

The Right To Education

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It is certain that unless there is a world-wide disaster — which could undoubtedly be brought about by man himself — humanity will never again be what it was in the past. As a result of universal education, we have entered upon a new type of civilization. What this civilization will be like and what its main features will be, it is still very difficult to say with any degree of accuracy.

A very short time ago — scarcely more than a century — education was the prerogative of a small, privileged élite. Whether this élite was composed of an hereditary social class, or whether its members were elected or came into it individually like the scholars of traditional China, the fact remains that it comprised only a tiny minority of the population (often less than 5 per cent) which had access to the world of knowledge and learning. The rest of the human race remained for centuries in ignorance and illiteracy before finally winning the right to be given the rudiments of learning which we call “the three R’s.”

It is not surprising, in these circumstances, that learning for a long time had a *sacred* character. To be educated, learned, was to have entry into a sort of sanctuary or tabernacle shrouded in mystery, to enter into possession of an almost magical power over things and people. Thus the masses, while respecting educated persons, have always distrusted them, because their learning conferred on them, to use the biblical phrase, "the knowledge of good and evil." This represented a considerable power which could be wielded for human good or ill. This is perhaps what Fernand Dumont means when he speaks of "a sort of original sin of learning."¹ In ancient, so-called primitive, societies the sorcerer was respected as well as feared; he was an ambiguous person who, as everyone knew, could use his occult science just as easily to cause evil as to do good. An earlier Christian age burned at the stake not only the ignorant but also men and women who had gone to the Devil's school and were too advanced in the black arts. In popular folklore and children's fairy tales, the evil witch wielded a dangerous power because she knew the properties of all plants and could prepare potions that would kill her victims or put them to sleep or change them into animals. This idea of an ambiguous or dangerous science still persists. Have you not noticed, in the modern science-fiction novels we read and see in the movies or on TV, that the scientist is often portrayed as a warped mind or madman whose satanic design is either to establish a vicious tyranny or to destroy mankind.

But today we find that the veil of the temple of learning is rent and that the inner temple of learning is open to the multitude, like the palaces of former royalty which are converted into museums and amusement parks. The comparison, moreover, is not without basis in fact. Knowledge, like political structures, is becoming democratized; we are witnessing the secularization of learning and of royal or imperial power at the same time. Access to the world of learning is no longer the prerogative of a caste, it is no longer an honour bestowed on a chosen few. The Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948 states in Article 26 that "every person has a right to education." And it must be admitted that in the last hundred years, and more particularly in the last two or three decades, great progress has been made in this direction. For example, governments have assumed responsibility for education; war is being waged on illiteracy in the less developed countries; school attendance is being made compulsory to the age of 15 or 16; free

education is becoming general; elementary and secondary school curricula are being revamped; advances are being made in vocational and technical training, and adult education is expanding. In a number of countries, including Canada, the vast majority of children now complete at least part of their secondary school education. This phenomenon did not occur until the twentieth century, and it will certainly be one of the most powerful factors in bringing about the change in tomorrow's society from an industrial society to what is known as the post-industrial or mass society.

However, in spite of such great progress in such a short time, it is fair to say that we are only making a start on the profound changes that will have to be made. We are barely emerging from the stone age in education and we still have taken only the first halting steps in the democratization of education. This is not just an idle statement: it is based on the fact that *in practice* the universal right to education is still far from being translated into action and becoming a reality. Regarded from this angle, the Declaration of Human Rights, in this as in other parts, is more like a hope or a prophecy than a description of the present situation.

Obstacles to the Right to Education

What are the obstacles which still prevent the full exercise by all citizens of the right to education? While I cannot claim to be exhaustive in the space allotted to me, I should like to enumerate the principal ones so that we may better measure how far we still have to go and have a better appreciation of the reforms that must be begun or continued. For the purposes of this paper and for greater clarity, I shall group these obstacles under three main heads: social inequalities, the inadequacy of the educational structures, and individual handicaps. I therefore propose to approach the subject starting with the socio-economic structures, proceeding then to the school, and finally to the pupil himself. This analysis will enable us, in a final section, to outline the reforms that are necessary if we want the right of each person to an education to become a *reality*.

Social Inequalities

In North America, we do not like very much to think in terms of social inequality. Above all, we are not prepared to admit that there are social classes or to recognize the consequences of this fact. We prefer to delude ourselves into thinking that social classes do not exist on this continent, or at least that there is so little distinction between classes as to be negligible. It is generally held that the class system is more rigid in Europe than in North America and that upward social mobility for individuals and groups is more difficult and less common than it is here. In fact, in most European countries the working class is poorly represented in the halls of higher learning and in the secondary schools which prepare students directly for university (the *lycées* in France, the *athénées* in Belgium and the public schools and grammar schools in England). Therefore in most European countries, access to higher education remains the privilege of what is commonly called the middle class. Yet a university education costs much less than in North America and should therefore be more accessible. How can we explain this fact?

A study conducted in England by two sociologists, Brian Jackson and Denis Marsden, published under the title *Education and the Working Class*,² affords some explanation. These researchers compared school-age children of the middle class with working-class children of the same age. They found that middle-class parents encourage their children throughout their school life and seek to develop and maintain in them the ambition to succeed. Middle-class parents choose the elementary school that offers the greatest chance of leading to grammar school. If the child has problems at school, the parents are able to discuss them with the teachers, to obtain expert advice, or to move the child to another school. These parents are able to help the child with his school work, finding material for his projects and helping him study for his exams. They make a point of maintaining a home atmosphere that is conducive to study. Working-class parents on the other hand are far less well equipped in this regard. They do not know the right schools that will lead to grammar school; they are not familiar with the services that are available to help their children; they are intimidated by the teachers and often do not dare to go and see them. They accept without ques-

tion the teachers' decisions concerning the guidance of their children; they are ill-equipped to help their children scholastically or to advise them in their choice of options. University seems to them a far-off world beyond their children's reach.

The obstacle which bars the way to higher education for the working-class child is, in the final analysis, perhaps less financial or economic than psychological. It is luck, or a miracle, if a child of the working class is able, in spite of his family and social background, to embark on the path that leads to university. If he is to succeed, he will have to be endowed with a mind, a motivation and an energy far superior to those of the middle-class child; and it is only at the cost of enormous psychic tensions that he can get through grammar school and university.

The working-class people described by Jackson and Marsden do not live in slums or blighted areas. They are semi-skilled workers living in relatively adequate socio-economic conditions. What is it like then for the truly proletarian class who live in the most deprived districts? The Newsom Commission, which was entrusted in 1961 by the Central Advisory Council for Education in England with the task of conducting a study on the education of children with average and less-than-average ability, studied the plight of children from the slum areas. The commissioners came to the conclusion that in these areas 79 per cent of the secondary schools are seriously inadequate. They are too old, they are obsolete. Classrooms are small, unsanitary and not soundproof; libraries, laboratories, workshops, play rooms and recreational programs are woefully lacking. Generally speaking, there is a high turnover in the teaching staffs of these schools. In short, the slum children, who are already deprived by reason of their birth, are doubly handicapped by an inappropriate school environment that is ill-suited to helping them. Thus the percentage of academic failures, slow learners, absenteeism and dropouts is abnormally high in these schools.³

Such is the situation of working-class and proletarian children in England. Is it much different in North America? As the result of a survey conducted in the large American cities, former Harvard president James B. Conant gave a striking description of the disparity between the schools in the slum districts and those in the residential suburbs.⁴ To give some slight idea of this disparity, suffice is

it to point out that in 1961, when this survey was made, the cost-per-pupil in a suburban secondary school was \$1,000 a year, and there were as many as 70 professional adults per 1,000 pupils. In the slum school the cost-per-pupil was half as much, and there were 40 professional adults at the most for every 1,000 pupils. These are two rough indicators of the vast difference between the two types of school and education. And Conant concluded with this warning which has since proved to be prophetic: "We are letting social dynamite accumulate in our big cities."

At the same time as Conant, the American sociologist Patricia Sexton was conducting a thorough study of the public school system of a major industrial city in the United States⁵. Her main conclusion may be summed up in the following formula: the money spent on public schools and the quality of the school services vary directly with the income of the families in the district. In other words, the well-off families enjoy better services while the poorer families receive poorer services. This conclusion is based on precise findings and statistics obtained by painstaking investigation. Whether it be school buildings and equipment, qualifications of teaching staff, pupil-teacher ratio, guidance, counselling and treatment service, hygienic conditions, recreational facilities or cafeterias, everything is always poorer for the poor and meaner in the deprived districts.

The slum areas of England do not need to take a back seat to those of the large American cities. What is the situation in Canada? We still do not have in this country the counterpart of such painstaking and exact studies as those of Conant, Sexton, and the Newsom Commission. However, we do have some revealing indicators. Professor Emile Gosselin recently published an analysis which he entitled "The Third Solitude," based on official figures of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. By the third solitude he means the solitude of the "grey zones," the underprivileged districts. It is the solitude which surrounds and shuts up within itself the chronic poverty in which a large part of Montreal's population is born, lives and dies⁶. Le Conseil des Oeuvres has pointed out a number of times that as a result of a host of factors — psychological, socio-economic, cultural and educational — we observe in Montreal as in the great urban centres of North America that "the children in the underprivileged areas have a poorer school performance than the children in the other areas." I have even been able to observe the same phenomenon directly and as if through a microscope in the

small school board, on which I serve as one of the administrators, in the Montreal area. In the area served by our school board, there are both poor and well-off families. It is in the schools serving the poor district that we find the most slow learners, the most personality problems and the most drop-outs. Finally, I have had the opportunity to visit a good number of schools in the greater Montreal area, and the contrast is striking between the obsolete and ill-equipped schools of the poorer districts, with their small playgrounds jammed in between blocks of houses, and the modern, well-ventilated and well-equipped schools of the suburbs. I know that the school administrators in the Montreal area are aware of the problem. But it will have to be solved quickly; otherwise Dr. Conant's prophecy will come true in our own country sooner than we think.

If the slum areas of North America resemble those of Europe, is the same thing true of the working class? All the descriptions which American sociologists have given of the American working class resemble, with few differences, that made by Jackson and Marsden for England⁸. Summing up these studies, the Canadian sociologist John Porter said recently that we have been too prone to believe that the aspiration to upward social mobility was evenly distributed among the whole American population. In reality, the desire for mobility is strong mainly in the middle class. It is much weaker and more limited in the working class⁹. These attitudes are reflected in figures. The American sociologist William Spady has just published the results of a survey on the educational level of American males between the ages of 25 and 64. The statistics he compiled show beyond any doubt that although the educational level has risen steadily for the American population as a whole, it is the middle class which has benefited most. The child of working-class parents has *proportionately* less chance of finishing high school and college than the middle-class child. Spady concludes:

Contrary to the assumption that the observed increases in high school and college graduation rates during this time have particularly benefited boys from the lower social strata, we found that the *relative* chances of such boys having reached and completed college compared with the sons of college-educated fathers have diminished over time. Paradoxically, while completion rates continued to rise for all men, the probabilities of going to college, given that you finished

high school, and finishing college once you entered, have decreased over time for low-status sons . . . Unless a more concerted effort is made to create and stimulate more meaningful opportunities for the people caught in the bottom stratum, what now seems like a paradox is likely to evolve into a social dilemma which neither indifference, hostility, nor legislative action will be able to ameliorate. The urban riots and destruction of recent summers strongly indicate, in fact, that this dilemma may already be upon us.¹⁰

No doubt there are economic or financial factors which may explain this situation in part. In an article which appeared in the *New York Times* on April 21st entitled "The Higher Cost of Higher Education," Myron Brenton demonstrated the staggering rise in the cost of university education in the United States. From 1957 to 1967, the cost of a year's tuition rose by 3 to 5 per cent. This places college and university still farther beyond the reach of children from the less well-off families. But the financial factor does not account for everything; American sociologists have revealed the existence of what they call "a working-class culture," that is, a set of ideas, attitudes and behaviour patterns which are not likely to develop in the child the motivation, ambition and aspirations necessary for success in the essentially competitive climate that prevails in the school system.

Unfortunately, we do not have for Canada the equivalent of these American studies. This is a gap that we shall have to set about filling without delay. But in the absence of definitive studies, it is accurate to say that except for a few differences the situation is probably the same here as across the border. It is not likely to be much better, it is probably about the same and we only hope it is not worse. We can at least refer to the study made in Quebec on the living standards of the working population by two sociologists from Laval University, Professor Marc-Adelard Tremblay and Gerald Fortin. In the section on education, they find that parents, when thinking of their children's education, have an attitude that is shortsightedly utilitarian and very unrealistic. As a result, they have a practical standard that is too low and an ideal standard that is too high. The authors conclude: "As long as education continues to be defined in strictly utilitarian terms among wage-earners, the level of education will rise very slowly from one generation to the next. Inability to meet the indirect expenses involved, the need for

extra income, the pressure of the environment, and the absence of an intellectual or humanistic tradition — these are factors which will perpetuate the lag between performance and ideal by turning young people away from school".¹¹

It is therefore true to say that in North America, just as in Europe, social inequalities are still, for a large part of the population, an obstacle to the full exercise of the right to education. We are now finding, to our dismay, that the school system, far from being the instrument of social mobility it was believed or hoped to be, is still a factor of segregation, of social cleavage, and even of individual and group alienation. Instead of lowering the socio-economic barriers and fostering the free circulation of talent, the school system is helping to make the social inequalities irremediably *hereditary*.

This conclusion requires us however to make an important distinction, which is suggested to us in particular by the American sociologist Frank Reissman: "There is a great deal of evidence that deprived children and their parents have a much more positive attitude toward education than is generally believed. This attitude is obscured by the fact that deprived persons value education but dislike school. They are alienated from the school, and they resent the teachers. For the sake of clarity, we should consider their attitudes toward education and toward the school separately."¹² This brings us to the second obstacle to the right to education — the inadequacy of the educational structures.

Inadequacy of the Educational Structures

The chief difficulty lies in the fact that the educational structures still bear the stamp of the aristocratic and bourgeois society which created them and of the concept of the *élite* which inspired them. Not long ago, elementary education was the only kind that was accessible to the majority of children; only a minority went on to secondary and higher education. Elementary education dispensed the rudiments of knowledge. Secondary education, on the other hand, was designed to develop the mind and character with a view to forming what was called, according to the country, the humanist, the gentleman, the *intelligentsia* or the scholar. Secondary education was

therefore patterned on an ideal model, on a typical man considered as the most perfect, most highly developed representative of humanity. In his famous speech of 1925 on "The Forms of Learning and Culture," the German philosopher Max Scheler wrote: "It was the great mistake of the 18th century — a mistake which had a disastrous effect on the 19th century ideal of humanity — that it set up, as a cultural ideal, "humanity" understood solely in the abstract form of the reasonable being, *equally* present in all men."¹³

It is precisely this unique and monolithic conception of culture and of the secondary school course that must now be shattered. Secondary education, which is destined in the future to be thrown open to nearly all the adolescents of one generation, can no longer retain its former character, can no longer be based on just one ideal of the well-rounded man and one ideal of culture. On the contrary, today's secondary education must recognize the diversity of aptitudes, interests and outlooks of the students; it must be based on the idea that intellectual culture may take various forms and that there are many roads leading to it. Just what is intellectual culture? I would define it by saying that it is a *mental relationship which man maintains with himself and with his whole environment, through a variety of symbols (concepts, words, numbers, actions) and by a constant effort of thought and meditation on the realities and on their representations*. Thus defined, intellectual culture is not an intellectual baggage nor accumulation of knowledge; it is a movement, or more correctly, an attitude which is the fruit of attention and meditation aimed at always seeking to understand better the meaning of human beings and of events in order to live in harmony with them. Viewed from this angle, the humanities and the sciences are no longer the only paths leading to culture; a genuine intellectual culture may be acquired through the practice of the plastic and rhythmic arts as well as by the study of the applied sciences, technical subjects, technology, and manual labour. In short, culture is perhaps more a way of living than a way of reading.

Although this dynamic and pluralistic concept of culture meets less and less opposition in theory, the same does not apply in practice. This notion of culture has not yet become a part, in any real sense, of the secondary education system, and as a result the structures are partially ineffective and ill-adapted. I should like to sketch briefly some of the main structural defects of secondary education.

In the first place, the burden of general abstract and bookish learning still weighs far too heavily on the system. A premium is still placed on verbal and abstract intelligence, to the detriment of the other forms of intellectual activity. The dice are loaded against the child whose inclinations are more towards concrete, practical, mechanical or esthetic activities or achievements; he is often the one who becomes bored, who is unruly, who fails, and who finally drops out of school.

In the second place, secondary education is still partitioned off too much in parallel sections, which are assigned a place in the status system. This system is perpetuated by the teachers, the parents, and finally by the students themselves. It is "in" to study pure science and the humanities, but commercial and technical subjects are for those who do not have the ability to do anything better. This mandarinism is scarcely less common in North America than in Europe, although it must be admitted that North America has generally established the single secondary school, thus sparing the children the traumas which accompany a change in school necessitated by a transfer to another section.¹⁴ But we are still far from having the true comprehensive high school which Conant has defined simply as "the secondary school whose programs can meet the educational needs of *all* the children in a given area"¹⁵ and whose specialists are agreed that it offers the most flexible formula, best adapted to the diversity of talents and to the demands of modern industrial society.¹⁶

Thirdly, present-day secondary education continues to maintain an unnecessary and pernicious divorce between general education and vocational training. The fact is, we have not accepted in practice two *idées-force* or dynamic concepts which seem to me to be basic: first, that a technical and vocational training can and should be "cultural" if it is well done, and second, that general education need not necessarily *precede* vocational training for all students, but in many cases should parallel and *supplement* it.

One of the particular advantages of the comprehensive school is that it permits better integration of general education with technical and vocational training. It should be added that although considerable attention has been devoted in the past few years to vocational training at the secondary level for boys, there still remains a

great effort of imagination to be made for the vocational training of girls.

Fourthly, the educational system forces too many children to make final choices prematurely. This works to the detriment of "late bloomers" and deprived children. We now know for a certainty that forcing children to make final choices at the age of 11, 12 or 13 years places a large group of students, mainly from low-income groups, at a disadvantage. These children need until the age of 15 or 16 before deciding definitely which direction to take.¹⁷

In the fifth place, secondary education is still very remote from real life and the labour market. This is a carry-over from the time when the secondary school had but one purpose: to prepare students who were going on to higher education. Today, it must prepare the larger numbers of students who fill its classrooms to go straight out into the labour market. Over the door of every secondary school a sign, printed in huge letters, should be erected, containing the principle on which the Committee of Inquiry on Technical and Professional Education for Quebec based its entire report. It would read: "No child should leave school until he has received a minimum of vocational training, and the school system should be so organized that it could, at the proper time, offer to each child the vocational education that is suited to his capacities and ambitions."¹⁸ For this purpose, I believe we should follow the lead of the USSR in the experiment tried there for the past few years, in which every secondary and technical school is affiliated with one or more industrial firms. The students are required to serve an apprenticeship in one of these, which initiates them both into their occupation and into the world of work.

Lastly, some American psychologists have shown that the North American school system as a whole is dominated by the ideas, outlook, spirit and values of the middle class.¹⁹ This is a very difficult question to explore and to document, because it is a many-faceted phenomenon with many shades of variation. But this problem will have to be studied very carefully, because the school system is in conflict not only with the working-class mentality but also with "youth subculture," which in many points is diametrically opposed to the middle-class culture.

If I have analyzed only the inadequacies of the secondary

educational system, it is because it now has to be accessible to nearly all the children in one generation and because it is in urgent need of reform. But higher education is no better adapted to its functions and is also in urgent need of reform. The increasingly loud rumbles of dissatisfaction among university students all over the world will force us to make reforms before very long.

Personal Handicaps

The third group of obstacles to the right to education — personal handicaps — is perhaps better known. At least they have been amply publicized in recent years by psychiatrists, psychologists, educators and social workers. I shall therefore deal with them very briefly.

Schools and curricula are designed for what is sometimes called the “normal” or “average” student. Assuming that such a student exists, it must be admitted that there is a minority group of students who are not normal or average. It was specifically to study the problem of these children that the Newsom Commission was created in England. The commissioners entitled their report *Half our Future*, thereby seeking to indicate the importance, both quantitative and qualitative, of the group of children whose fate was their concern.

I should like at this point to underline the problem of what is called the “exceptional child.” In the school board on which I serve, a team of specialists (psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker and child guidance officer) recently demonstrated to us that ten per cent of our children in the first grade are already repeaters because of backwardness or troubles with the development of the mental, emotional or physical functions. These appear as psychomotivity problems, troubles with perception or language, personality problems, intellectual immaturity or defective or frail health. If these difficulties are not diagnosed and treated at once, these children will still go to school, but they will repeat two or three grades in elementary school, they will have difficulty passing into high school, and will finally become discouraged. However, if most of them were treated at the start of their first year in school, they could continue

their schooling in a normal manner. How then can we not think of each of these little children as a human being with his whole life before him and with a right, like a normal child, to a full life? A little attention and care on our part can save them from certain disaster.

Among the exceptional children I would also classify the gifted children, although they doubtless form a special category. We now know that a good many slow learners are in fact children who are "too intelligent" to go at the pace of a normal class. They get bored, develop attitudes of inattention and laziness and very soon come to lose all interest in school. The fact that intelligence becomes a handicap in an educational system shows to what extent the system is depersonalized. An experienced educator said in my presence that, according to his experience, the teacher really teaches half of his class; the remaining pupils are either too advanced or too far behind to keep up with the program. Doctors talk a good deal these days about the "medical act," which they say must remain a personal relationship between the doctor and his patient. Have we considered that we have long since collectivized the "educational act" and that we must now take the necessary steps to make it individual again?

I say without hesitation that the school system is just plain *cruel* to exceptional children when no attempt is made to detect and treat these children. They are forced, in fact, to follow a system of life to which they are not adapted, and in this way we hurt them and further disorient them, or finally make them the victims of the success of others.

Necessary Reforms

When we see these innocent victims of the school, when we see the children of our deprived areas, the children of our ill-served rural areas, our Indians who are all too often poorly educated, our teenagers who drop out of a secondary school which has not been able to adjust to their needs, how can we still speak of the right of every person everywhere to education? The brief analysis I have just made enables us, it seems to me, to understand better what this right to education means in practical terms. This formula means that *each member of the community should be able to receive the education which corresponds to his interests and his needs and that he should receive the auxiliary services he requires, so that he may pursue his education as far as his ability permits.*

From this statement alone, we can see at once that the theoretical right proclaimed in the Declaration of Human Rights is still far from being realized. We still have to pass, to use the excellent expression of Jacques Leclercq, from "legal equality to social equality,"²⁰ that is, from a *de jure* equality enshrined for two centuries in various laws to a *de facto* equality translated into reality in the social and educational structures. Therefore, in order for the right to education to be fully put into practice, it is not enough to pass laws for compulsory school attendance or free education.

What reforms are still needed? I would reply that there must be reform both of structures and of mental outlook.

Reform of the Structures

First of all, it is clear that all children are not given an equal right to education so long as the school system does not contain, as one of its *essential* elements, a system of auxiliary services designed to detect, treat and rehabilitate children who have particular trouble in adjusting to school. This presupposes that the school should have available an interdisciplinary team composed of a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a child-guidance officer, a social worker, a doctor and a nurse. I would add that detection will take place too late unless pre-school classes become general, because these permit a better socialization of the normal child and the detection and treatment of children who are not ready for regular school.

In the second place, all teaching must be radically changed so that it is henceforth centred on the pupil and on his rate of learning and development. This presupposes that the teacher is no longer "up front," addressing the whole class, but that he is down among his pupils, mingling with the work groups into which they are formed. This reform also requires that we eliminate the spirit of competition which has completely warped conventional education and that we resolutely adopt *an approach that is both personalistic and communal*. And this educational revolution should take place not only at the elementary level but at all levels, including university.

I referred earlier to comprehensive secondary education. It is precisely on this new personalistic and communal spirit that it must be founded; otherwise we shall have, as is too often the case, a caricature of the comprehensive school. Furthermore, secondary

education, if it is to be comprehensive, absolutely requires the assistance of a guidance department. This department is the rail which is indispensable for the smooth running of a comprehensive school and for directing each pupil into the right path.

In my opinion, the concept of comprehensiveness should also be extended to higher education. In particular, I think we should develop without delay a senior technical or applied science course midway between our present technical education and higher education. Here is a big gap that is waiting to be filled in various sectors of the economy. For instance, some industrial firms recruit engineering students who have failed after two or three years because they say that these persons make top-notch senior technicians. But these technicians will never receive recognition of their studies in the form of diplomas, and they will face permanent insecurity. I am convinced that senior technical education is an answer both to the excessive rate of failures in the first years of university and to needs which are not met or which are not met effectively in the labour market.

It is my profound conviction that for deprived districts and regions, all the reform of education and of the school services I have indicated is still not enough: the school will also have to be integrated into the plan of economic and social development for the region or district. The school can be a powerful force for social renewal, provided that the leaders and the teaching staff understand that they have a role to play as social spark-plugs (*animation sociale*) in the district or region. In this connection, I am convinced that teachers who plan to work in these places should receive special training to equip them not only to teach but also to promote public participation. Where education is hampered by the socio-economic environment, the teaching staff will have to take an active part in the renewal of the community, and this will have to be part of their regular duties, recognized as such by the school administrators.

Reform of Mental Habits

But it will only be possible to achieve this reform of structures to the extent that there is a real revolution in mental habits. Certain ready-made and firmly entrenched ideas will have to be changed,

certain attitudes will have to be revised and questioned. In the first place, we shall have to abandon the idea of a reservoir of intellectual ability that is static. Although psychometrics has performed great services, it has also misled us, no doubt unintentionally, by leading us to believe that there are fixed and stable percentage of people who are intellectually fit to do secondary or higher studies. Actually, the reservoir of talent is elastic to an extent that we still do not know, and there are at least three reasons for this. In the first place, we find that *the intellectual capacity of a population rises with the improvement in living standards and conditions*. To use the expression of the English economist Halsey, "*a process of economic and social development is a process of creation of new abilities.*"²¹ In the second place, it is often observed that a strong motivation to study can make up for intellectual ability which has been judged insufficient according to the generally accepted criteria. Finally, a more diversified, more flexible and more comprehensive education will make it possible for different forms of intelligence to flower. Social and educational reforms may therefore have hitherto undreamed-of effects on the reservoir of abilities possessed by a people.

It is in this perspective that in my opinion the very important question of adult education arises. Up to now, I have spoken only about the education of children; however, this should be considered only as a part of the school system and not as the whole. The school system in future will have to be accessible to every person, regardless of age. The Human Rights declaration rightly refers to the entitlement of each person — not only children — to education. It is obvious that in modern society the *majority of adults are under-educated* because, for one reason or another, they have not been able to receive an education that is suited to their abilities and needs. This is a very serious problem, a problem of justice for these persons, and a problem of the economic and social development of the whole community. In the article noted earlier, John Porter showed that the most highly industrialized societies, and particularly North America, suffer from a chronic shortage of highly skilled labour, which accounts for the "brain drain" from the less developed countries. This tragically vicious circle will only be broken when our societies ensure the full development of their own talent reservoir. And this concerns just as much the under-developed intellectual potential in the adult population as the potential that remains to be developed in the young.

Another idea we shall have to discard, although it now has the force of law, is that in order to ensure a fair distribution of public funds in the school system, all you have to do is count the number of pupils and divide that number into the number of dollars available. Instead, we shall have to take the view that the education of the underprivileged should cost more than that of the others, and this is only fair. For example, in the blighted urban areas, vast blocks of houses will have to be torn down and new, well-ventilated schools built. In these districts, more school and auxiliary services are needed to make up for the shortcomings of the family and social environment. These include social services, child guidance clinics, health services, public participation programs, school canteens, in-school study, and so forth. This is no doubt a radical change of outlook compared to the policy that is generally followed. But such a new approach has been strongly urged in England by the Plowden Commission,²² which considers that a "positive discrimination" is necessary, and in Canada by the Conseil des Oeuvres de Montréal and the Montreal Council of Social Agencies which, in their joint brief to the Royal Commission on Health and Welfare in Quebec, call for "preferential treatment" for the deprived groups in the matter of schools.²³

Another essential reform in mental outlook, which will surely be difficult and take a long time to achieve, concerns the lack of prestige attached to technical and vocational education. Vigorous public information campaigns will have to be undertaken to raise this type of education in the esteem of parents first of all, and also of teachers and public administrators. We still harbour the old prejudices against manual work and technical education. Neither the ancient monasteries, where manual work was practised and venerated for centuries, nor Marxism-Leninism, which has given the working class a real existence, has succeeded in uprooting these prejudices. This is some indication of how hard a job it will be and the effort that will be required.

In this connection, I feel that it is imperative for us to question the capitalistic outlook with which we are imbued, not necessarily in the interests of a socialism that has not always been able to prove itself more humane, but rather in the interest of a new community spirit. The industrial revolution, which was brought about under the aegis of capitalism, subjected man to the demands

of production. In a civilization where leisure is rapidly increasing, we must set about developing a new social philosophy based on a more humane, more communal outlook. I believe that this is what many young people have instinctively understood when in their uncertainty and agitation they reject an adult society which seems to them, not without reason, to be dehumanized and soulless. Our present educational system is a reflection of our society. In it we find the same defects in microcosm: a premium on individualism and personal success, encouragement of tough competition, disgrace attached to the least failure, importance accorded only to work which earns marks or rewards. Such are the laws of our social jungle which the child learns at school. We surely delude ourselves if we try to introduce a new education based on disinterested intellectual work, team spirit, group consciousness and the demands of co-operation, while society operates on another set of principles altogether. Education cannot be divorced from the society for which it prepares the young; it cannot be in such flagrant contradiction with the prevailing values which are daily affirmed in society. The reshaping of education therefore demands first of all an "ideological conversion" of our whole society.

Conclusion

We can see just how far a genuine educational reform would lead: it would lead to the questioning of the most strongly held values of our industrial and capitalistic society. The fact is that everything is of a piece in social life, and education particularly cannot be renewed without bringing into question the social structures and mental attitudes of society as a whole. We will have to go that far, with courage and boldness, if we are to achieve anything more than trifling reforms. Will we have this vision and boldness? It is up to each of us as individuals and all of us as a community to answer this question.

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