

the crucial question is how the social studies can profit from their example.

The methods used in the science reforms—close co-operation between schoolteachers and university scholar-teachers and a trial-and-error process of revision at all levels—hold great promise for the reform of the social studies as well, Mr. Mayer rightly suggests. One hopeful sign is the offer by a few of the leading science reformers to help translate their experience into the social science field. And Mr. Mayer is justified in his criticism of some economists and others who appear to feel that the job can be done in academic isolation from the problems of bad teaching and badly prepared teachers. Whatever reforms are attempted, they must help to produce the kind of basic, easily applicable materials—books, films, kinescopes, etc.—which, with a simultaneous retraining of teachers, can be made “teacherproof,” a phrase used widely among the mathematics reformers.

MR. MAYER cites three major obstacles to reforming the social studies: the reluctance of scholars to devote time to the problem; the lack of educational sophistication among politically sensitive school superintendents and principals, who may join successful reforms but won’t start them; and the “total inadequacy of teacher preparation.”

These are formidable obstacles. But it seems to me that a more serious roadblock to quick and effective social studies reform is the difficulty of getting scholars in these fields to agree on basic concepts and priorities. This is probably as it should be. It *ought* to be harder for two historians to come to an understanding about first things in the curriculum than it is for two physicists or mathematicians. In fact, it may have to be conceded that no really acceptable common curriculum can or should be worked out in the social studies. There are too many ideological differences and too many legitimately clashing interpretations for scholars and teachers to come to any intellectually valid consensus.

One approach that conceivably might satisfy the different schools of thought would be to acquaint stu-

dents with all sides of controversial questions and let them form their own judgments. Once such a method were accepted, it might become easier to reach agreement on broad areas of coverage in a subject, and to retrain teachers so as to give them competence in those areas.

As these reforms get under way, one must hope that just because ignorance and intellectual softness made a mishmash of social studies the valid elements in the earlier reform movement will not be abandoned. The danger of counter-revolutions is that they blindly erase the good with the bad. Little will be accomplished by merely fragmenting the social sciences anew. If it is too much to expect that enough teachers can be trained to be at home in all the related fields and disciplines, then perhaps today’s gingerly experiments with team teaching might offer a clue. With a team that includes a historian, an economist, and perhaps a teacher of literature—to cite only one possible combination—the original aim of integrating inquiry and knowledge may actually have a chance. For a discussion of current events or even of problems of democracy need not be the kind of pooling of ignorance to which Mr. Mayer quite properly objects.

PROBABLY the most basic need, if American public education is truly to be improved, is for a long look at the entire stretch of available time—from kindergarten through high school. A great deal of repetition can be eliminated. But that is not enough. The question must be asked, for example, whether pedagogy really demands that first-grade social studies (or whatever label replaces it) must begin with the familiar—the neighborhood. There is much evidence that childish imaginations not only can but would prefer to cope with, say, ancient mythology as a starting point. Whatever the specific answers, the example is suggested only to show that the future curriculum must bring about cohesion not just by scrambling a few disciplines but by mapping out a meaningful advance through the human past into a future which, though not predictable, must be influenced by educated men.

A Village Anarchist

NAT HENTOFF

THE SOCIETY I LIVE IN IS MINE, by Paul Goodman. Horizon Press. \$3.95.

At fifty-two, Paul Goodman is in vogue, particularly among the young. He enjoys writing novels and poems, but it is as a social critic that he has acquired his largest audience—an audience multiplied during the past three years by his lectures at some fifty colleges. Goodman describes himself as a “community anarchist.” He maintains that “sovereign power must be diminished, because it is too dangerous to live with.” Accordingly, he expends much of his prodigious energy in suggesting ways “to multiply sources of initiative and experiment” in areas ranging from disarmament to education. (Goodman is a member of local School Boards 6 and 8 in Manhattan.)

He does not limit himself to books and lectures in his attempts to “influence the general consensus.” He is a ubiquitous polemicist, appearing in a wide variety of publications, including his neighborhood newspaper. Not even this frequency of printed dissent meets his needs. He is also a persistent letter writer to publications and to public officials. In *The Society I Live In Is Mine*, Goodman has collected some of the more provocative of these letters from the past few years as well as a few speeches and book reviews “that are very like angry letters.” He also tells what result, if any, followed the discharge of each missive. The primary purpose of the collection is to urge by example that more of the populace become “authentic citizens, alert, concerned, intervening, deciding, on all issues and at all levels.”

The book has some value for its distillation of many of Goodman’s central ideas, but its major appeal is as entertainment, and I do not use the term pejoratively. However one may disagree with Goodman’s theories, it is invigorating to attend his indignant, sardonic, and often devastatingly accurate assaults on

specific examples of obtuseness in the culture. He describes, for instance, a network television show for preschool children whose directress "was in a tightly controlled panic lest anything spontaneous occur" and thereby not give her enough time to read all the commercials. When his son, a student at the Bronx High School of Science, was suspended for having refused to cooperate in shelter drills, Goodman pointed out to a member of the Board of Education that "The form of one such drill was kneeling and holding a book over one's head, an interesting medievalism for a school of science."

DURING a session on the repression of sex in our society, Goodman, speaking to Lutheran youth workers, made a swift but valid literary judgment: "The audience of Tennessee Williams is the Protestant audience—that is, the combination of lust and punishment." He then moved on to social criticism in a New York *Herald Tribune* book review of Dr. Spock's *Problems of Parents*: "There are no problems of parents as parents; the problems are of the grown-ups as people in the society they are responsible for, and in which children cannot reasonably grow up."

The most persistent theme in the book, as in nearly all of Goodman's recent writing, is his concern with the waste of the young. Discussing dropouts in a New York West Side weekly, he reflects what a number of the dropouts themselves keep saying—the schools in their neighborhoods are useless and damaging and they leave in self-defense. Yet, he recognizes, the dropouts "are imprudent, since they diminish their future chances of a decent living. But then the reasonable social policy would be not to try to keep them in school, unless the school is radically changed, but to provide them opportunity for a decent future in some other way. Our society at present can't and won't do this. And by and large, the concern for the dropouts is because they are a nuisance and a threat, who can't be socialized by the existing machinery."

Later, in the same neighborhood journal, he declared, "There is a case for uniform standards of achieve-

ment, but they cannot be reached by uniform techniques." Standardization, therefore, is not at all more efficient, nor is it necessarily less expensive. "Particular inventiveness," he has observed, "requires thought, but thought does not cost money. And the more authority to initiate (including the right to make mistakes) is delegated to many, the wiser and freer we shall all be."

Goodman's solution to the various problems he confronts are often debatable and are sometimes impossible of achievement without a prior social revolution that he does not know how to instigate. His highest and most stimulating function, therefore, is as a nay-sayer. What makes him so readable is that all his years in exacerbated opposition have not made him chronically self-righteous or humorless. His constant explosions in public—as in the prose that makes up this book—have obviously served as one form of catharsis. Whatever the ultimate effect of his ideas on the way the next generation lives, Goodman's insistent pamphleteering has at least helped sustain the impetus of one of the most thoroughly independent members of our society. «»

The Last Aesthete?

SIDNEY ALEXANDER

THE BERNARD BERENSON TREASURY;
selected and edited by Hanna Kiel.
Simon and Schuster. \$6.95.

"First I must keenly enjoy a picture, then I can write about it. This, I suppose, is not scientific. . . ." So wrote the twenty-five-year-old Berenson to his future wife back in 1891. And at ninety he makes a rueful entry in his diary: "None of my young contemporaries write as if they enjoyed a work of art. They attack it with questions, with problems, with psychoanalysis, with recidite learning, with didactical acumen, with metaphysical conundrum, with logic absolute. . . . For the 'young's' one artifact is as good as another, because they are interested

in events and not what works of art do to us, and one event is as much a cadaver as another, equally worthy of dissection and analysis. . . ."

Bernard Berenson's ghost is still stirring up the Tuscan countryside. One can still quarrel in his defense. The younger generation doesn't like him because he considered nonrepresentational art "neodecalcomania." The older generation is sick to death of "tactile values." And that is as it should be. Great men don't die easily: they are permanent disturbers of the peace. And now with Hanna Kiel's excellent selection of Berenson's writings, including sizable chunks from the unpublished correspondence and the achingly revealing diaries of the last years, we can understand why this tiny delicate man, an aesthete, was the force he was, and why his doctrines, his way of life, his values can still stir so many moderns to a frenzy of rejection.

I don't refer to his unique life story: the Back Bay Boston aristocrat that emerged from the chrysalis of a Lithuanian-Jewish immigrant boy. Such lepidopterous transformations are the daily miracle of America. That would refer to his personality, and what one gathers from these writings is the man's effort always to transcend his personality, his increasing desire to lose himself in the nonself. ". . . I have no objection to being known," he writes to Charles Du Bos in 1926. "On the contrary I have a good human desire for 'fame'! Only it must be unanecdotic, and as it were, abstract, and if it were not paradoxical to say so, impersonal."

We can respect him for that. And yet it is difficult to separate Berenson's life from his ideas; and indeed much as he disliked anecdote about himself, his very notion of making one's own life a work of art, and his dedicated effort to live according to that notion—all this leads to an inextricable web of the personal and the impersonal. Surely the last decades at I Tatti, with its regular receptions, its daily parade of the learned and the royal and the curious, makes one think of, let us say, the court of Weimar, with Berenson playing the role of Goethe and the Grand Duke at once.

But now, of course, what remains