

THE GREEN IN DEATH VALLEY

THAT Alonzo! They oughta send him for Ambassador to the Kremlin! If anybody could straighten 'em out over there, he could. We knew he had suction with the Government, but we couldn't figure out why. He seemed like such a screwy guy. And when the bus load of girls pulled up to the place that time we pretty near went nuts wondering how he did it. But that was Alonzo—you never could tell what would happen next.

It was right after the war when they got together a hundred and thirty-seven of us guys from the federal prisons. There was forgers, mail frauders, Mann Act boys, draft dodgers, a couple conchies, some long-term guys the courtmartial had thrown the book at, a few counterfeiters, and a couple kidnapers (small-time). They hauled us out in the middle of Death Valley alongside a great big well and left us there with Alonzo. They briefed us first, sure. They told us this was going to be a big new experiment in peenology—that we hadda chance to be Pioneers. Maybe we did, but we didn't know what that meant. Looked like once-around-for-fun for the Government, again, but we had plenty a time. It was a change.

Finding water in the middle of Death Valley was crazy enough, but collecting 137 cons on a square mile of desert with no guards, no fences, no nothin but that odd ball Alonzo to look after us was a lot crazier. They set us all down there with a lot of packing cases fulla tools and fixtures, some grub, and a big pile a lumber and left us. Some guy from Washington made a speech about our chance to regain the "respect of society" and then he went away. Alonzo never made any speeches. He just asked how many could do carpentering and took about sixteen guys over to the mess tent for a conference. (I forgot to say that before we got there somebody built us

tenthouses to live in and fixed up a temporary cook shack and latrines and all that stuff.)

I said Alonzo never made any speeches, but he did talk to us one night when we'd been there about a week and had "convict city" planned out a little. After we ate he got up and scratched his head and said, "Now if I wanted to get out of this place I'd head west. I'd take about a gallon of water with me and a tarp and I'd travel only at night. I think I'd make it. I wouldn't try it, of course, until I'd been here long enough to get used to the climate. But that's what I'd do if I wanted to get out." He waited for the Bronx cheers. I guess he knew the fellas would think he was conning them, but it looked like they hadn't figured him out yet. I don't think they ever did. Anyhow, he explained he wouldn't care if they took off over the hill, except if they did they oughta be sure they could make it. He wouldn't chase 'em, he said, and he would only notify the Prison Bureau by ordinary mail. He said he had the idea that some day a sanatorium could exist here in Death Valley and his deal with the Government was that he was to have men from the federal prisons to civilize Death Valley and he didn't have to worry about the men getting away. He said he didn't care about that and he sounded like he meant it. It was just like he didn't care what we did and he didn't care what the Government did, he was that independent. Maybe the fellas never did believe that stuff about getting away but they sure found out he was independent. *Nobody* told him what to do. He didn't really tell anybody else what to do, either. There we were, stuck out in that hotbox of a Death Valley and if we wanted to be comfortable we had the stuff to build ourselves places to live in. That's what we did.

Alonzo didn't know too much about building, but some of the other guys had been around

construction jobs. They useta talk damn near all night planning the town. Some of the guys tried a little apple-polishing and said to Alonzo, "We got to have a church, don't we?" They thought he must be some kind of Holy Joe. But Alonzo just said, "If you want a church, have a church," and walked away. There wasn't any chaplain at the camp, so we settled for a combination rec hall and meeting house and some of the guys used to go in there and pray once in a while. But you couldn't get close to Alonzo that way. It was kinda hard to get close to Alonzo because you couldn't figure out his angle. One of the smart talkers in the bunch tried to start him going one time. "There's some good in every man," he said to Alonzo, "and a program like this ought to bring it out." Every cell block's got a couple of intellectuals, and we had six or seven like that in the camp. Alonzo just said, "Maybe there is, but I'll wait and see. All I figure about this place is it might give these men a chance to enjoy living and building something. But if some of them decide to be ornery all the way, I won't mind. I didn't make the system they're mad at, even if I did have something to do with setting up this camp. Maybe some bad'll come out, too." That was the thing about Alonzo. You couldn't surprise him and he just didn't seem to give a damn about "saving men." He wanted to build a town in the desert and he'd just as soon work with a kidnapper as a baseball player.

We did have some ornery guys. They oughto've been sent to Springfield instead of to us. One of them disappeared one night after we'd been there about three months and another one got so mad 'cuz he couldn't find anything to get mad at he got himself transferred to El Reno. Alonzo did tell us a little of what he had in mind. He said he figured if we could prove to ourselves we could make a good place to live and live in it a while, he would try to get us all pardons. He talked about pardons like they was tickets to Kansas City. Anyway, the idea helped out, even if it took almost a year for the fellas to get into the habit of going along on what Alonzo said. The way he talked, it seemed like he was measuring

what he said against something inside himself, and he never bothered with trying to measure anybody else. He even got the fellas figuring that way, now and then. If somebody bleated about what "the people outside" would think, Alonzo would look like he felt real sorry for him, but he wouldn't say anything.

Well, we laid out the town with a lot of little one-family houses, kinda in a circle. We put in grapes an' dates an' cots and after about three years we began to take in a little money on the grapes. The stuff grew good down there 'cuz we had plenty of water. It was then a lot of the guys began to get restless. Sure, they'd always been restless, but now they all had something you could call a home. 'Long about sunset these guys would be playin guitars an' singing, and we even had a hot band. Well, Alonzo talked to the married men and said he'd try to fix it so their wives and kids could come to live with them. He did it, an' what's more, he got the State to send the single men some girls outa one of their pens. I dunno how he did that, either. It must have taken some finagling. The girls lived in one of the old barracks till they was all picked out and a justice of the peace came over and married 'em off. Some reporters showed up but Alonzo put in a call to Washington so the story never got printed. Just as well. It would a been kind of a dirty trick to make a story on how sentimental some of those old cons got with their new girls an' little houses an' grape farms in the desert. It was all kind of pretty, too.

Wasn't much that happened after that. I mean, I got out after six years an' got myself this little place near Fontana. I raise some chickens an' some grapes an' get by all right. We (my wife was one of the girls) have a little boy and we're comfortable, and the neighbors don't ask no questions. The thing is, what *could* happen? There was a spot of green in Death Valley, and it began to get bigger an' bigger as the boys spread out. I used to drive over there once in a while to see Alonzo an' the boys. Alonzo, he got married,

too (to one of the girls), and they had a boy a couple years older than ours. Then even the lifers all got pardons an' cars an' would go over to Mojave now and then, or even to L.A. But they liked it out on the desert. I guess you'd say they got "adjusted." It was nice, but not exciting like in the early days.

Alonzo didn't change much. He looked about thirty-eight when I first met him, and about forty the last time I saw him. That was a little while after he was talking to two or three of the boys about going to Alaska. "You see," he said, "they won't let me do anything where there's likely to be a lot of publicity. To tell the truth, they're scared of me," he said. "I've got a kind of nuisance value, but I want to be reasonable, too. I could get them to let you three start out in Alaska with a new crew, just as we did here." I guess he picked them out because they were getting restless again. "It's colder'n hell in Alaska," one of them said. "Cold there, hot here, what's the difference?" another one said. It seemed like they was gonna go for the idea, if Alonzo could swing it, and he said he'd try.

I happened to be there when the Government man came out to talk to Alonzo. By that time there was an air strip about a mile away, and an Army plane brought him out. So this Government guy got in one night around five o'clock and had dinner with us, an' then we went over to Alonzo's place to talk. The Government man wanted to be alone with Alonzo, but Alonzo didn't arrange it that way. It was a funny thing the way the Government man acted with Alonzo. He was real nice, but you could see he had a slow burn about the whole thing. Who was this little guy out in Death Valley who could tell the U.S. Government where to get off?

"You wanted me to tell you what I would do," Alonzo said to him, "so I thought up this Death Valley project. It's worked out pretty well, hasn't it?"

The Government man said yes it had. "But," he said, "we were able to keep it pretty quiet. We

just can't have a repetition of what happened before, you know," he said. "All that terrible publicity." So that was it. Alonzo had something on the Government! The four of us ex-cons were laughing like hell inside. He had something on the Government and it was so bad they couldn't do anything about it. We couldn't figure out why they didn't just put him away somewhere—they got plenty of places for that—and later on we decided they couldn't put him any place he wouldn't go by himself. How he stopped them we didn't know, but he did, and that was that. The next day he told us they just couldn't arrest him—he was born that way—couldn't tell why—but nobody could do *anything* to him.

Well, you know. Whatdya say to a guy like that? You take it or you leave it, and here was Alonzo making a deal with a big wheel from Washington who stood there with his hat in his hand. So three of the boys got tickets to Alaska and went up there to get the Quonset huts put up—it's colder'n hell in Alaska and tents wouldn't be any good. I got a letter last week from one of them. Alonzo went up there once and then went away somewhere. But the new boys have got there and things are starting to roll. The three oldtimers are talking about how they'll have Alaska civilized pretty soon an' then they say they're goin to stake out Washington, D.C., for the treatment. I wonder what Alonzo would think of that.

THE ARTS OF PEACE

SINCE the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, there has been an awakening feeling of responsibility among scientists. The physicists were heard from first, some of whom formed an association to consider the new problems created by modern physics and the role of physicists in empowering governments to accomplish such devastation. Men eminent in the field of nuclear physics began to stump the country in behalf of international controls of atomic weapons and power. J. Robert Oppenheimer said that "scientists have known sin," Norbert Wiener permitted publication of his letter refusing to assist in military research on "guided missiles," and a group of scientists formed an organization concerned with the social responsibility of scientists.

Only recently, another such organization came into being—or rather, not an organization but a "working committee" of social scientists which operates under the name, Research Exchange on the Prevention of War. "The primary purpose of the Research Exchange," according to an announcement, "is to provide means of communication among interested individuals in all areas of social science." The working committee publishes a bulletin, organizes research projects, provides channels for collaboration, and generally attempts to coordinate efforts for the eventual goal of "the development of an integrated and usable body of knowledge about the elimination of war." (Further information about the Exchange may be obtained from Dr. James Karper, Psychology Department, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.)

There are many ways to set the problem of war, and the longer such a committee works, the more avenues of investigation it is likely to open up. At the moment, that such a group should have been formed at all seems more important than its specific approaches to the question, which, so far, for obvious reasons, are at best tentative and in the academic tradition. It is certainly a fact that governments themselves cannot prevent war; they are more likely to cause it, so long as the great mass of individual citizens leave such questions to the

fortunes of diplomacy and "national interest," while it is equally certain that such groups are bound to come up regularly with useful formulations and basic questions. Following is a suggestive paragraph from the Nov. 1, 1953 *Bulletin*:

The provincial personality {writes Robert F. Creegan of New York's State College in Albany} finds threat and provocation in all surprising social situations. The universal man finds the promise of wider sharing, or of productive conciliation, in the discovery of unexpected social trends, attitudes, or demands. Since shared experimentalism (democracy) requires defense of the conditions of sharing and of experimenting, however, even the most universal man must at times consider policies of defense against threats. Whether total war will be a rationally possible choice under the conditions of technology which are beginning to prevail, however, is a question which deserves consideration on its own merits.

Nobody wins "total" war. As Maury Maverick once put it, "Who won the San Francisco earthquake?"

It is also worth asking, even if difficult to answer: How many of the wars of the past hundred years might have been avoided if such "universal men" had been more numerous and able to make prevail their attitude of finding "the promise of wider sharing, or of productive conciliation, in the discovery of unexpected social trends"?

Then there is the further question: Do the present methods of "being prepared" for even defensive war work against the attitude of the "universal man," almost to the extent of effectively preventing its spread?

It may be that, in the long run, even "preparedness," which, especially in a mass society, must be psychological before it is physical and actual, will turn out to be no more a "rationally possible choice" than war itself.

We leave the matter here, with these distinctly unpleasant, and not wholly hypothetical, dilemmas.

REVIEW

CONTROVERSY WITHOUT FOCUS

EDUCATORS and teachers, we suspect, will always be debating the issues in education, and parents, having a natural interest in what is happening to their children during school hours, will continue to develop strong opinions concerning educational methods and objectives. This is certainly as it should be. What ought not to be a fact, but which seems to be, at present, is that when educators discuss education, they consider things which the parents and school boards seldom even think of, much less discuss.

The difference between the professional educator's approach to the problems of education and the parent's approach—or that of many parents—is probably an aspect of the larger, society-wide gulf which separates the "intellectuals" from the "common people." That the gulf is real, and not the invention of an essayist looking for something to write about, is found in recent events in California and elsewhere. Teachers, for example, are not really worried about what a study of UNESCO will do to the children in the public schools. On the whole, teachers and educators have sense enough to recognize that, while they have problems, the "menace" of UNESCO is not one of them. But a controversy over UNESCO in the Los Angeles Public Schools recently rocked that city until the School Board, in self-defense, voted to abandon the UNESCO program. The super-patriots, in short, were victorious.

Another and broader indication of the level of *popular* controversy about education in the United States is found in a somewhat demagogic article in *Collier's* for Feb. 5—"The Struggle for our Children's Minds," by Howard Whitman. With what purports to be a display of measured editorial "objectivity," *Collier's* introduces the article:

American education has drifted into the gravest crisis in its 300-year history. The future not only of

our public schools but of our country may depend on what all of us do about it now.

Deteriorating buildings and the shortage of teachers are only a part of that crisis. Most important is what is being taught our children and how it is being taught. Subtly, unnoticed by most Americans, highly organized left-wing and right-wing extremist groups are exerting unprecedented pressures on the public schools in a struggle to capture the minds of our children—the minds of the future citizens of the United States. The pressure groups have already gained a foothold in a number of communities across the country and are reaching out for others. Parents in many of these cities and towns are discovering that their children no longer are being given the basic education needed to face today's problems, let alone enter college. Some children are no longer taught how to write. Censorship is reaching into the classrooms to ban objective study, even of such American-supported organizations as the United Nations.

Never before have our schools, what they believe in, what and how they teach, needed such a searching inquiry. Never before have the health and strength of the nation more critically demanded it.

These rabble-rousing paragraphs bristle with assumptions—assumptions doubtless shared, if less articulately, by *Collier's* readers and many other millions. There is for instance the assumption, at least implicit, that we, or somebody, *knows* what is "the basic education needed to face today's problems." The *Collier's* article would have been far more useful if it had pointed out that this is the question which educators themselves are debating, and ought to debate and that it is only the demagogues who claim to have the final answer. It is this assumption which tends to make discussions by serious educators seem irrelevantly academic and unimportant to the "real business" of bringing up our young and "preparing them for life." The educational controversy between John Dewey and Robert Hutchins was about this assumption. It is not a controversy about education alone, but is about the nature of man as well. It is basic and it remains unsettled. Any sort of popular article on education which passes this question by as though it did not exist is out of focus, and if the article

has an incendiary quality, it will be positively harmful.

Let us acknowledge that educators are working in a state of confusion, that the best of them have their bewildered moments. But let us acknowledge at the same time that the confusion of educators is neither a sin nor a crime it may reveal their essential honesty—and that those who refuse to admit to a certain amount of confusion, these days, are either superficial in mind or opportunist in motive.

Let us take time out to recognize, also, that modern education is largely the product of earnest men and women who for the past thirty years or so have been trying to formulate a constructive educational program for the United States. Parents, for the most part, have not shown much interest in their efforts, and do not, today, save in the terms of disturbance and indignation chronicled by Mr. Whitman. Parents have become interested in education only because it seems to be going wrong. It does not often occur to them that education may be going wrong because the world is going wrong. In view of the world's turmoil and indecision, why should it surprise us that educators, who, if nothing else, and despite differences among themselves, have for more than a generation tried to teach in the light of philosophical and social ideals, now exhibit certain failures and at the same time are unable to make themselves understood by school boards and patriotic pressure groups? It is a fact that during this generation, teachers, educators, and other intellectuals had to carry the burden of serious thinking and planning for the population at large, which has just not been interested.

What sort of thing has upset the parents interviewed by Mr. Whitman? Well, for one example, the abandonment of the old report card system. A group of parents in St. Paul, Minnesota, decided to investigate the "new type" report cards in use in the city's high school, and after several months produced a 3000-word analysis. The new cards eliminated grading by the

letters A, B, C, D, and F, and substituted "Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory." The St. Paul parent group commented:

The abolition of grades is contrary to an age-old truth—that man's incentive is to work for reward. Competition is a stimulus for achievement whether in sports or in school. Football, baseball and basketball games are played with the main objective—to win. Eliminate the scoring from these events, and the players and spectators would lose interest. Eliminate scoring in golf—how many people would continue to be enthused about golf.

When the businessman-leader of this parents' group found himself labeled a "Fascist" in a PTA meeting, and accused of "trying to wreck the school system," he began to feel that the country was coming apart at the seams. "I think the worst moment of all," he said, "was the day my own child came home and asked, 'Daddy, are you an enemy of the schools?'"

It must have looked to this man as though the "liberals" and "progressives" were in diabolical league against him. The real argument, however, is about the nature of man and the sort of education and society that are suitable for the best expression of human beings. He is apparently not interested in that argument which, for him and his investigating associates, was settled long ago by the "age-old truth" that men will work only for reward.

But this is only an age-old *half-truth*. The other half is that some men are animated by other and perhaps better motives. Further, no father would set a five-year-old in competition on an equal basis with a ten-year-old. It wouldn't be *fair*. Yet in every class there is a spread of native ability which presents a problem of this sort to the teacher. Children of limited ability have psychological trouble when made to compete with more agile minds. This is an educational reality and when school days are over it creates enormous social problems leading to extensive regulatory and social welfare legislation. The measures taken by the new education may not be the best solution, but we do know that to the

degree that competitiveness is emphasized, these problems increase, both in school and out. But the average parent is not interested in such problems, despite the fact that they have engaged the attention of educators for many years. The average father just wants to know how Johnny is doing in school, and the new type report cards don't tell him. So he gets annoyed with the schools and with the people who determine the methods which are used. It is easy to see how some critics of the schools, noting that both teachers and communists oppose competition, conclude that the new report cards are part of a gigantic "red" plot.

Another failing of the schools described by Mr. Whitman is the low quality of reading, writing, and spelling ability. The examples he gives are dreadful. If we admit that they are representative, then criticism is in order. Mr. Whitman quotes an incredible passage from a supporter of "the new teaching methods" in which it is said: "We shall someday accept the thought that it is just as logical to assume that every boy must be able to read as it is that each one must be able to perform on the violin, that it is no more reasonable to require that each girl shall spell well than it is that each one shall bake a good cherry pie." If this quotation is authentic, and serious, then it can hardly be representative of educational opinion. The tools of communication cannot be compared with playing a violin or baking a pie. This seems Mr. Whitman's most justifiable complaint.

What seems a bit ridiculous in Mr. Whitman's report is the vast amount of emotion generated over the modern trend to a printed rather than a Spencerian script in the teaching of writing. Parents complain that they have difficulty in reading their children's writing. But this, surely, is a minor matter and not something on which to base serious charges against modern educational methods. The pity of this and other sources of concern about education is that they obscure the genuine issues in educational theory and tend to

close the minds of parents to all but petty complaints. Parents have need of learning to share the problems of teachers, but to do this they will have to do some of the thinking that educators have been doing all their lives. Often teachers feel that parents "interfere" with the educational process, and Mr. Whitman gives several instances of irate parents being shut out of school board meetings or being otherwise prevented from having a hand in the planning of the education of their children. One supporter of what Mr. Whitman calls the "new education" said, "We don't want parents demanding things. We hire experts, and the people should let them work. You can't listen to the public whenever it wants something."

The obvious question is, "Who has a better right than tax-paying parents to demand changes in what and how their children are taught?" Nobody, we suppose. But there is more than this involved. Are the parents really ready to share with teachers the long-term concerns of education? Are they willing and eager to understand the trends which led John Dewey to inaugurate his "progressive" revolution, and then to consider the counter-criticisms and analyses of Robert M. Hutchins? Or are they looking for slogans to shout and horrible examples to hold up to scorn?

The only way parents can really help with the educational problems of today is by becoming, in some measure, educators themselves. Teachers become a little touchy when parents announce with grand finality just what is wrong with the schools and the teachers. How do they know?

The January *Scientific Monthly* printed an article on education, "The Retreat from Heresy," by Frederick C. Neff, which illustrates the kind of thinking some teachers are doing. It is a remarkably fine article dealing with the issues behind such phrases as "academic freedom" and "controversial subjects." When parents learn to grasp and appreciate such articles, they will be in a position to render help and encouragement to

hard-pressed educators. At present, there is reason to think that almost none of the parents described by Howard Whitman would have any notion at all of the importance of this *Scientific Monthly* article. In consideration of the tensions created by the term, "controversial," the following passage by Mr. Neff has self-evident importance:

Before change there must be controversy, and before controversy there need to be facts. The freedom to seek out and verify knowledge is the only ultimate guarantee that discussion about facts can lead to intelligent change. When the young are denied opportunity to participate in discussions of a controversial nature, we can scarcely expect an adult generation that is equipped to grapple with the growing complexities of the problems they will inherit. To say that an issue is controversial is to say that it deals with a problem which admits of more than one solution. To solve a problem scientifically means to gather relevant evidence, to examine the reliability of the evidence, and to test out, in one way or another, proposed suggestions emerging from an examination of such evidence. It means, on the negative side, a rejection of the notion that answers to problems are predetermined, that they may be found lying about, ready-made, labeled "solution." Insofar as our schools are seriously dedicated to the critical, problem-solving approach to learning, and to the extent that we are truly concerned with cultural improvement, there is bound to be controversy. Indeed, there is reason for making of controversy the very heart of the educational process. . . .

To judge from recent outpourings on the subject, the danger to educational freedom is the likelihood that teachers and professors will not longer be able to engage with students in discussions of a controversial nature. The importance of such a danger is not to be minimized, and the consequences it would entail are grave indeed.

Mr. Neff offers a valuable quotation from John Stuart Mill:

. . . it is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most, by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in orthodox conclusions. The greatest harm is done to those who are not heretics, and whose whole mental development is cramped, and their reason cowed, by fear of heresy. Who can compute what the world loses in the multitude of promising intellects combined with timid characters, who dare not follow out any bold, vigorous,

independent train of thought, lest it should land them in something which would admit of being considered irreligious or immoral? . . . Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think.

We submit that legitimate opinions on the problems of education are practically out of the question without a deep appreciation of what Mill says here. Yet nearly every attack on modern education is obviously made without regard for or interest in such considerations. They are simply not regarded as "problems."

Many things may be wrong with modern education. We find plenty of fault with it, ourselves. But an attack on education which grows out of the more or less trivial results of much larger issues is without dignity and can have no good result.

COMMENTARY

A DIFFICULT QUESTION

THE question of the differences among men is so systematically ignored in our society—publically ignored, that is, since unscrupulous men make a large profit on human differences, and liberals are afraid to discuss them lest they be taken for fascists or disciples of Nietzsche—that we are beginning to think that no question has greater importance.

The differences among men may be the foundation on which "realistic" autocracies are founded, but they are also behind the weaknesses which a democratic society so readily exhibits. The problems besetting modern education are so plainly a result of the differences among men that one wonders when educators will have the courage and intellectual honesty to discuss them openly. Mr. Neff (see Review) finds one educator ready to do so, but this cynical individual proposes simply that the intelligent have the responsibility of devising "conditionings" by means of which the untutored and untutorable masses may be controlled. There is nothing new about this theory. Thomas Hobbes held that religion had the function of instilling fear in the population and restraining the brutal and disorderly impulses of the great majority.

Such theories are the equivalent of suggesting that the only way to deal with immaturity is with a club—either a physical club wielded by the State or a psychological club wielded by the Church. Glamor and beguilements, of course, are to be added whenever appropriate. Hitler was a past master of both techniques.

But with twenty or thirty years of clinical experience in psychotherapy behind us, we now know that no one is really helped by such methods, and we ought to be ready to recognize that social relationships—and international relationships—are sure to end in disaster under the regime of the club.

We readily admit the immaturity of children and say we believe in kindness and understanding in meeting its problems. Why not admit the immaturity in many adults, and plan like methods of assistance? Why should such an admission constitute confession of an intent to exploit?

The idea has difficulties, of course. We can explain the immaturities of children, but we can't explain the differences in maturity among adults. Yet they are real. There ought to be a way of considering such problems without sounding or becoming presumptuous or arrogant. Perhaps one way to begin such discussions would be to allow only men who care nothing for personal power to participate.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THERE are so many ways of writing about education, and the trouble is that all, or nearly all, of them are just that—dissertations "about" something. Now, there doesn't seem to be much anyone can do about this predicament, which exists not alone in respect to education, but in respect to most everything else as well. The intellect abstracts from direct experience; it is the intellect which distinguishes man from animal, which makes reflection possible; but it is also the intellect which tempts us to become a theorist or a moralist. Too much theory—even highly ethical theory—has its special dangers, because theories can become obsessions and the man obsessed can no longer communicate with others, be they fellow adults or children.

For these reasons, and attempting to blend the "intellectual" approach to education with awareness that intellect is not the whole show, it seems to us that education should periodically be redefined by everyone. A definition requires a trained intellect, but it also requires simplicity. A definition takes us, or at least should take us, back to essences, and an "essence" is always more than an intellectual abstraction. . . . Education, in this particular moment's redefinition, is simply meaningful communication. Here we would draw from Hutchins' *University of Utopia*, recalling his remarks to the effect that the means for education, at all levels, should be "conversations aimed toward truth."

The value of defining education as communication, and more particularly as conversation, may not be immediately apparent. We may reflect, however, that a great many of the worries of parents and teachers stem from the feeling that "education" is something that should be *happening* to the children in their charge, entering the child mind in prescribed doses. If the dosage hasn't been successfully administered, or if it has somehow not been assimilated, something is

wrong. But if education is simply conversation *aimed* toward truth, we have as educators only one requirement to meet—namely, to be sure that a conversation is presently occurring between ourselves and the child—or university student—in our temporary care.

Let's look for a moment at this word "temporary," for it seems to have a good deal to do with the attitude of the parent or teacher, especially the parent. The fact that a child will not always be a child, ours to control and condition as we will, seems to escape many for whom the responsibility of parenthood looms as so great a fulfillment that they never wish the fulfillment to be complete. Psychologists warn against the parents who try to live their own lives in their children, and with good reason. What the word "temporary" should bring to mind is that each young man will make his own life. Making one's own life means building the constituents of one's own mind.

When we have a "conversation" with a person much younger than ourselves, we implicitly recognize all these crucial facts. In a conversation, a true conversation, one never talks down to the other person. The greatest and best-loved teachers have never talked down to even the smallest child, deriving the greatest satisfaction from being able to feel and speak naturally at the child's own level. Even with babies, the knowing adult, instead of overwhelming the infant with his presence, chin-chucking and talking at the tiny face, waits for the little one to begin *his* part of "the conversation"—that is, to show some independent interest in the adult. This he will often do, if not alarmed at the outset by too much hugeness in proximity. Similarly, with older children, unless we give them time to establish the existence of their own personalities in relation to us—unless they know we are really aware of them as individuals—they cannot participate in a conversation. For in a conversation each party must feel that he has something to contribute to the discourse. Again, the educators who have

earned universal respect have been those who approached all students with an air of attentive expectancy—they knew pupils are always teaching the teacher something, if he is wise enough to realize and profit by it.

So it seems to us that the most practical question for the teacher or parent is this: How can one prepare himself, inwardly, for making the most of all opportunities for conversation with the young? No list of subjects can possibly be compiled which serve adequately for all children. A conversation is always original, something which never took place before in exactly the same way, and never will again. While we may often traverse the same general fields—we may, for instance, be assigned the task of instructing the young in the rudiments of mathematics—the pathway across the field will wander a different course each time.

But there are many more parents than teachers. Also, since children have to get the hang of genuine conversation with adults in order to enable them to derive the most benefit from teachers who practice this esoteric science of education, it is the parent who is the key to vitalizing the whole process of education, both in and out of schools. If a parent is able to discover how, when, and where his own children are best able to learn, and if he finds joy in conversations with the child, he is aiding the psychological preparation which each child needs to gain the most from school and college. To go back again to Mr. Hutchins, some of the most welcome memories of students associated with him at Chicago center around the impromptu "bull sessions" which occurred whenever Hutchins found himself with leisure time in the proximity of undergraduates. These were indeed conversations, which no one could mistake for anything else, and we imagine that any student who thus learned that the president of his University placed a high value on conversation was immediately better equipped to approach the more formal instructions of his classroom in a

participatory frame of mind. Hutchins, we surmise, *wanted* to be a participant, not because duty called, but because it was his pleasure. In any event, we have now revealed, with much circumlocution, the shape of a key which we think can unlock many doors which presently separate parents and children, teachers and pupils. Our "conversations" have to involve what *we* are interested in just as much as the things in which the young are interested. A child will "learn" far more from our talk when it interests us, and be far more likely to ask interested questions.

FRONTIER

BOOKS FOR OUR TIME—Discussion

SO FAR, discussion of points raised in the BFOT series hasn't left the question of why MANAS has so little to say concerning "the arts," and has included among the books of this series no plays, novels, or poems. Dr. Wienpahl, for one, who brought the matter up, has given our "answer" to his original criticism (MANAS, Jan. 6) polite attention, but will not let us sidestep his view that the books we selected turn out to involve philosophical analysis, which seems to indicate a suspicious leaning towards moralistic stuffiness.

Another subscriber, himself an artist, is plainly pleased by Wienpahl's first point, but takes an even dimmer view of lists presuming to recommend "inspirational" works:

He communicates as follows:

Gentlemen: Wienpahl does have a Point here for you to consider; especially inasmuch as you, sirs, do have a penchant (when plunging into print) for adding to the heavy increment of published stuff further matter that but emphasizes the "too serious, too unconsciously moral outlook" that seeks to cope with the essentially frivolous and consciously immoral attitudes that have established the Quandary known as "Our Times." (This is a long sentence that I've not troubled to construct on strictly scientific principles. In short, it happily resembles many of your own creative sentences. I trust you appreciate my effort.)

And yet, must not every last soul *individually* seek whatever books exist in tribute to and in extension of its *particular* "understanding" (subjective and spiritual, as distinguished from objective and rational)? In short, is each person obliged to suffer that his Inspirational books be picked for him by *other* persons? Is it not enough that on every side he's gratuitously instructed for Mankind's Sake? Rational, factual, "scientific" education comprises that body of knowledge which each man is at liberty to *take*; while the transcendental, intangible, inspirational measures of his development comprise a unique treasure that inevitably must be *sought*. Any list whatever of "Books for Our Time" understandably can have but a limited range, a recognized modicum of practical

value; yet no list whatever of "Books for Our Time" is sufficient (as you yourself would admit) to indicate precisely how the hopeful reader *is* to train himself to find those more elusive books that mirror, confirm, and enlarge the confines of his own singular spirit. "Creative literature" for any given man is necessarily that literature which he morally is bound to find (or else compose) for himself. It is the part of literature that every thoughtful man should scorn to ask others help him discover. In this vital Quest, the only valid course to follow is his unwearying own.

Honus Volkenschlager

So H.V. apparently does not agree with Wienpahl that the BFOT list would be improved by inclusion of at least one novel or poem. He feels, in fact, that such a recommendation would make the list even more presumptuous. This seems true enough.

There is, of course, no real disagreement between these two correspondents. It is obvious that if one were to recommend (and discuss) a novel or a play, the result would be the same—more intellectualizing *about* something. The only direct experience would be for a person to read the "creative work" itself, as both Wienpahl and Herr Volkenschlager have it (or perhaps *do* the creating!).

Critics of creative literature impress us much less than critics of philosophical expressions; the latter are *meant* to be discussed rather than simply experienced, or rather, the discussion is part of the experience they initiate. This suggests that philosophical and psychological analysis is part of "really living"—is creative in its own way.

In our first discussion of the "indifference to the arts" question—raised in MANAS for Jan. 6 by Wienpahl's "Letter from Santa Barbara"—we had barely enough space for the letter itself, and for quotations from Macneile Dixon illustrative of his (and our) appreciation of what Wienpahl was getting at. Our feeling then was that Dixon's writing leaves an unforgettable impression along the very lines of Wienpahl's concern. At least, he (Dixon) helped to peel a number of scales from the present writer's eyes, making the artist, the

musician, the author, and the poet seem closer companions than had been the case before. But Dixon doesn't tell you to read more plays or poems; he simply makes you feel more like doing it.

Perhaps there are three universal languages, all of which a man needs to be able to speak to know the most of himself. One is the language of symbolism (for some a form of religion) as indicated by Campbell and Fromm. Another is the language spoken by the arts. The third is the language of philosophy—or perhaps we should say, of philosophical psychology. It seems clear that it is in this third realm that *discussion* is most profitable. It is here that MANAS endeavors to operate, proceeding upon the assumption that part of "really living" for men is the effort to improve the quality of their value judgments.

The analytical mind has here its greatest scope, and it is with this area of man's experience that MANAS is peculiarly concerned. But one does not have to discount either religion, *per se*, nor the arts, in order to champion the value of philosophic discussion. Devotion to the latter discipline may mean simply that a man knows he is bound to be both somewhat religious and somewhat artistic in any case, and therefore wishes to examine, and whenever possible to improve, his religious and æsthetic standards.

No subject, it seems to us, is more deserving of attention than that of the strange relationship between reason and intuition. The inner core of man's being is revealed by both. No æsthetic experience is complete without reflection—reason turned inward—nor is any form of reasoning complete which does not evoke feelings and convictions. *The Human Situation* is, for us, a "great book" precisely because it constitutes a dual approach to experience, showing why man has, and must have, respect for both the heart and the head. Dixon, lover of the arts and himself an artist of prose, helps us to see that man does not live by reason alone, but also perceives that "anti-intellectualism" can never be more than a passing

fancy. We have heard him on the subject of the arts; now give him ear in respect to the reflective mind:

The human mind is no mere excrescence upon nature, but a part of nature, and as a part of nature represents nature, an attribute as much at least as any other part of her innermost being. Yet again, the intellect grows with what it feeds on, expands with the information it gathers, and no limit can be assigned beforehand to its powers. You have no right at all to assume a static reason in an unchanging world.

Innumerable attempts have been made, in the interests of the spiritual life, to find a substitute for reason, to discover another than the intellectual path to the sanctuary, an inner way. Reason may, indeed, itself acknowledge that there are regions beyond its powers of exploration, veils it cannot lift, and that knowledge may reach us by channels other than its own. The heart, as Pascal said, has reasons of its own. Yes, indeed, but every heart has its private and incommunicable secrets. There is no common ground. And here we perceive the intellect's grand prerogative and advantage. And remember its magnificent hospitality. Reason keeps an open house for all comers. It introduces us to a noble partnership. Here we can come to an understanding with each other, exchange opinions, correct each other's errors, have our eyes opened. The reason is its own protector. Nor need we doubt that its present powers may expand, that they are prophetic of higher powers to come.

The universe slumbers in the soul, and we awake to it day by day. In proportion as we come to know it we come to know ourselves. Nothing is so much to be feared as any alliance with the despisers of reason, nothing so much to be desired as to follow whithersoever the argument leads.

We are not to assume that what is now unknown is forever unknowable. Reason till reason fail, till reason itself discover a power superior to its own—we must stand to that.