

## GLOOM AT THE TOP

by PETER SCHRAG

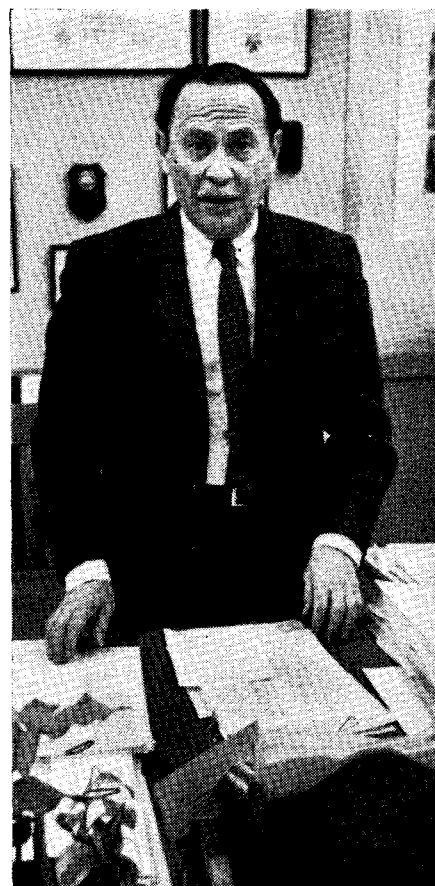
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Most of it is familiar: Harvard types in cord suits, sweating in the 100-degree heat like ordinary mortals; a couple of shrinks; a rabbi from Cleveland; Louis Harris with the poll data; a guru from the music industry in a \$300 suit playing Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel records; Paul Goodman with his shirt-tail out; David Riesman with the generation gap; Jerry Avorn, last year's editor of the *Columbia Spectator*; a dozen or so high school students (rural North Carolina and Central Harlem; fancy prep and small-town high); some eighty public school administrators of the Advanced Administrative Institute of the Harvard Graduate School of Education—deputy superintendents from big cities; full-dress, four-star supers from Edina and Shaker Heights, from Salamanca and Canton; plus a few monsignors—diocesan school superintendents—doing summer business in polo shirts.

The topic is like the cast, like the set, like the heat: The Youth Revolution. (The coming insurrection in the high school? The new culture? Why kids hate school? Hypocrisy among the aged?) But when Harvard calls, people come—even in July. The Advanced Administrative Institute at Harvard is an annual affair for experienced school personnel, but this year's meeting has more urgency, allows for less time, than the normal conference dealing with the mysteries of mustering support for bond issues or the problems of getting along with the school board. "The Youth Revolution" is more than rhetoric, more than a fabrication of newspaper pundits and cheap sociologists. But what are the connections between that revolution—whatever it may be—and the schools? Do the people who run those schools feel they have a problem, and in what way do they regard it as something that relates to what they do? Can "the problem" be administered away with a few new tactics, or does it reflect pervasive inadequacies in the society and the educational system? Those who come to Harvard are touted high on the with-it-ness scale. If they don't know, who does?

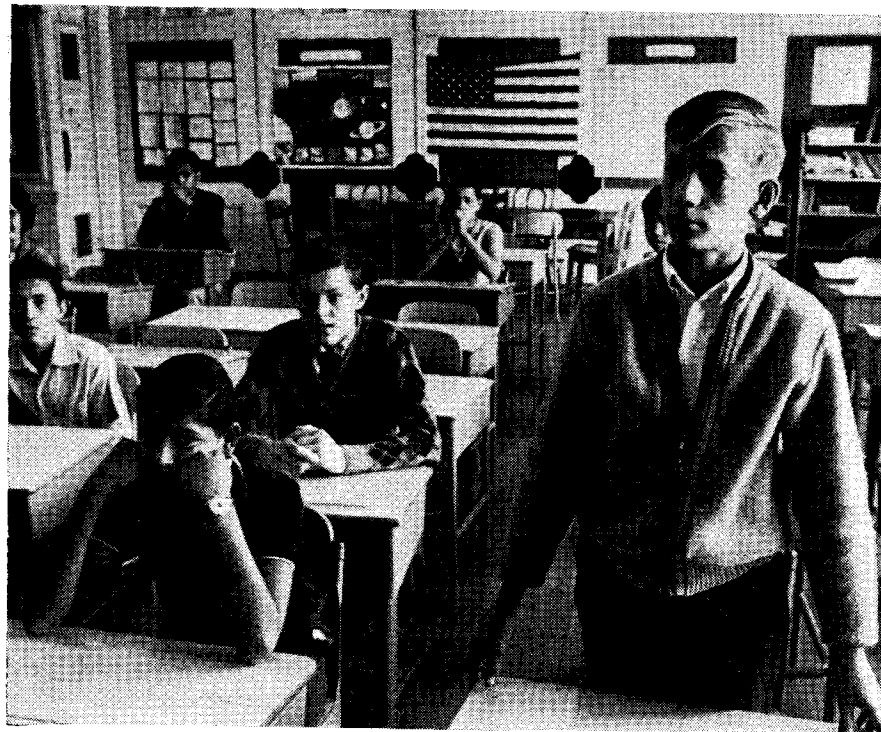
The heat is a symbolic equalizer. For much of the time we are all incarcerated in un-air-conditioned buildings that impose an elusive atmospheric democracy. Some of the superintendents are wearing Bermuda shorts and sandals, all the duds that violate the dress code of Central High; out of uniform, they, too, are ordinary mortals, middle-aged men, some of them going to pot, trying to figure what the hell it's all about, or maybe trying to figure a way not to have to figure at all. In the dormitory, the kids are playing hard rock, some of them dancing, some of them playing cards with a young priest-administrator from Chicago, others rapping with a black administrator from New York. Equality in the hot living room of Holmes Hall at Radcliffe. "This whole damn thing," says the way-out with the extra-length hair, "is like a Green Beret counter-insurgency manual. They're trying to figure what color hats the guerrilla leaders will wear."

Maybe, for some, it is. Maybe for most. There is a recent copy of *School Management* magazine floating around: STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH BOYCOTTS, VIOLENCE, SIT-INS. In *School Management*, the kids are the enemy, barbarian hordes who have to be conned, or co-opted, or accommodated. Success is to get the kids "back into class in short order." But what about the other guys? What about the guy from the Midwestern city—a deputy superintendent—who confesses that two-thirds of the high schools in his district stink and that the kids are perfectly right to scream about teachers who can't teach, administrators who are inaccessible, and programs from another age and frame of mind? Is there a sensitivity scale? Here are the men who supposedly run a cross section of American schools, ghetto schools and suburban schools, and all-American mainstream schools in places like Sioux Center, Iowa, and Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. How many of them expect to do business as usual next year and forever after? There were high school student demonstrations and protests last year: some in New York City, others in New Jersey, Ohio, Florida, and Minnesota; and no one can really conceive of what nor-



malcy might again be like, even if he fell over it in the lunchroom. We all (let's not say all; say many of us) sense that something is about to happen, that 1969-70 is going to be the year of Central High the way that 1968-69 was the year of Harvard, Cornell, and San Fran State. (And perhaps it will be the year of the junior high, too.) Race, pot, music, the anger of youth—all the elements are there. And so is business-as-usual. Six hours a day of incarceration, thirty kids to a class, listening to a drone; guidance counselors advising independence, while the teachers sniff the john for smoke; hall passes and after-school detention; phony student councils and pompous principals issuing the daily homily. They are masters of the put-down, experts in condescension. "What they're doing," says a tough, angry man from the Minneapolis schools, "is killing kids."

Everybody is trying to tell them something, and after a few days the message ought to be deafening. At a moment like this, only a boob could worry about the school bonds: Mary McCarthy, Radcliffe senior and daughter of Senator Eugene McCarthy, telling them, with four-letter words and other appropriate shorthand, that kids have lost faith in the ordinary institutions of society; Julius Hobson, who beat the track system in the Washing-



School administrator, high school student demonstrator, and the common classroom—"We are living in a no man's land labeled 'the generation gap' which gives its educational system no clues to follow."

ton schools and who is now an angry minority on the district school board, speaking about the society's war on the young, about dirty old men who worry about miniskirts and see-through blouses instead of concerning themselves with racial injustice and the education of children; kids telling about harassment by cops and administrators (and other kids describing how, at sixteen, they are being pursued by white vigilantes, or Black Panthers, or dope pushers); conservative kids and radical kids and moderate kids trying to say that at least part of the time schools are irrelevant, stupid, and repressive.

The messages are so thick that the overload of noise becomes itself an element of administrative relief. (Thank God, says the secret heart in the big office, the kids can't agree. The enemy is divided.) For the first few days of the institute, the kids—despite their divergent views about politics and race—form a phalanx, a defensive clot against Authority in Superior Numbers. "We stick together, stick up for each other, even if we don't agree," says one, but he cannot explain what they have in common other than age. (Later, he will begin to learn.) But the divisions become apparent, almost chaotic, when the kids sit down, all of them, around a table without a moderator or even a working micro-

phone. For an hour and a half, the irrationalities and the hard facts of diverse and often bitter experience are tossed, inconsistent and incomplete, at the visiting Romans. The kids dredge up the phrases of hand-me-down pop sociology, stuff about "elitist theory" and "multiple value systems" (reminder: only a couple are over eighteen; a few are barely sixteen). There are references to FBI conspiracies, to Harvard's use of its investments ("Harvard," says one, "could buy South Africa if it wanted to"—but he neglects to mention that across the street an all-white construction crew is erecting a new dormitory for the girls of Radcliffe), to Black Panthers and the SDS, to the use of Mace-spraying helicopters on the Berkeley campus, to the brutalities of ghetto schools and the injustices of racism, to nonviolent and violent revolution. The leader of an organization of American Indian students reproaches the other kids for shooting off their mouths, making social causes of their paranoia, without having an idea of what they really want. The Indian is tough and cool, like Cochise in a John Ford movie. ("White man talk too much, white man afraid.") The students—from black Harlem militant to Midwest racist—are expected to set out a bill of particulars for the Youth Revolution; instead they set forth a

still incoherent set of attitudes that reflect precisely the diversities for which they were chosen in the first place. If you bring together an alienated long-haired militant from the suburbs and future ROTC captains from North Carolina, you can't really expect them to agree on whether schools, courts, and policemen collude to harass students, on the imminence of revolution, or on the racial inequities in American life.

After all that, the kids were patsies for the put-down, patronizing, fake-sympathetic, the voices of reflection impressed by "these young people," the tone of the high school principal after the assembly discussion program. New England monsignor: "If such young people are coming out of our high schools we must be doing something right." Prep school dean, cultivated, mini-Ivy masculinity: "Admire your honesty . . . but . . . you have to ask yourself what you've made of your opportunities." Superintendent from Midwest suburb: "There's still some tact, courtesy, and good manners to be learned. . . . Youth still tends to violence. . . . Good manners are essential to good communication." There was a lot of palaver about how the kids hadn't used Roberts's *Rules of Order*, how it took them too long to

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# The Editor's Bookshelf

Paul Woodring

## The Retreat from Masculinity

THE DRIFT TOWARD unisex, not only in clothing but also in attitudes and styles of life, is making it more difficult to decide which traits are properly called "masculine" and which "feminine." Television viewers are led to believe that a real man achieves his ends by being tough, brutal, aggressive, reckless, and indifferent to human suffering, but in a civilized society one who exhibits an excess of such characteristics is likely to alienate his friends and to encounter difficulties with the law. Some forty years ago Margaret Mead, after a study of primitive tribes in New Guinea, reported that even in a Stone Age society the traits considered masculine differ greatly from one tribe to another.

Social psychologists who investigate the problem and develop scales to rate individuals on a masculinity-femininity continuum usually resort to an operational definition: a masculine trait is one found more frequently in men, a feminine trait is one found more often in women. Thus, a boy who likes football, boxing, and karate is masculine, while one who prefers ballet, poetry, and music is feminine. Obviously, such rating scales reflect the biases of the society in which they are standardized—whether they reflect anything more fundamental is debatable.

The problem of definition is central to an evaluation of the merits of Patricia Cayo Sexton's new book, *The Feminized Male* (Random House, 240 pp., \$5.95). Dr. Sexton, a sociologist, contends that American males are losing their manhood, and that although strong trends throughout the society contribute to the feminization, a substantial part of the blame rests with the elementary and secondary schools that are staffed by women and by men who are lacking in masculinity. In support of her thesis she draws upon the literature of psychology, sociology, and education, but she also relies heavily on her own experience, including a study that she made of school children in a small city, which she calls "Urbantown."

The author is convinced that the feminized male not only is a mal-adjusted individual but is often a positive menace to society. "Murders are usually committed by quiet and gentle men, 'nice guys,'" she says. "Sirhan and Oswald, both reared under the

maternal shadow, grew to be quiet, controlled men and dutiful sons. Estranged from their fellows, fathers, and normal male associations, they joined a rapidly growing breed—the 'feminized male' whose normal male impulses are suppressed or misshapen by overexposure to feminine norms. Such assassins often pick as their targets the most virile males, symbols of their own manly deprivations."

In her study of the boys and girls attending Urbantown schools, Dr. Sexton found evidence to confirm her conviction that the boys who are most masculine (according to the conventional rating scales) have the hardest time in school. They make lower grades than either the girls or the more effeminate boys, and they are more likely to be classed by teachers as "behavior problems." Only by developing feminine or effeminate traits—neatness, politeness, obedience, gentility, etc.—can a boy hope to please his teachers and achieve a good school record.

Although the feminized boys make good grades in school, Dr. Sexton doubts that they can ever become effective leaders of men. She points out that the present power elites are recruits from a different society—from rural or small-town, rather than urban or suburban, ways of life, and she says that on the farm boys have a better chance of becoming masculine men. She fears that the truly masculine boys in school today are likely to become dropouts or at best under-achievers, and she presents some evidence that this is exactly what is happening.

Dr. Sexton offers a secondary thesis which is tangential to the first: Although women are inherently superior to men, the men have somehow managed to relegate the women to an inferior status. "Having excelled as scholars in the schools," she says, "girls then confront some of life's

realities. In this society and most others, the stark reality is that men hold title to the best jobs, almost all the power, and most of the privilege and status that really count. It is indeed a man's world."

As evidence of the inherent superiority of human females, Dr. Sexton cites the facts that males show a wider variety of genetic defects and are much more prone to commit crime. Learning and behavior disorders are three to ten times as common among young males as among females of the same age, and boys outnumber girls three to one in mental institutions for children. Boys mature more slowly, and she concludes that they are "more vulnerable and more perishable than females."

As proof that women still are relegated to an inferior status, she reminds us that in 1957 only one of the ninety-six U.S. Senators was a woman, and that no woman has ever served on our Supreme Court or on a Court of Appeals. Only about 2 per cent of what she calls "the real executives" in private industry are women, and the median salary of all employed women is substantially lower than that paid to men. And the situation is not improving. The number of women on college faculties has declined from 28 per cent in 1939 to 18 per cent in 1965-66, and only 11 per cent of the Ph.D. degrees are granted to women, which is a lower percentage than it was in 1920. In the public schools, where the majority of teachers are women, nearly all the higher administrative offices are held by men.

Because of the inferior status to which men have relegated them, "many women actively dislike and resent males. They take their revenge whenever they can, in the home and in the school, on young men they control." Thus, the complete cycle runs something like this: Men have subjugated women, women have responded by forcing boys to become effeminate in order to get along at home and at school, and when the boys grow up, they counterrespond by keeping women in an inferior position.

This thesis contains enough truth to make it interesting, but many of the facts are subject to alternative interpretations. It is true that girls, on the average, make higher grades than boys, and in part this is because many teachers prefer "feminine" traits in their pupils, but the view that a boy cannot excel academically without losing his virility is true only if a very conventional definition of "masculinity" is accepted. Douglas MacArthur, Woodrow Wilson, Hubert Humphrey, Jackie Robinson, Ralph Bunche, and



at least two or three of the astronauts made high grades in school. It is true that men hold the majority of high administrative and legislative positions, but in large part this is because most women choose to become wives and mothers, and having made this choice lose interest in competing for the more demanding jobs that require sustained motivation and an uninterrupted career. It is also true that males mature more slowly than females—this is one of the reasons behind the better academic records of girls in schools where they are placed with boys of the same chronological age—but it is doubtful that this proves the inherent superiority of females.

To say this is a stimulating and provocative book is not merely to indulge in the favorite clichés of reviewers; it will surely stimulate thought and discussion, because there is something in it to provoke every reader, male or female, masculine or feminine. But it is also a frustrating book with too many loose ends, unanswered questions, and unresolved paradoxes. If it is true that males are both inherently inferior and further weakened by feminization, it is difficult to understand how they have been able to maintain their superior status in a society in which women have the vote and men are rarely permitted to use their physical strength.

The solutions offered seem paradoxical. Dr. Sexton sees a need for "a clearer masculine image," particularly in the schools, but she also wants women to have their full share of executive positions in the school and throughout society, and it is difficult to see how this would enhance the image of masculinity. She seems unwilling to make any distinction between the roles appropriate to the two sexes, or between the traits desirable in each. A woman who is feminine in the traditional sense is as objectionable to her as is the feminized man. "The ideal woman," she says, "should resemble the ideal man," and, though the traits she lists are indeed desirable in either sex, the reader is left with the impression that what she most admires is a high degree of masculinity in *both* men and women. Perhaps we are moving in that direction, but if we are, it seems certain that the concept of masculinity that will emerge will differ greatly from that held by our ancestors. If the concepts of masculinity and femininity as psychological traits are already outmoded, we ought to quit using the words and give our attention to the traits that are desirable in any human being. But, speaking as a male, this reader will continue to say, *vive la difference*.

## Medical Students

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a father and child in a hospital clinic only to be told, with them, to come back next week, and wait again. He might learn that a fifteen-year-old pregnant girl simply did not know about contraception, or prenatal care, or that iron was good for her, or even that babies come in nine months. Finally, many of the students who see these incidents begin to realize that these are not isolated occurrences, that to too great an extent they characterize American medicine, and that to too great an extent they have been ignored by American medical education. The ideals and the realities of medical care seem suddenly disparate, suddenly to require a rapid and radical rapprochement.

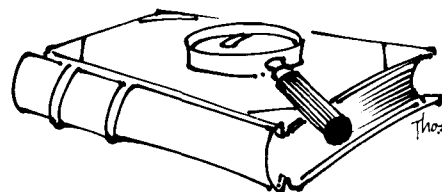
**T**he new revolution began in California in 1964, and marked an important transformation of the medical student's traditional posture. Action began to be channeled into activism. The movement there was in large part consolidated by William Bronston, at the time a fourth-year student at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, who was reacting to what he now terms "the fundamental contradictions and inequities in medical education, and the health industry's empty rhetoric of providing health care for everybody." Using the example of the free speech and civil rights movements, Bronston organized a national invitational Medical Student Forum to discuss subjects conspicuously absent from the formal curriculum, but vital to the physician's function in society—abortion, birth control and the population explosion, poverty and health, discrimination in medicine, and chemical and biological warfare.

The forum evolved into the Student Medical Conference and the movement went activist, first coordinating the efforts of students working in a range of action projects, such as audio-visual screening of Head Start children, staffing a new family planning clinic in an East Los Angeles Mexican-American neighborhood, distributing 5,000 copies of the proposed therapeutic abortion bill to every medical student in California, working with the Medical Committee for Human Rights in Mississippi, sending health education teams into the economically depressed San Joaquin Valley. In Boston, Chicago, and New York, other students were beginning similarly to reject the isolation of the school experience and to organize projects of their own.

By the summer of 1965, the diffuse burst of activity across the country

was ready to coalesce, and plans for a First Assembly of Student Health Organizations (SHO) reached fruition in October at the University of Chicago. The two-day conference brought together sixty-five students of nursing, social work, dentistry, and medicine.

SHO was organized around the local chapters and has remained, nationally, little more than a loose communications and coordination network. Although membership is defined simply as attendance at meetings or involvement in projects, it may today be estimated at close to one thousand of the nation's health science students. Federal funding for the group's student health projects has increased annually, and by the summer of 1968 Washington was supplying \$1.25-million nationally



for projects in nine areas of the country, utilizing more than 500 health science students and teen-age community "interns." SHO's success has been impressive enough to stimulate the larger Student American Medical Association, founded in 1952 and considered by some a pawn of the AMA, to proclaim noisily its own activism—a significant indication of the new and dramatic shift in the climate of medical education.

Perhaps the most important decision facing the Student Health Organization is one of politics. Increasingly, students have come to realize that it is difficult if not impossible to address oneself to the health problems of the poor without, at the same time, confronting the economic, political, and educational disenfranchisement to which they are likewise subject. "The health system," founder Bronston contends, "must be integrated with education, recreation, housing, employment, concept of work, human relations, economic relations, social goals, political goals, world goals. One atomic bomb makes all of our parochialism meaningless."

The public and political response to SHO, to the unfamiliar thing called medical student activism, will probably be a prime determinant of its future tack. That response must be evaluated on two fronts because, especially in the 1960s, medicine has divided rapidly and sharply into two establishments. There is, of course, the American Medical Association—small-town and rural-based, firmly rooted in the traditional, doctor-patient, fee-for-

service, entrepreneurial model. In the urban areas, however, modern medical practice is dominated by complex institutions made up of medical schools, teaching hospitals, and the universities; many of these institutions, besides producing doctors (a not insignificant tool for influencing the character of American medicine), control hospitals in the city. They therefore control the quality and quantity of urban health care allocation for a great, and increasing, percentage of the population.

When this dichotomy between the AMA and the urban medical centers is resolved—assuming that the trend toward urbanization and specialization is not reversed—that resolution will clearly lie in the direction of the urban medical centers. It is the medical school, then, to which student activism must finally address itself, and with which it must in the end work.

Some activists, however, doubt that working with the schools can be effective. Dr. Bronston, for instance, who is presently affiliated with the Citywide Health and Mental Health Council in New York, has come a long way from his liberal-reformist days at Southern California. The SHO summer projects, so much a product of his earlier efforts, he now condemns as “romantic sensitivity-trips which gave the people a sense that they were moving, which gave the schools an opportunity to say that *they* were moving, and which really did not change anything fundamentally.” Curricular reform, another of his earlier goals, Bronston now sees as “a co-opting move—a way of absorbing potentially radical energies and sentiments into cooperating with the system in the domination of the masses in this country.” The single solution, he contends, “is to destroy the medical schools, to destroy them completely.”

Not everyone agrees with Bronston's prescription, but a surprising number agree with his diagnosis. Harvard's Dean Ebert, for instance, recently echoed a great many of the points made by Bronston. “The organization and delivery of care, and how it is distributed,” Dr. Ebert said, “has become the central issue for medicine. How do you structure and organize care for the urban area, for the ghetto, for the isolated rural area? Obviously the technology is there.”

The tragic dimensions of the problem are clear, and Ebert, like Bronston, sees them clearly. “Medicine until now, in this century, has been a middle-class institution. You practice on poor people, but you really are going to take care of the middle class. All of medicine is essentially this way. At every level the poor come off badly. They are used for teaching purposes, they have more



serious disease, their mortality rates are higher at all ages, they have more serious psychological disorders, their medical care is fragmented and discontinuous, they are powerless in the system. And yet, until recently, medicine has not considered this medicine's problem. The change that is occurring—the most important ‘revolution’—is that this concern is for the first time being injected into medical schools.”

Concern, Bronston would counter, is not enough. “All that is going to happen,” he contends, “is that the good people in SHO will become the good oppressors.” Making the medical school and the medical school experience humane—one of SHO's original goals—is no longer sufficient. The marked consolidation of power in the new urban medical-complex establishment, which Ebert sees as a potentially beneficial tool for restructuring the outmoded fee-for-service variety of medical care, is, in Bronston's eyes, “a malignant change. The new medical empires are infinitely better funded, infinitely less accountable than the old entrepreneur class in medicine. They have a corner on the provider market, absolute control of manpower.”

Yet, the medical school-teaching hospital is capable (in terms of money, personnel, and physical facilities) of directly and comprehensively serving the urban community. It can help the community efficiently utilize its own resources, its own leadership capabilities. Direct political action, for which SHO's student health projects served as a model and into which many of the student activists' energies have been directed, is vital. But the medical school can also shape the quality of American medical care in a unique, a more lasting, fashion. They can produce, or at least help produce, a new kind of physician. New curricula are a step in this direction. They can provide flexibility, variability, an opportunity for each student to develop according to his interest, his capabilities. They can provide new courses in areas previously ignored: medical sociology, economics, behavioral science, community medicine. Beyond curriculum, the medical school can purposefully broaden the socioeconomic and ethnic base of American medicine, and can increase the number of its practitioners graduating each year.

But a new kind of American physician—and increasing numbers of students today want desperately to be-

come a new kind of physician—will become possible only when educators, prodded by students, offer new models of medical care, real and attractive alternatives to private practice. “We must somehow instill the idea,” Dr. Ebert says, “that the physician is not performing his role if he and his colleagues don't see to it that everybody in that community is getting good care. It is the environment which must be changed, the framework in which one teaches medicine. The hope is with the younger generation, this generation.”

And the younger generation, for the most part, is hopeful. Hopeful, but not comfortable. Because to be comfortable is to be both unintelligent and negligent in the midst of these realities: The life expectancy of Negroes in 1965 was seven years less than that of whites. The non-white child under five years has a death rate twice that of the white child. Between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four, non-whites have a death rate 150 per cent higher than whites; between forty-five and fifty-four, 94 per cent; between fifty-five and sixty-four, 72 per cent. Non-white maternal mortality was twice the white rate before World War II; since the war it has risen to four times the white rate. The infant mortality rate of Negro children in Mississippi or the northern city slum is comparable to that of Ecuador; nationally it is better—nearly as good as Costa Rica's.

First steps have been made, but first steps are insufficient. They are not solutions. Because they are not, the activist mood of American medical students will continue to grow, to confront, to challenge.

Like Abraham Flexner sixty years before, the student today has exposed intolerable inadequacies in the system of medical education. The gap that Flexner sought to bridge was scientific—a discrepancy between ideal (the German system) and real (the American improvisation). That gap has admirably been filled. But today's gap is of a different sort, and broader. The ideal (the world's best health care for everyone) and the real (the world's best health for that fraction of the population that can afford it) contrast tragically. It is to this tragedy that medical students have begun to address themselves. Their activism suggests that a real transition in the structure and climate of medical education in this country has been initiated. It suggests that this transition will embrace not merely the student and his school, but the community which student and school together can serve. And it suggests, too, that it is the community above all which American medicine *must* serve—quickly, equitably, and well.



## Danish Free Schools

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of the parent to oversee the education of his child. Essentially a tolerant people, most Danes view the Free Schools with favor, seeing in them a protection of personal religious and political liberty. The Little School advocates see their schools as protection against bureaucratic encroachment by the state through its schools, and as protection against mass fabrication of people without regard to individuality. Like many advocates of American private schooling, some Danes defend the Free Schools because their freedom to innovate and experiment is seen as a stimulus to the public schools. The existence of these schools is regarded as helping to guarantee the quality of public education, because they act as competitors in a situation where the public schools have no monopoly and, therefore, have to maintain excellence.

A significant effect of the existence of the Free Schools is that they remove much conflict from the public schools. Any dissident minority, with minimum expense and with government cooperation, can leave the system and establish its own school. The result of this is that when Danes discuss educational problems, they tend to stress professional, pedagogical concerns or the matter of finance. They rarely discuss the kinds of problems that are considered important in the United States, such as school-community conflict or teacher-administrator difficulties. A striking characteristic of Free Schools is the general coincidence of goals on the part of parents, teachers, and administrators, and the harmonious relations among these groups. Certainly, were a serious disagreement to develop, there would be no point in retaining a child in the school; when serious difficulty arises in public schools, there are alternatives available. Parental control in the Free Schools, through the hiring of a headmaster and the approval of the hiring and firing of teachers, does not appear threatening to school staffs whose pedagogical and philosophical bents coincide with those of the parents.

Since all *Friskoler* are required by law to provide education in Danish, there does not appear at present to be serious concern over the bicultural education received by minority groups. While there are complaints about the *Friskoler* laws, the major ones are that the government does not provide enough financial help, and that it ought to provide 100 per cent of the funds for teachers' salaries, fully equivalent funding for the children, and more money for supplies. Efforts to remove public

support for *Friskoler* are likely to be met by serious opposition from conservative traditionalists as well as progressive elements.

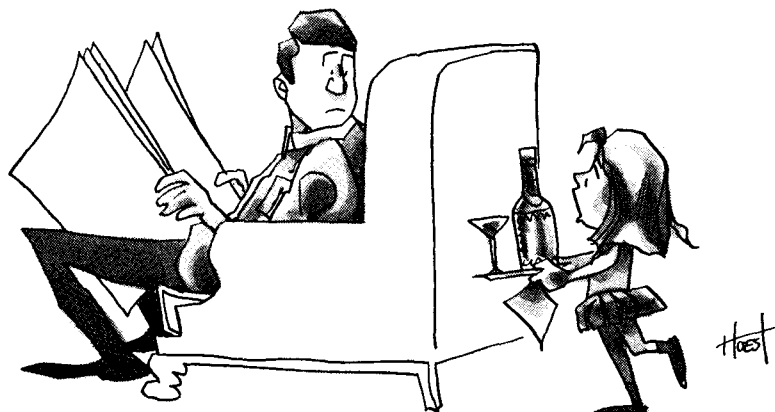
Does the Danish experience with Free Schools have relevance to problems facing education in America? There are, of course, basic differences between the two nations that preclude any easy or direct modeling of one system upon the other. One major difference is the fact that in Denmark the Evangelical Lutheran state religion is taught in the public schools. From the very beginning of compulsory education in that country, the existence and support of schools outside the state system was viewed as a guarantee of religious liberty. On the other hand, in the United States, the separation of church and state is seen as essential to religious liberty, and the public support of any educational system that includes religious instruction traditionally has been viewed as a danger to the democratic system. Although this view has been modified by the "child-benefit" theory of aid to education, it remains a strong current in American educational thought.

Another basic difference is that Denmark, despite its German-speaking ethnic minority and several religious minorities, is a fairly homogeneous nation and does not face a race problem. The United States, on the other hand, not only has racial heterogeneity, but includes a multiplicity of ethnic and religious minorities and larger economic class differences. Public, compulsory education was long seen as essential for the accomplishment of the homogenization or Americanization of immigrants whose differences were viewed as threatening to national unity. Although at present the schools are no longer educating many immigrants and the recognition is growing that cultural differences are deeply entrenched in American life and ought to be valued, the traditional belief that the public school somehow acts as a unifying force has not disappeared.

Still a third difference is that the Danes, although they may sometimes question the snobbery of certain upper-class schools or the separation of some intellectual groups from the public schools, do not see in the Free Schools a threat to their democratic way of life. In this country, on the other hand, the private school system, where it has been supported occasionally by state governments, has been seen to operate either as an intrusion upon the principle of separation of church and state or, more recently, as an effort to circumvent integration. Thus, state-supported private schools tend to be viewed as potentially anti-democratic.

Yet, the fact remains that affluent Americans have far greater choice concerning the education of their children than do the poor of America's inner cities. Those who are confined to the ghettos either by race or poverty or a combination of both are completely dependent upon a public school system that is compulsory and monopolistic, and which is increasingly viewed as intrusive. Pious talk concerning the democratic nature of the public school system does not change the fact that for many it is unsatisfactory, and that social and economic class has a great deal to do with the educational choices open to a family. Movement to the suburbs or into private schools are not choices readily available to the urban poor. At present a major alternative open to this group, when consciously dissatisfied with the schools, is to engage in social protest, a phenomenon American inner-city school systems have seen develop in recent years.

At first, much of this social protest centered on the eradication of de jure and de facto school segregation. More recent efforts have concentrated on decentralization of school systems and the substitution of local community control. It would appear that even if public school districts were under the direct control of local parent and com-



"Daddy, you forgot to sign my report card."

munity groups, this form of organization would not preclude the disaffection of some groups from what would remain essentially a monopolistic, compulsory educational system. As the experience of community control in New York has shown, such programs run the risk of being stillborn, strangled not only by the opposition of conservative forces supporting the traditional system, but also by internal factional dispute.

A publicly supported system that allows for alternative forms of school organization does give the promise of meeting special minority needs, whether they be a desire to rear children via Montessori or Summerhill pedagogy or instruction in Swahili, ballet, or Amish traditions, without disruption of the work of the larger public system. That this would then tend to remove from the school its most militant critics and leaders of needed reform has been observed in Denmark. Yet, there is wide agreement on the difficulty of effecting change within the large bureaucratic systems that our schools have become, and what is often forgotten is that alternatives outside the system are already used by those able to afford them. The provision of alternatives to larger numbers of people opens the possibility of creative use of talent and the implementation of reforms presently inhibited by the organizational needs of schools as they are presently constituted. Should the alternative of publicly funded private schooling be made available, funding short of 100 per cent is likely to facilitate the acceleration of the flight of the upwardly mobile and middle class out of the public system. For alternatives to be truly universal, they must be free and include the provision of supplies, buildings, and funds for staff.

For those who fear the fragmentation of the public education system, the Danish experience supports the view that alternative forms of schooling do not mean the inevitable demise of the state-run public schools. On the contrary, vigorous support for public education and the maintenance of high standards draws the allegiance of the vast majority of the population.

An advantage of a system with publicly supported alternatives is that freedom from the monolithic compulsion by huge bureaucratic organizations may free the public schools of debilitating conflict. But perhaps the most important advantage is that permitting concerned groups of parents and community organizations to set up schools for segments of the population that find the present system unsatisfactory may unleash creative potential and make possible an educational renaissance.

## Gloom at the Top

*Continued from page 51*

establish some form of parliamentary procedure, how their language offended nice people; and before the palaver was over, the kids were on the defensive. Some of them vaguely realized it, but for most, the technique was so much a part of habitual experience that it went unnoticed. "They just refuse to listen to what's being said," one of them complained later. What the superintendents had done—not all, but many—was to prove that open-mindedness was, like everything else, a good ploy.

It was, of course, not unanimous. There was an angry minority who knew what had happened. "Three-fourths of these guys," said a man from the Midwest, "don't have a clue." "You bet we have a problem," said another, a man responsible for his system's "human relations" efforts. "We should have known all the things the kids are demanding of us, but we messed up our opportunities for reform. The students demanded we fire a principal who was inaccessible, and that we do something about what they considered—rightly so—a watered-down program. But I'm not sure we can act." In his schools, the Mexican-Americans are taking action to demand community control, and the white vigilantes (students), the Nazis, and the Panthers are all organized. There have been bombings, riots, and several deaths, but the human relations man—no angry young upstart—is still a minority. Few others, in his system, feel

any urgency about the problem.

Among the administrators at Harvard who had faced protests or violence, there was talk about outside agitators, and even more talk about faint remedies: individualized instruction and a little black history for race riots, smaller classes for cultural gaps that had yet to be appreciated or understood. "I don't think we'll have real trouble in Maryland," said another educational statesman. "Maybe some sporadic incidents. . . . The students who are here showed today that they have disagreements, too. So far they just stuck together, but today they showed that they have sharp differences." (Relief.) If there was no real trouble, then obviously there was no real problem.

One night they held up the mirror: Fred Wiseman's documentary film *High School*, photographed in a thoroughly middle-class Philadelphia high school (where local citizens obtained a court injunction to prevent it from being shown there); one hour and twenty minutes of the boredom, mindlessness, and hypocrisy of decent people. Schoolmarm reading "Casey at the Bat" to a class of blank faces; school disciplinarian telling a kid that the way to be a man was to accept his punishment even though it might be unjust; the Mickey Mouse of "simulated space flight" in a hand-me-down NASA capsule; the baldhead in the corridors asking every living creature, "Where's your pass?"; the well-meaning young thing turning Simon and Garfunkel song lyrics into an English class exercise as inspiring as scanning the lines of *Hiawatha*; the final irony of the principal reading a letter from a recent graduate who expected to be killed in Vietnam and expressed his gratitude to the school by leaving his insurance money to the scholarship fund. "I'm just a body," he wrote in ultimate tribute to his education, "doing a job."

Did they recognize themselves? Some surely did. ("The film hurt," said a man from Kansas City.) One of the superintendents unintentionally confessed all to a student: "He asked," said the kid, "how it could ever be different with the people they got. I told him he was supposed to be the educator, that it was for him to figure out." There were several men who decided that it was time they listened to their students a little more, one of them a central city administrator of a parochial system who hoped he could get his principals to pay a little attention to what the students were trying to tell them. One of the students—one of the few who had missed the point of the film—later wondered aloud wheth-

### WIT TWISTER #125

Edited by ARTHUR SWAN

*The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word.*

\_\_\_\_\_ with God, what  
cannot martyrs do?  
Consider \_\_\_\_\_, or  
blind Samson's plight,  
Or saints who, \_\_\_\_\_  
or burned or torn in two,  
Brooked no \_\_\_\_\_ of  
their Master's might.

—A. S.

(Answer on page 58)