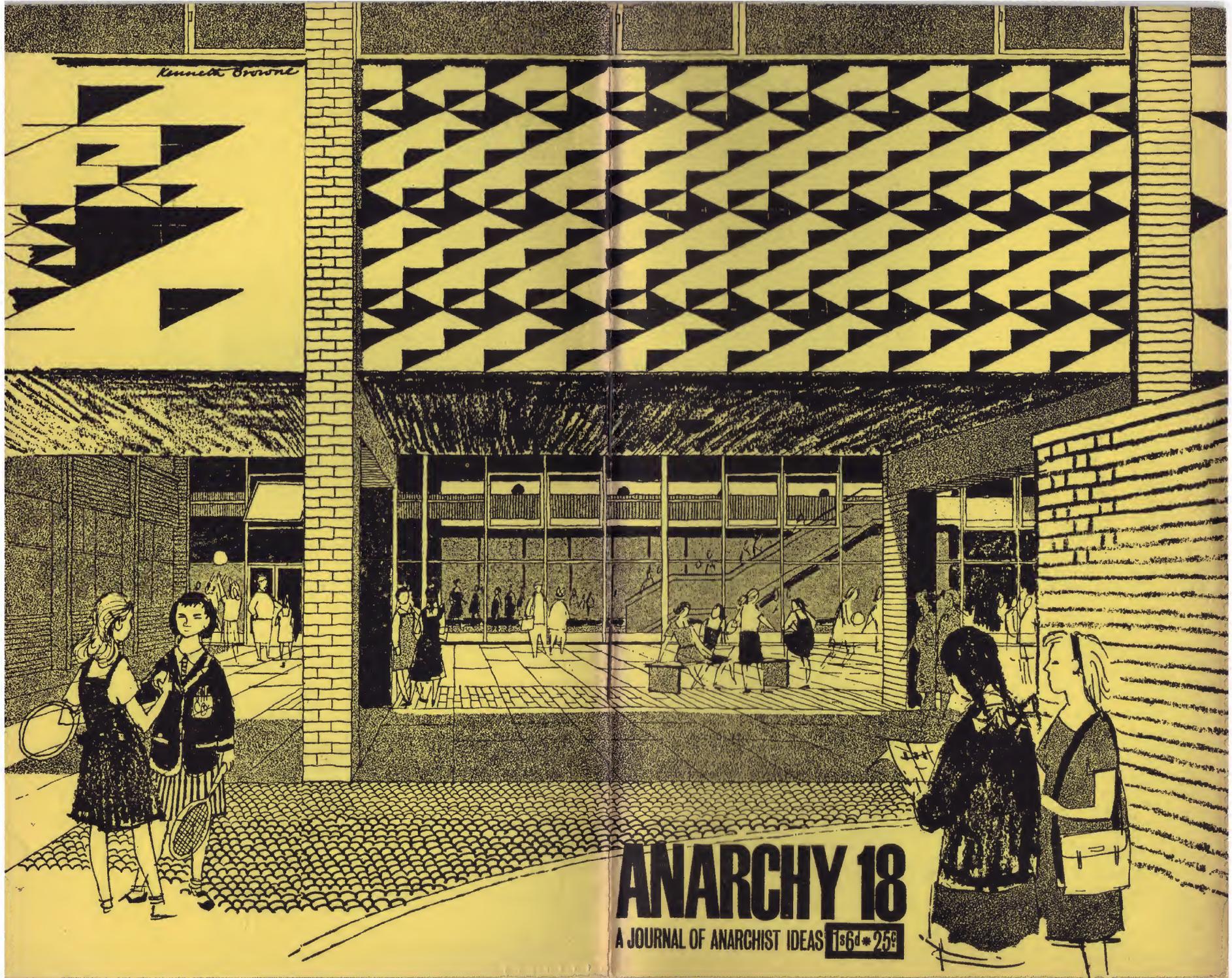


*Kenneth Bronson*



# ANARCHY 18

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST IDEAS 1s6d • 25c

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Technics of anarchism; Africa; Anthropology; Poetry of Dissent.  
Towards a lumpenproletariat: Education vs. the working class; Freedom of access; Benevolent bureaucracy; CD and CND.

**Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to Mr. King and Mrs. Hindley, and the the editors of **Forum**: for the discussion of **trends in education** and of **Athene**, journal of the Society for Education Through Art, respectively, for permission to use their articles. (See inside back cover).

We are grateful to Carter Tiles Ltd. for permission to use Kenneth Browne's drawing.

**Apologies**

We were expecting several articles from teachers in comprehensive schools, who in the end couldn't get them done because of the end of term rush. Will readers in Secondary Modern schools please note that we would welcome **their** contributions to the October **Anarchy** by the first week of September?

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*A correspondent in The Observer a short time ago concluded his letter thus: 'The Fairy Tale of Education runs as follows: Once upon a time God made three types of children. The Norwood Report discovered what they were. The Ministry put them neatly in different schools. And they all lived unhappily ever after.' We in the comprehensive school believe that there are as many different types of child as there are children, and that it is not our job in education to iron out the differences and produce one standard product or three standard products just because it is administratively convenient and suits the haphazard historical development of our educational system.*

—G. A. ROGERS, Headmaster of Walworth School, London.

# Comprehensive School

THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN THIS COUNTRY attend (compulsorily between the ages of five and fifteen, voluntarily after that age) schools maintained at the public expense, under the control of local authorities (county councils or county borough councils). To call them public schools as is done in America, would be misleading since that term is used here for those schools of high social prestige (usually residential and fee-paying) which have traditionally provided this country with a governing élite. To call them state schools is also a misnomer, since although the state, *via* the Ministry of Education, supplies local education authorities with more than half their funds, it does not run the schools itself, nor employ teachers itself, nor lay down a curriculum. In many important respects the local education authorities are autonomous, though they maintain schools by virtue of a series of Acts of Parliament, from the Act of 1870 which set up the old school boards (which lasted until 1902) to provide universal compulsory elementary education, to the Act of 1944 with the promise of "secondary education for all".

The 1944 Education Act has been implemented by different local authorities in many different ways, which have been the centre of social, educational and political controversy ever since. As Professor Ben Morris, then Secretary of the National Foundation for Educational Research put it a few years after the Act came into force:

"In Britain, we have only recently replied to the question, 'Who is to be educated?' with the answer, 'All the children of all the people'.

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We are now forced to ask ourselves, 'What kind of education have we in mind?' Some suppose that, after the English Education Act of 1944, the era of equality of educational opportunity has already arrived. But it seems to me that the educational system now finds itself the victim of its own two major traditions, the one of a liberal culture originally intended for a professional and governing class, the other of an essentially utilitarian training designed for the masses engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services. The official solution of course is to stress the need for what is called 'diversity of educational provision' and for 'parity of esteem' as between different types of school. The urbanity of such phrases, however, serves only to conceal a social conflict; it does nothing to solve it. Such a conflict exists. It is revealed in the bitter struggle to obtain entry to the grammar school, which is regarded primarily as the road to the most desirable occupations. Indeed, the demand for equality of educational opportunity seems to have produced a widespread phantasy that professional jobs can be found for all. But between these catchwords, 'equality', 'diversity', 'parity', lurks a genuine problem, for which the English secondary school system will have to provide a solution. How? My own view is that we shall have to create alternatives to the present forms of grammar schools . . . The most dangerous solution to my mind appears to be the one at present in greatest favour, the tripartite system of grammar, technical, and modern schools—the latter a euphemism for a school designed for the pupils of average and sub-average intelligence. Such a policy favours the increase of social segregation. It separates from each other in early puberty, and more or less permanently, those who will later become administrators, technicians, and skilled and semi-skilled and unskilled workers. This solution seems to me to misconceive the needs of the type of society we are at present building up by other means, and it appears to be based on a grossly over-simplified psychological theory of development."

He was writing more than a decade ago, and we can see that he was over-sanguine about the "type of society we are at present building up". We are building up exactly the kind of society which the tripartite system of secondary education is designed to perpetuate. (It is actually a dual, not a tripartite system, since less than 4 per cent of English children attend technical schools). See for instance the article *Education, Equality, Opportunity* in ANARCHY 1, or *Towards a Lumpen-proletariat* in ANARCHY 17, where it was pointed out that "The educational system subserves the concept of a society based upon differential rewards in the occupational structure. The rightness of this concept is unquestioned by all brands of political parties, right and left; the anarchists alone question the rightness of the fundamental principle of the wages system."

Social influences on the educational system are always stronger than educational influences on society, and it would be naive to expect modifications to the structure of secondary education to have any radical effect on the structure of society as such. "Institutions like

schools," writes the headmaster of one comprehensive school, "cannot be manipulated into a pattern that conflicts with social realities . . . Conscious social purpose is apt to produce contrary results from those intended, and social engineering to defeat itself". Nevertheless, the strongest challenge to the educational assumptions of our hierarchical society in the last ten years has come from the experience of the comprehensive school.

\* \* \*

For a definition of what a comprehensive school *is*, we may turn to a Parliamentary answer by a Minister of Education a few years ago, who explained that "secondary schools are classified as comprehensive where they are intended to provide all the secondary education facilities needed by the children of a given area, but without being organised in clearly-defined sides." A closer general description than that cannot be given, since no two comprehensive schools are alike. "There is no typical comprehensive school!" declares Mr. A. E. Howard of Forest Hill School, in his chapter in the symposium *Inside the Comprehensive School*, and another contributor, Mr. Raymond King of Wandsworth School (who also contributes to this issue of ANARCHY), observes that

In the decentralised English educational system, in which there is relatively little direction and still less specific prescription from the Ministry of Education, trends in educational organisation have tended to reflect unformulated social and educational pressures and have often adapted their provision to local needs or shown local initiative in meeting changed conditions and trying out new ideas.

Comprehensive schools are in fact operated by little more than a dozen of the 146 local education authorities in England and Wales. Thus in the County of London 36 per cent of 13-year-old children attend them, while in Essex none do. In the City of Coventry 35 per cent of 19-year-olds are in comprehensive schools, but in the City of Bradford none are. In the Isle of Anglesey in Wales, all secondary education is comprehensive.

The case for the comprehensive school may be put briefly thus: It is absurd to imagine that there are three types of child to match the three different systems of secondary education. The attempt to sort them out (which means in practice the selection of children to fill an arbitrarily limited number of grammar school places) at the age of 10 or 11, has been shown to be unscientific and inaccurate. It distorts the curriculum of the primary school ("the rat-race begins at seven"), it gives the unselected 75 to 80 per cent a damaging sense of "failure". The effect of "streaming" is that of a self-fulfilling prophecy—you separate the bright from the dull and proceed to make the bright brighter and the dull duller. Subsequent transfer of misfits between separate schools is very difficult and so distressing to parents and children that in practice it seldom happens, but in the comprehensive school on the contrary it is possible, in Mr. King's words "to fit the

educational curriculum to the pupil—and not create misfits by attempting the opposite.”

The case against the comprehensive school is more difficult to put, because no-one in these mealy-mouthed days likes to go on record as an élitist or an anti-democrat. At its weakest it can be expressed in this quotation from a Conservative electoral announcement published in the Sunday papers before the last general election:

Education should bring out the best in your children. It should encourage them to go forward, not force them to hang back. It should make them want to make the most of their brains and not be ashamed of it.

Equality not quality, is the Socialist idea. How would they work it out of practice? The grammar schools, for a start, would have a rough time. So would the modern and technical schools. The Socialists want to put all our eggs in one basket..

The comprehensive school is their answer to everything. Yet these schools—all still experimental—have only been in existence five minutes. Some of our grammar schools have been working successfully for many hundreds of years.

It sounds frightening? It is frightening. Parents have always treasured the right to give their children the education of their choice, etc., etc.

Most of the criticisms of the idea of comprehensive education are on this level. Perhaps we shall hear fewer of them as the fact emerges that the comprehensive schools are extending the academic success associated with the grammar schools to a wider group of children. This is certainly the striking experience of Anglesey whose four comprehensive schools were developed out of what had previously been grammar schools. At Wandsworth School in London, also a former grammar school, Mr. King has shown that

‘self-selection by response’ within a flexibly organised curriculum enables many pupils who were below ‘grammar’ category at eleven to reach the sixth form and the university. The only ‘loss’ to the grammar school is that of its ‘C’ Form. But this is no loss to the pupils who have been able to find their fulfilment elsewhere in a school that is equipped to aim at high standards in other departments. These pupils are less likely to leave prematurely than the frustrated and the apathetic.

Mr. P. G. Squibb of the same school noted recently in an article in *The Guardian* that “over half of our academic successes are achieved by boys who, at eleven, were deemed unsuited to academic courses.”

\* \* \*

There are two criticisms of the comprehensive idea which need to be taken much more seriously. The first is that in a school for children of all levels of ability, the non-academic pupils, who leave earlier, are denied the chance of ever being “top people” in the school world. Mr. Harry Réé, a well-known critic of comprehensive schools remarks that “In a Modern school, the child who works for and achieves, for instance, his three or four O-level subjects gets an immense stimulus from the glory and honour he knows he will receive. In the Comprehensive schools, for the average child this stimulus is removed: he knows that those who win the applause are achieving results far beyond his reach.”

And he cites this observation by a teacher with a long experience of a comprehensive school:

All our prefects have come from the academic streams . . . that is true also of house captains . . . as do the majority of the teams . . . Violin class, and consequently the orchestra, are attended mainly by academic children. The choirs contain few non-academics; although great efforts are made to include them in plays (as in all school and house activities), it is rare for even one to be willing to take a part. I have also taught in a Secondary Modern school and recognise in my present school many who, in a different setting, would have been responsible and successful leaders.

One way of coping with this problem is to ignore its existence, and in fact to emphasise it by concentrating on proving by exam results how wrong were the academic jeremiads on the comprehensive school. Another is to spread preferential responsibilities down to the fourth form as at Elliott School, or to diligently seek alternative fields in which the least academic pupils can achieve success as at Wandsworth. A different approach, which is probably closest to the point of view of our readers, is to question the whole ideology of “success” and “leadership”. Dr. Robin Pedley in his pamphlet *Comprehensive Schools today* remarks that

Prizes are a rather obvious and ineffective carrot. I taught for several years in a Quaker school which lived happily and successfully without them. The panoply of cups, shields and medals also seems, if not very pernicious, not very elevating either. We need to encourage effort for the sake of the pursuit itself, rather than for material rewards. Though the gleaming trophy is not intended to do so, it may cloud these principles in the minds of both the delighted recipient and the disappointed loser.

He criticises the traditional prefect system which was developed in the “public” and voluntary grammar schools when they were preparing boys for the aristocratic leadership of society, and has been borrowed in this century by the maintained grammar schools, more recently by the modern schools, and now by the comprehensive schools. He suggests instead a much wider spread of responsibility:

In other words, the members of a school community—as of any other community—need not elect “leaders” or “prefects” as such (though hardly any schools have got even thus far)—pupils elevated to permanently superior status, a new aristocracy; but rather to give to the natural social groups within the school—the form, the department, the various clubs and societies, including both pupils and teachers—much more opportunity of discussing adolescents are capable of exercising sensible judgment on far more matters, which affect others, there should be joint committees or lower school and upper school councils, upon which representatives elected for a limited term could serve. No one who has studied the early growth of responsible behaviour in our nursery-infant schools, or its later stages in the high schools of U.S.A. and in progressive schools in this country, can doubt that adolescents are capable of exercising sensible judgment on far more matters, and matters more serious, than the trivial things they are usually allowed to decide.

Why do so many heads hesitate, or reject outright this vitally important aspect of the social education of their pupils? In some cases it may be due to sheer lack of originality and knowledge; some, perhaps, are not well informed of experiments elsewhere, and it does not occur to them to adopt any system other than that to which they have become accustomed. There

may be an element of caution: it is easier and safer to appoint your own agents than to risk having to work with individuals appointed by others, and of whom you may not approve. Moreover, it greatly strengthens a headmaster's hand to wield this power of patronage. "All power corrupts . . ." and where is the tyrant who has voluntarily become a constitutional monarch? It is easier and more efficient to take decisions quickly than to await the laborious processes of committees—especially when you know the answer much better than they. . . .

\* \* \*

The second of the criticisms of comprehensive schools which needs to be taken seriously is that of size. It is a question, as the I.A.A.M. pamphlet *Teaching in Comprehensive Schools* puts it, of "how to prevent a school from becoming like a vast factory in which the individual child and the individual teacher feel lost and insignificant." The first thing to say about this is that it is as impossible to say what is the "right" size for a school as to say what is the right size for a town, and that many of the people who view the comprehensive schools as "vast impersonal teaching machines" would not dream of saying the same of Eton for example, or Manchester Grammar School, or the French Lycée at South Kensington, which are all as large as most comprehensive schools. Yet size is a problem as can be seen from the painstaking ways in which many of the comprehensive schools set about subdivision into smaller groups and units. It is also an irritant if it implies a whole host of petty rules and procedures which would be unnecessary in smaller schools.

One London comprehensive headmaster, Mr. Eugene McCarthy of Malory School, asked by the *Sunday Times* if he was worried by the size of his school, replied that he saw it as an advantage in that it gives far more life and variety in school activities than any smaller school can ever manage. "I know about half the children myself by name, and we have a very successful tutorial system that allows senior teachers to get to know children on every level throughout the school." The interviewer noted, significantly enough, that "One of the unique things about Mr. McCarthy's headship is that he never seems to punish anyone."

The reason why many of the comprehensive schools are so big—apart from questions of administrative convenience or the economics of school building in dense urban areas—is the need to have sixth forms of a certain size in order to make possible a wide range of advanced subjects and specialist teachers. (The Ministry of Education's Circular 144 back in 1947 argued that in a secondary school taking all children, only 20 per cent would be capable of sitting for the GCE, of whom in turn only 10 per cent would remain at school beyond the age of 16, and that it would thus be necessary to have a school of over 1,500 to get a large enough sixth form). There is plenty of evidence however, that with a much larger percentage of children staying longer at school

—particularly in the comprehensive schools—the estimates are out of date.

One of the advocates of comprehensive education who at the same time wants small schools is Dr. Pedley, who has been canvassing for years the idea of "two-tier" secondary education: a common high school for the first three years of secondary education and a common grammar school—Dr. Pedley would like the name "County College" to be used, for the remaining years, also open to all children, irrespective of academic ability, whose parents undertake to keep them there. In his book *Comprehensive Education*, he has set out the arguments for an arrangement of this sort, not the least of them being the practical one that it would get the best use out of existing school premises, and improve existing low-grade *grammar* schools, since schools at either level would not need to be large in order to offer a wide variety of courses. A scheme of this kind is already working in certain areas of Leicestershire, where one of the results which the education authority has noted has been that the ending of the 11-plus bogy has transformed the primary schools where the work generally "is reaching standards hitherto thought to be beyond their reach."

Dr. Pedley wants small-scale organisation because "we need the ferment of individual ideas and the possibility of wayward initiative by the small group or the individual alone". And this, he fears is likely to be ruled out by the "over-riding importance of efficient organisation". A "potential Neill or Bloom running one house on unorthodox lines would undermine the whole foundation of the formal discipline favoured by the others, and could not be tolerated. Even moderate divergence would soon be regarded as peculiar, and be unlikely to survive—for even wider divergence would ultimately create an impossible situation." He goes on :

Conversely, it would seem more difficult for the head of a school with over 1,000 pupils effectively to carry out a radically progressive policy. Such a policy depends for success upon the faith of the teachers that it is right: preferably the faith of all the teachers, and certainly the great majority. A head can only work through his staff. He can inspire them, encourage them, set them his own example—but he cannot expect always to convert them, even if he can afford the years of divergence and dissention which must often precede conversion. Is it likely that fifty teachers could be found to staff one local school who believed—for example—in more self-government for the pupils; who were prepared to abjure the convenience of routine control of young children by prefects, prepared to share in those chores themselves and to share out the sense of power which comes from taking decisions that really matter; who were prepared to renounce the aids of orthodox rewards and punishments? And even if it were likely, would not such a large team of individualists tend always to diverge? It is significant that all our really "progressive" schools are small schools.

One answer to Dr. Pedley comes from Professor H. C. Dent, who says, "Let the comprehensive school justify itself, if it can—that has yet to be proved—for the reasons for which it has been established, educational diversity, and social homogeneity, not as a new kind of

Bedales or Summerhill." But from our point of view of course, that is exactly what we would like the comprehensive schools to be!

\* \* \*

The contributors to this issue of ANARCHY (most of whom would probably not wish to be identified with the aims of this journal), look from different angles at the comprehensive school; as it happens they are all writing about London schools. A headmaster writes on what his school tries to do for the twenty per cent or so of boys who have shown "little or no capacity for scholastic objectives". A devoted teacher of "less able" children writes on why she felt unable to work successfully in the highly organised atmosphere of a London school. A first-former tells us his prosaic first impressions of his new school, a boy who left at the first possible opportunity tells us why, and a sixth-former with a very successful academic career gives a cool backward glance. Finally a parent gives us a disturbing and entirely factual account of social attitudes to the comprehensive school and the "eleven-plus" in her district of London.

### Further Reading

*Comprehensive Schools Today: an interim survey*, by Robin Pedley (Councils and Education Press, n.d. (1955).)

*Comprehensive Education: a new approach*, by Robin Pedley (Gollancz, 1956)

*Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School*, by Brian Simon (Lawrence & Wishart, 1953)

*Inside the Comprehensive School*, A Symposium edited by the N.U.T. (Schoolmaster Publishing Co., 1958)

*Values in the Comprehensive School*, by T. W. G. Miller (Oliver and Boyd, 1961)

*Teaching in Comprehensive Schools*, by I.A.A.M. (Cambridge University Press, 1960)

*London Comprehensive Schools: a survey of sixteen schools* (London County Council, 1961)

## Educating the non-scholastic

RAYMOND KING

"BLAGG OF 4 IOTA HAS AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE." The headmaster stood aside from the rostrum, and a ripple of amused expectation passed over twelve hundred faces as Ted Blagg, with permissive unconventionality, stepped up, wearing crew-cut, side-whiskers, drapes, drain-pipes, and wrinkle-pickers.

"I am a film-star", began Ted, prefacing a notice of the première of "Living for Kicks", Iato Production's first film, in which he had been cast to play the lead. Who should know Ted's potentiality as a gang leader better than his classmates? We only suspected it. "Living for Kicks" tells the story of a tough group of adolescents: car-theft, joy-ride, near-tragedy, hospital, juvenile court, approved school, abscondence, gang-fight, and recapture—a topical story of wayward youth, seen through the eyes of the peer-group.

Iota Productions is a company on business lines run by the members of Form 4 Iota, Wandsworth School, to produce and exhibit films made by themselves. That is what justifies a description of their project as a contribution to educational method. Theirs is a real and first-hand experience, made possible by the incredible restraint of a teacher who led them through discussion of all the difficulties and problems, but, when it came to the final project, refused to interfere.

Rôles were widely distributed. All aspects of the production were in the hands of the boys themselves: story, script, direction, camera-work including lighting and focusing—continuity, editing, titling, and publicity. They managed their own finances, too. The school loaned the equipment, but the cost of the film stock and the production was raised by the chairman and directors of the company through the issue of shares at half-a-crown to members, and an appeal for donations. The project was neither a stunt, nor a casual and unrelated episode in school life. Its significance is not fully apparent apart from what led up to it and what is due to follow.

It is a particular illustration of one aspect of a curricular plan for what we in a fully comprehensive school find to be the "hard core" of

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*H. RAYMOND KING has been headmaster of Wandsworth School, London for many years, and has enthusiastically shepherded its growth from a grammar school to a fully comprehensive school. He is a former chairman of the English New Education Fellowship.*

the problem of secondary education for all: for the group that come between the 70 per cent. on the one hand for whom we can plan a purposive education on scholastic, though not necessarily academic lines, and the 10 per cent. on the other hand whose total education is in the hands of diagnostic and remedial experts.

### *Second class citizens?*

In a fourth year arranged 15 forms abreast, this 20 per cent. or so of less able "secondary modern" pupils make up three forms. They have shown in their passage through the school little or no capacity for scholastic objectives, mainly owing to low I.Q., but in some cases to temperamental, emotional, social, or environmental factors. To send them out as failures contradicts what in one way or another a flexible organisation of wide resources enables us to do for the rest.

How for these too can we organise success? To regard them as second class citizens contradicts the spirit of a comprehensive school. How can they earn recognition? For failures and inferior citizens they will become unless there are teachers who have faith in them and in whom they in turn will feel confidence.

But, paradoxically, in order to succeed with them we have to stop being "teachers" and accept the rôle of social mentors. At this stage in their lives they are likely to react to being taught subjects or even to being treated like schoolboys with boredom and apathy, if not with rebelliousness and hostility. Their physical maturity and social independence and sophistication, callow as it may be, lead them to resent a situation in which their intellectual short-comings are too continually and too painfully obvious. Schooling of the traditional kind has lost contact with their interests in life and their emotional drives.

We decided that goals of schooling other than scholastic must be accepted in the fourth and, for some, final year of the course. And yet what we appeared to be closing the door on did, as it turned out, come in at the window. We re-thought their curriculum as a more integrated whole in terms of social skills. From the consideration of their education as persons, as citizens, and as productive workers, three interpenetrating areas of formative experience emerged: Communication (the Person), Co-operation (the Citizen), and Calculation in conjunction with Construction (the Productive Worker). A fourth area was individual choice of a special activity. Moral education, social responsibility, and personal standards (courtesy, speech, appearance) were regarded as dimensions of the curriculum, or, to change the figure, a climate of education actively fostered by all the teachers concerned.

Now to return to Ted Blagg and his class-mates.

Ted was enjoying a new-found power to communicate, amounting to a transformation of personality.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that the drives and urges of inarticulate adolescents take the anti-social form they so often do because they cannot use the social channel of communication?

We found it useful to start by encouraging free group discussion

of the everyday social problems that these boys feel really concern them: relations with parents and teachers, other young people of their age, authority, the police. But it was not until we gave them the chance to work out their problems in simple social mime and drama that they began to show objective insight rather than subjective feeling, mainly resentment. At an appropriate stage we brought the police into the classroom and had it out together. It was development along such lines as these that led up to the making of 'Living for Kicks'.

And what came in at the window?

The collective enterprise involved lengthy and lively discussion both of the story and of the organisation of the producing company. Detailed observation of human behaviour in real surroundings was required and the right approach to co-operating people and institutions outside the school, in order to secure realistic scenic background. They all got to know something of the many facets and functions of film-making, and found the obvious practical route to film appreciation.

The whole group was involved, practically, financially, emotionally, co-operatively. They were ready to accept responsibility, show initiative, and exercise self-discipline. Social integration is at the root of group morale. All experienced the enhanced status that comes from acceptance and from recognition of worth-while achievement, in this case by the whole school and the parents. A succession of showings at 3d. a head on an Open Day swelled Iota Productions' finances. Shares issued at 2s. 6d. are now worth 5s.

But when it was suggested that the film should be shown at a simple entertainment arranged for certain old people in the neighbourhood, no one had in mind to make a charge. Who are these old people, and how do they come into the picture? This brings us to the second area of educational experience, that we call above Co-operation.

Social studies for this group are real and relevant, locally applicable (though not exclusively so), and designed to foster social awareness, social purpose, and social action. In this phase such studies link the school with its community and help to bridge the gap between school and working life for boys who are near the point of transition. Local studies form the starting point: honest social surveys from which they learn to appreciate social achievement and its complexity, but in which they note some of the weaknesses and failures of present-day society. Why, they ask for example, don't *They* do something about old age pensioners and cripples living alone? Their compassion, genuine enough, doesn't mean that they feel in any way called upon to act. It is a matter for *Them*, the authorities, the grown-ups. Adolescents have no influence in affairs, no organised means, no status in public. Their emotional stirrings, compassion, a sense that things are not as they should be, even indignation, have no ready and rational social outlet.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that absence of, or ignorance of channels for social impulse and action account for a good deal of adolescent rebelliousness, violence, and vandalism?

**Group action.**

As individuals we all feel powerless very often, whether we are adolescent or adult. We need group dynamic to start something, even to produce new attitudes in individuals: certainly to give the individual adolescent confidence and support in a novel undertaking. John Fordham left school last Christmas. He wasn't a 'success' at school: he didn't pass any examinations. He was, in fact, a rather obstreperous member of the 20 per cent whose education we are grappling with as our toughest problem. School held him at any rate until the middle of his fifth year. Most of the staff no doubt thought it would be better for him to get the 'discipline' of work. But patently not all his teachers had despaired of him.

The mother of one of my sixth formers, a social worker in the area, mentioned him and his doings to me recently. My informant knew nothing of his school record and reputation. She thought it brought great credit on the school to have produced a boy who had spent much of his spare time in the months after leaving in helping a lonely old age pensioner by painting and decorating her kitchen and living room and making a concrete path in her garden. He had done this without reward, without fuss, without any smug sense of charity or sacrifice, and without anyone—so far as he was concerned—knowing about it. John is no sentimentalist: yet here he is, self-committed to works of compassion, self-identified with a human lot other than his own. I cannot number John among our failures. He has learned at least one lesson that our rethinking of the curriculum enabled us to teach him, that the adolescent can gain in stature and earn his own social status in the community by seeking out and performing a social rôle.

Applied social studies as a curricular activity entail the keeping of a log which the pupil may submit for the Mayor's Award, a diploma for social competence and good citizenship. A social survey brought a group into touch with a home for crippled children. They discovered a need for toy repairing, which led to social service of a useful and in fact congenial kind. Their work as members of a Toymakers' Association carried over into what I have called the third area of educational experience: Calculation and Construction. The toy-makers drew on an adequate range of resources: Woodwork, Metalwork, Painting and Decorating departments, Drawing Office, and English and Mathematics classrooms.

Dick Bennet for one, put more effort and care into this work than we have known him put into anything else. His log book is a model: neat drawings and sketches, measurements, calculations, and accounts of transactions of the Association and of the finished products. Much of the work was done by Dick and others out of school: rather out of character, so it seemed, for Dick, whose constitutional indolence has constantly depressed his performance in studies, in spite of a tolerably fair I.Q. and propitious home background.

For boys of this group the kind of work that meets with the readiest response is a real job with an immediately useful and practical purpose and demonstrable social utility. Large-scale projects are attractive. A whole form devoted its handicraft periods and extra voluntary time to the construction of workmanlike side-shows for the School Fair, from drawing board to finished product, and later zealously operated the shows to the benefit of a charitable cause. Another form have spent the winter months constructing their own dinghies with a view to their use in the summer. When we are asked by the LCC to repair and refurbish the craft they provide for the use of school rowing and sailing clubs, we have to hand just the kind of job we are looking for.

I call to mind Arthur Noble, the most persistent truant I have known in many years, whom neither his teachers, his parents, nor the authorities could keep in school beyond a day or two now and then. We gave him the chance of two days a week down at the Boathouse—quite out of order, of course—but Arthur attended school for the rest of the week to earn the opportunity of satisfying his passion for messing about in boats, the only enthusiasm we ever managed to discover in him.

Of the group of which I am speaking, it is often said that they have far more leisure than they know how to fill. The kind of activity that we seek to promote takes up some of this super-abundant free time, in a voluntary way, of course. The person who could best direct it would be part teacher, part youth-leader, with his time so disposed that he would be available to the group, say, for a couple of hours on two evenings a week and at the week-end, with corresponding freedom in the day-time. We are hoping shortly to make such an appointment.

Communication, Co-operation, Calculation and Construction, stimulated by group dynamics, sustained by the security of acceptance as persons and as contributing members of a great community, rewarded by recognition and the status that accrues to those who find and fill a social rôle. A small percentage of boys still leave at 15: rather more fail to return for their fifth year: but the individuals we would wish to be rid of as early as possible are very few, and for the most part probably ought not to be in our kind of institution at all. In our work for the less able 'secondary modern' we shall be a good deal more satisfied when the school leaving age is raised to 16. I am sure that a year's added maturity gives these young people clearer insight into the meaning of a saying of Rabbi ben Hillel, who shall have the last word:

*If I am not for myself, who is for me?* (self-acceptance).

*And if I am for myself alone, what am I?* (social purpose).

*And if not now, when?* (social action here and now).

## Bombed site and comprehensive school

WINIFRED HINDLEY

IN 1948 I TOOK OVER A 14- TO 15-YEAR-OLD group of boys and girls with IQs ranging from 70 to 115, in a horsa hut built on a bombed site adjacent to the school. It was in the heart of industrial Salford at a time when the back-to-back houses and dark alleys were being replaced by blocks of flats; bookies' corners, fried fish shops, rag and bone depots, pawnshops and the Flat Iron Market gradually disappeared and hot water and sophistication crept in. The old village was replaced by a rootless well-housed community.

We had none of the amenities now accepted as necessary for the education of children . . . no laboratories, gymnasiums or Art blocks, and yet in my hut I had everything to hand to satisfy the immediate needs of the child, to help him to grow. The pre-fab was a second home, where the adolescent often grew through a second chance. There were curtains, flowers, children's writing, painting, modelling and over a thousand books to satisfy a variety of needs and purposes. And because the Hut belonged to them, because the boys and girls created the environment, they shared in the care of it, writing and drawing were done on paper, not on walls and desks. The environment was permissive, sanctioning, and supporting; text books disappeared and, with them, arid exercises and lecturettes and because I taught them for most subjects real relationships could grow. It was possible to create an atmosphere of poetry, literature and music.

English was my civilising agent. But the tiny hut was the place which made so much possible, which made these girls and boys safe enough to "feed" and sure enough to retain the childlikeness (*not* child-ishness), the naïveté Lawrence writes of . . . "It is only from his core of innocence and naïveté that the human being is ultimately a responsible and dependable being . . . It is one of the terrible qualities of reason that it has no life of its own, and unless continually kept nourished or modified by the naïve life in man or woman it becomes purely a parasitic and destructive force." It was while I was experimenting in

*MRS. HINDLEY writes of seven months spent at a large London comprehensive school. Previously she taught for nearly a quarter of a century in Salford. Her interest has long been centred on the average, or less able adolescent boy and girl, and in their education through the arts.*

this ideal and yet condemned situation that I began really to know that education is concerned with far more than the trading of facts to unwilling customers. "The soul of education is not subject matter but a blend of value, assumption, a certain moral love, a special quality of imagination and a peculiar flavour of sensibility."

Eventually reorganisation brought my satisfying and happy experiment among the ruins to an end. With a very sure knowledge of the truth of Wordsworth's:

. . . . . "day by day  
 Subjected to the discipline of love  
 His organs and recipient faculties  
 Are quickened, and made vigorous, his mind spreads  
 Tenacious of the forms which it receives."

I went to teach English to less able (not backward) boys in a Comprehensive school. Naturally this presented me with problems of personal adjustment, but I feel that I can at this stage write objectively of the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of school. There were countless advantages in the shape of laboratories, experts in many fields of learning, a large organ, a stage, gymnasiums, a choice of 17 types of sports, a library, Art and workshop blocks. There was the stimulation of meeting daily a variety of people from all walks of life . . . the excitement which comes from belonging to a large, brilliantly organised community. There was the satisfaction of parents who had feared the 11-plus and saw their sons wearing the same uniform as the boy who had passed. Courses were provided to suit the developing needs of the boys of all ranges of ability; responsibility for the social and emotional needs of the boys was shared by set masters, tutors and teachers.

But I have come to believe very strongly during these months that all the amenities in the world are of little use if the child cannot "feed". I worked in the Secondary Modern Department with boys very similar in ability to those with whom I worked in the North. These boys will never join the ranks of the academics, unless it is to join the "paper chase" for one or maybe two bits of paper, and yet there they were sitting in rows in classrooms with the time-table so structured that they were in theory to receive eight daily injections of learning. Worse, there was no supporting environment. All that wealth of amenity and not the environmental support to satisfy immediate needs. All those walls . . . and not one of them mine . . . or theirs. All those people officially responsible . . . but too many. All those boys and men . . . and so few women!

In fairness I should state that those who structure the education of the less able boy are as aware as I am of its inadequacy in its present form. And also in fairness I should state that restructuring is made difficult by lack of rooms. The architects and planners of Comprehensive schools must have believed that you could grow children by innoculating them in "boxes". They seem to have planned with only a view to physical and intellectual development. They disregard the

fact that the education of the Secondary Modern child needs a far different setting from that of the old type Grammar School. In the Comprehensive school I found myself once again in the kind of setting I had discarded in a condemned slum classroom 12 years ago.

All the planned opportunities and amenities are of little worth, however brilliant the planning, if education of the less able does not always give the boys and girls a purpose which they immediately recognise, in a safe environment with materials and books to supply immediate needs, and with an enduring safe relationship.

The boys I taught showed their needs very obviously. They were attention seeking. They met me before lessons and trailed after me after lessons to tell about pigeons or mice . . . or sick rabbits and tortoises, to bring scraps of crumpled poetry . . . Miss Hourd's "love offerings". The younger ones fought to carry my bags.

I knew from my Salford experience the need to create, to colour and cut and paste and I was ever rewarded for the trouble of carrying around my bags loaded with coloured crayons, paste, paper and scissors and watching the boys delve with satisfaction into the assortment. Gripfix has a wonderful therapeutic value: it appeals to the senses of touch and smell. When given the opportunity to make class, group, or individual books the boys did so freely, with a will. They were constantly asking for paper and books in order to go on making at home. But it was difficult and often impossible to give to each boy the attention and interest and help he needed at a particular moment of his development. I had no room I could call my own. Often when they sought me in between periods I sent them away; I had to in order to survive myself. *I found myself censuring the demands which were essential parts of growth.* I had to compromise, and I found myself drawing on my early "regimental" experiences with a sense of guilt and inadequacy.

There was a considerable output of creative writing. London boys like Salford boys and girls often delight in illustrating their writing and the work I began to draw from the boys resembled that of earlier days except that it had not the meticulous care the Salford adolescents showed. It could not have—sugar paper books grow battered when constantly carried around.

Often when I have lectured on children's writing and taken the Salford children's work, the immediate response of teachers has been, "Surely this is Primary School work?" It had all the life and colour and care of the work of the Primary School child. And why not? Do we put away childish things at eleven? I contend that if we do, in many many cases we fail to grow children. The second year form I worked with in the Comprehensive School had strong primary needs which could not be satisfied in the prevailing structure. The boys were very demanding. It was as if they were saying in countless ways, "Look at me! I'm here." I changed my dress daily, having learnt the dramatic and social value of this in Salford: our modern pre-adolescent and adolescent is very aware of dress. One day I broke the leaden ornamental horse shoe in my chain belt. Every form noted this. But my

second year boys whose needs were starkly obvious, were very concerned. I wore the belt the following day, with the broken ornament dangling at my waist. They attached a veritable sporran of ornaments, key rings and charms to the belt. I taught these boys for eight 35-minute periods, but I am certain that I could have done so much more for them had I had them for longer stretches, and had I in some way shared the other Art subjects, and so made more easily possible communication "at depth." They brought a medley of mice, lizards and frogs which they kept concealed. They brought bulbs and cacti in a pathetic collection in old tins. But I was frustrated . . . I could not make a room which was used by so many attractive. I could not display work. And when Christmas came (a time I had loved and used in Salford for music and poetry and Art and parties) the boys told me that I must realise that I was in a boy's school. *Yet* they surprised me with a home-made manger, crude and glorious and gay with holly and sparkle—a glimpse of that which I have ever believed is the most vital thing to preserve in any being . . . joy in making, delight in tiny things. But that gesture, like so many countless ones, could not be used; so, many vital teachable moments were lost. Signals announcing the end of periods had to be obeyed instantly or the organisation broke down.

With the less able you can never forecast the growing moment, the moment for a poem, some music. If you have taught this type of child for a quarter of a century you are vibrantly aware of the right moment. In the pre-fab hut the record-player, the tape recorder, the music and poetry records were immediately available. In the Comprehensive school this was not so easy. I could not cope with the organisation of the mechanical equipment as well as all the materials needed for creative work.

The Comprehensive School is a comparatively new experiment. The one in which I worked will probably be in the forefront of the revolution in the structuring of the education of those boys whose ability is just above that of those needing and having remedial education. But no change can really take place until new rooms (not classrooms) are built. I could not have a room. There was not one for me. Until this happens the necessity for smooth running of the vast combine will have to be regarded as being more important than the immediate needs of the child. Ruthless demands of the God "Organisation" will impinge on creative moments: broadcast announcements will blast across a poem, ends of periods will come all too soon, and inmates will, as the day wears on become more frustrated and tired. Defences will be less and less constructive. Survival will be all important.

I cannot write about the able child, or the truly backward, their needs are apparently catered for in the Comprehensive School, but for the less able I cry aloud for a revolution in structuring. I conclude with the somewhat astounding realisation that the condemned horsa hut in Salford had more to satisfy the needs of many children than the vast London Comprehensive School with its host of amenities. There is a place for horsa huts in the Comprehensive School.

## A last look round

### SIXTH-FORMER

I AM ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE PRODUCED as living advertisements for the comprehensive system as I started life in a "non-academic" stream, and moved, imperceptibly and painlessly into the academic sixth—something which happens more frequently inside a comprehensive school than by way of transfers between one school to another, outside. Any criticisms of the school which I make have to be seen in the light of the fact that it has served me well.

The first point which occurs to me to be worth commenting on is whether a school which is not co-educational can be truly said to be comprehensive. Most of the schools described as "comprehensive" in the County of London are mixed schools, but a number, including my own, are for boys or girls only. This is apparently partly the accident of history, where an original school has been enlarged, and partly a matter of policy, since it is thought necessary for parents to be able to select an all-girls or all-boys school if they wish. Apart from any other arguments for or against mixed schools, the concept of the school as a community is very much weakened in those schools where one sex is banished, since a large part of people's interests must be centred outside the school.

But apart from the fact that in such cases there is something rather unappetising about an all-girls community, one is apt to wonder whether the concept of a "community" is a little overdone. This is a heretical view in English education, but an article which I read recently about secondary education in France, made it clear that the idea of a community is not thought very important there, and no-one seems to suffer. According to Mr. J. G. Weightman, there is no talk in French about "character-training" and "community spirit" or about the idea that "the best part of education is outside the syllabus". There, apparently, "all schools on a given level, apart from the *grandes écoles* are interchangeable and it doesn't normally occur to the French to ask each other where they went to school." Moreover, "In the *lycées*, what counts is not the general atmosphere, which is much the same everywhere, but the pupil's relations with his class-mates and the influence of individual teachers. These are not deliberately arranged parts of the system, but they are important effects. Perhaps because the school is not thought of as a community, solidarity between individuals counts

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*SIXTH-FORMER is 18 and has just completed her final year at a London comprehensive school, and begins a university course in the autumn.*

more. The members of a given class tend to think of themselves as a generation, and they further divide up into small groups or pairs bound together by a very warm notion of comradeship."

Isn't this, apart from the official and perhaps rather juvenile ideology of the spirit of the school, what actually happens here? And shouldn't we admit it? This is why I think that the argument about whether the London comprehensive schools are too big or not, are rather wide of the mark. It is conceivable that there is more freedom to be oneself in such a school than in a smaller, more intimate one, although none of the defenders of the size of the big schools ever say so, concentrating instead on the possibilities of "breaking the school down" into smaller units. It would be as logical to defend the sheer size of the big school because of the greater variety of possible friendships among both girls and staff that it offers. I am sure that to the individual girl it is the small group that matters whatever the size of the school. The writers of juvenile school stories know this—all those "fearsome fours", "terrible fives" and "secret sevens".

The same thing affects the alleged breaking down of class barriers which is claimed for the comprehensive school. If it happens at all, it happens on the individual level for individual girls, in groupings based on common interests. If, as might very well be true, girls of different social origins have different educational or social interests, this social integration will not happen, despite any good intentions. Social theorists usually expect too much of the schools, a school should not be considered as an instrument for modifying the class structure of society. Its function is simply to teach people, which is a big enough task.

Two final points. Firstly about school uniforms. For juniors they have obvious advantages, foremost among them being that the way a girl is dressed need no longer announce that her parents are wealthier than those of other girls. For seniors they are an embarrassment and a general horror. Wouldn't more girls stay beyond the fourth form if one of the privileges of entry into that form were the abandonment of uniforms? Secondly, may I enter my protest against the horrors of compulsory games at any age?

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## Some were all right

### EARLY LEAVER

*Q.* Would you tell me something about the school you went to?

*A.* Yes, it was one of the big new schools on the other side of the river, with more than a thousand kids, and smashing workshops and everything.

*Q.* Did you want to stay there longer?

*A.* No.

Q. Could you, if you wanted to?

A. Oh yes, a lot of them did, but I like to be out.

Q. What did your parents think about it?

A. They wouldn't have minded. Keeping me there longer I mean.

Q. What did you expect to do when you left?

A. Well, I could get a job in a garage, but a mate of mine got me in here. I want to get a job as a driver when I can get a licence. I can drive, and I want to get on the lorries afterwards. But I don't mind this job because I like getting about and I wouldn't like a job inside anyway. I might get a job in the building, driving I mean. I wouldn't mind that.

Q. Could you have learned something more about motor engineering if you had stayed at school?

A. Well, I did. We did all about motor engines when I was there. Stripping them down and grinding them in and all that.

Q. Who were your friends at school? Were they the people in the same year or the people from where you live? Did any of them stay on?

A. They were mostly the same lot from the flats where I live. I still go around with them in the evenings. Mostly they came from the flats and some of them went to the same school as me and some didn't. We all left as soon as we could. It wasn't that we didn't like the place, but we just wanted to go out and get a job. See a bit of life, you know. There were one or two kids that stayed of course, but I didn't see much of them. The brainy ones all sit for the GCE and they don't go out dancing or they haven't got bikes because they haven't got time. But I wasn't a scholar and I wasn't sorry I left. They haven't got the money either, which I have.

Q. Do you think they could have done more for you at school?

A. Well it's not a crime to leave is it? I mean, some kids got apprenticeships or things like that, but I didn't want to be tied down and I couldn't have got in on one anyway. There were some things I liked about that school and some things I didn't

Q. Such as?

A. Some of them treated you like kids all the time, and they had a down on you if you made cracks about history and things like that. Some were all right though. There was one who was a bit of a lad. I liked him, he wasn't like a teacher at all.

Q. What was he supposed to be teaching?

A. Well, English. Only he was always talking about what was going on or what we'd seen on TV or the films, and what was good about them and whether it was true what they said about them in the papers. He used to get us to come up to the West End and see plays and shows and write about what was good or bad about them.

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*EARLY LEAVER is now 16, but left the comprehensive school which he attended at the minimum statutory age of 15. He works as a messenger for a firm of photo-printers.*

A. What did you see?

A. "West Side Story" and the "Hostage" and all these shows. He got the tickets.

Q. Do you ever go now?

A. Well, I'm buying a bike now, but I have seen a few shows since I left. Only I usually go around with the same bunch from our way.

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## First impression

### FIRST-FORMER

MY NEW SCHOOL IS A VERY LARGE ONE compared with the primary school that I was at. It has an old building and a new one, which is very large indeed. There are many things which are different from my old school and I am only going to tell you a few. The first thing that is different is that we have different teachers for each lesson and we go into other rooms. Before, we didn't have a loud-speaker for announcements and pips for the end of each lesson or period.

The new building consists of gyms, woodwork shops, science labs., as well as classrooms, and near the new building is a tuckshop. The old building is old compared with the new one which was built somewhere around 1955. The Lower School is for the first and second year boys, and it has a Gym which is called the Lower School Gym.

For dinner you have to wait in the playground until your form is called out, and then you go and line up. The dinners are very nice, and as soon as you have finished you can go out to play. In the playground you can see the boys all lining up for their dinner. Some classes have a late dinner and have to miss some of the lesson.

There are only four women teachers at this school, and there are no girls. My old school was very close to our house but now I have to get up earlier and cross the park to get to school by train.

We did not wear a uniform at my old school, and I am not used to wearing a tie. I was in the football team but now I have to learn rugger which is quite different. But I like the Gym and the showers after P.E. At my other school we went swimming all the year round at the Public Baths which are warm, but here as it is an open air bath we cannot swim in the winter.

I expect it will take some time to get used to the school but I probably will.

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*FIRST-FORMER, who is now 12, wrote this account of his new school, one of the biggest in London, during his first fortnight there last autumn.*

# Eleven-plus and the comprehensive

BY A PARENT

MY TWO CHILDREN ATTENDED THE SAME PRIMARY SCHOOL, where the elder was in an 'A' stream, with an excellent teacher, and the younger in a 'B' stream with an indifferent one. The elder boy's curriculum had a marked emphasis on arithmetic, English and "intelligence" (*sic*), the younger one did "handwork"—a subject now reserved for the also-rans—there was no time for the A-streamers actually to *make* things—parents would grumble that they weren't being coached.

On the day when the elder boy sat for the Junior Leaving Examination (the so-called 11-plus), the sky was heavy with parental anxiety and with the promise of bribes in the form of bicycles, record-players and puppy-dogs. Fathers took the day off, and waited patiently in their Consuls and Veloxes outside the school, to collect and cross-question their darlings. One mother arranged to go into hospital for a post-examination hysterectomy.

For the children the period after the exam was a great anti-climax. School had ceased to have any point, and friends and neighbours continually asked for tidings of the result. They looked reproachful when told it had not yet been made known, as though something was being hidden from them. "I'm strong, you can tell *me* the worst", the tone of their voices suggested. Eventually my unbribed but A-streamed eldest was told that he had passed. The terminology was of course that he had been "selected" for a secondary course with an academic bias, but everyone, including the teachers, used the word *passed*—with its corollary of *failed* for eighty per cent of the child population. There was no nonsense about "parity of esteem" so far as they, or anyone else, were concerned. Then came the question of the choice of a school. Not surprisingly, in view of the enormous emphasis put on "passing", the parents of those children who *had*, began to entertain delusions of grandeur about their progeny, and it became clear that some grammar schools were considered more desirable than others. Convinced that their intelligent geese were swans, they put down as first choices those direct-grant grammar schools of relatively ancient foundation, and as second choices such as grammar schools of post-1902 vintage as were known to be uncontaminated by the LCC's notorious desire to democratise secondary education.

When I named a comprehensive school as a first choice, the headmistress of the primary school looked disapprovingly across her desk at me and gave me a homily about "zoning", and the merits of some dreary old grammar school in the next borough. But it was the

other mothers, whose attitudes, which they had no hesitation in making known, were most upsetting. "He might just as well not have passed" said one. "You're throwing away his chances," said another, and I was accused of sacrificing my firstborn on the altar of my alleged political convictions, or at the very least, of being indifferent to his educational welfare.

It was difficult to reconcile their picture of the comprehensive school, with the impression we got at the interview there, where the tutorial system and the "diagnostic" year were carefully explained, and the school's academic and musical distinctions were extolled with justifiable pride.

In the following year, my B-streamed second boy's turn came. He was not "selected" and had to give a negative answer to all those well-wishers who asked him if he had passed. I named the same school as a first choice. The primary headmistress was not surprised this time, and at the comprehensive school he was interviewed with the same courtesy and care. The faded blue eyes of the celebrated headmaster looked into his wide grey ones. "You'll have to work here, you know," he said as he shook hands.

But the subsequent enquiries from friends and acquaintances revealed other preoccupations. "Will he wear a uniform?" was the first question, and the second one was usually "Will it be the same uniform?" as though they were scandalized that the same blazer should enfold the sheep and the goats, or relieved that the eleven-plus rejects could disguise their shame with it. "But will he actually be in the same building?" they asked, as though they imagined that a fence should separate them. More distressing was the unspoken assumption that the elder boy's "success" had in some way been devalued, by the younger one's admittance to the same school.

The experience has taught me a number of things. Firstly I think that the last people who would want to see the eleven-plus examination go are the teachers, because of the enormous parental pressures upon them if any greater part of the onus of decision rested with them. Secondly that parental attitudes to schools are as much based on questions of social status and prestige at the humbler end of the social scale as they are in the world of the fashionable public schools. For the "grammar" child, the comprehensive school is regarded as second best, because he might actually mix with the non-grammar majority; for the "secondary modern" child it is a chance to share, vicariously and undeservedly, the glory of the grammar school, symbolized by the blazer and badge. You cannot change these pathetic social attitudes until you change society, but it is perhaps hopeful that the comprehensive schools are successfully living down the politically inspired hostility which attended their inception. One day someone might actually ask me whether my boys are being taught well and whether they are happy at school. It will make a change from all those questions based on snobbery and prejudice.

I quite forgot to mention that it's the best school for miles around here!

## A senior concert of the High School of Music and Art

PAUL GOODMAN

I always come ahead of time, to see what goes on.

It's a big orchestra of empty chairs, with their stands and lights and music-sheets, must be eighty or eighty-five. So far only the drummer, a slight bespectacled boy with colourless hair—when he bends his ear close to the kettle-drums, he is lost in the equipment. He has stage-fright and is nervously banging away bang! bong! dominant and tonic. Now others players are appearing at their stands, trying to look business-like. A young miss, quite a young lady with a turquoise blouse and a skirt of flaring orange, is screwing together with quick twists the three pieces of her silver flute.

The kids have collected too early, to warm up their instruments. They have stage-fright and each is private. Each kid is practicing his own phrase forte or fortissimo, the din is fierce. Each kid heedless of the others and of the audience that has begun straggling in, the parents.

You expect them to start pacing up and down on the field, to burst into a sprint down the field, to heave a lead shot erratically in a thoughtless direction and almost knock somebody's head off, while the sun floods down his unstinting light from the royal-blue sky.

Now thirty or forty of them have gathered and are busy practicing; but if you look at the programme—the phrases they are loudly playing have nothing to do with the concert to come. In private, heedless of one another and of the audience and also of the concert to come, each kid is seeking safety in his "own" music, the way musical adolescents—and these adolescents are very musical—hear with fanatical rapture the harmony that was invented specially for oneself, no one else in all the generations ever understood it, "really" understood it. Also, now without any stage-fright, in isolated day-dreams each is performing brilliantly on a bright stage to a vast audience, with universal admiration, triumphant over envious enemies who are magnanimously forgiven (that's the best part of it).

So one lad with a brass trumpet is exclaiming *Freedom! Freedom!* from *Fidelio*. And another with an ear-splitting horn is boasting that he is Siegfried.

It is not embarrassing because they are not embarrassed; but one is abashed for them, they are so young and exposed, but they are not abashed.

A slide-trombone has acquired a hat over his bell and is taking with an arrogant posture the chorus of a Dixie blues, but when he ends with a flourish and gives it to his buddy—alas! the clarinet is brooding with the aged Brahms who has been reading Sophocles. Unconscious of everything, the young lady with the silver flute is discouraging earnestly with the Blessed Spirits. And the little drummer is banging away at the march from the *Symphonie Pathetique*, streamed round by the flapping banners of the United Nations and bawling out the melody. But you cannot hear anything in the din.

Next moment, silence. The house is full, the kids are poised, their conductor has stepped onto the podium and raps. The stage-curtain parts revealing the choir (there are the rest of the seniors!) and they have begun *Wachet auf*.

The orchestra has begun to play and I am blind with tears.

But what's to weep about any of this? Naturally they play well, they are very musical kids. Naturally they play well together, they are well rehearsed, and they know one another. The conducting is simple and sensible, firm on the broad lines and on the obvious dynamics. There is plenty of spirit, it is animal spirit. The nobility—there is nobility—comes from the pride and aspiration of many poor cultured homes. All this is natural and to be expected; why then should tears be streaming down my cheeks and I cannot see anything but a wet bright sheet of light?

Because it is our orchestra.

Always it is absence and loss that we weep for; when we seem to be weeping for joy, we are weeping for paradise lost. And the case is—as I look about in our community and remember the longing of our lives and the frustration of our longing—the case is that we do not have any orchestra. This is a truth too bitter to live with and we usually dismiss it and keep our faces set as best we can.

But here is our orchestra— It is playing *Wachet auf!* Our choir is taking it up. With the opening of this new possibility, at once the old tears well and roll down our cheeks. Our mouths are open with breathing in and out.

This orchestra is proud of its orchestra. The adolescents take it for granted that on the occasion they can rely on one another.

I sympathise with the conductor who is a man of my own age. He is smirking and continually breaking into smiles and broad grins. Each time they have traversed a hard passage, he breaks into a broad grin as if to say, "Listen hey? The way they got through that! I told you they could! I promised you they would!" But the young people are playing right on. They are neither smirking nor nervous nor grimly determined, they are matter-of-factly playing the music which they think is just beautiful, and indeed it is very grand and beautiful. They are attentive to the music, but they are also damned proud of their orchestra.

The girls' voices ring out loud and bright. The young tenors and basses do not have an equal weight; you would say that the young men

are not confident, they are afraid their voices will break. No, no! Risk it! Give forth! (the conductor is pleading with his shaking left hand)—what is the use of young male voices if they do not shout out loud and clear? There, that's better. It doesn't matter if a few break down when there are so many brothers supporting.

We are towards the end of May. The school concert is part of the commencement exercises, a demonstration of the work of the year, of the years. *Wachet auf! wachet auf!* This is not the "own" music of any of those kids, I suppose, but it is our music; they have chosen it for us, and do they not take it well upon themselves! They are reconciled to us (us at our best, to be sure); they agree to continue. It is their commencement. I wish that they were in fact beginning into such a community as they seem so well able to take upon themselves.

My eyes are washed and the scene is clear and sharp. "Thou art That!" What does it mean? The immortal humanity. Each one stands as a witness.

As sometimes happens when you have been surprisingly moved and are thereby *in* the scene, some object spontaneously brightens and stands out from the background; or first one, then another, then another. A spotlight falling across one face, another face shining out of a unique shadow. Like those group photographs in the biographies of famous men, where the face of the hero as a boy seems to shine out from the group, destined for his terrible career, although when the picture was taken all the faces were equal.

Before, they were all isolated in their jarring soliloquies, pathetic, violent, promissory adolescents. But then well enough they took upon themselves to be our orchestra (they are still playing our music, as I solemnly watch them). And now one, two, and three heads loom alone—doomed to it—as witnesses of immortal humanity.

The red-headed boy in the shaft of light has been doomed to sing in a new way; you can see the guilt and suffering of his absolute break with the generations on his stubborn and imploring face: imploring for us to listen to him, but stubborn to persist in his way whether we will or not. And why should we pay regard to him when he has broken with us? But also both he and we know that there is no break at all; we are laughing about it underneath, at the same time as we are set on making one another very unhappy.

Notice too, the face of that serious little girl in the shadow. She is cursed with an eerie and unerring intuition that she frightens her teachers and makes her fellows freeze. In self-protection and protection of the others, she hides her truth behind clever words, she is a smart-aleck. No one likes her, but everyone is going to need her. She weeps a good deal because the boys do not make love to her and the girls don't invite her to their parties. She would like to be like the others, but she cannot, by willing it, be stupider than she is.

The dark lad in the choir whose voice, among so many, rings pure and clear right to my ears: why is he frowning? He is a forlorn angel. He is not one of the fallen angels, for he has a ready entry into paradise;

but he seems to be lost in a wood, his wings bedraggled. His trouble is that he persists in wanting to drag us home with him, and we will not go along. He invites us, we start to go with him, and he is elated; then he finds we have deserted him, and he frowns. But he has courage—

Creator spirit, prosper us. *Wachet auf!* They are thundering the chorale. Let us join in.

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## Dachine Rainer DOWN THERE WITH ISHERWOOD

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD'S NOVELS HAVE ALWAYS received a fair share of attention; nevertheless, his work has been seriously misappreciated. Because of his seeming frivolity—an Oxonian bravura he shares with the name most closely associated with his own—that of W. H. Auden, his one time collaborator—it has been relatively simple for even Mr. Isherwood's admirers to ignore the profound merit of his work. By his creation of living characters—himself a minor character and the uniting link in each of his several works—and by his casual assumption of the variety and uniqueness of human beings, he succeeds in asserting the prior rights of the individual over against a dulling and damning society.

His *joie de vivre* bubbles to the surface and although it sinks from view when the individual flounders under the oppression of his own temperament and his social condition, it re-emerges, too, like a buoy in a rough swell. It is this individual, his artistic and spiritual integrity that most terrifies the state—the political state and, I sometimes think, the literary state as well. (There was no more specifically political reason than this, for example, that made the Communists liquidate their greatest modern writer, Isaac Babel.)

This respect for the individual and his rights—not to be happy, necessarily—(only few are chosen)—but to be alive, is the mark of any distinguished writer. Isherwood is, among British writers of his generation (he remains British although he has long been in self-imposed exile in several countries, primarily Germany and the U.S.) the most distinguished just as E. E. Cummings, more than a decade his senior is the conspicuous example of an American intransigent.

Isherwoodian characters and the unfolding of their stories suggest that however fascinating, gay, tormented, revolting we make our lives,

if we do not succumb and exist passively, if we *live* it, that is all that may be reasonably expected of us. In not accepting the criteria of an ordained way, one is open to error. With few measuring rods, save one's individual convictions, life must be lived pragmatically and by intuition. This may be considered heroic—some might say foolish—for life is not overly long and the possibility of error is infinite, but at least it is *lived*. This improvisational way of life exists not in contrast with a more intelligently arranged life, but with an unlived one. Consequently, Isherwood is to the common run of writers what any bohemian is to any IBM automaton.

His characters are not mechanized; they assert life over death. They find no merit in altering the face of nature (by nature I mean to include all that any complexity of arrangement our passions will) nor in examining, pondering, and ultimately intellectualizing the meaning out of life. Isherwood, as each novel's privileged character, so to speak, does take the liberty of a commentary on the others (and himself). He does this in an oblique way and with consummate artistry, so that his fiction—actually the best in personal memoir that the decades of this century have produced—is remote from dogma. It is a significant entertainment, moving and delightful.

If a man is sound to begin with, he will, like wine, improve with age. *Down There on a Visit*, his most recent\* is the best of Isherwood's novels. The *Down There* of the title, despite the critics and the raving of the blurb, has no metaphysical significance; it is not the nether world, nor the private hell of the individual. Partly, the reference is temporal: Isherwood returns to his youthful adventures in Germany; later, on a Greek island and lastly, in Hollywood. In order to re-investigate his past he must capture the *Down There* within himself which time—a private time, but not unlike the geological time of earth—has buried, layer upon layer. This is Proustian, not in style and execution but in intent, a *recherche du temps perdu*. This is the primary intention; a corollary is that there exists, even in the present, these layers, a *Down There* in each individual, which is buried by the inconsequential. As with past time, Isherwood permits the significant in present life to emerge from its obscurely hidden places. There is no indication of hell; hell is an ominous and dreary place. This book is too this-worldly and too funny.

But how does Isherwood set about his task as social critic? He doesn't rave like the angry men of the generation following his. He is too talented an artist to believe in the efficacy of direct propaganda. Look how he speaks of Waldemar, the companion of his Berlin days and after, of the depraved, yet curiously idyllic life on the Greek island to which they repair:

“ . . . he didn't care to work for more than a few weeks at a time. Mostly, he tended bar, or helped out at bakeries or butcher's shops, or set up pins in a bowling-alley. He seemed to have acquired, from his

\**Down There on a Visit*, by Christopher Isherwood (Methuen 21s.).

early days in Mr. Lancaster's office, a contempt for desk-work. It was a bore, he said, and *spiessig*—a word which he used to mean bourgeois, stuffy, timid, respectable, as opposed to proletarian, forthright, physical, sexy, adventurous. I rather liked Waldemar for taking this attitude, absurd as it was.”

But does Isherwood really think it is absurd? Then why does he select his characters from those, outside and sometimes far outside, middle-class society? Why is he so unlike those writers who manage to acquire a reputation for reflective disassociation from our times, but whose work occurs in the laboratory or the classroom?

Who does the desk work in literature? Is it not those angry young men, like Kingsley Amis?—that Academy of Angry Young Men who seem “timid, stuffy, respectable” indeed? But is it not the middle-brows in critical authority who select and establish the rebellious of any literary period? And how are they to know? Do not critics have most rapport with those writers espousing their own position?

Why do so many of our naughty and daring novels take place in a college? Because that's where the critics live. Their humour is college humour, their opposition to society ardent, ill-thought-out and of short duration (only until they are accepted) and inevitably amateurish. Isherwood is no amateur in living, politics or art.

Consider Waldemar's definition of desk work. Our society could be reduced to some semblance of attractiveness and order in one day. Just think what improvement a twenty-four hour moratorium on literacy would make: who would write the orders that are so unreasonably obeyed? Waldemar, as a simple fellow, is in a position not unlike that of Shakespeare's fools: his person incorporates an impressive objection to the *status quo*.

I do not single out Waldemar. As I've said, Isherwood's characters generally exist somewhat out of ordinary society, at a tangent to it. Waldemar is particularly important, however. It is through his life during the Munich crisis that Isherwood is best able to portray the political senselessness of events. The tragic note is struck when Waldemar turns relatively square, his wild life reduced to piddling mediocrity. He adjusts, marries conventionally, has an ordinary job, tries to con Isherwood into subsidizing the family's move to the U.S. But all this occurs in the latter part of the novel, decades after Waldemar's first appearance and deep involvement with the author. He has turned from a major to a minor character; he is lost to himself, to his youth and former effervescence, lost to Isherwood and so, to us. Waldemar's appearance is a coda, like that of Fortinbras, urging that life go on, even though in the face of tragic waste there is little motive for it to go on.

This fourth section, less successful than the first three, is interesting for a variety of reasons. Isherwood who is, and with significant modesty, a minor character, is sometimes more in than out of the world he despises. One of his difficulties is that he understands the “wrong” people correctly and that his sympathetic nature draws him into involve-

ment with these as with the others. This section which takes him to Hollywood—the setting for the meretricious in everything and of the phoney novel especially—shows him wavering among a variety of influences. (In the United States Hollywood and Madison Avenue rival the college and suburbia as “angry” settings). His most pressing problem is economic success. Its concomitant is a fruitless, joyless and uncommitted life. Paul, a near nihilist, and in serious difficulties himself, appears to save Isherwood. The blind leading the blind and, as is often the case, it works. Their salvation lies in sensuality, discipline and humour. I know no better life, no way of having more fun and of being satisfied in the acts of living than in a relationship—usually in its early stages—where there is the same rhythm and unity between the physical and the intellectual.

Isherwood rediscovers himself, as much as anyone can, and in the process is converted to, but becomes detached from Yogi philosophy. Detachment is Isherwood's great saving and it is his major flaw. There is a certain shallowness—partly artistry—a facile talent—partly high spirits—even when he is most disassociated, most anguished, he bubbles up to the surface. But it is something more: fear, perhaps?

He is terribly moving to anyone of sensibility. Although he shows enough of the false and futile to warrant nihilism, his belief in individual dignity—conviction rather than compassion—rescues him from this philosophy. Like most sensitive people, his pity has been larded with toughness. He is further sustained by perversity and contradiction.

Isherwood is a pacifist. In two sentences in this novel he provides what seems to me the best reason for being one. He happens to be a rather freewheeling Quaker, too, and in his previous novel, *The World in the Evening*, gives an hilarious, damning portrait of a Quaker lady. Nothing is sacred to Isherwood, save man. He is scrupulously honest (particularly about himself) perceptive, generous. I think we may call him a romantic ironist. He is a comedian, in the sense that Dante's *Inferno* can be described as a comedy. Isherwood sees comic flaws in tragic wastes.

Although his good humoured contempt for the square is evident—sometimes simply by omission—as though these people don't even exist in several of the worlds he inhabits—he is free of sanctimony and malice. (These are my particular criterion for spiritual greatness). And I wish I could say this about more orthodox bohemians and anarchists I have known. Isherwood is the sort of man I have always imagined in a free society, perhaps because he has always had at least one foot out of this one—and is likely to have at least one toe out of any more humane one.

Needless to say, I recommend all his writings; this novel, his best, in particular because apart from all considerations which point to his art as being an edification, *Down There on a Visit* happily fulfills the prime function of fiction: it is an Entertainment. And a grand one, too!

## Comment on Anarchy 13 & 14: Direct action and disobedience

Nicolas Walter's essays on direct action and civil disobedience bring to mind an almost forgotten campaign which took place in Britain just thirty years ago: the 'mass trespasses' in the Peak District, promoted by the more militant supporters of the proposed Access to Mountains Bill. These demonstrations were the type of direct action; they symbolised and realized their aim at once, however temporarily. It might be imagined that they were in every sense holiday occasions in view of the remoteness of this area of struggle from the familiar battlefields of status, subsistence and security, but this was not the case. In some part of this country a claim to free access to land—even uncultivated land—is a significant one and here it was seen as such and resisted fiercely. The confrontations with gamekeepers, paid helpers and police were unfriendly and on the rather confused and ill-prepared trespass on Kinderscout on April 25th, 1932, serious fighting broke out. Four hundreds took part in this trespass and at Derby Assizes afterwards four demonstrators received sentences of from two to four months imprisonment for unlawful assembly and breach of the peace whilst one got six months on charges of riotous assembly and causing grievous bodily harm.

After the war, with the impending designation of the National Parks, there was little activity of this sort though further north, after one meeting, the War Department notice-boards surrounding Ilkley Moor were formally taken down. The Army didn't re-assert its need of the moor.

The access agreements now in force in the Peak District seem to have satisfied all but the disaffected minority. Even now, there is a good deal yet unopened but the access negotiation machinery of the Peak Park Planning Board is trundling slowly onwards.

Nottingham.

H.D.

## The anarchists—from outside

ANARCHISM is “permanent revolution”, easier to define by its opposites (fascism, capitalism, communism, for instance) than by its positive qualities. It is no longer (if ever it was such a thing) a movement of bearded central Europeans stuffing, with tears in the eyes, indiscriminate bombs into letter-boxes in order to bring society crumbling about our

ears. Nor, perhaps, is it the movement of wet idealists that it may indeed once have been; anarchists now may well argue for the abolition of present forms of social organisation, though not because they believe that men will, if left alone, run their lives successfully. The contemporary anarchist may resist rule by others simply on the grounds that others are too stupid and too self-interested to be allowed to run any lives other than their own.

Such a pessimist would, in Britain now, belong to one of the individual-anarchist groups. On another wing of anarchism, equally respectably descended from Proudhon through Bakunin, come the remaining anarcho-syndicalists, believing in control by the workers of units of production, and often campaigning (perhaps together with members of the Independent Labour Party) for a re-humanisation of the trade unions. Anarchists, of whichever wing or of neither, are extremist libertarians; they are in revolt against large-scale organisation because it has failed to provide for the sick and the old, because it has failed to produce beautiful things, because it has destroyed human relationships between human beings, because it has blighted sex or craftsmanship or kindness. The main centre for anarchist thought in Britain is a bookshop in Fulham; the main organs of anarchist thought are the weekly *FREEDOM* and the monthly *ANARCHY*. The latter has a circulation of some 1,000 in Britain and 1,000 abroad; but the quality of the writing it contains it deserves better.

For anarchism has among its supporters far more than its share of dons, writers, architects, typographers, and other applied artists (not unexpectedly, the best jazz musicians in Britain are apt to turn up to blow at the Anarchists' Ball). Schools run on anarchist principles have won themselves, together with the salacious interest of the popular Press, the respect (as experiments, if not as achievements) of many non-anarchist educationists. The social malaise expressed by so many disillusioned social-realist writers in Britain (say, Colin MacInnes, Alan Sillitoe, Adrian Mitchell) has been hailed by anarchists as a vindication of what they have been saying for years: American beatnikery, as distinct from the British bowler-hatted trad jazz variety, represents a similar disillusion with society.

This, no doubt, is the growth strain in anarchism. For anarchists have found in the Bomb the ultimate support for the proposition that the State is always wicked. To sit down in front of the American and Russian embassies *and* in front of the Ministry of Defence all at once would be the ideal act for an anarchist of our time. Whitehall, the Bayswater Road, and Grosvenor Square are too far apart for this to be possible; but the anarchists, rather than any more conventionally organised political movement, can claim sincerely that the young sitters from the art schools of Britain are with them in spirit—whether they know it or not.

—NICHOLAS HARMAN,  
(*Political Quarterly*, July-Sept. 1962).

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