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VISION AND REFORM

THE authors of Utopias do not get into trouble because they write Utopias. They encounter opposition or obstacles only when they attempt to apply utopian principles to the very imperfect societies of their time. Socrates lost his life because he insisted on applying his principles in Athens and Plato was kept prisoner at Syracuse by a tyrant who discovered the inconveniences that the philosopher intended to impose on his accustomed mode of rule. Nor did Thomas More suffer over-much from the daring expressed in his *Utopia;* it was only when he insisted on practicing similar integrities in relation to the self-indulgent policies of Henry VIII that he lost his head.

Since vision always outreaches human practice, men commonly regard visionary conceptions of social order as sentimental impossibilities, accepting the status quo as the limit of the feasible in human affairs. A busy man, concerned with his own practical ends, has no difficulty in finding evidence to suggest that such high goals, if not beyond reach, will require extraordinary effort on the part of many people, so why should he waste his time?

The Socratic man, confronted by the same discouraging facts, adopts another view. He does not deny the facts, but simply to arrange his life so that they cause him the least personal unpleasantness or bother is for him no solution. Rather, with painstaking care, he devises means of applying the principles of his vision to situations and relationships which are the very opposite of ideal. The difficulty, here, is that his activities in this direction often appear to have hardly any relation to vision. Outwardly, at least, he will find himself involved in saddening salvage or even scavenger functions. In an upside-down situation, "doing good" may have little or no spontaneous appeal. Gandhi's lifework is an excellent illustration of this problem. Gandhi dreamed of an India made up of hundreds of thousands of small villages—healthy, wholesome, social units populated by self-reliant agriculturalists and artisans. Yet in his time the villages of India had fallen into extreme decay. Many of the peasants lacked enough to eat, while the artisans, as a class, had largely disappeared. Of what had to be done he wrote:

> Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit. The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now. . . .
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> Villages have suffered from neglect by those who have had the benefit of education. They have chosen the city life. The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of villagers. . . .
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> We must have unquenchable faith in our mission. We must be patient with the people. We are ourselves novices in village work. We have to deal with a chronic disease. Patience and perseverance, if we have them, overcome mountains of difficulties. We are like nurses who may not leave their patients because they are reported to have an incurable disease.

It is this appearance of "incurable disease" that discourages many from trying to help in last-ditch social situations. Their attention is more easily drawn to utopian projects unmarred by ugly current realities. It is true enough, of course, that not everyone is qualified to nurse people afflicted by incurable disease. Candidates for such work are unusual persons to begin with, and then they have to learn how to do it.

Only a generation ago it seemed natural for a Westerner—or an American, at any rate—to think of the conditions of India as forming a special

case, as unique in the annals of deprivation and poverty. Today, however, what is happening in the large cities of the United States comes very close to having the appearance of incurable disease. There is hardly any other way to describe the conditions of life for hundreds of thousands of people in the city of New York, at the present time. What, one wonders, would a "utopian" of Gandhi's convictions do in relation to the misery and unhappiness of these people?

There can be no simple answer to this question. The futility of the sort of "slum clearance" and "urban renewal" programs which are now attempted is made quite clear in books like *The City Is the Frontier* by Charles Abrams, in Richard Whalen's *A City Destroying Itself,* and, for gruesome detail, in Julius Horwitz' novel, *The Inhabitants.* Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* might be inspected by readers with strong stomachs.

The conventional reform projections of officials hold out little hope. As Amitai Etzioni wrote in *The Public Interest* for the summer of 1968:

> Mayor John V. Lindsay testified before Congress that he needed $100 billion to rebuild New York's slums, at the present rate, it would take forty years before such an amount would be available to eliminate *all* American slums. And that is housing alone! With regard to all needs, a study by the National Planning Association calculated that if the United States sought, by 1985, to realize the modest goals specified by the Eisenhower Commission on National Goals, it would (assuming even a 4 per cent growth rate in GNP) be at least $150 billion a year short.
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> But even if the economic resources were available, and the political will to use them for social improvement were present, we would still face other severe shortages, principally professional manpower. In the United States in 1966 there were an estimated four to five million alcoholics, 556,000 patients in mental hospitals, and 501,000 out-patients in mental health clinics. To serve them there were about 1,100 psychoanalysts and 7,000 certified psychotherapists. If each therapist could treat fifty patients intensively, a staggering figure by present standards, this would still leave most alcoholic and mental patients without effective treatment. Today most of those in mental hospitals are not treated at all: only 2 per cent of the hospital staffs in 1964 were psychiatrists, only 10 per cent were professionals of any sort; most of the staff are "attendants," more than half of whom have not completed high school and only 8 per cent of whom have had any relevant training.

Added to this broad account of the inadequacy of the resources for meeting urban ills is the undeniable fact that the available resources are often extremely ineffectual, as William Ryan showed in his report, *Distress in the City,* an exhaustive evaluation of the public mental health facilities in the city of Boston. While Boston has more medical facilities than many cities of similar size, including centers for advanced training such as the Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. Ryan found again and again that the approach of highly trained specialists to the problems of mental disorder in a large city is often irrelevant to the actual needs of the persons referred to them. The entire social situation needs overhauling. Dr. Ryan offered this illustration:

> . . . consider the case of a depressed and defeated working-class housewife turning to someone for help with a multitude of problems that are overwhelming her: an alcoholic husband who disappears for days at a time; the piling up of pressing debts; an eviction notice from the landlord; two children in diapers and a third who is enuretic; a sickly daughter and a neglected oldest son whose school work is worsening daily; headaches and stomach aches; increasing trouble with her neighbors as she becomes more and more short-tempered, and a growing sense of guilt as she finds that she herself is turning more and more to liquor for consolation.
>
> If this woman is viewed in a narrow mental-health context it is possible that she would be diagnosed as suffering from depression and, if she were so diagnosed or so identified, it is likely that she would be referred for psychiatric treatment. Possibly she might be identified as a person with marital problems and then be referred for marital counseling. The question that comes to mind is: how logical is such a narrow identification? It is likely that this woman would not be viewed as a suitable candidate for psychotherapy and this judgment would probably be correct, since she is neither introspective nor

> verbal, nor does she consider herself "mental." Most important, she would tend to perceive talking to somebody once a week for a long period of time about her feelings, and her many worries, as a totally inadequate method of helping her solve her problems.
>
> Aside from the probable futility of referring such a client for counseling or therapy, however, one must consider the question of whether it is even appropriate to make such a referral—to abstract, as it were, a "disease" from this complex of problems. Her "depression" is a condition that might seem quite natural in view of what is happening to her. To call her situation a marital problem seems, not only to her but to most people, a rather glaring understatement.

It seems above all important to realize, in considering this typical case, that the remedies offered by existing social agencies are themselves very much a part of the problem. And while this may be obvious in the light of such studies as Dr. Ryan's, it is not at all obvious to many of the people working in these areas, nor is it known to the great majority of the general public. Moreover, the elaborate social structures which now attempt to deal with these problems all have intricate connections with human habits and attitudes throughout the society in which they have evolved. A sudden "revolutionary" destruction of these institutional structures would produce a higher casualty rate than their present operation, however unsatisfactory; on the other hand, the existing situation is plainly intolerable.

What then is to be done? The only "utopian" approach worth considering would be to deal with both the "helping" institutions and the people who are so little helped by them in a Gandhian spirit. The entire human community suffers from "chronic disease" and it needs "nurses" with endless patience and perseverance—who will not desert their patients because they seem to be suffering from an incurable ill.

There are many levels where the services of such nurses are needed. Socratic questioning is one sort of "nursing," as Robert E. Cushman shows in *Therapeia* (Chapel Hill, 1958) . Yet the grosser ills cannot wait upon reconstructions that may result from the changed attitudes of those who will be in command of human affairs a generation hence. What would be an immediate "constructive program" for the cities of the United States?

There are probably many unsung efforts that could qualify, but we know of one example that seems especially good. First, the symptoms of the ill:

> One hundred and three thousand persons came into the Manhattan Criminal Court in 1968. Most were young, uneducated, unskilled, unemployed members of a minority group from one of the city s ghettos. In the normal course of events, this would not be their last arrest. Statistics vary, but at least one expert has concluded that "the average man who is arrested once will be arrested seven times." . . . It is likely that the only successful people most of these defendants had ever known were people beating the system: gamblers, pimps, numbers-runners, narcotics dealers. People from the ghetto who make a legal success of themselves do not remain in the ghetto as examples for the young.

This is how the city performs as "educator," fulfilling the function of *paideia*, exercising its shaping influence on the young, in this case in reverse. The city, you could say, is helping to destroy these people. What is the city doing about its failure?

> Federal, state, city, and private programs have been developed in an attempt to counteract some of the disabilities faced by the young ghetto resident; welfare assistance, remedial education, addiction treatment, employment guidance, job training, health programs, legal services, are all available. But few reach a person when he may need them most—at the time of arrest—and even fewer focus specifically on people accused of a crime.

These are two introductory paragraphs in a pamphlet descriptive of an undertaking—really a "nursing" undertaking—designed to give practical help to the people in this plight. The pamphlet is of interest for a variety of reasons, of which the most important may be that it makes the reader fully aware of the extreme limitations on what *can* be done, now, for these people. Our quotations are from *The Manhattan Court Employment Project*, published this year by the Vera Institute

of Justice, Room 1330, 100 Centre Street, New York, N.Y. 10013. Briefly:

> The Manhattan Court Employment Project (MCEP) is an experimental attempt to intervene in the usual court process just after a defendant's arrest to offer him counseling and job opportunities and, if he cooperates and appears to show promise of permanent change, to recommend that the prosecutor (District Attorney) and the judge dismiss the charges against him without ever deciding whether he is guilty. Thus, the MCEP attempts to convert a participant's arrest from a losing to a winning experience. The system stands to benefit from this conversion as much as the defendant. Successful participants leave the project working and earning an honest living, the community gains a taxpayer, and the resources of the overburdened criminal justice system are freed to attend to serious cases.

The Project had little difficulty in gaining the support of both the judges and the District Attorney's office, and large employers committed to hiring hard-core unemployed have been extremely cooperative. There were, however, many barriers:

> For instance, it is a deeply held belief, in the court as in society at large, that punishment should be the reward of crime. In fact, most people who work in the court know that less than one fifth of those arraigned will spend any time in prison on a particular charge, but in spite of that knowledge they exhibit a consistent emotional resistance to giving a defendant a "break"—and in the minds of most court personnel, the MCEP is distinctly a break. This attitude varies in its effect on our work, but it is a constant factor to consider.

Other obstacles have a similar origin—that is, in attitudes acquired in the past and deeply rooted. Practical experience led the administrators of MCEP to conclude that they could serve only a very small portion of the total number of violators. They found, for example, that the candidate for participation in the program must be male, not a drug addict, and, if working, receiving a low rate of pay. As the pamphlet explains: "Most women defendants are arrested on drug or prostitution charges. We are not equipped to deal effectively with drug problems and we doubted we could have an effect on women charged with prostitution who were accustomed to an income many times that of any job we might refer them to." The program does not accept defendants charged with serious crimes, since the cooperation of the court and district attorney would be lost by such a policy. And—

> Other charges are excluded because of our assumption that we cannot successfully work with the defendants: we do not accept gamblers, pimps, and others who make good money in the street economy because we cannot compete financially with their accustomed income. We exclude all defendants who are charged with public intoxication on the assumption that most will be alcoholics. Alcoholism, like drug addiction, is beyond our capability to treat.

Even when these bad risks are avoided, the workers for MCEP must find a hair line to follow for any hope of success. They screen carefully all the possible participants for the program, selecting, on the average, ten candidates out of every 1000 cases considered. In twenty-three months of operation, the Program took in 850 participants, half of whom were black, and a third Puerto Rican or other Latin descent. Most were school dropouts and all were from poor families. Most had broken the law repeatedly with minor crimes, and "their actions seemed entirely unplanned, often poorly executed and—considering the dangers involved for them extremely unprofitable." Further:

> Most of them have a key characteristic in common: they don't believe they can succeed at anything straight and, even if they thought they could, would not know how to go about doing it. Having been counseled and programmed throughout their lives, they have generally lost faith in outside helpers. Most know that the chances of going to jail if prosecution proceeds are relatively low, so they feel little compulsion to cooperate with the project unless it can deliver something for them, and deliver it pretty fast.

These are the boundary conditions within which the MCEP must work. There is a wistful note in the pamphlet, heard faintly whenever hope of accepting other defendants is expressed, but this is plainly not possible now. The key people in the present program are the Representatives, who

maintain close contact with the participants once they have been accepted and have agreed to cooperate. To relate to the defendants at all, it is necessary that the Representatives (called "Reps") have the same background or "street" environment in their past. It is perhaps natural, therefore, that the Reps—who are never social workers or professionals—have all served time in prison (an average of 7.6 years). These men, the report says, are capable of establishing "a relationship of respect, trust, and often affection with significant numbers of our participants." This is explained:

> The main reason is their commitment to each participant independent of stereotype or even, frequently, the participant s past behavior. The Reps have consistently assumed a partisan role in the face of the court, the prosecutors, and MCEP administrators. For example, they will continue to work with an addict even though they have failed to persuade go per cent of the previous addicts to seek treatment or remain in the project. They will strongly request the right to continue to work with a participant who has been rearrested. Their refusal to be guided by actuarial predictions has sometimes meant their energies are misallocated, but their willingness to stick with participants is infectious and one of their strengths.

On the side of making good on jobs, the chief trouble of the participants comes from their manifest personal weaknesses—few have ever learned the importance of punctuality, they have at best only fragile self-confidence and are seldom able to continue *trying* in the face of discouragement or injustice.

It should be quite plain that none of these problems has anything important to do with "crime." They make up the face of a society that is afflicted by common ills—inverted values and distorting conceptions of self—which are perpetuated by a vast web of prejudicial personal experience typical of city life, affecting not only "the poor" but the entire urban community. Needed is a corps of utopian nurses to attack this chronic disease at every level, with the same persistence and perseverance as the "Reps" of MCEP. What other way is there to raise the level of "the feasible" in objective structural reform?

REVIEW
THE "PRIMITIVE" FAITH

WHAT a man goes by, is often only obscurely related to what he says he "knows." Many of the decisions we make from day to day are not reasoned out, although we may rationalize them afterwards. Saying this need not be part of a case for the splendors of spontaneous, irrational man, but rather an account of the way we behave—the way even the most reasonable of men may behave. Involved are recognitions and inclinations we hardly ever regard as "decisions." They might rather be called the "tropisms" by which we determine the flow of our lives. Michael Polanyi's small book, *The Tacit Dimension*, is peculiarly valuable in showing how much we depend upon these quiet, holistic apprehensions for the feeling behind our sense of knowing.

Polanyi speaks also of the way in which men increase their knowledge by detailed examination of structure, mechanics, and process. This amplification is called science, which brings exactitude and lucidity to our awareness of aspects of the external world. But, Polanyi points out, to increase one's knowledge is not the same as supplying its core, the initial perception. When amplification and descriptive detail are substituted for the essential cognition, a misleading certainty results which Polanyi calls *unbridled* lucidity. This mistaking of the nature of knowledge, he says, "can destroy our understanding of complex matters."

The defender of the methodology of "exact science" might argue: "Intuition, visionary hunches—of course!—we all depend upon them. But these happy inspirations must be filtered through the checks of scientific method. We must *verify."* Here the champion of the methodology may on occasion be both right and wrong—right in principle but wrong in application. There are areas of inquiry, that is, for which the best techniques of the age afford no means of verification, with the consequence that the facts or realities of those areas are habitually redefined in other terms that seem to make them accessible to experiment or test. But this deliberate *shifting* of the problem may have unknown consequences—worse consequences, perhaps, than would result from being guided by hunch or guess. The man piloted by guesswork at least knows how ignorant he is—that he is taking a chance.

What else can we do? Which really means: How else can we be *sure.?* Perhaps we cannot be sure about a great many things. Learning how to live with uncertainty may be the only rational course. The question then becomes: What sort of principles might combine well with the inevitable uncertainties of human life?

It is evident that there can be no answer to this last question without having a free hand in choosing normative values—values such as what we mean by the noble, the truly human, the worthy, the aspiring and the free.

Are such values "real," or did we invent them as humanly useful heuristic tools? This is like asking whether or not there is a moral law in the universe, as, for example, Emerson proposed. Such great questions will not be settled by argument, yet it seems of some importance to recognize that all the world once believed in the moral law. A modern man may say, "Belief is not good enough; we have to know," and he may be right, yet the question does not become negligible for lack of a certain answer. Still, a fresh inquiry probably ought to begin with open recognition that presumptuous accounts of spiritual reality have caused more evil in human affairs than any other single historical cause. This is apparent from only the past thousand years of history. So, naturally enough, a modern man will want some "proof."

But in what would such proof consist? We hardly know. Tolstoy struggled with this question throughout his long and productive life. He had one of the best minds in all European civilization, but he found no final answer and pretended to none, although he developed some working

principles which guided him along the way. Isaiah Berlin's excellent book, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (Mentor), is a study of the contest between the intuitive genius in Tolstoy and the uncompromising scientist in him.

As we said, all mankind once believed in the moral law—in, as Robert Redfield put it, a world of "immanent justice." In his book, *The Primitive World and its Transformations,* he wrote:

> Primitive man is . . . at once in nature and acting on it, getting his living, taking from it his food and shelter. But as that nature is part of the same moral system in which man and the affairs between men also find themselves, man's actions with regard to nature are limited by notions of inherent, not expedient, rightness. . . . "All economic activities, such as hunting, gathering fuel, cultivating the land, storing food, assume a relatedness to the encompassing universe." And the relatedness is moral or religious.

Children still accept this view almost spontaneously, as Redfield shows, but adult modern man is weaned of the belief:

> Man comes out of the universe within which he is orientated now as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character and becomes to him indifferent, a system uncaring of man. The existence today of ethical systems and of religions only qualifies this statement; ethics and religion struggle in one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man.

There is this question: Is modern skepticism an overlay which obscures spontaneous recognition of the validity of the primitive faith, or is the primitive faith in a moral universe only a plausible invention of shamans and priests, which the latter often distorted and turned to their own advantage—a piety without authentic natural ground?

It seems evident that at the present juncture of history this question can have no durable "collectivist" reply. While individuals may find their way to some firm conclusion, a published certainty in the form of a new "revelation"—whether religious or scientific—would only have the effect of preventing other individuals from undertaking the persistent inquiry that is necessary if a man is to have an answer of his own. So the question about moral law is very like the one which asks, "Who am I?" Only the man who asks it can make an answer. Quite possibly, the questions which can have no answers at second hand are questions which *need* to be shrouded in uncertainty.

The artist may have a natural advantage over other men in reaching this conclusion. The artist makes forays into mystery, but he does not "reveal." The work of a fine artist is not truth but a glorious charade in its honor. The splendor of great art is as much in its lack of pretense to finality as in the excellence of its achievement.

A rare mixture of the primitive and the modern makes the texture of Laurens van der Post's novel, *The Hunter and the Whale* (William Morrow, 1967), now available as a pocket book. It is the story of an adolescent Boer boy who goes to sea from the port of Natal as the lookout and sometimes the companion of an expert harpooner of whales. The boy has the background of life on the veldt and the African bush, and the stoker of the whaling ship is a magnificent Zulu who holds his job against all competition because he can do the work of two men. The foreground of the story is concerned with the friendly rivalry between the captain, who is a famous hunter of whales, and an old white hunter who has killed more elephants than anyone else. The captain wants to hunt an elephant and the white hunter longs to harpoon a whale.

Underneath, however, are other themes. Some of the sailors on the whaler have still a childlike or primitive belief in the balances and reciprocities of life. These men are somewhat like the African, who thinks without question in terms of a world where immanent justice rules. Long evenings at sea are spent in talking about these things. The Zulu, 'Mlangeni, sings as he shovels coal to maintain pressure in the ship's engine:

> "Seed of the great mother,

Black corn of the earth,
Food of flame,
The child is hungry,
Come feed new fire:
Yes, feed, feed this fire."

Then, when the flames were bright, he would sing:

"Red flame of the earth,
Child of the sun.
Look! Fear no water,
Hunger no longer!
Take food from the mother,
Eat this black corn,
Fill your belly.
And grow, my little one,
Yes! Grow strong and great."

One night the boy and a particular friend among the sailors talked of the enormous consumption of sardines by the whales and gulls. The boy is the narrator:

> Yet, with all these forces mobilized against them the sardines nonetheless survived. They lost their battles day after day, but they won the campaign, for we knew that the following year they would reappear undismayed in as great numbers as ever. I was to see this event four years running and if anything it gained in importance and magnitude.
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> In this as in all else, Leif saw a lesson. Nature was all things, he said, a killer and creator, a builder and destroyer. He believed man's problem was to maintain the proportions, for life's deepest longing was to be rescued from these two terrible opposites. And surely at depth there was a point beyond which nature would take no more killing? Then its answer was to summon up its final and greatest weapon: the life of numbers. But this, of course, meant great sacrifices of complexity and quality in the system of life itself, for the bigger the number the more inferior the quality. And the more the killer learned to cope with the antidote of numbers, the quicker became the cycle of reproduction of the new inferior life mobilized against total destruction until finally it would be so small that the most powerful electromicroscope could not observe it nor any scientific filter hold it. Nature had an infinite abundance to draw on for its ultimate purpose of promoting life. If necessary, if indeed it were the only weapon left against the heretical life which was denying life, it would not hesitate to summon up an abundance of undetectable and unpredictable organisms to bring pest and plague back to discipline a world unaware of its own lust for killing.

Is the world like that? Is it also a world with beings in it who can find out that the world is like that and begin to plan their lives as enterprises in a natural harmony?

COMMENTARY
OUR "OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC"

A COMMON response to the discouraging facts related in this week's lead article is the cry for "more research." Yet the facts are plain enough, and adequate interpretations of them have been available for a long time.

The depressing realities of the Manhattan Criminal Court reported in the pamphlet on the Employment Project make a case in point. Thirty-three years ago, a thorough study was made of such offenders by Dr. Charles B. Thompson, senior psychiatrist in the Psychiatric Clinic, Court of General Sessions, New York. His report, "A Psychiatric Study of Recidivists" (*American Journal of Psychiatry,* November, 1937) was based on examination of 1,380 offenders. He found that the habitual criminal or "repeater" acted in response to an idea of himself which, once formed, was not changed by either imprisonment or existing educational influences. Dr. Thompson maintained that the negative influence of society on such individuals is twofold: first, it generates an obsessively egocentric self-image, and, second, it teaches a morality of "good" and "bad" categories. The self-centered "I" of the recidivist comes to have "more importance than everything and anyone else in the world," while "good" means for him anything to the advantage of this "I." These attitudes are also found throughout society, Dr. Thompson said, but in the criminal they are reinforced by his daily experience and out of control. "Civilization's outstanding characteristic as well as its fundamental anomaly," Dr. Thompson wrote, "is its systematic training of each individual to get for himself at the expense of others."

It may be noted that the workers for the Manhattan Court Employment Project were obliged to pay tribute to this dominant pattern in their effort to help offenders get jobs. The project had to deliver concrete benefit to the participants, "and deliver it pretty fast."

According to Dr. Thompson, the offender is often only a portrait of a conventionally "good citizen" who uses unacceptable methods to get what he wants. Dr. Thompson says:

> In our superficial angers and hatreds or in our agreements, in our wars and in our equally superficial and evanescent arrangements called peace, "normal" man, like the criminal, is himself a repeater of pathological reactions. Naturally, then, if we are all involved automatically in repeated reflex actions that have to do with oppositeness, self-acquisitiveness and competition, the nature of the behavior of the recidivist is not far to seek, for the problem of the recidivist is but the problem of man's behavior generally. . . . Society has its mass homicides called wars, its mass-robberies called invasions its wholesale larcenies called empire-building. As long as the individual's behavior fits in with the mass-reaction it is considered "good" behavior. As long as he does not question by word or deed the validity of the mass behavior he may be called a "good citizen."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SOME LAST WORDS

THE most important things about education are sometimes said in "farewell addresses." The Summer 1970 number of *Exceptional Children* (journal of the Council for Exceptional Children, published in Arlington, Virginia) contains James J. Gallagher's "Thoughts on Leaving Government Service," after three years in the Office of Education of HEW as Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation. In one place Mr. Gallagher says:

> The credibility of the Federal government is under serious and justified attack because of its failure to follow through on programs once they have begun. Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the educational laboratories are only two of many programs that began with great expectations. In the second or third year of their efforts—their political glamour worn off—their favored place was taken in the Administration by new, bright, and shiny programs that are polished by hope and unsullied by experience.
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> The odds now seem to be against the realistic use of long range educational planning for the foreseeable future at the Federal level. Although most everyone admits to the importance of planning in the abstract, the existing governmental organization or system is designed to inevitably frustrate it. There are simply too many persons, some at quite low levels in the hierarchy, who have the power to change the signals on previous commitments and long range programs. The plans designed in past years become the victims of persons who have no sense of history or respect for programs begun before their entry upon the scene but who are eager to push their own pet projects to "make their own mark" in Washington. . . . The multiplication of people who have authority to change programs but who leave others to face the often negative consequences of their actions is one of the most severe morale problems in government. Even after programs run this gauntlet, they must be reviewed again by the Congress where another variety of special interests are brought to bear on the programs.

Mr. Gallagher is convinced of the country's need for federal activity in education and he gives his reasons, some of which are impressive. Yet his account of specific needs which would be otherwise unmet in no way deals with the intrinsic character of an agency which combines incompatible elements—political power and educational intentions. These two do not really mix, and the belief that they can be *made* to mix through the choice of good administrators seems a basic delusion. It can be called a delusion because obviously good men keep on trying to mix them, probably because, as things are now, there seems nothing else to do.

The problem has elements in common with the one which confronts the Indian Bureau. Long years of white domination of the Indian population, political interference with their lives, and both conscious and unconscious racism in the administration of Indian affairs have made it almost impossible for the Indian Bureau to withdraw from its functions without accomplishing an incidental genocide for a great many Indians. It is a problem without solution, save through long and painstaking growth in human understanding on the part of all involved. So also, no doubt, in the area of education. The only solution lies in basic community reform and widespread change in attitude and heart—which is of course what all the apparently excellent plans imply, but fail to spell out, except in brief asides.

A sagacious comment comes at the end of Mr. Gallagher's paper:

> I have occasionally felt that we in government are actors in a badly written or badly produced play by a long forgotten author. Good actors can disguise the flaws in a play for a time, while bad actors make them immediately apparent, but the flaws remain and merely changing the cast of characters doesn't help that much. We need to do something about the play, or in this instance the way in which decision making occurs on educational matters in government. There will be few meaningful accomplishments in Federal education policy without this reform.

The general public does not know—cannot know—the frustrations that the "good actors" working in government must encounter. People

read of the appropriations made by Congress and suppose that the best that can be done is being done. All that money! Will the day ever come when parents finally realize that separation of School and State is every bit as important as separation of Church and State? The issues are basically the same. "Good actors" don't change them.

Some parents are already acting on the necessity of providing education for their children, themselves. In the same issue of *Exceptional Children*, Whitney Young, Executive Director of the National Urban League, tells of the success Harlem black people have been having in establishing their own schools:

> It doesn't make any difference what color skin is. We have proven that in the free academies in New York City, the store front schools where we took the dropouts, the pushouts from New York City schools, the people that teachers said weren't educable. We took these kids and we put them in the store front schools, but we picked a different kind of teacher. We picked teachers who had hearts as well as heads. We picked teachers like the Peace Corps type and the Vista type, young people who came early and left late and went to the homes of the kids, who treated these kids like they were somebody and told them they were somebody, who would seek for something positive to say about a kid so he wouldn't feel like a failure from the word go. We sent these kids on to our private Harlem Prep, and every graduate from Harlem Prep is in college and we have 2 or 3 Rhodes scholars. These are the people the school system said were uneducable. I visited Harlem Prep not too long ago and kids were mouthing and rapping Black power, which is great, and I hope you are smart enough to capitalize on this new sense of pride and new sense of dignity and use it to your educational advantage. But at any rate they were using the rhetoric that we have to have all Black teachers and all Black businesses in Harlem and everything else. The school has integrated teachers, in fact, there are more white than Black, and I said, "How can you say that? I just saw you talking to this teacher and you obviously had mutual respect and affection for each other." He said, "Who, Mr. Young?" I pointed to the white lady and said, "Her." He said, "Oh! She ain't white, she's nice." To a youngster whose basic experiences with white people have largely been the negative, the policeman frisking him, the merchant selling him some bad meat in the market, the landlord insisting that the rent be paid when he won't fix the plumbing, to that kid, white and evil become synonymous. A white person who acts nice just isn't white.

Schools need to be *local*, with local people in charge—people who care only for teaching and the young. Speaking of IQ ratings, for example, Mr. Young said:

> I would ask you to take a hard look at the tests. I was speaking to a friend the other day about a new test that has been developed in Harlem. . . . It's based on the language of the ghetto and the language of Harlem and the experiences of the ghetto. Scotty Reston, probably the most prestigious of brilliant columnists in the country, . . . was curious about it. I sent it to him and he took the test and he scored 40 per cent—an idiot. . . .
>
> There is the story of the black kid who was considered unintelligent because she always painted the banana brown, since that was the only kind of banana she had ever seen, and because she couldn't figure out the arithmetic or the proper answer to the question "If you had 24 apples and somebody else had 24 apples and they give somebody else 12 how many do you have left?" The concept of anybody's having 24 apples and somebody's giving away something was so confusing that she didn't get the arithmetic. It was a whole new environment. How many of us make the judgment that a kid from the ghetto is not too bright because of his language, when if the kid is from Italy or Ireland or somewhere we don't make the same kind of judgment; and I submit that the culture of rural Mississippi or Alabama is probably more foreign than that of a kid who comes in from Ireland. . . . How many of us are still victims of perceiving only pathologies in Black people? We have been the victims of all the studies of what's wrong with us. . . . Pat Moynihan got to be assistant president for a while. People have made a great living by studying Black people and their pathology. I've already warned Pat that if he doesn't stop trying to be an expert on Black people I am going to be an expert on Irish people. . . .

Mr. Young is also good on how the pathologies of the present will look a hundred years from now, and where responsibility will be placed. The invisible pathologies are usually the worst, because we give them no attention at all.

FRONTIERS

The Real Villain

POGO'S sage comment, "We have met the enemy and he is us," is more quoted than taken seriously. For example, in the *Nation* for Sept. 14 Robert Sherrill explores the lethal threat to human beings of pesticides now widely in use in the United States. He places the blame for past, present, and future disasters on the government:

> The real villains in the environmental scandal are the government agencies which have failed to use available laws to keep the corporate poisoners and polluters in line. More penalties and taxes should be levied against industries that foul the air and water, to be sure, but a much more useful reform would be to establish a quick and effective court procedure whereby harsh penalties for negligence could be invoked against the hierarchy of entire government agencies.

Mr. Sherrill's article is shocking from beginning to end, and filled with evidence of official neglect and indifference which sometimes seem to verge on collusion with offenders. Yet his conclusion as to the identity of the "villains" needs to be questioned. The material in this article is very like the evidence gathered by the Nader Study Groups in three recent reports: *The Interstate Commerce Commission* by Robert Fellmeth, *Vanishing Air* by John C. Esposito, and *The Chemical Feast* by James S. Turner—all new paperbacks published this year by Grossman. The resulting picture of government bureaus and agencies is almost totally discouraging, yet the "real villain," so far as we can see, is the kind of thinking which permits us to regard these revelations as a *surprise.*

All these evils—and they are countless—grow out of acquisitive motivation, a misconception of "progress," and habits of action based upon generations of indoctrination in the importance of competitive, commercial "success." How ridiculous to suppose that deep-seated tendencies of this sort can be reversed, eliminated, or even controlled by a government bureau subject to the pressures of powerful lobbyists and political intrigue! Mr. Sherrill is enough of a realist in relation to industry, as his first paragraph shows:

> Beating the drum of "corporate irresponsibility" in the environmental crusade is okay if it is done with calculation for propaganda purposes. Dow, Georgia Pacific, Olin Chemical, Wyandotte Chemical, Shell—such names are highly useful for arousing the citizenry to furious counterattacks. But only the most naive would seriously suggest that these outfits could ever be thought capable of voluntarily assuming "social responsibilities." Corporations clean up their messes and operate honestly when forced to do so. That's the American way of life.

But is government really outside this scheme of things? A man does not undergo a miraculous change in his human nature when he goes to Washington to take a job policing people for whom a natural inclination to social responsibility is said to be unthinkable.

We turn from this unlovely area of national affairs to one in which these problems are tightly joined—in what President Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex. The people in this complex, like those in both industry and government, are products of the country's institutions. Many observers are appalled by the monopolistic activities and presumptions of the military-industrial complex, yet there may be no more occasion for surprise, here, than in the case of the government's impotence to put a stop to widespread poisoning of land, flora, fauna, and man by pesticides. All these people are doing "what comes naturally."

Actually, as Seymour Melman shows in his paper, "Business as Usual—National Suicide" (*Journal of the Division of Higher Education*, December, 1969), President Eisenhower himself brought the industrial military complex into being. In 1946 he announced in a memorandum the need to "interlock the Army, civilian technology, scientists, and industry on a continuing basis," and he set up an organization in the Army to supervise these interrelationships. Later, he saw the danger

of an undue concentration of power and warned against it. However, under John Kennedy, Robert McNamara replaced the industrial-military complex with an efficient organization for modern corporate management within the Department of Defense—a "state management" body which, in 1968, Melman says, controlled $44 billion of industrial work. By comparison—

> . . . the giants of American industry have been rendered into medium and small-sized managements. Insofar as control over production gives decision power in other spheres of life, it is unimpeachably the case that the new management is far and away the most potent center point of decision power in the United States. . . . In American government, under the design of the Constitution and its interpretation of the Federalist Papers, political and military power are rendered to government, but *enterprise* is left to the citizenry. This separation has been altered so that there is now an unprecedented concentration of decision power in the government of the United States.

Mr. Melman makes it plain that the Vietnam War is a great success for "state management," since it has vastly increased the power and scope of decision-making for the military executives. Moreover, he shows, this body looks at the Vietnam enterprise as a kind of model for similar involvements that are expected for the United States. The rest of his article details the military capacities of the nation—to perform instant invasions, to "overkill" (we can deliver "more than six tons of explosive power [TNT] *for each person living on this planet"*), and a nuclear-weapon destructiveness developed to the point where "we can destroy them [enemy nations with similar weapons], they can destroy us, and neither can prevent the other from doing it."

He concludes with figures on the brain-drain from civilian technology into military production and on the cost to American industry of the concentration of technological skills in weaponry. "One-half to two-thirds of the research and development scientists in the country work directly or indirectly for the Department of Defense," and "American industry now operates the oldest stock of metalworking machinery of any major industrial country in the world." American production capital is being invested abroad and we are acquiring an unfavorable balance of trade. It costs twice as much to build a ship in the United States, compared to costs in some other countries. The list of inadequacies and incompetencies goes on and on—decline in health, in the number of physicians, in housing—all due, Melman suggests, to the misdirection of the energies of the nation to the services of the war-making machine.

Mr. Melman's analysis is presented in greater detail in his current book, *Pentagon Capitalism.* Will the "furious counterattacks" Mr. Sherrill finds expedient do any good? This seems a misplaced confidence in emergency rabble-rousing. It is the common thinking about progress, government, and war that produced these conditions.