

Editorial

Education and Schooling

This issue of the *Journal* tackles a basic question faced by teachers, parents and students: "Is schooling educative?" While this is a perennial question, it has been highlighted in recent years by the writings and ragings of Ivan Illich, Everet Reimer, Colin Greer, Christopher Jencks and members of the de-schooling school of thought. With the publication in 1966 of James S. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which is better known as "The Coleman Report" and which was the result of a comprehensive study of American youth commissioned by the United States Government, the answer seemed clear: Not schools but families make the significant difference in children's future income, success, social mobility. The great myth of the school as agent of true democracy and effective social escalator was exposed. Meanwhile, a legion of other critics, such as Paul Goodman and Jonathan Kozol, had criticized the schools as being anti-humane, anti-intellectual, anti-social. In the awful institutional vacuum all this condemnation created, alternative forms of education were sought in varied, imaginative and often improbable places.

However, some of the delight, freshness and fervor of the alternative movement has faded. Some of its assumptions have been subjected to scrutiny and found wanting; some of Coleman's findings have been seriously challenged (see, for example, Herbert J. Walberg and Sune Pinzur Rasher, "Public School Effectiveness and Equality: New Evidence and its Implications," *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 1974, pp. 3-9).

The contributors to this *Journal* are not ranged for or against the ideologues of de-schooling. They look at formal education from a number of perspectives and, while the following extracts suggest they are critical of past efforts, they tend to justify faith in the idea that schools *can* be worthwhile!

. . . school shelters an individual in the most negative of fashions by not giving young persons adequate preparation for life, often muddling their minds up in the process by giving them a mistaken idea of the priorities of life by means of which they can manoeuvre more effectively into and through this Brave New World of ours.

— E. F. Beane

. . . education, even in more or less formalized systems of schooling, need not be what it usually has been. We were created to be more than narrowly didactic, machine-like creatures in our classrooms. . . .

— Donald S. Seckinger

The way Americans had thought about education in the past was no longer good enough. Pieties about the value of schooling to democracy without the necessary financial support would no longer do. . . .

— Jeffrey Herold

Our first order of business should be aimed at recapturing the dream of creating an institution — public, universal and compulsory — whose major task is to bind and cement. We will probably come up with something quite different from what we have.

— Charles A. Tesconi

If readers of the *Journal* are not convinced that schools and education can be compatible, we challenge them to devise better forms of learning.

M. G.