

William H. Boyer.

**EDUCATION FOR
ANNIHILATION.**

Honolulu:
Hogarth Press, 1972.
162 pp. \$3.25.

Boyer's book is a condemnation of the militaristic orientation of society as shown through the military establishment and the ROTC programs in the American public schools and colleges. He leaves no question about his desire for a world without war. He regales us with all the faults of war and builds up a very tight case against the abuses of the military, even to the misplaced allegiance of the chaplain. The bias throughout the book is unabashed, indeed, the thrusts against the military are reinforced so often that one can tune out before reaching the heart of the thesis.

In Chapter IV, "Education for Survival," Boyer shines particularly well, especially since his global ends for education are important for the future of mankind and are difficult to argue against. He supplies the reader with an ample number of desirable outcomes but does have difficulty in coming to grips with the means to accomplish these ends. Boyer's philosophical position is well taken but the practical processes to attain his world without war seem to be based wholly on political activity — not a bad idea at all, except that he did not cover the politics of world problems. Furthermore, this world without war would seem to produce other kinds of wars which Boyer touches upon only briefly, if at all; for example, poverty, prejudice, greed, apathy, lethargy. All of these as well as Boyer's wars are important components of society and cannot be laid to rest solely at the doorstep of education.

Teachers are surely a part of society and as such are influenced

by the same politics that Boyer wants to use to implement "international conflict management." But how do we get the political momentum to provide "that the processes in which people become involved *constitute their education*" (p. 129 — italics are Boyer's)? If the conflict in Vietnam were still hovering over our covered heads, then I could see support for Boyer's perspective on a broad scale. However, skeptic that I am, it appears to me that the world when peaceful and without wars returns to its old individualistic habit of self-righteousness and leaves the dialectic to the scholars.

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Douglas Barnes et al.

**LANGUAGE, THE LEARNER
AND THE SCHOOL.**

Hammondsworth
Middlesex:
Penguin, Revised ed., 1971.
168 pp. \$1.25.

"In the average classroom someone is talking for two-thirds of the time, two-thirds of the talk is teacher-talk, and two-thirds of the teacher-talk is direct-influence." (Ned A. Flanders, 1962).

The authors of this opening edition of the Penguin Papers in Education deal with an important problem in the classroom: how the linguistic behavior of the teacher affects the learning ability of the students. As Piaget has noted, the process of learning in the child develops through his assimilation of knowledge and his accommodation to this new information. If the child meets with a dead-end in this process, if a word is totally alien to him and no attempt is made to assist him in coming to grips with it through voicing his opinions and listening to those of his peers, then that word may

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simply be memorized as a "label" for a restricted segment of information which can then be parroted back to the teacher. In order to avoid this, the teacher must turn himself into a "sounding board" for the student's opinions, letting him learn through experience to argue constructively and to respect others' points of view, while at the same time subtly altering and improving his use of language so that it may gradually take on a more mature form.

The three essays in *Language, the Learner and the School* concern themselves with the teacher-student relationship, with student interaction and with the reasons behind the proposal for the establishment of a language policy in the English schools. The first essay by Douglas Barnes describes the results of a survey made of secondary school British classrooms in 1966/67. Classifying the language used within the classroom, he found four categories of teacher questions: factual ("What?"); reasoning ("How?" "Why?"); open questions not calling for reasoning ("What books have you been reading?"); and social ("Won't you? Aren't we?"). Two kinds of student answers occur from these questions: closed-ended (having a predetermined answer) or open-ended (allowing the pupil to evolve his own conclusion). The occurrence of open-ended answers is quite rare, especially in the arts and mathematics. At times, the teacher may appear to be asking an open question when in reality it is a "pseudo-question," to which again there is only one "right" answer. It may require the use of specialist terminology or of "correct" speech patterns not normally made use of outside school. It may permit the student to think aloud in a predetermined pattern, but not to deviate into personal anecdotes and observations. Other pupils may be prevented from contributing their opinions; there may be visual aids carefully pointed out by the teacher in order to steer the pupil into the "right track."

In short, very little free thinking is allowed. As a result, the teacher cannot discern whether those labels so adeptly handled by the students in response to a predetermined stimulus are really understood and can be used in alternative or varying situations. Barnes says that these inadequacies can only be noticed within the context of more "open" discussions where students are permitted to hypothesize freely. In order to learn children must be allowed to verbalize freely, not to view language solely as "an instrument of teaching."

The second essay, by James Britton, focuses on student interaction, showing the results of classroom indoctrination in the use of language. Through recordings made of conversations among students, he discovered that although the speakers can at times express their sentiments very clearly, they show very little ability to argue constructively and to benefit from the opinions of their peers. Instead, they set up a form of "sympathetic circularity," in which constant appeals are made to the others in their group for approval ("I mean," "like," "you know," "right (?)"). They avoid becoming more explicit, and find it almost impossible to believe that the others may think differently. Britton states that their appeals are more to what they feel is "common sense" than to reason. The last conversation, between a science teacher and his pupils, illustrates Britton's theory of the benefits of learning to point out "alternative possibilities." The teacher's method of asking open questions ("What do you think?") grants the pupil endless possibilities for an answer and helps him to develop his language through the process of expressing his opinions. By describing an event, the student learns how to explain it.

Harold Rosen reviews the findings of the two previous essays and makes proposals for future alterations of classroom language. One of the most interesting features of his essay is the extensive

list of rules for the present classroom "language game." The constraints placed upon the pupils by the unspoken rules of the game considerably limit their ability to think. My most vivid memory of elementary school is the shock felt upon the realization that deviation from the teacher's line of thought could be considered a heinous sin. Called upon to state what early man used as his first tool, I found that the answer "flint" was firmly rejected for the textbook's "stone." On that memorable day, the "language game" began in earnest. Rosen points out that language, or speech, is a most important element in the classroom. The child must be able to vocalize his sentiments, and the teacher would do far better as an adult voice and listener instead of as a dictator. He can then evaluate his student's ability as a learner; and the benefit of an audience of peers and the opportunity to express himself fully, reward his student with a better grasp of language as a learning tool.

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J. Gilchrist &
W. J. Murray.

**THE PRESS IN THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION.**

Melbourne: Cheshire, 1971.
334 pp. \$8.50.

This book covers the period 1789 to 1794, and perhaps *The Press on . . .* rather than *The Press in the French Revolution* would have been a more accurate title. To the exclusion of all other news it deals with just that, the French Revolution. Matter of title aside, the handling of the material is both systematic and interesting for the period chosen.

The introduction is rather heavy with detail and possibly necessarily

so for the subject, but it is neither brief enough for the subsequent content nor long enough for the French press in general. However, this is a minor matter once one gets into the various parts of the book which cover the year 1789, the Church, the Monarchy, the People, War, Ideals, and the Terror. Particular enjoyment can be gained from contrasting the extremes of political left and right, literary styles and techniques, lofty objectivity and downright personal abuse, and long and short term aims which impress and depress one with their purity or pointless savagery.

If one's sole desire is simply to learn more about the French Revolution, then this is probably not the book to consult, but it is excellent in the manner that it demonstrates how a free press operated at a given time in history and how it handled such events. The selection of these extracts must have been a monumental task as over five hundred different "newspapers" of greater or lesser length of publication appeared between 1789 and 1794, nor is anything lost in the translation from French into English. Marat, Robespierre and Hébert (or Père Duchêsne as he calls himself) flit across the pages and events in most life-like form, probably because they wrote most but also because they had more to say. Other writers had less to say, but this does not detract from the selection methods used which favour the pro-revolutionary more than the anti-revolutionary or moderate evolutionary writers. The extent to which the pro-revolutionaries disagree among themselves in their writings and actions debunks the "massive monolithism" usually associated with revolutionaries. The fewer anti-revolutionary extracts do the same for the "Establishment."

The authors, J. Gilchrist and W. J. Murray, chose to end in 1794 on the grounds that after that date the press degenerated rapidly to the stage of simply echoing the various Jacobin clubs that arose to