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THE CONTRIBUTION OF EXPERTS

THERE is a scientist as well as an artist in every man, and these two are doubtless capable of collaboration, but since this is difficult, they more often find ways of ignoring one another. The scientist is supposed to look at things as they really are; he studies facts and tries to find out what they mean; and if there are too many facts in a given area of investigation, as a matter of course the scientist subdivides the territory and creates another, more limited branch of science in order to carry out his work with professional thoroughness. The artist has a different means of unifying his activity. He, too, looks at the world, but his eye skips around. He doesn't map and organize his investigations by external criteria. He waits until an element in his environment, a sight—or maybe a sound—moves him to visioning, and then he begins an act of creation. He takes some aspect of experience and makes it into a meaning of his own. What he leaves out does not rise up and demand attention, since he can always do something else with that, next time. Neither in theory nor in fact must the artist attend to everything. He reaches after universality in another way. The scientist investigates meaning "out there," while the artist declares it from an inside seeing.

The ordinary man is under no compulsion to respond to life as an artist. He may do so, but he doesn't have to. Perhaps he ought to, in order to have a more human life, but biology and economics do not make him write poetry the way they make him give attention to practical facts. It is right here, in this attention to facts, that the modern world has become overwhelming in its demands. For the ordinary man cannot do what the scientist does. He isn't a professional pursuing an objective discipline. He can't subdivide his world and devote his time to only a small portion of it. He is a *citizen,* which means that he is supposed to be some kind of universal man in relation to the general. problems and decisions of the society in which he lives. And this, he finds, has become practically impossible for him to do. So, in desperation, he sometimes pretends that he is doing it. He uses the free selectivity of the artist, but without the honesty and responsibility of the artist. He goes around assuming he has accurate (scientific) knowledge about the affairs of state, the needs of community, the right and wrong of war, then acts on his assumptions, and this brings nothing but trouble, since no country can prosper under the guidance of people who are ignorant, but pretend to know what they are doing. Very likely, people practice this deception because there seems nothing else for them to do. The pretense is admittedly a desperate act. But its consequence is that desperation comes to attend all the decisions and behavior of such people. So we say, quite accurately, that we are a sick society.

There is an alternative, but it is difficult to accept. The alternative is an honest admission of ignorance. This is a kind of "opting out," but it is only opting out from pretense. Refusing to pretend any more is simple integrity, and many of the problems of the citizen might wash away in this solvent. How much of our energy as citizens is spent in trying to peer past each other's pretenses and the pretenses of politicians and other authorities, in an effort to see if by chance they really know what they are talking about? Not all of the complexity we face is due to pretense, but it is certainly made impenetrable for most men by pretense.

One of the fruits of practicing an art may be the development of a special sort of integrity. A serious artist soon finds that he cannot produce good art if he pretends. And since, as artist, he is under no necessity to know all about everything—

which is the burden laid upon citizens—he may get enough practice in refusing to pretend as an artist to allow him a similar candor as a man. In an article in the *Nation* for Nov. 14, 1959, a novelist, George P. Elliott, made the kind of confession we are talking about:

> Nothing is harder than to have a clear, steady and sound idea of what society is and what it should be. I must speak for myself: I realize that I could not define the word to anyone's satisfaction; like many, I sometimes in desperation identify society with the state—whence horrors ensue. The word "democratic" has ceased to have any more independent meaning than the word "united" in United States. We have no good analogy by which to comprehend our society. It is not a body whose head is the President, nor an army, nor a corporation, nor any sort of religious body, nor any sort of machine. The commonest analogy is to an organism, but which sort of organism? A tree? It is not mobile enough. A Portuguese-man-of-war? No centralization. An eagle, as the dollar says? Too small. One of the dinosaurs? That sounds pretty good—a vast, bewildered, terrifying, vegetarian, self-extinctive creature. Yes, it will serve. Our new totem: the brontosaurus.

It is useful to note at this point that accepting Mr. Elliott's agnostic stance about the nature of society does not make the roof fall in. You still get up in the morning to go to work, and the job is still there. The world and its works continue and the people in it go on having relations with the world and with each other; all these things continue, whether or not we admit that we can't see the world "whole" and suspect that other people are in the same fix. All that has been changed about the world when a man confesses his ignorance is that there is now a little more honesty in it. The world can't help but be a little better off as a result.

But there are other resources which deserve attention: the experts. This time, admitting our ignorance, we are going to approach them with respect. We have the work of two experts for consideration, and they seem to be very reliable ones. Both are concerned with the public good—with "society," and how it can be improved.

An expert of this sort is a man who tries to bring science to the study of an apparently finite phase of public affairs. After he gets some knowledge he is able, if he wants to, to tell what he has learned to the rest of the people. If the people find him dependable, they may believe what he says and do what he recommends. On this view, an expert is a very good man to have around. The fact is that we can't get along without experts. But the problem is that we don't do very well even with their help. The best of them do not pretend to solve problems, but hand the problems back to us, although they may explain why they can't do anything else. The greatest value of an expert often lies in this explanation.

The article, "The Media Barons and the Public Interest," in the *Atlantic* for June, by Nicholas Johnson, a member of the Federal Communications Commission, is an excellent example of a serious and accomplished expert at work. In this article Mr. Johnson tells why he feels that the public interest is threatened by the tendency of enormous "conglomerate" corporations (operating numerous sorts of businesses) to buy up the communications media. The analysis is temperate and you feel that Mr. Johnson is right in both his facts and his opinions. He compares what he knew about propaganda and communications when he started as a member of the FCC with what he knows now. What he knew at the beginning is about what the rest of us know, and what he knows now is enough to make people very skeptical of what reaches them through the mass media. He has a great many facts and he shows how these companies alter or color the news, how they try to influence reporters and editors, and how they often succeed. After describing an especially shocking instance of such pressure, he says:

> It demonstrated an abrasive self-righteousness in dealing with the press, insensitivity to its independence and integrity, a willingness to spread false stories in furtherance of self-interest, contempt for government officials, and an assumption that even

> as prestigious a news medium as the New York *Times* would, as a matter of course, want to present the news so as to serve best its own economic interests (as well as the economic interests of other large business corporations).

Well, we are not muckraking, here, and while the *Atlantic* article names names and gives dates, the important consideration is that the corporation whose officials behaved in this way wanted control of a television network that would give their company access to "93 per cent of the then 50 million television homes in the United States." Mr. Johnson didn't believe that company would use its power over the news responsibly, so he opposed the merger. His careful, unexaggerating report makes you agree with him. So does his balanced conclusion:

> Economic self-interest *does* influence the content of the corporate conglomerates, the areas of information and opinion affecting those economic interests become dangerously wide-ranging. . . .
>
> I do not believe that most owners and managers of the mass media in the United States lack a sense of responsibility or lack tolerance for a diversity of views. I do not believe there is a small group of men who gather for breakfast every morning and decide what they will make the American people believe that day. Emotion often outruns the evidence of those who argue a conspiracy theory of propagandists' manipulation of the masses.
>
> On the other hand one reason evidence is so hard to come by is that the media tend to give less publicity to their own abuses than, say, to those of politicians. The media operate as a check upon the other institutional power centers in our country. There is, however, no check upon the media. Just as it is a mistake to overstate the existence and potential for abuse, so, in my judgment, is it a mistake to ignore the evidence that does exist.

Mr. Johnson points out things we might never think of without an expert's help. He explains, for example, that the anti-trust laws don't apply to this situation since they are designed to prevent monopoly in an *economic* market. Control of the media means control over *news,* and the anti-trust laws don't take cognizance of that sort of monopoly. Toward the end of his article, Mr. Johnson discusses attempts at government regulation of the media, then says:

> This history is an unhappy one on the whole. It forces one to question whether government can ever realistically be expected to sustain a vigilant posture over an industry which controls the very access of government officials themselves to the electorate.

This writer ends on a mildly optimistic note, since he recognizes as healthy "the wave of renewed interest in the impact of ownership on the role of the media in our society," but from the point of view of the plain man the best that can be expected is hardly good enough. And the sort of vigilance shown to be eternally necessary cannot be guaranteed. So, until some kind of Great Change takes place, we really need men like Mr. Johnson and should be extremely grateful for his services.

The other expert we have to call on is John Kaplan, professor of law at Stanford University. In a paper published in the *Northwestern University Law Review* for July-August, 1966, he devotes forty-eight pages to the subject: "Equal Justice in an Unequal World: Equality for the Negro—the Problem of Special Treatment." He discusses employment, housing, and the schools, considering very nearly every known proposal for the particular benefit of the Negroes—proposals, that is, for laws providing preferential treatment—and illustrates the enormous complexities that are involved. A reading of this paper is a discipline for the mind, since almost no one, even with the best will in the world, could anticipate the problems Mr. Kaplan describes in practical detail. The paper shows a warm concern for humanitarian values and can hardly be criticized as written in behalf of a do-nothing status quo. Instead, between the lines, and sometimes explicitly, it becomes clear that only a free flow of human attitudes can accomplish the reparation and good that preferential laws would frustrate and abort. It should be emphasized that the paper is not critically concerned with laws affecting all Americans, and which might bring much practical benefit to Negro Americans as a result, but only

with laws proposed to provide "special treatment." We quote his final conclusion:

> It is hard to think of an issue which raises more difficult and practical problems than that of special treatment for Negroes. We are constantly forced to compromise the strong moral claims of the Negro, because the structure of the institutions of our society interferes with the implementation of what otherwise might appear to be a just result. Moreover, the necessity of considering not only the reality of governmental action, but also its appearance, may justify the belief that in this area we cannot afford complete openness and frankness on the part of the legislature, executive or judiciary. Though this may shock some, it perhaps is an inevitable consequence of our history. One should not expect to find within what would be our traditional morality a just cure for three hundred years of immorality.

The law, in short, is a finite instrument and it will not serve to make specific amends for an incommensurable wrong. Reading Mr. Kaplan's paper in another way, it may be concluded that the white population cannot make reparation to black Americans by merely legal means, especially since legal means have been shaped to the purposes of racial injustice for several hundred years. Yet again and again it becomes evident that men are free to do individually the constructive and helpful things that cannot be compelled. This freedom to act wisely and justly is a quality of civilized human beings. Passing laws is not a substitute for the beneficent use of this freedom. The kind of remedial justice that is now called for cannot be delegated to a system. It is a task involving directly the conscience and decencies of men.

What do we learn from these experienced and sagacious experts? We learn something that William James deduced from his life's experience a long time ago, and put into these words:

> I am done with great things and big things, great institutions and big success and I am for those tiny, invisible molecular forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootless, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride.

It isn't that we can or ought to abandon law or governmental regulation as means to what order, common protection, and justice they are able to provide, but that we must recognize that these instruments can never do more than generalize the moral attitudes and common intelligence of the people who devise them and whom they express and affect. The experts can write laws and invent controls, but only the people can make them work; and they will hardly work well so long as the deeper processes described by William James are given no attention. If these processes are ignored, we shall continue to compel our moralists to be muckrakers, go on mistaking our anger for virtue, and substituting political manipulations for genuine pursuit of the good.

Our civilization is well supplied with skillful and responsible specialists. We hear from them all the time, but what we hear is mainly about their frustration and how they are prevented from doing well what they know how to do. A great many of them are doing the best they can, which is doubtless a part of the explanation of why our civilization keeps going at all.

Yet if we turn this analysis around, directing attention to the failures and shortcomings of the age, one soon finds ample reason for charging many or most of the men engaged in these technological pursuits with maintaining an order which has manifestly inhuman tendencies. Such books as Ellul's *The Technological Society* and Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* are brilliant critiques along these lines, and they leave us, as individuals, with nothing to do but despair.

The only important difference between the experts and ourselves is that they are able to turn a little more science to the service of their specialties. But they are hardly more competent than we are to see things whole. However, another thing that wise specialists are able to do is to exhaust the possibilities of technique and expertise, and then tell us, quite frankly, that these means are not enough. What also needs to be

said—which few scientists will tell us, although the artists might—is that when we burden our techniques, our control systems and our productive mechanisms with responsibility for dispelling our existential fears, for fulfilling our longing for identity, and for repairing our neglect of the human qualities and needs of one another, the system must break down. Fury at this failure, and seeking scapegoats, will not help us. Our opportunistic politicians and our commercial administrators are no more our real enemies than motion picture idols or television stars are true models for love and life.

We need to practice a homely Socratic ignorance in relation to the unknowable complexities of social organization, and a determined Socratic morality in relation to what we do understand. This way, the honest experts will be able to do more good, and the pretenders will not be able to fool us so easily.

In this matter of trusting and being fooled, it should be obvious that we are obliged to rely upon one another, whether we want to or not. But we may be able to recognize and reject the language and the promises of pretenders if we stop our own pretending. Many of the young are trying to stop pretending, but this is very difficult for them to do against an unbroken background of institutional and social pretense. We haven't helped them much in this respect. And public pretense, much of the time, is armed by deep hostility because of a general fear of what would happen should all these false certainties really break down.

Actually, the basic insight of the age—which comes in upon us from all sides—is the futility of mass solutions for human problems, of manipulative means to qualitative ends. The implications of this insight make it urgently necessary for every one of us to stop giving the scientific specialist impossible tasks which, if he accepts them, must turn him into a pretender in self-defense. Asking of specialists only what they are able to do will gradually reduce the incomprehensible complexity of the times, and eventually make possible new social formations based upon what men really know about themselves and about each other. And then the wonderful talents of the experts will have a chance to flower in a new way. This is a part of what men mean when they speak longingly of *community*. They speak of it in scores of different conceptual languages, sometimes with words that shut out the essential content of what they mean. Paraphrasing Mr. Kaplan, one should not expect to find within our traditional vocabulary words for realities that have been ignored for centuries. The meanings have to come first, the language after.

REVIEW
WHERE THE INITIATIVE LIES

TWO weeks ago, the MANAS lead article quoted from W. J. Eccles' *Canadian Society During the French Regime* to call attention to the fact that Louis XIV attempted to establish a socially responsible welfare state in Canada during the seventeenth century. The evidence provided throws an interesting sidelight on "feudalism," which is supposed to have been blindly "backward" and indifferent to what were later called the "rights of man." This "progressive" aspect of feudalism is the point of Mr. Eccles' volume. By coincidence, we recently came across further evidence along these lines—not in relation to the policies of the French king, but applying to Elizabethan England.

In Marchette Chute's *Shakespeare of London* (Dutton, 1949), a completely delightful and authoritative book which shows how much careful research can reveal about a man of genius whose profession obscured him from his own times, the writer describes how the English government tried to meet the emergencies caused by food shortages. Toward the end of the sixteenth century there were years of bad harvests in England, and corn and malt (which we call wheat and barley), were in short supply. Hoarding became common and in 1598 the Privy Council ordered a grain inventory of every barn in the country, as a check on profiteering. After a newsy paragraph on the amounts of corn and malt stored away, showing that "everyone in Stratford was being illegal, or at least illegal as possible," Will Shakespeare included, Miss Chute observes:

> The medieval idea that prices could be controlled legally and that everything should be shared was still strong enough in England so that the Privy Council had the approval of the general public. But occasionally there was an individualist who thought otherwise, like the grain holder who announced in Star Chamber, "My goods are my own . . . I will do what I list with them." For this he was fined a hundred pounds and obliged to wear a paper cap, like a schoolboy's, which described his misdeeds.

In those days economic misfortunes had a single standard explanation, repeated by government officials and clergy alike. "Sin" was at the bottom of every public trouble. At the time England was still paying off the costs of the overthrow of the Spanish Armada; war had shut her out from important European markets; and, as usual, there was "a dangerous rebellion in Ireland." So, with prices running far ahead of wages and rents, the food shortage was seen as a climax of divine punishment. The Privy Council declared that everything was "exceeding measure in price, such was our sins in deserving it," and for immediate remedy and penance asked Londoners to eat less.

An account of Bristol when Shakespeare's company came there on tour brings a further note on economic policies:

> The years of depression and bad harvests had hit Bristol hard, and 1597 was the year in which the mayor decreed that all the citizens must "keep as many poor persons in their houses as their income would permit, for fear of an insurrection." Wheat was selling that year for twenty shillings a bushel and matters might have been even worse if one intelligent alderman had not imported rye from Danzig and made it available to the people of Bristol at half the local price.

These affairs come into Miss Chute's story only as they affected the life and times of Will Shakespeare, yet they have their interest as evidence of ideas of common social responsibility and of the role of government in seeing that men do not turn away from their fellows in hard times. Similar conditions often exist today, and there are the same problems of evasion and resistance to social control. We might say of the present, however, that it is a time when the role of the welfare state has been developed to a climax of complexity, and that the fulfillment of its countless responsibilities is now harassed by a law of diminishing returns. In addition, the welfare state, under competitive world pressures, has become a warfare state, so that the contradictions within its own administrative functions, which have grown

to match the totality of its problems, now range out of the sight of ordinary men.

This situation produces an absolute dilemma for ideological thinkers, since to take full account of it would show that there is now no rational promise in ideological solutions. So, in consequence, ideological argument has largely turned into emotional appeals claiming unstained moral purity of purpose, and radicals often seek support from the purging simplicity of revolutionary love. Rational ideology is confronted by too many practical contradictions from recent history and its themes have become too tenuous and abstract to be followed by ordinary men. So a kind of primitivism afflicts ardent political activity today, since integrity can hardly be maintained at any other level.

For soberer heads, the question becomes, How can we set about doing what rational politics, informed by historical experience, shows us cannot be done?

A kind of therapeutic leap for social thinkers may be required. At the dawn of the seventeenth century it seemed that "God" was the major factor in ordering men's affairs—at least, in punishing them with troubles—whereas in the present the State is the source from which all blessings, as well as all ills, are supposed to flow. But what about man himself? Ideological theory regards human beings as constants—only the system is variable—which makes men desperately eager to design the correct system.

But what if *men* must learn to be the variables, if there is to be any betterment in their condition?

This question seems an underlying theme in a paper by John A. Hutchison in the June *Journal* of the Blaisdell Institute of Claremont, Calif. Dr. Hutchison is director of the Institute and professor of philosophy and religion at the Claremont Graduate School. The problem he sets is to find out where human beings ought to get their ideas of themselves. Must the conceptions of man's nature and obligations be filtered through theological or political systems before the individual is allowed to think about what he is and what is expected of him? Is this, possibly, the formula that has produced the decline and failure we face today?

Dr. Hutchison seeks an answer in the pervasive humanistic inquiry which began to take shape discernibly in the nineteenth century, "coming to flower in the twentieth century, and embracing philosophy, theology, literature and other arts." This inquiry is now broadly identified as Existentialism. Dr.Hutchison writes:

> The movement centers in the question, "What is man?" or perhaps more personally and poignantly, "Who am I?" The question is pressed with great passion, and is often asked in the midst of an agonizing sense of alienation or estrangement from true selfhood. Sometimes it takes the form: "Prior to all rational theories what am I *really* or *actually?"* At other times it takes the form: "beyond all alienation, who or what am I *authentically?"*

Now an ideological thinker might interrupt here and say, "Yes, of course, when men get a new idea of themselves and their rights, they elaborate the conception in a political theory and make a revolution—we know all that." But this comment, while accurate enough, is not the real point to be made concerning existential inquiry. The important thing about the new quest for self-understanding is the *higher priority* of its own, undiluted terms in human reflection. It is natural enough for conclusions and feelings about the self to be reduced to politics—and, of course, to religion—but this is now done with much more difficulty, much more skepticism, than in the past. The existential questioning which forces itself to the front in present-day thought *resists* confining systematization or politicalization, just as the thought of Kierkegaard resisted denaturing by theology. Sartre has terrible troubles trying to existentialize communism and Camus' idea of the true rebel is hardly political at all. The ideologist's comment is dated.

At root, you could say, existential questioning now tends to prevent a man from letting his thought be converted into some "product" or systematic conclusion. He knows that sloganizing it will kill it, or pervert it beyond recognition. This means that the foremost responsibilities of being human cannot be delegated; the secondary responsibilities, perhaps, can be implemented by organization,but not the essentials of being a man.

This view is bound in time to lead to another conception of human action. A man must be a man before he turns to a system for minor aids or technical extension of his efforts. At issue is where the initiative lies in being human. The initiative can no longer be acceptably defined by either God or the State. In this connection Dr. Hutchison has helpful passages on the distortions of historical religion. The great religions, he says, are primarily concerned with the nature and destiny of man, not with "God." He writes:

> In many of these sources such as early Buddhism the idea of deity is declared to be extraneous, and in some, such as Jainism, it is specifically denied. Where the idea of deity enters, as in the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is with reference to the human situation.

When the Lord speaks it is "invariably something about the nature and destiny of man." Dr. Hutchison adds similar testimony from anthropological research, then comments:

> If this evidence is accepted, then it follows that the interpretation I am offering you does not turn religion upside down, but just the opposite, turns it right-side up. If time permitted, I would like to argue that in the modern West, roughly since the enlightenment, there has been a massive misconception of religion as a hypothesis concerning a remote being called God whose dwelling place is just beyond the reach of our further telescope. Theists accept this hypothesis and atheists and skeptics reject it; but significantly they agree, and I would say mistakenly, in the primary meaning or reference for religion. I would call this the fallacy of the Head Spirit (I am tempted to say the Head Spook) Out There.

In brief, the broad historical effect of existential questioning has been to restore to man an unalienable identity and personal responsibility, which neither God nor Ideology can now supply or take away, enhance or diminish.

This is the kind of thinking that brings the strength required for a therapeutic leap. Its main achievements, no doubt, still lie in the future, and its present influence may be largely hidden by being mixed up with the thinking of the past. It is thought which concerns what men may do of their own motion, and with, in time, other men who act of their own motion—all of whom recognize that politics, technology, and science are only tools, never dependable guides.

COMMENTARY
THE INDIAN TRIBES

THERE are many good books about the American Indians, but for background on the issues discussed in Frontiers, one might read first Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor,* then turn to John Collier's *The Indians of the Americas.* Such books as George F. Willison's *Saints and Strangers* and Carey McWilliams' *Southern California Country* describe the cruelties and betrayals which the first white settlers practiced against the Indians, and the exterminations which their land-hungry acquisitiveness encouraged.

To understand what lies behind U.S. Government Indian policies, one could do no better than to browse through Felix Cohen's *Handbook of Federal Law,* issued by the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1942, and available for $2.00. In this volume are endless quotations from government officials, from the earliest days of our country until almost the present, dealing with these policies from every point of view. Nathan R. Margold, Solicitor for the Department of the Interior, says in his Introduction:

> Despite a widely prevalent impression to the contrary, all Indians born in the United States are citizens of the United States and of the state in which they reside. As citizens they are entitled to the rights of suffrage guaranteed by the fifteenth amendment, and they are likewise entitled to hold public office, to sue, to make contracts, and to enjoy all the civil liberties guaranteed to their fellow citizens. These rights take on a special significance against the background of highly organized administrative control. They indicate that a body of federal Indian law, considered as "racial" law," would be as much an anomaly as a body of federal law for persons of Teutonic descent, and that the existence of federal Indian law can be neither justified nor understood except in terms of the existence of Indian *tribes.*

Indian law grows out of the fact that the relations of the Government with the Indians have always been based upon treaties with the tribes. From the days of John Marshall these tribes have been acknowledged to be political bodies with powers and rights of self-government. However, as the Supreme Court has noted, the people of the states where the Indian tribes live "are often found their deadliest enemies." And the court observed: "From their [the Indians'] very weakness and helplessness, so largely due to the course of dealing of the Federal Government with them, and the treaties in which it has been promised, there arises the duty of protection, and with it the power." It is this obligation to protect the existence of the Indians as *tribes,* assured by solemn treaties, that is at issue, today.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HOW CHILDREN LEARN

SOME adults regard the growing up of children as a process they don't know much about but which, somehow or other, always takes place. They may deal with children as a special sort of object which changes a bit from year to year, requiring both tolerance and indulgence, while tradition prescribes workable rituals for speaking to children. After all, they are only children, and you have to wait for them to mature before you can really have anything to do with them.

Children put up with this because there's not much else they can do. It's just that adults who behave in this way are not ever real people for the children. They are walking-around and talking columns of flesh but what they say doesn't have any direct meaning for a child. A person can feel quite friendly toward children but if what he says to them is part of the ritual—the questions people ask of children without caring much about the answers—the children can only play this tiresome little game, too, and both parties know that it isn't going to go any place.

A teacher is a person who has learned how to identify with the darting intelligence of a child, and can feel, sometimes quite accurately, what interests him, and why. A teacher is a person who feels no frustration at all because the child is not yet grown up so that he can be talked to in grown-up terms.

John Holt's new book, *How Children Learn* (Pitman, 1967, $4.95), is a fascinating book because it is filled with little stories about how the author learned to understand children, and about what he was able to do because he understood them. These stories are infinitely more valuable to people interested in the teaching of children than all the books filled with verbal abstractions about "values." The reader becomes able to imagine himself doing, at least some of the time, what Mr. Holt did.

For example:

> A few days ago, about forty minutes before regular classes started, I took my electric portable typewriter into the three-year-olds' classroom. When I went in, I didn't say anything, just went over to a corner of the room, set the machine up on a low table, and, very slowly, one finger at a time, began to type. For a while the children circled warily at a distance, now and then, in the middle of their play, casting quick glances at me out of the corner of their eyes. Gradually the bolder children came closer and closer. Finally, as I had hoped, one of them came up close and asked if he could do it. I said, "Sure, if you want to." Before long they all wanted a turn. While one typed, the others crowded around the machine, pushing silently and insistently, like people waiting for a train. The typewriter was almost too popular. I couldn't let any one child type for even as long as five minutes, which wasn't enough time for them to do much investigating and exploring, let alone discovering.

So there were other mornings for learning about typewriters and what you can do with them. Mr. Holt is a writer as well as a teacher and you might think he would worry about that expensive electric typewriter. Apparently he didn't. He just watched the children learn. On the fifth day he noticed some progress:

> By now all the veterans know about this gadget and like to work it. They are beginning to be slightly more interested in the marks made on the paper, instead of just running the machine for the sake of making it go. They might be even more interested if the letters made by the typewriter were bigger.

One time some older children (four and five-and-a-half) were there. They could read and spell. One printed out without help: ..DEAR DADDY, I LOVE YOU AND YOUR ROOM. A smaller boy, with a little assistance, was able to type DDEAR DDADDY, and then stalled.

> Perhaps the slowness of having to hunt for the letters made his thinking freeze up. He was torn between his desire to make the machine go lickety-split, and his desire to make it say something.

There is absolutely no hurry in all this:

> Charlie can find, and likes to find, the C with which his name begins. When I asked whether he could find the other letters, he gave me an anxious look, so I quickly let the matter drop. How strongly and immediately children react to being put on this kind of spot. He likes to have me name the keys that he hits.

All this experimenting with a typewriter isn't a sly way of teaching children to read while they are still tots. It's much more than that. The children are learning about the world and the things in it, and a typewriter is a special sort of thing which gets the mind going in a great many ways. And it happens to be a tool for communication.

One child, Tommy, has a father who is an expert mechanic. Tommy understands the importance of knowing how things work, and "fixing" them when they don't is the most important of all. He has to experiment with and explore every gadget there is around the school. He has to *know.* He learned to master the charcoal grill out in the yard. He cranked it up and down, but sometimes the crank came loose and he couldn't get it back:

> Usually, after trying a while, he left the handle on the ground, or carried it around awhile before leaving it. We learned to recognize it, even in odd places, and to take it back to the grill. We let the game go on, because it is a good and valuable game. To crank a handle one way, and see that something goes up, and then to crank it the other way, and see the thing go down, is an interesting and important experiment for a small child. He not only learns how this particular crank works, he also learns that many actions have regular and predictable effects, and that the world is in many ways a sensible and trustworthy place.

A year later Tommy's mother wrote Mr. Holt, saying that "he is the most *noticing,* thoughtful, quick little boy and he hates to be *taught."* He has his own tools and uses them with great skill and care. He loves to do things *with* his parents, keeps busy, and is endlessly curious. The mother went on:

> But when we try (as we are now) to *teach* him something like ABCDEFG, which appears to be without meaning or use he just can't *bear* it—in fact he becomes furious and frustrated—almost in tears. How will he react to school this fall?
>
> Lisa is a super serious student—she now has an all A report card and really *worries* about her grades. She *hates* to be unprepared for school and yet she deeply dislikes it. . . .

This is a contrast which Mr. Holt leaves without comment. There is hardly anything to say.

There is a wonderful section on what the children did with Mr. Holt's cello when he brought it to school. Alert and unshy, they all learned to make sounds on the instrument before too long. Discussing this brash, wonderful eagerness of children, Mr. Holt compares their approach to the cello with the way a scientist might go at it. The scientist would spend far less time getting to know the fundamentals. He would leave out a lot of fooling around. But the fact is that he probably wouldn't touch the cello at all. He has restricted interests. He controls his curiosity and makes it go in a productive, professional direction. But for the child *all life* is there to be grabbed at, found out about. The child dives into everything, looking in his own way for meanings.

> . . . and he is much better [than scientific adults are] at picking out the patterns, hearing the faint signal amid all the noise. Above all, he is much less likely than adults to make hard and fast conclusions on the basis of too little data, or having made such conclusions, to refuse to consider any new data that does not support them. And these are the vital skills of thought which, in our hurry to get him thinking the way we do, we may very well stunt or destroy in the process of "educating" him.

The whole book is filled with such illustrations of how children learn, ranging all over schoolroom and home, with commonsense comments throughout. Mr. Holt knows how to think like a child, and he knows how to help his readers to do this, too.

FRONTIERS

Crossroads for the Indians

JOHN COLLIER, lifelong friend to the American Indians, died this year on May 8, in Taos, New Mexico. He was eighty-four years old. His books, *The Indians of the Americas* (Norton, 1948), *On the Gleaming Way* (1962) and *From Every Zenith, a Memoir* (1963), the last two published in Denver by Alan Swallow, are the testament of his understanding and love of the Indians. Almost by chance—he was not a politician—he was appointed U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs by Harold Ickes in 1933 and served in this post until 1945. What he accomplished is recorded in *The Indians of the Americas.* What he stood for could easily be extracted from his writings, but it seems more appropriate, here, to quote from a tribute by D'Arcy McNickle, an Indian who teaches anthropology at the University of Saskatchewan (Regina campus), which appeared in the *Nation* for June 3. Mr. McNickle tells how watching a Pueblo dance in 1922 opened Collier's eyes to the inner splendor of Indian life. He continues:

> As he reflected on these and similar scenes in the years that carried him deeper into tribal affairs, it was borne in upon Collier that Indians had retained something that had disappeared from the lives of industrialized Westerners. Urbanization had uprooted populations, destroyed neighborhoods, impoverished the relationships between generations, expanded enormously such escape devices as commercialized recreation, and favored the lowest common denominators in entertainment and mass communications. In all of this, urbanized man stood bewildered, confronting ultimate destruction.
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> That Indian societies could survive in an environment so hostile to simple folk values could only astonish a mind as sophisticated as his. In spite of oppression, contumely, appropriation of their wealth, even threats of extermination through wars and pestilence, they had remained viable, keeping their languages, their religions, their kinship systems and their self-views and world views. They had been adaptive and assimilative, yet faithful to the past. He observed: "Intensity of life, form in life, beauty in the human relationship, happiness and amplitude of personality are not dependent on complexity of material culture or on that 'security' which in the world today has come to be a controlling objective. . . . It is hard for us, citizens of an age of giant external power, to conceive that the human psychic and social values . . . were not created by ourselves."

One could wish that ideas of this sort had formed more of the discussion of the problems of the Indians which appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* for June 5, which reports on a recent Bureau of Indian Affairs Conference. The article discloses the pressure on the Indian Bureau from both the President and Congress to liquidate the responsibility of the Government to the Indians, administered so unevenly during nearly 150 years. As Kimmis Hendrick, the *Monitor* writer, puts it:

> If the "Indian problem" should some day be solved, the Bureau, of Indian Affairs would go out of business. Yet that is the charge President Johnson gave Robert L. Bennett, the current Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Mr. Bennett, an Oneida Indian from Wisconsin, was told to make sure Indians need the BIA less and less.
>
> President Johnson appointed Mr. Bennett, a BIA career man, early in 1966. At the time of his confirmation, the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee said some pretty pointed things. It reminded Mr. Bennett that Congress is still on record as favoring termination of federal trusteeship for Indian lands and welfare. It also remarked that the BIA appeared more bent on self-perpetuation than on helping Indians to become self-sufficient.

It might be supposed from this that only a government bureau's reluctance to administrate itself out of existence is at issue, or that the Indians are simply unwilling to accept responsibility as citizens of the country like "everyone else." But these assumptions, which could be expected of an impatient Congress, would grossly misrepresent the actual situation. At stake for the Indians is their communal way of life, which depends upon their lands and their tribal integrity. It is this that the "termination" theory wholly disregards. One could say that the Indians want to fulfill another sort of responsibility, but that the institutions of the

surrounding and controlling white society have made this very difficult for them. But difficulties are not as bad as the disaster which, so far, has come from termination. In conformity with a House Resolution adopted in 1953, directing that Indians should be put on exactly the same basis as all other citizens "as rapidly as possible," two tribes were terminated:

> These were the Menomenees in Wisconsin and the Klamaths in Oregon. Their members voted to end their tribal status. They wanted—and got—their timber-rich lands to be sold and the money divided among them equally.
>
> Enormous problems resulted. Termination was not completed before it was evident that many Indians in both tribes were totally unprepared to benefit by it. . . .

Many Indians do not want termination of tribal status. Their fortunes as a racial minority under state law would be far less secure than they are with the present federal arrangement. And Mr. Bennett points out that Indian values "include a primary concern for community and an almost negligible interest in private property." How would you go about making Congress appreciate this point of view? Would you say that the Indians are really too advanced to join the rest of us in the competitive struggle? That they don't care about money and don't handle it well?

There are "success stories" about what some of the tribes have done through cooperative cattle-raising and even industrial enterprise, and these are mentioned in the *Monitor,* but Indians don't agree that economic growth is the sole key to their problems. Dr. Sophie D. Aberle, chief author of *The Indian: America's Unfinished Business,* thinks that Indians ought to be free to pursue their tribal life if they want to, and to preserve opportunity for this the water rights of the Indians must be made secure. She warns that "insistence on economic development" may "wreck a precious part of Indian culture." Meanwhile, it is apparent that some of the present problems of the tribes, such as factionalism, are a reflex of Indian Bureau policies in the past. For many years, Dr. Aberle pointed out, the Bureau used to encourage tribal factions because they made control of the tribes easier. And even now, she says, with the Bureau, it's "push, push, push," all the time.

There is no neat legislative solution for all this, but if, along with the current facts and recommendations, something of the wonder and respect the Indians inspired in John Collier could be spread around, there would be more hope of reducing their pain.