

Voices in the Classroom



Summer Shorts

NOW THAT the last commencement orator has put his clichés back in mothballs, all neatly folded and ready for next year, the silly season is full upon us. On campuses that are hotbeds of sobriety and decorum during the regular academic year, summertime produces a shirtsleeve democracy that places teachers and students on a footing of personal equality that is rarely seen during the colder months. There must be for many students something refreshing about the reminder that professors sweat just like everybody else.

On most campuses the tone of the summer program is far more civilized than it is the rest of the year. Sophomores who are treated as children in May become adults in July, and formalities that were inviolable during the winter are ignored when the temperature reaches 70. Presumably anyone who appears in a summer course is there because he wants to be, not because of requirements. Of course, this is a myth, since many students are there to pick up extra credits or to make up deficiencies, but the atmosphere persists. College courses in summer school seem to be rooted in the adult world, not in presumptions of adolescence and immaturity. Perhaps it's just that all the deans are on vacation.

The virtue of summer study and research is that it appears to conflict with nothing (except rest and recreation). An advanced student of science can devote all of July and August to the pursuit of a single microbe without the competition of assignments in other courses; a professor can devote full time to his writing and research without the pressure of regular class meetings. It would be interesting to lengthen the summer—to have vacations run from April to October, for example—to see what would happen to academic performance in colleges and universities. A change in the calendar might well allow people to learn more and to feel less guilty while they're about it.

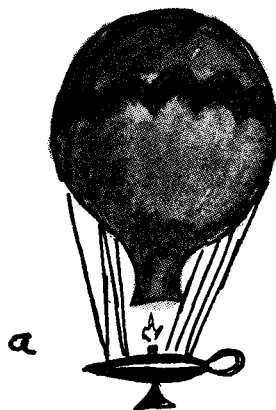
Summer, of course, isn't what it used to be. There was a time when a professorial trip abroad was something of an event on the local campus. But the airplane and the grant have put so many people in exotic places that a man coming back from Katmandu or Pago Pago or Zanzibar is now often greeted by his

academic colleagues with the query, "You been away?"

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A NATIONAL MAGAZINE recently discovered that people with brains are helping to run the country. It calls them the "action intellectuals," making them sound like a spinoff from the Pepsi generation. The action intellectuals, as one might guess, are the deep thinkers who, as consultants or part-time employees of the government, are helping to formulate domestic economic policy, international strategy, and other major decisions on national questions.

What is most significant about this development is not so much that large organizations, including the government and corporations, are buying brains and ideas, but that there is a growing tendency toward the collectivization of knowledge and information. For generations there has been concern about the individual as against the power of large organizations, but until recently



this power existed primarily in the form of political or economic strength, not in the form of usable information and ideas. The significance of the so-called knowledge explosion is not that there exists more information than ever before, but that such information can be managed only by large organizations. One of the real challenges for education and for social policy generally is to give individuals access to the best thought and ideas and to enable them to make optimal use of what is known.

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IN THE LARGE no-man's-land between formal school and the easy living that we used to associate with summertime lies a huge area of education that has

been largely overlooked. "For years we have called ourselves a school of education," said a member of the staff at the Harvard Graduate School of Education recently, "but all we've really been interested in is schools."

All of the recent major studies of school performance indicate that success is determined more by social and economic background than by the customary indices of school quality—libraries, teacher-student ratios, number of books, or age of buildings. What we don't know is what and how people learn outside of school. What are the consequences of all those thousands of hours of television that children watch even before they begin the first grade? In what way is a big city a huge but badly used teaching device? In what way is involvement in community activities or civil rights work an educational experience which is virtually unique and which certainly cannot be duplicated in any classroom? We know that students who have spent time with Crossroads Africa or in a Southern voter registration drive or as block workers in a Northern ghetto return to the campus with a high degree of sophistication and with an impatience toward the pallidness of normal academic fare. The educational consequences of all of these experiences are clearly worthy of further study and of more recognition than we have yet given them.

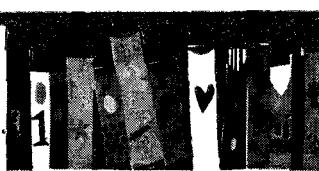
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IN THE CONCERN for solving our major educational problems, and especially the problems related to those we call the disadvantaged, we often forget that a large sector of American education is not undergoing any crisis and that, in a thousand communities across the country, schools are functioning well and parents and teachers are equally pleased with the things that are going on. Behind the commencement clichés and the Norman Rockwell figures of small-city America, one can discern young men and women of good cheer and confidence who are more sophisticated than their parents were at the same age and who are probably as diverse in their abilities and attitudes as Americans have always been. If they are sometimes apathetic or relatively unpolitical, there are also many among them who are responsibly concerned about their world (and that world is often global rather than local) and about the way they will live in the future.

It would be difficult to imagine how we could sustain the current level of educational and political dissent outside a society where the vast majority are committed to the existing institutions and are willing to maintain them in sufficient order and harmony so that dissent can operate without tearing the society apart.

—PETER SCHRAG.

the Editor's Bookshelf



A CURRICULUM, in common parlance, is a sequence of courses leading to a diploma or a degree. But many professional educators use the term more broadly to include all the planned activities or experiences provided by an educational institution, including those not academic in nature which do not yield credit toward a degree. A generation ago, progressive educators objected to the term "extracurricular" and insisted that since all experiences are in some sense educative, all the activities carried on under the auspices of the school should be considered a part of the curriculum.

The progressives coined the term "experience curriculum" to emphasize the fact that they were concerned more with the child and his experiences than with the traditional subject matter taught in formal educational institutions. It might be argued, however, that any curriculum is an experience curriculum since it provides the experiences through which a student will learn.

The history of education records many battles between those who would place the emphasis on intellectual learning and those who give greater importance to social adaptation or emotional development. During the Twenties, Thirties, and Forties, many of the critics of progressivism in education thought the schools were going too far in their de-emphasis of the academic aspects of schooling. Since 1950 or 1955 there has been a renewed stress on intellectual development in most schools, but now a considerable number of both educators and parents feel that academic pressures have become excessive. The current interest in the Summerhill School is evidence that many now are again willing to sacrifice academic rigor in order to give children an opportunity to live more carefree lives.

Those educators who prefer to steer clear of both extremes believe that a sound curriculum can provide all the academic and intellectual experiences that a child needs and still make the school a happy place. And they are convinced that this can be done without any sacrifice of intellectual rigor. Two new books by experienced professional educators offer proposals for developing such a curriculum.

The Curriculum and the Disciplines of Knowledge, by Arthur R. King, Jr. and John A. Brownell (John

Wiley & Sons, 221 pp., \$5.95), is a carefully reasoned book proposing a theory of curriculum practice which defines the curriculum as a planned series of encounters between a neophyte and the communities of symbolic discourse. The student is the neophyte, the teacher is a veteran discourser, and the school is a composite company of discourses with a mission. The authors propose a set of subtheories as a basis for selecting disciplines for the curriculum, for staffing the school, and for the nurture of the curriculum dialogue within the school. They argue that the vital revision and innovation of the curriculum which keep it closely in harmony with the changing conditions of the contemporary world of knowledge must come from this dialogue.

Though it is inevitable that many educators will look upon this as a proposal for a return to a subject-centered curriculum, it is worth noting that throughout the book the authors assert the worth and importance of the individual learner and see the development of the individual as the goal of education. They emphasize the necessity for the active involvement of children in the communities of discourse. But they hold that liberal education, traditionally considered suitable only for the elite of a society, belongs to all. They believe that the schools can give the same kind of educational opportunities to all students, provided that the amount of time and the techniques used are varied to suit the individuals.

This is an intellectually sophisticated book which will appeal to those who are willing to think deeply about the philosophical problems underlying curriculum planning.

School Curriculum and the Individual, by John I. Goodlad (Blaisdell Publishing Co., 259 pp., \$6.50), is a collection of papers written over a period of years by one of the nation's best known and most widely respected educators. Though he is now a university professor, Goodlad knows the lower

schools at first hand and has devoted much of his professional career to the improvement of elementary and secondary education. He says, "The central aim of education . . . is to develop rational men who do not sin against themselves and their kind." Intellectual development, though essential, is not enough. "The intellectual man standing disdainfully uncommitted, the educated man standing impeccably uninvolved, these are the living symbols of imperfection in education and in schooling."

The kind of rational man that Goodlad hopes to develop through his curriculum is "not only committed to the rich fruits of inquiry but also is prepared to act and, indeed, acts upon insight rendered compelling by commitment. He knows, as perhaps the most vital ingredient of his rationality, that only through action following understanding and commitment does man forge the links in the chains of his own humanity and of mankind's immortality. He senses his place in time and space and his individual responsibility to that place, time, and space."

The educational procedures designed to produce such rational men must be adapted to the known facts of individual differences in maturation rates and learning capacity. Consequently, in this book, as in his previous publications, Goodlad urges an abandonment of the ladder system in education, which requires each child to advance a grade a year, and proposes a nongraded system which will allow each child to advance at his own best rate.

In building his curriculum, Goodlad would not de-emphasize the intellectual content or neglect the academic disciplines, but he would stress unifying principles rather than specific bits and pieces of knowledge. By establishing goals appropriate to the capacity of each individual he would reduce pressures of the kind that can be harmful to a child's emotional health. He says, "pressure to succeed in school, increasing the world over, encourages behavior that is antithetical to goals of rational self-transcendence. Children steal answer booklets, copy each other's work, and falsify records in order to appear to have attained minimum standards set by the system. Education, the individual, and mankind are corrupted. Little wonder, then, that we have much-schooled men devoid of self-understanding and good will toward humanity."

Though neither of these books seems to have been written with either the general reader or the average teacher in mind, it would be unfortunate if they were read only by curriculum directors and education specialists, for they deal in depth with problems that are of concern to all those involved in educational planning.

—PAUL WOODRING.

