

# FORUM

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# Social Integration in the Comprehensive School

NICHOLAS READ-COLLINS

*In 1949 Lieut-Colonel Read-Collins left Japan, where he was chief of the British Division of General MacArthur's General Staff. He later trained for teaching and has taught in East London and two comprehensive schools, at one of which (Holland Park) he was housemaster. From October, 1960, he will be head of a new mixed secondary school at Yeovil.*

Dr. Johnson is credited with the remark that while learned men were discussing whether to do this or to do that on the issues of his day, others were doing both.

Whether to instruct or to educate is still a subject of controversy among English teachers who for the most part seem to overlook the fact that others—China, America, the Soviet Union and Israel—are indeed successfully doing both.

Their size, if nothing else, has forced comprehensive schools to give greater attention to having children behave as they do not naturally behave—to make possible the integration of up to 2,000 young people into a viable and purposeful community.

The grandiose architecture of a very large school slows down personal communication, increases scope for the erosion of responsibility and renders supervision more difficult. As a result, anti-social attitudes, which in a small school can be rapidly eradicated, multiply in geometric ratio as numbers increase.

The problem which poses itself, therefore, is not whether to instruct or to educate, for obviously these are two aspects of the same process, but how the achievement of social awareness and personal responsibility can be made a main purpose of this process.

## The cause of frustration

Family factors apart, the most general source of negative attitudes ranging from apathy to aggression lies in conventional study dictated by examination requirements. It is common to find a class following an amended or modified G.C.E. syllabus unsuited to as many as 20 of its 30 pupils. Goals of this type usually reduce the classroom to a patagonia of

second-hand experience and substitute aims. Frustration at home and frustration at school make Jack and Jill both escapist and bad-tempered.

Though much is said about education for life tomorrow, studies most suited to tomorrow's needs are too often shouldered out of the time-table. The need for social integration throughout the comprehensive school has brought teachers face to face with the need for a re-orientation of educational method. Just as theory and practice must fuse in the workshop if a recognisable and useful product is to emerge, so must pupils be shown the unity of knowledge and its relevance to the life they will probably live. This implies raising social science to parity with academic instruction in the curriculum.

## Knowledge and social relevance

At Oundle a generation ago, F. W. Sanderson gave a working demonstration of practical education when he made engineering workshops the hub of an English public school. Sanderson maintained that his integration of science and arts was valid because one could not be divorced from the other and neither had meaning apart from life. This view has found expression in the comprehensive idea in that academic, engineering and general studies can be followed on the same school site. This promise of unity between previously divorced branches of knowledge cannot, however, be made absolute until the studies themselves are so arranged as to stimulate in every pupil a social consciousness and an integrated personality.

How and why to undertake social, in addition to vocational, education perhaps needs explanation. Social education must be practical, meaningful and continuous if it is to be effective. It involves a disciplined study of human behaviour from which

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a boy and girl can induce the grammar of citizenship. The emphasis upon learning through experience naturally suggests a school's involvement in the life of the neighbourhood. This involvement ought to be encouraged with the specific aim of developing both social awareness and a feeling of moral obligation to attempt to put to rights what is manifestly wrong. As a corollary the present emphasis upon instruction needs to shift from remembering to understanding. Why should teachers be timid about applying scientific method, social psychology and anthropology, to the social problems with which children are familiar in their own surroundings?

If discipline is defined as a response to a social situation, it will at once be clear that we are aiming at something qualitatively different from the submissive obedience indoctrinated by examinable studies lacking both social orientation and life connections.

The unification of subjects into a single process of self-education will certainly liberate tremendous energy and interest. Consideration must be given to the type of organisation necessary to develop this energy for socially acceptable ends.

#### **School and society**

To reduce numbers to manageable size the adoption of a house system, with sub-division into tutor groups of 30 pupils, is fairly general in comprehensive schools. This administratively convenient breakdown of numbers forces staff to inject *post facto* meaning into an organisation possessing no intrinsic social significance. The cart is before the horse for, in reality, function must determine form. Further, little or no time is provided for group work devoted directly to the development of social maturity. It will do no harm to emphasise the well-known fact that the finest academic instruction does not result in maturity. The inarticulate matriculant and the ignorant graduate are, unfortunately, the proof of this.

To these impediments can be added problems inherent in a large, variegated catchment area. Clearly the whole situation demands pioneer thought. There comes to mind the example of the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges (though not comprehensive) providing a group of villages with educational facilities from infancy to old age. They are a good example of educational continuity, and fusion with their environment.

Although, no doubt, social integration can be achieved in many ways, there are certain principles to bear in mind, and the first of these is economy of

effort. Social training should exploit existing neighbourhood patterns rather than organise situations within the school itself. The family group is an obvious starting point and the first aim of teacher and pupil should be to bring the family continuously within the influence of school activity. Home and local environment are the immediate sources of pupils' experience and largely determine attitudes to the syllabus, teacher, class and school. A desirable reciprocity between school and family cannot be achieved until parents feel more responsibility in the matter.

Psychology and pedagogy are more advanced in this respect in the Soviet Union, where both parents and trade union representatives may often be seen sitting in on lessons. Russian teachers and adults claim considerable benefit from the constructive discussion and criticism that arises from this practice. In Britain, many schools do invite parents to discuss their work and hobbies. Teachers find that co-operation of this sort furthers mutual appreciation of the place of family and school in the broad pattern of education. In some American States after-school recreation in extension of, and integrated with, the curriculum is the responsibility of either paid or voluntary personnel recruited from families.

The adoption of a similar system for the English comprehensive schools might provide a field in which competent and willing parents could perform a valuable social function.

### **Optimum size of groups**

Street and neighbourhood studies become possible once effective contact has been established between school and family. They require small working groups of (say) five, each with a leader, within every tutor group. At one time social activity may require the labour of all six teams in a tutor group (of 30); another project may involve all the groups in a House and so on, but in the final analysis co-operation is best cultivated at the level of the group of five. Of course, optimum size for groups will be determined by local conditions and experience.

However, we are not the first to consider the requirements of effective co-operation. Guidance as to optimum size can be found in the famous Han of China, which for centuries enabled central government to be administered in the provinces on the basis of a five-man team. In contemporary China, committees of five, now called 'Street Associations', still exist for voluntary participation in government. A similar system, *Tonari Gumi*, a neighbourhood association in Japan, fostered a remarkably strong

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community feeling which, as we know, was used by industrialists and the army for their own ends.

Experience shows that social responsibility is unlikely to emerge through chance fraternisation at club activities. These are valuable, but social training *per se* is not a club's job. If it were, we might expect rugger and bridge players to show an outstanding degree of social awareness! It has already been suggested that learning to live in society begins with reciprocity between pupil, school and family. It is appropriate, therefore, to examine as critically and as scientifically as pupils' maturity and interest allow, the way the family struggles in the local turbulence of modern living.

### Study of the environment

Most children live in towns dominated by docks, condensers, power stations, goods yards and coal dumps but, contrary to first impressions, the municipal kennels to which we give the name 'home' are the nursery of life more vibrant, more purposeful than we find, for example, in suburban Subtopia. A 'bad environment' is generally a particularly good one from the view of social training, and teachers should not be depressed by a forbidding façade.

Two considerable advantages aid the teacher from the outset. First, children know from their personal experience a considerable amount about human behaviour. I remember a twelve-year-old boy who, on a day trip to France, answered the question on his identity card, 'What is your occupation?' with the single word 'Living'! Second, there exists for every locality an admirably up-to-day textbook—the local newspaper. Conditions, then, could not be more favourable. Through the local newspaper, the group of five and the teacher can bring into focus a previously blurred and limited vision of the adult world. The weekly procession of champions, delinquents, aldermen, lovers, drunks, and licentiate of musical academies offers for study a range of human subjects greater than either family, immediate neighbourhood or textbook can provide.

The object of this phase of study is to learn something of the mainsprings of human behaviour, of motivation, of response to environmental stimuli, and above all to understand rather than to condemn.

At the mention of moral training one is reminded that in France 'morale' has been taught for many decades without any apparent beneficial effect upon French public life. The chief reason is quite simply that 'morale' is and was essentially a matter of classroom precept divorced from practice. The lesson we can learn from this is quite obvious. A programme which aims at social integration can succeed only

when young people are given the opportunity to apply consciously in suitable situations the rules which govern civilised living.

If theory and practice are to marry, and they must, then all social training will be a preparation for action and a change for the better in society. I remember an east London class who raised £30 to adopt a brutally beaten donkey. It was kept as a pet. Some time later the same class was asked to give something for young Arab refugees. The result was nine shillings and fifty centimes. The class was on the right road, but one must beware of a typically human limitation to stick at vivisection and swallow nuclear warfare!

The teacher's task is not to invent fields of opportunity, for these already exist, but to encourage young people to serve the needs of the community as distinct from its wants.

School can then legitimately become a social laboratory where students are shielded from the consequences of erroneous behaviour and where, because of constant reference to actual situations, school never becomes a dangerously deceptive micro-climate, a seminary charmed by its own reflection! The technique of social survey brings the world within young people's reach and permits each group to observe society without being divorced from it. Experience confirms that, during the transition from a socially indifferent, competitive anti-social attitude to one of group co-operation, children generally show a surprising maturity of judgment and a willingness to accept the responsibility that the work demands.

### Co-operation and discipline

A pupil evaluates instruction according to its ability to give wider meaning to experience. Questions of rewards, punishments, incentives and discipline require considerably less emphasis when education is keyed in to learning to live. The concern of parent, teacher and pupil to apply the arts and sciences to the business of living in a changing society will give birth to a new attitude to work. A new type of discipline will emerge through the exercise of social approval and the counter-balancing restraint of social criticism. This approval and criticism should be spontaneously exercised by the school community against those who threaten its harmony. Thus, the teacher can be mercifully spared the frustration of poor academic work that never improves, and of wearying vigilance in the prevention of loss or damage to school and personal property.

The election of prefects will also cease to be a

subject for more or less arbitrary staff decision because, with emphasis moving from the individual to the group, a new attitude to leadership will certainly emerge. As co-operation replaces competition the leader within the group is something of a contradiction, and leadership must be re-defined as an ability to liberate in others the desire for co-operation towards socially desirable ends. Ability to discharge this type of responsibility ought not to be left to chance. By their attitudes and social maturity pupils will select themselves for prefectorial office, and after suitable training in elementary psychology their election can safely be left in the hands of the school at large.

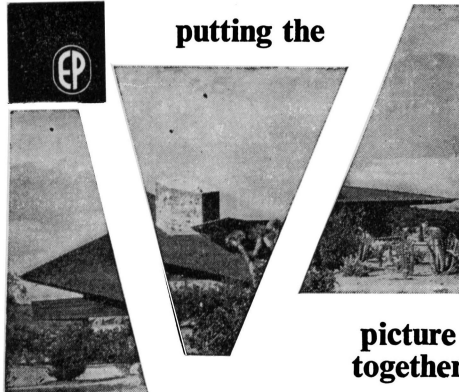
### Adolescence

Between thirteen and the last year at school, special consideration needs to be given to the problems of most parents who discover in their children young men and women, often better looking and more knowledgeable than they are. We usually refer to the matter as the problem of adolescence. Education for social harmony can obviously do much to reduce tension at home and prepare for smooth integration with the adult world. The angry young man fashion, the teddy boy and the rise in juvenile delinquency (especially in the last year at school) are well known symptoms and we would be wiser to recognise that the rebel without cause, abusing his elders, is the product of a disintegrating society.

School has a duty to encourage the non-conformist, recruit the rebel to the service of society and courageously press for a curriculum which promotes education for citizenship and for life. Recognition at school of young people's aspirations to be grown up whilst lacking adult maturity, can be the means of capturing energy so often wasted in anti-social escapism and revolt against the standards to which adults give at best only lip service. It is between thirteen and sixteen that young people chafe at the classroom situation. A regurgitation of facts, and academic inactivity, have a seriously inhibiting effect upon creative talent. There is something to be learned from the metamorphosis that takes place in school leavers who, within a month of leaving school, blossom into young men and women. Unfortunately, in throwing off school dress they put into permanent store the rags and tatters of years of aimless instruction.

The English climate has a dampening effect upon enthusiasm, and critics may doubt that children can for long be interested in society as such. Obviously the teacher's method and personal conviction count for much.

An answer to this type of doubt was given me



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once by Hsieh Chueh-Tdai, the Minister for Chinese Internal Affairs. I asked him how long interest in literacy, improved agriculture, co-operatives, divorce and so on could be maintained. He replied, 'Now that the people have provided themselves with food on three days of the week, don't you think that they will also have an appetite on Thursday, Friday and Saturday?' The moral is simply that the organisation of success is much better than the reinforcement of failure.

### The creative mind

With the aid of science and psychology, economics and history, young people can and indeed must be allowed to comprehend, among other things, the nature and origin of prejudice, the evolution of man and his ethics and the art and expression of love. Thus we can create the educated individual who emerges a disciple of truth and does not need the hypothesis of original sin to excuse the perennial breakdown in social relationships caused by one man's exploitation of another.

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# The Neglect of the Primary School

JOHN ENGLAND

*Mr. England is head of the Nelson Street primary school, Birmingham. He is Junior Vice-President of the National Union of Teachers.*

As the man who administers poison is to murder, so is he, who injures by neglect, to cruelty; each is at the extreme of harm. Indeed, in some ways the latter is the more evil, his damage is done by no positive act but by abstention. Furthermore, he may so delude himself by a flight from reality that his conduct is virtuous.

If I say that primary schools have been neglected there will arise a cloud of witnesses in denial. They will testify to the fine new buildings, to the reduction in the size of classes, to better equipment and so on, and I will freely admit that *absolutely* they would be right; but, thanks to Einstein, the veriest schoolboy knows that all things are *relative* and *relatively* there has been neglect of a most serious and far-reaching nature.

## Reorganisation and its results

The primary school owes its birth to the re-organisation of schools following the Hadow Report. For administrative reasons, since it was clearly impossible to cram a senior course into less than three years, all children over eleven years were to be educated in a separate establishment. (The presence of all-age establishments in 1960 simply adds one further piece of evidence to the body of proof that of all reforms the educational takes the longest.) I will repeat the phrase, 'for administrative reasons', for I have yet to find any serious educational ones. In the other system operating in this country, children leave preparatory schools at *thirteen* for public schools. However, to argue that the break comes too soon is fatuous nowadays, the system is with us and appears to be as rigid as the laws of the Medes.

The removal of older children by this re-organisation posed two problems. Where were they to go and what was to be done with the remainder? As to the first, certain schools in each area were earmarked for their reception. A good deal of building was done and continued to be done for some time, both of new schools and additions to older ones. The latter problem was easily solved: junior and infant children remained where they were in unaltered old schools. Teachers had very little choice as to the

type of school in which they taught and many, remaining in the new junior schools, felt some resentment that the older and more interesting pupils (particularly in the way of athletics) had gone. The fact that, almost of necessity, allowances for equipment were higher per head for children in the new senior schools caused some resentment, most of it ill-founded.

The stage was set for the abolition of the elementary system by the Education Act of 1944. We had already the division by age—this was continued—but the raising of the leaving age by one year made the senior course a more reasonable proposition. It is true that a great deal of new building was required and more teachers needed at a time of great scarcity. Teachers came to regard the measure as an 'act of faith' and put up with conditions, especially with regard to size of classes, that were almost unbearable.

Nowhere was the strain greater than in the primary field. Teachers herein could have been excused if they had simply held the position, indeed in the face of such mountainous difficulties they would have done well if this was the sum of their endeavour—but they did much more. Anyone who lived through this period will remember that where one could have expected nothing but stagnation there was flow and ferment. New ideas, some good some bad, but all novel, were conceived. Experiments were framed and carried out. Primary education advanced more in a decade than it had in the previous fifty years. Sordid argument, largely of a political nature, has been the feature of secondary education: arguments there have been also in the primary field—and bitter ones on occasion—but all have been on education and most have been fruitful.

## The fact of discrimination

It is not to be wondered at that the primary teacher, who had borne so heavy a burden with such devotion so that secondary schools should come into being, who had done so well with so little, should feel vexed to see most of the new building and equipment and apparently all the interest being lavished on this new and untried system: nor should we be surprised that a blaze of anger spread through the schools when the staffing was laid down as one teacher per forty primary pupils as against one for thirty secondary. This was not neglect, it was discrimination. Ministers and others have expressed their amazement at this difference, yet no one has made the slightest move to alter it. As a primary teacher, I do not propose to attempt to prove that it is wrong: that has been done by better men. I

will content myself with recording how much I, for one, resent it.

A previous mention has been made of capitation and other allowances. I do not deny that there is good reason for difference, but it need not be so great. Nor should there be such a marked dissimilarity in building and the provision of equipment. It may have been inevitable that we should have to inherit the old elementary school buildings but we were, I believe, promised 'equality of esteem' with the new secondary education. Many of us believe that that equality, if it ever existed, is fast vanishing.

### Recent threats

A fresh blow, from an unexpected quarter, was struck in the Burnham Report when the points system materially differentiated between the pay of some teachers in schools of the same size. It is significant that provision for the post of head of department is made, on a permissive basis, to secondary schools not necessarily doing work of an advanced level, but forbidden in primary schools which are organised in real departments, junior and infants. The worst threat of all, which was staved off, I hoped, for ever, was the suggestion that when three year training became an established fact, it should be exclusively the privilege of the intending teacher in the secondary system. I say, I *hoped* that this had gone, but it has reared its head in another guise.

Although, at this moment, no official publication has been made, kites are being flown in enough places to make it perfectly clear how the wind is blowing. As far as the training and supply of teachers goes, I believe the position to be this. By 1970, with the school leaving age as it is now and with the staffing ratio unchanged, 340,000 teachers will be needed, 162,000 in the primary schools and 178,000 elsewhere. No shortage of secondary teachers is expected. These will be untrained graduates, some trained graduates from university education departments, the necessary non-graduate specialists such as domestic science teachers, and some general practitioners from the training colleges. Graduates now in primary schools are expected to be absorbed into the secondary system.

The position is very different where primary teachers are concerned. These will be drawn entirely from the training colleges and will be augmented by some 14,000 colleagues decanted from secondary schools. In the primary schools there will still be a serious shortage and the number of children per teacher will still be forty. Training colleges will, eventually, be part of the primary system. Few

graduates will be trained in them, if indeed any graduate will risk the loss of qualified status by taking a course which will leave him, if he is successful, exactly where he was when he started.

All this, if put into operation—and although it will be strongly opposed, who shall say that it will not?—all this, I am sure, will cause such a gulf between the two systems as will make that dividing the old elementary-secondary systems appear a mere crack.

The solution is simple. These matters could be put right quite easily by the exercise of a little goodwill and the remembering of a few promises. Primary teachers do not claim that they are superior or that their work is more important than that of their secondary colleagues. They do say that the two fields are complementary and that both should have equal regard without discrimination or favour. If the neglect of the primary side continues, if the teacher in a school for younger children is regarded as inferior and treated as such, then inferior teachers by a kind of Gresham's Law, will accumulate in the primary field and the educational structure will be built, if not on sand, then on very poor foundations.

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### THE CROWTHER REPORT

The second volume of the Crowther Report, expected early this year, was finally published in July. This volume contains the results of the three comparatively large surveys carried out for the Crowther Council on which many of their conclusions were based.

Of particular interest to readers of FORUM are the details given of the National Service Survey, which forms Part II of the volume. This included measurements of ability based on five tests (reasoning, mechanical knowledge, arithmetic, spelling, comprehension) given to all recruits on entering the army. It was partly on the basis of this data that the Crowther Council was able to estimate the substantial reserves of ability in the population (especially among the children of manual workers) which the existing system of education fails to develop. The volume is well worth consulting for this information alone.

In addition, the surveys include a great deal of material on the relation of education to the social structure, especially as regards school-leaving and employment. All three surveys provide much information on the situation in further education. The volume can be obtained for 8s. 6d. from H.M.S.O. B.S.

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## Middle and Lower Streams in Secondary Schools

*The Editorial Board asked Mr. R. E. S. Jones, deputy head of a comprehensive school, and Mrs. Nan McMillan, headmistress of a secondary modern school, to open a discussion on the problems posed by the middle and lower streams in secondary schools. Readers are invited to send in their contributions. We should particularly welcome actual descriptions of courses, etc., which have been tried out successfully in the schools.*

### (1) THE LOWER MIDDLE CLASS

R. E. S. JONES

*Mr. Jones has taught in grammar and technical schools in Birmingham and Coventry. He has been deputy headmaster of the Woodlands comprehensive school, Coventry, since its opening in 1954.*

Of the 300-350 boys who constitute the annual intake of The Woodlands, about 90 are selective pupils and work for G.C.E. in the normal way; an approximately similar number are backward or seriously retarded; the remainder, about half of the total number involved, thus range in ability from a sub-G.C.E. level to one barely distinguishable from backwardness. All the boys in this large group are 'catchment area' pupils and come from new council estates which lack little but social and domestic maturity, from homes where, in general, the T.V. set is a much-beloved tyrant.

The educational problems of the group are not, basically, very different from those of any other group: the questions to be solved still concern finding the right courses for varying abilities and aptitudes and developing suitable approaches to the teaching involved, but further problems, arising frequently from a combination of emotional instability and an almost congenital resistance to learning—and becoming more difficult as the age level rises—often make the solution of the basic questions well-nigh impossible.

Perhaps the most important difficulty with this group is to arouse and sustain interest in school studies. In the early years of secondary school life this difficulty is not acute, even though the sense of failure which the 11-plus mechanism inevitably leaves in the minds of such children is an obstacle which only really purposeful work can completely remove. The exploration of new areas of knowledge can, at this stage, and with lively teaching, bring a sense of excitement to even the least able of the group. However, as they grow older, the trailing clouds of primary school glory are dissipated by the

strong winds of materialism and adolescent cynicism, and it is by no means uncommon to find numbers of 14- or 15-year-olds who regard their last terms at school as a pre-employment period, at best to be tolerated, at worst actively disliked.

Courses with a recognised vocational value provide suitable incentives to more able boys who are prepared to complete the necessary four or five years at school (R.S.A., pre-apprenticeship, pre-commercial courses are being tried with some success at The Woodlands). But there remains that most difficult group, sometimes called 'the third quarter', who, while not backward, are still quite far from being able to cope with even the modest standards of a pre-technical course.

For them there exists no external examination to act as an incentive; indeed, it is difficult to see how one could be devised, even were it thought desirable. And it is perhaps because of this that a sense of failure, of slower development and stronger growth than that at 11-plus, stemming from the realisation, at the age of 13-14, that they are working for no readily-grasped end, takes possession of their minds and influences their attitudes to school and almost all school affairs.

Here, then, are found the hard core of those who make it almost a matter of pride to resent and even, from time to time, to resist authority of almost every kind. Anti-social behaviour in school—truancy, cutting of lessons, insolence, an unpleasant tendency to loutishness in manner and dress (though the more bizarre sartorial deviations are fortunately rare)—is more common amongst the boys of this group than in any other, and the group also produces by far the highest percentage of actual criminals known to the

police. Normal school sanctions preserve an apparent acceptance of discipline, but this tends to be compensated by surliness and a stubborn refusal to do anything more than can be exacted by threats.

The home backgrounds of many of these boys leave a very great deal to be desired and contribute directly to the creation of such mental attitudes. While there is little or no cruelty or poverty—unless the common substitution of material comforts for parental love and understanding is regarded as cruelty—there is often fecklessness and selfishness, and sometimes, though not often, a determination to see the school as an enemy to be thwarted and deceived.

Of course, the majority of the boys concerned are neither actually nor potentially delinquent at school or at home; one recalls with gratitude the devoted and spontaneous efforts of many of them in charitable activities and in spare-time labours on behalf of various school activities. But good and bad alike have, to greater or lesser extent, a resistance to academic study, to education *qua* education. The reason for this may be found in the sense of failure referred to above, in a kind of desperation born of the apparent lack of real purpose of much they are required to do, in the materialistic atmosphere of their homes. Whatever the cause, the results in normal class work are clear: careless, untidy written work; poor spelling and slow, hesitant reading; weaknesses in arithmetic and the simpler mathematical processes; and above all, a lack of pride in work well done, a failure to want to do well for the sake of doing well.

In practical subjects the situation is, generally, much happier. Many of these boys do extremely well in practical lessons in woodwork, metalwork, brickwork, plumbing, rural science, art, and the light crafts of bookcraft and pottery. The problem here is to integrate the work done in such lessons with the general subjects taught, so that the encourage-

ment derived from success in the workshop shall inform and enlighten the attitudes of the boys concerned to work in the classroom.

The problem of the uncompleted fourth year is greater amongst the boys of this 'third quarter'. It is difficult to arrange any course to have three different terminal points, and for the individual class teacher the reducing number of his class is perhaps no compensation for the frequently-voiced frustration of those boys who have still a term or two to go. Even more disturbing is the profound social immaturity of these early leavers. Many of them have had little exercise of powers of responsibility, either because their slow development meant that they were as yet unfitted psychologically and emotionally for even minor office or because they had refused to accept opportunities which had come their way. Such refusals often seem to stem from membership of a 'gang' which would be quick to exclude a follower thus openly on the side of authority. And for some boys, the gang in which they have a recognised place is the only alternative to a home which fails to provide the right kind of understanding and a school which may equally fail to capture their loyalty.

The big need of the boys of this group is a sense of purpose and a course of work which is related to the world they live in. Higher standards of behaviour, morality and judgment have to be learned through active participation in lessons whose aim is clearly and unequivocally stated and grasped. Experience shows that such courses are best when craft-based and when the vocational purpose is frankly recognised. At The Woodlands, an internal Certificate of Attainment—graded, and gained in the face of the possibility of failure—is being introduced, and in this, as well as in the kind of protracted initiative tests originated by the Armed Services and practised with success at an appropriate level elsewhere, may possibly lie at least some of the answers to the educational problems of the third quarter.

## (2) PURPOSE IN EDUCATION

N. McMILLAN

*Mrs. McMillan has taught in London secondary schools all her teaching life, except for a period on the staff of an Emergency Training College; she has been head teacher of Silverthorne secondary school for girls since 1953. A past president of the National Union of Women Teachers, Mrs. McMillan is now president of Camberwell and District Association of the N.U.T.*

In the chapters relating to the 'School-leaving Age and the Individual', the Crowther Report says, 'Inevitably there is a strong vocational flavour to

what boys and girls value most in secondary education. Before the end of the secondary course they have reached the stage when they desire to see the

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relevance of what they are doing in school to what they will be doing when they leave school. They are anxious to see a purpose in education, and this anxiety seems to us wholly natural.'

From my experience I believe this to be particularly important for boys and girls in the secondary modern schools, and the early troubles that beset many in these schools can be traced mainly to the lack of purpose.

It was in an effort to meet this need that we in my present school began to organise special courses for girls in their fourth and fifth years.

Before working out the details of such courses, it was necessary to make an analysis of the jobs taken up by the girls who had previously left the school, and of the opportunities offered for careers in the immediate locality, and in the centre of London. Silverthorne school is a girls' school in South-East London, in the midst of an industrial working-class district. There are a variety of factories and small workshops in the vicinity, large shopping-centres are nearby, and the homes of the girls are within easy reach of the City and the West-End of London.

Previously, the pupils leaving school had drifted casually into a number of jobs. A small group of the more able girls had entered offices, a large group had taken up jobs in the local small workshops as machinists, or packers in various factories, some had taken up trades, such as bookbinding, and a large number had become shop assistants in the various shopping-centres. It was an analysis of these occupations that set the direction for our special courses in the fourth and fifth years.

These courses all have a vocational bias, but the important thing is to develop courses not too narrowly vocational in content, and to ensure that general education, including art, music and drama, is continued. An interesting report was published early this year by an International Advisory Committee on School Curriculum held in UNESCO House in Paris, which stated that: 'In considering the claims of liberal and vocational education, the Committee agrees that there is no basic dualism between the two—both can contribute in their characteristic ways to the education of the total personality—and the specialised subjects, if taught with vision, can train the mind and develop new ranges of interest.'

This is what we are trying to do in our school, to approach the special courses with vision, and to develop new ranges of interest. Every girl in her fourth year begins a special course. For the first three years the content of the curriculum is similar to that of most secondary schools. During the third year the Youth Employment Officer visits the school,

and discusses with the girls the opportunities that exist, both locally and in Central London, for girls leaving school, relating these opportunities specifically to the courses undertaken in the school. Then the teachers in charge of the special courses discuss the content of the courses with the girls, who complete a questionnaire relating to their own interests and aptitudes. Finally, meetings are called of the parents of the third-year girls, a description of the aims and purpose of the special courses is given, and parents and teachers discuss each girl separately and the relative special course is chosen.

### **Two-year courses**

There are four such courses. All are planned for two years and all lead to an external examination. It is important that all should lead to a final examination, for although a minority only—but a growing minority—complete the full two years and take the external examination, it does ensure parity of esteem for all courses.

The courses are either commercial or technical. There are three courses organised by the commerce department—one a secretarial course, including commerce, shorthand and typewriting, a second is a course for a variety of jobs that can be undertaken in offices, including copy-typing and general office duties, and the third is a course in retail distribution. This latter is a course which we started in our school as a pioneer venture, but which is now being developed in various ways in schools in other parts of the country. Finally, for girls with a practical interest who wish to work with machines, a needle-trades and dressmaking course is available. Formerly, only the girls taking the secretarial course worked for external examinations, but now some girls in each course reach examination level each year. Those taking the first two commerce courses enter for a range of subjects including shorthand, typewriting, English and arithmetic in the examinations organised by the Royal Society of Arts and the London Chamber of Commerce. Those taking the needle-trades course work specifically for 'Dress' in the G.C.E., while the girls taking Retail Distribution work for the Junior National Certificate in Retail Distribution.

Although the very large majority of the girls in the school are what would usually be termed typical 'secondary modern girls', with I.Q.s between 100 and 80 in their junior leaving examination report, their quickening interest awakened by the special courses have enabled many to reach a remarkably high standard. Our results in the commercial examinations are good, and this encouraged us to undertake preparation for a wider group of

subjects in the G.C.E. Three years ago we started this development, and now girls from all courses are able, in addition to their special subjects, to take any of this wider range of subjects according to their ability. At the moment we are entering girls for English language, English literature, religious education, human biology, and art in the G.C.E., and next year we hope to include domestic science, history and geography.

The scope of this article does not make it possible for me to include a full description of all of these courses. Suffice it to say that we have attempted to plan them all on a wide educational basis, not too narrowly vocational and with vision. I would like to conclude with a full account of our Retail Distribution course, which may be of help to others planning such courses.

The commercial content of this course is under the supervision of the teacher in charge of the commerce department and it is based upon an understanding of the growth of trade and commerce from the early days of the country fair to the development of the department store. The syllabus includes a study of the functions in retailing, e.g. buying and selling, despatch, maintenance, equipment, the contact between seller and buyer, a general understanding of the finance of the trade, and staffing and general management. It is interesting to point out in passing that the retail trade engages more school-leavers each year than any other trade or industry.

Collaborating closely with the commerce department in this course are the art and science departments. A visiting specialist art teacher, whose main work is connected with design in a leading London studio, attends for one day each week to train the girls in design, display and lettering. Under his guidance those taking this course now make their own models for window-dressing, and display fittings. Fabric printing is another important aspect of this work.

The science syllabus includes a special course on textiles with scientific understanding of the different fabrics, both natural and synthetic. The girls classify fabrics and test for shrinkage, dyeing and durability. Another part of this course is a special study of cosmetics, and during their science lessons they make powders, creams, lip-sticks, eye-shadow and so on. The third main special study undertaken in this course is an examination of bacteriology, and cleanliness related to food packaging and preservation.

The history and geography is built round the development of London as a centre of trade and commerce, with special reference to the markets of

London, the Pool of London, the location of specific industries, the City and the main railway terminals. Finally, in the course of English lessons the girls compose 'counter conversations' which are first written and then spoken during their oral lessons and tape-recorded. This is very valuable from the point of view of self-expression and developing confidence. Letters, which they are trained to write, to firms all over the country, become realistic, as they appeal for stock, and acknowledge receipt of gifts sent or lent. Every year the work culminates in a special display on 'Open Day', which have included such projects as a Fabric Fair, a Departmental Store, The Furnishing of a Bungalow, and this year we are working on a project under the title of 'Fabrics and Fashion'.

### **The school transformed**

When we began these courses, we were working in very difficult circumstances, in an old building built in 1878, with no specialist rooms. Since then we have acquired a second building, which was erected soon after the beginning of this century, but which has been modernised for our requirements. We now have a very fine commerce room, a large needle-trades room, and a hall has been adapted for a large store, with windows to dress, store-fittings and a stockroom. All of these rooms are very well equipped, and this has proved a tremendous stimulation to the girls. Previously it was customary for our most able girls to take the secretarial course, and the less able to take the other courses. Now, with a realisation of the opportunities that exist in the retail and other trades for girls who are looking for a career and eager to qualify themselves, we find that each course attracts some more able girls and they are fixing their sights on a variety of jobs that offer opportunities of promotion and interest. Girls leaving school this summer are taking up posts in banks, the civil service, a variety of offices in the City, in large stores in the West-End of London, and in the retail dressmaking and clothing trades. At the present moment we cannot satisfy the requests for girls which we receive from a variety of firms that have employed our pupils in recent years.

I would conclude by pointing out that the special courses take up about one-quarter to one-third of the week's lessons. In developing these new 'ranges of interest' we are very careful to continue the development of the 'total personality' by ensuring that the curriculum includes a wide variety of subjects. There is no doubt that the introduction of these special courses have given an aim to the older girls, and transformed the work throughout the school.

# Comprehensive Education and the Canadian High School

NANETTE WHITBREAD

*Miss Whitbread has taught in secondary modern and other types of school, including an L.C.C. 'Interim' comprehensive school. She is head of the history and geography departments at Nightingale county secondary school, Wanstead, and has just returned from a year's leave of absence teaching in Rosemount high school, Montreal.*

During discussions on comprehensive schools some-one invariably states, 'After all, ours is the only country with a tripartite system: other countries have some form of common school.' At first glance a Canadian high school seems very like an English comprehensive. It takes all the children from all the neighbouring elementary schools; the number of pupils ranges from one to two thousand—I taught in one which has approximately 1,400 on roll. The specialist and vocational training rooms include typing rooms with a model office, printing, metal-work, motor mechanic's shop, cookery rooms fitted with unit kitchens and a domestic science flat, needlework and dressmaking, as well as the art room and science laboratories.

In a large city such as Montreal there are several high schools. Since these operate on a regional basis, they reflect the dominant social class of the area: mine was almost exclusively working and lower middle class, another predominantly business and professional, while others may include a broader cross-section. This is an inevitable result of the way cities tend to segregate within themselves along the broad lines of class divisions.

Nevertheless, the Canadian high school has the human and physical basis of a common or comprehensive school. Let us see how the system works in practice in one of the schools of the Montreal Protestant School Board.

There is no selection examination as such, as soon as a child has passed the school examinations for the seventh grade, he automatically goes to high school (aged 13 or over). But sometime in grade VII he has done an intelligence test, and standardised tests in reading and arithmetic (and French in Quebec); the results reach the high school on his final report card. On the basis of these, with particular attention to his I.Q., he is directed to follow one of four courses—Latin, Science, Commercial, Practical. For the 1959 grade VIII entry there were two Latin, six science, six Commercial and two

Practical classes. It is easy to see that these divisions are a form of streaming and roughly correspond to the English bi-partite system: the Latin groups follow the more academic or grammar course, the Science, Commercial and Practical groups equate with secondary modern. In grade IX the Commercial are sub-divided into 1, 2, 3, according to competence. The children are, of course, aware of the significance of these groupings. Most of the Practical classes have lost heart from the day they are registered in those classes.

## Disguised streaming

Then there is the further disguised form of streaming which operates throughout all grades of elementary and high school in almost every province, and which presents its own peculiar teaching problems. A child must obtain a specified average percentage in the final examination mark at the end of each grade. If he fails to do this he cannot pass on to the next grade, but must repeat the same grade. Thus, most classes contain a certain number of 'repeaters', who are older than the rest and often likely to be bored. Since some have repeated nearly every grade, the age range in certain classes is enormous, especially in the Commercial and Practical. A 'repeater' who fails the same grade a second time may be moved down a classification. Stream promotion beyond grade VIII is rare because the courses then diverge. Promotion from a Practical, or into a Latin, class is almost impossible even during grade VIII, because the Practical is much watered-down with syllabuses that are largely modified repetitions of grades VI and VII.

From this it will be clear that the Canadian high school, despite its outward form, is far from being a common school. It is comprehensive only in so far as it comprehends a variety of elements within its four walls. I have taught in one English secondary modern that is, in its internal organisation and character, more truly comprehensive; and I have taught in a London interim comprehensive that deserved the title very little more than the Montreal school. Yet it would be relatively simple, with a change in intention and organisation, to transform both the latter so that they could provide genuinely comprehensive education.

Many Canadian high school teachers are very much aware of the shortcomings of their own system. They know that standards are low compared with Britain or Europe. Without being in the least complacent about wasted potential in English schools, I can say that the Canadian grade VIII level of attainment is about equivalent, stream for stream, to English first year secondary, although the normal age for entering high school in

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grade VIII is thirteen or over. In staffrooms and official educational circles there are continual discussions on why standards are low, and of various experimental schemes.

As in Britain, sides are taken on the question of streaming. There is the cry for more, and more rigid classification by I.Q. At present discussion centres round *Subject Promotion*, with which some schools are now experimenting. This is practised in Alberta and British Columbia, and is to be introduced experimentally in two Montreal high schools next year. Briefly, this scheme involves individual timetables, with children progressing from grade to grade or repeating a grade as their competence in each subject permits: thus, a third year pupil might be taking 3 or 4 subjects in Grade X, 2 or 3 in IX and 1 or 2 in VIII. This must result in classes with a wide age range and of homogeneous rather than mixed ability. Other schools arrange 'accelerated classes' for a select group of children who can be made to cover much of the work of two grades in one year. These are all variants on the principle of streaming. Canadians hardly seem to question the advantage of this principle; they have nowhere yet seen it in full practice to know the effect on morale.

These schemes are all directed towards enabling the quickest, or most gifted or favourably environed, children to forge ahead in a highly competitive society. Undoubtedly this is a practical issue: we must be fair to the élite as well as to the majority and to the less fortunate.

Voices are also raised to suggest that the abler children should be enabled to use their advantages to enjoy a fuller and richer education. This is much more difficult within the rigidly bureaucratic Montreal protestant system, even with its formally common school, than in the more flexible English system, whether divided or comprehensive. In Canada the provincial or city school board prescribes the curriculum, syllabuses and textbooks, leaving little scope for divergence or experimental initiative by individual schools or teachers. Every class, except Practical, in each grade in all the Montreal protestant high schools must write examinations set exclusively on the prescribed sections of the official textbooks. This is a restriction which should obviously be modified, and which fortunately does not affect schools in Britain. It might, however, be argued that in Britain rather more co-ordination is desirable between secondary schools in an area, especially where attempts can be made to operate a more flexibly comprehensive system through existing differing types of schools.

The main arguments must surely centre round the requirements of the vast majority. How does the 'average' child fare in Montreal as compared with

London schools? Officially and superficially the emphasis in Canada is on the 'democratic' need to set standards which will enable the majority of average children to pass. Hence the emphasis on common examinations, and hence, too, the enormous emphasis on marks in thrice-yearly examinations throughout high school. This approach has also led to the stress on 'objective-type' questions requiring one-word answers, and consequently to a great deal of teaching directed to the memorising of facts rather than to reasoning and understanding. In practice this so-called democratic attitude results in dull teaching: notes are dictated or copied from the board so that everyone has exactly the same material to learn, and so that those who cannot phrase by themselves are not at a disadvantage; only the bare facts are taught, without the interesting 'why's' and 'wherefore's' and background atmosphere; children are taught *what* to think rather than *how* to think. There seems to be little training in independent work, and self-expression is mainly restricted to the weekly composition lesson.

#### **Form and content**

It should hardly need stating that none of this is a necessary result of attempting to provide a common education for all children. It is the result of a contemptuous attitude towards the capabilities of the 'average' child, such as one finds, too, in some bad English secondary modern schools. It also reflects the lack of a sound human philosophy of education—which is also largely lacking in Britain, despite the fine platitudes of 1944, and despite the many notable exceptions which we hope may prove the rule.

Both Canada and Britain are faced with the problem of providing mass secondary education to a whole generation for the first time. On parents' evenings in both countries the majority of parents I have met had not themselves received any formal education beyond elementary. In both countries we find that, despite the formal provision, the majority are 'early leavers'. In Quebec protestant schools 45% to 50% reach grade XI, and only 30% to 35% obtain a high school leaving certificate. The Canadian average during 1946-58 for those reaching grade XI was 37%, while 28% did not continue beyond elementary school grade VII. Economic pressures and a feeling that school work is irrelevant to them, or a sense of failure in school, cause many to leave soon after the law allows. The form only of a common school will not alter this, on either side of the Atlantic. Organisation, methods and content of teaching must be redirected if our education is to be made genuinely democratic.

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## Discussion

### *Mr. Rowe Replies*

What hatchets are out where? There was a quite unusually large number of notices of my book. Only *one*, repeat (for Mr. Hopper's exclusive benefit) *one*, hatchet was wielded. This proved to be a two-edged weapon with which a colleague of Mr. Hopper's on the editorial board of FORUM succeeded only in decapitating herself.

Perhaps this was the bitter blow to which Mr. Hopper refers? What I offered was a valedictory gesture, mild as milk and showing a proper respect for the corpse.

I do not understand Mr. Hopper's second paragraph. (Neither, I warrant, does Mr. Hopper.) It is clear, though, that he seeks answers to five questions. Here they are:

1. 'Educational problems are the same everywhere; and they are always different, because the context is different' [Professor Lionel Elvin]. Grant this and two things follow: 'my highly successful experiment' in one context cannot be 'equally suitable and successful' in another context; my educational problems will be the same in the second context as in the first and I am therefore applying the same kind of basic thinking, but much enriched (I trust) by my previous experience, to their solution.

There are signs already that my present school of 800+ will be as successful (and unique) in its own way as my previous school. This will not be for me to judge: in two or three years Mr. Hopper will be very welcome to come and judge for himself.

2. There were three staff changes during my four-and-a-half years at Holmer Green. The three newcomers in their turn had to be, so to say, initiated into our way of educating. They were given time to observe our methods in action, to assess for themselves their success, and to see clearly how they could best use their own talents—professional and personal—to enrich the teaching-learning patterns we were creating. Nothing was more important to the rest of us than to see that they had all the help and sustained encouragement that they needed—and this not least in their adjustment to a particular educational climate.

3. Of course, if child A spends more time on one topic than child B, then he will have less to spend on another topic. 'Study in depth of certain topics, inherent in (*sic*) the job-card method' is also a feature of any worthwhile system of education: it is the teacher's job to keep the balance.

My pages 115 and 116 provide Mr. Hopper with a fuller answer to this part of his question; so does Ronald Morris's invaluable little book, *The Quality of Learning* (Methuen).

In the second part of his question, Mr. Hopper wonders 'also about the limiting factor culturally, in experience and in exercise of the critical faculty in this method when it is applied to music or literature'.

I wonder in turn whether Mr. Hopper has read my

book. I quote from the preface: 'This method can be used successfully by the teacher in the classroom with unstreamed or streamed groups, except in such obvious subjects as physical education, *music and literature*' (my italics).

As for Mr. Hopper's concern for the 'critical faculty', I must point out that *discussion*—critical, appreciative, civilised, what-you-will—is one of the linchpins of the method (see, for instance, pp. 74-79) and far more of it goes on than is possible under the usual methods.

4. The book *passim* supplies the answer; so (dare I whisper it?) does commonsense—any method in any particular subject will be more successful in some teachers' hands than in others, with some children than with others, etc., etc.

5. The numbers of children in one class was never less than 35, never more than 43.

The real danger to educational advance lies in Mr. Hopper's final paragraph: 'few will dissent from the principles Mr. Rowe proclaims, or their practice in part'. (Can principles, by the way, be practised in part?) What we need is a wholesale and radical re-thinking and re-shaping of the education of the average child: and this is what my book is about. A serious study of it will reveal that job-cards are offered as one possible way of embodying this re-thinking and re-shaping in the day-to-day work in the classroom. But 'it would not be fair to conclude what has been said on the job-cards without emphasising that in relation to the teacher they are as the shadow is to the substance; they are but dead things until the experienced and sensitive teacher breathes life into them. They do, however, in our view, ensure that the pupil gets the maximum benefit from his own and his teacher's labours' (p. 88).

And now a word to you, sirs. I take it that the legend above Mr. Hopper's letter was yours. The naïve charms of alliteration and vowel modulation (was it perhaps a rush of Anglo-Saxon blood to the head?) have led you to desert the truth. There is no 'Row over the Rowe Line', but only—if the letters I receive and my experience of lecturing up and down the country be any guide—an intense and practical interest in it.

A. W. ROWE,  
Headmaster, the Margaret Tabor Secondary School,  
Braintree.

### *The Secondary Modern School Continuum*

There are two aspects to education—thinking about it and putting the thoughts into practice: the theory and practice of education. It would be as well if many of those now writing about education would first put their ideas into practice (or get someone else to put them into practice) before they wrote down their ideas.

To the practising teacher it is becoming truly irksome to have presented to him books and articles in which the ideas and thoughts emanate from shallow thinking and have remained untried. I feel like Juvenal:

'Shall I not once attempt to quit the score,  
Always an auditor and nothing more?'

Let me speak.

The article in FORUM (Vol. 2, No. 3) by Cyril Rapstoff on the Bi-Polarity of the Secondary Modern School serves as an excellent example of what I think is bad in educational thinking today.

It is comparatively easy to write an article of this nature. The way to begin such an article, book, lecture, what you will, is to quote some figures from some report. You also quote someone else's platitudes. Then you get into the swim. From these platitudes you proceed to proliferate further platitudes; the proliferations I refer to seem like truth, pass for truth and gain for the perpetrator thereof praise for thought. They are, however, dangerous to those who have not trod the path the author is treading *in imagination only*, and infuriating to those who *have* trodden the path and know at least in part and can, therefore, prophesy in part.

Mr. Rapstoff says of extended courses:

'In view of the inevitable fallibility of selection methods at 10+, the provision of these courses at secondary modern schools must be regarded as a service for those border-liners who, by some misfortune, were placed on the wrong side of the line.'

Now why *must* extended courses be regarded as a *service* for border-liners? Why does he not find out first and *then* say what they are?

They are invaluable to the educational development of those who are prepared to stay on at school and indirectly to the entire school population. Why must they be of value only to 'border-liners'? Why not to anyone who can partake of them as well as to those indirectly affected? And what is meant by referring to those who 'fail' the selective examination as on the *wrong* side of the line? Extended courses differ in content and suit the aptitudes of those who stay on at school: border-liners or the immature backward strugglers. Extended courses are not *all* based on the G.C.E. syllabus. *All* these pupils are probably on the *right* side of the fence.

Why the belief, encouraged by educationalists and teachers and the Press, that to be in the modern school is to be on the wrong side of something? Someone intimately concerned with my school referred to boys who fail the 11+ as being 'thrown to the lions'. Fancy a governor of a school—who ought to know better because he has the chance to walk round and see for himself—referring to my school as the 'lions' den'!

Again the writer of the article with which I am concerned says of the extended course:

'It may also help to raise the standard of work done in at least part of the school.' Why does he not try it and see? I have. It raises the standard of work in *all* parts of the school. If more teachers and headmasters got on with the job of making secondary education in the modern school a reality instead of referring to the 11+ (10+ now) as a 'blow'—there would be no blow to refer to.

But it is easier to write on this subject (especially in vacuo) than to act.

Mr. Rapstoff appears never to have heard or seen, or

bothered to find out about schools which have extended courses that do not involve the G.C.E. at all, and so in fact have pupils able to explore the 'green pastures' at the foot of the G.C.E. Olympus.

I have developed extended courses which follow the G.C.E. syllabus; far from this resulting in less able classes having the poorest teaching, quite the reverse has happened and more and more the less able are asking to remain at school, not to take the G.C.E., but to take courses involving remedial teaching or courses based on some practical activity or centred round some vocational interest. Members on my staff have classes in a number of streams—how otherwise can a 'head of English department', for example, know what is required in the way of English texts, etc., in the 'D' streams?

Why, oh, why, must an extended course be a 'grammar' course? No extended course in my school can be considered a 'grammar' course at all. Take as an example the boy who obtains six 'O' levels made up as follows: metalwork, woodwork, technical drawing, science, English language and mathematics.

Then Mr. Rapstoff does a bit of slumming—popular journalism this—he starts suggesting that café loafers, street corner Teds, inmates of Borstals and prisons might be an indirect (direct?) result of stress given to G.C.E. work in modern schools. But there is, so far as is known, no connection whatever. In fact if, what I believe to be true, the modern school, by careful planning of extended courses (not necessarily G.C.E. courses), encourages pupils to stay at school longer, then the very opposite is likely to take place. *This* is supposition on my part but I have much evidence to prove that what I say is correct.

But this jump into sensationalism allows Mr. Rapstoff to produce his *pièce de résistance*: 'The only solution is a careful balance between these two opposing poles in the modern secondary school.' Well, well. None of us ever thought of that one before, did we? *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. What about in between the poles? Intelligence and ability form a continuum.

We do not—at least I do not—emulate the grammar school. The grammar school has a special function which I, as head of a modern school, would not attempt to usurp. What I think is the greater danger is that grammar schools will perforce ape the modern schools. Unable to cater for *its* backward element it will introduce, nay is introducing, methods and schemes which the modern schools carry out better. The 'D' forms in the grammar schools are the depressed classes—tire and ask to leave; they would be far better off in a modern school with extended courses geared to the various aptitudes of the many. Then they would ask to remain.

The modern school does not wish to teach the grammar school anything.

What the modern school would like is for those who write about it to take the trouble to find out what is really happening in them and to have *faith* in them and try to refrain from referring to those that go there as rejects.

K. PORTMAN,

Headmaster, Secondary School for Boys,  
Thomas Road, Clacton-on-Sea.

## *Polarity or Continuum?*

A REPLY BY MR. RAPSTOFF

*(Mr. Rapstoff has taught in a modern school and been head of a junior school; he is at present senior remedial teacher in the School Psychological Service of the city of Birmingham.)*

Vituperation is no equivalent for debate; invective is no camouflage for self-appraisal; yet Mr. Portman clearly seems to think so. He has not followed my argument, nor answered it.

In his jealous indignation for parity of esteem he has failed to recognise a practising teacher as anxious as he for parity—if not as indignant.

I cannot see, however, that such parity can be attained by inflating examination records. It is doomed from the start unless selection methods deteriorate and selection percentages fall. There is no sign of either of these. Yet such examination triumphs are the single vision pursued by some modern school heads. I attempted to show this was an evil, and that such an outcome was likely, though not, I hope, inevitable, with external examinations.

Mr. Portman has offered no evidence to disprove the contention that *whatever* courses are taken, the G.C.E. will become *the* criterion of educational success among them. In fact, when he writes of the indirect effects of extended courses, does he not mean that children who measure themselves against the externally-examinable élite benefit from the process? The striving *may* be beneficial for some, but the often well-publicised process of sifting and shifting within the school can hardly be beneficial to the unchosen.

'More and more,' says Mr. Portman, 'the less able are asking to remain at school, not to take G.C.E. but . . . remedial teaching . . . practical activity . . . or vocational interest.' He does *not* say the proportions from the two ends of the continuum, but Crowther does. On page 69 we read, 'Most . . . pupils in extended courses are drawn from 'A' streams.' Even this is probably euphemistic.

I am accused of stating platitudes; this from one who writes, 'Intelligence forms a continuum'! What Mr. Portman has failed to disprove is that external examination fever tends to polarise this continuum into the examinable (no matter in what) and the non-examinable.

To suggest a connection between stress on examination work and anti-social behaviour is stigmatised as 'popular journalism'. Can it be that Mr. Portman has never heard of the relationship between delinquency and scholastic failure? (cf. Burt, Trennaman and, recently, Ferguson in *The Young Delinquent in his*

*Social Setting*). The 'journalistic' conclusion reached from these 'popular' sources was that if examination success, or even eligibility, is to be made the criterion of educational achievement, 50% of the modern school population are 'failed' at the outset; not a promising start for the process of socialisation and education.

External examinations will not solve the difficult problem of what and how to teach the second and third quartiles in the corrupting age of mass-media. Nor does Mr. Portman convince that external examinations for the 'cream' of these strata will rebound to the benefit of the remainder.

CYRIL RAPSTOFF.

## *Science Books for Juniors*

Since writing my review-article on this topic over six months ago, the situation has improved considerably so far as British-written books are concerned. The first books in three new series have appeared and at least three other publishers have a Junior Science series planned.\* I was well aware of this improving situation when I wrote my article, but the books were not then available for review and consequently were not mentioned.

No British publisher is prepared to produce Junior Science books as lavish and costly as some of the American series but some of them have, wisely I think, decided to act as distributors for these well-produced American books to satisfy the growing demand. Other publishers, who are as sensitive to the changing curricula of our schools as anyone, are making some effort to produce the textbook and reference material which we require.

Perhaps, as Mr. G. Price mentioned in the last issue of FORUM, there might have been some editing of the American books before they were made available to schools here, and I know that this has been done in one set. However, as he knows very well, one of the most popular books in introductory science at the moment is a translation from the Dutch original. There is a place for good books in Junior Science from all countries in our schools, either in translation or as originals. Indeed, an excellent series of Information books have just been published by Harraps (entitled *This Wonderful World*) and these have been translated from the original French!

ERIC LINFIELD.

\* Series published, with Book I or more: *Challenge Science*, Hamish Hamilton; *Science from the Beginning*, Oliver and Boyd; *Natural Science*, Schofield and Sims. Series planned: *Junior Natural Science*, Collins; *Science in Action*, University of London Press; *Starting Science*, Chambers.

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R. W. DARGAVEL

*Mr. Dargavel taught in various schools in Newcastle upon Tyne before joining—in 1946—the staff of the National Union of Teachers as Regional Official for the four Northern counties. He serves as a co-opted member of Newcastle Education Committee and is Chairman of the Governors of the College of Further Education.*

English education, like the English climate, is notable for its diversity, and previous reviews published in FORUM have underlined this characteristic. Even so, it is doubtful whether any area can show such a wide range of geographical and social differences as the area between Tees and Tweed. Within a fifteen mile radius of Newcastle upon Tyne, the natural centre of the region, almost a million people live and work, and Tees-side is becoming as completely urbanised. Between these two areas lies Durham, a county of small townships, linked by straggling mining villages and fringed by a heavily populated coastal area. Stretching northwards from Tyneside to the Scottish border is the rich agricultural area of Northumberland, as thinly populated in its northern and western extremes as any county in the country. The whole constitutes an administrative nightmare.

Educationally speaking, the area is a microcosm of England. The uneven distribution of population, the heritage of the lean pre-war years, the mushroom growth of new industries, the changing social habits of the people—these are the factors governing the educational development which is observable on every hand.

### Durham County

The county has a long and honourable tradition in the generous provision of educational facilities—the implied tribute of those engaged in local government to whom education has meant so much. Following the Hadow report, tentative experiments with upper standard schools were made, and these have clung tenaciously to their status, if not their name. Nevertheless, it is only in the past ten years that really giant strides have been made to complete reorganisation, and this is now in sight. Despite its radical tradition the county did not, in preparing its original development plan, pin its faith to comprehensive or multilateral solutions. It was anticipated that for the most part the needs of the county would be best served by a system of grammar-technical and modern schools, with a tripartite provision in the highly industrial areas. Time and circumstances have produced considerable variations on this

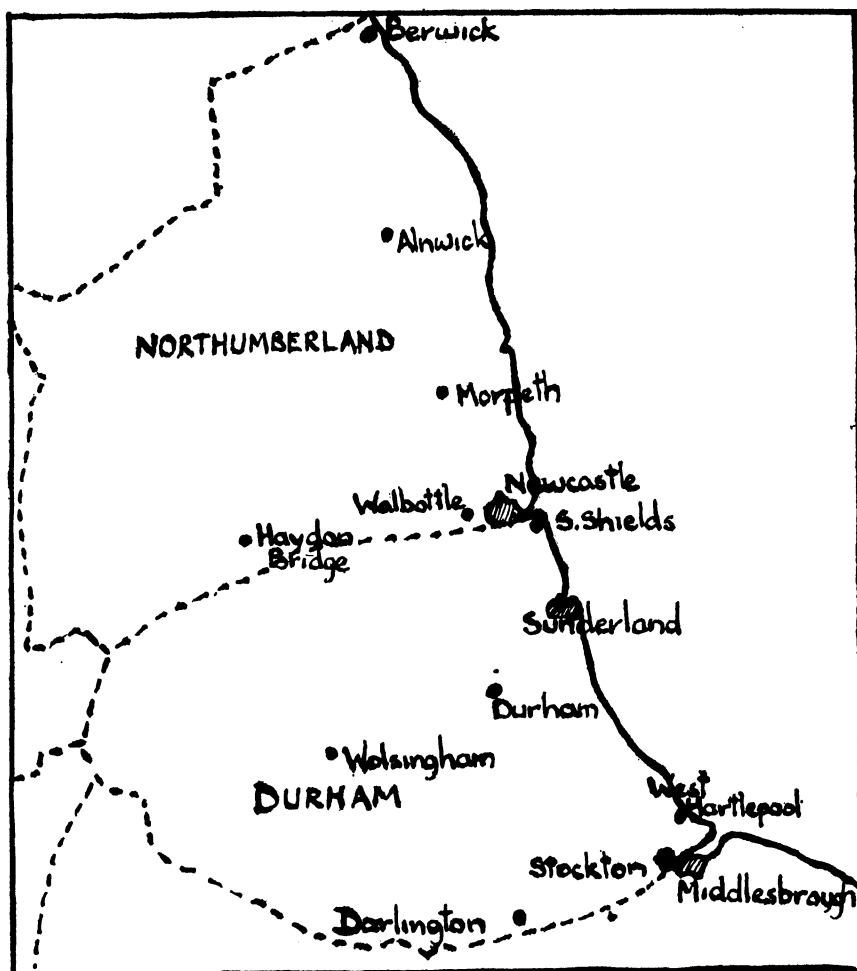
theme. Certain modern schools (about 50 in number) have established G.C.E. courses to which selected pupils can transfer at 13 from schools in adjacent areas. A similar number of modern schools have become centres providing technical and commercial courses. Concurrently, there has been a considerable expansion of the existing grammar and grammar-technical schools, so that the present selected entry is about 20%.

Three years ago a deputation of the county education committee visited a number of areas where comprehensive units have been established. The resultant report suggested that, as the tempo of reorganisation was built up, some provision might be made for comprehensive and multilateral schools, and named certain localities in which geographical factors favoured experiment.

In fulfilment of this proposal, the county has established its first comprehensive school at Wolsingham. The grammar school in this small Weardale town was being rebuilt as a three-form grammar-technical school, and at the same time a new three-form modern school was nearing completion. The combination of these two into one unit, drawing children from the whole length of Weardale, is a development being watched with interest.

In the south-east corner of the county, the authority was faced by a similar problem in quite different terms. At Billingham, the rapid growth of I.C.I. has created and is still creating a tremendous demand for housing and educational facilities. It was planned to meet the needs of the area by the erection of four three-form entry modern schools, and one five-form entry grammar-technical school, quite close together. A survey of sites revealed the possibility of campus development, and this is now well in train. The group, made up of five 'Halls', with one governing body, share gymnasium, playing fields, canteens and swimming bath. Over and above this, the Halls will aim at the closest possible integration of courses and emphasis is laid on ease of transfer of children. Currently, the authority is shaping arrangements for multilateral units at Durham and at Bishop Auckland.

It will be seen that though selection processes



continue in County Durham, strenuous efforts are being made to negative its worst effects. Flexibility and freshness are keynotes of the administrators' thinking, and there is every chance that these qualities will be reflected in organisation at all stages in the educational service.

#### Northumberland

The original development plan proposed considerable development in the secondary modern field by the provision of some 16,000 places in new and remodelled schools, and new grammar schools to be built at Morpeth and Gosforth. Technical secondary schools were planned at Alnwick, Ashington, Blyth, Whitley Bay, Gosforth and Prudhoe. In the event only one technical school, in the excepted district of Wallsend, has been built, but many modern schools are developing excellent technical

courses. The projected new grammar school (two-form entry) in the Gosforth area has been built and the Lemington grammar school has been replaced by a new structure a few miles away at Walbottle. Special mention should be given to the provision of courses with agricultural and rural bias at the Shaftoe Trust School in the mid-Tyne village of Haydon Bridge. The demand for places in this school necessitates a high degree of selection.

By tradition, secondary provision in the county has been tripartite, and it was in this tradition that the development plan was conceived. Like most development plans, however, unforeseen problems and the impact of events elsewhere have necessitated modification. It is likely that for some time selection processes—constantly under revision in the county—will provide the pupils for the dozen or so smallish grammar schools, some single sexed, some

'mixed', but there are signs of solutions other than the tripartite division finding favour. It may well be that the campus project now being developed at Walbottle—some three miles west of the Newcastle upon Tyne boundary—may establish a pattern that will be copied elsewhere. Housing developments in that area, and the need for reorganisation of 'all-through' schools, created a demand for at least two five-form entry modern schools. In addition, there was an urgent need to replace the buildings accommodating Lemington grammar school which served the needs of the urbanised strip along the north bank of the Tyne. At the appropriate moment, the authority was able to acquire a 30-acre site at Walbottle, and here a four-form entry grammar school and two five-form entry modern schools have been built and are now functioning. The site is set astride the fosse which fronted the Roman Wall at this point, and to it about 450 of the total school population of 2,000 children are transported by bus, from an area measuring six miles by six miles.

As one of the modern schools has been in existence barely a year, it can hardly be expected that the campus pattern has been firmly established. There is already an interchange of pupils between all three schools for certain 'settled' subjects in the first two years, and a joint G.C.E. course for borderline children has been started.

There is obvious good will between the three headmasters concerned and already—besides the common use of playing fields and other facilities—extraneous activities are being organised on a joint basis.

Other localities in the county, such as Gosforth, Blyth and Alnwick, suggest themselves as offering scope for campus development, and it is noticeable that at Berwick and at Morpeth, secondary provision has been made by building two almost identical blocks on adjoining sites. Nearly all the schools are entering pupils for newly constituted Northern Counties School Certificate Examination, and there is a general feeling in the county that external examinations are a powerful incentive in the schools.

### **Newcastle upon Tyne**

Like many other places, Newcastle has reason to lament the years that the locusts ate, between the wars. The city has always been well endowed in the matter of independent schools and the Royal Grammar School, Dame Allan's School, the Central High School and the Church High School (in addition to R.C. grammar schools for girls and for boys) have long met the needs of a community stretching well outside the city boundaries, and have undoubtedly attracted a high proportion of the

available ability. However, the four L.E.A. grammar and high schools, Rutherford and High Heaton, each with a four-form entry, are well established and highly regarded. As might be expected in a city with such distinct affiliations with heavy engineering and with the chemical industry, technical education has always been a feature of the educational landscape. Atkinson Road and Heaton Technical schools, taking pupils (boys only) at 13+ had a distinctive if rather narrowly conceived function. The early stages of Hadow reorganisation added two new establishments, commercial-technical schools for both boys and girls. In other respects, reorganisation proceeded slowly and the original development plan made no proposals which departed radically from the established pattern.

A switch of political power in 1958 produced a change of approach and aroused much controversy locally. Revised proposals set out, as a long-term objective, the embodiment of secondary provision for the whole city in eight comprehensive units. With the new buildings for the Rutherford grammar schools, and also two other large units to replace the old secondary technical schools, nearing completion, it was obvious that a substantial start might be made towards the fulfilment of the plan. Not unexpectedly the plan, when published as a general guide to development, aroused considerable opposition, not least among teachers engaged in the service. It was clear, too, that Ministerial objections would prevent the scheme coming to fruition in measurable time. However, some small contribution to the final pattern has proved possible, and is arousing great interest.

In addition to the replacement and remodelling of the ten schools taking 'selected' children, the authority also had on the stocks two four-form entry secondary modern schools (boys and girls) to meet the needs of a large new housing estate at Kenton, on the north-west boundary of the city. Ministerial permission was granted for the amalgamation of these two schools into one unit. This school opened at Easter as the Kenton secondary school. Except that pupils 'selected' at 11 for transfer to the appropriate grammar schools can opt out, the Kenton school is comprehensive in concept and has been staffed and equipped with this in mind.

Obviously, with a total secondary entry of something like 44 forms already provided for in new, or nearly new, premises, and with organisation of VIth form work in eleven of the authority's secondary schools, the material provisions for the 11-18 age group are well advanced.

Work is proceeding rapidly on the redeployment of the city's housing and this will call for further secondary provision at an early date. Of necessity,

sites for school building will have to be found on the extreme edges of the city. The sites available are few in number but of reasonable acreage. Not unexpectedly, therefore, the first two places in the list of priority building are taken up by two 12-form entry secondary units.

### **Sunderland**

The tripartite pattern is traditional in Sunderland. The Bede grammar schools (boys: five-form entry; girls: four-form entry) are well-established schools with an excellent tradition, and as befits a borough with such well marked industrial interests, it is natural that the boys' technical school should long have been a feature of the educational provision. More recently it has been found necessary to establish another mixed grammar school to serve the area north of the River Wear and a girls' technical school. The older part of the borough, south of the river, is well served, with something like 27% selective places for the age group. New estates north of the river offered a new challenge. The committee has responded to this by planning two comprehensive units at Seaburn and Red House and a new eight-form school at Castle View, possibly to be comprehensive. When this scheme comes to fruition the river will be the boundary between the northern half of the borough, served in the main by comprehensive schools, and the southern half with its tripartite features unaltered. Extended non-G.C.E. courses and the requirements of the Northern Counties

School Certificate examination are proving valuable incentives to longer school life, if only to complete the fourth year.

### **Darlington**

In general outline, the pre-1945 arrangements for secondary education still exists, but a closer examination shows that, in Darlington as elsewhere, a reconsideration of purpose and method at this stage has had its impact on the schools. The old-established Queen Elizabeth Grammar School for boys stands high in the affection of the town, and its defenders were quickly into action when recent proposals for reorganisation seemed to threaten its pre-eminence. Two years ago, with the Labour Party in power, the Town Council approved the establishment of a comprehensive school at Branksome, but the forces arraigned against the scheme have compelled its withdrawal and the school—now nearing completion—will take an unselected entry. The grammar school and the parallel girls' high school are being extended, each to take a four-form entry, but the secondary technical school, which at present draws its pupils from a 13+ selection, will be allowed to 'run down'. Every effort is being made to secure a flexible arrangement whereby G.C.E. and other extended courses will be normal features of all secondary schools. Head teachers of the schools concerned will consult on transfer (two-way) of suitable children at any stage in the secondary course.

## **Examinations in Secondary Schools**

A. E. HOWARD

*Mr. Howard is headmaster of Forest Hill (Comprehensive) school, London.*

Following the publication of the Crowther Report the subject of examinations in secondary schools is now very topical and it is a well-known fact that two committees have been considering the problem for some time and are soon to produce reports. One of these committees is reviewing the G.C.E. system, particularly at the Advanced and Scholarship levels, and the other is specially concerned with examinations for the 'secondary modern' pupil.

As I write this article, neither report has been published, so it is impossible to comment on their findings, but the main lines of the argument in each

case are fairly well known, so that I hope my suggestions will be appropriate.

### **The Various G.C.E. Examinations**

The pattern of the G.C.E. examinations at all levels is now well established and widely known. With all its faults—and it has some!—the examination at 'O' level has become such an integral part of the secondary education of this country that nothing short of a major upheaval could really alter the system. Indeed, any changes, other than of detail, would be very largely resisted by the schools them-

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selves, especially by the teachers in the grammar schools.

Perhaps the worst effect of the 'O' level examination is that it has come to be recognised as a 'school-leaving certificate' in a much wider context than was originally intended. Since it was designed to select students for advanced courses of various kinds, it is obvious that passes in certain defined subjects should be acceptable for exemption from the preliminary examinations of many well-known professional organisations. However, this has tended to get a little out of hand and we now find that many employers, both local and national, are demanding success in this examination as a pre-requisite for offering apprenticeships and other openings in industry and commerce.

Of the examination itself, it is pleasing to note that many more subjects are now available and that, in some Examining Boards, a wider approach to syllabuses and types of questions are evident, though it is still a truism to say that the G.C.E. examination is essentially academic. In spite of this fact, however, far more children than is sometimes thought in official circles, can be quite successful in obtaining good results.

All is not well with the 'A' and 'S' level examinations. These have become highly selective for entry to universities where the policy seems to be exclusion rather than inclusion. Because of this, syllabuses have increased in content to an almost impossible degree with the result that a common complaint one hears is 'undergraduate scientists are almost illiterate and Arts men have no elementary knowledge of the scientific world in which they live'. This, of course, is bound to be the ultimate result when the pressure by the universities themselves is such that sixth-form pupils are compelled to spend the whole of their time on the specialist subjects they are studying to the exclusion of any wider reading.

It would seem evident, therefore, that one of the first recommendations of this committee must be the drastic pruning of syllabuses in specialist subjects to allow these highly intelligent pupils to progress with their 'general education' to the mutual benefit of both themselves and the community. Certain Examining Boards are already experimenting with General Papers at 'A' and 'S' levels and this I would applaud provided that equivalent reductions are made in the specialist subject syllabuses as suggested above.

Another reform at these levels seems obvious. Not all pupils who sit the 'A' level examination do so with the intention of entering a university. In some cases they may be contemplating further education at a College of Advanced Technology or taking the examination as a further step towards gaining pro-

fessional qualifications. It would appear, therefore, that some differentiation between the purposes for which the examination is being taken should be considered. In my opinion, a recommendation should be made for general 'A' level papers in all subjects with 'special' papers, separately assessed and possibly not taken until one year later than the others, for those wishing to obtain entry to a university. A complementary reform to this is that passes should be awarded in 'grades' so that the actual marks obtained by a candidate are not available to a university when he is being considered for entry. Although there are obvious difficulties here we shall, at least, be spared the rather undignified procedure which happens at present when 'mark grubbing' to attain a somewhat fictitious 66% in all subjects is forced upon the unfortunate candidate before he can hope for a place.

I have dealt with the problems of the various G.C.E. examinations as the first part of this article because this field is well known and the difficulties widely appreciated. This is, however, but one aspect of the whole question of examinations in secondary schools. We must consider in some detail the more complex question of what is broadly defined as the 'secondary modern child'. As the headmaster of a comprehensive school, I particularly dislike this term, but it is, at least, recognisable.

First we need to examine the whole background of examinations in secondary modern schools before suggesting ways and means by which the problem can be solved.

### **Why Examinations in Modern Schools?**

When secondary modern schools were set up by the Education Act of 1944, many well-intentioned and forward-thinking educationalists threw their not-inconsiderable weight into the argument and pronounced that the conspicuous feature of these schools should be that 'they must not be fettered by the external examination as are the grammar and technical schools'. It was felt that without these limitations it would be possible for any secondary modern school to develop in the way in which its own particular circumstances best suited it. It could plan its own syllabuses; it could relate its curricula to its own immediate environment and it could arrange within its own portals what methods of testing progress were thought desirable.

And yet today, 16 years after the Act came into being, I am writing on 'Examinations in Modern Schools'. [Incidentally, it is interesting to note in this connection, that the then Minister of Education in his circular setting up the various arrangements for the General Certificate of Education, did indicate, in

the second and least-read part of the circular, that he would be enquiring into what arrangements were being made by individual schools or by groups of schools to arrange suitable examinations in all secondary schools.]

I feel it is important to investigate this change of heart and undoubted demand for examinations. There are, no doubt, many reasons behind it, and very good educational reasons at that. Some of these are:

1. The essential need for an aim or a target.
2. The value to both teacher and pupil of an independent assessment.
3. The 'competitive nature' of human development.
4. The value of a recognised 'piece of paper' for the purposes of future employment and further education.
5. The stimulus and orderliness which an examination curriculum can provide.
6. The desire for 'Parity of Esteem'.

Of these, undoubtedly the first is the most important, but the others cannot be neglected for, at least, they provide a clue to the type of examination which should be organised and the way in which future developments should be made. Most of the reasons cited above are self-evident, but I feel further explanation is required for number 6. There has been much talk about the idea of 'Parity of Esteem' between the various kinds of secondary schools so that, in particular, parents, as well as pupils, shall not feel that the end of the world has come if their sons or daughters fail to gain a place in a grammar school as a result of the 'eleven plus'. Most parents have some slight idea of the meaning of the G.C.E., certainly they have no doubt about its value in opening the doors to various professions. Perhaps, too, these ideas have been fanned by certain employers who have demanded 'the G.C.E.' for apprenticeships and other openings in their concerns for which this particular examination was never intended nor, in fact, was ever likely to be of value.

I have, indeed, known secondary modern schools where the head and staff have been virtually forced to introduce a 'G.C.E. stream' by pressure of the parents who no doubt in their turn were influenced by economic pressure outside. Equally, of course, there are many heads of modern schools who have willingly and, in my judgment, quite rightly introduced the G.C.E. into their schools, having decided that it is quite wrong to deny opportunities to children simply because of somewhat haphazard selection at 11+ which can vary between 12 to 15% in certain suburban areas to over 50% in other places and which, in any case, makes no allowance for future development. Being in a comprehensive

school myself, I feel I am in a particularly happy position to comment on this aspect.

Whatever the reason, the motive is the same, i.e. to secure some measure of that 'parity of esteem'—so much talked about but so little in evidence.

There is no doubt that the main reason for the introduction of examinations into modern schools is, however, to provide a target or an aim. Vague phrases like 'our object is to provide a good general education', whilst expressing the right ideal need further definition. What constitutes a good general education and what evidence is there to prove it? Parents and employers require something more than a statement from the school—maybe they shouldn't, but they do—and in any case these statements need reading in the right context. Furthermore, and this is the most important point of all, a target to be aimed at by the pupil provides the incentive for a better all-round attitude to work and to the school in general. This is reflected in the tone of the school and must, I feel, have some lasting effect on the pupil himself. At least he will see that there is some purpose in life and that aimless drifting will bring no reward. It is this very fact which can point the way to the type of examination which should be provided.

### Courses and Examinations

One cannot consider examinations *in vacuo*. An examination is the culmination of a course and so it is to courses that we must first turn. In my opinion, the most significant factor in secondary education at the present day is the influence of the 'vocational motive'. In the first instance, certain modern schools attempted to copy grammar schools and provide a somewhat watered-down academic education. This may have been a laudable ideal but it did not prove very successful. The traditional approach is suitable for only a few of those pupils who are in the modern schools, for the majority are not essentially academically minded. On the other hand, they can, and do, learn most successfully by 'doing'.

For this reason, we have seen the development of most successful 'quasi technical' courses in the modern schools and with them an upsurge in both spirit and effort. A very wide selection of these courses is available, covering the broad technical lines for many future careers. Thus, for boys there are courses for engineering, building, leather trades, hotel work, agriculture and commerce, and for girls, in addition to some of those mentioned, nursing, needle trades and tailoring and catering.

All this, I feel, is excellent. Guidance is sometimes needed to direct enthusiasm and provided each course is designed to use the vocational motive as the means whereby a general education is acquired,

then all will be well. Let us never forget that every course must start with English and mathematics, must have its share of science, must contain the humanities with an appreciation of man's highest achievements in art, literature and music, and then we put our 'technical subjects' in the right perspective.

So much for courses. How then shall we measure progress and attainment? Here, I feel, I must get down to details though there are certain general points to consider first. Suitable syllabuses must be drawn up, and here the widest possible consultation is essential. I refer back at this stage to one of the points I made earlier, namely the value of examinations for the purposes of future employment and for further education.

Of these, the latter is the more important in relation to the compilation of syllabuses. Careful thought is necessary so that the school courses provide the natural background for the Further Education Courses which will be, in the main, City and Guilds Courses of various kinds together with National Certificate Courses for the minority.

I feel it is essential that an allowance is given for course work in planning these examinations. This implies that credit is given for regularity of attendance, since the amount of course work produced is obviously dependent upon the amount of time spent. In certain subjects, e.g. craft work, art, geometrical and engineering drawing, such course work is fairly easy to assess. In other subjects, it is more difficult. I do not, however, think it impossible to make this allowance. Surely the production of a set piece of English which could be in the nature of an illustrated thesis on some selected subject is of educational value and could be the object of real pride.

What of the examinations themselves? There are basic essentials that must be learnt and certain skills that must be practised in all subjects and it is right that these should be tested. May I, however, make a plea? I sincerely hope that the aim of every examination will not be merely to test memory. There is a case for this with the more academic type of pupil, but I feel it is out of place in an examination for modern school pupils. I have no place for 'examination tricks' or 'playway tests'. These, I think, are an insult to our pupils, except for the very least able. Here are my suggestions, taking them subject by subject:

### **English**

The essential thing for pupils of this kind is that they shall be able to write clear, though simple, English and that they should be able to understand the meaning of written and verbal passages.

For this reason, the examination paper should

consist of short essays, each with some concrete subject as its title. I would commend reports of journeys undertaken, of visits made, of simple experiments carried out in the laboratories and elsewhere, of plays or films seen and of books read. Abstract titles have no place here.

Passages for comprehension should be reasonably within their own experience and phrases or words for explanation should not be either too literary or metaphorical. Credit should be given for spelling and correct usage of English, though too much formal grammar should be avoided. I feel that the examination should also include a practical test in spoken English which is highly desirable and would certainly help the pupil to attain some self-confidence.

### **Mathematics**

The basic element here is that the subject is mathematics and not simply arithmetic. Questions should be set in algebra, geometry and trigonometry as well as arithmetic, in each case emphasising the essential practical applications of these branches of mathematics. Properly taught, there is no reason why any of these subjects together with the necessary calculations using logarithms, should be beyond the understanding of quite average pupils in modern schools. Simple examples in mechanics should also be included.

### **Scientific Subjects**

In this modern world, the basic science is physics and I hope this fact will be remembered in the drafting of syllabuses. When we come to the examination it should be necessary for each pupil to produce a laboratory notebook since it must never be forgotten that the sciences are essentially practical subjects. Indeed, is it impossible to contemplate a simple form of practical test? Some spring readily to mind—the fitting up of a suitable switch for various electrical purposes; connecting in series and parallel with consequent readings of E.M.F. and resistances; the preparation of a simple salt or other compound; simple experiments with plants and animals. Questions in the theoretical papers should not rely entirely on memory but should reflect the 'scientific method'. Is it too much to hope that the drawing of conclusions depending upon given circumstances is within the capabilities of these pupils? The writing of concise reports and the production of good clear diagrams obviously have their places.

### **The Humanist Subjects**

In this group of subjects I include history, geography, religious knowledge and modern languages.

It has been truly said that the 'history of the world

is but the biography of great men', and it is in this context that I feel the subject should be taught, though man's achievements and development must have their place. Let us also remember that what is happening today is largely conditioned by what happened yesterday.

The syllabus should contain references to modern institutions, particularly those which affect our pupils personally, e.g. democratic government and why I should use my vote; the National Health Service, Trade Unions; Why do I pay rates and taxes?

The answers to the questions should once again involve the writing of good, clear English. Indeed, the history essay, though short, is one way of inculcating good habits of writing.

The teaching of geography has probably changed more than any other subject since my time as a pupil at school. Excellent field-work is now undertaken by many schools and the production of a 'field-work study' should be a *sine qua non*. Economic and social geography should have the greatest emphasis and the essentials of map reading and map production are of paramount importance. Geography is, I feel, one of the most straightforward subjects to examine and gives scope for considerable ingenuity.

Foreign languages are not everybody's 'meat'. Nevertheless, they should be included so that those pupils who can make progress in these studies should be encouraged. May I make a plea, however? The 'play-way' to French conversation or German conversation or to any other language has very little value except as an introduction to the subject. Learning a language is an intellectual exercise and should only be persisted with for those who show a considerable competence in their own language, though it is right to provide the opportunity for a wider range than this. Examination of the subject should involve both oral and written papers containing translation and description.

Religious education is part of every school course. Indeed, it is one subject which is specifically named in the 1944 Act as compulsory! Should R.E. be examined? It is most difficult to be dogmatic about this. Perhaps, in the last instance, a paper in this subject should be available for prestige purposes and, dare I say it, to ensure that the subject is properly taught!

### **Arts and Crafts—The Practical Subjects**

Much interesting work has been done in recent years and a realistic technique has been worked out. Course work can easily be provided and assessed (though perhaps for the benefit of all concerned, certified evidence of course work in cookery rather than the article itself would be more desirable!).

Scope should be given for a variety of different arts, particularly now that so many modern schools have facilities for pottery, bookbinding, lino-printing and basket work as well as painting.

In all the 'practical subjects', examinations should contain both practice and theory, since knowledge of techniques and of the materials used must be an integral part of the course. Theory papers in some of these practical subjects provide first-class opportunities for questions involving mathematical calculations, scientific principles and technical drawing and sketching as well as the writing of accounts and reports. Papers on commercial subjects can conform to these general principles.

Throughout this article I have concentrated on final examinations at the ends of various courses. These final examinations, however, set the pattern for examinations during the school career of the pupils. It is important that they should gain examination experience and so a full-scale examination under proper examination conditions should be held once per year with suitable term tests to measure progress. As with most other things, there is an examination technique which can be learnt by experience, and practice in this can take away much of the fear of 'der Tag'.

How should these examinations be organised? I do not feel that completely internal examinations, unless they are externally assessed, are of much value, since an objective assessment is required for many purposes.

There are various possibilities which can be considered. For example, a local authority could make an arrangement between a group of secondary schools and the local technical college, whereby internal examinations assessed by the college staff would provide a certificate suitable for entry into recognised Further Education courses. This could have widespread value in making both parents and pupils realise the importance of continued education after leaving secondary school. Furthermore, if local industry can be persuaded to take an interest, then this certificate could well have importance in securing suitable employment for school leavers. Alternatively, certain groups of local authorities, based largely on their geographical position, could combine together to produce suitable examination papers which would be taken over the whole area. It may be that the committee concerned will recommend this second course since there are obvious administrative benefits to be derived. If this should prove to be the favoured course then it is most important that the teachers concerned should be intimately connected with the organisation and that they should have active participation in it, for it is essential that their goodwill be obtained.

## Book Reviews

### Geography Books for the Secondary School

*A Survey* by D. J. MORTIMER

Although most teachers of geography have numerous other aids and materials available, there is little doubt that the textbook will always have an important role to play. It is therefore comforting to note that many books recently published show a much greater adaptation to the needs of the schools than did their predecessors. Three trends appear in books for the grammar school; a provision of more geographical data from which pupils can draw their own conclusions, a desire to provide a balanced course for those who cease geography after three years, and an attempt to cater for the less able G.C.E. pupils. In books for the modern school there is a tendency to produce more informal and lively regional books, to use the human sample study more frequently, and to provide detailed information on certain topics.

#### FOR THE BRIGHTER PUPIL

A most stimulating series introduced recently is *Geography for Schools* (Heinemann), a series of five books, two of which have been published. Book 1 (7s. 6d.) samples areas from the British Isles and the World, whereas Book 2 (10s. 6d.) adopts the regional approach. Two interesting features are the variety of geographical data incorporated and the exercises based on this data which form an integral part of the text. Although the approach is

sound, I have found the series difficult to use. The frequent interruption of the text by exercises, the numerous cross references to maps and pictures, and the variety of topics within each chapter may cause misunderstanding and confusion in all but the brightest of pupils.

A fairly advanced but conventional course is contained in the six volumes of *Philips' Global Geographies* (from 8s. 6d. to 13s. 6d.). The introductory book, describing occupations throughout the world, is followed by five graded regional books. There is a wealth of information in the four books published but some have insufficient sketch maps and diagrams. Book VI provides a most thorough systematic and regional account of the British Isles.

The English Universities Press *General School Geography* (five books from 8s. 6d. to 12s. 6d.) provides an excellent grammar school course. Three books covering mapwork and regional geography give a complete course for those who cease geography after three years, and a firm basis for those continuing to G.C.E. level. Physical and human geography are dealt with in Book 4 and the final book provides a complete revision course for the year prior to the examinations. Throughout the series the presentation is formal, photographs, diagrams and sketch maps are numerous and well chosen, and the exercises are most useful.

Although intended for African secondary schools, the *Oxford Progressive Geography Senior Series* (Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d. to 9s.) is also suitable for grammar schools in this country. The first book, giving an excellent introduction to the regions of the world which could well serve higher up the school, is followed by four others covering the regional geography of the world. The books already available have a very high standard of

(Continued from page 32)

I have already considered the G.C.E. examination. In my opinion, this examination is suitable for only the minority of secondary modern pupils and slavish adherence to it may mean the organisation of the school sacrifices the many for the few. Such an examination as I envisage should be within the scope of most of the pupils and as many as possible should be encouraged to enter for it. Furthermore, this final examination should come at the end of a basic five-year course. I am not in favour of an examination at the age of 15 plus and I hope this will also be the view of the S.S.E.C. Sub-Committee.

To obtain a certificate, I feel a minimum standard must be obtained in a range of subjects of which English and mathematics must be compulsory. I can see every reason why the certificate should be awarded in two grades—i.e. 'pass' and 'pass with

distinction'—for I have no doubt we should recognise effort. Possession of the distinction certificate could well confer certain benefits, e.g. exemption from certain preliminary courses in technical colleges.

Throughout this article I have constantly referred to the purpose of taking examinations in secondary schools and it is to this aspect that I wish finally to return. Provided there is a well-defined purpose the examinations are valuable. Examinations should never be regarded as ends in themselves but always as steps leading to a further stage in a pupil's educational development. As a corollary to an examination there should be ample opportunity for any unsuccessful candidate to sit the examination again. In fact, the whole philosophy should be that of 'including in' and not (to quote the words of a well-known Hollywood producer) 'including out'.



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presentation, remarkably clear and relevant maps, diagrams and photographs and most lucid explanations.

For the less able G.C.E. pupils I recommend the new Arnold series *A Course in World Geography*. The three-year introductory course covering Britain and the World is followed by an examination course dealing with the physical and human geography of the British Isles and a physical, economic and regional world survey. Book 1 (8s. 6d.) is lively and provocative. It uses families with typical occupations as the basis for the study of the major regions and activities of the British Isles. Geographical terms and ideas are introduced in a most ingenious way and as the book proceeds the emphasis changes from the sample to the regional study. There are ample good photographs, diagrams, maps and exercises all closely linked to the text.

Two good books recently published are *Reading Topographical Maps* (University of London Press, 10s. 6d.), the best course in G.C.E. mapwork I have seen, and *Let's Look at England and Wales* (Chambers, 8s. 6d.), a beautifully presented regional geography.

#### FOR THE AVERAGE PUPIL

One of the best series, *New Ventures in Geography*, is published by Schofield and Sims. *A Map Reading Book* and *Foundations* are for first-year use and regional books follow covering the Southern Lands, the Asiatic World and the Western World. The presentation is most appealing, the photographs and simple diagrams exceptionally clear, and the brief text absorbing. The frequent exercises, the wide pages and margins, and the fascinating line sketches add to the interest of the books. *The Groundwork Geographies* (Philips, 8s. 6d. each), a series of four regional geography books, have a pleasing and refreshing approach. Unfortunately they are uniform in size, style and presentation which makes them unsuitable for a graded four-year course. Noteworthy features are the arrangement of the text to fit terms of twenty-two lessons and the useful exercises.

Another excellent regional series is Wheaton's *Panoramic Geographies*. Throughout the four books the emphasis is given to the lives of people and to products which play a vital role in our daily lives. The quality and choice of photographs is outstanding and the text is lively and imaginative. Sub-titles, captions and numerous other devices catch the eye and stimulate interest. Very good value at 6s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. each. For the quicker readers I would recommend *The Life and Livelihood Geographies* (Murray, 8s. 6d. to 9s. 6d.). These four books are made up of representative sample studies within a

regional framework. Despite numerous photographs, these books appear dull at first glance but, once sampled, they are intensely interesting and most readable.

Johnston and Bacon have just published the first volume of a series titled *Living in Geography* at 7s. 6d. After dealing with mapwork, towns and services, the book covers a wide range of Britain's farming and industrial activities and incorporates many aspects of physical geography. The inclusion of two atlas pages and two Ordnance Survey extracts adds to the value, while the informal approach and the lavish use of colour makes the book very appealing. *This Land of Britain* series (Nelson, 9s. each) is a social geography of this country in four volumes. Its unusual content makes it unsuitable for a normal geography course, although Book 2 provides a good account of occupations, and Book 4 a useful guide to local study. Books 3 and 4 of Black's *Looking at Geography* can be used with slower first and second year children. These books (5s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.) covering Britain and the World contain numerous illustrations and are most lively and attractive.

Besides textbooks there are available many books giving detailed information on certain topics. Hutchinson's *New Visual Geographies* in two series, economic and regional, have whole page photographs with short explanatory texts. The three volumes published, *Ice Cap and Tundra*, *Northern Forests* and *Mining of Coal* (5s. 6d. each), set a very high standard in visual presentation. Hulton's *Essential Geography* series (6s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.) by the same author, is also very good. Four volumes on *Homes*, *Food*, *Clothes* and *Transport* contain a wealth of written and visual information. Collins' *Where, How and Why* mapbooks (5s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.) have a vast amount of up to date material in maps and diagrams of vivid colour. Two volumes, *Australia* and *Norway*, are available in the *How the People Live* series (Educational Supply Association, 8s. 6d. each). Both books provide detailed sample studies with good illustrative material which should be most useful.

#### OUR REVIEWERS

**Mr. Mortimer** is head of the geography department at Great Barr comprehensive school, Birmingham.

**Professor Judges** is Professor of the History of Education at King's College, London University.

**Mr. Harvey** is head of the Weston Lane junior school, Otley, Yorkshire.

**Mr. Wilkinson** is head of Earl Shilton junior school, Leicestershire.

**Mr. Shuttlewood** is head of the history department, New Parks secondary modern school, Leicester.

**Mr. Richardson** is a lecturer in education at the University of Leicester.

# Mathematical Topics

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## Exploration and Activity

*Approaches to Science in the Primary School*

edited for the New Education Fellowship by  
E. Lawrence, N. Isaacs and W. Rawson, Educational  
Supply Association (1960), 133 pp., 10s. 6d.

This book can be recommended both to those teachers who have already introduced the study of science into their curriculum and to those who feel in need of reassurance and guidance before they do so.

It is a composite work compiled by members of the committee appointed by the New Education Fellowship 'to consider the place of direct observation and experiment in the Primary School'.

The keynote of the book is the importance of active exploration, enquiry and discovery in the development of scientific interests and a scientific attitude, and, indeed, in the education of the whole child, of which this scientific development is a part. Quite rightly, there is an emphasis on the children themselves doing things and not being mere passive recipients of scientific facts.

The editors and contributors recognise that there is a need for the physical sciences to be investigated by the children in the primary school and for them not to be confined to Nature Study. In one section, several contributors describe the various ways in which they have introduced their children to the physical sciences.

There is a section describing different kinds of work in Nature Study carried out in a school situated in the country. The interests were based on nature news, nature tables and nature rambles. This work in Nature Study was of the liveliest kind, as would be expected from the contributor, who is a well-known specialist with young children in this field.

Another section describes how schools have made the best of what facilities they have both in and out of school.

An important chapter is devoted to the discussion of teachers' apprehensions, difficulties and problems, and shows how they can be overcome.

There is a brief description of the psychological development of young children and the importance of methods of active enquiry in fostering this development during the school years.

A list of typical questions asked by children of eight, nine and ten, and a short, but useful, bibliography complete the book.

This book is successful in that it will stimulate thought and practice in our primary schools, but, as the editors would be the first to agree, it is not to be slavishly copied, nor does it suggest any schemes of work.

The main criticism of the book is that it is longer than it need have been. Although the editors quite rightly stress the importance of the whole child, and that scientific education cannot be considered in isolation, it does seem at times that they have strayed too far in the direction of writing a general apologia for an active approach in the primary school. Almost the whole of a chapter describing life in a primary school run on activity lines could have been left out without sacrificing much.

However, in general, this book is a useful contribution to the 'teaching of Science in the Junior School as an activity by the children, developing their powers of exploration and observation'. J. WILKINSON

## The Junior School

*The Education of Childhood*

by Alexander M. Ross, B.A., PH.D.

George G. Harrap & Co. (1960). 159 pp., 10s. 6d.

To whom is this book addressed? Members of the general public, to whom the style of writing and rather repetitive contents seem suited, are unlikely to borrow or buy a book of this kind. For students in Training Colleges it could only provide a very general first book to read, possibly after their first period of school practice.

Because so much has been condensed into 150 pages, the book is lacking in depth. Thus, although some attention is drawn to size of classes and to differences inside and outside the state system, far more could have been made of these facts. A few figures of teaching ratios would be useful and illuminating.

In such a small compass it would be difficult to convey to the reader the verve and vitality so characteristic of a good primary school. But the author need hardly have gone out of his way to paint a picture of a teacher muddling through. We all know Miss Stubb (what a name to choose!). Her days are all 'off days'. I should have preferred a picture of a different kind of teacher, a little more glamorous, full of energy and enjoying her day's work.

The wide range of abilities met with in junior classes is rightly stressed, but more could have been said about making provision fully to extend the really bright children. The question of streaming is fairly dealt with, and the conclusion that a headmaster's decision on this aspect of organisation 'will reflect his own views, and also his evaluation of conditions in the school and the many other local and individual factors', is a valid one. Unfortunately, the argument is confined to conditions obtaining in two form entry schools, and the point is not made that very different considerations apply when a multi-stream system is possible.

A good account is given of the multifarious duties and responsibilities of the head teacher, who should encourage, advise and command his staff—in that order, not in the reverse order as on page 81.

In making out a good case for the adoption of freer methods, the author is no doubt right in saying that groups of children 'develop in a crude way the characteristic methods of the research worker'. But the use of the word 'crude' is unfortunate, for much of what is accepted by many teachers and students from these groups is the mere amassing of material, much of it irrelevant. To be well done, this work requires much background study on the part of the teacher, more rounding-off of work attempted and more highlighting of what has been found out, together with insistence on high standards of production. I should have liked to see these points stressed.

Although many primary school teachers would favour transfer to secondary schools at 12 (or even 13), less support would be received for the compulsory lowering of the age of entry to infant schools. But one must agree with the author that these changes would result in a nice tidy scheme of four years in an infant school, four in a junior school, and four in a secondary school. Whether this, as the author states, more nearly meets the needs of the children, is not as certain as its tidiness.

There will be general agreement with what the author has to say in the chapter entitled 'The Parent and the School'. Unfortunately, it is unlikely to be read by those most concerned—the parents.

This could have been a very good book, but it would then have been much larger. In its present form it makes pleasant reading, and in doing so, rather tends to foster that spirit of complacency it sets out to criticise. I would have preferred Dr. Ross to state his own views more forcibly and not just to record all sides of most arguments. This, at least, would have provoked controversy. E. HARVEY

## School Biography

*Comprehensive School: the Story of Woodberry Down* by H. R. Chetwynd, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1960), 168 pp., 18s.

This book, written by the headmistress, is both a stimulant and an irritant. In the first capacity it creates impressions in brilliant flashes of the whole life of a large scholastic community passing through its earliest experiences of growth and achievement. It irritates because it is careless, ill-punctuated, often slipshod, quite obviously thrown together in a hurry. And this is a great pity, for, whilst the book can be recommended to parents curious to know more about the educational atmosphere of a good, mixed non-selective school, and indeed be warmly pressed upon all those who need convincing that a school can retain its poise in a liberal tradition whilst being strongly career-centred, it can hardly serve as a very intelligible guide to the handling of particular problems that face the organisers of a comprehensive curriculum, although to be sure arresting *aperçus* are thrown off in passing.

The most skilfully managed section deals with the techniques of observation and record keeping, which fall within the province of the heads of 'houses', senior members of staff whose functions combine the land duties of adjutants with the marine duties of ships' commanders. Experience with life in inner North-London—it has traditions of small craft industries and rugged back-street individualism—has shown how desirable it is to get career prognoses and school-leaving forecasts in hand and cleared with the pupils' elders during the third year. It is not surprising that Woodberry Down is popular with parents and is already influential as a local institution. It becomes clear how close is the functional relationship between hard-bitten local custom, children's leaving proclivities and pressures on the curriculum.

This is, I think, the first full-length study of the life

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of a comprehensive school, and, inasmuch as the starting conditions of 1955 have not yet allowed an 'academic' top to develop, attention is rightly given to the topics which have exercised the organisers most. In the treatment of these themes, Mrs. Chetwynd's temperament brings the human side, often in a touching way, to the reader's attention, as when she gives good reason for valuing the services of emergency-trained teachers. My copy of the book is marked on numerous margins with a special sign that means high quotability. If there were room for more examples, it would become even clearer how the humane character of the book weighs down a critic's misgivings.

No one attempted to deny that overwork was not characteristic of the school population of the district.

I have never yet encountered one parent who has insisted that a child who has pleaded earnestly to stay on at school be made to leave.

A moment comes when the blurred vision of apparently purposeless lessons comes into sharp focus and the picture of the right future career emerges.

Strangely enough a negative moral training exists in the majority of homes where many parents will give serious warnings by innuendos in matters they refuse to discuss openly.

'Punish me in any way, sir, keep me in, cane me, but please don't export me.'

'Surely [comment many visitors] so much movement from group to group confuses the children. Don't they need the security of one room, one set of companions when they come into what must appear to them an enormous, complicated organisation?'

The final observation may be prompted by good sense. The explanation of streaming and setting and the handling of mixed-ability groups, if it follows the method employed in Chapter V, may well confuse anyone. Those anxious to find a short statement of the theory of Woodberry Down must be disappointed with the awkwardly contrived eight-point design on page 45, with more than its share of oddities in grammar and punctuation and two screaming misprints, an almost incomprehensible hotch-potch, which might charitably be considered as a précis of the arguments of some opaque official directive by a candidate short of time. It is as a biography of a school in its neighbourhood setting that the book scores every time. A. V. JUDGES

### **Jungle Guidebook**

*Bibliographical Guide to the English Educational System* by George Baron, Second Edition, University of London, the Athlone Press (1960), 97 pp., 12s. 6d.

The second edition of this admirable annotated bibliography brings it as nearly as possible up to date by including references to books and other material published up to 30th June, 1959. Sensibly arranged,

and clearly divided into well-defined sub-sections, it will prove of interest and value to all those interested in the study of education. There are, for instance, sections listing the major publications in fields such as 'Secondary Education', 'Further Education', 'Progressive Schools', and so on: students in colleges and departments of education will find the book invaluable as a source of very necessary information, and the more experienced worker will find it helps both with the rapid and easy verification of a reference, and with its indications of additional work done in the fields which interest him. There is an accurate and complete index of authors at the end, which again makes for speed of working where quick reference is necessary, whilst the whole style and lay-out of the book encourages the reader not merely to dip into it, but to browse through it at leisure.

There is the occasional inaccuracy or misprint, even in this second edition, and the difficulty of selecting from the mass of material now published has led to a certain unevenness in the quality and balance of the various sections—section one, 'Reference Books and Lists', and section two, 'Periodicals', might be considered rather thin—but it is a noteworthy feature of the book that in these cases, where the author has been forced to restrict the number of his own references, he is at pains to indicate where the additional information and the fuller bibliography may be found. Altogether, the book is a conscientious and successful attempt to fill a very definite gap. G. RICHARDSON

## More on Secondary History

### *The Changing Shape of Things*

A series of large books containing titles, *Transport by Air*, *Transport by Sea*, *Houses*, *Dress*, *The Changing Shape of Things* and *Transport by Land*, is published by John Murray at 15s. a volume. I inspected the latter title. The books are of high quality, of glossy art paper and strongly bound. Two-thirds of each page is illustrated and the diagrams and maps are among the clearest I remember. For the use of the average secondary school child the language is rather complex but with staff guidance this series should be excellent as a source book for classroom or library use. I think it is the sort of stimulus to further study that we need. *Transport by Land* could be used as a very attractive peg on which to hang a study of the local landscape, a history of changes in society and resulting changes in transport, or a straight history of railways or roads.

PETER SHUTTLEWOOD

The Report of the International Conference on the Backward Child, held during the Summer and organised by the Guild of Teachers of Backward Children, is available from S. S. Segal, 32 Revell Rise, Plumstead, London, S.E.18, at six shillings including postage. It is very good value (232 pp.) and contains much that will interest readers of FORUM.

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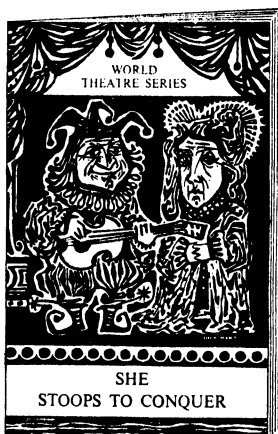
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