

## THE "MANAGING" COMPLEX

THE great books of the world have all been addressed to human beings as individuals. That is, religious teachers and philosophers spoke to men as men and not as managers or organization officials. They invited attention to what a man might do about himself, not about other people. We must conclude that these teachers were convinced that the leverage for human improvement lies within the individual, since they appealed to individuals as subjects, as responsible and causal beings. Seldom if ever did they refer to the masses as objects, as constituting a "problem" for solution by the more sagacious and better informed.

Modern works concerned with human affairs almost never have this character. By tacit agreement, both writer and reader are regarded as members of a literate elite who are considering a problem which lies "out there"—in the vast "public" which is defined by the gross outlines of mass behavior, and studied as some kind of lethargic semi-intelligent monster that is moved to action by only the grossest sort of stimuli.

There are various practical reasons which seem to require that man in the mass be conceived and dealt with in terms of this sort of abstraction. Planning is one of them, whether the planning be for some public project or a large enterprise in mass marketing launched by private industry. If you have in mind an undertaking that will need the consent of hundreds of thousands or a few million human beings, it becomes necessary to think of all those people in simple behavioral terms. They are, for the purposes of the project, an aggregation of more or less predictable behavior-patterns. That is their relevance to what you want to do. The intention, of course, is to do them *good*, whether by means of a new national park, a great dam and hydroelectric plant, or a means of transport that will improve the efficiency of their

daily lives. So, naturally enough, you get into the habit of objectifying what you need to know about those people, and of defining them in this way.

In one of his occasionally sage observations, Marshall McLuhan remarked that "when printing was new, it created what was known as the Public." He went on to say that electric circuitry "created the mass," which was to his purpose, but we should like to suggest that the development of printing and other forms of communication—which have made it possible for men to become aware of each other as "statistics"—has vastly facilitated the tendency to think of the great majority of mankind as constituting a behavioral problem which we must somehow learn to understand and solve. Even if the patterns of mass action seem unchangeable in most respects, we continue to define our problems in this way. We have all those figures, studies, reports and analyses of human behavior in the mass, so how else can we think about what needs to be done?

Those old philosophers, we say, didn't understand the social question. They didn't ever think in social terms, because they hadn't developed social awareness. They didn't know how to objectify and to abstract and generalize, so they couldn't be scientific. We say that, yet the argument has a serious flaw, so far as the other side of the modern conception of man is concerned. For the abstracted and generalized portrait of mass man has absolutely nothing in it to suggest the qualities of "creativity" and individual resourcefulness which are believed to be the endowment of every human being. And there is a sense in which the scientific description of mass human behavior leaves out all the tendencies in men which do not come to the surface in action because they have been displaced by more dominant tendencies. Finally, it neglects the long-term effect of *treating* people as

objects—the shrivelling influence on the self-conceptions of people who, in a thousand ways, find their identities increasingly limited to the dull uniformities they share with the rest of the mass.

There is perhaps an internal logic in the whole trend of modern development which has predestined this broad result. The keynote of much of the progress of the past three hundred years has been in the externalization of the idea of reality. The physical, the measurable, the controllable, since Galileo, has been taken as the source of scientific knowledge. Material welfare has been the index of human good for many generations. With the gradual centralization of power, human beings have been increasingly catalogued as means to external or material ends, and their relevance has been as "labor" or as "consumers," and lately as a military resource of manpower. Public education has been little more than a facility for preparing the young to serve the needs of either private or public institutions, and the idea of human beings as ends in themselves gains only the shallowest sort of lip-service. Movements which begin as earnest efforts at political reform eventually perceive the people merely as "votes" to be counted in the drive for power, while their objectives are seldom more than a juster sharing of benefits which have little or nothing to do with the essential qualities of human beings. In short, the typical diagnoses and remedies are all quantitative, and since ills are so numerous and so massive, the idea that the only lasting remedies are qualitative hardly occurs to anyone.

There is a sense in which every serious and concerned utterance of the times seems addressed to managers or to would-be managers, as though the people themselves were no more than a vast collection of passive, neutral onlookers waiting to have their problems solved for them by the Better Minds. Nothing can be done, or is expected to be done, without complex arrangements prepared by those who have studied the human species in a scientific manner and are in a position to decide

what to do. So this conception of the mass-man, which is both real and unreal, hangs like a dead weight over us all, immobilizing the individual will and spreading the depressing idea that nothing that ought to happen will ever happen because the obstacles are too great and there is no way to bring it about.

The obsession, in short, has become a reality; the mass way of thinking about man has become a way of life. If the obsession is allowed to continue, it will surely bring an even worse paralysis, since every effort to solve our problems in merely quantitative terms has the effect of closing out the possibility of qualitative change in human beings. After all, men who think of themselves as dependent upon experts and authorities who regard people in general as objects are certain to suffer an extreme retardation of the will, finding themselves unable to attempt constructive changes in themselves and their lives. Their only hope of escape lies in trying to become experts and learning how to manipulate others. This, doubtless, is what Camus had in mind when he spoke of the present as a time when a man has only a choice between being a victim or an executioner.

Surely mankind was better off back in the days before we learned to think about "man in the mass." This is not to give way to nostalgia, but to recognize that some of the most attractive ideals of men of vision in the twentieth century contemplate the recreation of conditions which existed before the industrial revolution and the techniques of mass communication. The decentralized society made up of many small face-to-face communities, with no great factories requiring a proletariat for labor-force, but instead producer-craftsmen who fabricate goods for consumption in their immediate environs, where people maintain control over their own lives and enjoy friendly, cooperative relationships with one another—this is an ideal which should not be beyond the realization of intelligent human beings who have freedom of choice and the

determination to live in a way that seems desirable to them. The invention of machines was after all the result of human ingenuity, not an invasion from another planet, and it ought to be possible for self-reliant and resourceful people to limit their use and to set the scale and pattern of human organization to suit themselves. With such arrangements, there would no longer be a "mass-man," nor any of the dehumanizing necessities which have been created, not by any organic need, but by a style of life founded on a value system of external objectives and acquisitive goals.

It will of course be argued that it is "too late" for any such pastoral or perhaps medieval dream to be realized. But it is not too late. This is a way of describing Gandhi's dream for India, and while his dream is still far from achievement, it is certainly feasible there, since there are already some regions where it has been partially realized. And what is to prevent the advanced societies from accomplishing what is manifestly within the grasp of an "underdeveloped" people?

We might say that the some three thousand communes established within the past ten years in the United States represent a blind but stubborn groping in this direction. Whatever else it is, the modern commune is an emphatic rejection of the "mass society" concept and a refusal to live by its rules. We don't *have* to think of other human beings as people who have to be maneuvered and educated into seeing the light as we see it. It is not necessary to win a lot of elections by using essentially degrading and manipulative techniques of mass persuasion in order to change the direction of our society. It would be far better to disarm all mass techniques by rejecting the measures of man on which they are based. If people stop nourishing the institutions which rule them, those institutions will wither and die, or convert themselves into something different.

What of the contention that we need the services of the social sciences which use the mass approach if only because of the present dimensions of our problems? We must know the

extent of what is wrong before we can do much about it. There may be some basis for this claim, but two of the most effective reformers of the twentieth century, Gandhi and Dolci, do not think in mass terms at all. You never come across a "those people," collectivist sort of analysis in the works of either of these men. Always they speak of living, human beings, not statistical abstractions. The obsession of the mass man is gone. While there is recognition of the massive scale of human pain, the fundamental approach to that pain is through individual regeneration, involving reliance on qualitative self-discovery.

This seems a good place to recall a very statistical article in the *New Republic* for Jan. 10 of last year, by Wayne Davis, a biologist at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Davis is persuaded that the people of the United States need to become more like the villagers of India, simply to survive in the reduced conditions that are likely to be upon us within only a few decades. The Indian villager, he says, destroys about one twenty-fifth as much of his environment as the average American. At the rate we are using it up, our environment, he says, simply won't last, and he has strong arguments to support his contentions:

If our numbers continue to rise, our standard of living will fall so sharply that by the year 2000 any surviving Americans might consider today's average Asian to be well off. Our children's destructive effect on their environment will decline as they sink ever lower into poverty. . . . Our economy is based on the Keynesian concept of a continued growth in population and productivity. It worked in an unpopulated nation with excess resources. It could continue to work only if the earth and its resources were expanding at an annual rate of 4 to 5 per cent. Yet neither the number of cars, the economy the human population, nor anything else can expand indefinitely at an exponential rate in a finite world. We must face the fact *now*. The crisis is here. . . .

The tragedy facing the United States is even greater and even greater and more imminent than that descending upon the hungry nations. . . . Many millions will die in the most colossal famines India has ever known, but the land will survive and she will come back as she always has before. The United

States, on the other hand, will be a desolate tangle of concrete and ticky-tacky, of strip-mined moonscape and silt-choked reservoirs. The land and water will be so contaminated with pesticides, herbicides, mercury fungicides, lead, boron, nickel, arsenic and hundreds of other toxic substances, which have been approaching critical levels of concentration in our environment as a result of our numbers and affluence, that it may be unable to sustain life.

The picture may be over-drawn, but it is at least partly true to the facts. We *do* have a mass-man, over-consuming, nature-exploiting society, and it *is* based on the never-enough, no-limit-to-anything idea of progress, so that the fate Dr. Davis pictures will surely overtake us sooner or later, if we keep on saying that it is "too late" to change.

A book noticed recently in Review—*Science Looks at Itself*—had this passage by one of the contributors: "the religions of primitive peoples—often predicated upon a respect for ecosystems which the worshippers do not understand—are more farseeing than those of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which propounded the absurd notion that everything on earth was created for man's enjoyment or use." "Development," this writer says, in our use of the term, has become "a euphemism for environmental destruction." The spirit now becoming manifest in various sectors of our society is an expression of respect for the surrounding ecosystem because many men now feel that they *are* beginning to understand the dynamic relations of the natural environment, and whether or not this is an improvement, so far, over the intuitive reverence felt by "primitive" peoples, there comes with this consciousness of obligation a need to think our way through to a kind of life that is consistent with that respect and a logical fulfillment of it. This should mean a gradual change in attitudes toward all other peoples, in the direction of a natural sense of community with them, and a rejection of the abstracting and statistical habit of mind. How much better it would be, for example, if we did not even know of the existence of Indo-China, by comparison with the kind of "knowledge" we now

think we possess of people so far away, with whom we have had no relations at all, save through the abstractions of cultural egotism and political "policy"? Our progress has brought those people nothing but evil, and at what moral cost to ourselves do we continue to think of it with pride?

While we cannot turn the clock back, nor abandon the mechanical facilities and other technical aids upon which so many millions have become dependent for their very lives, we can at least begin to regard all these skills and industrial achievements in a somewhat different light. The measure of human beings does not lie in the height of their monuments nor the speed of their transport, but in the quality of their self-development as human beings. If this is not admirable, then nothing that is done with their technology can be admirable, whatever its quantitative potentiality for material welfare. The good and the wise of the distant past knew this, whatever their ignorance of the methods of analysis now practiced, and regardless of their indifference to what we call "social issues." We do not know, we have not even begun to consider, the extent to which the "problems" of the modern world are the result of distortions and misconceptions in our idea of knowledge and the value system based on its abstractions.

We seem to have the habit of supposing that the patterns of existence imposed by the runaway development of Western science and mechanical genius are some kind of relentless destiny which is unchangeable in either its character or direction. Such exaggerated respect for the manipulative skills of technology may be partly responsible for the low estimate of man that seems characteristic of the way social problems are formulated and attacked. Individual resourcefulness has been discouraged for generations, and policies conceived in terms of "mass" needs together with vast manipulative operations have created an entire gamut of functional orthodoxies which have the practical effect of reducing large numbers of human beings to little more than passive

responders to formulas developed by planners whose minds are wholly in the grip of extrapolations from an exploitive and destructively oriented past. The so-called "mass man" is in some measure the creation of these manipulations, which proceed according to a time-table alien to normal human development, and respond to "necessities" unconnected with any natural human need.

Needless to say, an effort to change all this can be born only in individuals, so that there is no occasion for fearing that what is here proposed is a sudden halt in our accustomed ways of doing things. The natural and human mode of social change is by gradual stages, through the decisions of individuals, each in his own time, by his own light, until, finally, the character of an epoch is transformed through the evolution of new social relationships and forms of association and cooperation. Little by little, through such changes, we shall find ourselves relieved of the impossible burden of feeling that the great "mass" of humanity out there must somehow be managed into behaving in better ways. The fact is that no human beings worthy of the name are ever "managed" to any good result at all; and if they submit to manipulation, they are degraded and weakened by it, and will have a long, uphill struggle to regain their integrity and self-reliance at some future time.

We may notice, finally, that the really remarkable achievements of oppressed races come only when they break away from every form of control, whether tyrannical or benignly paternalistic, and strike out on their own, however primitively and crudely at first, their fundamental and initial achievement being the recovery of their self-reliance and self-respect. Everything that we know of human nature suggests that the "management" idea is wrong on every count—wrong for the managed, who are never helped, but only hindered, in their development, by even well-meaning efforts at control; and wrong for the managers, who have the misfortune to embody the

most outrageous egotisms of their age, and are certain, in the long run, to achieve only frustration and defeat. A society that places its hopes in the management of some human beings by others misconceives the human situation right at the start. That it now seems absolutely necessary to do a lot of managing is only evidence that this misconception has been at work for a long, long time, and has produced a host of consequences which further distort the circumstances of human life.

## *REVIEW* ON RIVERS AND MEN

IT gives a reviewer particular pleasure to come across a writer he is familiar with and admires in an unexpected place. Not all the tasks of the reviewer are enjoyable, even though they may be worth doing. The best jobs are those which are as much fun at the beginning as at the end—which are good all the way through. Reviewing Wendell Berry is like that. We can think of no writer we have read in recent years who gives the reader so much continuous enjoyment. So, when we found that the *Hudson Review* for the Winter of 1970-71—secured for other editorial purposes—had in it an extract from Wendell Berry's new book, *The Unforeseen Wilderness* (University of Kentucky Press), we settled down for an interval of really pleasurable reading.

Every one of us, man or boy, and perhaps girls, too, has wanted at some time in his life to go down a river in a boat or canoe. Some get to do it, and seldom forget the experience. Some of the best writing you can find is concerned with such trips. But what is the writing really about? John Wesley Powell wrote about the canyons of the Colorado river, to be sure, but years afterward you think mainly of his daring and the fact that he undertook this adventure with only one arm. Did Thoreau write about the Merrimac and Concord rivers? Well, yes. But that isn't what you remember. His defense of the rights of the shad, which are found (*were* found) in a lot of rivers may be what sticks in the mind. Wendell Berry writes about an experience in the Red River Gorge, in a canoe, and while we'd like to see that place, too, we kept wondering what was really the content of this writing. A passage in John Burroughs's *Pepacton*, a book which begins with his trip down a river,—a branch of the Delaware,—in a home-made boat, may be the best guide to what these writers are concerned with, even though Burroughs is somewhat extravagant and would probably be rejected by both Berry and Thoreau. The great naturalist wrote:

There is nothing in nature but what the beholder supplies. Does the sculptor interpret the marble or his own ideal? Is the music in the instrument, or in the soul of the performer? Nature is a dead clod until you have breathed upon it with your genius. You commune with your own soul, not with woods or waters; they furnish the conditions, and are what you make them. Did Shelley interpret the song of the skylark, or Keats that of the nightingale? They interpreted their own wild, yearning hearts. The trick of the poet is always to idealize nature—to see it subjectively. You cannot find what the poets find in the woods until you take the poet's heart to the woods. He sees nature through a colored glass, sees it truthfully, but with an indescribable charm added, the aureole of the spirit. A tree, a cloud, a bird, a sunset, have no hidden meaning that the art of the poet is to unlock for us. Every poet shall interpret them differently, and interpret them rightly, because the soul is infinite. Milton's nightingale is not Coleridge's; Burns's daisy is not Wordsworth's, Emerson's humble-bee is not Lowell's; nor does Turner see in nature what Tintoretto does, nor Veronese what Correggio does. Nature is all things to all men. "We carry within us," says Sir Thomas Browne, "the wonders we find without."

Well, this is good, and there is much truth in it, but not *all* the truth. Something has happened to the world since the nineteenth century, when Burroughs wrote; we are worse off, and some men—a few—have become wiser. A thoughtful man can't be as cheery as Burroughs was; not, at least, in the same way. He wasn't driven in, in, to his own core in the way that some men have been in recent years; Berry among them, as we shall see. But there is one more sentence from Burroughs that can stand with the best anyone has said about Nature. Contending that the true poet knows more than the naturalist, because he has nature's secrets in his heart, he added: "Eckermann could instruct Goethe in ornithology, but could not Goethe instruct Eckermann in the meaning and mystery of the bird?"

Here is a passage from Wendell Berry, taken from the *Hudson Review*:

This is a stretch of country that might have been deliberately meant to refute all our idle talk about "the everlasting hills." There are no everlasting hills. There is only everlasting process. Here the hills are

clearly being torn down. But this, I keep reminding myself, is not destruction. It is creation. If men, with their souped-up ambitions and their panic-stricken sense of time, should attempt to work on such a scale—and they do—the invariable result would be destruction. But this is a scene, and a result, of the creation—which simply cannot be thought of in man's terms. It is never—except in his limited, selfish view—destructive. It is never going through a period of destruction between something created in the past and something to be created in the future. It is always creating what *is*.

It is our journey, our laborious passage through these works, that has taught us this. Passing down, contriving against obstacles, as the water passes, we have moved outside ourselves into a curious sympathy with what is happening here. We have dealt with it stone by stone. And so we do not now stand apart from it like real estate speculators saying what a nice place it will be when it is finished. For we know that it *is* finished, just as it was, and as it will be. We know that only a fragment of its substance and its duration is visible to us, and that however tumultuous and chaotic the place may look it is involved in a process that is ever coherent and whole. For the wilderness, which is to say the universe, we have no words. We deal with its stones, its trees, its water. We ask ourselves which will be the best way to go. Our words are for the way we have been.

Once, in the very depths of the Roughts, we find standing in the stream a craggy stone with bluets and liverworts in it and a few ferns. It is not large—perhaps six or eight feet above the surface. What stops us and keeps us standing there looking, looking, is that it is a coherent landscape, a rocky mountain landscape, exquisitely scaled and proportioned and colored, as though contrived and placed there by the most subtle of Japanese gardeners. It is uncannily all of a piece, orderly, impeccable. Like a fine work of art or a neat small farm, it is resonant with the intimation of orders too large and too small to see.

Wendell Berry would not agree that nature is nothing but a clod, man's mind all. He might like better Ortega's view, that the selfhood of a man includes himself and his environment. In this part of his book he speaks again and again of the need of man to realize that nature has her own ways and is doing her own things. It is *hubris*, he maintains, to assume that nature is simply there, waiting to be used by us, by some kind of extra-

cosmic appointment. A man ought to expose himself to an experience of nature which corrects this delusion. He has a passage on this:

The evil that has produced what we now call "the environmental crisis" is arrogance or, to use the ancient Greek term that is more accurate, *hubris*, the assumption by men of divine prerogatives. It is the willingness to use more power than one can control. It is the *ignorant* use of power. It is a sin of which the consequences are invariably visited upon the descendants of the sinner, as the Greek myths and tragedies tell us over and over again. It is the reason why humility and modesty and self-restraint and temperance have been recognized as essential virtues through all of human history. The man who assumes and uses the powers of the gods must in his ignorance inevitably reduce the common fund of life and fortune on which his children will have to live.

The cure for *hubris* is an exact understanding of what are the powers and prerogatives of a *man*. Men who become too powerful and too proud, too arrogant in their use of the world, are beaten down, reduced to mansize, driven back into their proper estate. That is a divine or, if you would prefer, a natural—law. It is one of the major subjects of *The Odyssey*: Odysseus, for his offense against Poseidon, is stripped of everything—homeland and rank and followers and weapons and clothes—and made to contend naked against the sea, not as a king but as a man, inferior to the gods and therefore dependent upon them. In the same way, as John Stewart Collis shows in his excellent book *The Triumph of the Tree*, nations of people who destroy the forests that protect the steep slopes and safeguard the health of the watersheds, destroy at the same time the sources of their life, and eventually famine drives them out at large in to the world. Perhaps the cutters of the trees do not themselves suffer for what they have done. Perhaps they prosper and their work seems productive only of wealth. But they have nevertheless prepared a justice which descends to their children like a congenital disease.

Mr. Berry thinks it well for a man to test himself voluntarily, as Odysseus was tested, to learn the limits of his powers simply as a human being. If he does not learn humility and a portion of wisdom, he may at least learn prudence. Plainly, it is a good thing for a young man to do—to go out into the wilderness, alone, unarmed, and bearing only what he can carry on his back. He

will learn something, and not know what until he learns it, for the scene forever changes. Nature has her order and a man does well to respect it, to realize how little he knows. To live a life insulated from nature is to render such discoveries unlikely.

Why will Mr. Berry not particularly like what John Burroughs said about nature being only what the mind of man makes it? Mainly, we think, because the observation or half-truth omits to notice that nature is a part of ourselves, extended in the world, and filled with mystery, as all selves are filled with mystery. It is the separation of man and nature that he will object to. Speaking of the man who seeks instruction from nature, he says:

He should discover, at the very least, that a man who has a body and five senses to amuse himself with has little need for the machinery of recreation. The time he stays in the wilderness is a time spent in touch with a non-human world that is mysterious to him. From the flowers to the stars he sees little or nothing that men have made. He spends that time not as a master of the world but as a dweller in it—which is, after all his true condition. And he should emerge from his experience somewhat changed—less eager to cash in on his birthright, aware that men are *part* of what they destroyed.

Readers who wonder where the Red River Gorge is will not find this question answered in the portion of the *Unforeseen Wilderness* reprinted in the *Hudson Review*. There were clues we didn't follow up, such as references to numbered highways, but the book will surely tell!

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE MANAS READER**

A BOOK called *The Manas Reader*, made up of selections from MANAS articles which have appeared over a period of nearly twenty-three years—since the beginning of the magazine in 1948—is now available in the book stores. It has 483 pages. The publisher is Grossman and the price for the paperbound edition is \$4.95. (The hardback is \$15.00!) We can hardly review this book here except to confess that we like it very much.

The contents have approximately the same symmetry as an individual issue of MANAS. There are, in sequence, the usual five sections—lead articles, reviews, editorials, "Children" articles, and Frontiers discussions. The selections include both staff-written and signed contributions. Among the latter are works by A. H. Maslow, Henry Miller, Robert M. Hutchins, Milton Mayer, E. F. Schumacher, Arthur Morgan, Henry Anderson, and Theodore Roszak.

The book begins with the first lead article, which tells what the paper set out to do. An effort has been made to include articles which have proved especially popular with readers, such as, for example, E. F. Schumacher's "Buddhist Economics" and Henry Anderson's "Case Against the Drug Culture."

Those who have already seen it think well of the book, regarding it as a fine source for browsing and a likely candidate for Christmas presents when the time for that comes.

The paperback has sewed sections and is durably put together for so large a volume. The book design is simple and tasteful and the typography seems just right—completely legible. The hardback and paperbound editions are identical except for the covers.

Within each section, the articles appear in chronological order, each being identified by date of original appearance at the end.

For readers who wish to have copies of *The Manas Reader*, we have put in a stock of both the hard and soft cover volumes at the MANAS office and can fill orders now. This is more for the convenience of readers than to obtain distribution for the book, since even the stores in California should now have copies on hand. (Our sales of the book will be handled by our printer, The Cunningham Press.)

For the editors and publishers of MANAS, the appearance of this book is something of an event. It is appropriate, here, to express thanks to readers and friends who, through the years, have given their support to the paper and made the *Reader* possible.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves REDESIGNING COLLEGES

SINCE most of the material which appears here is about what individuals do in relation to working with the young, and we don't print much about institutions except to view them with alarm, we began reading Harold Taylor's new book, *How To Change Colleges* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971, \$4.95), a few weeks ago with measurable skepticism. There must be a better way to serve education than by trying to change places that don't want to be changed, we thought. So, when we found something immediately quotable, we made an article of it and went on to other things, promising to come back to Mr. Taylor.

Reading the whole book was worth doing. If there is anybody in the country who knows how colleges could be improved, it is certainly Harold Taylor. Whether they will submit to it is another matter, although, to be fair, it should be said that some of Mr. Taylor's ideas of what to do are already in practice. Yet it seems certain that most of the colleges are going to be left behind by the sweep of changes that no institution could possibly keep pace with. New beginnings in education are really the most important thing. Perhaps Mr. Taylor thinks this, too, but also believes in *trying* to improve the existing colleges.

Most of the criticisms by students, he believes, are accurate, and many of them suggest reforms that could be carried out by a faculty and administration that were willing to do so. But the value of the book lies in the suggestions he makes which can be applied by individuals. By telling what is already being done, he shows how much resourceful teachers can do of their own motion. We should begin, however, with his summary of what is wrong with the colleges and universities.

First, they are mainly responsive to sources of money, not to the needs of either the students or society. Students have no part in determining the

character and tone of their own education. Faculty is more concerned with professional careers than with teaching students. The teaching, therefore, is poor, and arranged wholly for faculty convenience. The lecture system is deadly, and the required courses give the student few options, so that motivation tends to be low. The heavy schedule of the student leaves him time to do nothing thoroughly. The need to pass examinations becomes the dominant concern and tests usually measure only memory. Any advanced learning is aimed at graduate school rather than the development of the student and his interests. Dr. Taylor comments:

The total effect of this system is therefore to divorce learning from life, to put the student in a passive role, and to force him through the study of materials which are irrelevant to his own interests and to the needs and problems of the society around him.

The rest of the objections have to do with the orientation of admissions policies to white, middle-class students, the social pressures exerted by boards of regents, and the administrators' lack of interest in actual education.

This analysis comes early in the book. Succeeding chapters look at the particulars of the indictment and offer alternatives. First comes the proposal to free the student of the necessity to conform to elaborate patterns established over many years by professors who do only one thing. All through this book, the emphasis is on the need to give the student responsibility for getting an education. The idea is to help the student to discover what he needs and to choose it, himself. He will never even begin his education until he is self-determining. He will need help, but not arbitrary requirements, which will not develop his judgment but only make him either passively submissive or rebellious. This proposal, as Dr. Taylor anticipates, will have a radical effect on all student advising. If course requirements are abandoned, the students will have to know more about what teachers plan to teach, and why it may be important. If they *have* to take a course,

there's not much point in finding out about it in advance. An open curriculum gives the student experience in decision-making—something he will have to do for the rest of his life:

Without the crutch of requirements, the student is in a situation in which there is pressure on him to take his choices seriously. Discussions of courses and teachers then involve many more questions than are ordinarily raised under the advising system now in operation. . . . this will demand that each teacher be much more explicit about what he intends doing in his course. He will need to describe it in writing, and he will need to find ways of conferring with students about his work, both the students who have already been working with him and those who are trying to decide whether to or not.

It seems obvious that under this open curriculum arrangement, teaching will be *better*.

Dr. Taylor's next proposal is for abolition of the lecture system—not all lectures, but the system. As he says:

Even if every teacher in every one of the five courses the student normally takes in a term were brilliant and the content of each of his lectures absorbing, three times a week in five separate courses means fifteen lectures a week. That is fifteen times a week that the student sits with his notebook writing down what is said (or not said), and trying to remember from week to week what he *should* remember from his reading and the lectures.

On the face of it, that is an absurd way of teaching students to think and to learn for themselves. They learn *not* to think for themselves because the lectures do that for them. The lecturer interprets, analyzes, describes, lists points, defines, introduces general concepts, makes relationships. Sometimes if he has talent approaching genius, he thinks aloud about a subject in which he is so thoroughly saturated that the lecture is an occasion on which new ideas are generated by the mere presence before him of a group of interested young people. That is the rare occasion. Most of the time the pedagogy is didactic, and merely covers "material" and sets things straight according to the canons of the academy.

The rest of this chapter, devoted to practical alternatives to the lecture system, is packed with good ideas.

Now comes a frontal attack on the credit system. It makes no sense at all, as Dr. Taylor shows, to say that 120 units representing the work done in four years to earn a bachelor degree is a useful way to measure a student's education. You can't chop up into discrete particles what an intelligent human being knows. The units mean only time spent and tests passed, and are not a guarantee of anything else.

The students are quick to point out that the units of academic credit are not only tools to be used against the reform of the system, but are, in a sense, a form of money. Tuition is charged at so much a point of credit, and the credit money is spent by the students for semester hours of education in about the same way one would go about buying a refrigerator or reserving a hotel room.

It is plain enough that the patterns of university and college organization are organized in behalf of all the interests except those of the student.

What would Dr. Taylor do? He would, as we said, throw the responsibility for education back to the student, devote the school and its departments to helping him meet that responsibility. This would mean turning places of higher learning into centers for cooperative self-education. He gives examples:

The experimental colleges—Antioch, Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, Friends World College, Goddard, among others—assume that the world is the campus and that the college is the central learning space with which the student is identified and where he can make his intellectual and educational home. He moves out from that center with its libraries, laboratories, teachers, and courses into the surrounding cultures, institutions and communities in order to learn by direct experience what is going on there, and brings back what he has learned to add to what he can continue learning on the college campus. In these experimental colleges, the question of academic credit for what the students do is settled, by whether or not the experience, on and off the campus, is of a kind which advances the student's intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural growth.

There is also a chapter on how to replace grading, tests, and examinations with more

intelligent ways to determine how well a student is doing. The later chapters, dealing with various changes, are rich in suggestion. For example, Dr. Taylor would break down department barriers:

The purpose in teaching the humanities and the arts is to educate the sensibility and to deepen the capacity for aesthetic social, and personal insight. If that purpose were taken seriously it would mean that the English department would pay a great deal of attention to the idea that language is the tissue -which holds the arts together and makes it possible to talk about the act of the artist. . . . This would argue for a full opportunity for students in the English department, with English considered not as a literary form but as a means of expression in words, to work directly with dancers, actors, composers, painters, and sculptors, and to write poems to be danced, stretches of dialogue, scenarios for films, one-act plays, critiques of art works, through discussions with the student artists who made them. Everything should be done to encourage the student of literature to become more deeply involved in the art of expression, and to write and read, especially to write, because he wants to say something and to know something for himself. . . . In this, a reconstituted English department could combine forces with a psychology department to become in practice a center for the study of human nature.

In the "What Is Wrong" chapter, Dr. Taylor says that what is basically wrong with the university as a teaching institution is that it has no philosophy of education. He points out that the reforms he will offer are specific, not a proposal for a philosophy of education, yet the medium in which all that he says floats *is* a philosophy of education. No reader who works with the young can fail to be stimulated by this book.

## *FRONTIERS* A Ravaged Land

THE best magazines today are the critical ones. Now and then some mournful voice is raised to ask if there isn't anything *good* happening, and there have been one or two ventures in publishing in an attempt to satisfy such inquiries. But these attempts don't succeed, and you don't hear about them after the first couple of issues. Can it be that the good things are not the important things? Perhaps it is rather that we don't have very clear ideas on what is good, but are fairly sure about the bad things.

MANAS writers read a lot of magazines. There is always a reproachful pile of unread material waiting for attention. And when a writer or reviewer gets around to going through this material, he is often afflicted by the monotony of all the bad things that are going on. Of the making of evil, it seems, there is no end. Then, too, so many of these papers try to blast the reader with their messages of intolerable wrongdoing. The writers have been horrified, and they want to horrify you, too. You can't blame them. Very bad things are happening. They ought to be stopped.

That's true enough. These things should be stopped. But something else ought to happen, too. Human beings need to regain their balance, by some means or other. Life can't be only a crusade against evil. Being unbalanced is also an evil. A realization of this may be back of all the "opting out" of the indifferent and apolitical young. We might remember that one so lately a child may have no other way of seeking balance. For him, it may be exactly the right thing to do. A life, after all, is something to be lived. It must have positive qualities. Life cannot be entirely given over in reaction to all the subdivided and specializing institutions of our society and outrage at the mistakes and excesses they are guilty of. A man has to stand on something good of his own before he can find balance, and it seems likely that

only people with balance will be able to find ways of stopping the bad things that are happening.

We began thinking along these lines after reading several issues of a good magazine—one that more people ought to read—that is devoted to human welfare. It is called *Environment*, which comes out monthly (except for two combined issues) and is published in St. Louis, Missouri, by the Committee for Environmental Information (\$8.50 a year). It is a magazine edited and written by scientists, and might well be edged in black. Nearly everything that appears in it is concerned with some aspect of the man-made decline in the environment. Nothing about bird walks or the glories of the Grand Canyon. Quite plainly, the magazine is a mission-oriented, emergency operation. It is out to *save* the environment—to help, that is, and do all it can. It does a lot, and we read it because we *have* to.

Americans don't believe the Germans who say they didn't know anything about the concentration and death camps. We think they ought to have found out about those camps. So, also, then, with the ruin of the environment caused by people we support—buy from or vote for. We have an obligation to find out what they are doing and then to object, protest, and stop them from doing it, if we can. That's why it seems important to read and report on what a team of scientists has to say about the effects of defoliation in Vietnam. It would be pretty hard to give space to bird walks after reading the article, "A Tour of Vietnam," by Terri Aaronson, in *Environment* for March.

It took a long time for the American Association for the Advancement of Science to get around to investigating the effects of the war in Vietnam on the land, but in December, 1969, it appointed a Harvard biologist to make a plan for studying the effects of herbicides spread by the American military on the Vietnamese ecology and people. He made a plan, it was put into effect, and last December, at the annual AAAS meeting, the Herbicide Assessment Commission (MAC) made a preliminary report. Apparently, the first

effect of this report came before it was given, since three days before HAC was to address the AAAS, the White House announced that herbicides would be "phased out" in Vietnam.

The names of the various plant poisons that have been used are too complicated to be given here, so our summary will be very general. What follows is practically in Miss Aaronson's words.

In the past nine years, defoliation has affected more than one seventh of the land area of South Vietnam. Some 60 to 70 per cent of the total area of the country is forested, which means about 25 million acres. The purpose of defoliation is to deny the National Liberation Front forces the concealment of forest cover and to expose to view their supply routes through forest areas. Trees sprayed remain leafless for months afterward and one out of every eight or ten trees dies. In areas sprayed twice, 50 to 80 per cent of the trees die. Half the forest land in South Vietnam is dense jungle. Of this area, 35 per cent has been defoliated. Lumber is—or was—South Vietnam's most promising industry, but the forest areas so treated do not regenerate well, and sometimes not at all. Commonly, the defoliated areas are invaded by bamboo, which has little economic value. A long train of ecological consequences follows the poisoning of the forests. The only animal life now thriving in defoliated regions is said to be termites.

Another phase of the herbicide program is crop destruction, which is supposed to deny food to the NLF. According to HAC, the crop destruction program is a total failure, since "95 per cent of the crops destroyed were intended for civilians." Moreover, most of the crop destruction has been carried out in the central highlands, inhabited largely by the Montagnards, who amount to about a million people. Food for 600,000 people has been destroyed there, according to HAC. It is said that the loose wording of the "phase-out" order applying to herbicides allows the destruction of Montagnard crops to continue unabated. What happens is this: the people are ordered to leave an area, and

shortly after it is classified as having "zero population" and sprayed. Farmers who don't want to or can't leave are ignored. One researcher said that only 3 to 5 per cent of the crops destroyed in Vietnam were meant for the Viet Cong. Concerning the reactions of the people to defoliation, the same man said that the villagers simply could not understand it. "Rather, they seemed to assume that defoliation was an American attempt to destroy the economy and make South Vietnam dependent upon the United States."

The final proposal of HAC was that further research should be given over to study of how the Vietnamese can rebuild their ravaged land.