

INTRO QUOTE  
What kind of world do  
you want to live in? What  
are you good at and want to  
work at to build that world?  
What do you need to know?  
Demand that your teachers  
teach you that.

# S D S I N T E R N A L E D U C A T I O N

SUBJECT: American Public Schools

AUTHORS: S.D.S. EDUCATION COLLECTIVE

Chuck Ream

Pavel Kropotkin

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<sup>WE</sup> see it it is the purpose of SDS to educate people to the realities of oppression and then to act to radically change those realities. Years ago the Ann Arbor SDS, mainly under the leadership of Diana Oughton and Bill Ayres recognized the vast importance ~~of education to the~~ of change in education if significant changes were to be made in society. <sup>after</sup> Their attempt to start a Community School was sabotaged they changed the focus of struggle to other areas.

Tens of millions of American children are no less oppressed now than they were then. The compulsory nature of education ~~is~~ is nothing other than involuntary servitude, it refuses to accord to young people any integrity or autonomy in deciding how they ~~will~~ will ~~spend~~ use their lives. ~~Once inside school~~ ~~Schools are~~ Present schools are an absurd anachronism, they neither prepare a young person to deal ~~with~~ effectively with his environment nor do they help him to make sense of his existence. The real learnings that take place in schools are three. 1) Learning to submit to authority, ~~to~~ follow directions, and look for right answers 2) Learning to follow tight schedules and meet deadlines 3) Learning to compete with one another for grades and recognition. ~~It is of no matter that~~

It is seen to be of no consequence that the children involved are devastated in the meantime. It is an empirical fact, for instance, that ~~the~~ the strength of a child's self concept diminishes each year he attends school. Think about that. Now think about it again.

To the S.D.S. education collective (and to many

current writers in the area the reason for this gross dehumanization is clear. Children must be conditioned to accept the exploitation and the vacuous existence which will be their lot when they ~~reach~~ grow older. Only those capacities which will mesh with bureaucratic regimentation can "afford" to be developed. Sensitive, loving, "whole" people are a distinct threat.

Thus we ~~find~~ <sup>discover</sup> that our enemy is the same enemy that faces the Vietnamese people in their struggle for freedom; ~~the same enemy~~ that <sup>exploits</sup> blacks and women with low wages and second class citizenship, that aspires to turn workers into mindless machines. This enemy is the American ruling elite, those who control the big corporations of our beautiful technocracy. It is profitable for them to defeat the aspirations of third world peoples with their imperialism. ~~It is absolutely necessary~~ While accomplishing this however it is absolutely necessary that schools continue to produce "cheerful robots" (C. Wright Mills) rather than human beings. New ~~people~~ <sup>recruits</sup> must continually be found to people their sterile bureaucracies ~~and~~ sweat in their grubby factories, and perpetuate ~~the~~ the monstrous death trap which is America today.

~~In light of this~~ It is the opinion of the Ann Arbor S.D.S. Education Collective that ~~the masses~~ <sup>Radicals</sup> ~~throughout~~ <sup>throughout</sup> America ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> ignored for far too long what may prove to be the "soft underbelly" of capitalism. We must develop creative ways of attacking the entire structure of American education from top to bottom. We must demand that our School of Education support and fund experimental educational

alternatives. We must educate teachers <sup>and future teachers see both</sup> ~~to~~ to the harm they are causing children and ~~to~~ how their work functions to perpetuate <sup>the</sup> capitalist brutalization of the world. Most importantly however we must help to catalyze and give some analysis to the already burgeoning consciousness of oppression among the students themselves. We must ask them how ~~we~~ they can square the idea of compulsory education with the constitutional prohibition of involuntary servitude. We must ~~do~~ explain how grades function to stimulate competition and tension between them and to prepare them for accepting further arbitrary sanctions in later life. Ask them if they like sitting still in a chair for a fifty minute period six times a day. Show them how the careful sifting of their teachers (accomplished by often absurd teaching requirements) is responsible for the endless succession of banal horrors they must ~~face~~ <sup>endure</sup> year after year. The list goes on and on. Agitation must not stop until all schools are "free schools" and all children are able to develop to their fullest human potential.

The following are quotations from various writers on modern American education. ~~They are grouped under broad subject headings~~

### ~~The Real Learning in Schools~~

BUCKMINSTER FULLER

"What usually happens in the educational process is that the faculty are dulled, overloaded, stuffed

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and paralyzed, so that by the time that most people are mature they have lost ~~the~~ ~~of~~ their use of many of their innate capabilities."

### MARSHALL McLuhan

In this setting, [the "extreme of fragmentation and specialization"] education's task is fairly simple: decide what the social machine needs, then turn out people who match those needs. The school's function is not so much to encourage people to keep exploring, learning and therefore changing throughout life as to slow and control those very processes of personal growth and change.

### E.Z. Friedenberg author "Coming of Age in America"

Basically, then I disapprove of compulsory school attendance in itself. I see no valid moral reasons to single out the young for this special legal encumbrance. The economic reasons are compelling enough; but they are likewise contemptible. A people have no right to cling to economic arrangements that can be made halfway workable only by imposing an infantile and unproductive status on adolescents and indoctrinating them with a need for trashy goods and shallow, meretricious relationships they know to be degrading.

Adolescents are among the best social groups in the world to be given the full nineteenth century colonial

treatment.... The maintenance of a colonial system requires that the natives accept enough of the dominant culture to meet its schedules, work for payment in its smaller currency, desire and consume its goods, and fight in its armies....

~~John~~

Jonathan Kozol - Birth at an Early Age

Schoolteachers, in his experience, were "dedicated above all else to the extension of their own personalities and the perpetuation of

~~Paul Goodman~~

PAUL Goodman Growing up absurd, Compulsory Mis Education

The belief that a highly industrialized society requires twelve to twenty years of prior processing of the young is an illusion or a hoax.... Whatever the deliberate intention, schooling today serves mainly for policing and for taking up the slack in youth unemployment. It is not surprising that the young are finally rebelling against it, especially since they cannot identify with the goals of so much social engineering - for instance, that 86 percent of the federal budget for research and development is for military purposes.

THEODORE ROZAK - The Making of a Counter Culture

We call it "education", the "life of the mind".

the "pursuit of truth." But it is a matter of machine fooling the young to the needs of our various baroque bureaucracies: corporate, governmental, military, trade union, educational.

JULES HENRY

The Suburban School Nightmare

In a society where competition for the basic cultural goods is a pivot of action, people cannot be taught to love one another, for those who do cannot compete with one another, except in play. It thus becomes necessary for the school, without appearing to do so, to teach children how to hate, without appearing to do so, for our culture cannot tolerate the idea that babies should hate each other. How does the school accomplish this ambiguity? Obviously through competition itself, for what has greater potential for creating hostility than competition? ... School is indeed a training for later life not because it teaches the 3 Rs (more or less), but because it instills the essential cultural nightmare fear of failure, envy of success, and absurdity.

ANDRE GORZ

It is in education that industrial capitalism will provoke the revolts which it attempts to avoid in its factories. Its manoeuvres are too clear: in order to produce its zombies without trouble, it has to be

able to count on a mass of individuals whose horizons have been limited from early childhood.... Now, this enterprise is a tissue of explosive contradictions, for to attempt to teach ignorance at the same time as knowledge, dependence at the same time as autonomy within narrow limits, is to expose oneself - if one cannot enforce a rigorous segregation - to the risk of seeing these limits and this ignorance challenged.... There lies the possibility and necessity for a cultural battle waged on all fronts by socialist forces.

## ~~Some~~ Thoughts For ~~the~~ the Future

### Montgomery County Student Alliance

Self concept and a sense of control over ones own destiny is much more significant in the development of a child than the many other factors school administrators spend all their time worrying about.

### Marshall McLuhan

We are only beginning to realize what a tiny slice of human possibilities we now educate. In fragmenting all of existence, Western civilization hit upon one aspect, the literate and the rational, to develop at the expense of the rest. Along with this mental lopsided development of one of the senses, the visual. Such personal and sensory specialization was useful in a mechanical age, but is fast becoming outmoded. Education

will be more concerned with training the senses and perceptions than with stuffing brains. And this will be at no loss for the "intellect." Studies show a high correlation between sensory, bodily development - now largely neglected - and intelligence.

### CARL ROGERS

The goal of education must be to develop a society in which people can live more comfortably with change than with rigidity. In the coming world the capacity to face the new appropriately is more important than the ability to know and repeat the old.

### IMPORTANT READING

1. Radical School Reform Beatrice and Ronald Gross eds.
2. Education and Ecstasy George Leonard.
3. The Open Classroom AND 36 Children - Herbert Kohl
4. Coming of Age in America E. Z. Friedenberg
5. Death at an Early Age Jonathan Kozol
6. Freedom to Learn Carl Rogers

### SUPERB PERIODICALS

1. "This Magazine is About Schools" <sup>-QUARTERLY</sup> 1 YR \$3.50  
56 Esplanade St East Suite 301  
Toronto 215, Ontario

2. "New Schools Exchange Newsletter" 3 TIMES MONTHLY  
~~in electronic (and to many)~~



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The simple realities of this oppression are quite sufficient to justify our involvement <sup>in the struggle for a free educational system</sup>. We should also consider, however, ~~what effect~~ how radical changes in education would affect the orientation of masses of young people towards the other struggles with which we identify.

We should recognize, for instance, that for the American death machine to function successfully it needs the acquiescence of <sup>the</sup> millions of people who serve as the tiny cogs and gears of that machine. New recruits must continually be found to people its sterile bureaucracies <sup>and</sup> sweat in its grimy factories. Masses of people will ~~be~~ voluntarily fet themselves into ~~such~~ <sup>our</sup> highly rationalized technocracy only if their horizons have been limited since earliest childhood. What would happen if a young person's sense of self worth and integrity was affirmed throughout his ~~self~~ youth rather than demolished. What would happen if, instead of proceeding through the curricula and learning right answers, young people were encouraged to follow their own interests, to explore the full breadth of their humanity? The focus of education now is on data and discipline. What ~~if it changed~~ ~~was changed to~~ would happen if it was refocused to center on developing creativity and loving ~~of~~ (rather than competing with) fellow human beings. We expect ~~that~~ children educated to develop a feeling of empathy with their fellow men would find it much harder to ~~become~~ <sup>become</sup> insensitive <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the reality</sup> of slant eyed babies fried in napalm or little black children with rat bites on ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> cheeks. We expect at least a part of the rampant sexism pervading our culture could be eliminated if schools actively rejected sex-role stereotyping.

In fact, if free education can produce "free" people it will strike very close to the ~~the~~ case of ~~it~~.

In fact the ~~the~~ products of free schools might begin to undermine the whole ~~the~~ dead mine to fine, Protestant Ethic

In fact, Would the products of free schools ~~want to~~ work nine to five for forty years, retire, and die? Would they persist in <sup>the</sup> fanatical acquisition of goods (which is the only way most Americans can justify their existence.) Very probably not - at least not to the same degree.

~~It could fundamentally undermine our country's~~ through production. It is true that ~~the~~ ruling elite of this ~~might~~ might discover at some point that free people are ~~interested~~ interested to their ~~own~~ interests

↓ One of the basic reasons for the success of our capitalist ruling elite is that the great mass of Americans are ~~little~~ have become little more than half alive production / consumption machines. If young people begin to move out of this mold the whole structure will be undermined. Right or.

The New American Movement should move right now to firmly support youth struggle. We can begin by incorporating some of the parts of the Youth Liberation program into our own analysis. (These are points that specifically relate to youth oppression and have some particular programmatic suggestions.)

We propose that this convention of the New American Movement adopt the following proposals:

1) We want the immediate end of Adult Chauvinism. We believe that ideas should be judged on their merit and people on their wisdom or kindness. Age in itself deserves no recognition. Adults who really want to help young people can show their concern by providing money, floorspace and equipment for meeting places, offices, or concerts. In cities where the New American movement has strength we must see to it that radical students in all local schools have access to a printing machine, a place to meet, and other basic necessities of organizing. A major reason (and an example) that young people have no power over their lives is that it is now almost impossible for them to gain access to the tools of struggle.

2) We want full civil and human rights for all people. We believe young people are necessary participants in democracy. They must have complete freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and the right to vote.

3) Young people must have the right to form their education according to their own needs. We believe compulsory education is a form of enslavement and must be abolished immediately. Grades must end because they divide people and make them work for other peoples ends. All discipline procedures must be decided democratically within the student community. No school staff should be hired or fired without the democratic consent of the