DAY * STAR 20

C O N T E N T S

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A conservative is a man who passes laws prescribing that all chickens shall be put back immediately into their eggs, and damns as an egghead and an atheist the social scientist who attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of his desires.....MZB

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and by way of an editorial...my

STENCIL GAZING

If this issue of Day*Star is a little short on witty fan chatter, blame it on the nature of the material. I've had the guest editorial from Walter Breen for some time, and have also been planning to run my long editorial on education through FAPA for the benefit of the five or six people therein who take education very seriously. With the acquisition of the "Whig Alphabet" by M.E. Bradford, which happened to fall roughly into line with the general "problems" layout of this issue, I decided to devote this issue of Day*Star to the serious material entirely, rather than breaking up the mood here and there with trivia. (And anyhow, with a full college schedule, I'm not exactly keen on publishing more than forty pages for one mailing. I need another spare-time activity (to quote Dick Eney) like I need a case of leukemia.

My Christmas greetings told you most of the details of the move to Abilene, and we are now settled down in the new house and enjoying the fact that it has a study-cum-fanshack-cum-workroom for me, and endless new bookshelving contributed by Brad. I've reduced the books-put-away-in-boxes to only three cartons.

But I didn't mention in Christmas Cardlette that just before the Rochester address passed into oblivion forever, we had one last visitor there. This was Bruce Pelz, who called up at 7:15 or thereabouts one Friday morning and asked whether I was going to be in Abilene that day for classes, or whether I'd be in Rochester. Since Friday was my free day last semester, I told him I wasn't coming in to Abilene (hastily planning to make a flying trip down and say hullo if he had a lengthy stopover there) but to my delight, he decided to come out on the bus, which was leaving in a few minutes. He apologized for the early phone call, apparently not aware that my normal hour of rising is about 5:15. (Be warned, fans; I will receive a phone call at five in the morning with pleasure, equanimity and good manners, I'll even talk sense; but except at conventions, when I eschew sleep entirely, the fan who telephones me after 10 p.m. is courting yawns, blurry thoughts, general fuzziness, and the possibility that I've already gone to bed and am fast asleep. Unlike the "typical" fan, I belong --usually-- to the Day People, and am a lot more alert and wide-awake at 5 am than at 11 pm. There are exceptions----sometimes I'm wide-awake at midnight--but they are rare and special-occasionish. In fact, if I don't get to bed before 11 pm, I have long discovered, I might as well stay up and see the dawn come in; it's overwhelmingly hard for me to get to sleep once I'm well awake after that hour; often and often, when Steve was a baby, he'd wake up for a night bottle and I'd be growlingly awake for the rest of the blinkety-blank night. But if I can sleep from --say - 9 pm to 2 am, I'm fine; that's what I do sometimes at conventions, take a nap in the early evening and then stay up till dawn.) During that long parenthesis, you may imagine Bruce Pelz coming closer and closer

STENCIL GAZING, continued.....

to Rochester. As 9:00 neared I grew mildly apprehensive; the house was practically stripped for our move to Abilene, all the books had gone, some of the furniture had been taken away, and a lot of the dishes. I also worried a little about whether I would recognize him; as some of you have learned with chagrin, my combination of poor eyesight and the habit of listening rather than looking at people means that I fail to recognize even those I know well. (Don Wollheim was positively testy about it,)when I mistook him for Robert Bloch the second time.)

However, he was immediately identifiable as a fan due to the paraphernalia hung about him in all directions, (and by his Sensitive Fannish Face, of course) and of course when he spoke, I recognized his voice. And when we arrived at the house he was very gracious about the stripped-down-and-messed up condition of the place.

Sometimes I think these fan visits are more fun than the conventions. At a con, it's rare to get time really to know anyone; which is why I look back with such pleasure on the interludes of quiet, when suddenly, out of the crowd, a face and a characteristic voice emerges, talking my language. (A moment, for instance, on that crowded, madhouse drive to Chicago when, for once, Paul and David and Walter were all sleeping and Les Gerber, quieted down from his boisterous jokes, and I, talked for almost an hour about the writer's personality and self-expression versus communication, discovering to our great pleasure that we meant almost the same thing.) And so, rather than brief words of goodwill in a crush, Bruce and I had time to talk about Silverlock, about folk songs, about our common passion for Tolkien; to talk about our separate plans for I Palantir and Anduril. There was no actual folksinging, since I had such a bad case of laryngitis that I'd missed a voice lesson and was forbidden to sing....even the talking was probably bad for me, but I wouldn't have missed it. But enroute to Abilene next day (Bruce spent the night, sleeping, like fans before him, in David's bed) he was singing as if to himself some exquisite minor-modal thing "....and I seek it through the world," and I was so delighted that I felt I simply had to know it. To my amazed pleasure, I discovered that it was one of the Coventry songs, written by Ted Johnstone and himself--and here I'd thought Coventry was just a lot of nonsense about spindizzies, feuds and the more bughouse goshwow sword-and-sorcery set! But if nothing other than this had ever come out of Coventry, then it would be worth it--even the trouble it seems to have caused among L.A. fans -- because the song is one of the loveliest I know. (Bruce sent me a copy. Be warned, because I still have that harp, people.) He called it "Tedron's song". It deserved a better title.

Let's see-- well, before bedtime he showed us some boxes of slides from the convention (in one of which my back is visible, seated on the floor with Kevin Langdon like true Humble Acolytes at the feet of Heinlein in Room 801, complete with the blue dressing-gown in which RAH gave audience.) We played some

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DEMOCRACY and the WELFARE STATE

Difficulties in all previous efforts in this general area of thought stem from a number of related causes. The most salient among these appear to be unclarity in the minds of writers and speakers as to the actual meanings (if any) of "welfare state" and "democracy"; the genuinely interdisciplinary nature of the ideas associated with these concepts; the specific difficulty of thinking objectively in a problem area loaded with values and in which one's expressed attitudes may have important political or even legal consequences. A parallel difficulty arises, for American writers, in the populist tradition traceable to J-can-Jacques Rousseau in which (begging the question of alleged human equality) any man's opinion is supposedly entitled to as much consideration as his neighbor's, and in political thought one finds supposedly opinions and loyalties to the near exclusion of anything else. Any political thought opposing this tradition is going to be subjected to harsh criticism in some quarters; a truism, but one perhaps not often seen as a source of difficulty in political thoughts.

To minimize one possible source of unclarity in this essay, though at the risk of running afoul of someone else's pet stipulative definitions of "welfare state" and "democracy", for lack of an unequivocally agreed-upon definition-in-use, let me begin my exposition by defining the two terms. The only merit I can claim for these definitions is that they are the nearest approximation I can formulate to a definition-in-use.

I define "welfare state" as a nation organizing itself at some period in its history around the principle that government action is the preferred method of obtaining solutions to social problems, specifically those problems related to poverty or to economic exploitation. "If the people can't take care of themselves, government has to." Such government action can take many forms; welfare and relief legislation, child-labor laws, baby bonuses, government health programs as in the British experiment, etc. (Elementary public health legislation, e.g. regulation of chemical additives to food, is not necessarily an indication that a government is acting as a welfare state.)

A nation's commitment to a welfare state program may be slight or complete; short of completeness, it is usually inconsistent. At completeness, it gives the government some properties commonly associated with the "socialism" label --at least in some definitions of the latter. Whether this need be so is debatable. Nevertheless, so-called democratic socialists have long been vociferous on the need for such commitment to a welfare state policy. The Bentham principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" is behind

this."happiness" being often explicitly defined as the satisfaction of elementary material needs -- akin to the recent "security" fetish by which pensions are an important desideratum in jobs. "Democracy" is a much more difficult word to define. Too often it is a shibboleth or vague catchword, meaning "the form of government the speaker happens to like", or "free enterprise" (historically minimizing government restrictions on business, particularly Big Business) or "the status quo." Originally, it meant rule by many rather than by one (monarchy, tyranny, dictatorship, etc) or by few (oligarchy, military juntas) lying--as Plato and Aristotle knew---uneasily in the space between the pitfalls of oligarchy and mob-rule. In the early American colonies, the term supposedly referred to autonomous settlements in which policymaking occurred through "committee of the whole" in town meetings, decisions being made by the majority and agreed to by the minority, those decisions superimposed on a basic framework of unanimity on fundamental issues not later present. Pure democracy in this sense may never have existed save briefly on the smallest scales. In practice the compromise adopted was that of policymaking by elected representatives, ideally in close touch with their constituents (something no longer possible owing to overpopulation, as I shall show below). The American form included the interesting experiment of writing into the Constitution an explicity system of checks and balances, not merely limiting what the governing bodies could do, but giving each branch a way of offsetting or correcting decisions by the others. Some such system of internal negative feedback is to a certain extent present in nondemocratic governments other than dictatorships or military junta oligarchies, but it has rarely been written into a Constitution or set of binding legal precedents or other framework of nonarbitrary decision procedures. And in nondemocratic governments, the feedback system is at any time subject to interference, perhaps drastic, from an independent sovereign. I define democracy in the modern sense, then, as a system of government whose absolute sovereignty is vested in no single individual, committee or other governing body, but in which instead limited sovereignty is divided among mutual and reciprocally interactive subsystems, and in which the population as a whole has a real choice in electing its representatives to these subsystems as well as some method of obtaining redress for injurious or oppressive legislative, executive or judicial decisions.

So defined, democracy is an ideal, though one occasionally approached in practice. I have tried to enumerate necessary conditions rather than specific or sufficient conditions for a government to belong to the class of democracies. Nothing in this definition excludes a class system, hereditary or otherwise, or a constitutional monarchy so long as the ruler is limited in sovereignty as are the various European monarchs and the President of the U.S. In practice, however, the term is not usually applied to constitutional monarchies. Note well that the "consent of the governed" formula is an automatic corollary; oppressive judges can be impeached as can presidents and senators, representatives too disregardful of their constituents can be defeated at the next election, petition for redress of grievances and some other features of the Bill of Rights are ways of expressing the limited-sovereignty clause, etc.

The above definitions of "democracy" and "welfare state" are not automatically inconsistent, let alone mutually exclusive as some would have us believe. The question of consistency has to be answered, rather, in terms of consequences, viewed both in theory and in the light of history. Given that the welfare state is a more recent development than democracy, it will be sufficient to show that the welfare state furthers weaknesses in democracy, or that a welfare state ideology leads to ideals which negate those of democracy, or that it leads to a political or legal system untenable in terms of democracy (i.e., breaks in the checks-and-balances system) or that the welfare state is a self-defeating proposition in the long run while democracy is not (or vice versa) to demonstrate any putative inconsistency between the welfare state and the ideals of democracy.

The first step in any such investigation is a historical one. We know that democracy in any real sense --invariably a rare development associated with statesmanship of a comparatively high and restrained order at the early stages -- has arisen almost always as a reaction against tyranny of one kind or another. This was true in Hellas; it was certainly true in New England and the American colonies generally; it has been true over and over again in European states and South American petty republics. Not all of these representative governments lived up to the ideal definition of a democracy, and many quickly degenerated to a condition where some political boss weilded power through his machine or party; sometimes this became overt despotism, sometimes uprisings occurred and insurgents ejected the boss, either replacing him by another one whose promises were a little more attractive, or perhaps trying to restore the status quo ante. It becomes apparent that Plato's familiar cycle of successive forms of government (from aristocracy to democracy to mob rule to tyranny to oligarchy to timocracy to aristocracy and so on around again) is operating in a somewhat compressed form; stable governments of any kind would appear to be the exception rather than the rule. This observation does not commit us to any such rigid model as the Hegelian dialectic; we need not look for any inevitable "synthesis" from the interaction of opposed factions, nor (for that matter) for any inevitable development of implacable opposition to any given system.

Nevertheless, it behooves us to ask whether the Welfare state is in fact just such an opposition growing out of democracy. The welfare state is a recent development (nobody would seriously claim the Roman "bread and circuses" government as a case in point) and its definition makes clear that it is a reaction against something; specifically against some economic system leading to a more than ordinary degree of poverty and misery. Something can be learned from investigating the historical background of the welfare state and the conditions making it possible.

Poverty has been a feature of human history for a long time. So-called liberals usually blame it on unethical, i.e. inequitable distribution of goods; they point to exceedingly wealthy individuals and combines (e.g. cartels) and shout that these got their wealth by injurious practices leading to impoverishment of the many;

monopolies and price-fixing agreements making necessary goods into inordinately expensive luxuries, oppressive rents, confiscatory taxes, etc. Conservatives have less to say about it, but the Protestant Ethic for a while provided them (and specifically the wealthy) with a raison d'etre, reaching its apogee in the unsavory rationalization of "social darwinism." Originally those on top felt no need to justify their position; they were successfully playing the same game as the rest; does a poker player have to justify himself to the losers? Intellectuals gradually groped toward the insight that their ga es of politics and economics involved different rules from those of individual ethics; and they felt that this was somehow unfair, against the Will of God and the interest of man. Faced with this challenge to the legitimacy of their position, the plutocrats turned the Protestant Ethic to their advantage. And so we hav egregious identifications of the "is" with the "ought to be" like that in Pope's "Essay on Man";

> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee,
> All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see,
> All Discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial Evil, universal Good;
> And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
> One Truth is clear: WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.

Into the same hog-trough may be dumped such swill as the idea of Progress, the eternal idealism of Turgot, Condorcet and Proudhon, and the sociology of Herbert Spencer. According to this last, and its popularizations as "social darwinism," the classes and elites--then flourishing remained atop the heap because they were the product of natural selection, the best adapted in the perpetual competition (the "struggle for existence"), the "fittest". In terms of the Protestant Ethic, mundane success was interpreted as a sign of divine favor, of belonging to the elect, and had been so interpreted since Calvin's day. WGSumner even went so far as to spell out the conclusion that the plutocrats of his day were the survival types. Ruthless business competition, interpreted as a sort of "state of nature", a Hobbesian war of all against all, was not only accepted but justified as representing natural selection("the end justifies the means") as contributing to the evolution of the human species. Similarly and inevitably, failure was stigmatized as the deserved result of incompetence, success praised as proof that one belonged to the "fittest". (Illogically; one's favorable genes are not the result of meritorious acts, no matter how lamarckian one's viewpoint.)

In a civilization long accepting the Diving Right of Kings (the King can do no wrong) as revealed truth, some such development of the above was perhaps to be expected, even though one might well ascribe to chance the simultaneous apogee of the Protestant Ethic and the formulation of the principle of natural selection, so quickly seized on by apologists for the economic status qup. It is also significant that the same period saw the flood of racist works (taking their cue from the Conte de Gabineau's "Essai" of 1853-55) proceeding through H.S. Chamberlain all the way to the horrors of nazism. Objections to social darwinism and its related ideas, accordingly, have come most often from egalitarian (democratic") thinkers, defenders of the underdog; and their arguments

appeal more often to fellow-feeling than to science, more to the belief that poverty is curable by "welfare" than to a recognition of the role of overpopulation.

The welfare state ideology, accordingly, found its beginning in the utopian thought of the Enlightenment, and ultimately in the preachings of Rousseau; and it took form in reaction against the extortionate practices of the powerful to whom wealth was a primary good. The 1929-33 depression provided the occasion for the welfare-state ideology to become a permanent part of actual political structure; and the ideology has continued and developed to the present day, other conditions than the depression providing its continuance with a raison d'etre.

Is the welfare state a reaction to democracy, or is it a more highly evolved state of it? or neither? This question is not readily answerable, and may be wrongly put. The evidence seems to indicate that the ideology was a reaction against certain economic abuses growing in both democratic and nondemocratic societies; and that its continuance is a consequence of still other abuses and unfavorable conditions, some of them unquestionably referable to overpopulation.

Reference to the population problem is not a digression, but understanding it will take us rather far afield, and introduce issues biological, ecological and psychological (and theological); without which our understanding of the welfare-state ideology would be the less.

It is elementary in demography to speak of two types of population. The earlier or younger type is characterized by high birthrate, high infant mortality, high deathrate and low average age; the later or older type is said to have low birthrate, relatively low deathrate, and high average age. The high birthrate in the former is economically advantageous in a new agricultural or frontier region where new farm hands are needed. In addition, there is no doubt that in many such situations the combination of high birthrate, continuous battle with environment, and high death rate, amounts of natural selection. (So it was in the American colonies, where a couple of centuries of this sort of life, in which those surviving long enough to raise families were hardy and shrewd individuals, resulted in a whole galaxy of versatile intellectuals in the 18th and early 19th centuries.) However, the development of modern medicine had resulted in a new type of population, characterized by a moderate to high birthrate (the lower figures among the more intelligent, the higher among Catholics owing to the church's aversion to birth control) low infant mortality and low death rate, with increasing average age. This has two obvious consequences; (1) Natural selection decreases to Zero, (2) Population pressure increased without limit. The ecological consequences are grave; medically nonresistant types proliferate, many becoming dependents on public relief, inmates of public hospitals, etc, many being feebleminded or borderline cases. Still worse, the highly competent types are not reproducing themselves, lessening the likelihood that important problems

will be solved in the long run. (I do not subscribe to the notion that "group creativity" is an adequate substitute for the individual penetrating intellect, particularly when the group is of low quality; nor to the populist idea that creators such as Leonardo, Michaelangelo, Tesla, Goethe, Einstein, Max Weber or J. von Neumann are simply the results of a lucky combination of environmental factors. Marshaling all the arguments here would make this essay booklength.) Other ecological consequences include the depletion of nitrites and phosphates from the land cycles and their deposition in the ocean as sewage, to the detriment of both humans and their food and dairy animals; and the denudation of lands once forested, with the familiar erosion, drought and dust bowl results. Vogt, Pendell and others have spelled out these alarming consequences in detail; what needs emphasis here is that the human species, under the influence of Pauline Christianity and the Protestant Ethic, and apparently incapable or unwilling to think in terms of long-range consequences, has allowed overpopulation to become a major problem fertile of other major problems.

The welfare state is one of a number of short-range attempted solutions to the population problem, insofar as overpopulation has forced the cost of living to record highs alike by decreasing the amount of arable land, providing increased demand for the food supply, and accelerating the change from a land-based agricultural self-sufficient society (in which masses were almost nonexistent) to an urban industrialized and nonself-sufficient society (in which masses are characteristic). However, instead of lowering the birthrate (e.g. disseminating contraceptives), welfare-state ideology, following the egalitarians and bleeding hearts, has attempted to cope with poverty by taxing everyone and providing doles for the poor--and by passing laws designed to make survival and large families feasible independent of one's own efforts.

I contend that such efforts are in the long run <u>self-defeating</u> inasmuch as they <u>increase population pressure</u> rather than tend to hold it constant or lower it, thus giving rise to <u>worsened versions of the same problems they began with</u>. Further (and this is critical) I shall contend that <u>democracy</u>, without commitment to a welfare-state ideology, is in theory <u>not necessarily self-defeating</u>; and that in the long run, as the welfare state contributes to the worsening of the problems that gave rise to it, it will involve an increasing departure from the democratic process. This will suffice to establish inconsistency between the welfare state and the democractic ideals. I propose to show that the <u>increasing departures from the democratic process take the form of breakdowns in the checks and balances systems</u> making up the latter; that this degeneration has already begun, and <u>that it is irreversible short of radical changes in the whole social structure</u>.

The first point to establish is that democracy is not necessarily self-defeating short of rampant overpopulation or commitment to a welfare-state ideology. (The key phrase is <u>self-defeating</u>; it does not exclude the possibility of overwhelming invasions etc.) The democratic process, as earlier -

defined, makes explicit a system of checks and balances through which any developing abuse is remediable within its framework. Corrupt judges can be impeached, or if elected they can be defeated at the polls; as can corrupt or despotic local bosses, or a tyrannical chief executive. Unpopular laws can be revealed, given sufficient grass-roots pressure on the legislature; local corruption can be tolerated for years, if necessary, without endangering the system at large. With a stable population, a republic can last for centuries--in theory; my point is that the checks and balances constitute in the long run a natural feedback for correcting local imbalances. Even the most superficial familiarity with feedback systems suffices to demonstrate their stability short of drastic external interference or intervening breakdown (large increase or disappearance) in one or more of their major subsystems. (But overpopulation is just such a large increase....). Biological analogies spring readily to mind, e.g. feedback systems regulating temperature, pH, hormonal levels. Recognition that a democracy is a natural feedback system without the built-in interference provided in other systems with a near-absolute ruler is sufficient; we need not commit ourselves to reasoning from analogy.

The second point is that the welfare state is not an outgrowth of the democratic process. This is elementary enough; its historical origins go back to Rousseau and Enlightenment utopists, who were not operating in a democratic framework. Its most vociferous proponents have been idealistic socialists and others aligned with them. It developed in the U.S. through executive fiat following a paralyzing depression, itself the result of many factors not inevitable in the democratic process* and its subsequent development has been closely related to the gigantic population increases in the last few decades. The parallel case in Britain is also familiar; the Welfare state in its most explicit form developed through reforms forced through by the (socialist) Labour Party during its temporary power, and continued afterward because of features built in which increased its popularity (e.g. the health service.)

The third point is that the welfare-state ideology, in presence of increasing population, inevitably involves breakdowns in the checks and balances system of the democracy. This is probably the most important single point; from it follow increasing departures from the democratic process, and the inconsistency between the latter and the welfare state. A convenient starting point is as follows: the size (in terms of complexity of organization, numbers of subsidiary employees, amounts of appropriations, value of property, % of the total budget, etc) of the executive branch of government inevitably increases enormously when the executive branch is called on to carry out the mandates of a welfare-state ideology, as those have been enacted or created by fiat. This large discontinuous increase defines a central stress on the checks and balances system, insofar as one major subsystem is suddenly aggrandized without corresponding adjustments of the rest. (The exact biological counterpart is a pituitary tumor; increased

secretions, some chemically altered, throw the organism into imbalance.) In time, the legislative and judicial subsystems compensatorily increase. But this creates a further imbalance; the combined bureaucracy, self-perpetuating, is out of balance with the remainder of the subsystems, specifically local government and the populace itself. Politically thiscorresponds to an increasing degree of government by executive order at various levels; since many of these officials are civil-service appointees, and therefore difficult to remove, and since the very nature of bureaucracy (as analyzed by Max Weber and C. Northcote Parkinson) involves increased buckpassing and anonymity of decisions, redress (corrective feedback) becomes less and less feasible.

A further consequence, more ideological than political but equally related to the failing checks-and-balances system, is the reaction against wealth whether concentrated in robber barons or huge corporations or cartels; this reaction has historically involved the rise of powerful unions. The composition of unions by definition involves a preponderance of ill-educated people with little concern for long-range consequences of their actions on the country as a whole. (Historical accidents of regionalism have intensified this.) Such unions, inevitably, have initiated the likes of featherbedding, rulebook slowdowns, enforced pay by the hour rather than by the work completed, all with the effect of enriching their members (and still more the labor bosses) at the expense of the public and the quality of the work done. Legislators have feared to buck this trend because of the probability that the unions would control enough votes to defeat them at the polls. Government and public do nothing. Big Labor aggrandizing itself practically without limit (whatever happened to the Taft-Hartley act? and why isn't the rash of strikes at Cape Canaverel etc dealt with?) evidently constitutes another breakdown in the checks and balances system.

Still another such breakdown is found in the recent rise of pressure from congressional committees usurping legislative, executive and judicial functions, and from local police, FBI, postal and similar agencies. Part of the welfare-state ideology seems to be that if the government is supporting the people, it is entitled to increasing (even unlimited) control on private lives. Hence the increasing roles of censors, vice squads and investigators; and about them neither the public nor (apparently) anyone else can do anything.

Unopposed forces such as those described in the last few paragraphs certainly constitute breakdowns in the checks and

balances system, and therefore breakdowns in the democratic process. My conclusion, that the welfare-state ideology, and the welfare state in practice, are incompatible with the democratic process, therefore stands. The examples of breakdown cited are drawn from the USA in the last 30 years; it follows that this degeneration is well advanced.

The only remaining point is that this process is irreversible short of drastic changes in the entire social structure. This is obvious enough; given what has gone before,; the evil that the welfare state was designed to cope with, is still around; population increases continue, and the rate of increase is apparently going up, and the only solutions proposed which have any chance of getting through the legislature are short-range ones. Worse, the increased government gives rise to other evils, described above. It does not seem reasonable that further extension of government powers will automatically lessen, let alone eradicate those evils; one does not give either the populace or the union leaders a grasp of political issues or a concern for long-range consequences by legislature, or by establishing new agencies. I have not even mentioned the role of the educationists in perpetuating the welfare-state ideology, confining themselves to short-range solutions, discouraging intellectual originality, in favor of group mediocrity, and opposing anything which could reverse such trends, but they are among the worst offenders of all. On the other hand, cutting back government agencies has to be done with extreme caution to avoid other undesirable consequences, e. g, power seizures by unions, military leaders, political bosses or other agencies. And a simultaneous humanistic solution to the population problem must be found; simply cultivating Chlorella and the like to feed hungyy masses is not enough, as these same masses will continue to reproduce themselves unchecked. And with a lessened governmental authority, how is such a contraceptive program going to be implemented, particularly over the desperate protest of the largest church in the world? It follows that mere increase of decrease in size of government is not enough. What is necessary is reorganization --and since the problems involved are extremely serious, and pervade the whole of human life, the governmental-social changes will have to be all-pervasive. And they will have to be in a more democratic direction in the long run; the welfare state, despite its tempting promises of the Good Life, clearly is doomed to failure.

Walter Breen

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For a fictional treatment of "Social Darwinism" both defended and eulogized, of course, the reader will remember Ayn Rand's ATLAS SHRUGGED: for a biting fictional treatment of the problems of overpopulation, no reader has to be reminded of Cyril Kornbluth and THE MARCHING MORONS. Guided by both these horrorific extremes, I wrote the essay on Conant and the schools for Dr, Douglas J. Duffy, my first semester at Hardin-Simmons; Dr. Duffy, who taught the only education course in memory that was more than sheer crap.

Before going on to the next essay, may we pause for an

Editorial Digression

Closely allied to the problems attacked on the foregoing pages, a problem emerges in the field of education -- a problem daily more insoluble.

No matter what our reorganizations, reconstructions or reforms of society, (and leaving aside such fictional treatments of post-Atomigeddon rural Utopias as Leigh Brackett's THE LONG TOMORROW), it is unthinkable that anyone would seriously suggest a return to pre-industrialized, rural-centered, family-farm societies. Idealists may long for it, and isolated groups may attempt it; but for better or for worse, mankind now appears to be committed to increasing mass-production, automation, urbanization, and their concomitant complexity.

To say that such a world has no place for the ill-educated, is to repeat a truism. In an agricultural-rural society, bare literacy, or at best a grammar-school education, sufficed the bulk of mankind; a small elite were given high school training, and the colleges were reserved for the training of professionals, specialists, research workers and scholars. Shortly before the turn of the century, the upsurge of commercial and economic growth put the barely literate at an immense disadvantage, and an increasing demand for the products of the high school --that is to say, for the high-school graduates of that day -- forced these schools to open their doors to a wider group. Free high schools became the norm, not the exception. This, of course, had some good results. Fewer bright children were forced into the cottonfields --or the cotton mills --at an early age because "Pa didn't hold with that there eddication."

But as the demand for the <u>product</u> of the high school (i,e, the trained mind) was introduced, without a corresponding upgrading in the number of good minds per thousand students, it became apparent that 100%, or even 85% of the nation's youth simply <u>could not profit</u> from high school as the schools then were. So a curious fiction was devised. The program of the high school was remodelled to have "more relation to the life of the student," --bluntly and baldly, the standards were lowered to a point where a majority of the students could graduate, including those students who would previously have ended their education at grammar school or even before that. Since these graduates could "present a high school diploma," the schools deluded themselves, and the community, that they were therefore meeting the crying social need for more high school graduates.

Obviously this did not serve for long. Businesses, professions and occupations seen realized that the product now being turned out by the high schools did not meet their standards. Schools defended themselves with high-sounding statements such as the one that they were serving the needs of the greatest number (essentially true), and that the economic conditions of the country made it essential for youth to prolong the years of formal education rather than entering the business world (also essentially true) while avoiding the heart of the matter; that they could not give to 90% of the population the same sort of

training they had given to the 10%. Inevitably, the schools took over the functions of home (for instance, homemaking courses for girls), playground (physical education and social-skills courses) and on-the-job apprenticeships (various vocational training); and when the original 10% complained that they could no longer get the basic education their intelligence demanded, the high schools came right back with the flat-footed statement that this wasn't the function of the high schools at all, but of the colleges.

Meanwhile, the need kept right on growing, for educated youth to hold responsible jobs. (Note well; by the emphasis on preparation for good jobs, I am not referring to salary or status, but on the ability to serve the needs of society in key spots.)

Increasingly, finding that the high-school student did not fit their requirements, these key posts required two years of college or even a college diploma. Increasing population pressure, and an ever-increasing need for educated workers as opposed to the ditch-digger variety, made it even more desperate. And now the colleges are feeling the pressure. They are being told that they must take in more and more students and turn out more and more trained and educated minds.

It is deplorably true that the possession of a high school diploma, these days, does not even guarantee that a graduate can read and write. How could it? They fail to face the fact that shoving a third-class mind through four--or eight--more years of school will not make him a first-class mind. Yet the cry goes up; "Stay in school and graduate; society has no place for the uneducated." And it hasn't. The pity is, that this is all true. More and more, it is apparent that the college graduate alone is prepared for jobs which once required only one year of high school. (e.g. elementary teaching.)

But when the college freshman class is tripled, and two-thirds of the freshmen fail to pass the admission requirements, the cry goes up that the standards are "unrealistic". More and more instructors grade on a curve, which means that whatever grade is made by the majority of students, that is the passing grade of "c", and no more than 10% can fail or be judged superior. When the student body is uniformly intelligent--say an average IQ of 120, for whatever that may convey -- one can demand that a mark of 75% shall represent a passing grade, and all who fall below it can be rightly considered lazy or inattentive. But when 75% of the whole student body makes a grade of 55% on the same test, then 55 is the "passing grade."

They say this with some justification; for colleges are presented, as I said above, with a really intolerable dilemma. They cannot keep their doors open if they consistently "flunk out" two-thirds of their student body. Less and less can they afford to operate for the top 5% of the population. Yet where does it stop? Already school boards, seeing what comes out of the ordinary teacher's college, have started demanding a Master's degree for permanent certification.

Increasingly, our society demands that virtually <u>all</u> the working force must be educated, responsible, capable of reading and following directions, thinking clearly, taking responsibilities. If only a college-trained student meets these demands, the cry will go up to the nation's colleges --<u>has</u> gone

(concluded at the bottom of the next page)

Wagnerian records and folk-song tapes, and talked, talked, talked. Bruce took a hand at helping us pack books in boxes (the few that hadn't gone) and even offered to help me with the dishes (an offer I had to refuse, since our kitchen in Rochester would have been a tight squeeze for two well-fed hobbits, let alone two solidly built humans!) Instead I parked him out of the way at the table and made him hand me things.

We saw him off next day in Abilene with real regret. But Ellis Mills and Tim Armistead are only in Fort Worth (3 hours away) and spring will soon be here with larks and poems and fanac.

Fans who remember the Kerry portfolio will be glad to know that she is now married ---to an Abilene quasi-fan, Don Walker. Her address is 1426 Ross, Abilene, Texas.

And--ah yes --my son David, whose baby-sized footprints in MEZRAB caused F T Laney to froth at the mouth and demand with asperity to know why a fanzine should be filled up with "blather about babies", will issue his own first issue next month. Is that the icy breath of Time I feel? O Tempora! O, how it fidgets!

See you in May, maybe,

Marion Bradley

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DIGRESSION, concluded

up already; "Give us five million more Bachelors of Arts!" Sighing, the colleges will push five more students through their mills, and the 5% will tighten their belts and take a PhD. And what happens when no one short of a PhD can be trusted to program the key-punch IBM machine which replaced three hundred girls from the "commercial course"? And what happens when industry, needing at least 50% of the population with the brains of the top 10%, decides that machines --built, serviced and operated by 10% of the people --are more trustworthy, and 90% of the population becomes permanently unemployed and unemployable?

Is the problem insoluble? Part of it could be solved by redeeming the <u>waste</u> of good minds --- the ones who coast along in programs meant for the 90% when they could, with profit, get the kind of education meant for the 10%. Part of it lies, perhaps, in encouraging more children of intelligent parents and making it less positively profitable for the moron and dull-normal to raise enormous broods at public expense. (And in differential education which will encourage Hi*Q women to have children; few intelligent men want their children reared by morons, yet as things now are, and brilliant woman justly resents spending her 15 most productive years coping with domestic minutiae.)

Meanwhile we are asking something impossible of the schools, and we should realize it. We are asking them to to multiply by magic a scant 10% of the nation's youth into 80% or

thereabouts. The "average" IQ is no longer sufficient--and if you distrust IQ statistics as I do, let me say that what we need, then, is to have 80% of the nation's youth have the creative awareness, the ability to learn, and the verbal abilities, which characterize only a small fraction. If I knew the answer, I would probably be in Washington, solving it. I don't. I know some of the guesses.

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> "Adolescents are ill served by schools which act as melting pots. When they get into a stew, it is best if the stew is like a properly prepared Japanese soup; crystal clear, with the individual qualities of the odd ingredients preserved; the soft things soft, the touch things tough, the green things green....from this kind of heterogeneity it is possible to learn something. In this respect the high school has been getting worse for years.... the school today is less a stew pot than a blender. What comes out is not merely uniform, it is bland and creamy....."
>
> Edgar Z. Freisdnberg, in
> THE VANISHING ADOLESCENT
> Beacon Press, Boston, 1959

My greatest objection to Dr. Conant's approach to American education is this. Whatever he says, patronizingly, about the importance of individual differences, he is trying to build a bigger and better mush pot.

CONANT REVISITED

I

The task of evaluating, or revaluating the Conant approach to American public education has been an emotionally charged one for me, since I have Conant's first book to thank, or blame, for reawakening my interest in teaching as a career.

Without extended biography, from 1946 to 1949 I attended the Teacher's College in Albany, New York. My first year was taken up with exclusively academic courses, and in my sophomore year, when a course called Education 10 was required of all students, the accidents of the schedule placed me in a section taught by the college psychologist, during both semesters. So that while the other sections were getting, I later discovered, two semesters of nothing at all but platitudes, in our section the course titles of Educational Psychology and Psychology of Adolescence were accurate and descriptive. We were given pure psychology, and let the methodologies fall where they might.

In the first semester of my junior year, however, I was exposed to --or, I should say, collided with --- the educational theories of the mid-forties; consisting, in brief, of the idea that a school's primary purpose was to adjust the student--gently if possible, otherwise by every trick in the book -- to something called society.

I discovered, to my lasting dismay, that the ideal student was the median or average student; that mediocrity was never to be disparaged, and excellence, if not positively dangerous, at least a suspicious deviation from the norm. The following excerpt from a letter written that year, although the exaggeration of a malcontent, is self-explanatory;

> "Our education course --in a word. Teenagers are not really interested in anything except other teenagers, and if they are, they shouldn't be. High school isn't good for much except helping them to get along with their age-group. The A student is the shame of the school; if an adolescent gets so far from reality that he still cares about marks and schoolwork, then he is seriously maladjusted, and you ought to take him in hand and firmly gently guide him (sic) back to better emotional health and a fuller interest in his sex life. If necessary, take the poor deluded child's books away from him and enroll him forcibly in a course in Square Dancing or Dating Behavior to bring him out of himself."

This may seem extreme, but the college did nothing to keep me from developing these notions. When I respectfully questioned these revelations, I was asked if I wanted to bring back Latin, Greek and flogging to the schoolroom. And the official voice of the New York Education Department, speaking through the Guide to Curriculum Construction, admonished me;

> "young people who are not equal to the demands of a new social pattern....appropriate to their age, may redouble their interest in schoolwork as a cover-up for their failures in social situations. Sympathetic teachers are alert to this behavior, and try to help the youngster....work out a more rounded program."

While theoretically agreeing that youngsters should not live in a textbook world, the way this was presented made me feel that they wanted to abolish the superior and interested student in the same way they hoped to abolish the disciplinary problem or the retarded reader. And I resolved that nothing on earth could make me treat helpless adolescents that way, and gave up the idea of teaching as a career.

I had never heard of Dewey except in bad jokes. I believed that this --the mediocrity-worshipping view just quoted-- was representative of progressive education. I felt there must be a better way to teach, and privately I put it

into practice; with groups of music students in choir and voice classes, with my son's playmates, with tutoring in remedial reading. But I felt my approach was utterly outlawed in the public schools -- this concern for individuals rather than norms, this interest in children as they are rather than as they ought to be.

In 1958 I first read of the Conant report, with its emphasis on excellence, its concern for the gifted, its attempt to solve the problem of the many students not qualified for academic work while not neglecting the academically talented; and I returned to my first love: the passion to teach.

Naturally, after my experience at State, I began my education course with hostility and suspicion. I didn't know what progressive education was, but I wasn't in favor of it. (At least, I wasn't in favor of what I thought it was.) When this paper was assigned, and we were in effect commanded to tear Conant limb from limb, my hostility must have been felt all the way down the classroom. But as my bundle of prejudices and misconceptions has given way to a few facts and a lot of open-end questions, my attitude has altered. I was mildly distressed to realize that when I re-read Conant for this paper, I no longer agreed so whole-heartedly. I found myself snarling "Yes, BUT--" rather than purring "Exactly so."

This analysis, then, represents not an evaluation but a revaluation of Conant; and I have written an extended essay for the purpose of finding out what I think. In attempting to pull some order out of the chaos, it is my hope that I may put some order into my own thoughts. And if it turns out too lengthy, and somewhat too personal, my only defense is this; that the assignment was extremely vague; that we were commanded to be creative; and finally, that from where I now stand, the formulation and verbalization of an educational philosophy is more important than anything else--- even an A grade on a term paper in Education 213-A.

II
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The business of evaluating the Conant study could be done in any of several ways. To study his statistics, graphs and charts, and to say anything sensible about them, would demand far more mathematics than I have at my command. To describe the books, give a brief resume of each, and sum up his conclusions, would be the easy way; but this would prove only that I know how to read, and how to take notes on what I read. If, on the other hand, I were to take up each of Dr. Conant's points, state why I like or dislike it, and what I would recommend in its place (or what I think Dr. Duffy would recommend) would be to attach too great an importance to my personal opinions. And I don't have a Harvard degree, or any degree at all, to lend weight and respectability to this proceeding. I would probably enjoy writing such a paper, but I have serious doubts as to whether the instructor would consider that I had employed my time profitably---or his.

How to compromise?

First; it will attempt to summarize the Conant studies and the assumptions on which they are based; with an evaluation, necessarily personal, of each assumption.

Second; it will examine each of the specific recommendations made by Conant for improving the American high school, in the light of two questions; (a) How does it measure up to a theoretical ideal? and (b) Would it be an improvement on the present common practice in the average school.

I may as well state in advance that the answer to the second question is usually "Yes." In my opinion, almost anything would be an improvement on the average public high school as it exists in this year of grace --or of disgrace.

Finally, I will attempt to evaluate Conant pragmatically. Will his plans be adopted? If adopted, will they work? If rejected, are we likely to get anything better? Would their adoption improve, or modify, my probable future as a teacher? How would this affect the educational future of my son? Are his plans worthy of the attention and support they have received? And finally, has this study been worth the time it consumed, in the light of assisting me to understand the problem of the schools, and to formulate a philosophy and ethos of teaching?

III
CONANT'S BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Who is James Bryant Conant? He was primarily a chemist --- which possibly explains the emphasis he places, in his program, on the physical sciences. He was president of Harvard at forty. He has, so the foreword of his first book states, made intensive studies in comparative education. From 1957 to 1959 he made an "intensive study" of American high schools, and in 1958 he published THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL: a First Report to Interested Citizens.

Since then he has been producing books at a great rate. EDUCATION IN A DIVIDED WORLD. SLUMS AND SUBURBS. THE CHILD, THE PARENT AND THE STATE. And probably others I haven't yet heard about. He has rapidly turned into that idol of the American semi-literate; an Authority. A person to be quoted, or, more frequently, misquoted, when one is not quite sure of one's own ground.

His books have had immense popularity among laymen. They have been presented, sufficiently watered down, in such magazines as the LADIES HOME JOURNAL. They have been discussed by teachers discontented with their school principal, and by principals dissatisfied with their teaching staff. They are perhaps most widely discussed by those who have not read them, or have read only a magazine summary of their contents. They are misquoted, from out-of-context excerpts by one's favorite purveyor of predigested thoughts, by almost everybody.

Since this phenomenon applies to almost everything from the Secret of Bridey Murphy to the Kinsey Report, it behooves the serious student to go to the books themselves, and find out what they are really all about.

The comparison with Kinsey is not idle. Kinsey himself was distressed when he discovered that he was being quoted, after his sex studies, as a Final Authority on sexual manners and morals. An appalling number of people with whom I have discussed Conant's books suffer from the misconception that Dr. Conant has personally visited almost every high school in the country, and that his findings are all boiled down into his books. Conant himself disclaims this absolutely; he early states "I decided....to concentrate my attention on high schools with a high degree of comprehensiveness;" Before he even began studying schools, then, he had eliminated 85% or more of all schools; and he visited 55 schools, in a total of 18 states, specifying before considering a school that it must meet all his ideal standards for comprehensiveness. Just as Kinsey's report on Sexual Behavior in the Human Male turned out to be a study of a limited number of white American middle-class males, so Conant's report on the American High School turns out to be a report on a small number of a type of school which is actually very rare in the United States.

One cannot, of course, dismiss these findings (as some dismissed Kinsey's) by saying that he was talking about someone else, not one's own friends and neighbors. Kinsey has added much to our knowledge of human behavior, if only for the benefit of getting an often-ignored subject out in the light for a good looking-over. Conant has made people think about, talk about and write about the schools. But he is not the ultimate Final Authority which some people would like to think he is.

Conant states; "The study has made no attempt to answer such questions as "How good is the American High School." The question which he <u>has</u> attempted to answer, he clearly states;

> "Can a school, at one and the same time, provide a good general education for all the future citizens of a democracy, provide elective programs for the majority to develop useful skills, and educate adequately those with a talent for handling advanced academic subjects-- particularly advanced mathematics and foreign languages?"

But even this question leaves ambiguities. Conant does not, for instance, define "a good general education" for all those future citizens, though in THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, he makes a vague statement that by 9th grade "they should be able to read the front page of a newspaper."

Nor does he define that word "adequately" when he considers provision for the academically talented.

Nor does he ever --perhaps the most serious omission-- state on what basis he divides off that majority who must develop "useful skills" or state on what basis these skills are to be "useful." (Although one might conclude that possibly he meant to classify children by their progress in elementary algebra, discarding those who were inept or uninterested into the useful-skills bracket.)

Conant is said to expand on this in SLUMS AND SUBURBS, which I could not obtain for this study; Ralph McGill, in his syndicated column, quoted Conant on the "social dynamite" accumulating in slums where children, he says, are getting too much

academic and too little vocational training. For an expansion of Conant's theory let us turn to another book and another author. Mayvin Mayer, in THE SCHOOLS (Harper and Bros. 1961). Mayer says;

> In EDUCATION FOR A DIVIDED WORLD, Conant calls for a "common core" or "common learnings" which will unite in a single cultural pattern the future carpenters, factory worker, bishop, lawyer...professor and garage mechanic. But elsewhere in the same book, he (Conant) wrote that "what might be a satisfactory curriculum in one group of pupils might be highly unsuitable for another....the difference is not due to discrepancies in the intellectual capacities....but to the social situation in which the boys and girls are placed.

Mayer comments on this very peculiar doubletalk by saying;

> An educator may go one of Conant's ways or the other; he cannot possibly go both ways at the same time,.... there is something highly distasteful about the notion that a child's family situation should determine the education for which he is eligible.

Conant, however, finds it possible to reconcile them with his personal panacea for everything that is wrong with public education, the Comprehensive School. (as opposed to the exclusively academic or vocational high school.)

For Conant <u>does</u> answer the basic question quoted on page 5 of this paper, with a loud resounding YES: and it comes so patly that one feels he wrote out the answer before visiting those 55 schools, and searched there for evidence to confirm the testimony. (In fact, he stands convicted out of his own mouth of doing so, saying that he felt that if he could find one school which was doing this satisfactorily, his point would be proved.) Nowhere in his paper does he suggest any doubt that all our educational headaches could be cured by remodeling all our schools into comprehensive schools like his ideal one. He writes;

> "The number of small high schools must be drastically reduced through district reorganization. Aside from this important change, I believe no radical alteration is necessary to improve our public high schools."

And in THE CHILD, THE PARENT AND THE STATE, he goes even further;

> "...we need no radical change in this basic pattern, except as regards the schools that are too small."

The weight of this triumphant conclusion is a little reduced when one recalled that even among 55 sifted schools, he found only <u>eight</u> which measured up to his standards. So it appears to me that his sample was too small for such generalizations. And if even his chosen comprehensive schools do not measure up, one wonders how on earth he expects the average school to do so. And the whole study begs the question; <u>where</u> did he get that sweeping conviction that, of all manner of schools now operating, the comprehensive school is the best?

To return for a moment to his social theory, which asserts that the "majority" ought to develop "useful skills." To

me, the most wonderful thing in the whole Conant study (in the exact dictionary sense, meaning full of wonder) is this; he believes there is still a place for "vocational training."

I very seriously question the value of "terminal education" for noncollege students which prepares them for vocational dead-ends which may not even exist ten years after they graduate. How can we assume --when IBM machines, run by a single college-trained programming or key-punch engineer, handle the clerical tasks which once represented four hundred girls ---that teaching a girl typewriting and shorthand will guarantee her a means of self-support for the fifty post-school years our lengthening lifespan grants her? Granted that the girl is in school, and she has to be learning something. And there is a college-trained teacher with a M.S. degree all ready to teach the commercial course, and there are all those nice typewriters. The girl is keeping her fingers busy, and---perhaps---her mind out of mischief, while she pecks away in the cheery assumption that she will be able to get herself a good job, or support her children if she is left widowed. But should not the professional educators, at least, admit to themselves and to each other that they are merely keeping the girl off the streets and out of her mother's way, while they try to decide what lies ahead of her in society?

The same thing applies to thousands of boys studying Agriculture courses, based on family-farm methods ("The very heart of the American Way of Life") while day after day the family farms disappear into the maw of the great commercial factory-farms. Or the millions of lads dutifully learning woodshop and metal-shop techniques made hopelessly obsolete by mass production. Granted they learn manual dexterity and provide themselves with---perhaps --- innocuous hobbies. But is this vocational training?

Would not the schools be wiser to discard their "vocational" programs and concentrate on turning out young people who can read well, write well, think and express themselves to the limit of their mental capacities -- then leave it up to tomorrow's industries to train these educated, but unspecialized young people for whatever unguessed tasks may be waiting then?

Most high school "vocational" programs remind me of the "prison rehabilitation" program in one Midwest prison. By way of teaching them an honest trade, prisoners learn shoemaking in a fine, well-equipped shop. The whole state has three shoe factories, of which two will not employ ex-convicts at all. The work, doubtless, creates a blessed time-filler for men who might otherwise be going melancholy mad with boredom, or creating a disturbance in their cells. So do the vocational programs. They provide, perhaps, the only possible answer for the student on the lower margin of educability. But the majority of students who must someday earn a living, need more than this.

There is only one "useful skill" which will still be current twenty years from today, and that is the ability to think clearly and accurately, to live and work with others, to understand the written word, to express ones self. In short, the only marketable skill of truly lasting currency is the trained mind, alert and responsive. It helps if the trained mind is a good mind. But trained fingers will not make a poor one more

self-supporting in the space age. If the schools cannot train minds up to their capacity within this framework, they should admit it, now, and close their doors while there is still time to create something in their place.

Returning to Conant's second basic assumption, which I consider shaky. This second assumption is that there is only one alternative to his beloved Comprehensive school, and the alternative is the 100% academic pre-university school, European style. In THE CHILD, THE PARENT AND THE STATE, he spares a few pages to refute what he calls "radical reformers" who think he (Conant) is "conservative." I thought I was going to read Conant's defense against progressive, flexible education; to my startlement, I discovered that the "radical reformers" he attacks are those reactionaries who want to establish the formalized lycée system for the academic elite, abolish all social activities, and lower the school-leaving age for everyone else.

He justly demolishes these people, but he never spares a nod for those who would advance in the other direction. He gives curt, offhand permission to study "advances" such as educational television, but mostly he wants to reinforce and solidify the present system, stiffen its backbone, and rob it of its occasional diversionary or experimental character. He says so;

> "The road to better schools...might be considered merely a widening, straightening and improvement of the present rather overgrown and winding lane along which most children wander...."

He may not be all to blame. He has presumably seen the chaos of imperfectly digested, improperly implemented and inefficiently taught parodied of the "experience-centered" school. The public image of the progressive school is a place where kiddies run riot, expressing their personalities at the expense of the teacher, releasing their frustrations by throwing paint or beating each other up, and learning exactly what they wish, or nothing at all. The following quotation from Marjorie Lee's THE LION HOUSE is evidently serious and not intended to be satirical;

> "Oh, some of the public schools aren't so bad now. They make fudge at Richie's."
>
> "Yes," sighed Frannie, "but what good is that? <u>They</u> use a recipe!"

And just the other day, when I asked a fifth-grade teacher why it was not possible to use a more flexible format, she put me kindly in my place with a patronizing "Well, of course we all know that progressive education, all that Dewey stuff, doesn't work. Of course you aren't advocating <u>that</u>?"

Unfortunately, I discovered the <u>not juste</u> for retort a few days too late. Marvin Mayer answered this;

> In speaking of Dewey's progressivism, one must copy Chesterton's remark on Christianity; that it has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and not tried."

Conant's one reluctant criticism of the American educational system --that the rapid abolition of the small school is a top

priority-- seems to arise out of his one all-encompassing premise; that such schools are not comprehensive enough.

We ought to think before we swallow this whole. It is bitterly true that small schools are not, at present, educating anyone properly. In the community where my son attends school, I face the possibility that he --age 11, fifth grade, reading with a speed and comprehension which standard grade school achievement tests no longer measure adequately -- will get one year of algebra, two years of generalized, watered-down science taught by the coach in his spare time, some courses in Agriculture which will require him to keep a pig or chickens in the back yard, and some English courses which will, among other things, provide him a specially abridged version of Ivanhoe to read at the assigned rate of ten pages a day. (He read The Once and Future King through on a week end, and analyzed intelligently the differences between White and his King Arthur.) He will also acquire a few woozy platitudes called social studies, carefully emasculated of any ideas which might offend the community, and attend a required course in hygiene aimed mostly at teaching him the evils of tobacco, alcohol and narcotics (in that order.)

Consolidation would at least expose him (and thousands like him) to a few more teachers, tripling the possibility that he will come into contact with one good, dedicated mind; it will expose him to art, music and foreign languages if he cares to learn them, and let him study math, and rummage in a library. And it will not limit his learning experience to the kind of teacher who is willing to live buried in a libraryless, resourceless small town.

But consolidation will not cure the worst small-school ills. Nor must we assume that size alone makes these small schools poor. Mayvin Mayer tells about a very small school -- 30 pupils, 2 teachers -- where primary to pre-college students mingle, each one getting individual instruction at his own level, and the group attacking such things as natural history with a united open-seminar approach. I attended such a school -- fifty students, eight grades, two teachers -- where the whole school had the experience of living with all ages and all levels, the small students admiring and emulating the big boys and girls, the older ones helping the small ones with galoshes, drawing paper and sums. If consolidation means only that the individual student is to be lost in the mass-produced lockstep of the big city school, the better alternative would be total decentralization.

Because this is where Conant falls down. He advocated administrative changes of all sorts, size, comprehensiveness -- but he does not attack the basic problem in education, which is the quality of the teaching, and the loss of individual and intellectual values for the individual student.

IV

At the beginning of his list of "Specific Recommendations", Conant makes a surprising statement;

"This section of the report may appear too conservative for most readers."

I wonder if Dr. Conant is even aware that most readers

among the laymen to whom he addresses his book consider them not conservative at all, but dangerously radical?

From where I sit, of course, Conant is about as radical as Barry Goldwater. But it is an ostrich attitude to realize that school boards (mostly consisting of folksy mayors and nice old grannies) think of his ideas as radical innovations. If Conant is so far unaware of the American social structure of public education, the outlying districts where 75% of America's students attend school, does this not invalidate the sweeping quality of his study?

His first recommendation is for a "counselling system" with one full-time guidance officer for every 250 pupils, in close contact with parents and students to work out individualized programes.

I have been in correspondence with teen-agers all over the country, including some from large schools where "ideal" counseling systems exist. Here is how "Jane Doe" described her counselling interviews at such an ideal school;

> "I'd go in and he'd say 'How are you getting along, Jane?' I'd say 'Oh, fine.' Then he'd hand me a made-up list of courses to take next year, and I'd say 'Thank you" and that would be that for another term."

This may be an unfair picture; this particular Jane is an energetic, able, ambitious girl, the daughter of a doctor, and quite aware of her own ambitions and capabilities. Students with real problems get more help than that, even now. The guidance officer is usually well-meaning, whatever else he may or not be, and desperately overworked.

Would Conant's system improve present practice? Possibly. Where one "guidance worker" serves a school of 900 pupils (as in the high school I attended), a pupil is lucky to get a five-minute interview once a year; especially when the counselor also must handle discipline and keep all the school's records. In smaller schools, guidance is left to a busy principal, and all too often means only that he spends an hour now and then with some serious disciplinary problem, or talks with a worried parent or a failing student.

But how does Conant's recommendation stack up against the ideal? Poorly, I think. Ideally guidance should come from a classroom teacher who knows the student's capabilities and is interested in him as an individual. Those who complain that the teacher has no time for counseling ought to remind themselves that under present practice, she is believed to have time for monitor duty in the halls, disciplining, keeping lunch-money records, selling tickets to school plays, chaperoning parties and checking the toilets for unauthorized smoking---all of which could be handled by students themselves or by workers without the extensive training which teachers have in working with students.

I should add that I have very serious reservations about "counselling programs" which have, as their main goal, the "adjustment" of the student to theoretical norms. Freisenberg, quoted at the beginning of this paper, speaks of the regrettable emotional mauling which students frequently undergo in such a

program. Counselors, with chumminess and "tact", work on the feelings of a kid so desperate for approval that he will violate his own personality and individuality to turn into the kind of "nice, well-adjusted student" the counselor wants him (however well-meaningly) to be: thus abandoning the unique individual he is, and laying the groundwork for the curiously formless, group-minded conformist of our day.

> "...the goals of such guidance come, not from the student, but from the staff member's idea of what a nice boy should be like."

This also operates in the case of the class-conscious guidance worker who will push a low-status (as opposed to a low-capability) child into a vocational course "where all his friends and peers are" or a high-status one into a college-entrance group because of parental pressures. If the counseling system only reinforces the already-too-apparent status system of the community, it would be better abolished. And Conant spells out no recommendation for improving the quality of counseling; only raising the number of personnel.

Recommendation #2; that each student pursue an individualized, flexible program, without clearly defined "tracking."

Would this improve present practice? It would. All too often, a college entrance student is prevented from taking a longed-for elective because it belongs to one of the other "tracks", and isn't on the college preparatory list. For a girl who ended up as a professional writer, a course in touch typing would have saved me countless backaches and calluses on three overworked fingers. Yet I couldn't take typing without also taking shorthand and various other business courses.

Ideally, I suppose, every student would take a course designed individually for all his educational needs, most of his wishes, and a few of his whims. It's a nice dream...

Recommendation #3; Conant stipulates minimum required program of 4 years of English, 3 or 4 of social studies, one of math and one of science. Would this improve actual practice? I doubt it. Most schools in most states already have such requirements....and far too high a percentage of them can neither read well nor comprehensively, write expressively, or have any basic understandings of society and the world. Merely reiterating a requirement already in force will not raise the number of students who satisfactorily complete these courses.

I feel that the emphasis on "years" and "credits" should be dropped. It is either too much, or too little. The current mush and mishmosh which passes for "social studies" could be dropped, unmissed, from most curricula. There is, of course, a pressing need to replace it with a program of real understandings of the world and society. This new program would embrace history (world history, not patriotic American myths reprinted as fact) including the building and structure of governments, and the lessons of the past. Geography--not little stories about Hilda, a girl of Holland, or drab memorized lists of capital cities and chief exports, but real learnings about the shape and structure of our earth, including geology and ecology; and a continuous, required program of current problems taught from a nonpartisan viewpoint. This will be dealt with

more fully under Recommendation # 21.

"Four years of English" is too much or too little. The student who, in the eighth grade, has a good grasp of the grammatical structure of the language, and a mastery of basic skills of self-expression, should never again be forced to waste weeks and weeks drilling on page after page of exercises designed to demonstrate the difference between "lie" and "lay", "sit and set", "bring" and "take." (Nor should he be allowed to sit in boredom while others do so.) Nor should the student who reads extensively on his own be required to plough through watered-down classics at the snails' pace of the average class. He should be allowed, or required, to use these skills by doing extensive, individually guided reading, research and writing. While the child who has imperfectly mastered these skills in the grammar school will not be benefited by the formal "English class" either, with a little grammar, a little literature and a little self-expression; that student needs basic work on reading and writing skills, sometimes at levels as low as the third grade. The current "English course" bores the bright and baffles the dull, with benefit to none.

Is the answer to this in Conant's Recommendation # 4, which recognizes the spread of abilities and suggests ability-grouping in required courses? Would this improve current practice? Regretfully, if the present system must be continued, I say yes. Current methods, grouped heterogeneously, only mean one of two things; either the class moves at the pace of the slowest, or leaves the slower students hopelessly floundering beyond their depth. This is fair to neither, and some ability grouping (if we keep the present system) would at least release a little of the intolerable frustration of such courses for the bright and for the slow. But it is regrettable that so poor an answer must be considered. Marvin Mayer says;

> In the current state of teaching methods...the homogeneous group is more 'teachable' than the random group....but this procedure matches the weaknesses of teachers, rather than the facts of educability."

A really good teacher will handle a "mixed" group better than a homogeneous one. It permits, among other things, group experiences of a better kind. The bright students contribute ideas and can bring supplementary work before the class; while the slower students often gain a spark from the enthusiasm of the others which is sadly lacking in homogeneously grouped schools.

Those who talk about the presence of bright students giving the retarded ones an inferiority complex (or the dull ones frustrating the brilliant) should have been present in my music group, where students ranged from the talented girl already playing Bach two-part inventions on the piano, to the girl so musically limited that her voice was a monotonous drone when she began to sing, simply because her ear had not yet learned to distinguish tone from tone. Obviously one cannot put such children in competition with one another. But one can be incredibly frank with young people about their deficiency of achievement --if the teacher's praise or criticism is always firmly understood to be of the achievement and not of the

individual child's value as a person. In far too many schools, the teacher's approval is given, or witheld, to the exact extent of the individual child's performance in that teacher's subject. But I could say to the semi-tone-deaf girl (and any teacher could), "Teresa, do that again, that's not right yet," because Teresa knew that I was as fond of her, and as interested in her, as I was in the naturally gifted Anna Jean. This also gave me the opportunity to show these girls how experience and hard-work can to some extent remedy a deficiency of natural gifts, by the fact that this girl, (whom her mother called "tone deaf") could sing, within six weeks, correctly and in tune-- losing the pitch far less often than the musical-but-inattentive girl next to her. One of my proudest moments was when I went to a piano recital and heard this girl ("with no musical talent whatsoever") play a simple piece with real feeling for the movement and the musical structure. And to dismiss the idea that I am interested only in the retarded, I hasten to add that of the more talented members of that same group, three made highly-selective college choirs in their freshman year, and the fourth is one of the six "Riders" at HSU. I could not have achieved these satisfactions in a group of the uniformly dull, or the uniformly talented.

But this group was small, and participation was voluntary; in fact, a student could be dismissed for serious inattention or lack of interest. In the crowded "required courses" of public schools, some ability grouping would lighten the intolerable load at both ends of the scale. Where the dull student cheats if he can manage it (because only grades, not actual learning, is measured) because any violation of personal codes seems preferably to him than "sitting in that darned old class another year and learning those darned dates all over again", (or, most likely, failing to learn them all over again) and the bright student daydreams or reads endless novels under the desk while the teacher drills, drills, drills like an inexpert dentist without novocain. My perception of the novel KRISTIN LAVRANSDATTER still retains the memory of a wooden desk edge and the sound of my tenth grade English teacher's voice, droning on and on about the parts of speech I had mastered in seventh grade. This was bad for my eyes, my school spirit and my posture; yet I read a dozen novels there, and carried home an A-plus anyway. What else could the teacher do? The State syllabus required that we know those parts of speech by the time the Regents exams came around --if too many students failed, it was assumed to be her fault. And the school rules forbade her to release the rest of us to work in the library, practice in the music room, play in the gym, or do anything else whatsoever that would be of any earthly use to us. And at least the novel-readers were less trouble than the ones who were whispering, hair-combing, shuffling their feet or making eyes at the boys or the girls depending on gender.

Conant's Recommendation # 5, about a supplement to the diploma, carrying a permanent record of grades, brings from me a loud "Hooray." Of course a student with a high school diploma should be assumed capable of reading and writing. But my husband, who at times trains railroad telegraph apprentices, can emphatically say otherwise. No applicants are even interviewed, nowadays,

without the aforesaid diploma. From the limited comprehension of the written and spoken word displayed by these "Guaranteed diploma-worthy" apprentices, he wonders audibly and often what kind of applicants they turn down. Many jobs now require "two years of college", and already there is agitation to insure that with so many jobs demanding college, two years of a community free college must be supplied to everyone who wants to attend. Soon (if not already), pressure will be put on these junior colleges to provide some program for the students without academic talents.

///1963 postscript; the current phrase for these students seems to be "the well-rounded student who does not bury himself in theoretical, academic work." May a weary cynic, a fugitive from the mass madness of methodology, suggest that somebody call them "the students who are compensating for academic failure by an overemphasis of social life and peer-group activities", and maybe help them to "work out a more rounded program" including a little academic adjustment? IZB////

But I digress. Such a record of grades, supplementing the diploma, would permit a prospective employer to evaluate what, if anything, the student in question has to offer; so that he might select, for instance, a student with straight excellence in verbal skills, for a newspaper job; (even if inability to learn mathematics, or to "co-operate" in physical Education, brought his average down), while an apprentice in the building trades would not be kept out of a suitable job because of a poor record in Social Studies or Algebra.

That is, assuming that grades mean anything. Given the grading systems now in use, "grades" often simply identify the willing, verbalizing student with a retentive memory and a willingness to do something useless (like memorizing a list of dates or capital cities) for the teacher's approval.

Recommendation #6 states that English composition should be required for all. Improvement on present practice? Good heavens, yes. As representative of the Telegrapher's Union, my husband received a great number of letters; on reading them, one would imagine his constituents to be the escapes of an institution for the mentally deficient. Yet, meeting them, I discover the union members to be alert, intelligent, well-informed young men, not noticeably distinguishable from college people. They express themselves well -- in speech. But they never learned to communicate with ease and fluency on paper.

Ideally, of course, writing skills would not be isolated into courses on "English composition" but applied at every level and at every subject. No one is going to be enthusiastic about writing a series of assigned themes on "My Vacation" or "My pets" or "Why students should not go steady." Even budding novelists, scribbling long naive novels in their blank-books, are tepid about such themes, though they turn them out with facility, along the lukewarm lines Teacher approves of (it's better than drilling on the parts of speech) and go back to their own rubbish--which at least is teaching them that words

on paper can be meaningful.

The only way to teach composition --or so I would imagine --is to find out what the student wants to know, and then let him find out about it, and write about it, teaching him grammar and organization almost at random along the way; at least until he has learned that writing is not a task full of pitfalls and blue pencil, but a fascinating tool of thought.

Recommendation # 7, for the development of "marketable skills" has been adequately dealt with in the early pages of this paper. Recommendation # 8 asks special consideration for the very slow reader; I say "amen", while suggesting that we might well overhaul the primary grades and make it unnecessary to dwalk with this at the high school level.

Recommendation # 9, dealing with the academically talented, is a matter of deep and personal concern to me, about which it is difficult to write objectively. Speaking with careful moderation, I do not believe Conant has the answer.

For instance, he is concerned because he found no school in which "a majority of the able girls" were electing seven years of mathematics. This seems to me to be begging the question of why any girl, able or not, should need seven years of mathematics unless she belongs to that infinetesimal fraction who desire to become professional mathematicians, scientists and research workers. I concede that all able girls should have basic understandings of mathematics (but 9 courses in mathematics, seven in high school and two in college, did not give me those understandings, though I got acceptable grades in all but one subject) I further concede that our social system, in schools, should be revamped to where, if a girl <u>wants</u> seven years of math, it will not single her out for wary looks from the boys she likes. But the majority of girls, even <u>able</u> girls, are going to be wives and mothers. Even granting that women increasingly return to jobs and careers, seven years is an awful lot of mathematics unless a girl (or boy) happens to be interested in it. I don't think that putting pressure on every able girl to elect seven years of math will improve either the individual girls, or the structure of the society. It seems as futile as the medieval assumption that every boy should study Latin from the time he could read until the time he left school.

Nor do I approve of his universal recommendation of foreign language, even though I, personally, found the study of foreign languages the most rewarding of my life. An occasional youngster, believe it or not, WANTS to read Caesar's <u>Gallic Wars</u> or Cervantes or the Wagner librebti in Latin or Spanish or German, and denied the opportunity to study them formally, will spend leisure hours puzzling them out with parallel translations. I did. I believe languages should be offered early, and they should be <u>mastered</u>; I agree with Conant that the "Two years of French" now required of all students are a waste of everybody's time. Two years of a language is too much for the uninterested and too little for the capable.

Possibly, in a state bordering Mexico, Spanish as a second language should be mandatory in elementary school on a <u>conversational</u> basis. The same might be suggested in New England states bordering French provinces of Canada, or with large

French-Canadian populations. But by and large, languages should be offered, not required; and when elected, should be mastered, not sampled.

Conant's assumption that all academically talented young people should be pressured (he uses a politer word) into studying math and science, bothers me more than anything else in his study. Granted, such programs should be made available and attractive. Low-status parents should not be permitted to force their son into a cottonfield or their able daughter behind a typewriter. But I get the feeling that Conant would support a program which would force every able student to be force-fed with math, science and foreign languages. He falls into the danger of assuming that "the way to handle the bright child is to make him do extra homework." (Willard Abraham; COMMON SENSE ABOUT GIFTED CHILDREN.) All Conant's recommendations center about "more courses with homework" for the able child.

But what about the able child whose interests are NOT academic? Granted, we may lose a potential Jonas Salk because he elected mechanical drawing instead of zoology. But;

> "There would be an even worse danger in a selection process so efficient that everyone with a natural talent for leadership moved into the professional or managerial classes. The British Navy...deliberately left in the ranks a fraction of (the more intelligent) ...so that seamen would have quality leadership among themselves. A democratic society requires first-rate talent in every stratum. Certainly children should be encouraged to advance intellectually.... but those who don't wish to spend their adolescence squirming in an academic net should be let go, not merely with good grace, but with a sigh of relief..."
>
> (Marvin Mayer)

Perhaps in an "ideal system" Thoreau would have been "motivated" to go in for structural engineering. Forbid it, almighty God!

Recommendation # 10 deals with the highly gifted. To some extent, I feel this is a problem for special schools; yet such schools often reach only those rare few who can afford them, and the "terrible gloom and boredom which brightness can bring our children" is a matter of deep and terrible concern to me. These fine minds, the top one per cent of our intellectual capital, are being bored, bungled, wasted and emotionally mauled and manhandled. All over America, Willard Abraham says, bright children are running errands, cleaning erasers and playing monitor, because it keeps them busy. Occasional teachers try to "enrich" their program. With a mediocre or worse teacher (and the C-level college graduate has no trouble getting a teaching job, which means the typical bright student is being taught by a teacher considerably less well-read and well-educated than he is himself), the "enrichment" means one of two things. Extra homework for the bright child, which he justly resents --or else letting him do all the interesting projects while the other kids, plodding along at dull routine, justly resent the teacher's pet. The child who is allowed to make a model of Columbus'

ship while the others are memorizing dates, is lucky if he draws nothing worse than a snowball between the shoulders after school.

Conant's recommendations of advanced placement, and a special guidance worker and tutor, are better than nothing, perhaps. Yet, if singling out these children and making them targets for every educational theorist is the only alternative, I'm not so sure; it might be better to do nothing at all. (And again; we must cope with the guidance officer who, to keep the child from developing conceit, or to satisfy his private attitudes toward "academic overemphasis," will browbeat and belabor the child over, and over, and over, with "You mustn't think you're any better than the others, you're only different. You'd be much happier if you'd get your nose out of your books and be more social." The gifted child quite rightly fears this. The blind child is not forced to read. The lame child is not forced to play baseball. The cerebral-palsied child is allowed to do what he can do best, and not browbeaten for his deficiencies. Only the academically gifted child is continually badgered and given emotional wounds by the demands of the teacher and guidance worker that he shall shift his whole personality for their benefit.)

Ideally, I suppose the school program would be organized in such a way that no one will notice the gifted child working at his own pace because everyone else is doing the same thing. The gifted child taking calculus in mathematics period, and jumping rope at the noon hour, would cause no more comment than the dull but heterosexually precocious girl reading at fifth-grade level and dancing with her male schoolmates in the play hour.

Conant's recommendation # 11, about the provision of an academic inventory, I leave for evaluation by administrators, commenting mildly that schools are already swimming in a sea of paperwork. Conant's recommendation # 12, about dividing the day into seven or eight periods so that the student carrying a full academic load can still sing in the glee club or participate in clubs, without missing his lunch hour, has my utter support as compared with present practice; ideally, I suppose, schools would not be divided into "periods" at all, but present a flexible program which would permit almost everyone to do, as nearly as possible, everything he wants to, and expose him to as much of the life of the school and community as would be profitable.

Recommendation # 13, that a passing grade in the first course of a sequence be required for admission to the second, seems so obvious to require comment. If a student has failed first year Latin --or elementary algebra -- the chances are poor that he will improve in the second year.

Recommendation # 14, that a child should not be given a rank in class based on grades, is an improvement on present practice. But why compare a child with anything except his own past accomplishment?

Recommendation # 15 suggests the establishment of an academic honors list, conferring status and recognition similar to that given for school athletes. While this may be a small improvement over schools where football heroes are near-worshipped, I seriously question the introduction of students, this young, to a competitive race for status which will descend on them, soon

descend on them in society soon enough. Rather than extending this craze for status, it would be better to abolish the competitive athletics.

Recommendations # 16 and # 17, dealing with the support and establishment of developmental reading programs, and a tuition free summer school for all, not only for failing students, would be of value even in the ideal school. Today they would be an incalculable improvement.

Recommendation # 18, dealing with foreign languages, repeats much of what was said about the academically talented, adding that the able student should be able to take four years, not two, and that those with neither interest nor ability should be actively discouraged from enrolling at all. Amen.

Recommendation # 19 deals with required science courses. I agree that all students should have some basic understandings of our scientific age, even those who cannot pass advanced courses. But this could be handled by creative teaching on a seminar basis; where each student learns to the extent of his interest and ability. Except in advanced sequence courses where the uninterested nonacademic student has already dropped out, I see no room for such a grouping into the academic elite who study pre-advanced chemistry or pre-advanced biology in freshman year, and the "dull clods" who take some watered-down course which is an untidy, wishy-washy mishmosh. Horrors!

Recommendation # 20 regards the establishment of homerooms. I do not believe that in an ideal school such a program is either necessary or advisable. We should guard against any program which emphasizes (as studies prove over and over that they do) social differences already too apparent. High-status children get the plums such as committee appointments and student council elections. Low-status ones, who would profit by such programs, either cannot compete or are never encouraged to develop an interest. Freisenberg, in the title quoted above, gives an appalling picture of the way one "student court" was permitted to badger, and lord it over, the classmates of lesser rank. Sometimes a benevolent dictatorship is better for young things than the kind of feudal system they scratch out for themselves while teachers beam at the workings of the "democratic process."

In his final recommendation, Conant suggests that twelfth grade social studies should be a seminar in current problems. Agreed. But contrasted to the ideal, it is the most footling of his recommendations. If it's worth doing at all, why wait till twelfth grade to give the kids a chance to wrestle with real, not textbook problems, and to express their thoughts? Why not start it in third grade, and continue it all the way up? College classes demonstrate every day that after twelve years of the rigid lecture-and-recitation classroom systems, a student isn't even able to participate freely in discussion groups. And by that age, all his attitudes to society and government have hardened into rigid patterns. He needs the arguing-out, the free market-place of ideas, while he can still benefit from it. One year of twelfth grade social studies, especially if the first six weeks is wasted in teaching the kids how to work this way, isn't even going to crack the shell. It's better than nothing—but not much better.

V

If Conant's recommendations for the high school are irritating, the vague generalizations with which he sums up the junior high school are maddening. First he talks about required English and social studies courses again, as if specifying a certain number of years could possibly guarantee literacy. Then he recommends that some students should begin algebra and foreign language in junior high school. Again, this is admirable, but ideally a student's first experience with algebra and foreign language should begin, not at a certain level of chronological grading, or after six years and two months of public instruction, but whenever he shows readiness to begin them. (And again and again, educators have shown that languages are acquired more easily in the second grade than in the seventh.)

It startled me that Conant felt he needed to recommend a smooth transition between elementary and junior high, or a good program of extra-curricular activities. What IS desperately needed is something he ignored absolutely; official recognition that all the wrong students are participating in such activities. They are all, without exception, geared to the child who leads a fully socialized and rewarding life outside the school, and--- though he would miss them -- would not actively suffer if the schools cut out their extracurricular activities entirely. But these programs shun, ignore or actually exclude the often desperate needs of the child who gets, literally, his only exposure to a decent social and cultural life on the school grounds. The businessman's child, with a room of his own, playgrounds, sidewalks, churches, money for swimming pool fees and summer camps, also makes full use of the school gymnasiums, dances, music groups and clubs. But all sorts of written and unwritten rules combine to exclude the other child from most of these school facilities, thus insuring that his hours in school will be dreary routine and, for the rest, he can go back to his street corners and overcrowded tenements.

His seventh such recommendation is perhaps the all-time record for high-sounding nonsense;

> Instruction should be organized to provide intellectual challenge for the whole range of abilities found in a school.

Of course it sounds nice. But what else is new? It has been in every textbook, every paper, and every speech since schools stopped admission on a selective academic basis. Even Dr. Conant cannot seriously believe it needs repeating, formally mouthing, yet again. What it needs is doing --and if the schools cannot do it, I wish to goodness they would stop paying formal lip-service to it. If they intend to educate only a small group, and spend their time baby-sitting with the rest and keeping them off the streets, why don't they say so, justify that viewpoint, and start out from an honest statement of their position?

But he comes near to the epitome of the ridiculous when he solemnly states that "meaningful homework" is profitable, but teachers should not assign "dreary drudgery". It may come as a

shock to the President Emeritus of Harvard, but except for a microscopic fraction of one per cent of sadists, NO teacher deliberately assigns "dreary drudgery". HER special brand of dreary drudgery, she firmly and fervently believes, IS meaningful. If every principal in every school from Maine to California were to announce solemnly that teachers must henceforth never assign any "dreary drudgery", but forthwith proceed to assign only "meaningful homework," every student would carry home exactly the same assignments as planned, while each teacher beamed, feeling that the principal had FINALLY come out and recognized that HER kind of homework was meaningful, and that those other teachers finally had to cut out the kind they were assigning. Conant would have done better to recognize that teachers sometimes do not know the difference between the meaningful and the meaningless, and suggest that they learn to distinguish. (Query; but if they can't learn in the course of acquiring an M.A. degree, what would more methodology do?)

The whole book is filled with similar fuzzy and fine-sounding pronouncements. He gives patronizing recognition to the non-graded elementary schools where a studen works at his own pace till he masters basic skills, as a "promising development", but makes no recommendations for extending its province. He talks about suitable homeroom programs, and does nothing to extenuate the "turning of high school into an ersatz college or suburb.... the early and sometimes flat maturity as lovers, consumers and committeemen." (David Reisman). He states that marching bands and organized competitive interscholastic athletics are not desirable at the junior high level, but nowhere suggests a method for convincing parents that they should be abolished.

And the recommendation calling for minimum facilities--well stocked library, gymnasium with lockers and showers, etc--sounds good; but the existence of these fine facilities is often used to blind parents to more serious lacks in the system. A new shiny school with every modern facility is harder to criticize than a ramshackle one, even if both have equally poor teachers. Excellent libraries are no good to children who can enter them only with a library pass for ten minutes at a time. Movable desks mean nothing to children forced to keep them in nailed-down rows and get permission even to get a drink of water, while whispering, far less working together, is treated as a high crime. And a gymnasium is often the instrument whereby children are turned into unpaid professional athletes for public entertainment in small towns with no other recreational facilities. The same can be said of the music instructor whose sole function is to provide marching exhibitions, cheerleaders, majorettes and band music at half-time for these football games. (And, if one ventures to criticize the program, they cite the President's appeal for physical fitness, and the supposed poise and social benefits accruing to children from these public performances.)

The whole thing sounds fine. All of his books sound good. But it represents a damning attack on the American system, to realize that these footling recommendations should actually be an improvement on most schools today. If all of Conant's

were already in force, as I have shown, the schools would be hardly meeting the needs of today; where even Conant's suggestions are considered radical, how on earth will they meet the needs of tomorrow? And can tomorrow's needs ever be met by a program of patchwork calculated, at best, to fit the schools to the already-passing needs of today?

VI

> "Prudence would counsel you to strengthen such strong places as you have, and there await the onset; for so shall the time before your end be made a little longer."
>
> J.R.R. Tolkien
> THE RETURN OF THE KING

Conant's counsels are counsels of prudence. He feels that the desperate need of our country for better education can be made by strengthening the strong places of the present system, and perhaps lessening their more cruel deficiencies. If Conant's program could be adopted wholesale, tomorrow morning, it would probably improve the learning experiences of most children. Only when this patchwork is measured against the ideal education does Conant begin to look thin and inconsequential.

But there is another consideration; will it work?

Myron Leibermann, in THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION, deems to think that the improvement of education is a problem for the profession, and suggests that school boards and laymen should--to put it bluntly, though he is polite-- go and mind their own business. His bitterest criticism of Conant's books is that they are addressed to school boards rather than to professional educators.

It is probably true that schools should be freed from the local tangles, politics, prejudices and xenophobic taboos. Conant himself recognizes that our local-autonomy system is chaotic; but he recognizes helplessly:

> "But it works; most of us like it; and it appears to be as permanent a feature of our society as most of our political institutions."

And by "us" he means, not the profession, but the public who -- rightly or wrongly--have the final say. He recognizes an unsavory truth; the public fears professionals. Considering what rigid professional autonomy has done to produce an AMA and a Medical Profession more concerned with the needs of doctors, rather than the needs of patients, one cannot blame the public for fearing that a similar monster might grip the world of American education. Given professional status, higher pay and the privilege of birth-control at the source of his profession by licensure laws, would not the teachers produce a similar Frankenstein's Monster?

Whatever the abstract rights and wrongs, Conant realized that public education <u>is</u> in the hands of local school boards, and will remain so at least until all those now in high school are graduated. Social changes come by inches, except for the

kind seen in Cuba a few years ago. When things get unbearable, people often shout for a Castro; but the fear of Hitler usually outweighs the longing for Messiah.

And Conant showed a grasp of realities in writing for school boards. Professional educators are mostly aware of today's deficiencies. There is evidence to show that school boards are not. And he accepts reality when he admits that the status quo is a constant. School boards like it. Maybe they shouldn't. Maybe they are mush-heads for liking it. But if Conant had yelled, all through his pages, that the schools stink and the local school boards should forthwith put in sackcloth and ashes, proclaim themselves guilty, and sneak away with their figurative tails dragging--- would he be likely to gain the respectful attention he has had so far?

Well, would he? Certainly not. At best, they would have called him a fanatic and ignored him; at worst, they would have held a ceremonial book-burning and probably denounced him as a Communist, or something. Then they would have sunk again into comfortable apathy, convinced that only radicals and fanatics could possibly be discontented with their best of all possible worlds.

So, for better or worse, Conant has addressed himself to the people who are in a position to do something, now, tomorrow morning, about the schools. By judiciously sugar-coated flattery, he has perhaps sneaked in the thin end of a wedge of self-doubt.

Maybe this is a defeatist attitude. I am no starry-eyed sophomore. Nor have I lived all my life in the rarefied air of the professional colleagues who know what I am talking about. I have lived among fathers, mothers, teachers and school board members who can't imagine why I think there is anything wrong with the "best darned little school in Texas." I have made myself awfully damned unpopular with some of them because I refuse to admire the beautiful, beautiful new schools they have just built in Rochester. And I have come to the conclusion that I can't have the moon, no matter how much I cry for it. The local school board is perfectly satisfied with the school, and they are NOT going to tear it up and reorganize it along lines which the professional educators ("those eggheads") like better. They are perfectly satisfied with things as they are, and if I don't like them that way, well, so much the worse for me. But lately, maybe, Conant has given them a sneaking suspicion that maybe, just maybe, they are not quite as perfect as they thought they were. So, to that extent, I say jolly good for him!

I am not a conservative. I'm not even liberal. As one might guess from this paper, I am a far-out radical reformer (going not back to the hypothetical "Golden age" but ahead to the new and unguessable demands of a new world.) But long and bitter experience has made me a pragmatist.

What (short of murder, which is impractical and also illegal) can one do when a mother says "Yes, well, but I went to a school like that," The temptation to reply "Yes, and look at you," is childish rudeness. They are not going to admit that their schools did not educate them properly, because they do not want to admit (if they know), that they are uneducated.

For better or worse, Conant has confined himself to practice, not philosophy. So, for my pragmatic question, I say YES: Conant is worth studying, worth giving a second and third hearing.

For after all, his question is not "How can we reform the whole system from the ground up by five o'clock this afternoon?"

His question is, stated in other terms;

What can we do, tomorrow morning, to improve our schools? How can we improve the education of John Smith, tenth grade, between now and his graduation? What can we do for Margaret Brown, colored, age, fifteen, in Harlem, running the streets because nothing except the fear of the truant officer could give her any reason to go to school? Or for her cousin Maisie in Alabama? What can we do for James Doe, fifteen, dull-normal, eighth grade, marking time until his sixteenth birthday and the day that he can legally get a job? What can we do --to be personal a moment-- for David Stephen Bradley, age eleven, fifth grade, (reading level at the very top of the chart which goes all the way to "high school) faced with educational makeshifts and a system which will penalize him for failure to compete in organized, highly competitive schoolboy football games?

As a parent and a future teacher, I feel that if Conant can make even the tiniest chip in such schools, and such people, I'm inclined to support him. At least until something better, which will win equal support, comes along. These kids need immediate help, not radical reforms after they graduate. If Conant helps them get it, I will remember him in my prayers for the rest of my life.

> "Other evils there are that may come...yet it is not our part to master all the tides in the world, but to do what is in us for the success of the years wherein we are laid, uprooting the evil in the fields we know, that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule...."
>
> J.R.R. Tolkien

And, though Dr. Tolkien wrote these words in a novel, he is himself an educator; and their application seems not irrelevant to our present situation in the confusion, chaos and near-disaster of public education.

Marion Zimmer Bradley

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Postscript in 1963. Dr. Duffy, as might have been foreseen, did not remain long at Hardin-Simmons. And I have abandoned any thought of teaching in the public schools. Shortly before leaving Rochester I had, at last, a wholly satisfying interview with the principal of their school. Well, not satisfying, for it made little dent. "I tell you, Miz Bradley, if the schools ever give up those programs and quit givin' the kids that school spirit that wants 'em to win, I tell you, this country's jus' had it." The rest is silence.

A N O L D W H I G A L P H A B E T

M.E. Bradford

A Burkean conservative in the context of our times;

a) Will be immune to arguments against "mere prejudice" or "custom" made in the name of private reason or prejudice.
b) Will not feel guilty about the axiomatic, intuitive nature of the positions taken by most of his conservative allies.
c) Will recognize latter-day philosophics in the "a priori" social/political planner, the latter-day Jacobin in the politician or judge who falls back on the closet meditation of his own day to find both authority and mask for the privately motivated commitment to reform.
d) Will understand and accept as natural his role as counter-puncher, as one who acts, formulates his position "a posteriori" in reaction to a challenge, and will in defense of this "reactionary" posture (which Karl Mannheim in his Ideology and Utopia has made an indictment of the conservative mind) offer Burke on metaphysical speculations and the congenital psychological motives (the itch) that drives the reformer; that is, he will be content to be at peace until provoked.
e) Will take pleasure in the liberal charge against him that he suffers from a failure (or lack of) nerve.
f) Will insist that the verdict is not yet in on the Industrial Revolution and urbanization.
g) Will enthusiastically support "restorative" reforms (for instance, a return by law of certain sources of revenue and responsibilities to the States.
h) Will stand in undying opposition to all concentration of power or radical revision of the function of established organs of government.
i) Will oppose all attempts to "reconstruct" peoples according to notions foreign (not organically produced by) the "cultural tradition of the people in question --and will in consequence reject the idea of total war."
j) Will reject all forms of absolute social or economic equalitarianism as contrary to natural law and the doctrine of stewardship.
k) Will avoid identification with Social Darwinism and the so-called "Business conservative", in the name of noblesse oblige.
l) Will resist all attempts to define the nature and destiny of man in purely political or economic terms (and will reject determinism)
m) Will seek out and support representatives of the "natural aristocracy" within the framework of limited monarchy or classical republicanism.
n) Will affirm by his own example "the unbought grace of life" and the need for "manners" and for honor in our time.
o) Will counter, whenever possible, the influence of "social gospel" clergymen whose eschatology is often the outgrowth of their own lack of faith in providence.

p) Will, with Burke, maintain that "all persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, author and founder of society."
q) Will affirm the uniqueness of men and nations as a positive good.
r) Will always value proposals rising from experience more than the meditations of the closet.
s) Will, with courtesy, be suspicious of most so-called social sciences, not in principle, but because of the kind of thinking that most social science has endorsed in our times.
t) Will try to cultivate in his own culture a sense of the past,
u) Will manifest in his own life the courage to be "finite" and a contentment with the mystery of man's existence.
v) Will champion when and where he can Christian orthodoxy and traditional humanistic (prescriptive) approach to education.
w) Will recognize that old and well established prejudices, collective intuitions, whose justifications are not known to their champions, are a more formidable check to Jacobins than his own finespun conservative apologetics.
x) Will be resigned to being ignored.
y) Will be patient.
z) Will remember his fathers, and trust in God when he has done what he can.

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1. Democracy may be wholly bad, or admissible with certain reservations, or wholly desirable, according to the age, the country, and the particular conditions under which it is adopted.
"The Politics of Prescription", The Conservative Mind, Kirk, p. 67

2 (sic); ...the notion of inalienable rights has been embraced by the mass of men in a vague and belligerent form, ordinarily confusing rights with desire."
Kirk, p. 53

3. The state of civil society, which necessarily generates this aristocracy, is a state of nature, and much more truly so than a savage and incoherent mode of life.
Kirk, p. 58

Equal space will gladly be given, in the next issue, to anyone who cares to take the other side on either of the guest contributions. (Jack Speer?) ** Several small typos have kept intruding, and some of these stencils should be re-cut (the heading on Walter's article tore the stencil and I patched it roughly with stencil cement) but I have neither the stencils nor the patience. This hath been the largest issue of DAY*STAR so far, methinks...and THIS lady feels like protesting too much. See you in May--maybe. MZB