

THE ACCESSIBLE REMEDIES

THESE are the times," Tom Paine wrote in 1776, "that try men's souls." What, we might ask, is now being tried? Paine sought to focus the energies of men on an issue easily defined, if not easily remedied. But very different afflictions preoccupy the anxieties of men today, and not only in the United States. A few weeks ago, amiable and pacific Canada believed it necessary to declare a condition of wartime emergency because of the kidnapping and threat against the lives of two diplomats. The Soviets experienced the first successful highjacking of one of their planes. Undercurrents of suspicion swell with scares generated by the daily press. A reporter walks through the Pentagon carrying a shoebox, and because he was not challenged by watchful guards made a front-page feature of this failure of "security" at the heart of the American military machine. The capture of Angela Davis stirs vengeful anticipation in those who want no trial or verdict to tell them who is guilty and who is innocent. A succession of books intimate that the assassinations of public men in this country may be part of a dark pattern of plotting and subversion. The creeping expectation of planned disaster may soon be a "normal" factor in the calculations of men. Insurance companies, for example, now want to know, as an item made important by their actuaries, whether a publication is printing material likely to get its offices bombed or raided by political vandals, before they issue a policy covering damage to the premises.

What indeed is being tested by current events? We hardly know. Meanwhile, the harassment of conscience by the unending war in Vietnam has become a virtual constant in the background of all these happenings. And in the cities, the state of the air we breathe—edging toward more and more frequent "red alerts"—is another such constant, supplemented by the

degradation of the national diet, and the decline in the national health, both physical and mental. Then there is the erosion of hope brought by the continuing crisis in racial relations, which grows instead of diminishing.

There is only one bull market, these days—the market for scapegoats.

These are not the only tendencies in the present, but they are the ones which get the headlines, and anyone who assumes that newspaper accounts accurately reflect the condition of man can hardly avoid extreme depression. What then can be done? The question has little meaning in terms of events reported in the press, since these things, having happened, are really inaccessible to us. Yet they all may be seen as symptoms of at least one fundamental ill—loss of trust. Considering the growing influence of suspicion, and the inclination of people in the mass to act in desperation on their suspicions, disregarding all else, it seems apparent that the one thing that will *have* to be done is the gradual restoration, at the grass roots level, of man's faith in man. There will have to be countless demonstrations, in small things, that men can trust one another.

What is breaking down is the moral health of the social community. There is no fiat, no political system, no exercise of authority, that can change this condition. Only men and women can change it, through how they feel and what they do in their daily relationships with one another. No doubt other things can be done and will need to be done by persons with social roles and responsibilities, but they won't be able to accomplish much without the support of a constituency of ordinary, responsible people who are strong enough to turn away from the

fascinations of scapegoating doctrines and attend to essentially constructive work.

It isn't that what the crusaders and faultfinders say is not true. Some of it is true. Sometimes a lot of it is true. But a patient man who has learned that people can change and become better may do a lot more for the country by influencing a dozen youngsters than the compilers of indictments and the specifiers of guilt. The proposition is a simple one: There can be no health in a society which lacks an *infrastructure* of dependable and proven mutual trust and understanding which such people—call them "teachers"—help to produce and foster.

In his recent book, *Students Without Teachers*, Harold Taylor tells a story which relates to this point:

I remember vividly a symposium at an Eastern College at which Robert Lifton, Paul Goodman, and I had been asked to speak in a panel discussion about the reform of education. As his part of the discussion, Goodman did a standard denunciation of white middle-class America, with special reference to the members of the audience. They, said Goodman were middle-class students with middle-class parents in a middle-class college with middle-class teachers in a middle-class society, all of which, it followed, meant a certain kind of disaster for all those present and for their society. The audience was suitably cowed and made to feel the guilt of their transgression until one young man, bravely, I thought, stood to announce himself as a complete product of the entire system Goodman had just denounced—white, Scarsdale, WASP, Yale, everything—and that he agreed with everything that Goodman had written about the System. "Should I lie to myself about what I am? Is my background a disgrace?" he asked.

In the panel discussion that followed, speaking as his friends, we asked about Goodman's own class, since by his credentials, appearance, and style of talking, we told him that he did not seem to be a member either of the upper class or the lower class. This left him publicly exposed as a middle-class anarchist keeping company with a liberal psychiatrist and a college president with radical views on education, neither of whose incomes was disclosed. The benefits in intellectual insight in the

denunciation of white middle-class values have reached a point of very small return, the denunciation has for some time been redundant and intellectually counterproductive. Would it help to understand Theodore Roethke to call him a middle-class American poet? His father was a florist. Roethke lived in the suburbs and liked swimming, tennis, and lawns of grass. What would be accomplished by assigning him a social category so loaded with ambiguous negatives?

Developing this point, Mr. Taylor points out that the dimensions of the "middle class"—which in 1936 included about 13 per cent of the population—have increased enormously and in 1967 this class, defined as people whose incomes are above the poverty line, amounted to 60 per cent of the people. He points out that the protesters and radicals have nearly all come out of the middle class, then argues:

The injection of new values into the middle-class section of the society can be accomplished by education, if education is designed for the development of social values going beyond raw economic utility. In contemporary society, some of this is already accomplished among the 6½ million families attached to sons and daughters who attend colleges and universities from which, the record shows, a fair proportion bring back new views and deviant opinions about how to live. The middle-class student in the middle-class college can and does turn out to be the radicalizer of his parents as well as the teacher of educators.

In view of the ambiguities involved, we would be better off not using "middle-class" as an adjective defining a category of aesthetic, political, or social dogmas, and to speak in more precise terms about what values actually are in human terms.

Yet there are patterns which become objective in national behavior, in policies of government and cultural attitudes, which, to say the least, are discouragingly dominant as expressions of middle-class opinion. Mr. Taylor is not unaware of this. He is rather concerned with the practical futility of applying such statistical measures of human quality to all individual members of a certain economic grouping, as though some sort of determinism is involved. This way of defining the problem treats human

beings as objects instead of subjects and ignores the *becoming* aspect of the individual.

Mr. Taylor does not, however, ignore the terms of the common indictment of middle-class America. He says:

White, middle-class, racist America does exist. It is in control of American politics and American society. It does work its will through the full integration of its attitudes, values, and power within the economic system linked to government, the military, business, industry, technology, the mass media, and education. It is a System. It does try to cover the real problems of America by rhetoric, entertainment, social rewards, patriotism, and appeals to self-interest. There are politicians who call for unity among the fifty states around the principle of What's in It for Us. Occasionally the System does allow us to see in full color its hideous grinning face with the open mouth speaking the hypocrisies and dangerous clichés of the preliminary stages of fascism among the papier-mâché buildings of Miami Beach and the barricades of Chicago. It does possess an ideological structure and an antihuman will which even the most violent of its denouncers—among the poets, the writers, the radicals, the social critics the revolutionaries—can barely overstate.

But that is the beginning of it, not the end or the whole of it.

Well, Dr. Taylor is an educator, and not unnaturally believes that schools and colleges can "inject" new values into the middle class. Yet it may be wondered whether the awakening he attributes to exposure of the young to colleges and universities is entirely due to this influence. *Change*, actually, is in the air. The changes in the students seem more changes in basic motivation, in aspiration, and in conceptions of value than in the effects of higher education. Speaking of these "awakened" young men and women (in *Contemporary Issues*, Spring, 1965), Dorothy Samuels described some students she knew:

They spring from that group . . . for whom this has long been an affluent society. Among these young people, qualified by background, birth, and brains to become the new leaders, are a considerable number who already . . . have tasted deep of the fleshpots of conspicuous consumption and they have found them bitter and unsatisfying. They have been

overdosed with pleasures and inoculated with the vaccine of affluence. They represent the faint foreshadowing of the Age of Satiety. . . . It is among those who know that "you can't go home again," but who have found no new solutions, that the trend of the future appears to be taking hazy form.

On every college campus will be found unfashionably clad students lolling in cheap rooms, reading inexpensive paperbacks or second-hand editions of great books. . . . They browse among the courses and the disciplines. If a book speaks to their condition, they may skip a few weeks' required work to peruse everything the author wrote. When the grade card reflects what they did not learn rather than what they did learn, they couldn't care less. Top grades are meaningful only to employers; these students have not seen any jobs worth doing. . . . And so, the exodus has begun. In ones and twos, undramatically, thoughtful lads and lasses are dropping out of college, at least on and off, so they will have time to think. . . .

They are, in short, philosophical in an age which seems to offer no forum for discussion of principles and values and verities. . . . They would be Emersons and Thoreaus in a day when journals and podiums seem open only to statisticians and reporters.

It seems totally irrelevant to speak of such people as members or "graduates" of the middle class. Yet that, in some sense, is what they are. Most of all, however, they are self-educated people. All that their society contributed was the facilities. It seems likely that for years to come it will not be easy to take statistical cognizance of such good things that are happening. Meanwhile, most of the criticism and social commentary is founded on statistical data, or material which is "typical" enough to be generalized.

The point, here, is that the sort of beginnings which are important for American society are precisely those which will not submit to generalization. The ills noted briefly at the beginning of this discussion get attention in the papers every day, and they go on and on, in multiplying variety. Yet they are not accessible to any sort of planning or specific treatment. They are end-products of basic human attitudes, the issue of many generations of blithe indifference to the shaping of character in the United States.

What could this produce but low expectation of human promise and capacity, with accompanying suspicion of one another?—a condition of feeling which too easily becomes self-fulfilling prophecy with a built-in multiplier effect.

Family and community are the only places where such tendencies can be reversed. The rock of individual human integrity is stronger than the statistics of mass behavior or the profiles of popular journalism, but this integrity must be recognized and consciously experienced for its strength to be felt and believed in. Nothing less than a common realization of this fact and necessity can lay the foundation for a restoration of human trust.

This is a time for recognition of elementary truths—the truths which lie far beneath the surface phenomena of the sickness in our cities, the rebellion of our youth, the arrogance and cruelty of our wars, and superficiality of our pleasures. We need, perhaps, to suspend for a time the *social* definition of our social disorders and to find their origin in distorting conceptions of ourselves.

A good illustration of this mode of thinking is found toward the end of Wendell Berry's *The Hidden Wound*, where he exposes the corruption worked in American life by false notions of status and, in this case, "white superiority." He writes:

The notion that one is too good to do what is necessary for *somebody* to do is always weakening. The unwillingness, or the inability, to dirty one's hands in one's own service is a serious flaw of character. But in a society that sense of superiority can cut off a whole class or a whole race from its most necessary experience. For one thing, it can curtail or distort a society's sense of the *means*, and of the importance of the means, of getting work done; it prolongs and ramifies the life and the effect of pernicious abstractions. In America, for instance, one of the most depraved and destructive habits has always been an obsession with results. Getting the job done is good. Pondering as to *how* the job should be done, or if it should be done, is apt to be regarded as a waste of time. If we want coal, it seems to us perfectly feasible to destroy a mountain or the ecology

of a valley in order to get it. If we want to "contain Communism," we do not hesitate to do so by destroying the "threatened" country. Today we send a bulldozer or a bomber to do our dirty work as casually, and by the same short-order morality, as once (in the South) we would "send a nigger," or (in the North) an Irishman, or (in the West now) a Mexican.

The abstractness of the white man's relation to the land has forced the black man to develop resources of character and religion and art that have some resemblances to the peasant cultures of the old world . . . but at the same time it has denied him the peasant's sense of a permanent relation to the earth. He has wandered off the land into the cities in the hope of being better treated, only to be as deeply scorned as before. And on the land his place has been taken by machines—and we are now more estranged from our land than we ever were.

Not everyone who goes back to the land finds through this personal experience the insight that Mr. Berry records. Yet in a less articulate way, others are seeking the experience of doing their own work, dirty work included. No formula, of course, will suffice, and there must be many analogues of return to the soil where people can learn similar things and *feel*, if not describe, the meanings that emerge for anyone who puts himself back into symmetrical relation with the sources of his life. There may be inchoate longings for this sort of awakening and experience in many more people than we suppose. And every man who follows his heart, devises appropriate means, and begins to live a new kind of life, appropriate to his vision and his powers, can become a teacher and helper to all the rest.

REVIEW AN "OLD" BOOK

WHEN new books seem thin—not worth the effort of reading them, to say nothing of writing about them—it becomes a pleasure and a relief to turn to old ones which ought not to be forgotten. There are books which should be read again and again, but are neglected because of the steady flow of new volumes, many of which are issued with no more justification than the customary length of a publisher's list. For books, alas, are *merchandise*, and publishing is an *industry*, which is enough to alienate and drive to some more hospitable planet any authentic inspiration of the writer's art.

Yet good books do appear, in spite of everything, suggesting that human intelligence is a far more tenacious force than is commonly supposed.

The old book we picked up for attention is James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son*, a collection of reviews and brief essays first published by Beacon in 1955, and again in 1964 by Dial and Bantam. Baldwin writes exquisite prose. His sentences are balanced, his images effective, his descriptions lucid. In his non-fiction, at least, he is both in and above what he writes about, and the balance seems just right. One could say that he writes tracts for the times, but they are good tracts precisely because they are more than tracts. The year 1955 now seems a long time ago; many things have changed especially the circumstances of the stress between the races—since then. But in speaking of how things were in 1955 and before, Baldwin is mainly concerned with the psychological realities behind the circumstances, and these have changed very little. It is a truism that a man cannot know other people without knowing himself. Baldwin is valuable to his readers because he knows something about himself. All good writers are psychologists, often better psychologists than men with credentials, because they are not confined by

academic norms and categories. Knowing what they do by individual discovery and insight, they get freshness, a firsthand quality, into what they say. One learns far more from such men.

One essay in this book is an appreciation and criticism of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. The essay is broadly concerned with what it means to be a Negro in the United States, and this includes both fact and myth. Wright's book embodies one of the myths about the black man and so receives attention. First, the stage is set:

In the thirties, swallowing Marx whole, we discovered the Worker and realized—I should think with some relief—that the aims of the Worker and the aims of the Negro were one. This theorem—to which we shall return—seems now to leave rather too much out of account; it became, nevertheless, one of the slogans of the "class struggle" and the gospel of the New Negro.

As for this New Negro, it was Wright who became his most eloquent spokesman; and his work, from its beginning, is most clearly committed to the social struggle. Leaving aside the considerable question of what relationship precisely the artist bears to the revolutionary, the reality of man as a social being is not his only reality and that artist is strangled who is forced to deal with human beings solely in social terms; and who has, moreover, as Wright had, the necessity thrust on him of being the representative of some thirteen million people. It is a false responsibility (since writers are not congressmen) and impossible, by its nature, of fulfillment. The unlucky shepherd soon finds that, so far from being unable to feed the hungry sheep, he has lost the wherewithal for his own nourishment, having not been allowed—so fearful was his burden, so present his audience!—to recreate his own experience. Further, the militant men and women of the thirties were not, upon examination, significantly emancipated from their antecedents, however bitterly they might consider themselves estranged or however gallantly they struggled to build a better world. However they might extol Russia, their concept of a better world was quite helplessly American and betrayed a certain thinness of imagination, a suspect reliance on suspect and badly digested formulae, and a positively fretful romantic haste. Finally, the relationship of the Negro to the Worker cannot be summed up, nor even greatly illuminated by saying that their aims are one. It is true only insofar as they both desire better working

conditions and useful only insofar as they unite their strength as workers to achieve these ends. Further than this we cannot in honesty go.

In this climate Wright's voice first was heard and the struggle which promised for a time to shape his work and give it purpose also fixed it in an ever unrewarding rage. Recording his days of anger he has also nevertheless recorded, as no Negro before him had ever done, that fantasy Americans hold in their minds when they speak of the Negro: that fantastic and fearful image which we have lived with since the first slave fell beneath the lash. This is the significance of *Native Son* and also, unhappily, its overwhelming limitation.

James Baldwin persuades because he does not try to persuade. He does not try to "cash in" on his art. Seeing is not prescribing—but if clear seeing should make certain prescriptions obvious, well and good. Those which arise out of what Baldwin sees are mainly deep realizations which operate at the level of general understanding. To seek this, if he seeks anything as a consequence of his work, might be the best way to think of the responsibility of the artist.

Bigger Thomas is man as Victim, man made into Monster by "social forces." In *Native Son*—

we are confronting a monster created by the American Republic and we are, through being made to share his experience to receive illumination as regards the manner of his life and to feel both pity and horror at his awful and inevitable doom. This is an arresting and potentially rich idea and we would be discussing a very different novel if Wright's execution had been more perceptive and if he had not attempted to redeem a symbolical monster in social terms.

Baldwin shows, in effect, that accepting Bigger Thomas as a true symbol of the black man amounts to admission of the success of the white man in dehumanizing the Negro, and this ignores the extraordinary resilience of black people, who have been hurt and mutilated, but *not* made into monsters by white oppression. Reality, even "social" reality, is far more complex. Yet Baldwin gives the devil his due, since there is a devil in *all* men, and there is no need to deny the

reproduction in some black men of the white man's image of the blacks:

. . . there is, I should think, no Negro living in America who has not felt, briefly or for long periods, with anguish sharp or dull, in varying degrees and to varying effect, simple, naked and unanswerable hatred, who has not wanted to smash any white face he may encounter in a day, to violate, out of motives of cruelest vengeance, their women, to break the bodies of all white people and to bring them low, as low as that dust into which he himself has been and is being trampled; no Negro, finally, who has not had to make his own precarious adjustment to the "nigger" who surrounds him and to the "nigger" in himself.

Yet the adjustment must be made—rather, it must be attempted, the tension perpetually sustained—for without this he has surrendered his birthright as a man no less than his birthright as a black man. The entire universe is then peopled only with his enemies, who are not only white men armed with rape and rifle, but his own farflung and contemptible kinsmen. Their blackness is his degradation and it is their stupid and passive endurance which makes his end inevitable.

There is a truth in what happens to Bigger, but not the whole or the decisive truth. Further, to tell judge and jury to take Bigger to their bosoms because he is their creation, *will not work*, whatever its partial truth. This preachment works in reverse:

. . . the courtroom, judge, jury, witnesses and spectators recognize immediately that Bigger is their creation and they recognize this not only with hatred and fear and guilt and the resulting fury of selfrighteousness but also with that morbid fullness of pride mixed with horror with which one regards the extent and power of one's wickedness. . . . they know, finally that they do not wish to forgive him and that he does not wish to be forgiven; that he dies, hating them, scorning that appeal which they cannot make to that irrecoverable humanity of his which cannot hear it; and that he *wants* to die because he glories in his hatred and prefers, like Lucifer, rather to rule in hell than serve in heaven.

The indictment, the forceful reproach, the warning and the terrible accounting no doubt have their place in the transactions of men, but they are not the key to the self-discovery that leads to discovery of the humanity of other men. For the

righteous denouncers are really saying that *we*, the *good* people, do not do these things, but *you* the haters and destroyers, do them. So let us, the good people, increase our number and work for the day when we can shut out the bad people from our lives, or at least from view. Or render them powerless. Baldwin concludes:

This is the dream of all liberal men, a dream not at all dishonorable, but, nevertheless a dream. For, let us join hands on this mountain as we may, the battle is elsewhere. It proceeds far from us in the heat and horror and pain of life itself where all men are betrayed by greed and guilt and bloodlust and where no one's hands are clean. Our good will, from which we yet expect such power to transform us, is thin, passionless, strident: its roots, examined, lead us back to our forebears, whose assumption it was that the black man, to become truly human and acceptable, must first become like us. This assumption once accepted, the Negro in America can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality, the distortion and debasement of his own experience, surrendering to those forces which reduce the person to anonymity and which make themselves manifest all over the darkening world.

COMMENTARY
THE MATTER HAS SOME MYSTERY

BROODING about the oddity of the sources of human excellence—Paul Goodman's emergence from his "middle class" background, publication of Charles Reich's rather extraordinary essay in a humorous magazine, the *New Yorker*, and the fact that rather stodgy academic institutions harbor very unacademic rebels—we were drawn to recall William James's sprightly account of human nature:

Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well dressed, and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a *bon vivant*, and a lady-killer, as well as a philosopher, statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a "tone-poet" and a saint. The thing is simply impossible. The millionaire's work would run counter to the saint's, the *bon vivant* and the philanthropist would trip each other up; the philosopher and the lady-killer could not well keep house in the same tenement of clay.

Well, impossible or not, the *New Yorker* is quite successful in maintaining light-hearted hospitality in its pages to nearly all these intentions. Reading Mr. Reich (see *Frontiers*), one cannot help suffering minor distractions from the ads along the way. And since advertisers don't spend thousands of dollars in the *New Yorker* without doing a lot of business as a result, one must believe that there are numerous would-be *bon vivants*, gourmets, fashion plates, and lady-killers among its readers, who, somehow or other, are also capable of appreciating Mr. Reich. The matter has some mystery in it. We know only that the toughest and most persistent of Puritan reformers have been unable to replace these contradictions with uniformity. The familiar program for abolishing them, which is to design a more confining "tenement of clay" in the form of a social system, does not work.

Plans to "produce" only one sort of man have never really worked. Yet most of the time, when people talk about creating a "good society," they mean a society which will make other people more

predictable. Why do they keep on wanting or trying to do this? Mainly, we suppose, because it is at least possible to draw up plans for social institutions. Human nature, on the other hand, is essentially obscure. You can't plan for it except in terms of its unpredictability.

Save for the most superficial matters, uniformity is simply impossible in a good human society. There have been a few great moments in history when a handful of exceptional men have felt this to be true, and laid the foundations of freedom, but those who come after only repeat the words. They talk about leaving everyone to pursue "happiness" in his own way, and to choose his own religion, but then make elaborate and devious plans to persuade the population that "happiness" and "truth" can have only standard definitions. Happiness, for example, becomes endless acquisition, and truth becomes accepting whatever is required to maintain the desired rate of progress in acquisition. And then, as Harold Taylor says, we have a System which on occasion allows us "to see its hideous grinning face." Before long there are strenuous demands for a new and better System, as though another container of all this betrayal and contradiction could really change the quality of what lies within. The reformers would of course want to ban the *New Yorker!*

Yet what, in our present state of knowledge, could be worse than institutions which deny all inconsistency and have no room in them for schism and contradiction? The idea of making perfect institutions for imperfect men is something that can never be carried out, since imperfect men need most of all the freedom to change.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A TROUBLE WITH SCHOOLS

FROM one point of view, a school is like an economic system—that is, you have to have it. The best economic system is the one that works for the people who are using it. To make choosing the Right Economic System into a big issue of Good and Evil seems an incredibly bad mistake. There are no doubt bad economic systems, just as there are bad schools, but their worst badness results from misconceiving their function or relying on them too much for salvation and deliverance from evil.

If you think about what you read in the good books on education, these days, you realize that the best things that happen in teaching occur in the relations between people, usually just two people. The school, if the things happened there, was just the framework. The framework didn't make the things happen; the most you can say for the school is that it *let* the good things happen—it didn't get in the way.

Another thing that comes out in the good books on education is that real learning takes place mostly outside of school, or perhaps in spite of it. At the end of his latest book, *What Do I Do Monday?* (Dutton, \$6.95), John Holt says: "Like most people, I spent some time in schools; but most of my real education has taken place before school, outside school and since school."

Why, then, does—or did—John Holt spend so much time teaching school? Because that's where the children are, in our time. Because we haven't thought of a better way to deal with the problem of getting the children "ready for life." Even though John Holt spends most of the time he has outside of school explaining to parents (in books and lectures) why the schools are failing to do this very well, or even at all.

But just being against schools is too easy. You *can't* be against schools, anyway. Even if Paul Goodman is right about the importance of incidental learning, and even if Ivan Illich is right in pointing out that more "schooling," as presently carried on in Latin America, would only accomplish "the

modernization of poverty." To get rid of schools we would need an entirely different sort of society—a society in which home and community were good places for young people to spend their time, where they would learn something from practically everyone in the adult community. We don't have that kind of community.

What we can do, however, is to stop expecting the schools to do miracles—to be wonderful places of magical transformation of the human species, attending to the total cultural revolution we haven't got the time or the heart for, just now.

Anyone with any experience with one of the new schools knows that they sometimes do a lot of good. Relief from oppression usually does. The early nineteenth-century liberals did a lot of good with their reforms; but then, after they saw all this good, they decided that they ought to increase and *guarantee* it with proper safeguards and system. This kind of thinking ended in the welfare-warfare state, which is not so good. Freedom is really a great thing, but it has no built-in motivation of its own. Freedom is preserved only by people who are intent upon worthy accomplishment, and who create and maintain spacious areas of freedom by continuously working hard at what they believe in. Something like this can no doubt occur in schools, now and then. But the good things that happen, after oppression has been removed, require another sort of stimulus—something besides more "liberation."

It is one thing to think of a school where a good human being waits to teach eager youngsters who want to learn. There have been times and places where that idea does not falsify the school. But when there is *compulsory* education the chance of this idea being accurate is much reduced. If you say that children do have to go to school to learn to participate in a democratic society, then there can be a very long argument about schools in the service of the political objectives of the State, which is *not* society. Yet the spectre of a population in which a great many people have not learned to read is a threatening one; we probably won't risk it. So if we agree that we must have compulsory education, it then becomes very important to recognize that this compulsion puts a built-in flaw in whatever we do

afterward. The "school," in short, cannot be an ideal place so long as being there is not voluntary. This makes a coercive filter affecting all the good that can happen in a school.

There is probably no way at all in which "good" learning experiences can be institutionalized and located in a particular environment called a "school." It is a compromise situation, not an ideal situation, although, now and then, extraordinary human beings succeed in overcoming the artificialities of the assumptions people make about schools.

How *do* children learn? Well, Holt's books are good reading on the subject. It is evident that learning can happen anywhere, even in school. But it happens by accident—by unpredictable intervention, you could say—and hardly by plan. The best planning avoids putting barriers in the way of unpredictable intervention. A man's delight in his work, his intensity and enthusiasm in pursuing it, and his skill, are probably the most important incentives for the young. How to make these incentives appear in the school situation is a difficult problem, since teachers often assume they are supposed to have a *direct* effect on the children, when the indirect effect may be far more productive. In *What Do I Do Monday?* Holt says:

Visiting a non-coercive school on the West Coast not long ago, and talking with some of the teachers, I said something about adults in such a school sharing some of their interests and skills and enthusiasms with the children. One of the young teachers said scornfully, "Yeah, we'll all be magicians and do our little tricks." I said that I knew what he meant and wanted to avoid, but that for people to tell other people, especially those they like, about the things that interest them and please them is a completely natural and human thing to do. It has nothing to do with some people being older and some younger, or some teachers and some students. If we rule this out in our school or class because of some kind of theory, we make that school or class just that much less natural and human, we are playing a role instead of being what we are. To use a good word of Paul Goodman's, it is inauthentic.

So the art of teaching is in this way an art of abolishing the "reality" of the school. You try to de-institutionalize the situation for the child, because

you can't de-institutionalize society as a whole. People won't stand for this, they aren't ready for it.

Another delusion about schools is that it is possible to *hire* people to teach the young. It is true enough that people are willing to go into artificial situations and play the part of "teachers" for money, but that doesn't make them teachers. Holt is good on this, too:

Everyone talks today about the "role" of a teacher. It is a bad way of talking. In the first place it implies that we are pretending to be what we are not, or that in doing what we do we are only playing a part, acting *as if* we were what we appear to be, not truly committing ourselves to the work. In the second place the word "role" is vague. It lumps together many ideas, words, which are different, and ought to be separately understood and used. To teachers who talk about their "role," I say, "What do you mean? Do you mean your task, what someone else tells you to do? Do you mean what you tell yourself you ought to do, what you would do if you could do what you wanted? Do you mean what you actually do, the way in fact you occupy your time in that class? Do you mean someone else's understanding of your function and purposes, that is, *their* reasons for putting you in that classroom, or do you mean your own understanding of that function and purpose, your own reasons for being in the class?" These ideas ought to be kept straight.

Fire-eating attacks on the schools, anarchist demands for an end to institutions, and even Tolstoy's vituperation about grand opera and nearly everything else that fell short of his ideal conception of "art" can all be valuable provocatives if they are used, not as means for stirring destructive, nihilist emotion, but for correcting illusions about the part played in society by institutions. These institutions are not perfect and never will be. They are substitutes for far better ways of doing things—ways we are not yet capable of. So it is senseless to destroy them before we have really outgrown them; on the other hand, to idealize them is an equally bad mistake. We can get the best from our schools only by understanding their limitations.

FRONTIERS

The Blight and the Vision

TWO things seem to be necessary for a spurt of genuine progress in human affairs—the presence of a vision and an intense feeling of need for change. This would amount to a sense of overwhelming blight and at the same time a strong conviction that an alternative is available. The vision with lifting power incorporates dramatic perception of both the blight and the alternative.

With a blight as all-pervasive as the one we have now, a whole series of visions, slowly combining to generate an authentic change of human attitudes, will almost certainly be required. And if, in the present, we are preparing for such a change, it might be expected that there would be a lot of manifestoes, incorporating the expressions of persons who feel the need of a vision and are trying to supply one. It is seldom easy to recognize an authentic vision when it is first put into words. Gandhi said things about the needs of the world as long ago as the closing years of the nineteenth century, but not very many people heard him. It took the terrible blight of World War II and the turmoil which followed, including India's finally victorious struggle for political freedom, to give Gandhi a place on the world stage. But many people are now convinced that Gandhi's vision was indeed authentic.

A less potent but certainly significant vision was offered a couple of years ago by a Soviet physicist, Andrei Sakharov, in what became known as the Sakharov Manifesto. Oddly enough, Sakharov gained immunity from persecution in his own country by reason of his important contributions to the thermonuclear bomb developed by the Russians. Apparently, so "important" a man can say almost anything he likes! In this statement of twelve thousand words, titled *Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Academic Freedom*, Sakharov spoke more freely than any other Soviet citizen has dared, while remaining in his own country, contending that ideological divisions among the powers are not only outdated but dangerous for mankind. The full text of his statement was printed by the *New York Times* for July 29, 1968, and the

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (November, 1968) printed a summarizing review. The *Bulletin* editor said in presenting this material that Sakharov's views almost certainly reflected the opinions of a significant group of Soviet scientists. The physicist condemned equally the follies of capitalist and socialist or communist states, saying in one place:

Civilization is threatened by a general nuclear war; by catastrophic hunger among the larger part of mankind; by mental degradation caused by the narcotic of "mass culture" or imposed by the pressures of bureaucratic dogmatism; by mass myths delivering whole nations and continents into the power of cruel and wily demagogues [he mentions racism Stalinism, and Maoism as three such myths], and by death or degeneration caused by unforeseen alterations of the human habitat on earth. In the face of such dangers any action increasing the disunity of mankind, any preaching of incompatibility of ideologies, or irreconcilability of nations is madness, is a crime.

Free and open discussion, without pressure from authority, has become an absolute necessity, he said. Sakharov spoke out of his perception of the prevailing blight which he experienced, suggesting that the freedom of mankind is now suffocated by "the opium of mass culture," suppressed by the "cowardly and egotistic authority of small bourgeoisie," or by that of "ossified dogmatism of bureaucratic oligarchy with its favorite instrument—ideological censorship."

That was his version of the blight, and the remedy.

A different sort of manifesto appeared in the *New Yorker* for Sept. 26, and according to the magazine has been generating a response that compares with the reaction brought by John Hersey's "Hiroshima" and Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring." The contributor is a forty-two-year-old professor at Yale Law School, Charles A. Reich (the "ch" pronounced "sh"), who wrote about "The Greening of America." His first two paragraphs set the keynote:

There is a revolution under way. It is not like revolutions of the past. It has originated with the individual and with culture, and if it succeeds it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. It is now spreading

with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions, and social structure are changing in consequence. Its ultimate creation could be a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual.

This is the revolution of a new generation. It is a transformation that seems both necessary and inevitable, and in time it may turn out to include not only youth but the entire American people. The logic of the new generation's rebellion must be understood in the light of the corporate state and the way in which the state dominates, exploits, and ultimately destroys both nature and man. Americans have lost control of the machinery of their society, and only new values and a new culture can restore control. At the heart of everything is what must be called a change of consciousness. This means a new way of living—almost a new man. This is what the new generation has been searching for, and what it has started to achieve. Industrialism produced a new man, too—one adapted to the demands of the machine. In contrast, today's emerging consciousness seeks a new knowledge of what it means to be human, in order that the machine, having been built, may now be turned to human ends.

Mr. Reich begins with an analysis of the corporate state. It is detailed and relentless, and utterly believable. In a few pages, he says very nearly all that other critics have been saying, for a generation or more, and says it succinctly and convincingly. He probably says it better than anyone else, thus far. Then he turns to the meaning of the rebellion of the young, and interprets it with clarity and conviction, and the encouragement he finds seems wholly credible. Reich, you could say, has written every intelligent man's book. John Kenneth Galbraith, for one, told a *New York Times* reporter that the law professor had got on paper what Galbraith had long wanted to say, and Mr. Galbraith is not a man at a loss for words. The favorable response to the *New Yorker* piece—part of a book to be published by Random House—goes on and on. Reich said about it:

I felt that until people got this vision they'd go on feeling that the country was going to hell. It's no surprise to me that everybody now feels they wrote the book. Every observation in it other people could have made, and did. The book puts it all together. It's everybody's book.

Mr. Reich has another book in mind in which he will try to offer guidelines for what he calls the revolution in consciousness. He says:

The new generation doesn't know how to work or how to create a structure of society that will work or that will reflect its own values. Most of the kids today are in a trough—all they know how to do is hitchhike and play guitars and lie on the beach and "relate" to people. But we aren't all going to be able to sit in the trees and play harmonicas.

If from this interview Mr. Reich seems only lighthearted, then his *New Yorker* article needs reading entire, since it is filled with close reasoning and hard common sense. Said to be "perhaps the most popular lecturer at Yale," he teaches a course on constitutional law and a course called "The Individual in America."

The basis of his analysis is the division of American history into three stages of consciousness, which he labels Consciousness I, Consciousness II, and Consciousness III. Consciousness I is the awareness of the pioneer with a continent before him to tame and enjoy, and the freedom to do it. Consciousness II is the outlook of the Organization Man, in business and in politics. These first two stages have a lot in common, but the first has a lovely simplicity, while the second is complex and "sophisticated." But both are unquestioningly committed to Progress, Acquisition, and Growth. Together, they have brought us where we are today, and made the messes we are in. Then comes Consciousness III:

What Consciousness III sees, with a clarity that no ideology can provide, is a society that is unjust to its poor and its minorities, is run for the benefit of a privileged few, lacks its proclaimed democracy and liberty, is ugly and artificial, destroys the environment and the self, and is, like the war it spawns, "unhealthy for children and other living things."

All this is spelled out in graphic analysis and description. We don't think we have overdrawn the importance of this Manifesto. Our report is that Mr. Reich *has* written "everybody's book." Maybe the *New Yorker* will do a reprint of this portion of it—if Random House doesn't object.