

pessimism about educational technology stems from the fact that he is a self-confessed reformed visionary. Here is an innovative technologist who dreamed about solving the problems of education before he had taken the trouble to examine firsthand what those problems were. Oettinger dipped his intellectual ladle into the stew that is American education, took a few sips, and turned up his nose in disapproval upon discovering that it is not boeuf bourguignon.

Thus, the book is a mixture of some fresh and irreverent viewpoints and extraordinary naïveté about our schools, a fair amount of intellectual snobbery, laced throughout with the mark of the amateur, if not the dilettante. Oettinger's sweeping generalizations are based on a very small sampling of real schools and educational experiments. He seriously underestimates the significant changes that have taken place in our schools in the past decade, and, therefore, he underestimates the capacity of our schools to change. He dismisses what is known about the psychology of learning as being largely without usefulness in education, although he gives no evidence of having any broad knowledge of learning theory; instead, he cites a report written for the Navy, presumably by two psychologists, who take this debatable position.

In the end, Oettinger turns out to be a good old-fashioned naysayer. He expresses his "nays" with humor and great zest, but these welcome qualities do not mask the absence of any substantial constructive alternative in his critique. Even when he is finally prepared to risk a generalization about what should be done, he manages to hedge his advice.

"We must encourage as much diversity as possible—as many paths, as many different outlooks, as many different experiments, as many different initiatives as we can afford once the demands of education have been balanced against those of other needs of our society," he concludes after previously exhorting us to "... follow through in depth with a small number of distinct alternatives." In other words, we should do more with less, or less with more, or perhaps both.

Nowhere are the weaknesses of this book more apparent than in its final chapter in which Oettinger summarizes what is wrong and what should be done about it. He rejects the possibility of solutions coming from the people now involved: systems analysts, technologically illiterate educators, ill-prepared and underpaid teachers, academic curriculum reformers, passive industrial designers, and hypocritical professors of education.

What should be done? Oettinger urges us to support promising ideas longer than we do now, to support more risk-taking, to share risks and responsibilities among all partners in the educational enterprise, to chart our course by human judgment rather than by formula, and to follow through in depth with a small number of diverse alternatives. All of which is a mishmash of pious platitudes and red herrings. He has dismissed the promising ideas (except his own), knocked the risk-takers, implied inaccurately that change is now being charted by some unidentified formula, and contradicted his own call for as much diversity as possible.

To conclude that the reform of American education will need better ideas, better people, and more money after one has rejected all of the ideas and people in education and convinced oneself that more money is simply not available represents either an extraordinary achievement in glibness or a massive failure in logic. *Run, Computer, Run* abounds in instances of both.

A more balanced book on educational innovation might have punctured many of the same balloons without running the risk, as this book unfortunately does, of discouraging new experimentation. That our schools need to change seems to be an incontestable proposition. That we do not have definitive answers to questions about how they should change and by what means is an unfortunate but stubborn fact of life. We cannot wait until the people, the process, the institutions, the devices, and the money all fit neatly into an elegant algorithm for innovation before we attempt any change, because that would freeze our schools exactly where they are. This is why *Run, Computer, Run*, in spite of the progressive sounds it makes, finally comes across as an implicit defense of the status quo, which is obviously not Oettinger's intent. One can only hope that Oettinger will sustain his interest in educational technology and will move on to more constructive work in this field.

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New Books

Utopias and Education, by Howard Ozmon (*Burgess Publishing Company*, 157 pp., \$3.75), is a disarmingly straightforward explanation of learning in brave new worlds conceived by Plato, More, Bellamy, Huxley, Skinner, and others. Together with his prefatory essays, Ozmon's helpful introduction distinguishes clearly between speculative and satirical utopias. They also illustrate many meanings of "utopia"—high ideal, for instance, or practical possibility, belief in progress, or intellectual exercise. Brief readings further whet the appetite for source writings. This uncomplicated thematic treatment of an important educational topic will furnish perspective for some of today's more fanciful yearnings for educational panaceas.

Teaching Black Children to Read, edited by Joan C. Baratz and Roger W. Shuy (*Center for Applied Linguistics*, 219 pp., \$5), arrives as number four in a series of research works dealing with the place of language in big cities. The focus here is literacy, and the principal contention that accepting a black child's own language structure is the soundest basis for building reading skills. Contributions range from dialectology to reading materials. William A. Stewart's final paper on the use of Negro dialect in reading instruction recommends "facing up to the data" that, Stewart asserts, indicate that Negro dialect can help span the gap separating black experience from "mainstream language skills." A very helpful book for metropolitan educators.

Homer Lane and The Little Commonwealth, by E. T. Bazeley (*Schocken Books Inc.*, 200 pp., \$1.95), and **Talks to Parents and Teachers**, by Homer Lane (*Schocken Books Inc.*, 197 pp., \$1.95), are reprints from the late Twenties after Lane's classroom permissiveness and Freudian theory had guided the Dorset institution for young delinquents through five gratifying years. A staff member, Miss Bazeley sketches the origins and inner workings of the Commonwealth itself, offering numerous close-ups of "citizen" inmates who responded favorably to opportunities for self-expression. Her book closes with the report of a committee charged with presenting reasons for the reform school's closure under intimations of irregularities. Lane's own work, with an up-to-date objective introduction by A. S. Neill of Summerhill fame, lays out the New Englander's views on developmental stages and the possibil-

ities of student self-government, even in correctional settings. Both works reflect a naïve belief in the power of the humanitarian *in loco parentis* to effect near-instant changes of heart and character. But in its presentation of early educational experimentation, each volume merits present-day reconsideration.

Problems of School Men in Depressed Urban Centers, edited by Arliss L. Roeden (College of Education, Ohio State University, 112 pp., \$2.50), appears as a classic in its own right, despite the four and one-half years separating genesis from publication. Setting a stiff pace are Jack R. Frymier's vigorous reminder that teachers are the key ingredient to any teaching situation and Kenneth B. Clark's now-familiar thesis that assumption of cultural inferiority can be the most "insidious human obstacle" blocking the education of lower-status children. Companion pieces by Robert J. Havighurst, A. Harry Passow, Miriam D. Goldberg, David L. Clark, and Samuel Shepard, Jr., make up a most worthwhile summary of a productive seminar.

A Brief History of Canadian Education, by F. Henry Johnson (McGraw Hill of Canada, 216 pp., \$3.25), proffers the historical overview of one of Canada's most respected educational historians. Arguing that Canada's fundamental biculturalism dictates an educational principal of unity in diversity, Professor Johnson deals with early school establishment, schools and post-confederation nation building, and current trends and challenges as revealed through provincial and national commissions. Institutional in its topical selection, this succinct treatment will prove a valuable adjunct to currently available resources on the subject.

Reforming American Education: The Innovative Approach to Improving Our Schools and Colleges, by Alvin C. Eurich (Harper and Row, 269 pp., \$6.50), offers a "wide-angle view" of present problems and paths to future solutions. Though stylistically polemical, the book does report on some interesting experimental programs in teacher training and technology, as well as cite the gamut of commentators from Montaigne and Comenius to Bruner, Conant, and Cremin. A chapter on twenty-first century higher education chats (perhaps a little too assuredly) about sea-grant colleges, computers, national goals, electronic tapes, and so forth. But on the whole, here is a forthright call to action by a distinguished educator.

—JOHN CALAM.

Answer to Wit Twister, page 31: step, pets, pest.

Letters to the Education Editor

To Be Continued

DR. URIE BRONFENBRENNER's critique of *The Children of the Dream* in "The Dream of the Kibbutz" [SR, Sept. 20] and his outline of the course planned for some future study of kibbutz life are much appreciated.

First, there is my high regard for Dr. Bronfenbrenner and the discipline he represents. (I became aware of these qualities on coming to Merrill-Palmer Institute soon after he had left it for Cornell.) Secondly, my own observations in Israel make me strongly cautious about drawing generalized conclusions without adequate, careful study and documentation.

While it may be true that basic structures of scheduling and arrangements are quite similar in many kibbutzim, there is no question but that other factors such as familial and cultural backgrounds, religiosity, and political ideals make for significant differences—not only between kibbutzim, but even between families on a given kibbutz and, indeed, even between individual kibbutzniks.

These considerations not only make the need for such basics as controls essential, they also indicate the vastness of the field for research.

RUTHE SUBAR,
Rochester, N.Y.

It's Still a Good Job

ALTHOUGH IT'S true U.S. Commissioner of Education James E. Allen, Jr. came to Washington for less money than he was earning in New York, he got a much better arrangement than his distinguished predecessor, thanks to President Johnson's salary-raising efforts, and President Nixon's elevation of the job to the rank of assistant secretary. As a result, Dr. Allen's salary is \$38,000, not the \$27,500 mentioned in "Cool Man In a Hot Seat" [SR, Sept. 20].

In addition to the prerogatives of rank, he also has the chance to hire assistants at a higher rank and salary. He announced July 17 the creation of two jobs at the deputy assistant secretary rank, which would be in the \$33,495 range.

FRANK SKINNER,
Editor, *Higher Education and National Affairs*,
American Council on Education,
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First Things First

IN THE EDITORIAL "Tax Reform and Education" [SR, Sept. 20], James Cass expressed serious concern that private support to colleges might be hurt by pending tax legislation. It seems to me that more important concern might be voiced by pushing for legislation favorable to private citizens with college-age children, and also for teachers.

There is a serious need to offer tax relief to low- and middle-income families who cannot now deduct legitimate college

expenses on their income tax forms.

Teachers, too, need considerable support from the new tax legislation. Teachers' salaries, of course, are usually dependent on communities already overburdened with tax problems.

Those communities could be aided if teachers, as an occupational group, would be granted a government subsidy in the form of a tax reduction. Such an annual subsidy would have the effect of granting a yearly salary increase to teachers with the total bill shared by local and federal government.

EUGENE E. GLANTZ,
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Shaking the Gloom

NEAR THE END of Peter Schrag's "Gloom at the Top" [SR, Aug. 16], he says: "There is no general idea of culture in America at this moment; we are living in a no man's land labeled 'the generation gap' which gives its educational system no cues—other than unprincipled conformity—to follow." This statement provoked me to search for some general philosophy for our high schools to follow.

Why could it not be the joint undertaking of educators and students to begin to explore the most urgent problems of our times, face up to the need for change, study the means whereby change has been accomplished in the past, distinguish between change that can be rapid and change that requires some period of development, and thus build a basis for the further education of the students and for their eventual participation as adult citizens? Of course the young students do not have specific answers to the sharp questions they raise. But instead of downgrading their protests because they offer no solutions, why not accept the themes as a focus for study in many fields?

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Belmont, Mass.

