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Beyond the Classroom

AVAST vacuum exists today beyond the college classroom. Filling that vacuum is the Number One job of American education.

Consider some case histories. A lawyer we know is not yet forty but he has already won a wide reputation for his brilliant handling of complicated cases involving corporation law. Once outside the field of law, however, he is like a loosely sewn baseball that falls apart at the seams at the first real contact with a baseball bat. If you ask him about the 99 9/10 per cent of the world outside his own particular fraction you will probably draw a blank. If you ask him about the basic differences in philosophy and ideology between the totalitarian state and the democratic state you will get no further than the bald though not bold statement that one is very bad and the other is pretty good.

Or consider the case of another friend. He has spent almost ten years in college and university work in an attempt to obtain an education; but now he complains that his education has virtually been a total failure. He knows how uranium can be converted into plutonium, and he can calculate with a high degree of accuracy the amount of heat released by the atom at the split second of fission; but what bothers him now is that in a closely related and even more important field—the political and social and historic implications of atomic energy—he feels intellectually bankrupt. He has a strong sense of responsibility for the planet-shattering gadget he has helped to perfect; but he says he has little background or training to equip him to comment on the very problems the gadget has created.

Or consider the doctor who readily admits that the truly modern practitioner must treat the whole man, and who knows all about the critical relationship between body and mind. Yet his training—intensive training—actually serves to limit both his own horizons and his usefulness. He is a man with a stethoscope, a microscope, a cardiograph machine, an X-ray machine, a sedimentation tube, and a centrifuge. And there his education ends. He has spent so much time in mastering his profession that he has lost sight of the world of which medicine is only a part. He is not equipped to understand or deal with the relationship between society and his patient.

Judged by ordinary standards all these men have had the advantage of "higher education." And yet, whether in terms of the broader needs of their professions or their own comprehension of the community-at-large, they are under-educated, under-trained, under-privileged. They have yet to pass the literacy test of the twentieth century.

The conclusion is inescapable that it is no longer accurate—nor has it been for some time—to apply the term "higher education" to American colleges. What seemed adequate only a short time ago for the purposes of top-level education now fulfills an intermediate function at best. The definition of what constitutes a truly educated person has expanded so prodigiously within a single generation that the average college graduate of 1955 may be no better equipped than the average high-school or even elementary-school graduate at the turn of the century. This fast-widening

gap between formal education and the requirements of a world community is perhaps the main problem and challenge in education of our time.

EDUKATION fails unless the Three R's at one end of the school spectrum lead ultimately to the Four P's at the other—Preparation for Earning, Preparation for Living, Preparation for Understanding, Preparation for Participation in the problems involved in the making of a better world.

Adult education used to be synonymous with delayed formal education or naturalization courses or vocational training for grownups. But adult education today becomes just as important for college graduates and professional people as it is for the newcomer to the United States who is trying to learn the language. The language needed by the college graduate today is a complex one. First of all, he must keep himself up to date in his own field. (This becomes virtually a matter of the public safety in such fields as medicine, where basic changes in theory and practice have altered the main contours of the profession.) Secondly, he needs the kind of continuing education that will enable him to think and act intelligently in helping to keep up with the vast accretions of general knowledge. Finally, he needs to know how to look for and appraise information about the world of ideas and events. His country is going to have to make the biggest decisions in its history—both for the purpose of assuring its own survival and for helping to keep this planet in a single piece—and this may require some inspired prodding by the individual citizen.

Obviously, a back-to-school movement for the total adult population is neither likely nor possible. But a willingness to learn creates resources of its own. A book is still the finest portable university known to man. And, in a more collective sense, there is the rapidly growing prospect of a non-commercial national television network. No invention in the field of communications can come close to television in terms of its power or convenience. And almost no public issue before the American people today is more important than the question concerning the development of separate channels for educational purposes. Non-commercial educational TV network is now in its experimental stage. With public recognition and insistence it can become a living reality.

A vast adventure in education lies before the American people. The need is defined, the means are at hand, and the prospects are limitless. —N. C.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A REVIEWER NEEDED

JOHN STEINBECK hits the point exactly in describing literary critics as human beings, subject to all the faults and imperfections of their race, "Critics—From a Writer's Viewpoint" [SR Aug 27]. Yet his question of what is the precise function of the critic has a rather obvious answer: While the average, intelligent layman may not need the assistance of a book reviewer in grasping the main elements of a well-written work, he is generally incapable of sensing the book's place within the framework of history, literature, politics, or whatever field the author explores.

In answer to another of Steinbeck's questions, an excellent "critique of the critics" can be found in Malcolm Cowley's "The Literary Situation" (Viking).

BARRY IRA ORINGER.

New York, N.Y.

TAKEN FOR GRANTED

I HAVEN'T the faintest idea whether, as contended by Hollis Alpert, "Movies Are Better Than the Stage" [SR July 23], any more than I know whether ham and eggs are "better" than champagne. Certainly Henry Hewes's "search into why Alpert's theory is wrong" does little to enlighten me. ("The Wooden O vs. The Celluloid Eye" [SR Aug. 20]).

His unqualified assertion that "the theatre is always more genuinely moving and artistic than the films" will startle many of us who find Chaplin or Garbo considerably more "moving and artistic" than a large percentage of Broadway offerings and would have thought from Mr. Hewes's reviews that he was of a similar opinion. He states that when we go to the movies "our eyes become bored if there isn't constant movement" but fails to explain why eyes should get more bored watching a static film than watching a static stage scene. Actually it depends entirely upon what the ear (not to mention the heart) is hearing when the movement or plot or player is temporarily arrested. If it is Shavian talk like "Pygmalion" or Bronx talk like "Marty," Charles Laughton's rendition in "Ruggles of Red Gap" of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or Marlon Brando delivering the funeral oration at Caesar's bier, a movie audience, like a legitimate theatre audience, hangs breathless on the words, completely unaware for the moment of any lack of movement. Hewes is under the impression that patrons cannot "sit enthralled for several minutes while an actor is speaking a soliloquy." Mr. Hewes also relies upon the ancient cliché that "only in live performances is to be found the exciting phenomenon of two-way participation." Possibly for first-night audiences there may be such a "ritual of mutual participation," but less fortunate theatre-goers surrounded by late arriving, over-wined and -dined burgers and their wives, visiting buyers eager for sex



"Then it's settled—we'll split up the island and divide the local characters."

and sadism, and the old reliable contingent of coughers find little evidence in the Broadway theatre of "the actor and the theatregoer both in on the creative act." Or did Mr. Hewes ever attend a benefit performance with Sam and Sarah yoo-hooing to their friends in the audience? Their theatrical participation is more in the nature of a riot than a ritual.

"Any of us," writes Mr. Hewes, "who goes to the theatre regularly is thoroughly immune" to Mr. Alpert's thesis. Unfortunately, however, the chosen few who attend the theatre regularly grows steadily fewer and even among them there is an increasing number of apostates who think the screen did a more effective job than the stage with "The Country Girl," "Detective Story," and "The Time of the Cuckoo." "We do rather take the theatre's superiority for granted," admits Mr. Hewes. Maybe that's the root of the trouble, not only with his reply to Mr. Alpert but with something far more precious—the American stage.

ARTHUR L. MAYER.

New York, N.Y.

THREAT OF THE BOMB

IT HAS BEEN DISTRESSING to me to note that the only comments thus far published on Thomas H. Grainger's "The Emergency in Basic Science" [SR July 16] have been derogatory. It seemed to me that Grainger had stated his case well and that his article was much needed.

Harry Wiles's (LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, SR Aug. 20) would place the emergency in basic science low on the list of current emergencies and "summon our educational energies to the study of man" (presumably unscientifically). "Further prog-

ress in the basic science studies," he says, "would hardly render that device (the H-bomb) less threatening to survival." As a matter of fact, I know of no way other than basic research to reduce the threat of the H-bomb. Indeed, the very cause of our dilemma is the often-heard remark that the physical sciences—particularly applied physics—have so far outstripped the biological sciences. We understand man's behavior poorly because of insufficient knowledge of human and animal psychology, of neurophysiology, and ultimately of the physics and chemistry of life. (Skeptics of this view are invited to read R. W. Girard's "Biological Roots of Psychiatry," *Science*, Aug. 5, 1955.) The "fresh insights" in the study of man which Mr. Wiles calls for are unlikely to come from introspection and wishful thinking.

M. B. Ozonoff, in the same issue of SR (LETTERS), seems to feel that "research money is easy to get." I wish he would let some of us in on his little secret. Ozonoff believes the problem lies in the schools, "where a young person must have instilled into him a drive to learn for learning's sake alone." True enough, yet how many young persons with such a drive find themselves discouraged by the lack of prestige, low salaries, and lack of equipment and time for research, and allow themselves to be lured into applied science and industry, where they are assured of a far more comfortable living! Grainger is perfectly correct in stating that the major need is to teach the value of basic research to the average citizen, to legislators, and, I would add, even to college administrators!

HOWARD E. EVANS.

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