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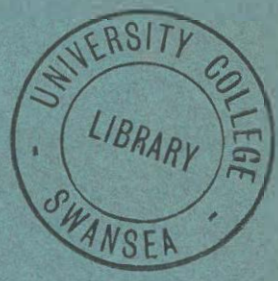
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

*Inaugural lecture of the
Professor of Education
delivered at the College
on October 29, 1957*

by

PROFESSOR C. E. GITTINS

M.A. (WALES)



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SWANSEA

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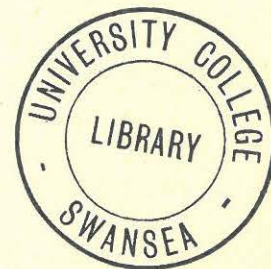
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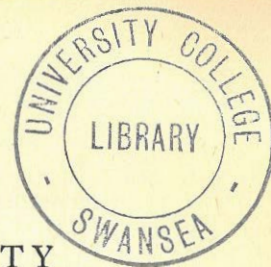
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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

IT can be rewarding to compare our educational progress with that of another country, especially a country such as France whose general position in this post-war world bears so many resemblances to our own. It helps us to see our own position in clearer perspective and to make us realize that in all our arguments and controversies about the 11 plus examination, or about the organization of secondary education, or about the best training which can be given to the intending teacher—we are not alone. Similar problems, similar struggles and tensions, can be found across the Channel.

France, as we are all aware, is much occupied at the moment with the problems of Algeria and of inflation, but linked with the second of these is the widespread desire throughout that country to embark upon radical and general educational reform. When the last war was over, the French Government set up a Commission to study this whole question of educational change—the Langevin Commission, which produced a plan in 1947 in which the general aims are succinctly stated.

1. To assure each according to his aptitudes the total development of which he is capable.
2. To prepare the child for the vocation most accessible to him and in which he will best serve the general welfare.
3. To raise as high as possible the cultural level of the nation.¹

The Plan has many interesting features. It carries the principle of equality to its logical conclusion by

¹ *La Réforme de l'Enseignement. Projet soumis à M. le Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale par la Commission Nationale d'Étude*, p. 13.

bringing the universities within the scope of free education: it conceives of three broad divisions in the compulsory system of education—one of which is

The period of orientation—11 to 15 years,

which is our 11 plus problem in a slightly different guise. The intention is to have all children at this age in common schools with the curriculum and teaching method centring around the task of vocational and educational guidance, after which they are to be sent to separate schools, each with its specialized characteristics.

But, so far, the French have not progressed very far beyond talking about these ideas. When their National Assembly rose on the 26 July last for its summer recess, it had spent the preceding three days taking a preliminary glance at a Bill submitted by the Minister of Education, M. Billeres, which seeks to put into effect, in a modified way, the recommendations of the Langevin Commission.

All this no doubt will add strength to the typically British attitude to the doings of the foreigner. We are not likely to be shaken in the belief that our British way is the superior way, that when it comes to politics, to education, there is little that the foreigner can teach us. After all, France is broadly trying to do what we did for ourselves in 1944 when we put a new Education Act on the Statute Book, proclaiming 'secondary education for all'.

But there was a time when French educational thought was far in advance of the British. We have only to go back to the late eighteenth century, to the time of the French Revolution, to find a France set upon the task of making education the duty of the State and the right of all, ideas which were utterly revolutionary at that time. French intellectuals had arrived broadly at the conclusion that men are shaped almost exclusively by their environment. 'All men are created equal' and, because of this, they went

on to assert, they are entitled to equal rights, but the one means essential for the enjoyment of equal rights is education. As one of the French writers of that time put it, a system of universal public instruction is essential 'to render real the equality of rights', and when the French Revolution decided to sweep away the old order, to dispense with monarchy and to have a Republic, this writer incorporated in his draft Republican Constitution the quite astonishing dictum, 'Instruction is the need of all, and society owes it equally to all its members.'¹ It looked almost certain that France would establish a dramatic lead in mass education—but this was not realized. France plunged into war and she still awaits the complete fulfilment of the high educational hopes of her eighteenth-century days.

What a contrast our British educational story is. By and large it can be said that on paper we achieved in 1944 what the French Government had envisaged in 1792. The French early reached Pisgah's Height and surveyed the promised land. We have moved much more slowly and are only now at long last occupying our promised educational land. Looking back, we can pick out two great obstacles to our own progress:

Firstly, the reluctance to give the State any power; the liberal tradition in British politics which was suspicious of government and of all centralized agencies, and, secondly, the persistent view that social mobility must be discouraged: that the social structure was sacrosanct. As Dickens once quoted:

We should love our occupations,
Bless the Squire and his relations,
Live upon our daily rations,
And always keep our proper stations.

¹ *Œuvres complètes de Condorcet*, ed. Mme M. L. S. Condorcet, with the assistance of A. A. Barbier, Cabanis, and Garat, vol. xviii, p. 276.

Even philanthropy, to which British education owes so much, resisted the notion that education was the concern of the State and accepted that the poor would always be with us, and, whilst they ought to be given a knowledge of Christian doctrine, they ought not to be led to develop ideas above their station. The York Place Church School, Swansea, which had been founded by Quakers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, even as late as 1852, declared that its object was 'to take young girls for domestic service' and, in consequence, 'only the rudiments of knowledge . . . are attempted to be taught'.¹

Teachers as well as pupils were held in this tight social vice. A young village schoolmistress had the courage in 1861 to write to the local paper, and she characterized the attitude of her so-called betters in the words:

'She must not dress above her station' is the cry of the clergyman's family, and Committee of ladies: consequently the new mistress is subjected to the painfully unpleasant process of analysis and being pronounced guilty of 'dressing as well as themselves' is punished by being made to feel her inferiority in ways too numerous to mention.²

It was a mark of progress in our country when, spurred on by the industrial and commercial competition of Germany, France, and the United States, Disraeli declared that 'Upon the education of the people of this country the future of this country depends.'

Even when, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the British government at last provided secondary schools, they were not intended for the education of the masses: but for an *élite* who could pay fees: they were not meant to be instruments of social change but pillars of the established order. This was emphasized when later 'free

¹ *The Development of Education in Swansea, 1846-1902*, J. Weaver (M.A. Thesis), p. 123.

² *The School Teachers*, Asher Tropp, published by Heinemann, 1956, p. 60.

scholars' were admitted to these schools and because of the repercussions one headmaster, in words typical of his time, reassured his Governors in 1904: 'It will be seen that the number of free scholars from elementary schools is 18, or less than 10% of the whole school, a proportion which presents no element of difficulty or danger.'¹ A little later, when pupil teachers, who were amongst pupils of the highest ability, were admitted into secondary schools for a free education 'both middle-class parents and secondary teachers objected' and in their turn 'elementary teachers' resented the fact that some secondary schools made invidious distinctions between pupil teachers and the other pupils 'such as separating them at playtime'.²

The First World War and after eased the social rigidities: the Labour Party, a new power on the political scene, found in R. H. Tawney a gifted advocate of an increasingly popular conviction—'secondary education for all'. Tawney reminded those who pleaded that in view of its war-time exertions our country could not afford radical change in education of some words used by Macaulay in 1846 in support of factory legislation: 'Never will I believe that what makes a population stronger and healthier and wiser and better can ultimately make it poorer . . . if ever we are forced to yield the foremost place among commercial nations we shall yield it to some nation pre-eminently vigorous in body and mind.'³

But the inter-war years were a disappointment to educational reformers: and there was some slipping back, as when 'free places' in grammar schools were replaced by 'special places' for which a means test was applied. According to a survey carried out by Kenneth Lindsay,

¹ *Social Class and Educational Opportunity*, Floud, Halsey, and Martin, published by Heinemann, 1956, pp. 22-23.

² Asher Tropp, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

³ *Secondary Education for All*, ed. R. H. Tawney, published by George Allen & Unwin, 1924, p. 144.

Britain in 1926 was a land in which 'proved ability to the extent of at least 40% of the nation's children [was] denied expression'.¹ When at last it was decided to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen, our appointed day proved to synchronize with Hitler's appointed day for the invasion of Poland, and hope was deferred.

Fortunately, the blitz, the evacuees, the stirrings of nationalism and racialism in Asia and Africa, the sale of foreign securities to provide the sinews of war, convinced the British nation almost to a man of the truth of Macaulay's words: there was a common realization that the British way of life could only be sustained in the post-war age through the trained ability of its citizens. It was the Education Act of 1944 which expressed this conviction and the Government White Paper of 1943 well expressed the prevailing mood when it said 'the bulwarks of a city are its men'. In 1956 another Conservative Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, expressed Disraeli's thoughts in different words: 'Prizes in the world-wide scientific revolution will not go to the countries with the largest population. Those with the best systems of education will win.'² And so, by many slow steps, we have reached the high level of what is sometimes referred to as 'Equality of educational opportunity' in contemporary Britain.

But this mid-twentieth century, hailed as the age of the common man, finds him willing to be free, assisted to be free, but shackled still. We are realizing that there is much more to 'secondary education for all', more in the words 'equality of educational opportunity', than had previously been realized.

If we could have looked into the minds of those who had strongly advocated these changes between the two

¹ *Social Progress and Educational Waste*, Kenneth Lindsay, published by Routledge, p. 23.

² Speech at Bradford.

wars and during the Second World War itself, we would have found an awareness that equal educational opportunity did not imply an equal or the same education. Even the theorists of the French Revolution had known better than that. There were, after all, acknowledged differences in natural ability, and environment is a most powerful educator. Yet, though these facts were realized, their strength was not accurately gauged. There was, as it proved, a misplaced confidence that natural differences in ability would prove far less significant once environment had been equalized, and in thinking about environment there was a facile tendency to assume that it connoted factors largely concrete and physical and to overlook and underrate the intangible and the imponderable elements of a psychological and sociological kind which are always present. It is characteristic of British radicalism and socialism to stress the mighty power of environment in shaping the lives of men. Once control the environment and all men could be changed into what was desired. In this the Liberal, John Locke, and the Socialist, Robert Owen, agreed: 'Any character,' Owen had written, 'from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened may be given to any community . . . by applying certain means which are to a great extent at the command . . . of those who possess the Government of nations.'¹ This was the hope, and amongst a great many the belief, which buoyed up those who during long years had worked for and had at last achieved, in principle, 'secondary education for all'. Their faith in the efficacy of schooling was firm. When they were reminded of the immense power of environment, what they conjured up in their minds was 'schooling' and this put them in a happy mood because now that the Second World War had further impressed the lessons of

¹ *Robert Owen*, G. D. H. Cole, published by Macmillan, p. 100.

the First World War, everybody, by and large, was agreed that every child should have a good school and a well-trained teacher.

Of course, there was more to environment than mere schooling; there were the vital factors of health and nutrition, and the important factors of clothing and money, but in these favoured and enlightened post-war years all these 'other' factors were being harnessed to assist and not to hinder children—free medical inspection and treatment were available, a school meal service of immense scope had been provided at great cost, and free meals could be had by many, Local Education Authorities had been empowered to provide clothing wherever they felt this to be necessary, maintenance allowances could be given to parents who found it difficult to keep their children at school after school-leaving age, and the route from the sixth form to the university had been converted into a smooth and broad highway by revolutionary changes in the number and the amount of university awards. The rough places had been made plain, environment had been brought under control. We could look now with comfort and assurance at the teachings of Locke and of Robert Owen, knowing that we had gone such a long way to implement their theories.

This appeared a solid foundation upon which to build our grand post-war educational edifice. There was a general feeling that we were privileged witnesses of another blissful dawn, worthy to be compared with the one which had fired the imagination of Wordsworth at the time of the French Revolution. Opportunity had come, a new world was waiting to be occupied.

But, fairly rapidly, the mood has changed; disillusionment has come. Other factors in this broad and comprehensive term 'environment' began to fix themselves upon our attention. We became much more aware than ever

before of the presence of large unseen influences whose power had been under-estimated, forces to which we commonly apply the label 'sociological'.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, grammar school heads had given a warm and spontaneous welcome to bright pupils from working-class homes, but the welcome at this mid-century stage is not quite so spontaneous and amongst many there are serious misgivings about it. I can well recall the feelings of distaste aroused by the remarks of a north of England girls' grammar school headmistress in 1942, when she stated that the type of home from which a grammar school pupil comes is every bit as important for academic success as the quality of her intelligence. There were few in that conference at that time who would have been found ready to agree with her. She was regarded as unsympathetic and a snob, but far more educators would be found today ready to endorse her opinion, and they would be astonished indeed if they were charged either with lack of sympathy or snobbery.

Something of this change of outlook is reflected also in the post-war attitude to the use of standardized tests of intelligence. At the end of the war these were widely accepted as heaven-sent instruments in harmony with the prevailing egalitarian mood. Here was a geiger-counter which could ferret out ability wherever it might be lurking, in the large house or the one-roomed cottage, in the large or the small family, in the big urban school or the one-teacher rural school. There was a general confidence that we were thus equipped to remove the injustice which Kenneth Lindsay had exposed in 1926. No longer would the nation's reserves of high ability be wasted. Actually it had been found in 1933/4, for example, in London, that less than one-quarter of the children with an I.Q. of 130 or more whose fathers were unskilled workers . . . went to

a secondary school.¹ This could now be rectified. The educational balance would be made even and ability, whatever its social origin, would be given the training it deserved.

To speak generally, results have not equalled expectations, for a very good reason—innate intelligence in its pure and natural state may be independent of social influences, but we cannot isolate it in this pure condition and what we are able to measure—the Intelligence Quotient—correlates positively with the social surroundings, even when non-verbal tests are used.²

What has therefore happened since the war, in spite of the wide use of the Intelligence Quotient in the selective process, is that grammar school places have continued to go in disproportionate amounts to children drawn from socially favoured homes, and often, where I.Q. was high and the social origin humble, academic performance has not touched the high level which had been expected. In 1954 the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), on the basis of a 10 per cent. sample of all grammar schools in England for the year 1946/7, found that 25 per cent. of grammar school places were allocated to the children of professional and managerial parents, a figure quite out of line with their relative size in the population as a whole.³

¹ Floud, Halsey, and Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

² B. S. Burks, *The Relative Influence of Nature and Nurture upon Mental Development: a comparative study of foster parent/foster child resemblance and true parent/true child resemblance*. Twenty-seventh Year Book of the National Society for the Study of Education. Part I. Bloomington III. Public School Publishing Company, 1928, pp. 219-316. Quoted by Elizabeth D. Fraser in a Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the University of Aberdeen, entitled 'Home Environment and the School', which is about to be published.

³ *Early Leaving Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, 1954, p. 17.

Figures in the other groups are:	per cent.
Clerical	10.3
Skilled	43.7
Semi-skilled	15.3
Unskilled	5.6

In a more detailed survey, carried out by a team of investigators of the London School of Economics in 1952 in Middlesbrough and south-west Hertfordshire, the same trend has been confirmed. It was found that, although manual workers formed 85 per cent. of the population in Middlesbrough and up to 65 per cent. in south-west Hertfordshire, their sons took no more than 45 to 50 per cent. of the annual places at the grammar schools. In spite of the changes and the improvements, it still remained true that the 11 plus examination was not a race from scratch—it was a handicap race, and the lower your social grouping the greater, by and large, was your handicap.

Nor was this the complete story. I can well remember head teachers of grammar schools who at this time pointed out that though a given pupil had a high I.Q. he could not express himself on paper with either accuracy or fluency; in brief, his English was not up to grammar school standard. This illustrates, in a narrow way, a much broader and more far-reaching phenomenon—that success within the grammar school is more frequently achieved by children from economically favoured homes. We have seen that social selection operates at 11 plus, but it should also be noted that it continues to operate throughout the whole of grammar school life. In the Sixth Form Stakes, success is for the most part conferred on those whom society has already favoured in most other ways. To return again to the 10 per cent. sample of the Central Advisory Council, we find that in the sixth form 43.7 per cent. of the places are occupied by the children of professional and managerial parents.¹

	per cent.
Professional and managerial	43.7
Clerical	12.0
Skilled	37.0
Semi-skilled	5.8
Unskilled	1.5

Central Advisory Council (England), *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Now it can be supposed that these figures reveal nothing particularly surprising; that as the 11 plus examination has revealed higher academic promise in the offspring of the higher social groups, so this is merely the culmination of the story, with the brightest staying the course to the sixth form better than the not-so-bright. But this explanation does not fit all the facts. The facts are that far more children who at eleven were in the not-so-bright category and who happen to be drawn from professional and managerial homes, reach the highest academic category on entry to the sixth form. Conversely, far more children of working-class parents, who at 11 plus were in the highest academic category, sank to the lowest level by the time the sixth form was reached. In statistical terms, 48 per cent. of professional and managerial children rose from the lowest to the highest group, whereas 54 per cent. of the children of unskilled workers fell from the highest to the lowest. The broad conclusion reached for the year 1946/7 by the Central Advisory Council, so far as England is concerned, was that out of 16,000 pupils admitted to grammar schools from the homes of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, 9,000 will drop out or fail academically.

Most of this represents a very serious loss and waste. Looking at this problem from a national standpoint we can note that some improvement must have since occurred because of the steady upward trend in the number remaining at school to enter the sixth form. Nevertheless, the seriousness of this waste is real. Here is a failure to achieve the target set in the Education Act, 1944, namely 'secondary education for all'. The intention to provide an education at the secondary stage suitable to the age, ability, and aptitude of each child, is not being fulfilled. We are failing not so much because of acts of omission or commission on the part of our collective selves (though obviously, even in this respect, much remains to be done);

failure to a far greater extent than was formerly realized has to be attributed to imponderable and adverse social forces which so frequently play on and around the young in the lower rungs of the social ladder.

Our concern as educationists and as citizens must increasingly, therefore, turn to these factors which are decisive in spite of every effort that is made and all the money that is spent.

This was brought home to me most clearly in the case of a grammar school girl with which I recently had to deal. The child was in her fourth year at a school in one of the industrial valleys of Monmouthshire. Her absences were frequent and were getting worse. Delinquent tendencies began to show themselves. She was strongly suspected of theft and her younger sister who had later joined her at school showed signs of following in the same path. Despite these handicaps and shortcomings, it was the opinion of her teachers and her headmaster that she was possessed of high ability, which, under happier circumstances, could have attained a university degree or similar qualification.

Her father was a big, blustering, talkative man, who still carried with him the slender evidence of an intellect that was once probably vigorous and fresh. Considering his humble social station, it can be said that he had read fairly widely—politics, thrillers, and pseudo-science. He had probably been a bright boy at school, and he still retained ambitions of a sort—to own or manage a hotel or pub or café, with his daughters to render cheap help, and thus be free from the mines, where he was a night-shift worker. He was suspicious of the fidelity of his wife, critical of her spending of the housekeeping money which landed him with debts at the grocer, at the pub, and with the rent-man. Suddenly he decided to throw up mining for the much more lowly paid work of a bus conductor,

all this ostensibly to enable him to keep a closer eye on things at home.

The mother was weary and indifferent; indifferent to the state of her home (the headmaster always judged it safer to sit on a wooden stool rather than on any of the upholstered furniture), indifferent also about her person except when she did herself up to go out, usually to the pub.

There were six children. The eldest was earning, and as father's wages were lower than they had been her earnings were important, especially to gratify some of mother's tastes. She became a privileged person in the household, and Mary, the next daughter, the pupil in whom we are interested, tended to be a butt and to be overloaded with domestic tasks.

To return to Mary and her younger sister—ultimately the younger sister confessed to the theft of a pair of hockey boots after having burned off the owner's name, and she revealed that her older sister had conspired with her.

It was at this point that the headmaster asked the Local Education Authority to take the older girl away from his school and, what was even more important, to persuade the parents to allow her to go away to boarding school if, as he put it, 'she was to escape a life of crime'. This was the supreme danger, and her failure as a grammar school pupil, serious as this was, was small by comparison.

With some reluctance, greater in the mother than in the father, the parents agreed to allow their daughter to go away to boarding school, where the co-operation and the understanding and the tact of the head and staff were excellent. Mary improved markedly during the first six months, and when her former headmaster met her casually at a Christmas school social, he wrote: 'I was tremendously impressed by the development of this girl . . . her

ideas have developed and flow freely, she is poised and confident . . . she feels she can look people straight in the eye.' Outwardly there was a marked improvement. At about the same time her new headmistress wrote: 'We have been very pleased indeed with the way . . . her character has developed recently.' It looked as though the venture was succeeding; but appearances were deceptive. The headmistress put her finger on the trouble when, in the very same letter in which she had remarked upon the favourable development in her character, she confessed, 'I am . . . beginning to feel that her home influence is pulling against what we are trying to do for her'. How right she was. At the beginning of the next term, Mary, who had now reached compulsory school-leaving age and was therefore a potential source of income to the home, only returned to boarding school after her former headmaster and the county woman inspector of schools had broken down the opposition of the parents. After getting a moderate General Certificate, Mary went from boarding school to the Gloucester Technical College as a full-time student, reading for the City and Guilds Certificate in Domestic Science, but here her excessive interest in male company and her utter indifference to study cut short her course. Although an opening was found for her with very good prospects as a secretarial trainee in Cheltenham, where she could have lived with an aunt, she accepted a job as a machinist in a factory at home.

Obviously there are a number of ways of looking at this experiment. As in all sociological inquiries we are looking at a whole combination of factors which are acting and interacting, and it is impossible to be sure of the factor or indeed the group of factors which is exercising the decisive influence. Hereditary influences clearly are part of the total situation, but this case has been quoted to

illustrate how extraordinarily difficult it is to render real the enjoyment of equal educational opportunities; how decisive the home influence is, in spite of the maximum efforts which may be made by the school.

But what is the home situation? The answer to this question is not simple, once again it is a complex of factors, acting and interacting. Clearly income is one, housing is another. The happiness and unity of the parents in their mutual relations has special importance. The size of the family is relevant and the child's place in it. If mother goes out to work, if the wrong companions are chosen, if the nightly vigil in front of the television set is indiscriminating, the effects are adverse for education. Towering above everything else, however, is what we may call the culture of the parents and, to a lesser extent, the culture of the community in which the home is placed and to which in indefinable ways it belongs. By culture is meant the accepted standards which enter into the whole design for living—what the sociologist calls the accepted 'norms'. These shape the educational destiny of children probably more than any other force. In south-west Hertfordshire and in Middlesbrough, for example, 17 per cent. and 20 per cent. respectively of the parents of pupils offered places in the grammar school had no intention of leaving them at school beyond fifteen.¹ How many daughters quickly discover that a prolonged education for them is not considered a matter of priority, or even of necessity, and how often is this supported by the usually unspoken assumptions of neighbours, of the club, and of church or chapel. Now it should be clear that, if parents do not take prolonged training for granted, it is positive that children hardly ever will and that indeed pressures will be exerted upon them to conform to the span of school life regarded as normal in the district. That is one

¹ Floud, Halsey, and Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

of the morals to be drawn from the case of the pupil Mary. But happily the converse of this seems true—when the parent does take this for granted, mountains of frustration can be moved. How true it often is that the home of the minister, one of the lowest in income, is one of the highest in length of scholastic life and in academic achievement, just as it often happens that where the mother of the working-class husband has had a superior education the length of the school and college life of their children far outstrips that of their social equals.

What we have been trying to do is to diagnose our present educational situation and, though unquestionably a gross over-simplification, our diagnosis points to an outstanding and extremely urgent need. The need is for a cultural revolution in our country in our time. We desperately need a greater measure of social integration and the diffusion of some of the values now associated with the middle classes throughout the whole of our national society. This is necessary for two reasons—firstly, if our civilization is to progress, or, as the leaders of French Revolutionary thought might have put it, 'if we are to render real the equality of rights', and, secondly, in order that our country may survive in prosperity.

We are committed to rendering real the equality of rights, or, to use modern parlance, 'secondary education for all', by Act of Parliament. But we are much more likely to achieve this aim as a result of the drive instilled into us by the struggle to survive in prosperity, for every man can be relied upon once he realizes that this is his situation.

And surely there ought now to be no doubt that this is our national situation. The Russian satellite, moving in its extra-terrestrial orbit, has shaken Western civilization out of its scientific and technological complacency. We are

told that it is characteristic of the ultra-modern department store in Russia to see 'peasant women with headscarves and bundles on their backs' buying 'remote-controlled toy motor cars as presents for their children'.¹ Here, clearly, a very steep social and intellectual change has taken place, and the pace of it has not been fully appreciated. Soon—some authorities think very soon—we shall find the world markets for machine tools and consumer goods competitive far beyond anything we have yet experienced.

We realize that this explains the recommendation of the Government's Scientific and Manpower Committee that the present annual output of scientists and engineers should be doubled over the next decade and its adoption as official policy by the Government to ensure our national survival in prosperity. Hence the policy of university and technical college expansion; hence the present scheme of special allowances in secondary schools. Our programme of capital investment in atomic energy is geared to a programme of educational expansion. But all these policies, admirable as they are, depend for success upon individual boys and girls feeling and following the impulse to continue with training right on to the end of the educational road, overcoming discouragement, being sustained throughout by parents and by the rest of the family who not only feel in a rational way that this is a good thing to do but believe in it to such an extent that it colours their subconscious as well as their conscious attitudes. To make all this possible we shall need to develop communities in which such homes are to be found, whose customs embody these values, communities in which the street, the club, and the playground are the allies and helpers of adolescent students.

¹ *New Scientist*, 17 Oct. 1957. Article by Dr. Kurt Mendelssohn, F.R.S.

It is easier, however, to diagnose than to suggest a remedy. A political revolution can under certain circumstances be accomplished very quickly, but a cultural revolution is the child of slow time and there are forces in contemporary society which are pulling strongly against the sort of cultural revolution we have in mind. Let us look at some of them, remembering that our purpose is not to pass moral judgement but to see facts and to try to evaluate their effects.

The modern family is a looser unit with less influence upon its members. Up to this point we have been observing the great power of the home, for better or worse, in the educative process, and, though true, this is not inconsistent with this other observed fact, that today families are less closely integrated and have less of their total experience in common. Only some of the evidence can be quoted—the Welfare State has assumed some responsibilities. The family is no longer a working unit as under a peasant culture it used to be, where father decided upon the tasks and assigned the particular duties. Today father brings home a wage, but it is usually not the only wage and not always the biggest. Mother frequently is an earner herself and increasingly she seeks to express herself in outside pursuits and entertainments and less in domestic arts. The status of father and mother is less because their function is diminished. This no doubt is reflected in the remarkable increase in the divorce rate which is itself part of the evidence of the diminished hold of the family. Moreover, all this is not static, it seems to be a continuing trend; the ties and the bonds are getting looser and looser.

Another fact which can be observed more briefly is the influence of radio and television. These not only draw the child from homework but impress values in most of what is purveyed which are hostile to the scorning of delights

and the living of laborious days which, as every student knows, is the price of achievement.

Further, in our contemporary society very young people can earn very high wages, and this has a grievously unsettling influence upon the age groups from which we must look for an increasing flow of recruits for full-time and part-time studies.

Moreover, industry and commerce themselves exercise a diminishing personal appeal. As the units of their organizations get larger, so the whole atmosphere becomes less personal and the boss is not merely some figure you never see, you don't know who or where he is.

Finally, we can observe organized religion. In the past two centuries, and particularly in Wales, this afforded not only a creed. The chapel was not only a worshipping centre, it was in the truest sense a community centre. Many of the interrelationships of everyday life sprang from joint membership of the church or chapel; but this is true no longer. Fewer people, far fewer than that small minority who attend for worship, bother about the Church as a society in itself to which it is a pleasure to belong.

These observed facts are a reminder of the great difficulties in formulating a policy which will convert adverse social influences into the allies and supporters of more prolonged training for far more people. Most people acknowledge the power of these social influences on the educative process, but this awareness has meant little in practice. In part this can be explained (as we have seen) by the concentration upon more obvious factors in the physical environment like food, clothing, health; but now that these have received their due attention we shall be forced to pay more and more attention to these sociological factors. The traditional attitude that such things are regrettable but beyond control will not fit the circumstances of a nation which is struggling to survive without

any impairment of its standards. The truth probably is that not enough people have it in their bones that such a struggle is on, and that amongst the leaders who know that this is our position, insufficient weight has been given to the power of conscious and subconscious social attitudes in shaping our educational and, in consequence, our economic destiny. This is hardly a matter for surprise, because even schoolmasters and schoolmistresses appear to give insufficient weight to these factors. When the National Foundation for Educational Research carried out an extensive investigation a few years ago into 'Rewards and Punishments in Schools', a very large number of pupils and teachers, drawn from many types of school, were asked what would be the strongest incentive to make pupils do their best work. The contrast in the replies, on the one hand from the pupils, and on the other from the teachers, is, I think, significant. The pupils felt that the strongest incentive was 'a favourable report for home', but the staff placed the following factors higher in the list than this:

Elected by staff to a position of authority.

Public praise.

Good marks for written work.

Election to leadership by fellow pupils.¹

It suggests that many teachers fail to exploit fully the power of the home in furthering the purpose of the school.

But what is vital is that society as a whole should realize the immense power of these domestic and community influences and mobilize all its resources to harness them to its own ends, remembering that the main purpose is—survival.

Once all this is more generally realized we ought to

¹ National Foundation for Educational Research, *A Survey of Rewards and Punishments in Schools*, 1952.

expect the radio, the television, and even the Press to submit, either voluntarily or otherwise, to a code of conduct which will make them supporters and shapers of the desired cultural revolution and stop being agencies of our social doom. There may be the chance of a gentleman's agreement or some other understanding which will regulate the remuneration of young people and thus remove a powerfully unsettling influence upon senior pupils in grammar schools, and there will be several other ways of accelerating the cultural revolution once the will to achieve it makes its presence felt, not excluding a radical reappraisal of the place of public schools in our national society.

But there is one way, however, which touches schools more directly than any other, and it is for this reason chosen for special attention.

The decline in the hold and power of the family, the inexorable tendency of industrial and commercial units to become bigger, more specialized, and more impersonal, the diminishing power of organized religion to shape the social activities of men—all these changes have this in common—the sense of belongingness amongst men is being weakened. Mankind seems to be moving into a state in which men will be not so much members of a society but aggregations of rootless individuals who are doing less and less in common.¹

The totality of the contemporary situation, the struggle for economic survival on the one hand and the trends apparently inherent in Western civilization on the other, to which we have drawn attention, make the role of the school not only increasingly important, but different. The school ought not only to be the training ground for a constantly increasing flow of future scientists and engineers;

¹ *The Human Group*, Homans, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, p. 457.

it must do this more completely and more efficiently by itself becoming the rallying-point around which community loyalties can stand and grow. If the school can be made into an organic society in which parents, as well as staff and pupils, find a natural place, it may be able to fill some of the void left by families which, under the conditions of modern life, have a diminishing influence, and some of the void left by churches and chapels which no longer shape the social lives of men as once they did. This is not merely a suggestion that there should be more Parent-Teacher Associations, admirable as they can be: it is a conception of the school as a community which includes parents, where they feel that in a real sense they belong. If we think in priorities in this matter, the need for more nursery schools must be stressed, for if they can be increased in number, and if they bring parents right into the life of the school, as we envisage, then we shall be exploiting the observed fact that the earlier the improvement in the social setting of the child, the greater the increase in the intelligence quotient,¹ and it should also follow that if parents can be caught at this age and stage they may be held up to and including the university education of their children. By imagination, by a radical change of attitudes on all sides, and by a due sense of urgency, this seems a possibility. We can call to mind that the Cambridgeshire Village College was itself once simply an idea and has now become such an impressive reality. If the school will cast itself for this role it might well prove a powerful agency for achieving the cultural revolution essential for our survival, especially if supported and not, as usually now happens, opposed by the other cultural powers and agencies in our society.

¹ H. M. Skeels *et al.* *A Study of Environmental Stimulation: An Orphanage Pre-School Project*. University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare, No. 4, 1938. Quoted by Elizabeth D. Fraser, *op. cit.*

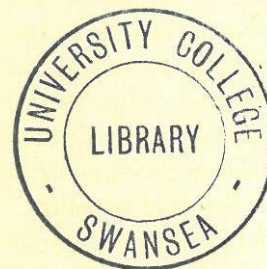
Much is implied in this suggestion. The schoolmaster would be in a much better position to influence and to come to terms with the sociological forces which, as we have seen, are very nearly as important for the efficient learning of his subject and the passing of his examination as he is himself. The schoolmaster's function would be greatly changed. In a far richer sense he would be sociologist, psychologist, and subject specialist combined. To help this to happen, several things are necessary and attention can only be called to some.

There would be need for more generous staffing ratios. The schoolmaster would have to be accorded a higher status. He would have to be trusted to do many more things without authority, given greater scope for the exercise of his judgement. The staff, the pupils, and the parents must be allowed the maximum freedom to act together without any semblance of external pressure. It is imperative that parents and teachers should get thoroughly mixed up together in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and freedom, that they should feel that in a real way they belong together and that, in fact, as well as in opinion, they share a common responsibility and a common purpose. The more frequently parents and staff interact, and there are very many constructive ways in which this may be done, the better for the pupils, and the better, therefore, our prospects of survival as a country. In this way, remembering that this is one amongst many possible means of hastening the desired cultural revolution, Britain might save herself by her ingenuity and Western civilization by her example, and the common man would find that secondary education was not only within his reach but for the first time within his grasp.

And so my end is not so much a conclusion as a fresh beginning, the indication of a way in which the educator, the citizen, and the parent, instead of resigning them-

selves to the sport of sociological forces deemed to be beyond control, will study how they may be harnessed to further the integration of society and the improvement of individuals. In this way we may interpret in a modern idiom a dictum of Rousseau: 'A child', said he, 'will be better brought up by a wise father, however limited, than by the cleverest teacher in the world.'¹

¹ *Emile for Today*, William Boyd, published by Heinemann, p. 18.



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