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FOR IMPROVISERS OF PEACE

LAST fall ten Russians visited the Los Angeles area to talk about "peace-making." The delegation was one of three such groups which came to the United States, sponsored by the Committee for U.S.-U.S.S.R. Dialogue. Two other delegations went to Toledo, Ohio, and Austin Texas. Kathleen Hendrix wrote a colorful report of the visit of the Los Angeles delegation (*Los Angeles Times,* Oct. 30, 1981), with quotation from three of the Russians, one a disarmament specialist, another a "youth" representative, the third a columnist on *Pravda.* Their hosts here were a couple living in West Los Angeles, and the Russians spent much of their time at the Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race, located at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, with also some sightseeing and visits to several other places, including the Hospitality House of the Los Angeles Catholic Workers, non-violent followers of Dorothy Day.

The well-reported conversations between Russians and Americans seemed determined attempts to be friendly, with occasional explosions of feeling. "Both our governments want to make us think of the other side as the enemy. We're happy to see each other as human beings," Rick Erhard of Hospitality House said. He went on: "We're trying to make our government more accountable. What movements are there within the Soviet Union to limit government spending on the military?" The Russians, as might be expected, said that their government had to prepare weapons to meet the threat of American arms. Some Los Angeles labor union people told the Russians that if they wanted to make contact with American labor they should stay away from the national leadership and talk to local people. Naturally enough, the Americans were proud of their "openness" and selfcriticism. The *Pravda* writer commented: "With all the openness of your criticism, you end up with—openness. If I were cynical enough, I'd say maybe it's just a safety valve permitted by the military/industrial complex." A host said that some Americans would say the same thing and the Russian continued:

> You have your political freedom, but I have never heard political freedom described as the main freedom by the people of the South Bronx. Maybe our people cherish something different. I hear people here comment about all the crime, [saying] "this is the price we pay for our freedom." Well, maybe we too "pay a price" for our security—our jobs, our health service, our social well-being.

An American woman who had attended long sessions of talk with the Russians said:

> It's very clear to me now. Dissent is the center of the political system in our country. The state, and loyalty, is at the center of theirs. It's their way. It does not mean because we're ideologically apart that we have to annihilate each other.

Warmth and even some affection sprang up between the Russians and the Americans. The distance between them always resulted from talk about government policies. The Russians said their armaments were no more than response to our aggressive policy, that Americans were deceived about them. At one point, after a similar remark, an American called out: "You're presenting yourselves as the angels of the world. We don't believe it."

"Okay, I realize that," came the Russian's reply. And then, as the *Times* writer puts it, "looking genuinely stumped, any self-righteousness long-gone," he asked: "Okay. What can we do?"

After the visit was over, the Los Angeles hostess said of the younger Russian: "I felt so sad saying goodby. . . . I think we touched them. I think they'll both carry that back. He was going

so far away—in every sense of the word. We came so close, but we're so far apart."

The reason for the "apartness" is easy to see. When the Russians explained how they had been chosen to make the visit—by a non-government agency, they said,—the Americans were skeptical.

> There were knowing remarks that everything is government approved; everything is, after all, the state; that everyone was handpicked, party-hacks, not ordinary citizens—those were the only people they ever let out.
>
> In spite of that distrust, however, the general attitude seemed to be, as was voiced more than once, so what if all ten were KGB agents? They were also human beings and that was what this was all about.

Yet any approach to questions of disarmament and peace led to common frustration. The Russians maintained that the American militarism was (except for housing) their only "problem," and that Americans had preconceived positions and would not listen. "You want us to be just like you," one of them exclaimed. In short, the Russians were firmly ideological in their stance, while the Americans, open, and often objecting to their own government's actions, felt powerless to change American policy—at any rate, soon.

The entire group—Americans and Russians—passed a resolution calling on "the governments of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. to work toward mutual understanding and to reduce drastically their arsenals of nuclear weapons as well as their military budgets."

There doesn't seem to be much to add to the report of this week-long dialogue between Russians and Americans. They met, you could say, as individual human beings, yet with split identities—the Russians constrained by ideology, the Americans embarrassed by their own country's foreign policy and determined drive to place "improved" missiles on European sites immediately threatening to Soviet cities.

Whether the Russians' faith in their political leaders ("We truly believe our government is of and by the people and problems will be solved by them") is genuine or only personally expedient—or a combination of the two—is not something that Americans can easily decide, nor can they alter such feelings in people on the other side of the world. At issue, then, is the fundamental question of reliance on the nation-state for order, welfare, and security. It is obviously much more difficult for Russians to give up that reliance, or even to discuss its possible benefits and disadvantages, than it is for Americans. On the other hand, not very many Americans, as yet, are ready for unilateral disarmanent, which would amount to rejecting the protective role of the nation-state.

Americans, however, are free to examine and weigh what that role, as presently conceived by the shapers of American policy, now means and will continue to mean, until enough of the people adopt a radically changed view of their society and its safety. In this sense the Americans have far more of the initiative for change than the Russians.

Consider, for example, Norman Cousins' editorial in the *Saturday Review* for last November, in which he discussed the content of the U.N. publication, *Nuclear Weapons: Report of the Secretary General* (Autumn Press, $12.95). He begins:

> The report leaves the reader convinced that the nuclear policies of the major powers are adding exponentially to their own national insecurity even as they undermine the general safety of the world's peoples. The nuclear explosives provide destruction power beyond any conceivable need. Even if only a fraction of the existing bombs are used, the effects would extend far beyond the belligerent nations. But the most useful single fact emerging from the report is that, despite all the billions spent on counter-weapons, no workable defense against surprise nuclear attack has yet been devised.
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> Most people have the impression that, if nuclear missiles were launched against the United States, our sophisticated defenses would be able to knock down a substantial number. The truth is that existing military technology cannot assure that a *single*

> attacking missile can be intercepted. We are spending hundreds of billions on something called "defense," but, in the final analysis, our defense strategy is based primarily not on hardware but on psychological factors. That is, the military assumes that the enemy's fear of retaliation will be great enough to provide effective restraint against any surprise attack. Such an assumption, however, presupposes a fundamental rationality in the calculations of an enemy. Would an Adolf Hitler hesitate to use any power at his disposal because of the fear of retaliation? Did the fear of retaliation prevent Hitler from bombing London?
>
> If we are counting on an enemy to act rationally, we have to recognize that nothing is more irrational than what we ourselves are doing in building vast nuclear stockpiles beyond any theoretical need. Is there anything rational about spending $25 million every hour for military purposes while complaining about inflation or government expenditures? If we want a rational basis for survival, we shall have to look for it in the control of force and in the development of world institutions to deal with existing tensions and basic causes of war.

Mr. Cousins here invites us to believe more rationally, and everyone can see that rationality will be an essential factor in making a world without war. But what we are up against is a population—people everywhere—that is *used to* relying on the national government, with long-established habits of confidence and trust. Were that trust and those habits to be *suddenly* destroyed, chaos would result. It took centuries for Europeans (including the Americans, who came from Europe) to ween themselves of their faith in princes, and now we are confronted by the need to weaken if not abandon our faith in national government. We have of course heard this before. Nearly a hundred years ago the Western world was warned by Herbert Spencer—who was wrong about various things, but certainly right in saying:

> The great political superstition of the past was the divine rights of kings. The great political superstition of the present is the divine right of parliaments. The oil of anointing seems unawares to have dripped from the head of the one on to the heads of many, and given sacredness to them also and to their decrees. (*The Man Versus the State, 1892.*)

What improved faith can come next? What can take the place of our confidence in the nation-state? The visit of the Russians to America—for all its embarrassments and failures—seems a step in the right direction. We must learn faith *in one another.* Yet the bitter fact is that, in a world like ours, such faith is the tenderest of plants. It is subject to the familiar uncertainties of human nature, and can hardly be protected against the storms of political propaganda and the periodic chills of fear. In short, given these vulnerabilities, the building of faith in one another will take a long time. It is a faith that can grow only out of increasing awareness of our common humanity, certainly not from any vain hope of a common ideology.

How can that awareness be deliberately fostered and encouraged?

In the middle of the second world war the Princeton Institute scholar, David Mitrany, wrote a remarkable essay, *A Working Peace System;* published in England by Chatham House for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1943). In it he said things that seem useful guidelines for any move toward peace along the lines we have been suggesting. "Peace," Prof. Mitrany said, "will not be secured if we organize the world by what divides it." This means leaving the nation-states alone, not trying to *use* them as instruments for peace. They were established for quite another purpose—to isolate and consolidate separate political identities—and to seek power and dominance for this purpose. The institutions of the state are all grained with these intentions. Mitrany also said: "Society will develop by our living it, not by policing it."

The counsel, in effect, is this: Don't make a frontal attack on national sovereignty, which can only generate fierce opposition. Instead, do things which, over the years, will prove that sovereignty is of diminishing importance and gets in the way of a great many activities that the people of various countries need to pursue. How can this persuasion be spread? By making a beginning—

by doing with the people of other nations whatever non-political things we can—provided they make obvious sense and need to be done. Mitrany gives lots of illustrations of how this works and what has been accomplished. He would have us slowly do away with political frontiers and divisions by developing "a spreading web of international activities and agencies, in which and through which the interests and life of all the nations would be gradually integrated." This is not of course a new idea, and people working for international understanding have been applying it in various ways, but this general process needs wider recognition as the only way to put an end, eventually, to the immeasurably destructive power of the state.

People have faith in one another when there are bonds of neighborhood, kinship, past history, and day-to-day experience of each other. Governments know nothing of these bonds; governments deal in trade relations, contests of power, political maneuvers, and war-college speculations about the "worst possible" military attack to be expected. Why not admit that governments *cannot* make peace? It is alien to their life and livelihood. War, as Randolph Bourne wrote prophetically years ago, is the *health* of the state.

Does this mean that the intelligent man or woman will thereupon ridicule or denounce the patriotic feelings of others who are slow in reaching a similar disillusionment? Not at all. Parents don't denounce childhood. Nor do they demand a sudden maturity of adolescents. They do what they can by way of example to help the young to find their own way to maturity. So, too, with the gradual spread of faith in one another, regardless of nation or race. Useful self-reliance calls for personal iconoclasm, not manipulated alienation.

Suppose, for example, such meetings between Russians and Americans were held not only for the purpose of "getting acquainted," but in order to plan cooperative projects of benefit to both, but in no way a threat to the "national sovereignty" of either nation. To attack the idea of sovereignty head-on is indeed to give it too much importance—to strengthen it. Rather treat national sovereignty as irrelevant! As, some day, it must become.

Mitrany says:

> . . . when the need is so great and pressing, we must have the vision to break away from traditional legalistic ideas and try some new way that might take us without violence towards that goal. The beginnings cannot be anything but experimental; a new international system will need even more than national systems a wide freedom of continuous operation in the light of experience. It must care as much as possible for common needs that are evident, while presuming as little as possible upon a social unity which is still only latent and unrecognized.

Mitrany calls his approach "An argument for the functional development of international organization." It need not, in his view, involve formal national assent or constitution-making. He is all for ad hoc improvisation, to get human and practical relationships going in ways that will be a satisfaction to all.

> Let it be said, first, that the functional method as such is neither incompatible with a general constitutional framework nor precludes its coming into being. It only follows Burke's warning to the sheriffs of Bristol that "government is a practical thing" and that one should beware of elaborating constitutional forms "for the gratification of visionaries." In national states and federations the functional development is going ahead without much regard to, and sometimes in spite of, the old constitutional divisions. If in these cases the constitution is most conveniently left aside, may not the method prove workable internationally without any immediate and comprehensive constitutional framework? If, to cite Burke again, it is "always dangerous to meddle with foundations," it is doubly dangerous now. Our political problems are obscure, while the political passions of the time are blinding. One of the misfortunes of the League [of Nations] experiment was that a new institution was devised on what have proved outdated premises. . . . We know now even less about the dark historical forces which have been stirred up by the war, while in the meantime the problems of our common society have

> been distorted by fierce ideologies which we could not try to bring to an issue without provoking an irreconcilable conflict. Even if action were to be to some extent handicapped without a formal political framework, the fact is that no obvious sentiment exists, and none is likely to crystallize for some years, for a common constitutional bond. . . .
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> As to the new ideologists, since we could not prevent them we must try to circumvent them, leaving it to the growth of new habits and interests to dilute them in time. Our aim must be to call forth to the highest possible degree the active forces and opportunities for cooperation, while touching as little as possible the latent or active points of difference and opposition. . . . The only sound sense of peaceful change is to do internationally what it does nationally: to make changes of frontiers unnecessary by making frontiers meaningless through the continuous development of common activities and interests across them.

One seldom encounters such plain common sense in works on political theory. The idea is to work cooperatively at specific projects "without confusing the popular mind in debates as to whether the flag is being hauled down from the Capitol." And if peoples learn to cooperate, "without running down every imaginable legal or political implication," they will "realize that the formalization of their practices is not a matter of speculation on possibilities but of ratification of actualities."

As for the progressive "dilution" of ideologies, we know that already, many of the intelligentsia of Russia, in particular the scientists, no longer take seriously the Soviet ideology, and in time this is bound to affect common folk. Meanwhile, in the United States, nationalism as a spontaneous emotion is steadily waning, with conscientious objection to war an increasingly likely response to proposed military adventures.

At another level, other profound changes are slowly taking place in the minds of people who have been driven by the times to think deeply about themselves and their responsibilities. Simone Weil, as long ago as 1934, set down reflections which were then solitary and private, but have since dawned on an increasing number. She wrote:

> Only fanatics are able to set no value on their own existence save to the extent that it serves a collective cause, to react against the subordination of the individual to the collectivity implies that one begins by refusing to subordinate one's own destiny to the course of history. In order to resolve upon undertaking such an effort of critical analysis, all one needs is to realize that it would enable him who did so to escape the contagion of folly and collective frenzy by reaffirming on his own account, over the head of the social idol, the original pact between the mind and the universe. (*Oppression and Liberty*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1973.)

This "pact," too, is in the minds of many. What is ecology, ultimately, but a formulation by conscious beings of what may be some of its terms?

REVIEW
A MEETING OF EAST AND WEST

THE avenues for understanding a man like M. K. Gandhi are many, and one by one they are leading to publication of works which illuminate various facets of his character. One such book is the essay, *Mahatma Gandhi in his Gajarati Writing,* by C. N. Patel (published at ten rupees by Sahiti Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozesha Road, New Delhi 110001, India). A teacher of English in a college at Ahmedabad, the author was invited to help with the editing of Gandhi's "Collected Works," and while so occupied came to realize, as he says in his preface, that for him the "feeling of Gandhi's presence deepened and so grew on me that I have now come, I may claim, to recognize his voice in my imagination, much as a student of Shakespeare's plays or Valmiki's *Ramayana* hears the voice of their characters."

This book of a little less than a hundred pages is, then, a labor of love, as most books on Gandhi become. Gujarati is one of a number of languages spoken in India—the tongue of Gandhi's birthplace—but used beyond the boundaries of the state of Gujarat. When he wrote in English, one could say, Gandhi was speaking to the British and to the world, but when he wrote in Gujarati he addressed his countrymen. He wrote his "Experiments with Truth"—his autobiography—first in Gujarati, and also his condensation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last.* The paper he started in South Africa, *Indian Opinion,* was in Gujarati. Gandhi never wrote as a "literary man," whatever the excellence of his prose. He wrote because there was something he felt needed saying. His intention determined its form. While his knowledge of English literature is evident from what he wrote in English, this imagery and metaphor would have been out of key in an Indian tongue. Mr. Patel says:

> Gandhiji's Gujarati writing bears no such evident traces of literary influence. His acquaintance with Gujarati literature was limited and he always remained an outsider to the mainstream of its thought and feeling and expressive idiom, so much so that an eminent Gujarati man of letters is reputed to have remarked that Gandhiji did not know as much Gujarati as a matriculate. Gandhiji's Gujarati, therefore, always remained close to the language of daily speech, in the South African period even to the language of the marketplace and of the half-educated Gujarati Muslim merchants and their Hindu clerks. But though close to the idiom of daily speech, Gandhiji's Gujarati shows his imaginative receptivity as richly as, if not more than, his English. Whereas in his English writings Gandhiji appealed to the moral feeling of cultivated Englishmen, in his Gujarati writings he appealed to the moral feeling of the common people. From his daily contacts with them and from his stray reading, he had absorbed the deepest sources of Indian moral feeling, just as he had gained understanding of the best elements of the English character through his reading of the Bible and his contact with earnest Christians. This intuitive appreciation of moral culture of the common people, which had been refined and enriched by centuries of popular education by saints and devotional poets, gave Gandhiji's Gujarati a certain dignity even when, as in the South African period it remained provincial in its linguistic idiom. He wrote to influence the thinking of the people on subjects of immediate and practical concern to them in a language which all could understand but he lifted their thinking from the dullness of unimaginative practicality to the higher realms of reason and the moral imagination.

One thinks, here, of the extraordinary life and power in the simple prose of William Cobbett (1763-1835), who also wrote because he had something to say. Gandhi was at once a spontaneous and a reflective man. If an idea appealed to him as true, he tried it out. For him, thinking meant acting. This is what sets him off from other men, but this is also what unites him with them at another level. Mr. Patel writes of the spirit which animated Gandhi:

> As a satyagrahi he is guided by truth and ahimsa in all his actions. But truth and ahimsa were not for him abstract principles accepted merely by intellectual choice. They seem, rather, spontaneous expressions of his nature which loves beauty and goodness where it sees them. He has travelled all over South Africa with, as he says, open eyes, observed the physical beauty of the country and fallen in love with it. He has observed with pleasure its fruit

> trees and farms and its well-fed and healthy cattle. He has seen native African races with the eyes of a lover and has admired the strength and beauty of their physique and the purity and innocence of their minds and loved the musical sweetness of their language. Gandhiji describes with admiration even the Boers against whom he fought for fourteen long years, praising their love of freedom, their spirit of patriotism and their bravery, especially of the women. He pays a loving tribute to all European sympathizers who supported the Indian cause. To the poor Indian satyagrahis who sacrificed their lives, Gandhiji gives more than admiration, he bows in love and reverence to them. It was this capacity for large-hearted love which gave Gandhiji the power and influence he came to possess over Indians of all classes in South Africa and inspired so many of them to overcome their horror and jail and fearlessly to court imprisonment. . . .

His generosity in debate is striking and needs special attention:

> Gandhiji's sense of truth seems equally natural and spontaneous and expresses itself in a variety of ways. He insisted on avoiding the slightest exaggeration in describing the community's grievances and would readily admit the justice of any criticism of its shortcomings. Avoiding exaggeration himself, Gandhiji would however condone exaggeration by the critics, for, he argued, such exaggerations were not always intentional. After summarizing a pseudo-philosophic argument often advanced by even well-educated and cultured whites to justify segregation of the Indians, Gandhiji advises the reader not to resent such arguments; probably Indians also, he suggests, if placed in similar circumstances, would advance such arguments. A satyagrahi should learn to appreciate opposing points of view and see the partial truth in each of them. . . . It was also part of satyagraha ethics, according to Gandhiji, not to take advantage of any difficulty of the opponent. During the last phase of the struggle, he postponed an intended march because of an unexpected railroad strike.

It would get very hard to go on thinking of a man like that as an enemy. He was working for mistreated Indians, but he didn't really have a "side." He wanted truth to settle the conflict, not a victory, and he did all he could to bring out the truth. But who knows what is "truth"? Well, the next best thing to knowing the truth is intensively looking for it and then communicating the fruit of that effort. A human who makes this the rule of his life acquires a kind of "glow" which cannot be ignored. It excites respect, then admiration, perhaps awe, and finally love. Gandhi's greatest contribution to the world was his demonstration that an ordinary human being can think about behaving in this way, then decide to do it, and then *do* it, for the rest of his life. And to pursue this course without pluming self-righteousness.

We might say that Mr. Patel is in some sense a captive of Gandhi's thinking. A willing captive. But he isn't diminished by this involuntary loyalty. To be Gandhi's captive is to strive for the same sort of authenticity he sought, which becomes release from any captivity. Actually, this paradoxical relationship is the pattern of all true education. Tolstoy understood it well. Education, he said, means *equality*. When you achieve equality you don't need the teacher. He has taught you to set yourself free. So the relation between teacher and pupil is a bond, but not bondage. So much for "influence" and "independence."

Here is another revealing passage in Patel's book:

> The central point of interest in Gandhiji's life-story, as he feels it, concerns the problem of self-division, of the conflict of opposing impulses in oneself which the individual feels as the conflict of good and evil. It is the problem of Everyman. Gandhiji realized the universal nature of this problem and interpreted the *Mahabharata* story of the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas as an allegorical representation of the perpetual war of light and darkness for possession of the human heart. Theologians, philosophers, and psychologists may try to understand and explain in intellectual terms the cause and nature of this eternal conflict. But great poets and artists feel the mystery of the conflict as it is experienced by the individual and wonder at the strength of the human spirit as it faces the never-ending war. Gandhiji has felt the mystery of the conflict within him and the miracle of the victory of light and truth in him. He attributed the victory not to his own strength but to a Power which he called God. In human terms, it was the power of truth and

> love, and so extraordinary was its working in Gandhiji's life that it transformed him from an Everyman into a hero of a type not known before.

This seems a splendid attempt to put the larger meaning of Gandhi's life into words. It doesn't succeed, of course, since what can be put into words would be only rhetorical shadow. Yet the account invites both wonder and reflection, especially here in the West, where there is rampant disorder when one tries to take seriously the meanings behind words like "morality" and "truth" and "character." We can't import Indian solutions, although we can admire their historic appeal and classic symmetry. But we can learn much from Gandhi for the reason that he found a way to expose and confront the self-deceptions of the West—in the form of cultural imperialism—with the moral strength he obtained, ultimately, from the *Gita,* and to make the Westerners *think* about what they had done.

India doesn't have the Western historical background of the great "war between science and religion." Indians, some of them, have a hard time recognizing that the peoples of the West are not able simply to sail home to Truth using the pages of Eastern scriptures for wings. Westerners have to assimilate in their own way what truth there is in the world—and there seems to be a lot in the philosophies of India—by rendering it into the conceptual language of their own experience. Yet Gandhi, who was touched by the West, has been able to touch the West back, to our everlasting gain. He is worth studying for this reason. He adds to our supersensuous vocabulary, which we have only now begun to develop. The grammar for its use will have to be evolved by ourselves.

COMMENTARY
A NOTE ON MASS EDUCATION

IN his *Daedalas* article (quoted in this week's "Children") Philip W. Jackson stresses the importance of education in the Humanities for *all* students, not just the college-bound. He speaks of the "talent and wisdom" with which at least some of today's teachers are endowed, believing that they and others coming along would be able to give this sort of education to all students.

It seems evident, however, that the present trend is in the opposite direction. A long article by William Trombley in the *Los Angeles Times* for Jan. 10, reporting on the opinions of college professors and textbook publishers, indicates that many college texts, especially the "introductory" volumes, are going down in quality, in response to what the teachers are asking for. The salesmen for the publishers come home after talking to the instructor, especially those in community colleges, and tell their sales managers that the students need simpler books. The high schools, it is said, are under pressure to "pass everybody," and the scores of prospective college students on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, which most of them take, has "declined for 14 consecutive years before leveling off" in 1981. In general, according to the *Times* report, "textbooks for freshman and sophomore courses have declined in difficulty to a level that might have been considered suitable for 10th graders not many years ago."

The publishers are now using a lot of four-color illustrations and drawings, with larger type and less text. "The lower the level the book, the more copies it sells," said a New York textbook publisher. "Every effort is made to avoid complex arguments," the reporter says, and a UCLA professor exclaimed, "The books have everything except pop-outs, and I imagine they're coming." Another publisher said:

> Over the years, I've been reducing the reading level of these books. Students tend to be weaned on television. Reading habits are not what they were. The students' ability for straight concentration has also changed, so we need picture-crammed books to hold their attention.

And the UCLA professor added: "We're dealing with a kind of semi-literacy, not only of vocabulary, but also of ideas."

Book publishers, being "businessmen," are out after the mass market, so they are "dumbing" the books, as they say in the trade. This has been going on for several years. The area known as "general education" is most affected by this trend.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

MORE THAN IS DEMANDED OF THEM

THE Fall 1981 issue of *Daedalus*, quarterly publication of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, is devoted to several selected schools, public and private, in the United States. The contributors report on how intelligent people are coping with the responsibilities of teachers or educators in the institutions of a highly organized civilization which lacks a center—that is, a coherent idea of what a human being is and what is his essential purpose, if any, here on earth. Not to have clear and unambiguous answers to such questions is neither remarkable nor reprehensible. It seems typical enough. On the other hand, to proceed with the practical and cultural tasks of education without admitting or calling attention to this ignorance—as the "authorities" seem to be doing—is surely enough to explain the confusion under which education proceeds. We should add that the contributors to this issue of *Daedalus* are perceptive observers and skillful reporters, and that what they say is certainly worth considering.

For the substance of one "issue" in public secondary (high school) education, we go to the essay by Philip W. Jackson, who teaches at the University of Chicago. He discusses what some educators argue about—whether "high culture" should be made available to all or to only the privileged or capable few. He says:

> Once the possibility of a class-free "high" culture has been broached, we are in a position to consider what the school's relation to such an entity ought to be. Within a democratic society, at least, the school's obligation seems almost incontrovertible. It must serve as the primary agency for the dissemination of that culture to as many of the nation's citizens as can possibly be reached and in as full an amount as is possible to give—directly, by exposing student to the very best their culture has to offer, and indirectly, by training them in skills and habits of thought that will provide lifelong access to stores of cultural wealth.
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> Though such a proposal expresses a sentiment noble enough to escape most criticism on ideological grounds, it nonetheless has its critics. As it pertains to the curriculum of secondary schools in general, three objections are customarily raised against it: the vast majority of high-school students, we are told, do not *want* the kind of courses that would expose them to the best our culture has to offer or prepare them to do it on their own; they do not *need* such studies in the light of the future that awaits them; and they could not *handle* such studies if they tried. These claims focus attention on the key ideas of *motivation*, *need*, and *ability* as they function within the context of educational discourse.

Is there any way this argument can be settled? Not that we know of, with our present resources. Robert Hutchins made a heroic attempt to provide a working settlement—with some success, in view of the application all over the country of his Great Books program—but he was jeered at by some very bright people for his pains. An ancient comment on "high" culture by the Mogul emperor, Aurangzeb, illustrates the same jeering in another form. The ruthless conqueror said to the teacher of his youth:

> You told my father Shah Jehan that you would teach me philosophy. 'Tis true, I remember very well, that you have entertained me for many years with airy questions of things that afforded no satisfaction at all to the mind and are of no use in humane society, empty notions and mere fancies that have only this in them, that they are very hard to understand and easy to forget. . . . Have you ever taken any care to make me learn what 'tis to besiege a town, or to set an army in array? For these things I am obliged to others, not at all to you.

Today, *mutatis mutandis*, the critics of high culture are saying the same thing. And others might point to the bloodless character of present-day teaching of the humanities as sufficient reason for ignoring them. They are doubtless partly right.

But there are now other sides to the argument. Mr. Jackson proceeds:

> The notion that a course of study in high school should be based chiefly, or even largely, on what interests students at the time—and its corollary, that students should not be required to study courses rich

> in cultural content—is a profoundly misguided doctrine. Criticism of such notions is useless. If educators do not already see the foolishness of that line of reasoning, the cause is lost.
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> . . . Yet the trend in secondary education in recent years has been toward a proliferation of curricular offerings and the corresponding expansion of choice, the gradual reduction of requirements of all kinds, and an increasing emphasis on individualized instruction. Hand-in-hand with these changes has been a general loosening of constraints of many other aspects of students activity (e.g., dress codes, "open" campuses) and a corresponding concern over the protection of student rights.

This writer is interested in achieving balance. He continues:

> Few would deny that most of the changes are genuine advances over the narrowness of curricular choices and the way high-school students were treated in the past. But has a once-healthy trend in certain respects swung out of control? Must it now be checked and possibly even reversed? A growing number of educators believe so, as do I. . . .
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> It is narrow-minded and patronizing to contend that students who are not college-bound do not *need* much history, math, science, or literature—narrow-minded, because it is based on merely utilitarian notions; patronizing because it makes tacit assumptions about the kind of life such students will live after leaving high school. In essence, these assumptions proclaim that these students will probably not do the same sorts of things as college-bound students—read "good" books, go to museums and concerts, follow news events in the paper, participate in public affairs, hold lively conversation, and so forth—so why burden them with making sense of English literature, world history, biology, and all the rest of it? To make this assumption is effectively to assure that it will prove accurate—a self-fulfilling prophecy. Basing educational policy on that kind of prediction is something educators could well do without.

It is impossible to argue with Mr. Jackson's sound sense and democratic regard for all students. Yet some ancillary questions sneak up on us. How far do you go with "high" culture, and how do you define it? Does educational theory include some idea as to when or where the initiative becomes the student's rather than the curriculum designer's? And would a more aggressive teacher of "philosophy" have been able to turn Aurangzeb around, making him see that besieging a town is by no means the best way to spend one's adult years? Did Aristotle, one wonders, discuss this with Alexander? The mere fact that such questions have no answers is not a reason for ignoring them. But again, no quarrel with what Mr. Jackson says:

> The conventional answer to who needs what in the way of academic studies in high school makes more sense to me when turned on its head. It yields the conclusion that those students most in need of science, math, history, and all of the other demanding academic subjects are precisely the ones who are *not* going on to college! Such a proposal is not nearly so preposterous as it may at first sound.

He goes on, commenting on the claim that some students are simply not capable of doing "college-level" work, conceding its "grain of truth," but proposing:

> At the same time, it would be a grave mistake to give in too readily to this argument. I am deeply convinced that most people can do vastly more than is ever demanded of them; more, too, than they customarily demand of themselves. . . .
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> What the suggestions in this essay put forward is not the transformation of the average high-school student into something resembling a humanistic scholar or scientist, but merely an increase, albeit a dramatic one, in his exposure to good books, historical studies, exercises in critical thinking, and so on. . . . there are a lot more talent and wisdom among today's teachers than those who lambaste our schools would have us believe. If the talented and wise teachers already there (plus those the ensuing years will add) were to labor mightily in the ways advocated here—doing all they can to extend the scope of the school's influence, to increase the number of students who are introduced to the best our culture has to offer in all domains of human endeavor, and to expand the powers of clear thought and forceful expression—the benefit to future generations will be immeasurable.

FRONTIERS

Both Luck and Management

IN a paper presented last August at the United Nations conference on new and renewable energy sources, held at Nairobi, Kenya, André van Dam detailed the multiple advantages of conservation, saying that "there is a rising body of evidence that conservation can stimulate innovation, employment, and economic expansion," although it requires a transformation of priorities and living habits. After citing various studies which show that "rail traffic is more labor-intensive than road and aviation traffic, and that solar heating creates far more jobs than the conventional sources of energy," van Dam went on:

> Conservation energy is produced, not by sophisticated technology and capital, but by ingenuity and an ample infusion of political will. Examples abound. In *transportation*, conservation means mass transit systems, rail freight; smaller automobiles; engine improvement; drag reduction; car pooling; speed limits; improved routing; closed town centers; reduced urban sprawl, and last but not least, the use of ethanol, methanol, and liquid hydrogen in cars. In *construction*, conservation means insulation; draught reduction; boiler improvements; retro-fitting programs, waste heat recovery, double glazing; heat pumps; wind screening by trees; solar hot water and space heating; and last but not least, the integrated design of new buildings.

Obstacles in the way of intelligent conservation, van Dam says, are inertia to change, institutional rigidity, vested interests, and apathy.

What happened for good at the Nairobi conference? Not much, according to one man who attended. The powerful nations stood in the way of policies the small and developing nations want and need, although there exists, he said, a core of small nations in the UN that will keep the idea of basic change alive.

Once again it is made evident that hope for change lies in *small* social formations. An interesting example of the capacity of small communities to recognize the need for change, and then to act on what they see, is reported in the September-October (1981) issue of the *Community Service Newsletter*, issued in Yellow Springs, Ohio. The writer is William Becker, who tells about the action taken by the 550 residents of Soldiers Grove, located on the banks of the unpredictable Kickapoo River in Wisconsin. Apparently, this village was about to be destroyed.

> Soldiers Grove and the other villages along the river were caught in the middle of a battle between environmentalists and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which planned to build a large dam and reservoir on the upper Kickapoo claiming the dam would end years of flooding which had troubled the communities of the Kickapoo River Valley.
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> The battle reached fever pitch in 1975 as the state, complying with the Federal Flood Insurance Act, began mandating floodplain zoning in the Kickapoo Valley. The zoning prohibited any new construction in the flood plain and placed strict limits on maintenance or repairs to existing buildings. Floodplain zoning threatened to kill Soldiers Grove because the community's entire business district was involved. In effect, the new ordinance condemned the downtown business area to rapid deterioration and immediately wiped out the property value of commercial buildings so that owners could not recover their equity to rebuild elsewhere.

The people of Soldiers Grove got together and proposed another plan. Take the money ($3.5 million) for the levee planned by the Army Engineers, they said, and help us to move the "entire central business section to higher ground." This idea was an open break with Army Engineers' traditional methods (see Arthur Morgan's *Dams and Other Disasters*, Porter Sargent, 1971), but the arguments of the villagers were strong. Often, they said, largescale construction to control rivers fails, and the Kickapoo's irregularities couldn't be anticipated. Fortunately, their conflict with the environmentalists over the up-river dam obliged the Engineers to call off all work on the watershed, giving the Soldiers Grove people time to look around for funding to make their own change. They looked vainly among federal agencies for three years. Then they got a splendid assist from nature:

> The breakthrough came in July, 1978. The Kickapoo hit the community with the largest flood on record, completely destroying several businesses and badly damaging all the rest. Embarrassed federal officials agreed to begin funding the relocation plan that Soldiers Grove had long proposed.
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> Now in an innovative and positive frame of mind, the village leaders wanted the new business districts to be as forward-looking as possible. One problem plaguing the community's already hard-pressed businessmen was the rising cost of oil. After a careful study of energy options, the village is requiring that each of the 40 new industrial, commercial and municipal structures receives at least half its heat from the sun. It is the first case in the nation where solar heat is mandated by the law.

This wonderful account of community-initiated change is not about something that is meant to happen tomorrow:

> Construction of the new downtown is now about half complete. The flood-plain is gradually being evacuated and converted to an arboretum-like park featuring recreational facilities and native flood-plain vegetation which will withstand future flooding. At the farm field [purchased by the village for its downtown area], a cluster of handsome new shops are being erected, some of which have already gone through their first Wisconsin winter without using a drop of heating fuel. The move has inspired a new spirit among the villagers. Long the victims of flooding and rural economic decline, they have now begun to take control of their destiny. Excitement and creativity in the community are nearly thick enough to touch.

The village had help, of course. They hired some experts, but the village Community Development Office "insisted that technology serve the needs of people rather than the other way around," and that consultants "act not as decision-makers, but resources in helping the villagers to shape their own future." The villagers decided to cooperate with the natural environment: "rather than trying to tame the river, they would simply move out of its way, giving their village an opportunity to live like a normal community and the river the space to behave like a river." The people undertook to "think globally and act locally."

William Becker concludes this story by saying that the people of Soldiers Grove "have accomplished the remarkable feat of realizing a dream when the odds were greatly against them." They had, you could say, some "lucky breaks," but they had made themselves ready for them.