

CAN URBAN SCHOOLS BE REFORMED?

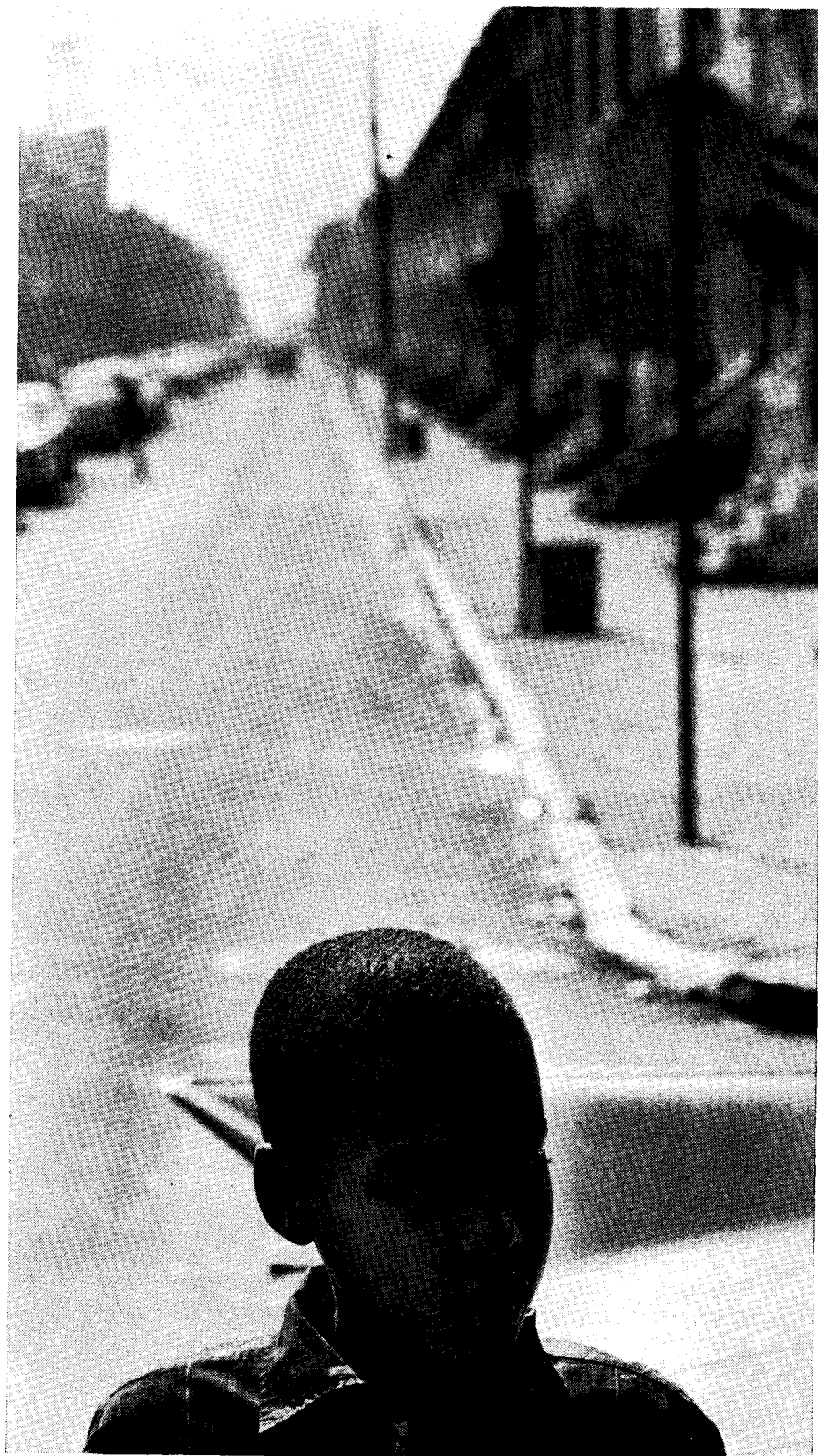
By WALLACE ROBERTS

CHANGE comes infrequently in Philadelphia, but when it does, it is like the fundamental kind set in motion at Independence Hall in 1776, and it is led chiefly by merchant-revolutionaries, liberal businessmen from the upper or upper-middle class with a distinctly Anglo-Saxon heritage of patrician radicalism. Yet the world of Chestnut Hill, the Main Line, the Assembly dances, Rittenhouse Square, and the Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting of Annuities connotes a class image of a cool reserve, an active disdain for the masses that goes beyond mere unconcern, and, finally, a rigid conservatism that is more than an injunction not to rock the boat.

It is hardly surprising, then, that change in the schools has taken 150 years. Philadelphia's public school system was set up in 1818 to serve the children of the poor. The city's upper class sent their own children to the many Quaker and Episcopal schools in the city and gave only passing notice to the public schools. In the early 1960s, however, a group of reformers led by a small band of gray-flannel radicals started a movement that has produced a series of decisive changes in the atmosphere surrounding the administration of the education of Philadelphia's 290,000 public school children.

Part of the change was a series of enabling laws that were jammed through the legislature to give the school system a measure of fiscal independence and administrative flexibility. The new laws, in turn, sparked the selection of a new school board to replace a group of men whose nineteenth-century outlook and frosty indifference to public criticism caused them to be called Philadelphia's House of Lords.

The new board brought in a dynamic and controversial superintendent, Mark R. Shedd, who is as unorthodox and as aloof as Eugene McCarthy; a doubled school budget in four years; more federal school aid per child than any other large city; an extensive and diverse collection of educational programs; and a \$500-million building program that opens fifteen new schools a year. The changes have also produced tensions, fears, and distrust, as jobs have been eliminated, old power centers have been circumvented, and new powers or threats



—Ed Eckstein (Bethel).

"If the Philadelphia schools were not fulfilling their promises to white children in the early 1960s, they weren't even making promises to blacks."

of power have been unleashed. The changes, however, have brought only barely perceptible gains in student achievement scores because they have been programed reforms aimed at providing the preconditions necessary for learning. The reforms have not gone far enough yet, but their future is already uncertain.

Some of the changes in the Philadelphia school system have been described as "revolutionary," but they are the fruit of a mixed heritage. The city's colonial tradition of genteel radicalism was conveniently forgotten once the nation was made. After the Republic's capitol moved to the mud flats of the Potomac in 1800, the merchant-revolutionaries of Penn's "greene Country Towne" turned their energies to making money, and, for the rest of the nineteenth century and up through the Second World War, the idea of reform movements led by the upper class was lost in the rush of a rapidly expanding economy.

THE city's banks played the key role in the capitalization of basic industries, and its counting houses have dominated the city's life; their atmosphere of conservatism, frugality, orderliness, and a subtly imposed harmony pervaded the city up through the late 1940s. Because the city's white immigrant groups were roughly the same size, no one group emerged from the wide-open battles of ward politics to dominate the city, as did the Irish in Boston and the Germans and Scandinavians in Midwestern cities. James Tate, the current mayor, is the first Irish-American to hold the job; his predecessors all have WASP-sounding names, and most of them were office boys for the business elite.

Reform in Philadelphia began twenty years ago, when the mayor's office was captured by a reform movement under the leadership of a small group of liberal, upper- and upper-middle-class businessmen—the Old Philadelphians who discovered their legacy of dissent. Joseph S. Clark, a descendant of one of the city's foremost banking families, became the first Democratic mayor in the twentieth century when he took office in 1952. Under Clark and Richardson Dilworth, his successor, who is now president of the board of education, the reform movement in city hall cleaned out the light-fingered pols for a while, streamlined the administration of the municipal bureaucracy, and, most spectacularly, turned a dreary and decaying downtown area into a model of well-planned, if uninspired, renewal.

After reshaping the rest of the city, the reformers turned their attention to the city's school system, which, at the time, symbolized the disaster of urban education. Elementary and junior high schools' achievement scores were con-

Learning on the Road

ONE OF THE most unusual educational experiments in the Philadelphia school system began last February when the Parkway Project, a school without walls, "opened its doors" to 142 high school students. There is no single building in which these students learn, instead, they go to non-graded classes in two dozen different public and private institutions located along or near the mile-and-a-half length of the city's tree-lined Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Originally, the project was conceived as a less expensive alternative to spending \$18,000,000 for a new 2,400-student high school that the city will need within five years. Since then, however, planning for the project under its director, John Bremer, has evolved into the idea that the project's lack of both physical and curricular structure will give students an opportunity to study independently and to design their own curricula. Bremer, a forty-two-year-old British educator, has taught in the Leicestershire schools and last year was the superintendent of the Two Bridges decentralized school district in New York City.

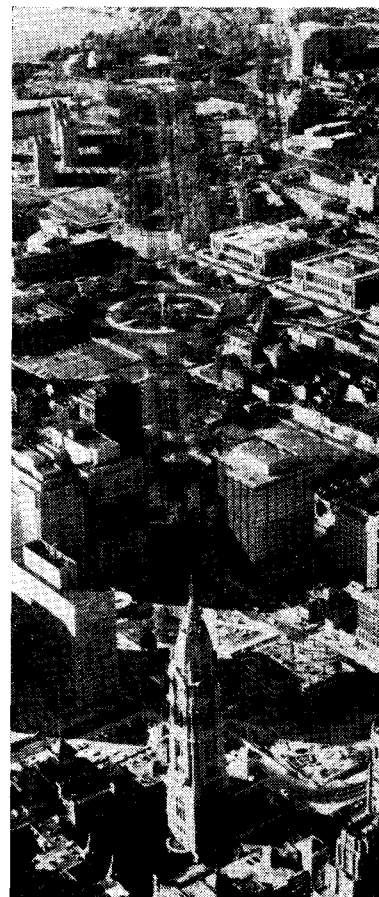
The students have been divided into tutorial groups, each with about fifteen students and two teachers. Orientation sessions were held for the first three weeks of the program to describe the various opportunities for both individualized and group study available in the ninety-five different specialized courses. During a typical day at the Parkway Project, a student might spend the morning at one of the participating institutions. In the afternoon, he returns to his tutorial unit and spends two hours studying to meet state-mandated curricular requirements in math and language, after which he can take a course at another institution.

Some of the initial possibilities for student specialization can be found in the characteristics of the cooperating institutions. Mathematics, electronics, and chemistry will be taught at the Franklin Institute, insurance at the Insurance Company of North America building, art appreciation at the Art Museum and the Moore College of Art, biology at the Academy of Natural Sciences, physical education at the YMCA, and zoology and anthropology at the Philadelphia Zoo in nearby Fairmount Park. Such non-Parkway enterprises as the Smith Kline and French pharmaceutical laboratories, the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and *Evening Bulletin* newspapers, and KYW-NBC radio and TV studios are also participating in the project.

The first Parkway class of sixty-nine black and seventy-three white students was selected at random from more than 2,000 applications submitted through the city's eight public school districts and the archdiocesan school headquarters; it also includes fourteen "exchange" students from some of the city's suburbs.

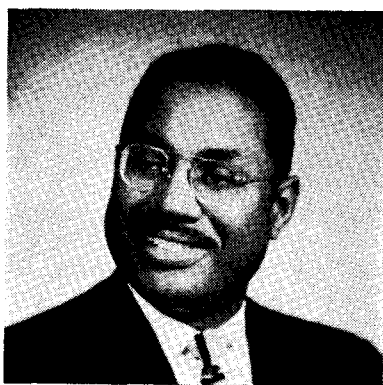
Future plans for the Parkway School call for increasing the enrollment to 600 next fall, with a maximum peak of 2,400 being reached in 1972 when a full four-year high school will be "in residence."

—DONALD COX.



—Philadelphia Public Schools.

Philadelphia's new school without walls extends from City Hall to the Art Museum near Fairmount Park.



Marcus Foster, principal of Gratz High School, has transformed it by working with parents and students.

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siderably lower than national norms in nearly every category tested; the high school scores, by contrast, were well above average, but this apparently reflected attrition not improvement, as Philadelphia had the highest dropout rate of the nation's ten largest cities. There were fewer professionals in relation to enrollment than in any other city except Pittsburgh, and even then one-sixth of the teachers were permanent substitutes. Philadelphia also had a higher proportion of its school-age children in private and parochial schools than any other major city, except, again, Pittsburgh. In 1959-60, it ranked seventh in school expenditures per student among the eleven largest systems in the nation.

In 1959, enrollment, which had been growing at the rate of 1,000 or 2,000 a year, jumped by 9,000. In 1965, nearly 60 per cent of the elementary schools, 83 per cent of the junior high schools, and 89 per cent of the high schools were overcrowded. Not only were the schools

short of space, they were old. More than 70 per cent of the city's public schools were over thirty years old, and sixty-three elementary schools were built before 1907 and classified as fire hazards.

Dissatisfaction with public education was considered only slightly less than subversive in Philadelphia until the late 1950s when a few individuals, citizen groups, and civil rights organizations began carping about finances and the overcrowding, but the criticism was sporadic and without punch. What welded it into an effective tool was the Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM), a nonpartisan group of about fifty businessmen, most of whom were corporation lawyers and bankers. GPM members had been active in liberal causes in the city even before its formation in 1948, and many of them were also members of the Philadelphia chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). GPM had actively supported Clark and Dilworth in their mayoral campaigns, yet GPM was composed of men who were primarily upper-class businessmen living in the city's fashionable suburbs along the Main Line. "GPM," says William H. Wilcox, its executive director, "made it respectable to criticize the public schools."

THE 1965 Philadelphia Education Home Rule Charter, which established a new school board selection process and shifted control over school finances from the state to the city, was based on state enabling laws that were approved by the legislature in 1963 only because some GPM members and friends had political leverage in Harrisburg. Those state laws, in turn, were originally based on a 1962 study of the Philadelphia schools made by GPM.

Under the new school board selection process, the mayor picked the board members from a list drawn up by a nominating panel consisting of the chief officers of a number of civic, labor, business, and education groups. Previously the school board members had been named in a seemingly haphazard fashion by the judges of the city's Court of Common Pleas, who were themselves political appointees. The result was a succession of boards of education composed of respected businessmen who saw their job as a custodial one that required a minimum of public controversy and the operation of a school system at the lowest possible cost.

When the new school board took office in December 1965, its new president was Dilworth, a carpetbagger from Pittsburgh who looks like a Tory prime minister. Besides his two surnames, he is marked by another distinctly upper-class trait of speaking his mind bluntly (they say he was born with a silver foot in his mouth), so it might appear that the school reforms he has hammered through

were the product of patrician impetuosity. But Dilworth, who is now an elegant and dynamic septuagenarian with a forty-three-year career as a lawyer in the city behind him, is acutely aware of the stagnancy that can strangle a system, a city, or an institution when its top leadership is an inbred coterie of powerful coupon-clippers that has no substantial contact with minds that think differently. He tells the story of how he could never understand why some of the city's banks and railroads were so badly run until he questioned a series of corporation presidents on the witness stand in court. "I'll never forget one man," Dilworth recounts, "He was a gentleman to his fingertips, don't you know, but stupid. My God, was he dumb."

Philadelphia's school bureaucracy was no different in this respect than the city government or business community had been. Dilworth and Clark had revamped city hall by bringing in outside experts, and the same tactic was quickly applied to the schools. Before Dilworth even took office, he set up three task forces composed almost entirely of the reformers and other people with no experience in education but with proven abilities in finance, planning, personnel relations, human relations, engineering, data processing, and purchasing. Many of these men and others like them are now working on the central headquarters staff under a clause in the GPM reform laws that permits the board to exempt 5 per cent of its professional employees from certification requirements.

Dilworth's task forces reviewed all the previous studies of the city's public schools, held public hearings, and then abstracted a long series of concrete demands and recommendations into a program for a goal-orientation set of policies that the board of education could institute without having to administer closely.

The board has since concentrated on two areas of the bureaucracy that are regarded as crucial to any changes in the system: financing and planning. The latter function was simply nonexistent, so it was not difficult for the board to establish a free wheeling planning office that doesn't just talk about bricks but tries to work out with the community and professionals involved just what should go on inside their school.

The same type of change has taken place in the office of administrative services. The schools' finances have come a long way from the days when two-page budgets were kept locked in the desk drawer of business manager Add Anderson, who, until 1961, had run the schools for twenty-five years like a Roman consul, extracting a tribute for the businessmen from each budget in the form of a low tax rate. Now the finances are on a

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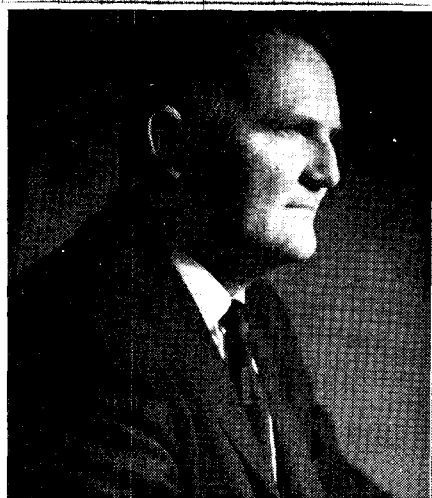
IQ: GOD-GIVEN OR MAN-MADE?

By GILBERT VOYAT

WHO would have believed that in the declining decades of the twentieth century the antique psychological argument between environment and heredity would garner headlines and rub academic tempers raw? The older, progressive educators scolded each other about the primacy of nurture over nature. The practicing pragmatists insisted that, "You are what you grow up as, not merely what you are born with." The environmentalists declared that slums produce children with more limited intelligence than generous suburbs do. Not so, asserted the genetically persuaded; poor performance in intellectual matters is the result of a shallow gene-pool.

And so the argument continues. In this past winter's issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*, Dr. Arthur R. Jensen, professor of educational psychology at the University of California at Berkeley, suggests that intelligence is a trait not unlike eye color and hardly more susceptible to change. This study presents an interesting renewal of the genetic argument. Although many of the ideas defended have the aura of statistical, scientific work, they are neither new, self-evident, nor irrefutable. The fact that Dr. Jensen's findings are corroborated by statistical evidence does not make them true. It makes them misleading.

Gilbert Voyat, currently teaching psychology at Yeshiva University, was formerly at MIT working on artificial intelligence. A native of Switzerland, he studied with Dr. Jean Piaget and collaborated with him on various papers and publications, including the book, *Psychology and Epistemology of Identity*, and is the author of *Studies in Time Estimation*.



—Blackstone-Shelburne, N.Y.

Arthur R. Jensen—"Jensen insists that in terms of average IQ, whites are more intelligent than blacks."

His central thesis is simple: Intelligence is a natural trait, inscribed in the genetic pool and unequally distributed among individuals. Theoretically, genius can be found anywhere, regardless of race or social milieu. In practice, however, Jensen insists that in terms of the average IQ, whites are more intelligent than blacks. The average IQ for blacks is, according to his calculation, approximately 15 points below the average for whites. Furthermore, only 15 per cent of the Negro population exceeds the white average. This has been shown, for instance, in a study (cited by Jensen) by Dr. A. M. Shuey, author of *The Testing of Negro Intelligence*, who reviewed

"Psychologists who put their trust in IQ tests tend to forget that the real issue is how the child learns."

—Bonnie Freer (Photo Trends).



382 previous studies of IQ. Here we have a typical case of validation by quantification. It is impressive, precise, and wrongheaded. The difference in intelligence between whites and blacks is also noticeable among privileged children; upper-status Negro children average 2.6 IQ points below the low-status whites. Jensen makes the further assertion that Indians, who are even more disadvantaged than Negroes, are nevertheless more intelligent. Jensen is very cautious about this differential intelligence. Negro infants, he claims, are more precocious in sensory-motor development in their first year or two than are Caucasian infants. The same holds for motor skills. But, he believes, what is crucially missing among Negroes is what constitutes genuine formal intelligence: conceptual learning and problem-solving ability.

Jensen offers a description of the respective roles of genetic and environmental factors as he defines intelligence. His strategy in demonstrating the roles of inheritance and environment is to utilize exclusively statistical evidence. He discusses extensively the notion of "heritability," which for him is a statistical mean allowing him to state the extent to which individual differences in a trait such as intelligence can be accounted for by genetic factors. He comes to the conclusion that this heritability is quite high in the human species, which means that genetic factors are much more important than environmental factors in producing IQ differences. And *this* relationship is almost entirely displayed in achievement on IQ tests which Jensen sees as related to genetic differences.

THESE analyses lead Jensen to the further conclusion that genetic factors are strongly implicated in the average Negro-white intelligence differences. Given these conclusions, Jensen ascribes the failure of compensatory education and other educational enrichment programs to genetic differences, because any attempt to raise intelligence per se probably lies more in the province of the biological sciences than in that of psychology and education. For example, the magnitude of IQ and scholastic achievement gains resulting from enrichment and cognitive stimulation programs range between 5 and 20 IQ points. But Jensen is inclined to doubt "that IQ gains up to 8 to 10 points in young disadvantaged children have much of anything to do with changes in ability. They are