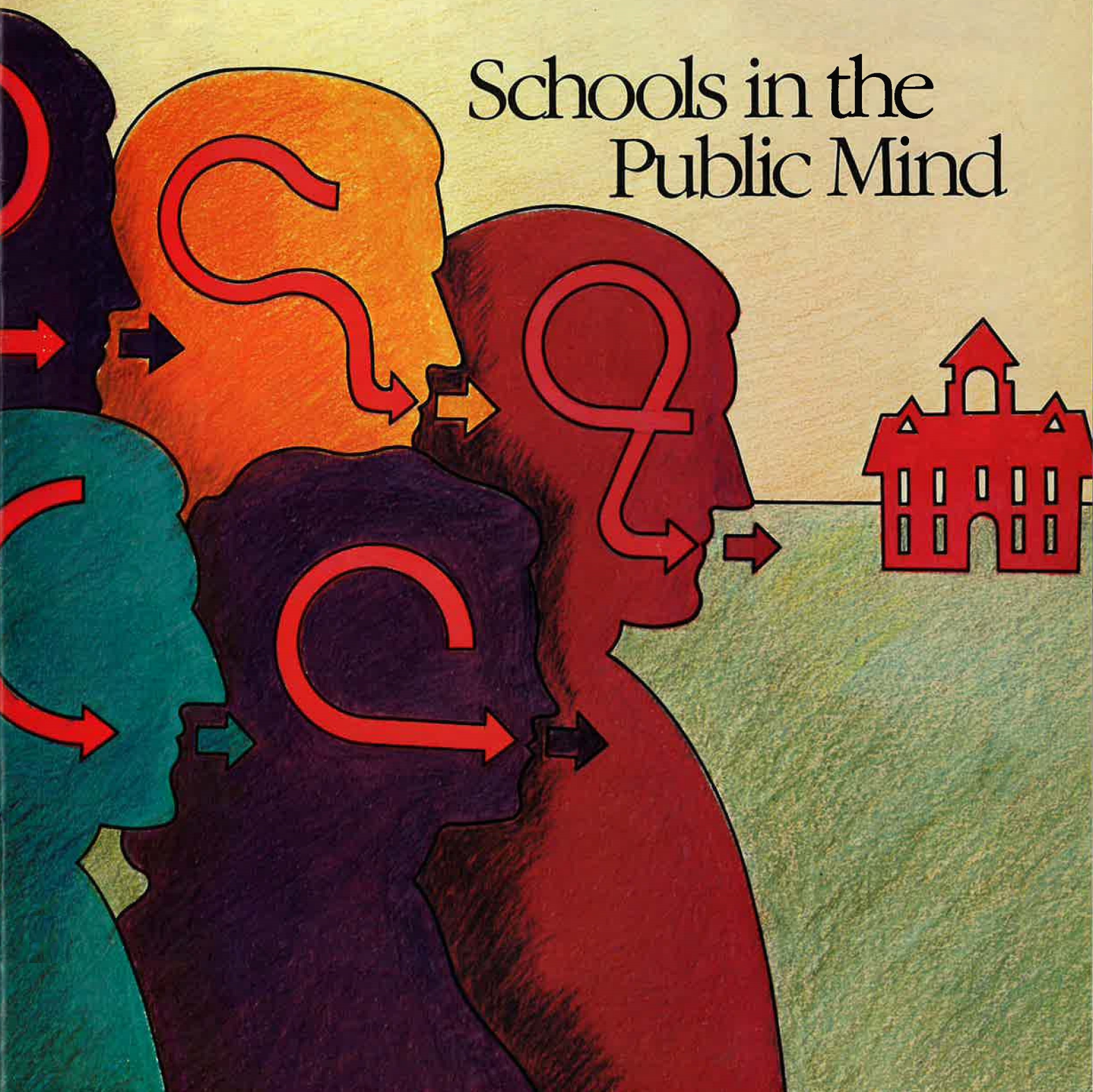
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
SPRING 1984

AMERICAN Educator



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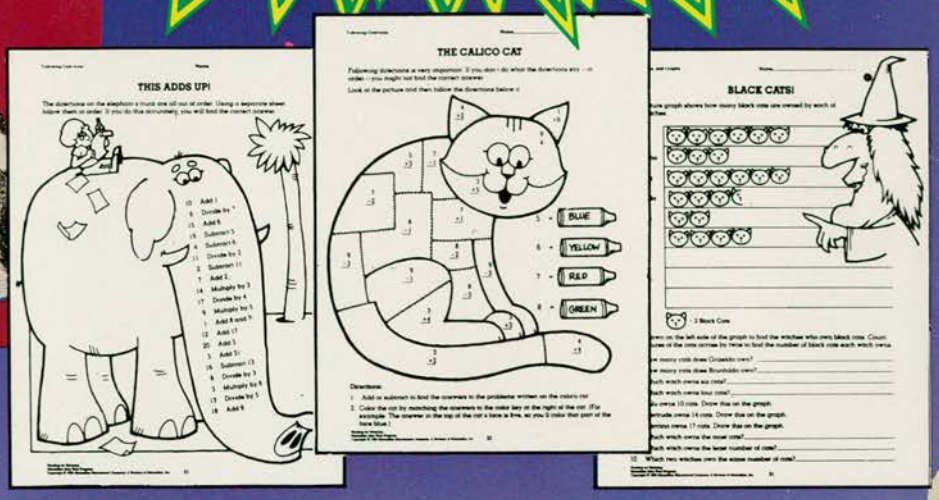

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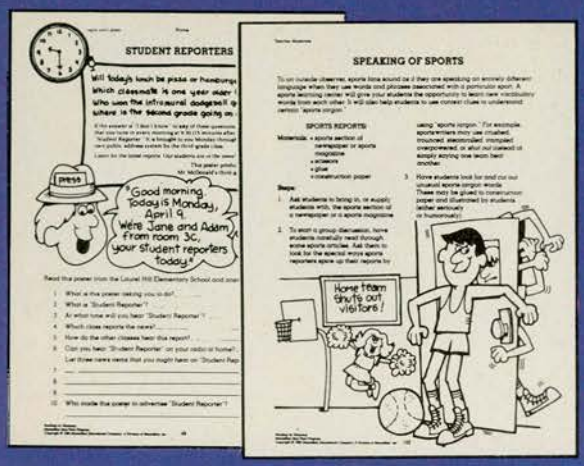

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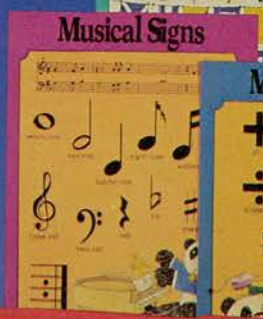

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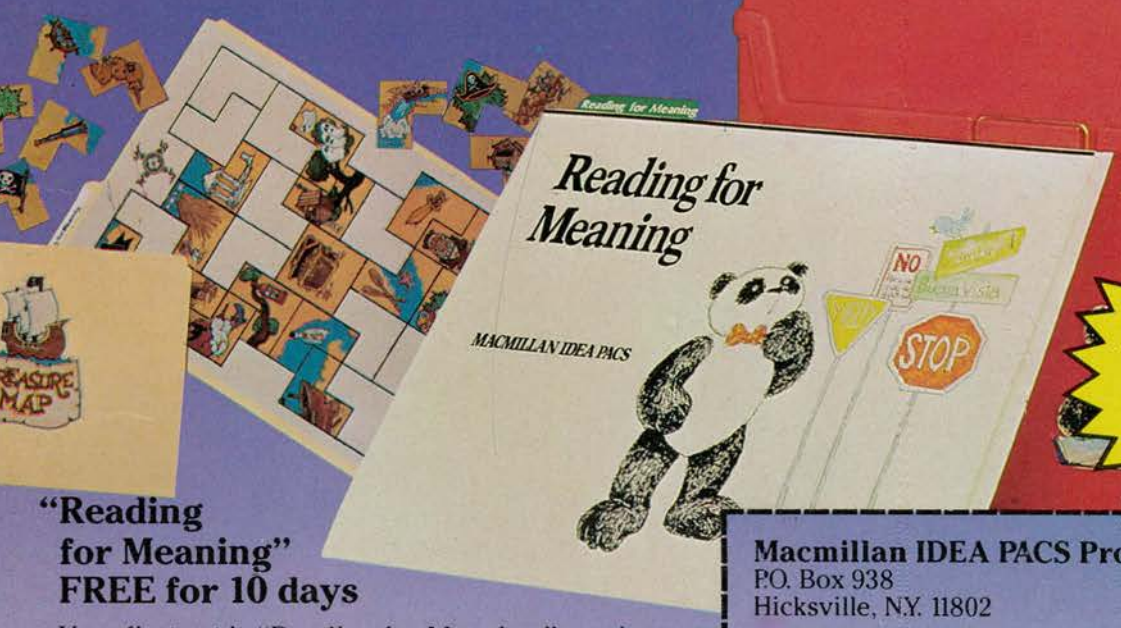

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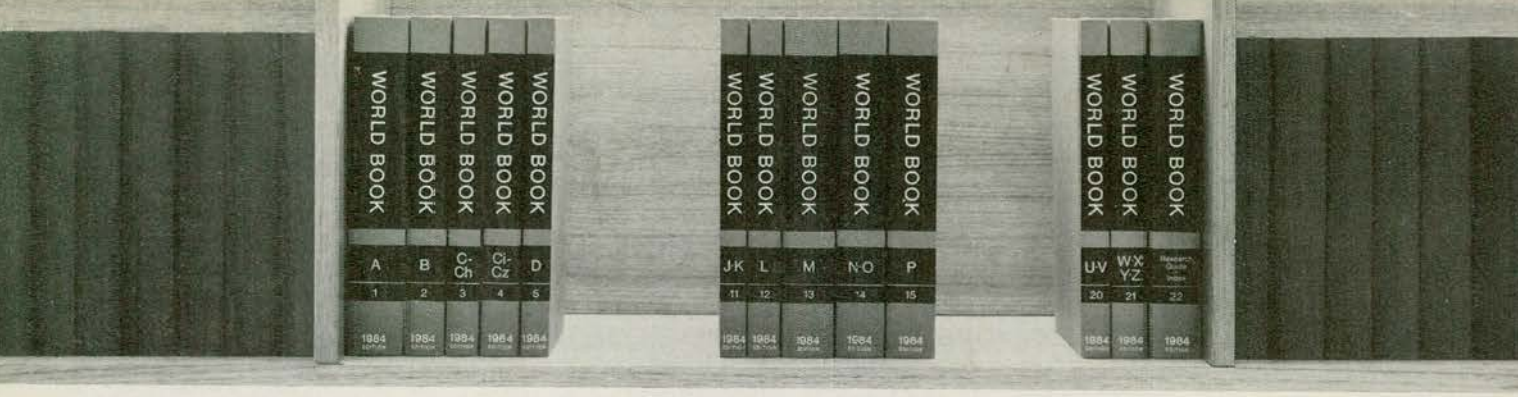

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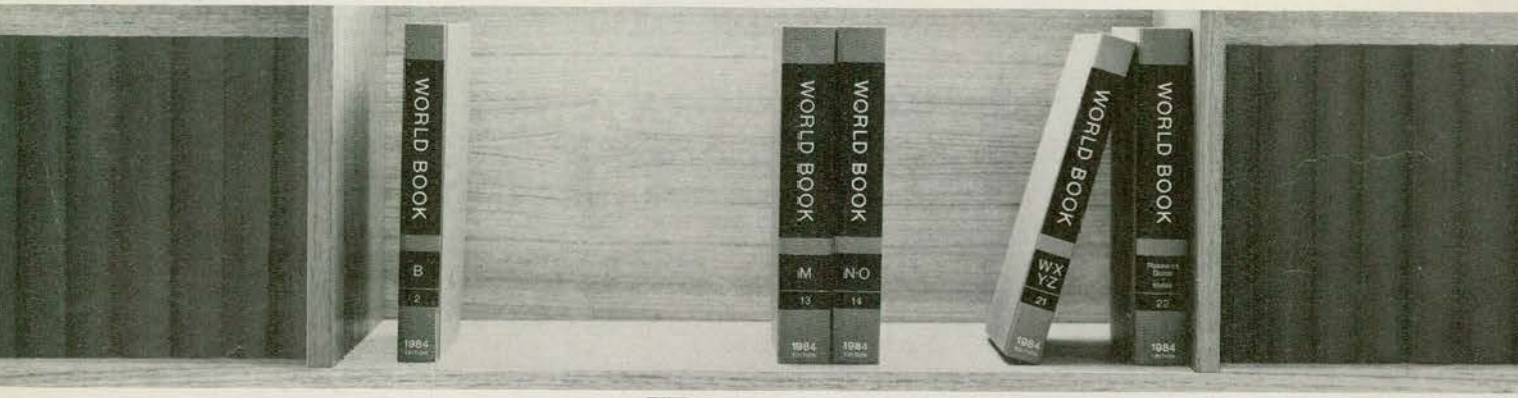

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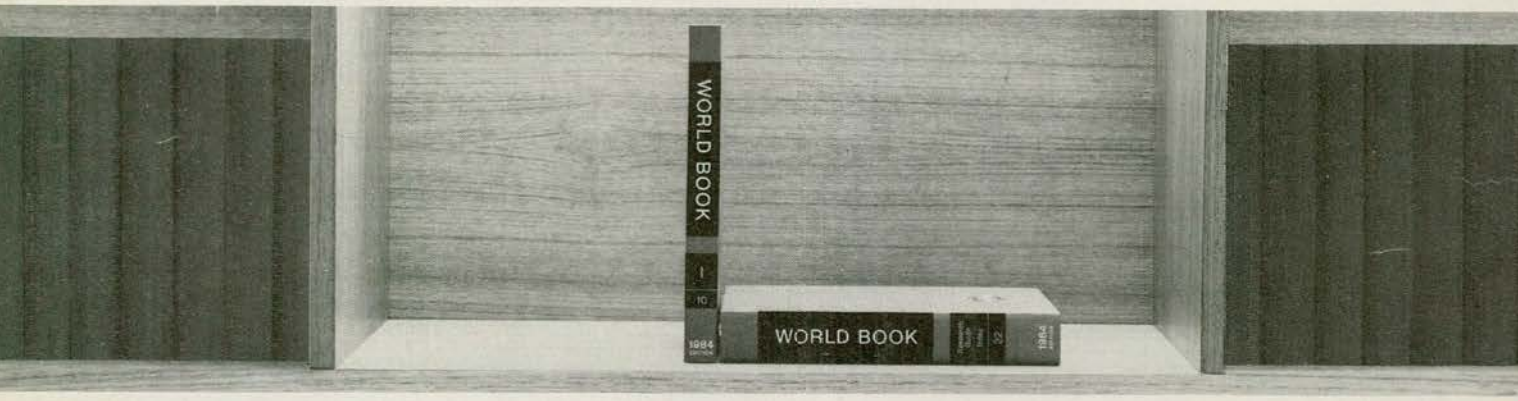

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World Book's popularity isn't the result of just ease of use. The *Guide* awarded *World Book* excellent ratings in nine categories: scope, authority, reliability, recency, objectivity, clarity, accessibility, graphics, and physical format. The closest competitors scored excellent ratings in only six, four and one categories, respectively.

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AMERICAN Educator

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Volume 8, No. 1, Spring 1984

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Notebook

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SHERBO

How Are Principals Chosen?

Not usually on the basis of merit, according to a new study by the National Institute of Education.

In most cases, the selection criteria for principals are vague and subjective. When merit does win out, "it is frequently due to chance or just the right combination of circumstances at a given moment," the researchers found.

Many school district decision makers spoke of "finding the best educational leaders," yet, when pressed, could not specify what that meant in terms of training, experience, or skills. Even in those districts in which the criteria were spelled out more sharply, very few required teaching and administrative experience at the type of school where the vacancy occurred.

What did seem to count most were strong and often unarticulated notions of "fit" and "image": "Every district had a deeply held image of a 'good principal' or a 'top' candidate or 'just what we're looking for.' However, time and time again, this 'fit' seemed to rest on interpersonal perceptions of a candidate's physical presence, projections of a certain self-confidence and assertiveness, and embodiment of community values and methods of operation. ... When professionalism competes with 'image' and 'fit,' the latter seem to be favored unless exceptional circumstances prevail."

This emphasis on community compatibility not only minimizes the importance of professional qualifications, note the authors, it also "works heavily against out-of-district candidates, minorities, and women."

The NIE study also profiles a few school districts with more sound selection methods, including some that have developed internships for training potential principals. With the assistance of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, twenty assessment centers have been established to identify managerial talent by simulating on-the-job problems that administrators are likely to face.

Nearly half of the nation's school principals are now between the ages of fifty-five and sixty-five and will retire in the next two decades. This could provide a great opportunity for improving the quality of educational leadership. But, the researchers warn, unless there are changes in the way principals are chosen, the ablest candidates may be turned away or may never apply.

Parents Say They're Willing To Do More

Parents are "remarkably positive" toward the public elementary schools and their children's teachers, but schools could do more to involve parents in helping their children at home, according to a recent study by Johns Hopkins University.

Parents were most often asked by teachers to aid their children in the following ways: to read aloud or listen to the child read, to talk with the child about the school day, to conduct drills in spelling or math, to help with worksheets, and to sign homework. However, from one-fourth to two-fifths of the parents surveyed were "never" asked to take part in these activities. Almost 30 percent felt they did not have enough training to help their children with reading and math, while over 80 percent said they would spend more time at such tasks if they were shown how to do specific home-learning activities.

Although most parents are involved daily for at least short periods of time with their children's school work, very few are active at school, the study found. Almost 70 percent "never" helped in the classroom or on class trips or with fundraising projects.

According to researcher Joyce Epstein, teachers who work at parent involvement and family-school communications are given markedly higher ratings by parents. "The message for teachers," says Epstein, "is that many parents ... would benefit from direction or ideas from the teacher that could be useful for the child's progress in school."

Percent of parents who *never* experienced the following types of communications from child's teacher over one-year period:

	% Never
Memo from teacher	16.4
Talk to teacher before or after school	20.7
Conference with teacher	36.4
Hand-written note from teacher	36.5
Workshop at school	59.0
Called on phone by teacher	59.5
Visited at home by teacher	96.3

More Need Chasing Fewer Dollars

In the first comprehensive look at what has happened to student aid from all government sources — federal, state, and local — a new study from the College Board finds that the total real value of college assistance money dropped by 21 percent during the early 1980s. Financial aid showed dramatic growth during the 1960s and 1970s, increasing from one-half billion dollars in 1963-64 to $18 billion in 1981-82. That rapid expansion ended in the 1980s, and the 1983-84 total is actually down an estimated $2 billion from its 1981-82 peak.

Most of this decline is a result of the phasing out of student benefits under the Social Security program and, to a lesser degree, tighter restrictions on Guaranteed Student Loans and a smaller number of veterans using G.I. benefits.

While aid has decreased, college costs have risen. "Adjusted for inflation, costs have increased, but income and aid per (full-time) student have not," the report says. "Thus, in contrast to what can be said generally about the last two decades, college has become relatively more difficult for families to afford in the 1980s."

The new findings bring into question the validity of the arguments put forth by the Reagan administration to justify the cancellation of Social Security student benefits. Donald A. Gillespie, principal author of the College Board report, explains: "At the time Congress and the administration discussed phasing out the Social Security student benefits program, the argument was made that needy students receiving Social Security benefits would be able to obtain aid from other programs. We now know that the total amount of aid has dropped while college costs have increased. So if we assume that there were needy students served by the Social Security program, which is likely to be the case, it is probable that as a result of the cuts in that program, there is more need chasing fewer dollars today than in the early 1980s."

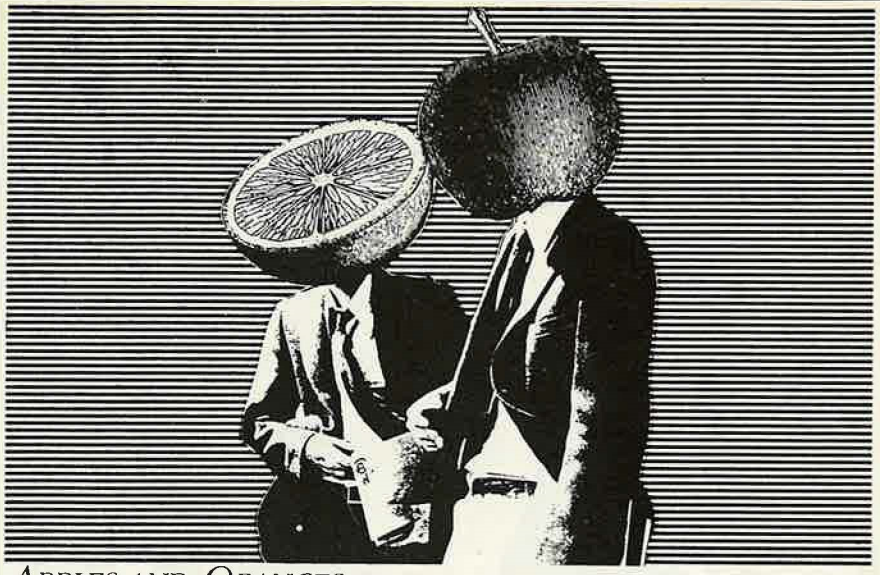

ILLUSTRATION BY GUY SCHUM

Apples and Oranges

In 1981, sociologist James Coleman and his colleagues received widespread attention for their study (*High School Achievement*), which purported to show that Catholic schools do a better job of educating their students than do public schools.

The latest challenge to that finding comes from sociologists Karl Alexander and Aaron Pallas at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The central flaw of the Coleman study, Alexander and Pallas say, is that it compares apples and oranges.

Students in Catholic schools score higher because they come to school with greater initial ability and not because of the effects of the schools themselves, the researchers found. "The basic conclusion from our study," says Pallas, "is that when initial levels of academic competency are accounted for, there is little evidence that Catholic schools are more effective at producing cognitive achievement than public schools."

The Coleman study argued that it had allowed for differences in student ability by controlling for socioeconomic factors in the children's family backgrounds. But, say Alexander and Pallas, such factors cannot adequately serve as proxies for differences in academic ability.

In order to control for differences in ability, the Hopkins researchers looked at Catholic and public school students who were enrolled in college prep courses, thus comparing those who were similarly situated academically. They found the score differences between these groups to be "inconsequential."

The Alexander and Pallas study appeared originally in the October 1983 issue of *Sociology of Education.* In a yet-unpublished follow-up, the authors provide further refinement of their argument. By monitoring the scores of the same group of students during their sophomore and senior years in high school, the researchers were able to more clearly separate initial ability from the effects of schooling. Again, it was initial ability that made the difference: Although the students in Catholic schools started at higher levels, the *growth* in performance over the two-year period was approximately the same in Catholic and public schools. The best predictor of how a student would score his senior year was how he had scored his sophomore year and not which type of school he attended.

In another dispute with the Coleman findings, the Johns Hopkins University team found that once initial ability is controlled for, Catholic schools do *not* do a better job of educating minority children than do public schools. That is, race is no more important a factor in predicting achievement in public schools than it is in private schools.

What seems to be at work here, the researchers conclude, is a selection factor: The children of the families who select Catholic schools have a head start.

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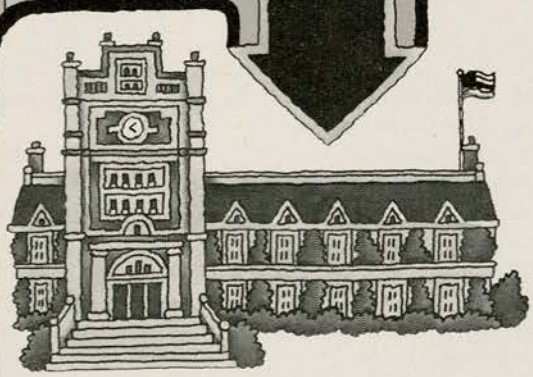

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BE ALL YOU CAN BE.

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(while your friends are job hunting).

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RECEIVE UNIFORM.
It'll look even better on you after Basic.

BASIC TRAINING.
Do 50 situps, climb over a wall, and run two miles. No sweat.

2
SECOND ANNIVERSARY IN THE ARMY.

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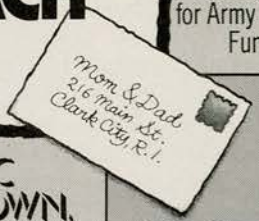

ADD A STRIPE.

Make a deal with your buddy: you'll teach him surfing if he teaches you cross-country skiing.

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT DOWN. YOU FIX IT.
(Piece of Cake.)

WRITE HOME.

Do you have students who have all it takes to succeed in college except a way to pay for it? The Army can help.

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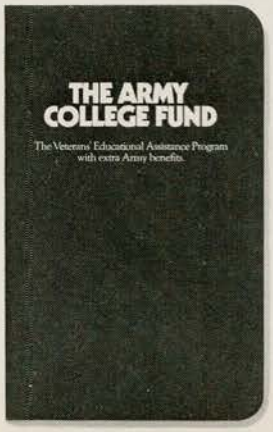
The Army College Fund is like a savings plan. Soldiers who qualify can save up to $100 a month of their Army pay, which starts at over $570 a month.



The government matches their savings five to one, or more. It can total up to $15,200 during a two-year enlistment or $20,100 in a three-year enlistment.

Your students can learn more about the Army College Fund from their local Army Recruiter, who has booklets explaining the program. The number is listed in the Yellow Pages. The Army's not the only route a bright student can take to college. But it could be the smartest.

ARMY.
BE ALL YOU CAN BE.

Letters

Reform and Reaction

Denis P. Doyle's review of Diane Ravitch's *The Troubled Crusade* was typical of reactionary right-wing thinking.

Having been one of those reformers whom Mr. Doyle pejoratively refers to as a "romantic" visionary, a "radical," and "intellectual," I am extremely proud of the efforts we made to create change in our schools and the nation's educational direction. Doyle is incorrect in making the flat assertion that the reforms resulted in serving the interest of "neither the teacher nor the taught."

Many of us were guided by the notions of Alfred North Whitehead's *The Aims of Education,* John Dewey's *Democracy and Education,* and the incredible work of cognitive and developmental psychologists. Many of the resulting changes in schooling and teaching have not weakened the process but greatly strengthened our educational goals. For Doyle, using the terms of the business world, the reforms have resulted in a failure of "tough mindedness" and "thoroughness."

Our schools are filled with bright students and effective teachers. American universities are meccas for learning and research. The corporations represented by Doyle's American Enterprise Institute hire thousands of our brilliant graduates each year.

As Doyle points out, Ravitch's book is brilliantly researched and it is an important study. What it proves is that our schools cannot solve all of the problems in a complex and pluralistic society infested with social and economic problems.

I would suggest that Doyle and his "free enterprisers" concentrate on the damage done to our children by corporate television and a poorly managed and ineffectual economic system. They might also see what they can do about getting the schools properly funded and the teachers paid a living wage.

—Terence M. Ripmaster
William Paterson College
Wayne, NJ

The Reading Debate

I would like to comment on one point in the debate between Dr. Bettelheim and Mrs. Chall. I feel that they are both correct in the use of the skills of phonics and the "look-say" method in reading.

In the early grades, the child utilizes his ability to memorize words, activities, actions, ideas, etc. Thus, the "look-say" method would be most important at that time.

The phonics method, since it employs thinking to a greater degree, should come later, gradually building on what the child learned by the "look-say" method.

I have been teaching children of all intelligence, background, and reading problems in the fifth grade for over thirty years.

I have found that the vast amount of the children have come into my class knowing the words either consciously or subconsciously. Their greatest conflicts come in the fear of the words, the fear of making mistakes, and in not being guided in knowing what basic facts for which to specifically look in whatever they read.

My conclusions are not only based on the over thirty years of teaching and my classes consistently gaining on the average one and one-half years on formal reading achievement tests, but on raising five children, two step-children and two foster children.

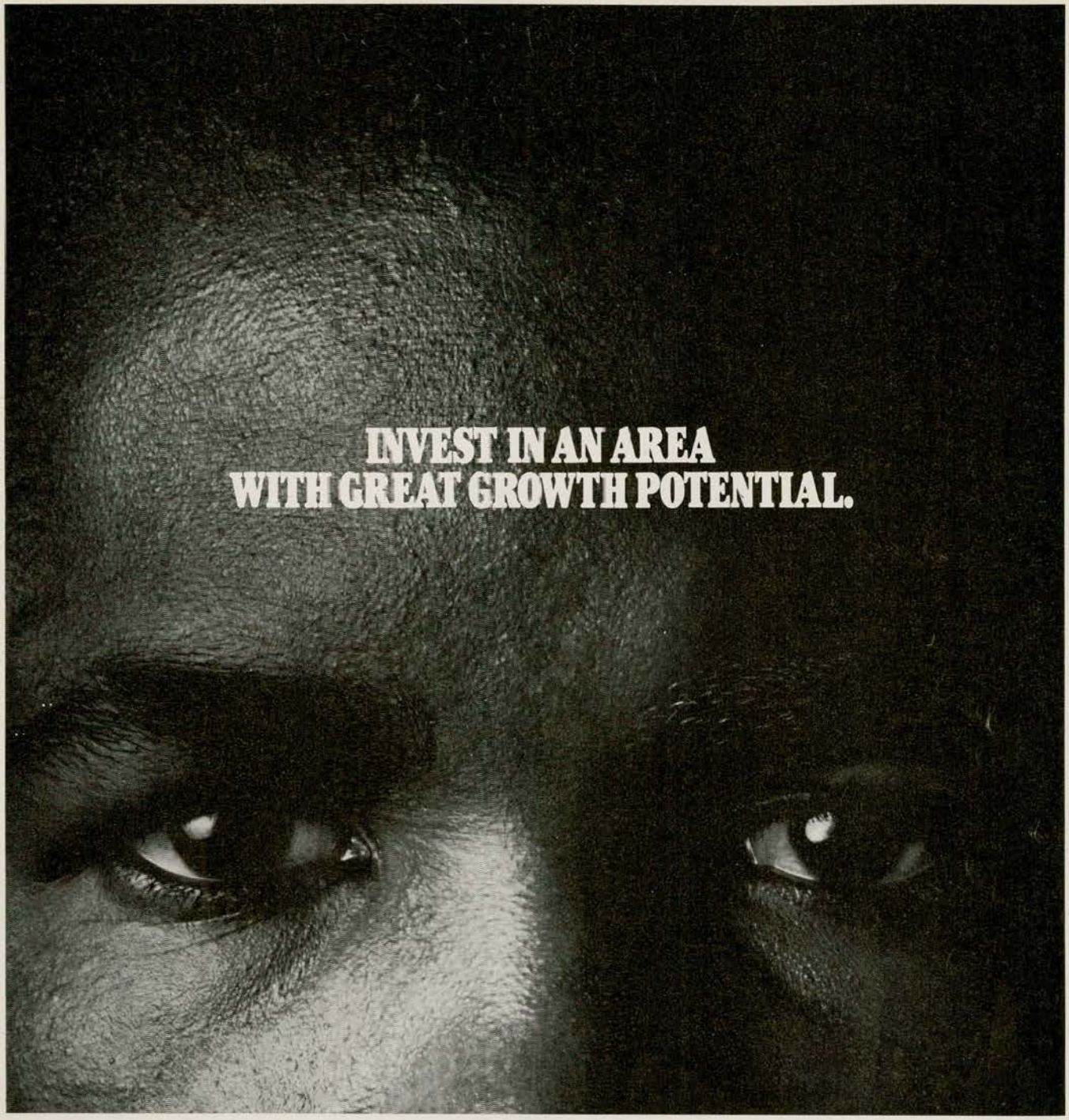
—Julius Bilash
Freeport, NY

To ask in 1983 ("Reading: The New Debate") whether reading is phonics or look-say is like asking whether Latin or Hebrew was the first language.

Harriet T. Bernstein's interview with Jeanne Chall ignores important research that has been done over the last fifteen years by such pioneers in psycholinguistics as Kenneth S. Goodman and Frank Smith. They have provided us with a much more comprehensive model of reading as a search for meaning that simultaneously uses the reader's experiential background, the reader's linguistic background, graphophonic cues, syntactic cues, and semantic cues.

These researchers have seriously challenged Ms. Bernstein's assertion that "fluent decoding is absolutely necessary." In *Reading Without Nonsense,* Smith writes, "The very complexity and unreliability of the 166 rules and scores of exceptions make it remarkable that anyone should think that inability to use phonics explains 'Why Johnny can't read.'" Indeed, Goodman questions the validity of the very term "decoding" in his article "Decoding-From

(Continued on page 48)



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THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A CONSUMER REPORT

By William Schneider

IS THE crisis of education really a crisis of consumer confidence? Economist Milton Friedman, writing in a recent issue of *Newsweek*, thinks it is. "Schools," he says, "are now run by professional bureaucrats. Monopoly and uniformity have replaced competition and diversity. Consumers of schooling have little to say. Control by producers has replaced control by consumers."

This argument holds that the recent surge of national concern over the quality of public education is really a revolt by dissatisfied parents and taxpayers over the "service" they have gotten from their public schools. The cause of the crisis in education, according to this point of view, is that the public schools are not doing their job. Why not? Any number of reasons are advanced. Educational programs are inadequate or misconceived. Teachers and school administrators are incompetent. Tax money is wasted or misspent. Federal interference stifles initiative and undermines the schools' sensitivity to local needs. What is to be done? Either abandon the public school system altogether by implementing tuition tax credits or a voucher system (which Friedman favors) or completely restructure public education to make it more responsive to consumer demands.

Do the public opinion polls support this argument? Do they reveal a nation of dissatisfied consumers who blame the schools for delivering a poor educational product? The answer, very simply, is no. The public does perceive a serious, although not calamitous, deterioration in the quality of this country's public education, but it does not blame this deterioration primarily on the schools or on the teachers. The causes of the problem are much broader. They lie in the area of social change, more specifically, in the breakdown of public and private authority.

People tend to see the crisis in education as a broad national problem, not a specific consumer complaint. In fact, when people are polled about their level of satisfaction with specific school programs and services, they tend to be relatively positive. Moreover, those who have direct experience with public schools — the consumers, so to speak — are usually the most satisfied.

This does not mean that teachers and public schools are off the hook. While the school system is not responsible for our society's social problems, the public does feel that the schools have not dealt with those problems successfully. The public wants improvements — higher standards, tougher requirements, better teachers — and it is willing to spend more money to get them. People want to strengthen the public school system, not abandon it. Will spending more money on schools and teachers solve the problems of American education? Not entirely, people say: Since the education problem is a product of social change, there is a limit to how much the schools can do. But they can do something. And they can certainly do more than they are doing now.

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ILLUSTRATED BY GUY SCHUM

AS EVERYONE by now is aware, the American public's confidence in education has declined in recent years. In 1966, 61 percent of the public told the Harris Poll that they had "a great deal of confidence" in the people running education in the United States. By 1973, that number had slipped to 37 percent in a survey taken by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) of the University of Chicago. In 1983, it declined to 29 percent. The Gallup Poll substantiates this trend.

What everyone does not realize is that confidence in all major social, political, and economic institutions was declining during this period. The Harris-NORC polls reveal a comparable loss of faith beginning in the mid-1960s in major companies, organized religion, medicine, the press, organized labor, Congress, the military, the Supreme Court, and the executive branch. All fell in public esteem, from an average of 48 percent indicating a great deal of confidence in 1966 to an average of 23 percent in 1983. The Gallup Poll shows a similar deterioration across a range of institutions — the church, the Supreme Court, Congress, organized labor, and big business, along with public education. The trend has been all encompassing. Not only has trust in business declined, but so have favorability ratings for a wide variety of specific industries and companies. Thus, the automobile, steel, and food industries lost credit with the public after 1965, as did General Electric, Shell Oil, and IBM. In our recent book on the subject *(The Confidence Gap: Business, Labor and Government in the Public Mind,* Free Press, 1983), Seymour Martin Lipset and I found that not a single industry or firm out of seventy-five tested actually improved its public reputation between the late 1960s and the late 1970s.

"Great events have great causes," said Montesquieu. A downturn as all embracing as this has to be related to broad perceptions of the social and political order. It is impossible to believe that the American public had negative personal experiences with every large and small institution in American society at the same time. Moreover, the data show that people continued to rate their personal experiences with business, government, labor, education, etc. rather positively, even while their assessment of the performance of these institutions in the society as a whole declined markedly. Our book argues that the decline of confidence was a response to events and to the perception of events. For the past twenty years, things have been going badly in this country. The sheer quantity of "bad news" increased substantially after 1963. For the first ten years or so, most of the "bad news" was noneconomic in nature — a disastrous foreign war, racial strife, protest, and political scandal. After 1973, the "bad news" became mostly economic, as the country was hit in rapid succession by the energy crisis, recession, and hyperinflation. The public's assessment of institutions, including education, is mostly a reaction to the way things are going "out there," in the society as a whole. By contrast, people's assessment of their own private lives, including their personal experiences with institutions, has remained relatively positive and resilient. It is this discrepancy between negative perceptions of public life and positive private experiences that we label "the confidence gap."

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THIS CAN easily be illustrated in the area of education. For the past fifteen years, the Gallup Organization has been conducting annual polls of attitudes toward the public schools (originally sponsored by the Kettering Foundation and later supported by the Lilly Endowment, these surveys are now a project of Phi Delta Kappa). One question in the poll asks respondents to grade the public schools in their own community on a scale from "A" to "F." The proportion giving their local public schools a high grade ("A" or "B") was 31 percent in 1983. Beginning in 1981, the Gallup Poll also asked respondents to grade "the public schools in the nation as a whole." This question has consistently elicited a more negative appraisal. The proportion giving grades of "A" or "B" to the public school system as a whole was 19 percent in 1983. In other words, Americans are significantly more critical of the national public schools than they are of the schools in their own community.

Their negative assessment of the nation's public schools can hardly be called a consumer complaint. People are more favorable toward the schools they know the most about — the schools in their own community. This pattern is repeated in polls dealing with other institutions: People are more favorable toward the company they work for than toward business as a whole. They like their Congressman but hate Congress. They dislike the press but like their local newspaper, and so forth. What these results suggest is that people are not generalizing from their own experiences. Their negative attitudes toward institutions — including the nation's public schools — are drawn from the strongly negative impressions they get about how things are going in the larger society, beyond their personal experience. And they do not seem to be going well.

THERE IS other evidence that "consumers" of public education are, relatively speaking, the most positive about the public schools. Parents of public school pupils can be expected to know the most about those schools. In 1983, as in previous years, public school parents gave the local public schools a noticeably higher rating than other respondents did: Forty-two percent of public school parents graded the local public schools "A" or "B," compared with 28 percent of other respon-

dents. As George Gallup recently said, "We have found that those who have visited the schools or been involved in the schools hold them in much higher respect and regard than those who don't know about them."

On the other hand, public school parents were no different from other respondents in their ratings of the *nation's* public schools. In assessing the public school system as a whole, direct contact doesn't matter. Everyone shares the same, largely negative, impressions.

Precisely the same patterns show up when the public is asked to evaluate the quality of teachers. A nationwide survey conducted by *The Los Angeles Times* in June 1983 asked respondents to rate "the performance of teachers in your neighborhood schools today." Sixty-six percent considered their performance satisfactory. That figure rose to 75 percent among public school parents. However, only 54 percent were satisfied with the performance of teachers "in the United States today."

There is still more evidence that the decline of confidence in education does not represent consumer dissatisfaction. When people are asked to rate specific public school programs and services, their views tend to be quite positive. The 1983 Gallup survey asked respondents to grade various aspects of public schooling in their community, such as curriculum, quality of teaching, extracurricular activities, and "the way schools are administered." In most cases, the grades were higher than they were for the schools themselves. Why, then, the overall lower rating? Two specific aspects of school performance seemed to bring down the overall grade. One of them was basic skills: "preparing for jobs those students not planning to go to college." The other was discipline: "behavior of students" and the "way discipline is handled."

In the 1981 Gallup survey, between 42 percent and 49 percent graded their local public schools "A" or "B" for the education they provided in music, reading, mathematics, writing, science, art, and social studies. "D" or "F" ratings in these subjects averaged 13 percent. Vocational training was seen as the least satisfactory educational program.

NEVERTHELESS, IT is important not to paint too rosy a picture. Negative feelings about the public schools have definitely been increasing. The Gallup series shows a decline in the public's rating of their local public schools virtually every year since 1974. The percentages giving the public schools in their community a grade of "A" or "B" declined from 48 percent in 1974 to 31 percent in 1983. The last figure is still higher than the 20 percent who rated their local schools "D" or "F" in 1983. But the 1983 results are nowhere near the 4-to-1 positive-to-negative ratio that prevailed in 1974.

If, as noted above, public school parents tend to be more satisfied with the public schools, then one reason for the declining ratings can be readily suggested: The proportion of Americans with children in the public schools has declined. In 1969, 44 percent of the American public had children in the public schools. By 1983, this figure had dropped to 27 percent. Most of the change is accounted for by the increasing share of the American public with no school-age children at all. Thus, an argument might be made that "consumers" of public education are still relatively satisfied but that the proportion of consumers has dropped to just over one in four, mostly because of demographic changes. The facts, however, do not sustain this argument. The percentage of public school parents who gave their schools high grades dropped by no less than 22 points between 1974 and 1983.

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What accounts for this increasingly negative feeling that characterizes parents and nonparents alike? Where do people — now three-quarters of the public — who have no direct knowledge of or contact with the public schools develop an unfavorable impression of them?

One place is, of course, the news media. That is where most people formulate their impressions of events, institutions, and personalities beyond their immediate experience (and, to a large extent, even things within their immediate experience). News reports about education, like news reports about every other major American institution, have not been particularly good over the past twenty years. Americans are repeatedly shocked by stories about violence in the schools, adolescent drug use, declining test scores, teacher strikes, and racial conflict. Success stories about public education have become rare, indeed. Everyone reads these stories, and so everyone is dismayed about the performance of the public school system.

In almost all cases, these stories are true. However, it must be asked whether the media are biased toward reporting bad news simply because bad news captures public attention (and a larger share of the reading or viewing audience). It is an old problem: The thousands of airplanes that land safely are not news, but the one that crashes is a story. Of course, it is the media's responsibility to keep a watch on institutions and report to the public when things aren't working. But it is at least plausible to argue that an incessant barrage of bad news, even if it is reported by a diligent and responsible press, will sour public attitudes toward their institutions and leaders.

There is another, more direct way for people to obtain an impression of the public school system. Whether they are parents or not, most Americans have some contact with young people, that is, with the *products* of American education. In the workplace, in public

places, and in their homes, they see for themselves what kinds of young people the public school system is turning out. And, the evidence suggests, they are not favorably impressed.

EVERY YEAR, Gallup has asked respondents to identify the biggest problems the public schools in their communities have to deal with. In every year but one, lack of discipline topped the list. (Twenty-five percent mentioned it in 1983.) That concern has been even higher among minorities. Worry over discipline has been essentially constant since the late 1960s, when the "youth rebellion" was in full swing. Two other problems tended to increase in importance during the 1970s — drug use and poor academic standards. Concern over integration and busing, by comparison, has tended to diminish over time. Close to a fifth of the public mentioned race-related problems in the early 1970s; in 1983, only one in twenty did.

A survey taken in June 1983 by Penn + Schoen Associates asked, "What's the biggest problem with the public schools today — not enough funds, bad teachers, undisciplined students, or inadequate facilities?" Forty percent said undisciplined students, whereas only half that many indicated that funds or teachers were the problem (8 percent said facilities). The discipline problem appears to be a key factor behind the movement of children from public to private schools. In the 1982 Gallup survey, 37 percent of public school parents and 46 percent of private school parents rated the discipline problem in public school "very serious." Almost half of public school parents in 1982 said they would prefer to send their eldest child to a private school if they could do so tuition free. The reasons most frequently offered were "higher educational standards" and "better discipline."

Even students agree. In 1979, the Gallup Youth Survey interviewed a cross section of 1,012 teenagers, thirteen to eighteen years old. When asked whether "discipline in your school is generally too strict or too lenient," 39 percent of the teenagers said "too lenient," compared with 31 percent who said "too strict." By 41 to 35 percent, nonwhite teenagers felt that school discipline was too lenient. When asked to name the biggest problems facing their schools, the youth were even more preoccupied with disciplinary problems than the adults. The top answers were lack of discipline (30 percent), drugs (24 percent), "pupils' lack of interest" (14 percent), and crime and vandalism (9 percent).

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WHOM DO people blame for the discipline problem? The answer could not be clearer: They blame the parents and the home environment.

- The 1983 Gallup survey gave respondents a list of eleven reasons why there is a discipline problem in the schools and asked them to indicate which ones they thought were most important. By far the largest number, 72 percent, chose "lack of discipline in the home." Only one other reason was cited by a majority: "lack of respect for law and authority throughout society."
- The *Los Angeles Times* poll asked, "Who do you think is most responsible for the condition of American education today — the government, or the teachers, or the taxpayers, or the students, or the parents, or who?" The largest number, 42 percent, blamed the parents, followed by the government (36 percent), teachers (26 percent), taxpayers (18 percent), and the students (9 percent). When asked which is more important for a pupil to succeed in school, a proper home environment or a proper school environment, respondents chose the home over the school by 6 to 1.
- Eighty percent told the ABC News/*Washington Post* poll that discipline in most high schools today is not strict enough. When those who felt that way were asked who is more to blame for this, "the school officials for being too easy on the children or the parents for not allowing high school officials to be stricter," 80 percent blamed the parents, compared with 16 percent who blamed the school officials.

THE PROBLEM is really one of social change. The parents have created, and the schools must deal with, a youth subculture that is more independent and less responsive to authority and discipline than in the past. You don't have to be a parent to see that many young people in this country are "out of control." In this sense, the public is dissatisfied with the "product" of our education system. However, they do not primarily blame the schools for producing a bad educational product.

They do, however, think the schools could do more to improve the situation. The public tends to favor improvements that entail increasing respect for authority and increasing competence in basic skills. The idea of "skills" is critical. The public is dismayed to find so many young people who get through the public school system without acquiring fundamental skills in communication, mathematics, reasoning, and the simple tasks of daily life (like following instructions or balancing a checkbook). In this respect, the public does have a consumer complaint, and it holds the schools partly responsible for the problem. That is why the polls show widespread support for minimum competency tests as a requirement for high school graduation. (Fifty percent favored such tests in 1958, 65 percent in 1976, and 82 percent in 1983.) It is a form of consumer protection.

Support for competency testing is strongest among the poor and the poorly educated. Low-income, low-

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education, and minority groups are the ones who need skills most desperately, and it is they who have been most critical of the public schools. In the 1983 Gallup survey, for example, 18 percent of whites and 28 percent of nonwhites gave their local public schools a "D" or "F" rating.

The public supports most of the recommendations made in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (although not lengthening the school day or the school year). The idea of stricter standards and more work, particularly more homework, is resoundingly endorsed. However, it should be stressed that what the public is looking for isn't "excellence" but competence. The public school system is perceived to do a fairly good job of serving the needs of the college bound, who usually benefit from a supportive home environment. The school system does not do nearly so well in serving the needs of the noncollege bound for basic skills and vocational training. That is where the public as a whole, and low-income and minority groups in particular, want action.

EDUCATION IS one area of government spending that continues to elicit a high level of public support. Almost every year since 1973, NORC has been asking people whether they think we are spending too much, too little, or not enough on "improving the nation's education system." The view that we are spending too little has regularly outweighed the view that we are spending too much by about 5 to 1 . In the 1983 *Los Angeles Times* poll, 52 percent favored more federal spending on education compared with 7 percent who wanted less. Support was slightly higher in the case of state spending on education, and people even favored more local government spending on education.

Are people willing to pay higher taxes to improve our educational system? The poll results on this question are mixed and depend to a large degree on how the question is worded. Gallup asks the following: "Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?" In 1983, as in previous years, the negative side prevailed. Possibly reflecting increased national concern over education, the margin was closer than it had been in 1981 when the vote was 60 percent to 30 percent against. The shrinking constituency for public schools makes a difference on the tax issue. Public school parents narrowly supported raising taxes, while respondents without children in public schools were strongly opposed.

The *Los Angeles Times* asked a slightly different question in 1983 and got a very different answer: "Suppose your local school district said it would have to cut its budget unless it had more money. As of today, would you vote for raising school taxes or would you vote against raising school taxes?" Fifty-four percent said "for," 40 percent said "against," almost the exact reverse of Gallup's margin. What appears to make the difference is that the *Los Angeles Times* question specified cuts in educational spending, which most people see as highly undesirable. A one-cent-a-dollar sales tax "to be used to improve our schools" was even more strongly supported, 65 percent to 31 percent.

THE POINT is that the public strongly supports spending to improve education even though it is, predictably, reluctant to endorse higher taxes. The more clearly people understand that the funds are to be used to "improve our schools," to increase support for education, or to avoid school budget cuts, the more likely they are to accept higher taxes. The vaguer the purpose ("the local public schools say they need much more money"), the more skeptical people are. The polls suggest that, in order to mobilize public support for education, including higher taxes, you have to convince people that the money will actually be used to make improvements in the public schools. Moreover, it also helps to define educational improvement as a national objective, rather than as a service to a limited local constituency. The public understands that the nation needs a better educated, more productive workforce in order to maintain economic growth and compete with foreign enterprise. When Penn + Schoen asked, "If it were clear that an improved educational system meant more jobs for Americans in the future, would you be willing to pay higher taxes to increase government support of education?" the answer was 80 percent to 16 percent yes.

If people believe that our educational problems are caused by social changes, do they think that spending more money for the public schools will completely resolve these problems? Not really. In the *Los Angeles Times* poll, only 28 percent felt that spending more money per pupil results in better education; 67 percent thought it didn't make much difference. Do people believe that "spending more money cannot solve our education problems," or do they believe that "our education problems cannot be solved without spending more money?" When offered a choice between these two statements, the *Los Angeles Times* sample was split almost evenly. The data suggest that people probably believe *both* positions: We cannot solve our educational problems without spending more money, but money will not be enough. That is not illogical. Given the magnitude of our educational problems, people seem to feel that more money is necessary, but not sufficient, to solve them. □

How the Networks Cover Education

Schools Are Not the Media's Pet

By Michael J. Robinson

FOR THE last several years, political pollsters have been telling us about the "gender gap," the ten to fifteen-point difference between men and women in their attitudes toward Ronald Reagan.

But more recently, as William Schneider documents in his article in this issue, pollsters have uncovered an even bigger "gap" in public opinion, a gap far more relevant to educators. Let's call this one the "user gap."

The user gap involves attitudes toward American education. In simplest terms, the user gap describes the significant difference in confidence toward the public school system between those (the users) who have contact with the schools through their children and those who do not.

The Gallup Poll, for the last few years, has revealed a user gap of modest proportion. And by early 1983, the Gallup survey for the nation at large found that "users" were precisely one and a half times as likely to give their local schools good grades as were "non-users."

Another recent survey conducted in New York City by the New York Alliance for the Public Schools indicates that the user gap may have now become a canyon. A full 66 percent of the users in New York — people with children in the public school system — give their local schools a grade of "A" or "B," more than forty points higher than the grade given the school system by the entire sample of New York City residents.

The user gap may represent the single most interesting finding in all the polls about confidence in the public schools. Since the midsixties, all major institutions have had to endure decreasing public esteem. But few, if any, have faced a gap in confidence as broad as that which separates users from non-users in the world of American public education.

For teachers, the user gap implies one major essay question: Why do users feel so much more confident about their schools than the rest of us? One plausible path of inquiry leads us to the media.

It makes perfectly good sense to suggest that those who lack direct contact with any institution come to "know" that institution through the media, either the news media or the entertainment media. For those who only have contact through the media, the images conveyed ought to be especially telling.

In essence, non-users are probably tied to public education more through the media system than anything else. So, if we can find that the media images presented about public education are preponderantly negative, we would have one possible explanation for the non-user gap and, of course, the user gap as well.

HOW, THEN, do the media, particularly the news media, cover American education in the eighties? To answer that question, Maura Clancey and I searched through a year's worth of network evening news programs. We chose network evening news because it is possible to take a comprehensive look at its coverage and because, according to the most recent audience

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surveys, 65 percent of the American public relies on television for "news about what's going on in the world today." We looked at detailed summaries of all the pieces dealing with teachers, public schools, and American education.

As we all know, 1983 was not a particularly good news year for education. The president's bipartisan commission report on education was released on April 26, and that report caused a gusher of bad news and bad publicity about the state of American public schools — immediately turning education into a major political issue for Reagan, for Walter Mondale, and for the rest of the presidential candidates. So as not to load the dice against the media — since the commission report and the reactions to it were newsworthy events in and of themselves — we worked backward from the report, analyzing all the network news about education that appeared in the twelve months before it was issued — April 1982 through April 25, 1983.

Still, despite the fact that we excluded the commission report and its aftermath, network news coverage of public education was overwhelmingly negative.

To be honest, network news rarely criticized or condemned the school system, at least not explicitly. But newspeople can say much without saying anything explicit. And they said a lot about education in 1982-83, especially through their news *agenda* — the *kinds* of stories they chose to report.

Although correspondents invariably provided time for both sides of a controversy, the news agenda itself in 1982-1983 was starkly one sided — almost always in the direction of controversy or failure.

To analyze the news agenda, Clancey and I turned to Vanderbilt University's index and summaries of network television news, which catalogues all evening news programs for story topic, story length (exact to the very second), correspondent covering the story, etc. We classified all the stories about elementary and secondary education into four main types: pieces dealing with educational *failures* (declining achievement scores, for example); pieces dealing with unresolved *problems* in education (teachers' strikes, etc.); pieces dealing with *problems resolved* (the settlement of a strike); and pieces dealing with educational *successes* (improving achievement scores).* We did not attempt to assess the factual bases of these reports, but examined the types of stories the media chose to cover.

The accompanying graph presents the news agenda about education as it appeared on ABC, CBS, and NBC during the twelve months prior to the release of the bipartisan commission report on education. Even if one *includes* that hefty percentage (28 percent) of news reporting that was considered ambiguous, a clear majority (56 percent) of news time (and news stories) dealt with "problems" and "failures" in American education. Excluding pieces that were too ambiguous to classify, we found almost four times as much news space devoted to "bad news" about public education as devoted to "good news."

* We also had a number of stories that we considered neutral or too ambiguous to classify. For example, stories abut an outbreak of measles among the school's children or about sending letters to the Ayatollah were classified as "ambiguous."

THE BAD news agenda existed throughout the year and on all networks, but it takes on a special dimension when one considers how the networks covered two specific topics — teachers' strikes and the release of the national SAT scores for 1982.

In a world of total press balance, one might well expect that if a teachers' strike merited one news item, then the resolution of that strike would merit something on the order of equal time. But not in American network journalism. Between April 1982 and April 1983, the network evening news programs devoted twenty-five times as much attention to teacher strikes as to the flip side of the same story — teachers going back to work (510 seconds vs. twenty seconds).

Equally revealing is the way in which the networks "covered" the release of the 1982 SAT scores in September. That set of scores should have been very newsworthy: Scores had gone up for the first time in fifteen years. But even the man-bites-dog aspect of this particular set of test scores failed to get the networks to forsake their commitment to an agenda of bad news.

CBS, the ratings leader among the networks, gave the SAT story a meager twenty seconds. Meager as it was, that twenty seconds on CBS was twenty seconds more than the story got on ABC or NBC. Despite its "novelty," what was one of the decade's happiest hard news items about American education practically got shut out on network evening news.

That CBS spent twenty seconds in September covering gains in national SAT scores ought not to suggest that CBS was less negative in its agenda. Three weeks after its initial "report," CBS chose to present another piece on SAT scores, this time about a less-than-newsworthy size failure. Few in number though they were, it seems that the children attending American military schools overseas had better SAT scores than the national sample. The message here was simple: American schools doing worse at home than American schools abroad. This story only got twenty seconds, precisely the same amount of time given the original story about gains in the entire national sample of high school students. So, the sum total of good news about board scores in 1982 — the year that scores went up — was exactly equal to the bad news about one small subsample of overseas Americans.

The good news agenda during 1982-83 included only four success stories: the brief piece on SAT scores improving; a feature story about a California teacher who had had marked success in teaching Hispanics mathematics; a story about MacDonald's having good luck at training high school kids about fast-food management; and an item about the advantages computers have brought to the schools.

As for the bad news agenda, it included one piece about evidence concerning the incompetence of school teachers; one piece about unrealistic standards harming kindergarteners; two pieces about obsolete practices in vocational education; and five pieces about illiteracy in one form or another.

And as for problems — as opposed to failures — there were nine stories dealing with teachers' strikes or union unrest; three dealing with the educational problems of minorities; three concerning book bannings or other

threats to academic freedom; two about parents who decided to pull their kids out of public school; and a mixed bag of other unresolved problems, for example, news about illiterate athletes and how they got that way, about schools made unsafe by asbestos, about schools denied funds because parents were up in arms over one problem or another.

In the last analysis, there was not one single news piece that placed the educational "establishment" in a truly favorable light. Even the success stories tended to deal only with success that came when somebody seemed to be bucking the regular educational system, succeeding almost in spite of the system.

Among the other good news items that went unreported was any historical perspective against which one might measure the current status of American education. For example, in 1950, less than half of America's young people graduated from high school. In 1977, the figure exceeded 80 percent. In 1950, less than 30 percent of black students graduated from high school; by 1977, that figure had risen to 76 percent. And during the 1970s, the public schools helped assimilate the children of 12 million immigrants — the largest wave of immigration of any decade in U.S. history. But the absence of this information from the evening news merely confirms the original point: Network journalism, like all commercial news media, follows a bad news agenda in covering education as it does in its coverage of virtually all institutions.

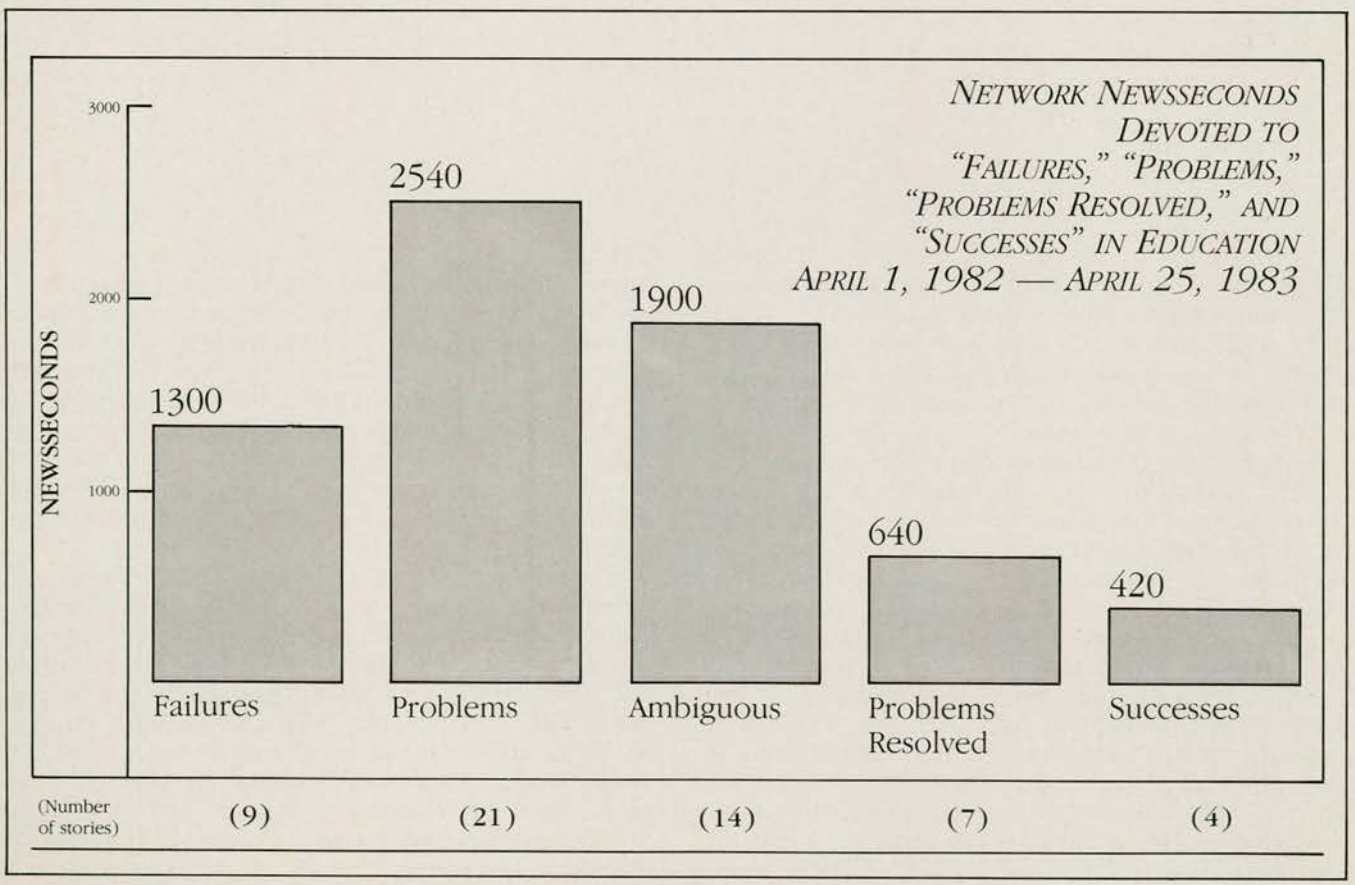
GIVEN THE messages presented through network journalism — the public's single most important source of news and information — it is less than surprising that those who hear about the schools from the media, and only from the media, will express the greatest and gravest doubts about them. So the media might well be a significant factor in explaining the user gap.

One can even decide to invoke the media to help explain how it is that public confidence in public education has continually declined for at least the last fifteen years — among users and non-users. As the news media, the networks particularly, have become more aggressive and more adversarial in tone, they may well have played a part in the public disaffection from the school system.

But the education community ought not to villify the media too loudly. To be sure, any news system that devotes twenty-five times as much programming to strikes as to their resolution deserves some criticism.

Yet, as the various reports over the last nine months have documented, there are serious problems with the public school system that can't be dismissed. Those who care about the schools ought not to shield them from criticism. And part of the user gap may be explained by the tendency on the part of those who send their kids to public schools to support their decision by insisting that the public school system deserves their confidence.

Nonetheless, it is also clear that the news media have committed themselves to hyping the bad news about education and, particularly, to ignoring the good. What is needed is full and accurate reporting of what the banner of the country's best-known newspaper describes as "all the news that's fit to print." That means the good along with the bad. □



TEACHER EXCELLENCE: TEACHERS TAKE CHARGE

Dal Lawrence Discusses the Toledo Plan

FOR MANY decades, teacher training and teacher evaluation have followed traditional models. Training typically consists of four years of college with a brief period of student teaching. Evaluation is hierarchical, with periodic assessments based on limited observations by the school principal.

With the country's attention focused on teacher quality, the conventional systems are increasingly being called into question. A number of states and localities are establishing new programs. One of the most interesting — and controversial — of the new proposals was launched in Toledo, Ohio, in 1981. Called the Toledo Plan, its emphasis is on professional development of teachers, by teachers. Probably its most unique feature is that it gives teachers the controlling voice in the establishment of teaching standards, the training and screening of new teachers, and the identification of teachers in need of intense assistance. The Toledo Plan has two components: the intern program and the intervention program. Through the intern program, all newly hired teachers are assigned for their initial teaching year to an experienced, expert teacher. These "consulting teachers" are released from their regular duties and given responsibility for both the professional development and the evaluation of the interns. The intervention program establishes a process for identifying and aiding veteran teachers who are experiencing severe difficulties with their work. Both programs are overseen by a joint labor-management Review Panel on which teachers, through their union, hold a majority of the seats.

The major concepts behind the Toledo Plan originated with Dal Lawrence, president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers. A former high school history teacher, he has been president of the Toledo local since 1967 and also serves as a member of the Executive Committee of the Ohio Federation of Teachers and as recording secretary of the Toledo Area Council of the AFL-CIO.

Mr. Lawrence was interviewed by Liz McPike, editor of the *American Educator.*

We welcome the response of our readers and hope the ideas presented will spark a lively debate.

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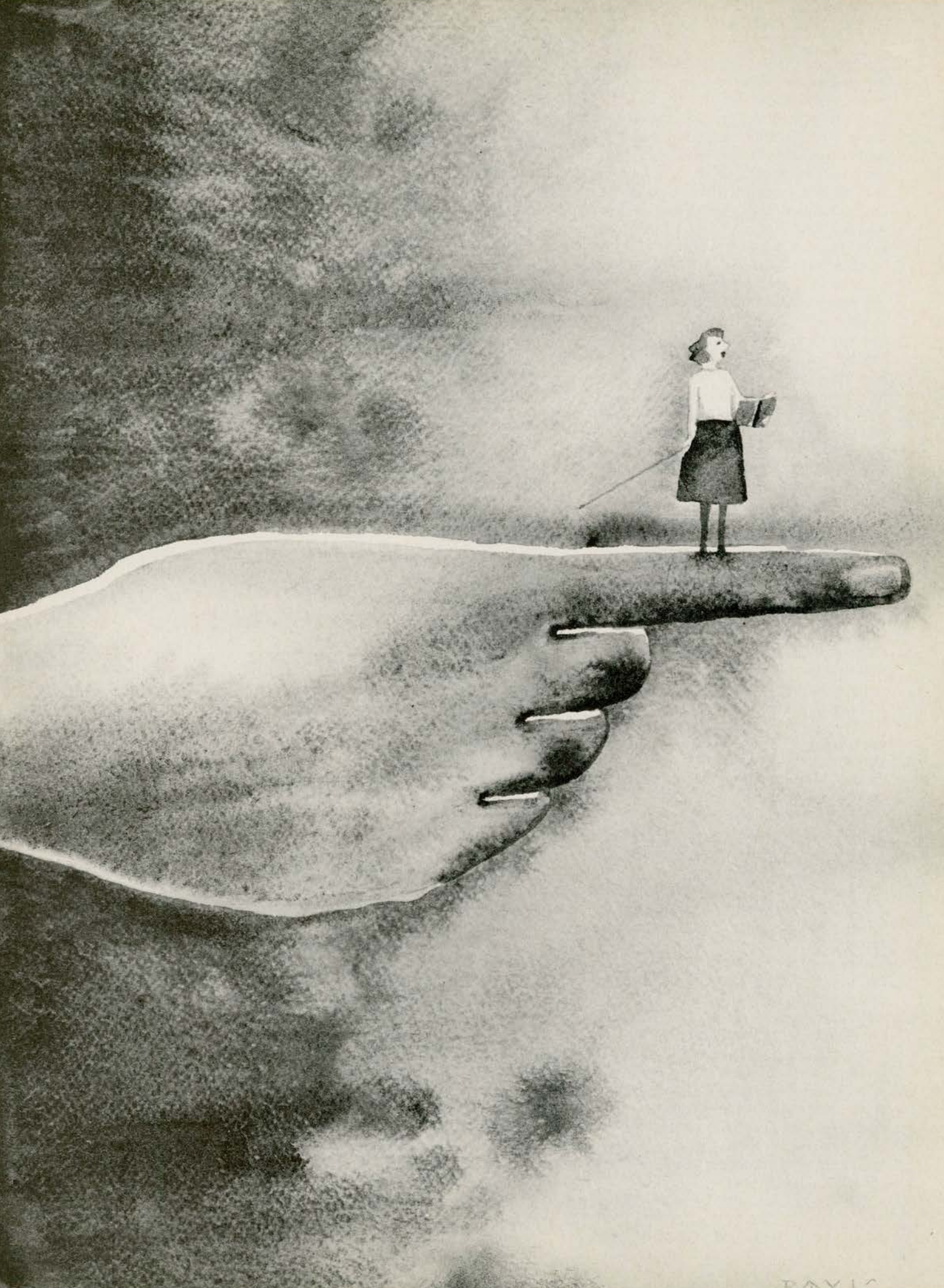

Question: *Obviously, the high quality and ability of the consulting teachers are key elements of this program. To a large degree, the success of the program rests on their shoulders. What qualities were you looking for in the consulting teachers?*

Lawrence: We were looking for several important characteristics: First of all, we wanted a good teacher. We wanted someone that other people recognized as being an outstanding teacher. We wanted someone who was good at human relations skills, good at communication. The last thing we wanted was to have a consulting teacher turn into a supervisor and be feared by the interns. We also wanted someone who could write, because consulting teachers have to write status reports, they have to write recommendations, they have to write clearly for the conferences they have with their interns, and so forth. We wanted to know how they reacted to stressful situations, to emergencies, to unforeseen circumstances. Finally, we wanted to know whether they would be able to recommend that an intern not be renewed for a second year if that's what the situation called for. That's never easy to do, but at the end of each one-year internship, we do have to grapple with that decision. The consulting teachers have to be very conscientious, thorough, and straightforward in their reports and recommendations. They have to be objective. They can't duck difficult decisions. So those are the kinds of things we looked for.

There were seventy-five applicants, and we chose fifteen people to go into a pool from which we draw to match as closely as possible the subject and grade level of both the interns and those teachers identified for the intervention program. The teachers selected went through intensive training, and we have continual in-service, consultation, and feedback. Currently, out of the fifteen consulting teachers in the pool, seven of them are working full time in the program.

Question: *Are they paid extra?*

Lawrence: They're paid $1,250 extra, plus they're paid for any supplementary contracts they might have held even though they are not doing the supplementary duty. This isn't enough but it is some recognition. As the program is now set up, consulting teachers can only serve in that role for three years; then they return to the classroom.

Question: *Let's concentrate first on the internship part of the program. Can you give us a sense of the relationship between the consulting teacher and the intern?*

Lawrence: A consulting teacher is a mentor to the new teacher. He or she is responsible for the professional development of the intern. It is a very personal and supportive approach, and it gives the new teacher a much better chance of succeeding.

A consulting teacher is assigned from seven to ten interns. If he or she is working with one or two teachers in the intervention program, there will be fewer interns assigned because we find that the intervention program takes a considerable amount of time. A consulting teacher will spend, on the average, half a day each week with each intern. If someone's having difficulty, he will receive more attention.

We've found that the areas in which the interns need the most help are classroom management and teaching technique. A considerable amount of time is spent in classroom observation, followed by extensive discussion of what worked well and what didn't. A seasoned teacher has probably experienced many of the same problems at some point in his own teaching and can spot the weak areas and offer alternative techniques. Often, interns are given the opportunity to observe other successful teachers in the field. Some consulting teachers videotape the intern and then they review the teaching process together. Teachers typically get very little feedback on their own teaching, so this is very useful.

Some interns need help with their questioning technique, others with organizing lesson plans, preparing IEPs, getting ready for a parent-teacher conference, finding out what resources are available, interpreting the results of standardized tests, and so on.

Also, new teachers are often overwhelmed by the bureaucracy, the system, the paperwork. The consulting teacher knows the system and can show the intern how to make things happen. What are the procedures for dealing with extreme discipline problems that can't be adequately handled in the classroom? What do I do when I'm out of supplies and the office says there's no money? When can I use the mimeograph machine? What if the janitor isn't cleaning the blackboards? The list is endless.

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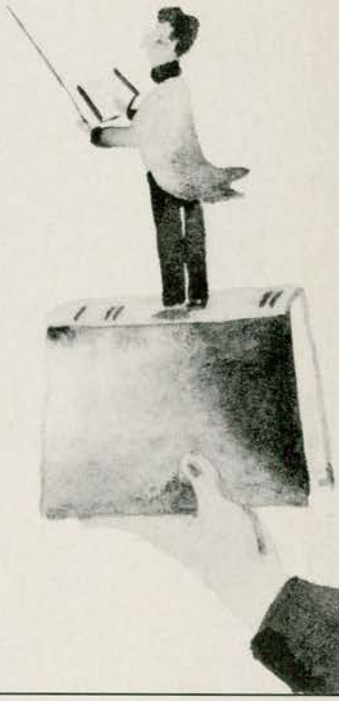

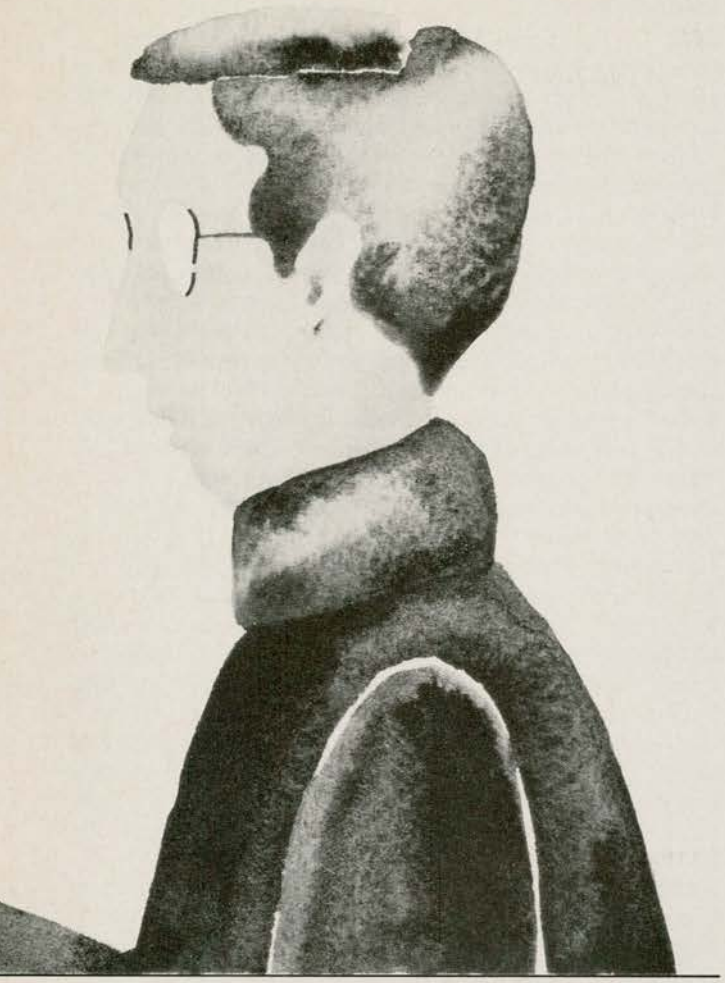

And sometimes it's just the idea of having someone there to reaffirm what they're doing, to tell them they are on the right track.

Some of the process is very formal. For example, the consulting teacher and the intern jointly establish objectives. These are always put into writing. We want to make certain the interns know exactly what they need to be working on to improve their performance. Then, twice a year, they're evaluated based on how well they are meeting those objectives.

Question: *How does this new program compare with the old system? Were new teachers pretty much in a sink-or-swim situation?*

Lawrence: Yes, always. A new teacher closed that door and, for the most part, was on her own. It was not uncommon, for example, for a teacher to begin the year without books. I had a teacher this fall who called the office and said she didn't have chairs or desks, but she did have kids. Under the traditional system, the principal would come in to observe and evaluate; there was little or no attention given to the professional development of the new teacher. If the principal got in three times during a semester, that was about the maximum. There were instances where they didn't show up at all. When I started teaching, I didn't have the principal come into my classroom at all my first year. I was called down to the office toward the end of the second semester and the principal said, "I have your evaluation here and I'd like you to look at it." I looked at it and it said "satisfactory." In fact, there wasn't anything in it that I would object to. I said, "How do you know I'm satisfactory?" And he said, "Oh, ah, ah, the kids let me know. I knew I didn't have to spend any time with you. You're doing a good job." I said, "Oh, thank you," and I left. The point is I might have been having all kinds of trouble and the same thing would have happened. He would have probably found it out from the kids. He certainly wouldn't have had enough time to help me. It was sink or swim. I was one of the lucky ones who didn't sink.

Question: *One of the major problems with the traditional system is that the principal or assistant principal does not have sufficient knowledge of the various subject matters, grade levels, and specialization areas — the old story of the ex-biology teacher trying to adequately evaluate, not to mention help, a French teacher, a math teacher, or a special education teacher. This program changes that.*

Lawrence: Yes, that's one of the major advantages of our approach. With a pool of consulting teachers to draw from, we have a great deal of ability to put a science teacher with a science teacher, an art teacher with an art teacher, an elementary teacher with an elementary teacher. That match makes a critical difference in both the quality of assistance that can be offered a new teacher and in the reliability of the evaluation.

Question: *Another perennial tension in teacher evaluation is that there is no firm consensus on what constitutes the proper standard of practice in a given teaching area. We may all be able to agree that certain methods are inappropriate, but we might not agree on what is the best or the right approach in the classroom. Given this lack of consensus, do the consulting teacher and the Review Panel make allowances for legitimate differences in teaching style?*

Lawrence: Yes, they do. We don't try to tell an intern what is the best technique. The consulting teachers know that their goal is not to make copies of themselves. We present the kinds of things that work in different situations. We do that by taking into consideration the interns' own abilities and interests, what they are doing best and what works for them. We are not, and we really stress this to the consulting teachers, here to tell an intern that this is the way you do it. We're here to present alternatives, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to help them achieve proficiency in those techniques that really do work. There are some things, as you say, that we know won't work. You always see them in beginners, and they are very easily corrected. But so far as presenting a particular lesson, there is no magic, "right" way. We don't pretend there is, and we don't force people into a predetermined mold.

Question: *At the end of the internship, the Review Panel votes on whether to recommend the intern for a second year of teaching, is that right?*

Lawrence: Yes. We would have been receiving periodic reports from the consulting teachers throughout the year, all of which are gone over with careful scrutiny by the Review Panel. The consulting teachers have to justify what they are doing. We pepper them with questions, and there is a lot of back-and-forth discussion. We know that the intern isn't going to be

perfect at the end of the year. But we have a definite set of criteria and standards that was developed jointly by the union and management and that we are continually refining.

The Review Panel is composed of five union and four management representatives. I wanted it to be all teacher representatives, but the administration didn't think that was the greatest idea in the world. So we agreed to a joint panel, but with teachers retaining the majority. We operate on a two-thirds-vote rule. No decision is made unless six of the nine members agree.

In the first year of the program, we had nineteen interns. We voted to recommend seventeen for renewal. Last year we had forty-five interns and voted to renew all except one. So, out of sixty-four new teachers over the two-year period, we recommended that three of them have their contracts non-renewed. You might be interested in how this compares to previous years: In the five years before the implementation of our program, only one new teacher had been terminated.

Question: *Now that teachers — through the union — are overseeing the development and evaluation of prospective entrants to the profession, aren't you moving toward a redefinition of the role of the principal?*

Lawrence: Yes, thank God, I think we finally are. And it's high time we did. During the intern year, the principal has only a very minimal role. He maintains a record of the intern's attendance and other noninstructional matters, but the development of the new teacher is in the hands of experienced colleagues. That's the way it should be. Principals don't teach school. And teachers, I should add, don't file reports with the state education department. You need good, competent people in both roles. We should stop this nonsense about a person who doesn't teach school being the instructional leader.

At the beginning of the program, the principals hated it, naturally. They felt they had lost a lot of power and influence. You know, it took us eight years at the bargaining table to win this. We first put the idea of an intern program in our bargaining package in 1973. We argued and argued and the principals fought and fought and we didn't get it. It was one of the last things we pulled off the table, and we were right back at it in 1975 and continuing right up until 1981, when management finally agreed to give it a try. Now, after two years of the program, I would say 90 percent of the principals are supportive because we've demonstrated that the process works.

Question: *Let's move now to a discussion of the intervention program. This is an excerpt from the official description: "Intervention is designed to bring direct, concentrated assistance from a consulting teacher to a teacher experiencing severe problems in the classroom. These problems might include, but not be limited to, classroom management, teaching techniques, emotional instability, or stress." Could you elaborate on that?*

Lawrence: Intervention is only intended for someone who has had a problem for a considerable period of time. By that I mean not just a couple of months but a year of problems or ten years of problems, during which time they have gone without help. They have developed a lot of bad habits. Parents are complaining, the teachers in the building are complaining. Their deficiencies are generally known throughout the staff if not the entire community. Those are the types of people who will be identified and recommended for the intervention program.

Question: *What is life like for a teacher who is having such problems, whose professional life is in turmoil?*

Lawrence: Their lives and their reactions are just like anyone else whose life is not successful, whether they are teaching school or trying to sell a product or whether it is an engineer whose bridge just fell down. They are very unhappy people. They are frustrated, and many times they are cynical and bitter. As a defense mechanism, they often make scapegoats of everyone and everything. Before we initiated this program, severely troubled teachers just lived with the problem. They couldn't hide it. You can't hide those kinds of problems in a school setting. But they would live with it. They lived with it very unhappily, very frustrated. There was no help. There was no place they could go to get help.

Question: *Because to get help was also to place yourself in trouble?*

Lawrence: That's right. If you go to the principal and say, "I need help," you're asking for trouble, and they knew that. The other interesting point is that their colleagues many times wouldn't give them help because they didn't feel it was their responsibility and because the situation was often so bad, they didn't have the time to give the kind of intense assistance that was needed. In very severe cases, it is typical for the other teachers in the building to say, "Well that's just the way he is," or, "I wish she'd quit, I hope I don't get her kids next year," that sort of attitude. Now we hear comments that it's a shame we didn't have this program five or ten years ago, that if we did, such and such a teacher could have been saved.

Question: *What happens during a typical intervention process?*

Lawrence: The interventions are really, really tough, and they're exhausting for all parties involved. You pour yourself into it and then little things begin to happen. Some improvements are shown, and the tension begins to ease. We can now identify the stages of a typical intervention. The intern consulting teacher goes in with the teacher in trouble and there's hostility: I've been identified, I'm not this bad, I'm afraid. There is a breaking-in period, in which the consulting teacher is establishing rapport with the person in trouble. It takes a while. At first, you don't get very much accomplished other than trying to build confidence and trust. Once you get over that hurdle, which takes about a month, you get into the phase of identifying the problems, trying to isolate those problems, and also building confidence in the person based on what they're doing right, because no one does everything wrong. And so you're building in a positive kind of way and isolating the things that are causing problems and offering suggestions about how to improve those techniques while giving the person ideas that they may have missed somewhere along the line.

In almost all of the intervention cases, the teacher has one teaching method only, which he uses over and over again. It isn't working, and he doesn't know where to go next. He's afraid to try anything different. So you begin to introduce new techniques, new procedures. You

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take one at a time. You do a good job at that, then take another one. You do a good job at that. This phase might last several months depending on the individual and how longstanding the bad habits are. And then, the good part is when the person finally begins to succeed with some new technique, some new approach. You can see him begin to smile for the first time, maybe, in ten years. You can see him saying to himself: "Gee, that does work, and I can do that." Self-confidence, missing for so long, begins to return. And the kids begin to respond in different ways to the teacher. At that stage, the rapport between the consulting teacher and the person in trouble is usually very solid. A very close professional bond develops.

I should add that there is no limit to the duration of the intervention process. There is no hastiness. We have some interventions that are in their second year.

Question: *To date, what have been the outcomes of the intervention program?*

Lawrence: We have had twenty-four people identified for intervention. Four of those are now out of the program, doing acceptable work on their own again. We were successful in obtaining disability retirement for a couple of people. Another individual wanted to leave the teaching division and move into the nonteaching division. We arranged that transfer, and that person is much happier than he was in the classroom. One person, who was on a one-year contract, was terminated. Fifteen teachers are still in the program.

Question: *At the end of the intervention process, does the Review Panel make any recommendation concerning the status of the teacher who has been in the program?*

Lawrence: No, and neither does the consulting teacher. This is very different from the procedure followed in the intern program in which the Review Panel makes a formal recommendation. In the intervention program, the union's involvement is almost exclusively in terms of participating in the decision to place the teacher in the program. Unlike the intern program, the Review Panel does not play a part in the status reports or get involved in other details. When the consulting teacher determines that the intervention process is completed, he prepares a report detailing the work that has taken place. If the administration, at that point or any point, decides to initiate termination proceedings against the teacher, and if that teacher requests representation, the union treats the situation like it would any other grievance. We would not be in the position of having put our imprimatur on the status reports. So if there's a good case to be made, we would be able to arbitrate the dismissal.

Question: *But the union is intimately involved in the decision to place the teacher in intervention, which means, as you've said, identifying that teacher as someone who is having serious problems. And as I understand it, once the decision is made, the teacher has no choice but to enter the program or face possible charges of insubordination. As you know, the union's involvement in this kind of peer review is a controversial idea. In the intern program, the Review Panel — with the union in the majority — actually makes a recommendation as to whether a first-year teacher will be renewed. And in the intervention part, the*

union is party to the decision to place a teacher in the program. Do you see a conflict of roles here for the union?

Lawrence: The intervention component is obviously more controversial than the intern idea where we are dealing with probationary teachers who are not yet full-fledged members of the profession and who traditionally do not have the same rights as tenured teachers. There are other examples in the labor movement — for instance, the apprenticeship programs run by the building trades unions — in which the union is involved in the training and evaluation of new people.

The intervention program is much more in the development stage. We went into it with our eyes open knowing that there were going to be things that had to be changed as we learned and worked our way through some of these problems. We are not presenting any of this as the best that can happen, but we are learning as we go, taking it one step at a time.

You first have to recognize that being identified for intervention is not synonymous with having your job placed in jeopardy. Our goal, our first responsibility, is to improve the performance of that person so that the individual is not in jeopardy, so that his or her job is not in jeopardy. Without doubt, we are saving the careers of some teachers, because if their performance continued to deteriorate and discharge proceedings were brought by management, we could lose a lot of those cases if they went to arbitration.

We are doing everything we can to see that there are safeguards against hasty or unfair treatment. For example, let's say a principal wants to place a teacher in the program. If the union committee does not think that's an appropriate program for that teacher, it can veto the principal's recommendation. And it has been our practice that before a decision is made to place a teacher in intervention, there must be a unanimous, confidential vote of the union building committee at that teacher's school. That committee of teachers is elected annually by the other teachers in the school, so it is very cautious about going out on a limb. It knows it has to maintain the confidence and the trust of that teaching staff. In addition, before the building committee is empowered to even consider the case, there is a review of the situation at the level of my office. Finally, to afford as much due-process protection to the teacher as possible, we are now looking into the establishment of an appeal process through an independent, neutral third party. As we envision it, any teacher who feels he or she was erroneously or unfairly identified for intervention could have a review by this third party to determine if the identification was warranted.

I don't have all the answers, but if there are further points of conflict or tension that we haven't yet faced, we are determined to work them out so that we can keep teachers rather than administrators in charge of setting standards for the profession. I don't see any unresolvable conflict between this program and the responsibility of the union to protect people against unfair treatment or unfair dismissals.

Question: *I know from looking at your contract that the Toledo Federation of Teachers has been quite successful in its attempts to put teachers in charge of professional decisions. For example, teachers serve on*

'The key factor in building a quality system is to place professional decisions in the hands of the teachers themselves.'

all committees related to curriculum, testing, and staff development. The committee that oversees in-service training is composed exclusively of teachers. Teachers elect their own department chairpersons, and monthly meetings are required between the union and the administration "to discuss matters of educational policy." Do you see this new program as one more step in that direction?

Lawrence: Yes, that's our goal. The first thing we did in this school district, in our first contract, was to do everything possible to get control of inservice training. We've been building from that point ever since. We've used the bargaining process to build a real profession and to establish those conditions that make quality teaching possible: smaller class size, preparation time, training and assistance, salaries that will attract good people, and so forth. The key factor in building a quality system is to place professional decisions in the hands of the teachers themselves. Historically, every profession has exercised control over who is deemed acceptable to enter its ranks.

Through our involvement in this program, teachers stand now more than ever at the center of the professional endeavor. We are involving large numbers of teachers — the consulting teachers, the interns, the teachers experiencing serious difficulties, the union building committees — in examining, refining, and overseeing the standards of teaching practice. I think that's an important role for the union to play.

We would like to place other professional decisions in the hands of teachers. I want to get away from the idea that the teacher is a hired hand who shows up and there's the class of kids — someone else has made all the decisions, and sometimes made them badly, without adequate information. That's not acceptable for two reasons: First, the educational output has not been satisfactory under these conditions, and secondly, no one can behave like a responsible professional unless he is given responsibility. I would like teachers everywhere to draft the class lists like we do in Toledo. I would like to see placement determination decisions made by teachers. I would like to see teachers take the lead in the discussion of what can be done next year at their schools to improve the instructional program as a result of what they learned this year. We can only accomplish these things through collective bargaining: That's our tool. Nothing is going to be handed to us on a silver platter.

Question: *What has been the reaction of the public to this program?*

Lawrence: Very positive. The parents are enthusiastic. They are curious. They like it. The press has been enthusiastic. The teachers themselves are taking pride in the program. There's no doubt that this is contributing to heightened public confidence in the schools. Toledo, like many other urban school systems around the country, had its share of problems during the 70s: a declining industrial base, a serious recession, a shortage of funds, two school closings. Morale was very low. We were forced to go on strike in 1970 and 1978.

Now the system is on its way back to sound health. We even passed a large operating levy recently. It's a constant uphill battle. You absolutely must have a public school system that works and one that parents perceive as working. Otherwise, they're going to put their kids in private schools. Then you add the idea of tuition tax credits, which is nothing less than paying people to leave the public school system, and we can see how important it is to convince the public of the excellence of our schools. I think our program can have a dramatic impact on public opinion. Certainly the public is going to be listening and appreciative if the teaching profession itself makes it clear that we take seriously the responsibility for high standards for new teachers and for improving the performance of those teachers with serious problems.

Question: *As you know, a number of other school districts and AFT local unions around the country have expressed interest in the Toledo Plan. What advice do you have for those who might be considering the establishment of something similar in their areas? What conditions are necessary to make such a program successful?*

Lawrence: First — I guess this goes without saying — there must be widespread support from the membership. We first posed the idea of an intern program to our members in 1973, and the response was 5 to 1 in favor.

Second, the union must be very strong. It must have the trust and confidence of its members. It must have a solid contract that firmly protects the rights of teachers. It must be effective at the school level, with an active union committee at every school site. And, of course, this program cannot exist in the middle of a jurisdictional dispute with the NEA. The teaching force must be unified.

As for the administration, they have to be willing to admit that the traditional system hasn't been working well. They have to be willing to change the existing relationships, to give up some of their power, to give teachers more responsibility. They have to re-think their attitudes toward evaluation and agree that evaluation must be tied to a strong professional development system.

I should also caution people to make sure they are protected against any *Yeshiva*-type legal decisions. Collective bargaining laws should be reviewed to ensure that consulting teachers will not be excluded from the bargaining unit and that the assumption of these new responsibilities will not in any way jeopardize the union's status as collective bargaining agent.

Question: *One last question: The union's emphasis in these two new programs is on excellence in the teaching profession. What about excellence among principals? Shouldn't there be a similar program for them?*

Lawrence: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, this school district is now very close to putting in place an intervention program for school principals. Principals are not appointed by God as perfect and forever will remain perfect. They have to learn their role, and they need help and support in doing what they do the same as teachers need help and support. Some of them need to be taken out of the school business. The way we have gone about appointing and policing the managers of our schools doesn't make any sense. Everybody can agree that we need good, competent principals, supervisory personnel, and curriculum people. But we have to redefine the parameters of those jobs. □

THE TEACHER'S PREDICAMENT

By Gerald Grant

With Urmila Acharya, Sharon Franz, Richard Hawkins, Wendy Kohli, and Madhu Suri Prakash

THE WITHDRAWAL of talent from teaching is one of the most disturbing signs that we face a crisis in education. In fact, there may be no more persuasive evidence of the depth of the problem. If even mediocre college graduates continue to sneer at teaching and if teachers continue to abandon the classroom at current rates, all talk of educational improvement or reform will be meaningless. The teacher glut of the early 1970s has already turned into a significant shortage of qualified teachers in many cities.

A third to a half of all teachers say they would not enter teaching if they could begin again. Many have already withdrawn: The number of teachers with twenty or more years of experience has fallen by nearly half in the last fifteen years. Perhaps most disturbing are the statistics on the declining intellectual ability of those who intend to teach.

The drainage out of teaching has been the result of a variety of factors, not least of which is the success of the feminist movement in lifting the professional horizons for women who in earlier eras would not have looked beyond the helping professions of teaching, nursing, and social work. And at the high school level many teachers have been drawn upward for better paying and less onerous jobs in the community colleges. But the deteriorating conditions in some schools and the loss of a reasonable authority teachers need to do their job in most schools are also crucial to understanding the causes of the exodus. In this essay we examine the nature of the teacher's authority in relation to contemporary realities that affect most teachers.

TEACHING HAS never been easy. Like a parent, one can never be fully prepared for the demands of teaching, and like a parent, one is bound to fail when one's efforts are measured against lofty aims. Individuals

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ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT RAPKIN

of extraordinary talent have been crushed in the schoolroom.

The stresses of teaching are endemic conflicts that grow out of the universal requirements of the task: to establish the minimum order necessary that education may take place, to gain the trust of pupils, to motivate and engage the students with the subject in ways that ensure that they will learn.

In classroom observations, in interviews, and, most revealingly, in the diaries that a few conscientious teachers kept for us, some conflicts and dissatisfactions seem to be universal themes of teaching: Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the emotional demands and needs of children.

An almost constant theme is the guilt teachers feel over the failure to meet the intellectual needs of all children. Diaries are filled with references of teachers being brought up short by students they know they failed to serve or to reach. Teachers in their private musings are also torn with conflicts between the way they would prefer to teach and the demands of prescribed curricula. A teacher put her lesson plan aside after she walked into a class one morning to find that a boy's dry-cell battery had overflowed and spilled acid on his desk during the night. The class spent the morning researching the topic to find out what could have caused this, how dangerous the acid might be, what words such as "corrosive" meant, and so on. Students went to the library, called parents, consulted science texts, and the like. This is the way that teacher prefers to teach but in her diary she worried that she may have "wasted" a day that should have been spent preparing slower children in the class for competency tests: "How do you assure that all kids get their skills taught in all areas?" And even for experienced teachers, the task of establishing a good working environment requires relentless vigilance. Teachers are vulnerable to emotional kamikaze attacks and aware of the ability of even one student to upset a whole class.

WHILE THE tensions discussed above are eternal dilemmas of teaching, what is new is the crushingly disproportionate balance between getting and giving. Expectations, complaints, even lawsuits, have multiplied while rewards have diminished. The root of much of the teachers' current dissatisfaction lies in being charged with increased responsibility while suffering a loss of authority.

The authority that teachers need is backed by power at some point — the power to expel a student, for example — but should not be confused with force. Authority rests on the legitimate consent of those who willingly render obedience to another in order to accomplish some worthwhile end. As Hannah Arendt has put it, authority is an obedience in which men and women retain their freedom. In the case of the teacher, that end is the development of educated persons who are capable of critical reflection. Hence, teachers have a special responsibility not to abuse authority. The teacher's task is to create an orderly context for learning and to win obedience in such a way that externally imposed constraints eventually become freely chosen internal disciplines.

Now, in order to show how the teacher's authority

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has diminished, we want to explain how it is derived. Essentially, we shall argue that the teacher's authority is both individual and social, that is, it is both personally earned and socially conferred. What has happened is that the socially conferred or institutionally organized sources of authority have been undermined, placing too great a burden on teachers, who must individually earn a personal badge of authority. The net result of such a state of affairs is what has been popularly termed *burnout.*

ONE OF the most important sources of authority is derived from the general social esteem accorded to any role. Teachers have never been near the top in any ranking in comparison with professions such as medicine or law, which can be more selective at entry because the rewards at exit are more exalted. Yet there are many signs of a decline in the status of teachers in recent decades.

Perhaps the clearest sign of the drop in status is recorded by the Gallup polls, which, over the years, have asked parents whether they would like to have a child take up a teaching career in the public schools. In 1969, 75 percent of all American parents said they would be pleased if a child became a teacher; this dropped to 67 percent in 1972 and to 48 percent in 1980.

It is interesting to speculate on this loss of parental regard for teaching as a worthy occupation. No doubt their opinion was influenced both by an awareness of other options for daughters and reports of increased violence in schools. But it is likely that something else was also at work here. While the pedestal may never have been very high, teachers until recent decades have enjoyed a general respect. One might occasionally run across a mean or embittered teacher, but most were generally presumed to be decent if not altruistic. Although the halo of authority dimmed for many in public roles in the 1960s and 1970s, teachers came in for special criticism. A wave of best-selling books, like John Holt's *Why Children Fail,* James Herndon's *The Way It 'Sposed To Be,* and Jonathan Kozol's *Death At an Early Age: The Destruction of the Minds and Hearts of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools,* portrayed teachers as insensitive, often authoritarian, and even racist. Neo-Marxist and revisionists' interpretations of schools, such as Colin Greer's *The Great School Legend,* suggested that a high percentage of classroom failure was necessary to the functioning of the American system. Teachers were seen as the agents of a capitalist society in which the intent all along was to ensure that a good share of the student body fails in order to provide a steady supply for the laboring class so others can be marked for power and success. Charles Silberman referred to this line of argument in his *Crisis In the Classroom* when he argued, "Schools fail less because of maliciousness than because of mindlessness."

While Silberman had more empathy for teachers, he frequently portrayed schools as joyless places in which teachers were educators for "docility." In civil rights demonstrations and in struggles for community control of public schools, blacks began to speak of teachers as oppressors, which came to be accepted at face value by some writers in the mass media. Some scholarly literature, such as Ray Rist's widely cited article in the *Harvard Educational Review,* "Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education," lent support to these charges. Rist concluded that primary teachers in a ghetto school placed children in reading groups on the basis of how they smelled and looked rather than on evidence of their ability. He suggested that students were first classified on social grounds, with the poorest children given the worst teaching, thus ensuring that tests later confirmed the biased initial assignments. We do not question Rist's integrity, but it is often forgotten that his article described only a few teachers in one school. The more popular studies by Kozol, Holt, and others also drew on limited anecdotal evidence of prejudiced teachers. Yet their portraits were accepted as standing for the whole.

Now we have careful studies that contradict those views. For example, Emile Haller and Sharon Davis found, in their study of thirty-seven elementary teachers in upstate New York, that teachers' perceptions of their students' families backgrounds do not influence their curricular placements. A study of teacher-student interaction patterns in twelve mainstreamed classrooms by Ray Thompson and colleagues showed that teachers were fair in their responses to handicapped, high-achieving, and low-achieving students. Rodney Clifton found that teachers based their expectations of pupils on intellectual ability and previous performance rather than the pupil's ethnic traits or ascribed status. Two black researchers, Jean V. Carew of Stanford and Sara Lawrence Lightfoot of Harvard, spent a year of careful observation in two racially integrated urban schools. They found little evidence that teachers practiced racial or sexual discrimination. On the contrary, they saw teachers who worked hard and seemed to derive satisfaction from helping children learn and grow and who adapted their behavior to each child's abilities and needs. They saw teachers who rejected stereotyped judgments about children and who disputed estimates of mental ability that had been assigned to children.

This concurs with our own observations in thirty-three schools. While a few teachers are marked by deep prejudice and some are embittered, most are decent and compassionate, if ordinary, persons. Certainly, the teacher's loss of esteem in America cannot be wholly or even largely blamed on the romantic writers or neo-Marxist critics of the recent past, but it can be said that a great libel was committed.

ANOTHER MAJOR source of social authority is derived from the teacher's role as a moral agent representing the community. As Willard Waller put it in his classic study, "The teacher had a special position as a paid agent of cultural diffusion ... and the teacher's position in the community is much affected by the fact that he is supposed to represent those ideals for which the schools serve as repositories."

But teachers can no longer depend on that consensus. In what was for many years a bible of classroom management, W. C. Bagley addressed the young teacher who wanted to know what to do when she had lost control of her class:

There is no explicit formula that will cover each specific case, but one general suggestion may be given: *Get order.* Drop everything else, if necessary, until order is secured. Stretch your authority to the breaking point if you do nothing else. . . . Remember that your success in your life work depends upon your success in this one feature of that work more thoroughly than it depends upon anything else. You have the law back of you, you have intelligent public sentiment back of you.

Many teachers no longer feel that either the law or parents are behind them. The law often seems to teachers to be used to reflect the distrust of their judgment or intentions, to be a weapon for disciplining them rather than students. Where the law once upheld the teacher's right to exercise reasonable corporal punishment, they now may be threatened with a suit for child abuse or with dismissal. One of the advantages of the method we adopted in our study was that we were often present in schools at critical moments and our repeated visits to five schools where we spent a year observing classes established a rapport with faculty that led to their speaking candidly and spontaneously with us. At Clydesdale High School, one of the teachers we were supposed to interview, who had a reputation for being one of the best teachers in the school, explained he had to cancel the appointment because a teacher had been suspended for striking a student:

I don't know whether you know about it, but a very serious thing has happened — a teacher has been suspended for protecting himself from a student and if he's dismissed, it will be the last straw — teachers, as a group, will have given away everything! As it is we have very few ways of asserting our authority over students. And now when students get to know that we can be chucked for something like this, that will be it. I'm not for hitting students. In fact, I'm very against it but that power should be given legitimately to a teacher in case he judges a certain situation as meriting a physical response. I know the teacher — he's a music teacher — and he's a wonderful person. He's a gentle soul. You know, he is like one of those people who fifty years ago would have made an ideal father — his notions of discipline and care for children are exactly like those held by parents of fifty years ago. And so, he didn't mean any harm to the kid. The kid had been giving him trouble for months now, and he didn't mean any harm but when the kid rose against him, he protected himself. And for that he has been suspended.

The incident touched a raw nerve with many teachers in the school and not a teacher agreed with the suspension. This comment was typical of many: "For God's sakes, what is happening to the world when a teacher is suspended for defending himself? Teachers aren't supposed to have any authority any more over disciplinary matters. . . . Teachers are really unhappy — they're insecure because they don't know how they can discipline students next without putting their jobs in jeopardy."

SOME OF the examples we encountered were so bizarre that they almost warrant a charge of persecution. A female teacher in one of the elementary schools in our field study was notified that she was being investigated for sexist attitudes. Since her colleagues saw no evidence of them, they were flabbergasted. Later it turned out that an employee of the local Human Rights Council, who had requested to use a stranger's telephone after a minor auto accident in the vicinity of the school, fell into conversation about school matters while waiting for aid to arrive. When the local resident learned of the Human Rights employee's interest in discrimination on the grounds of sex, she said her child had told her that her third-grade teacher had used a preponderance of male examples in a recent spelling test. This was the basis for a formal charge of sexism, with two notifications to the principal before the true basis of the complaint was revealed. In the end it was found to be false, both in regard to the particular test and with respect to the general pattern of the teacher's interaction. However, it was highly upsetting to the teacher, as was the language of the complaint which alleged that "some parents" had charged a teacher with sexist practices. One can argue that the schools are simply going through a period of adjustment to a new set of justifiable mandates and of course that is true. The fecklessness of many administrators in their overresponsiveness to some complaints, as in this case, also worsens the situation. But even if one agrees with the long-term aims of new policies, one cannot help but be concerned about such abuses. This incident was widely talked about by teachers in the school and helped to shape a new climate of opinion and to shift the teachers' perception of the authority with which they can act.

We did not have many opportunities to observe interaction between teachers and parents and had to rely on reports from teachers. Teachers feel that parents are much less supportive, that parents are too quick to tell teachers what they may not do and seldom suggest they stand behind the teacher. The most frequent refrain one hears from teachers on the subject of parent relations is to long for the day when the father or mother told the teacher that they can be sure that if a child needs a whipping in school he will get another when he reaches home. We suspect there is more than nostalgia in this. Teachers report widespread rebuffs in trying to win parental cooperation on disciplinary matters, sometimes encountering difficulty even in making contact with parents. One elementary teacher who had sent notes home to be signed by parents, asking for greater efforts to see that the child reached school on time, was told by the father to "stop sending these notes that upset my child just because you have a middle-class hangup about time." A high school teacher who worked out careful contracts with students who were severely below grade level, which she wanted parents as well as students to sign, was told by one parent that she was "fascistic." However, these climates vary greatly from school to school, and poll data show that the great majority of parents want to keep in touch with teachers and want to be consulted about the progress of their children. What has changed in the aggregate is that parents as a whole may now be more educated relative to teachers and they are likely to be more critical of a teacher's performance. As the decline in teaching talent becomes more evident, parents are dismayed and increasingly vocal about it.

THE QUALITY of recruits into teaching fell not only for the reasons we have enumerated here but as a result of the extraordinary expansion of the high schools that occurred with the postwar baby boom in the 1960s. In one decade, the number of high school teachers nearly doubled from 575,000 to about one million.

Some of these new teachers were influenced by the

'Some of the examples we encountered were so bizarre that they almost warrant a charge of persecution.'

radical battles on the campuses in the 1960s and 1970s and were disposed to question established authority. They shared to some degree the notion that competition was immoral and that hierarchies of any kind were to be avoided. If they did not quite want to establish a participatory democracy with students, they were reluctant to assume the usual disciplinarian role, or to cooperate with other staff in maintaining the established code, sometimes with good reason. Naturally, this introduced a new note of uncertainty within schools. For the third source of the teacher's authority is derived from the generalized set of expectations and norms within the school. The authority of any one teacher in the school is affected by the consensus or lack of it achieved by teachers in that setting. Can a teacher who approaches a student causing a disturbance in the hall expect to be backed up by others? Do other teachers in the school assign homework regularly and expect it to be turned in the next day? Or does a *laissez-faire* attitude exist? Do teachers in general tell students they owe it to each other to do their homework as an ethical obligation? In his study of twelve London comprehensive high schools, Michael Rutter found it made a great difference whether new teachers were aware that older teachers were checking up on them and were concerned that they were abiding by school norms with respect to such matters as homework policies.

Rutter and his colleagues also found that schools did better when the staff shared standards on disciplinary matters. When asked what the school's response would be to common disciplinary problems such as stealing or cutting classes, teachers in some schools gave very different answers. In others, there was wide consensus among old and young teachers and between teachers and administrators about what would be done. Both the discipline and test scores were better in the latter. In his most recent research, James Coleman also showed that students did better where minimum homework policies were established for the whole school rather than being left to the responsibility of individual teachers.

FINALLY, THE social authority of the teacher is also derived from the general status of adults in the society. As Glenn Gray has written, "It was Aristotle who pointed out with the simplicity of genius that education is a process of age instructing youth." But the relative statuses of children and adults have been thrown into considerable cultural confusion in the last two decades, and teachers can no longer assume much deference on the basis of age.

What we have argued thus far is that under the best conditions, the teacher's role is precarious. Teachers must establish control, motivate, and ensure that even their involuntary clients actually learn. They must insist that these students do often difficult and sometimes boring tasks without being able to offer them the usual rewards of pay or to employ the sanctions of firing as applied to most adult organizations. Teachers are drained by the emotional demands of their pupils and are troubled by their inability to meet the intellectual needs of all students. The authority teachers need to do their work is both individual and social. The social sources of authority have eroded. Teachers have suf-

fered a loss of social esteem and status; they are now more uncertainly buttressed by the law; parents are more critical, demanding, and divided; it has become more difficult to establish a generalized set of expectations and shared norms within schools that support the individual teacher in his efforts to maintain control and to inspire students.

WHEN SOCIAL authority weakens, the burden of establishing authority then rests more on the individual teacher. The response to this on the part of many is to leave, or to wish that they could.

In our own field work, we found that, with the social supports undermined, teachers who did not give up were forced to draw on their personal reserves. They tried to win students over by the force of personality, personal attraction, or friendship. In this sense, public schools sometimes became unwitting free schools, that is, teachers were forced to rely on forms of authority that were embraced by the radicals who formed alternative schools in the 1960s to escape what they felt was a rigid and stultifying authority of the public school. The irony is that a whole generation of reformers closely associated with those schools now lament the loss of authority. One's personal coinage is soon used up and the theme of exhaustion is heard again and again. A decade after his indictment of public schools in *How Children Fail,* John Holt asked why free-school teachers who had "taught for years in conventional schools without getting exhausted, saying all the time how they hated the narrowness, the rigidity, the very discipline, were now worn out." He compared these teachers to a waiter trying to please a rich customer who found fault with every dish, that is, teachers were trying to please children who no longer had to accept what teachers offered. Holt concluded, "It is not a proper task or a right relationship. It is not a fit position for an adult to be in. We have no more business being entertainers than being cops. Both positions are ignoble. In both we lose our right adult authority."

One of the most careful sociological studies was carried out by Ann Swidler, who spent a year at two free schools in California. She found that teachers were likely to invoke intimacy or appeal to friendship when they needed student cooperation. Teachers engaged in "self-revelation, pleas and reminiscenses designed to gain sympathy by exposing the teacher's vulnerability." But these personal appeals did not always succeed. On the contrary, she found that teachers were wounded when they threw themselves on students' mercy and were rebuffed. Ironically, although students preached an ideology of equality with teachers, when they themselves were given responsibility to decide matters, students showed that they believed "they should be disciplined by the teachers, made to show respect for elders." The end result was again exhaustion. Teachers lasted only a year or two, complaining that "the school was consuming their whole lives." Swidler found that teachers felt they were under constant pressure to maintain a personal mystique:

> This fact meant that it was in their interest to be unpredictable, exotic, and complicated. At the same time, many of the teachers' needs were very prosaic. They wanted students to do the ordinary, unexciting, routine things, like attend class, participate in school activities, and occasionally do assignments. Teachers then found themselves in the dilemma of yielding prestige only by encouraging the unusual or exciting, while depleting their scarce reserves of influence when they worked hard to get students to do precisely those unexciting things that make a teacher's life easier.

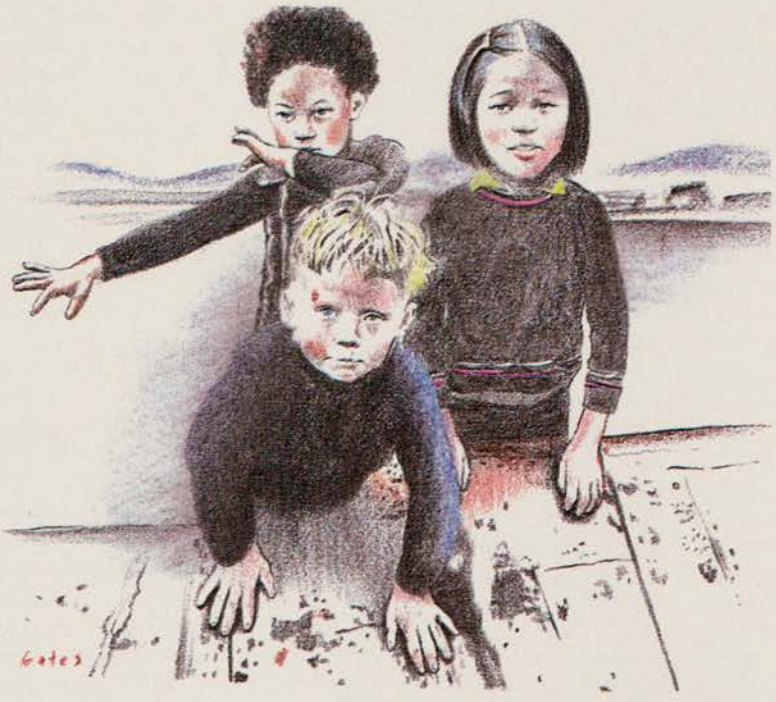
THE RELATIONSHIP between the individual and the social sources of authority is complex. A school or a society that relies primarily on individual sources of authority will produce a generation of burned-out and withdrawn teachers. On the other hand, if we depend too heavily on the glue of social or institutionalized authority, schools may become too rigid or authoritarian. A balance is needed, and the defect in one source produces a strain in the other. In the current situation, there is a further complexity to consider, which brings us back to the problem we raised in the beginning: namely, the withdrawal of talent from teaching. The erosion of the social bases of authority has meant that schools are less pleasant places to teach and to work, and no one is more aware of the fact than students currently sitting in high school classrooms. Hence, patterns of recruitment are affected, and those high school graduates who might otherwise be drawn to teaching turn away from it. Second, those conditions affect the decisions of newly employed teachers who are debating whether to quit or to stick it out after suffering their first rebuffs. And the evidence is that the best are leaving. Finally, it is important to note that college graduates with teaching certificates have absorbed in formal training perhaps only half of what they need to know in order to become good teachers. Most of the other half is learned on the job. And the school with a good ethos — which is another way of talking about the social bases of authority — not only attracts good teachers, it plays a significant role in making good teachers out of those who arrive with good intentions but few skills. Those schools with good norms and shared expectations for pupils are also good places for young teachers to learn their craft.

And such schools exist. They are schools in which principals have the courage to ask difficult questions and to engage teachers in dialogue about the real problems, which means listening to teachers rather than telling them how to solve problems. They are schools with a sense of mission and pride that grows out of pulling together on those tasks that everyone realizes he or she has a stake in.

While leadership is important, the quality of the teaching staff is critical. We are at a turning point in American education. As William Schneider's article elsewhere in this issue indicates, the public expresses increased willingness to provide additional tax support if it will result in genuine improvements. Proposals to restructure the teaching profession and to place it on a more attractive financial base are now being advanced in several states. The chance to attract and retain highly competent teachers has never been better.

Awareness of the problems associated with the erosion of social authority is also increasing. As that awareness grows, sympathy for teachers increases. That sympathy creates new ground for the discussion of reforms to strengthen the hands of teachers to do the work that society wants them to do. □

CHILDREN OF WAR



ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD GATES

BY ROGER ROSENBLATT

In September 1981, Roger Rosenblatt — writer, teacher, and editor — began a forty-thousand-mile journey to the war zones of the world to talk to the children who are growing up in these ravaged places, to ask them what they are thinking. He visited homes, hospitals, schools, and refugee camps and listened not only to the children but also to their parents, teachers, and counselors. He recorded his findings in a remarkable little book entitled Children of War.

"THE IDEA for taking this journey," the author recalls, "first occurred to me one night in the spring of 1981 when I was struck with a peculiar and obvious fact. There are places in the world like Northern Ireland, Israel, Lebanon, Cambodia, and Viet Nam that have been at war for the past twenty years or more. Therefore, the children living in these places have known nothing but war in their experience. The elements of war — explosions, destructions, dismemberments, eruptions, noises, fires, death, separation, torture, grief — which ought to be extraordinary and temporary for any life, are for these children normal and constant. Everything they understand, they have learned in an atmosphere of wildness and danger. Everything they feel and sense occurs in a situation where their lives may be ruined any moment.

"Who are these children? What and how do they think about the world? What opinions do they hold of their parents, of adults in general, of each other? What does friendship mean to them? Honor, loyalty? How sophisticated is their understanding of politics? Do they believe in rules, in governments, in God? Who is their God? And so forth, the questions peeling off one after another as I began to see that if the answer to the first question was that these are very special children, indeed, then in the process of seeking them out, one would almost be searching a separate civilization, one that showed the external marks of children everywhere, but one that also, because of its fierce circumstances, bore a resemblance to no other. It turned out that this was so. By the end of the journey I was certain that if it were possible to airlift Trinh and all the children I had met from their various war zones and plunk them down in a neutral place, they would recognize each other immediately."

Mr. Rosenblatt's portrait of the strength and dignity of these young people has been described as "offering in these bleakest of times a singular kind of hope." In the excerpt that follows, he reflects upon two common strains that cut across the differences in circumstance and nationality and bind the "children of war" together — the absence of revenge and the belief in God.

THE THEME these children shared was that of revenge. When in Belfast, Joseph turned to Paul and urged the spirit of revenge on his friend, he was striking that theme, which was to crop up within each country on the journey. For Joseph the course of revenge was clear, in one direction. For Paul, Bernadette and Elizabeth it seemed equally clear in the opposite direction, as it did for Keith and Heather. Elizabeth did not sound helpless when asked if she sought vengeance for the killings in her family. Her answer, "Against whom?" dismissed the idea outright.

In the north of Israel, Hadara's reaction to the idea of vengeance was conciliation, and Nimrod's "What good is this revenge?" indicated a real conviction in him. Dror shared that conviction. Like Joseph, the two teenage girls in Qiryat Shemona tended the other way, as did Waffa, the Palestinian girl in Ramallah whose father had been thrown in jail. But in another part of the West Bank, the girl Hania, who was shot in the leg by Israeli soldiers, declared: "I would not shoot them. Even if I had had a gun at the time, I could not." Her friend Nabil, angry as he was, expressed the same feelings. Even among the Palestinian children in Lebanon, where the ideal of revenge took on a mythic size, the actual war whoops came from the grown-ups, whereas for children like Jamila, Mona and Boutros the idea was subsumed and mollified in talk of historical destiny and historical justice. Ahmed never mentioned the word revenge. Lara had it spoken for her.

BUT FOR the great majority of the children seen so far, it was revenge that stood for hell, and they would have none of it. Here, then, was a consensus, but an odd one. If the guiding presence of adults is as important to children as it is said to be, why were not these particular children moved toward the vengeance the grown-ups promoted? How could they resist it? In terms of their own behavior the institution of revenge ought to make good sense to these children, for all the familiar reasons of standing up for one's rights, of not allowing oneself to be stepped on continually, of pride and honor and so forth. To be sure, they would be told in school and church that vengeance is the Lord's, but in the ordinary practice of their lives, it should seem fairly natural to seek redress for the wrongs done them. If revenge is not exactly sweet, it should at least hold a certain demonstrable satisfaction. Yet they forbore.

The remarkable thing is that this forbearance occurred in atmospheres where the idea of revenge would seem to be peculiarly fitting. Francis Bacon called revenge "a kind of wild justice," by which one assumes he meant that it takes the place of tame and ordinary justice. Thus the idea of revenge stands out as especially savage and stupid in places where established systems of justice, courts and the like, remain intact. But in war zones, where few such systems prevail, and where all hell breaking loose is the order of the day, what could be more appropriate and normal than wild justice? In short, the adults who urged the spirit of revenge on the children not only had rudimentary logic on their side, but the visible circumstances of the world as well. If a child could not pick up the idea of an eye for an eye under such conditions, he must be uneducable.

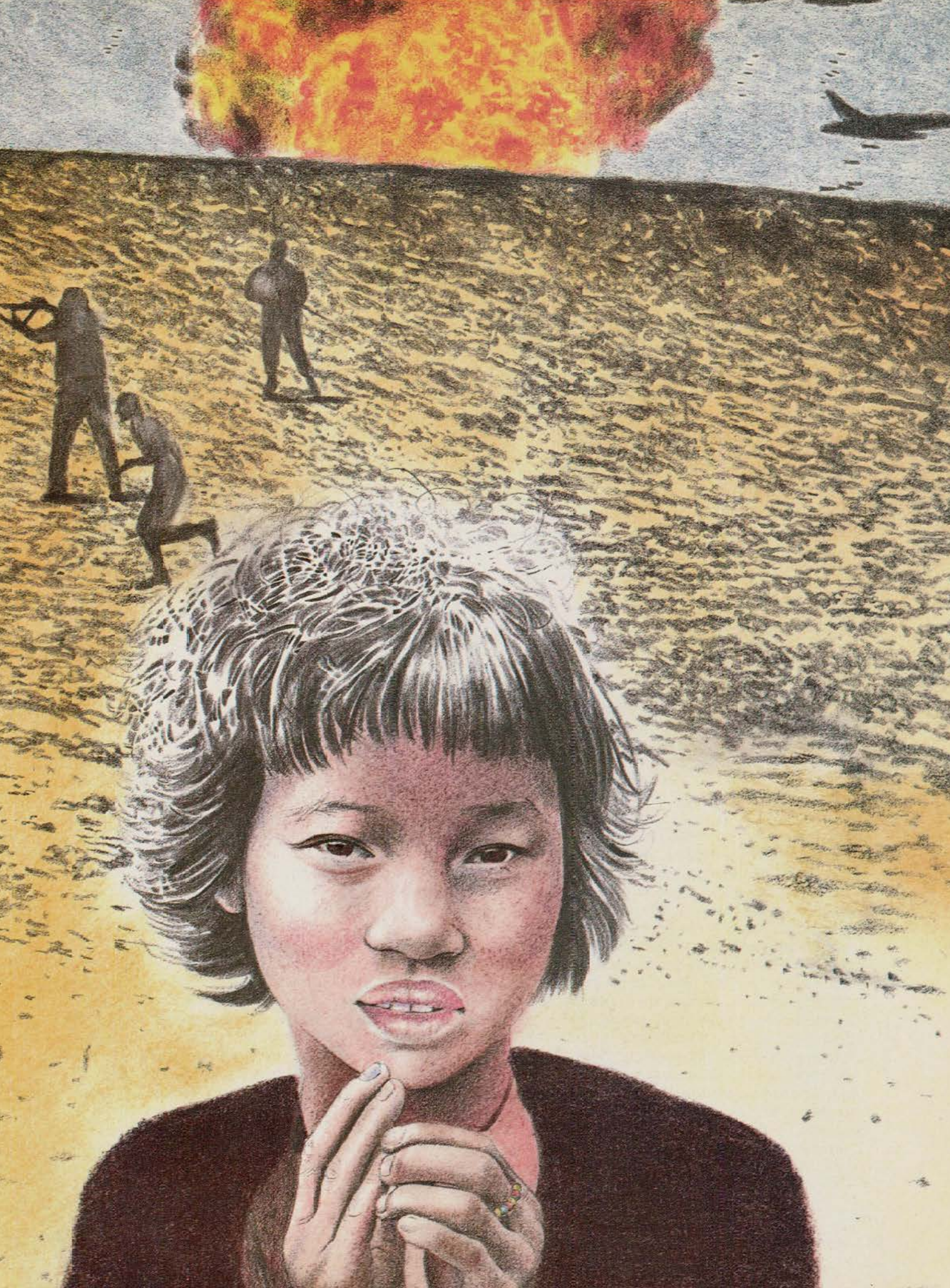
If the essence of revenge resides in the imagination, it would seem all the more likely for the kids to embrace the idea. All children take to fantasies, and these were no different. The Irish girls had their romantic novels, the Israeli children enjoyed a popular series of adventure books akin to the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries, and the children I met everywhere devoured the usual ration of cartoon and comic book supermen. One might think that the fantasy of revenge cooperated so nicely with the realities of the children's daily experiences, it would be impossible to turn down. They did so nonetheless. They did so actively, despite the pressures from above and all the natural temptations of their lives.

AT THE same time, the idea of revenge did not seem to be replaced with the idea of forgiveness. Psychologists sometimes note that forgiveness is itself a form of revenge, since the heaping of virtue upon the head of one's enemy is bound to bring him low. One keeps one's vice and expels it too. Yet as most people will attest, there is such a thing as genuine unalloyed forgiveness in the world. Nor is it necessary to be a saint to feel it. If nothing else, the act of forgiving those who trespass against us provides a holiday from petty anxieties and is therefore a practical decision, little different from relieving a headache.

These children, on the other hand, did not forgive their enemies, or at least they gave no such sign. Rather, the absence of a desire for vengeance in them seemed to be just that, an absence. Both Nimrod and Hania expressed their opposition to revenge solely in the negative. They replaced revenge with nothing, nor did they or any of the others suggest any moral framework whatever in which their enemies ought properly to be regarded, beyond specific criticisms for specific wrongs: "They took our land." Why did they not react more vividly to the murderousness around them? Passive resistance? Possibly. Yet their resistance, if this is what it was, did not seem passive, but based on other grounds.

If this attitude of theirs was evident to someone like me, making a fast-moving inquiry, surely it must have been obvious to the grown-ups who live with these children all the time. Did they feel at all frustrated by the lack of a vengeful spirit displayed by their young, or did they simply treat this absence as one would other absences in children, as gaps to be filled by careful and steady instruction? "They are so young," said Colonel Azmi, "but they are so proud." I pictured life at home at the Azmis, the dinner table catechisms in which Samer's performances improved by the week. Azmi was no fool. Whatever he might say about the pride of youth, he must have seen the silliness of trying to burn vengeance into his four-year-old son. Yet he persisted, perhaps feeling that it was only a matter of time before the words became dogma, before Samer would at last understand that his ritual could be applied to life. "My son will carry my gun," said Azmi. Certainly he had history on his side.

IF ALL this were so, if in fact the children in the war zones did not take naturally to the idea of revenge and had to be coaxed to it by their elders, was it possible that revenge is purely an adult invention? I was not thinking about the daydreams of revenge, which, being as childish as Orwell called them, fill children's minds



readily and all the time. But the facts of revenge, the actual plottings, the planning of attacks, the bombings and beheadings — they are way beyond the scope of children. Of course, this may be explained away as merely a matter of power. Yet the children I was speaking with did not abjure revenge because they could not achieve it but because it seemed to hold no attractiveness for them. Adults, on the other hand, spoke quite well of it. Children grow up. At what point in their growing up did revenge become attractive to them, and for what reasons?

It was not, after all, as if the penalties for taking revenge were ever obscured. All around them in Northern Ireland, Israel and Lebanon children could see plainly the consequences of striking back. If there was a core to the appeal of taking revenge, it could not be anything rational.

The more one thought of it, the more preposterous it became. Revenge was destructive to the personality, corrosive to one's morals, utterly useless as a political weapon; therefore, it was promoted. Since at some moment in their maturing lives the children adopted this bad idea as their own, they did so in spite of its patent absurdity. Perhaps it was a question of tradition, a way of honoring history by keeping up the old customs. Or perhaps, and this is what seemed dismaying, they adopted the idea of revenge simply because it was a sure sign of adulthood, because, unreasonable and debilitating though it may be, the exercise of vengeance offered concrete proof that they were at last entitled to the world of men.

Revenge could thus be thought of as a family gift, an heirloom passed down the generations. In order for a child to grow up in these war zones, he must be prepared to assume this mark of continuity. Before then he would have to be shown how grown-up an idea it was, and this by example, an example set by his parents railing against their enemies in his presence, the ex-

TRINH

THE LAST child I spoke with was Trinh, though she did not see me at first, and I, at first, did not address her. I was preoccupied with the priest, and she with Hong Kong Island. Standing quietly by herself on a corner of the pontoon, she stared open-mouthed across the blue harbor at the silver office buildings pressed tight against Victoria Peak in whose windows the sun seemed to burn. There were no such astonishing towers in Haiphong, the home Trinh left thirty-five days earlier with her mother, her brothers and sisters, and the priest. In all there had been fifty-one aboard, most of them belonging to the Catholic community of Haiphong. Although they had been stowed in holds intended for fish and the junk had nearly sunk three times, theirs had not been a harrowing voyage, as these voyages go. Trinh showed none of the scars of other boat children, no boils or bald patches. Indeed, she looked so alert and rested, you would have thought she had come to greet the junk, instead of having sailed on it.

. . . Then with Nhon's help I called to Trinh. In an effort to put her at ease, I told her how lovely she looked in her yellow barrette. At that she turned to me, her face suddenly drained of the enthralled expression it bore a few moments earlier. Slowly her eyes filled with large, bulb-shaped tears. "She is self-conscious," Nhon explained. My blunder. Rapidly I tried to recoup.

"Trinh," I asked. "Why are you crying?"

The girl looked away. "I am crying for my father who is home in Viet Nam."

When Trinh started to cry, so did Nhon. Nhon had left his young wife and three-year-old son behind when he fled Saigon. When Nhon started to cry, so did Matthew. When Matthew started to cry, so did I. To that point I had not cried once on the trip, nor had I ever felt the urge to do so, in spite of seeing and hearing things that might justify tears. Compared with the sorrow of most of the other children I met, Trinh's was minor. Nonetheless, there were the four of us, crying noiselessly and steadily on a blue playful morning in Hong Kong Harbor for perhaps half a minute. I cannot say why. □

ample of their sputtering fury at their own impotence, their checked desires to cut down all, and the sons and the granddaughters of all who ever did their people injury.

A PICTURE was beginning to come clear here, one that had started dimly to take shape in Belfast and which had grown steadily sharper in each country as I went eastward. I began to realize that most of the children in the war zones patronized their parents. Gently and with much solicitude, they did so. I believed that they tolerated things in their parents, like the idea of revenge, which they did not accept in the abstract or for themselves, and that they did so either because they loved their parents, which they truly did, and this acceptance was a way of showing it, or because they had small choice in the matter. To some extent, children always patronize their parents as a means of survival. A grown-up rants irrationally; a child grows very still. But war has a way of elevating our irrationalities to magnificent heights. It occurred to me that the children recognized this madness, feared it, and felt superior to it all at once. In short, they loved their parents, but they did not believe in them.

THEY DID however, believe in God. And they believed quite strongly. This was another common strain among the children. What in fact they must have seen in their parents' howling for vengeance was essentially a rage against God, since revenge always implies that God's justice is too slow and circuitous. If God could be counted on to knock off the Taigs, Prods, Jews and Arabs, then human bloodletting would be unnecessary. Since God was unreliable in this regard, grown-ups would have to do the work for Him. It was another way of saying that the adults were of little faith, or at any rate that their faith was modified to suit their needs.

But the faith of the children seemed abiding and boundless. I don't know why this surprised me, since faith is often intensified in dangerous situations, yet the attitudes of these children seemed to transcend immediate causes. When Bernadette and Elizabeth declared their trust in God in spite of everything falling down around them, they did not sound as if they had gone through any arduous process of reaffirmation but rather that they accepted, willingly and easily, the mystery of God as it is. "At first," Elizabeth said, "I couldn't understand why this was all happenin' to us." Then she dismissed the question, not as profane but beside the point.

So too Ahmed, responding to the same question about the endurance of his faith after the car bombing, said, "God does His work, man his." He was assured, convinced. Even Hadara's poem challenging the beneficence of God gained its strength from the fact that the girl was going through spiritual turmoil in the open. Fleeing God, she gave every sign she would wind up succumbing.

Presumably, the initial sources of this faith were the families of the children. If the elders did not by their own example promote belief in God, they undoubtedly did so like families anywhere, through custom and habit. A good Catholic, Moslem, Protestant or Jew was supposed to believe in God, and so would his children. Besides, God could always be outfitted for battle, as in the IRA murals in Belfast with Jesus portrayed as a hunger striker. The parents did not have to really believe. If they had lost their faith, or if they recognized in themselves the attitudes and behavior that made their faith seem hypocritical, then perhaps they urged faith on their children out of feelings of guilt. Either way, their children would be growing up in nominally religious homes, with the proper tracts on the walls and the appropriate ceremonies observed even though the wolves might be on both sides of the door.

STILL, ONE sensed that the source of their faith was not parental but rather something generated by themselves for themselves. They did not say so. They simply seemed to take for granted the vast chasm between the world of experience and the world of faith, between reason and belief, as if the mystery of God only achieved its power in proportion to its distance from cause-and-effect arguments. God does His work, man his. This decision to believe had to take an enormous act of will, because the reality of God, much less the benevolence of God, could hardly be proved by the explosive life around them. It is as if the children understood that above everything else God required this decision to believe in Him without rational bases. Having made that decision, they could accept anything, including their own irrational surroundings.

Whatever the individual sources of their faith, it was their sincerity that bound these children to one another. Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Moslems, they each seemed to feel some personal tie to God, a special guardianship. It struck me that on this journey I would be coming in contact with practically all the major religions of the world, and that there might be vast differences of spiritual context when the subject of faith came up. Yet when these children spoke of their particular God, one did not see the God of the Moslems or of the Jews or of the Irish Catholics hovering over certain designated neighborhoods of Belfast. Rather, there emerged the image of a single, comprehensive God for children in these particular straits, a God of the children of war, whose constituency had needs and fears like none other, offered prayers like none other, whose emergencies and doubts were theirs alone.

Was this special deity the source of the tone they shared as well? Was the occasion of which they showed a sense that of their own piety? It was quite possible, I thought, that all the children would be seeing the same God. They were seeing the same world, fundamentally, the same wounds and cruelty. They were hearing the same political speeches. They were being given the same rationales, the same calls to arms. They were used for the same things and cherished for the same purposes, and when their friends and parents were shot to death, they would be standing over the same graves with the same heads bowed toward the same fresh earth. Why would they not look to the same heaven, then? Where else was there to look? And looking, who else would they envisage but the particular God who could sit beside their particular hearts and tell them what no other elder would: that it was all right not to hate? □

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE MIND

Computers in the World of 1985

BY LANE JENNINGS

WE HUMAN beings often feel uncomfortable when confronted with anything whose size, appearance, or behavior is radically different from our own. The stars and planets awe us by their sheer scale; the behavior of subatomic particles confounds our notions of reasonableness; and we tend to classify animals as endearing or frightful based on how well they approximate human looks and motivation. Thus, monkeys and penguins are immediately appealing, but it takes a more adventurous spirit to admire a spider, and only recently have we come to feel kinship with the whale.

The same is true of machines. We may come to feel real affection for hand tools that seem, both by their convenient size and easy-to-recognize function, to be extensions of our own bodies. Farm implements, musical instruments, even weapons can be loved and treasured. But large, noisy, ugly, or confusingly complex machines alarm us. We may admit the utility of a concrete mixer or a dynamo, but few of us choose to spend any more time around them than is absolutely necessary.

The notable exception to this generalization is the case of transportation machines — boats, airplanes, trains, and, above all, motor vehicles of all descriptions. These we can love and often do. Though they are big enough to swallow us whole, may be loud and dirty, temperamental and even downright dangerous to operate, we somehow identify with them, endow them with personalities, give them names, and feel a sense of kinship that goes deeper than mere pride of possession. They may belong to us, but in another sense we belong to them — and are proud of it.

Computers have always been numbered among the great unloved and unlovable machines. When they first appeared, they were room-sized number crunchers — laborious to build and operate, exasperating to maintain or repair, useful only for performing abstract mathematical calculations, and impossible to relax around. Despite nearly four decades of rapid and dramatic changes, computers remain outside the realm of the familiar and the friendly for most of us. At best, they are tools or toys; at worst, they are threats or tyrants. We may reluctantly admit that we need them to handle the crushing burden of repetitive action and minute but significant detail that makes up so much of modern industrial civilization, but we resent and fear their inhuman speed, their relentless logic, and the limitations their designs have often placed on human freedoms of choice and action.

But I believe this situation is about to change. Computers are entering our lives in ways that make them nonthreatening, human-scale extenders of our individual knowledge and abilities. On the one hand, they are becoming instruments we can master and modify to suit our personal tastes and needs; on the other, they are losing their separate identity, becoming part of the environment — like central heating, plumbing, and the telephone.

Reviewing a few specific examples of computer applications already here or available soon (within the next

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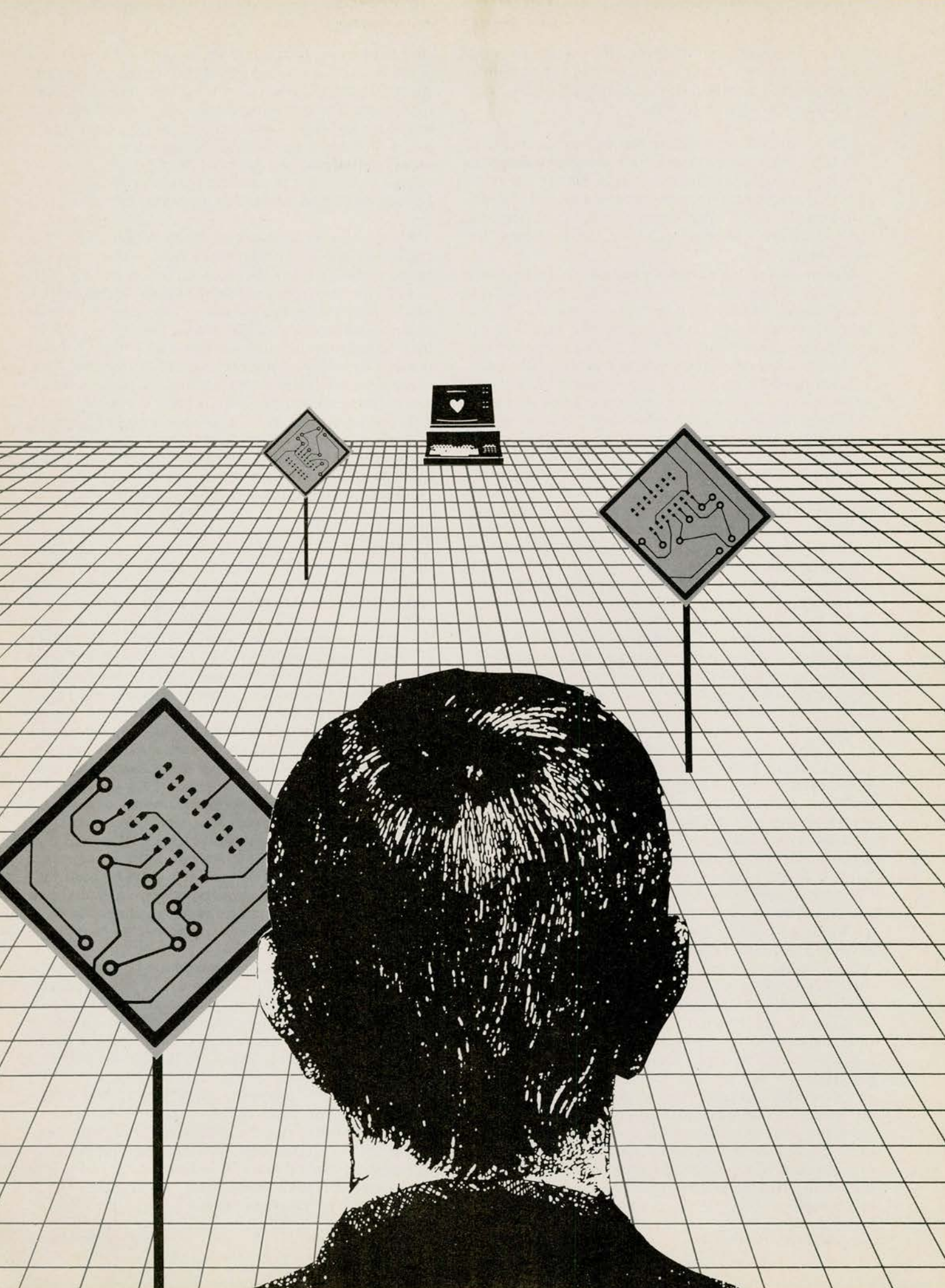


twelve to eighteen months) may be enough to show how interdependent trends in technology and human values promise to make the world of 1985 a better one — for humans *and* machines.

ADVANCES IN computer technology go hand in hand with advances in communication. These include not only improvements in how people use computers to communicate with one another, but also improvements in the way human beings communicate with computers themselves. Take the keyboard, for example.

Most personal computers today look something like a television sitting on top of a typewriter. You give the computer its instructions by typing code words and special function keys on the typewriter part, and the results appear as lines of print or graphic images on the TV screen. This can be very easy and efficient for someone with good typing skills, but for many others, the keyboard is a real barrier to feeling comfortable with the computer. Fortunately, other, more flexible modes of computer control and response are at hand. Here are some examples:

- *Touch Screen Controls.* Several new computers feature video monitors equipped with sensors that are able to detect and precisely locate any object that touches or comes close to the monitor screen. When a user switches the computer on, small pictures or "icons" appear on the screen. Each icon symbolically represents a different task the computer can perform. By touching the appropriate icon with a finger, pencil, or other object, a user can "command" the computer to carry out any desired operation. For example, the touch-screen icons for word-processing tasks might include: a pen-point (write), a pencil-top eraser (delete a word or phrase), a file cabinet (save and store), a waste basket (delete entire file), etc.

Using touch screens should help nonreaders (including children) to use computers more easily and could also eliminate many problems of translation by substituting easily recognizable icons for language-specific word commands. But care must be taken to assure that each icon is as unambiguous as possible. The icon of an upraised arm with palm facing forward, for example, might mean either "stop" or "enter" depending on the cultural background of the viewer.

- *The Joystick.* This device, named for the control stick used by pilots of small aircraft, consists of a short stick or handle able to rotate freely in a base. Moving the joystick in any direction will cause a flashing dot called a "cursor" to move in the corresponding direction across the computer's monitor screen. Pressing a button on or beside the joystick instructs the cursor to attach itself to an image on the screen. This image can then be moved or controlled in various ways by using the joystick. One especially creative application of joystick control is a program devised by Will Harvey, a California high school student, to compose and play music on a home computer. Called Music Construction Set or MCS, Harvey's program uses the joystick to pick up notes and other musical symbols from a "stockpile" at the bottom of the screen, move them into position, and then "paste them down" on a staff to form melodies and chords of up to six voices. To play the resulting music, the user simply moves the cursor over to rest on the icon of a piano located at one corner of the screen and presses the joystick button. While other programs are available for making music on computers, MCS is one of the most attractive and ingenious. It exemplifies the kind of programs most likely to become popular because it is "simple" (easy to learn and operate), "hot" (it appeals to the senses as well as the intellect), and "deep" (versatile enough to remain interesting no matter how often it is used).
- *The Mouse.* This device looks something like a cigarette pack on wheels. When held in the hand and rolled across a flat surface in any direction, its long "tail" (an electric cord plugged into the computer) translates this movement to the cursor on the screen. One or more buttons on top of the mouse (its "eyes") can be used to instruct the cursor to "pick up," "drop," "paste down," "draw lines," and perform other functions. One company now offers a text-editing program in which mouse movement replaces complex keyboard codes. This not only simplifies the job of cutting and pasting text when revising an article or letter, it also makes use of the editor's physical dexterity to enliven a task that is otherwise mentally taxing but offers no physical involvement except that of typing.

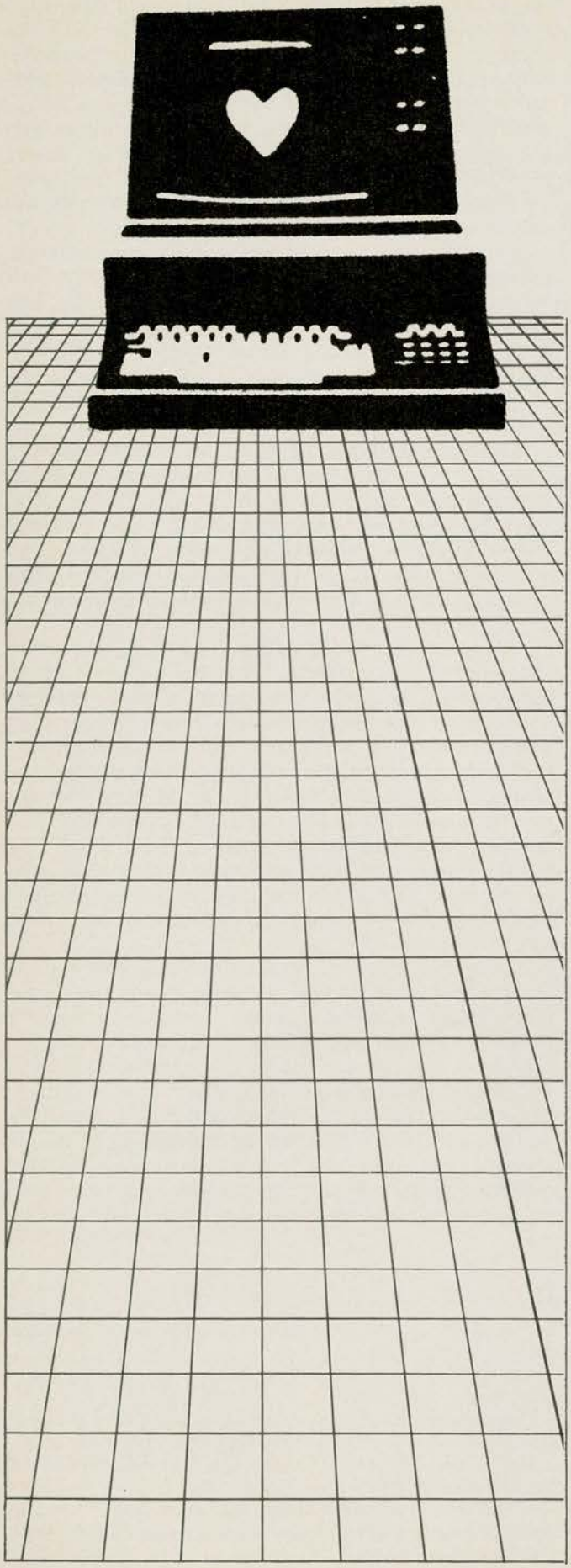
PERHAPS THE most dramatic break from traditional methods of human/computer interaction has been the development of devices that enable computers to translate human speech sounds into digital instructions and produce sounds that humans can recognize and respond to. Success at voice synthesis has already produced talking vending machines and elevators, cars that audibly remind you to check your oil or fasten your seatbelt, pocket calculators and clocks that speak their minds, even bilingual pocket translators and vocal toys.

Speech recognition technology has progressed more slowly, although already it is widely used by computers that automatically check credit card numbers over the telephone for gas stations and other businesses. But voice processing is about to become far cheaper and more reliable. Medical Communications Company recently announced a device that enables even small personal or "home" computers to understand 25,000 spoken words — about 60 percent of the average person's vocabulary. Such devices may soon be built into information kiosks in airports, shopping malls, and other public places to offer directions, announce sales and prices, or report on upcoming events in reply to spoken inquiries.

Milton Bradley is about to introduce a baseball game for home computers that makes use of voice recognition. Before you start to play, you assign names to every player on a team. Then, by calling out the name of the second baseman, for example, you can watch the figure on the screen scramble to catch a line drive, or dive to tag a runner out.

Already here is a system called "Waldo" that allows you to check the status of lights, thermostats, security alarms, and other electrical devices throughout your home by voice command. You can even phone your questions in when you are away from home, and Waldo will respond to each query with a spoken answer.

Being able to converse with a computer instead of



typing in commands and reading replies may well be the decisive breakthrough that makes these machines acceptable to humans as colleagues and companions rather than slaves — or tyrants.

YET THE computers we see and use ourselves account for only a fraction of the impact computers have on our lives. Although the number of small computer owners is expected to grow from today's total of around five million to more than twenty-six million by 1986, the computers we deal with but do not see or recognize as computers will become even more important to us.

Engineers and designers have been able to reduce the size of computer circuits so dramatically that it is becoming possible to put computer "brains" into objects of all kinds. In the kitchen, new "smart" models of microwave ovens, ranges, refrigerators, and other familiar appliances have built into them the computer guidance necessary to remember, execute, monitor, and automatically adjust complex sequences of operations. Some can even provide spoken status reports on meals in preparation. Look for many other smart tools and appliances in the near future.

A computer package no larger than a paperback book is now being used in some new cars to monitor distance and time traveled, quantities of fuel consumed and miles per gallon at current speed, and distance remaining to a pre-set destination. Dashboard displays offered as options for certain 1984 Buick and Lincoln models feature a touch-sensitive computer screen that displays operating information on the car's condition and can summon up information on local weather and road conditions as well.

A computerized automobile guidance system is now being sold by Honda to its customers in Japan, and a U.S. version is scheduled to appear early in 1985. A computer built into the car displays an area road map on a dashboard video monitor. As sensors in the wheels record the vehicle's speed and direction, this information is reflected in the movement of a flashing dot that pinpoints the car's location on the map. As the vehicle approaches its destination, the scale of the map increases from overland routes to show city streets. The system can also be used to calculate time and distance comparisons for alternative routes.

Computer chips as tiny as a pinhead can be placed practically anywhere. Worn as jewelry or implanted under the skin, such microchips are already being used to control sensors that monitor chemical balance in the blood and provide warning of health dangers. Teledyne Avionics Corporation markets a wrist alarm for diabetics that can detect hypoglycemic episodes even during sleep and alert the wearer in time to take proper action. Drug firms in Britain, Japan, and the United States are working to develop an automatic insulin pump guided by a microchip sensor implanted beneath the skin that will constantly monitor blood sugar levels and release minute quantities of insulin whenever necessary, without the need for daily injections.

Further advances along these lines may soon produce a wide range of computerized health maintenance devices that will make it possible for individuals to keep track of their own physical condition far more effective-

ly than can be done today. Personal health profiles, compiled over months of routine monitoring, can establish individual norms with great precision, make people aware of the effect of different foods, substances, and lifestyles on their own body chemistry, and could avoid much of traditional medicine by detecting potentially serious problems early enough to make preventive rather than remedial measures practical.

MANY PEOPLE'S image of the future is still based on the idea of machines as slaves or servants to human beings. But like slave owners in past civilizations, today's "machine masters" live in awe of the power they command and fear the possibility that someday the tables may be turned. Nowhere is this more evident than in people's attitude toward the computer — and particularly the computer-controlled mechanical worker or "robot."

Several companies already offer robots for the home. But most of these are really little more than large toys on wheels. They will come when called, carry light weights placed carefully on them, avoid obstacles as they move through a room, and some even automatically search the walls for electric outlets to plug into when their power supply is running low. But as yet none of them can perform major housekeeping chores such as setting the table for dinner or vacuuming a rug.

Some of the most exciting developments in robot technology today are coming from the Robotic Aid Project at Stanford University. Stanford's robots are designed specifically to help people with extreme physical handicaps, such as multiple amputees and paralysis victims, achieve self-sufficiency. Enhancement, not replacement, of human skill is the guiding philosophy behind the Stanford robots. Instead of reducing the human role to a mere oversight function, the Stanford team is trying to design systems that capitalize on interaction between human and machine to extend human capabilities in creative ways.

This cooperative approach could lead toward a true symbiosis of human and machine in which human muscles and a robot's mechanical limbs function as a single integrated unit, and a human brain could directly share sense data and "memory" with the computer. You might "become" the automobile you drive, feeling the road through its sensor-equipped tires, aware of the state of its engine as effortlessly as you sense your own heartbeat. You might "see" through a radio telescope or search an entire library of photographs at electronic speed by simply visualizing in your mind a particular image and instructing your computer to locate a match for it.

THE TITLE of this article specifically mentions "Computers in the World of 1985." But this is 1984 — a year made famous (or infamous) thirty-six years ago as the title of George Orwell's political nightmare novel. The fear and mistrust of computers still common today owes a great deal to Orwell's book, even though he was writing at a time when the importance of computers and their widespread use was not yet foreseen (Orwell never once mentions computers or any similar device in *1984*).

The connection between computers and tyranny seems to have grown up in the 1950s and 1960s when their awesome size and mysterious power was often made to seem even more inhuman by the bureaucratic and unfeeling ways in which they were employed by government and big businesses (the only institutions that could then afford them). The machines that brought us the punch-card, miles of unwieldy, barely readable, accordian-pleated printouts, and the intercontinental ballistic missile could all too easily be imagined as the electronic ally of Big Brother.

Such a danger does exist and has been pointed out to us by many authors — most recently, and perhaps most eloquently, by journalist David Burnham in his book *The Rise of the Computer State*. But the computer is not only a centralizing force that makes it easier for the state to spy on individual citizens, it is also an independence tool, particularly in the form of the small, portable personal computer.

Here we have computers we can love. Reduced to human scale in size, easy to talk to and work with, as versatile as our ingenuity can make them: The portable, driveable, wearable computers of the mid-1980s will not tie us down physically or confine us mentally to serve their convenience. They will be extensions of our bodies and of our imaginations — transportation for the mind.

Like transportation systems, computers take many different forms with different characteristics and advantages — from the power and capacity of the freight train to the low cost and freedom offered by the bicycle. Most of the people using computers in the future will probably be content to leave the design of circuits and even the writing of programs to specialists. In the same way, not everyone aspires to become an airline pilot or a professional mechanic. But tomorrow's computer users — like the travelers and car buyers of today — will need to be able to judge reliable machines and select appropriate programs from among the many varieties offered for sale.

"Computer literacy" involves knowing *how* to use computer systems and programs. "Computer wisdom" is the knack of knowing *when* to use one particular program or computer system rather than another to achieve a desired end and to recognize situations in which no computer is needed at all. I predict that these two skills will emerge — perhaps within this decade — as the mark of the well-educated individual: one who is able to act independently while thinking universally. Like the "gentleman" of yesterday, the "computer-wise individual" of tomorrow seems an ideal worth striving for. □

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LETTERS

(Continued from page 8)

Code to What?" (*Journal of Reading,* April 1971).

As Chall herself indicates, one does not have to agree with Bettelheim's psychoanalytic explanation to know that "there is not enough time in school for practicing reading." Ironically, this is because the subskills (including phonics) approach to reading has been the dominant model of reading instruction.

—MAURICE WOLFTHAL
Bronx, NY

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Since retiring from teaching, Jan. 1, 1983, my only contact with the classroom is an occasional substituting assignment. After thirty-two years of teaching that brought much gratification, I must confess that I do miss the classroom. Though the *American Educator* can't completely fill the void, it does a credible job of keeping me posted on educational trends past, present, and future. The articles are extremely well written, informative, and, for the most part, coincide with much of my educational philosophy. They are also inspirational and provocative. I look forward to each issue, reading and re-reading them with great delight.

—JAMES H. SEAHOLM, EMERITUS
Morton College
Cicero, IL

NUCLEAR CURRICULUM

As the principal sponsor of *Choices: A Unit On Conflict and Nuclear War,* we wish to take issue with several of the points raised by Ms. Chavez in her critique (*American Educator,* Fall 1983).

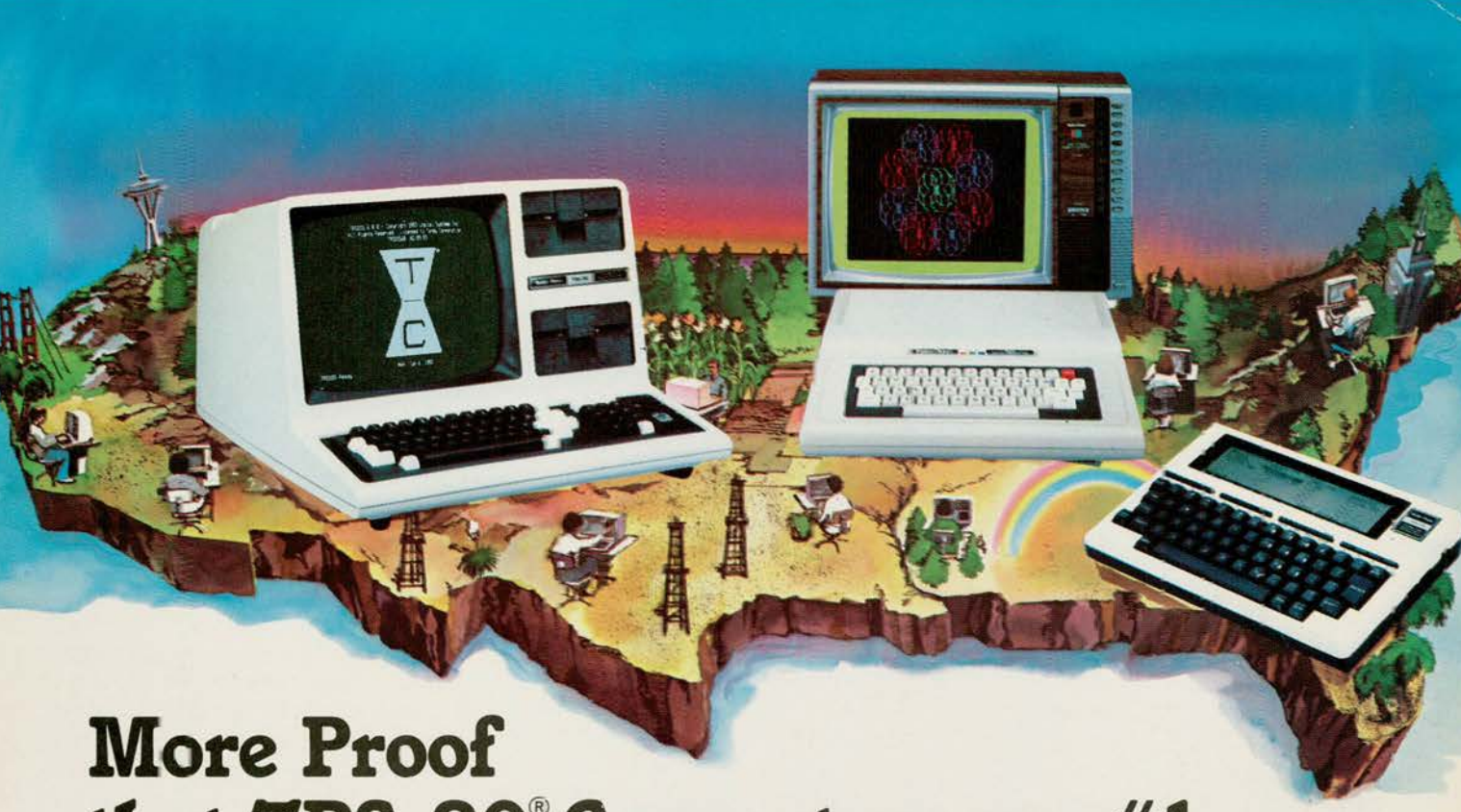
Her principal objection to the junior high unit seems to be that it does not provide sufficient information on the historical context within which the nuclear arms race has evolved. In developing *Choices,* we knew that the one hour per day, two-week unit would be taught in conjunction with the social studies, English, and science curricula that are standard components of junior high school programs. We chose to focus on the power of nuclear weapons and the consequences of their use. We assumed that the unit would be taught concurrently with more traditional subjects, such as the nature and causes of the Cold War, the history of Soviet adventurism since World War II, and the benefits of growing up in a democracy. Ms. Chavez is apparently unaware that these subjects are already being taught in our nation's schools.

With respect to other aspects of the unit, we believe Ms. Chavez has gone to great lengths to misinterpret the unit's presentation of facts. For example, she states that we have presented a distorted view of the 1983 federal budget. In fact, the exercise to which she refers deals with the *1987* budget as stated in the text. The figures are taken directly from data supplied by the federal Office of Management and Budget. She also implies that we have misrepresented the relative strengths of the United States and Soviet nuclear arsenals. Beyond the fact that we purposefully avoided making comparisons between the two arsenals, the figures presented in the unit are drawn directly from the International Institute of Strategic Studies, widely considered the most authoritative source on this subject.

Between the lines of Ms. Chavez's article, and those of her conservative colleagues (Sens. Barry Goldwater and Orrin Hatch have also expressed concern over the unit), is the implication that the subject of nuclear war should not be taught in school. She would have us ignore what many psychologists are saying — kids are scared stiff of nuclear war and need help in understanding that a holocaust such as that depicted in ABC's "The Day After" does not have to be an inevitable part of their future.

Probably what Ms. Chavez really wants is for us all to teach about nuclear war in a way that is more consistent with her own ideology. She would prefer a curriculum that says only the acquisition of more nuclear weapons will prevent nuclear war. That kind of indoctrination has gone on for forty years. We think that it is time that some other alternatives — among them bilateral arms control — received equal time.

—HOWARD C. RIS, JR.
Union of Concerned Scientists



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Florida. The latest survey (1982) shows that more than 45% of the microcomputers in Florida schools are TRS-80s, versus 24% for the second-place brand.

Kentucky. The 1982-83 state survey reveals TRS-80 microcomputers account for 52% of computers in Kentucky schools, versus 22% for the second-place brand.

Indiana. The 1982 survey showed Radio Shack in 37.5% of the schools, versus 32.4% for the second-place brand.

North Carolina. The TRS-80 accounts for 64.2%, versus 35.8% for the second-place brand, as of March 1982.

Oklahoma. A 1982 University of Oklahoma survey yields these statistics on the percentage of TRS-80s in the schools: 59.5% in elementary schools (versus 24.8% for the second-place brand); 68% in middle schools (versus the second-place brand's 26.5%); and 72.6% in high schools (versus 13.6% for the second-place brand).

Pennsylvania. 1981 figures showed school purchases of TRS-80s almost twice the volume of all other manufacturers combined.

Texas. A late 1981 survey reports usage of TRS-80s at 58% versus 40% for the second-place brand. Figures released in early 1983 for Region 5 show 59% of microcomputers are TRS-80s compared to 36.4% for the second-place brand.

Washington. In 1981, Radio Shack led in the state with 35.5%, versus 33.7% for the second-place brand.

West Virginia. The 1982-83 survey shows that of the four brands comprising 83% of the microcomputers in classrooms, 34.9% are TRS-80s compared to 29.8% of the second-place brand.

Montana. The 1982 survey finds usage of TRS-80s at 37.8%, versus 27.4% of the second-place brand.

Connecticut. The 1983 survey shows Radio Shack with 34%, versus 32.9% for the second-place company.

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If you still believe in me, save me.

For nearly a hundred years, the Statue of Liberty has been America's most powerful symbol of freedom and hope. Today, the corrosive action of almost a century of weather and salt has eaten away at the iron framework, etched holes in the copper exterior.

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The children of France helped fund the construction of the Statue of Liberty, and the children of the United States helped raise money for the building of the base and pedestal. In keeping with that tradition, a special Liberty Centennial School Campaign is being established. Children will have the opportunity not only to help save the statue but also to study the traditions of hope, courage, and liberty that she represents.

For information on educational materials for the classroom and ideas for fundraising activities, write Statue of Liberty — Ellis Island Foundation, Inc., 101 Park Ave., New York, NY 10178.

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