

# Our Educational System Is Incomptent

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Flatly speaking, the system is not only poor, it is completely incompetent. Students, or more truthfully, pupils, come to university not only knowing nothing, but without the ability to add to their knowledge.

Their first two years, if not more, are spent rooting around our halls and shacks of learning in search of an education they cannot comprehend.

## UNSUBTLE MINDS

Professors grey before their time under the strain of teaching high school subjects to unsubtle minds. A not entirely inapt analogy is that of trying to teach English to a group that understands no language. There is no common ground of understanding where the professor can begin, unless he draws pictures on the blackboard.

Exaggerated? Perhaps, but considerable substantiation can be found in any first or second year classroom.

And the classrooms are not the only places where students believe the claim they are acquiring an education. In cross-table discussion in the campus' eating places, in building halls, in the letters to the Ubysey again and again appears the proof that the student who comes to this university, while he may have a high school diploma, does not have a high school education. He has no thought, and when he has, cannot put it into

recognizable language. And a more easily recognizable proof is the monstrous failure rate in English.

## BLAME WHO?

Now who can be blamed? The students? Yes, but only to the extent that they are to be criticized for failing to go beyond the standard lowered for them in the public and high schools.

They have only followed natural inclinations and done as little as they can get away with. They are no worse than their system.

Then are the teachers to be blamed? No, unless they are to be attacked for not going beyond the bounds of their authority. They have only to teach to the standard inherent in a government exam, and no more.

Some teachers do go beyond the low governmental level, and for this students should be grateful. It is those teachers who keep the high school system from complete failure.

So now where to rest the blame? I said I would be sociological. I feel the fault lies at the feet of the public generally, and more particularly at the feet of those who are responsible for interpreting the public ideal of education.

Provincial governments, state governments, Parent-Teachers Associations and other interested bodies have wetted their fingers to the wind and deduced this magnificent bit of reasoning: Education should be fun!

Says Anthony P. Suburbanite, "I never had any fun when I went to school, but by God my kids are going to have fun."

## TEACH PRACTICAL THINGS

"All that crap about English and history, and languages. What good do they do ya? Huh, Teach 'em practical things, like how to clean their teeth, be like other kids, and make money. Give 'em the chance I never had. And let 'em have fun. Fun, fun, fun."

So spaketh the man who is really in control of what our high school students are taught. He never was a success, or like other kids, but by God, he knows he would have been if he'd had a school to teach him.

Well, he's got schools that will teach his kid now. He's got schools with swimming pools, rest periods, typewriters and business courses, and integration lectures, and personal development classes, and movies and recreation, and every damn thing needed to develop every asset but his child's brain.

His boy is well rounded, yes sir. A well-rounded moron. He can swim, play pool, type, dance and be completely unidentifiable from every other clod in the neighborhood, but he can't think.

Well, if Anthony P. thinks that sort that makes the world keep on an even course, he deserves to belong to a restricted society.

And that's the sort of society he's going to belong to. This is a society geared to be run by the mediocre, and its education system is geared to teach the mediocre.

But if the generation before decided its best group was its mediocre, then the new, mediocre generation will decide the best group

within it is its own mediocre, and so on. The circle will tighten until mankind is ruled by a moron.

## POOREST EDUCATED

Other societies have had the same problem. Ours is nothing new. But I wonder why. Why, in the face of the financial opportunity to make themselves the best educated people in the world do the North Americans insist on being the poorest educated?

Perhaps a man named David Reisman, sociology professor at Chicago, ex-law professor at Yale, and author of "The Lonely Crowd" offers some help.

Professor Reisman tells us that North Americans are afraid of work. We find it something distasteful, to be avoided as much as possible, and worse, to be hidden under pleasure.

He refers to the business man who cannot face an afternoon of letter dictation without first a round of golf (or a stiff drink, perhaps), or who cannot conceive of making a contract otherwise than over a pleasant luncheon. Consequently, having used up business time with pleasure, he must now consume his pleasure time with business, until the two become inextricably mixed and the function of both is seriously impaired.

I suggest the same catastrophe has befallen education. It is no longer, in North America, good honest work, but must be something to have fun at.

Consequently our schools are more renowned for comfort than scholarship, for the seeking of pleasure than for dedication to the search for knowledge.

## MORE IN U.S.A.

We have, fortunately more in the U.S. than in Canada, schools with swimming pools, lounges and marvellous gymnasiums.

But the epidemic of comfort courses has spread more rapidly. We are infested with the diseases of personal development courses, with movies, with severely relaxed standards, and behind it all, the fear that poor Johnny will suffer a nervous breakdown if his brain is taxed beyond five minutes of homework.

## TAKE IT EASY!

Everywhere is the big stress — take it easy, don't suffer for learning, you don't have to.

Why?

As Reisman suggests, we are afraid of honest labor. We have lost the ability to get satisfaction from a good day's work, though psychologists have proved that a two hours' loafing is often more tiring than eight hours of satisfying effort.

We have become afraid of work, and faced with it, spend more effort trying to camouflage the job with pleasure than it would take to do the job.

## CAMOUFLAGED

And we have camouflaged education. Who can blame the poor student, who, when he discovers that the getting of a decent education is damned hard work and not a barrel of laughs, stuffs it off for almost any form of diversion.

And the high schools offer enough diversion, for that pitiable character who has never learned that one of man's finest pleasures is the satisfaction of doing a good day's work.

# Mobilize And Develop Our Brain Power

by Gus Kroll in The Ubysey

In order to compete successfully for educational and technical supremacy, this country cannot afford undeveloped brainpower. And without any doubt, it is evident that at the present time, a great deal of intellectual ability lies dormant because a substantial part of the population has never enjoyed the stimulation of higher education. Probably the two main reasons are lack of sufficient funds to go to university and lack of sufficient interest in studying.

But we must compete for educational supremacy in order to survive. I believe that there is only one way open to do this. We must mobilize the entire brainpower of our society, or, in other words, we must make sure that every person shall obtain the highest degree of education possible.

Of course there are several ways to reach such a goal. There are a few which the writer believes to be most effective.

## CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

The first problem is to change our social environment so that it is conducive to higher learning. This means that the trends which

stagnate education should be removed, and trends which stimulate education should be introduced.

Now, there are a great number of trends which stifle education. Probably the most important one is the low financial reward that is given to the educated person.

## TEACHERS UNDERPAID

Our teachers are notoriously underpaid as are most government employees. Business is apt to pay more, but the security of the job is often much lower and the rewards paid to non-academically trained personnel is often higher.

It is by no means a rarity that a welder or an electrician makes considerably more money than an engineer. Is it then surprising if youngsters today refuse to go to university? By taking a trades course of a few weeks they can, in very short time, qualify for a job that pays substantially more money for a great number of years than a job they would get if they go through university.

We live in an economic society and financial incentives are powerful forces. And unless we have financial incentives for higher

learning, we will not attract that part of the population which regards education as a means of making money; and I have no doubt that a considerable number of people belong to that category.

## FIX SALARIES

How could this be accomplished? Well, we have legislation which fixes minimum wages. For equally good reasons should it be possible to fix minimum salaries for certain university degrees. This can be done by legislation. Nobody denies a union the right to establish certain pay rates. So why shall we deny the government the right to fix salaries for engineers, etc.?

## LOW ESTEEM

Another trend which stifles education is the low esteem which is given to the educated person. Our society glorifies all kinds of heroes; the war hero, the gangster hero, the sex and lover hero—both male and female—with Elvis Presley and Jayne Mansfield; the sports hero and the comic strip hero; but do we ever hear about the heroes of science and other field of thought? No they are conveniently push-

ed in the background.

Probably every child today knows who is on top of the hit parade. But how many children know who discovered Penicillin? We glorify the smart Alex because he makes a big pile of money, and money is the standard of success. And it does not really matter how low the tricks that were used to make this money. The man who devoted his life to an accomplishment that did not yield a great sum of money is being smiled at; he is a rather pathetic figure, quite often the subject of dripping novels or films.

Can this be changed? The Russians have done this. There, the intellectual is on top of their hierarchy. But then again, the Russians have a dictatorial system of government which can simply decree things even against the wish of the majority of the public. I personally think that a great deal depends upon the financial rewards given to the educated class.

If the scientist is no more a pauper but a top-paid individual, much will change. It is certainly not very easy to change values of a society and I believe that our esteem for financial success and pub-

licity is here to stay for a long time. So why not make the educated man a financial success; why not give him the publicity we give to Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe.

Another way to stimulate education is by increasing the age for compulsory schooling. Granted, this means that simultaneously an effort must be made to kindle the interest in education because nothing would be more futile than a group of children who are forced to remain in school, but desire to leave school. To that point I will come later, but here I want to point out that all these measures must come simultaneously to be effective. Such increase of compulsory schooling does not necessarily have to be directed towards a university career; it must also include trade and commercial schools, because education does not stop at the university level.

Of course it is impossible to list in the space permitted all the measures that can be taken to achieve the proposed object. But if we are able to remove the main obstacles and replace them with sound trends and incentives, a substantial part of the problem will be eliminated.

# A Question Of State Control?

By ROY JACQUES  
The Ubysey)

Perhaps NOW many of us in the west, and in this regard I mean this country and even moreso the United States, will begin to abandon the idea of our omnipotence in the field of higher learning.

We are not unaware of the fact that for many years now the Russians have been turning out technicians, engineers, and scientists in ever increasing numbers, and they have been the Ubysey more and more on teaching these things to their youngsters.

We are also not aware that this could be construed (on the surface anyway) as being fairly easy for

them because they have state controlled education.

This argument is weak by its very shortsightedness. For it is not difficult to see that there is no state control of education (certainly not in the Russian communist sense) in say, Britain or Australia. Yet those nations, to name only the first to come to mind by virtue of their scholastic records and standings, those nations have turned out, and are continuing to turn out, highly skilled and forward thinking, intelligent scientists, technicians and engineers.

It is true that this country and the United States are also turning

out some brilliant scientists, engineers and technicians also. But in proportion to the Russian turnout in these fields, the west would look exceptionally sick were it not for the number of such experts being taught and graduated in the aforementioned Commonwealth nations.

And the one main reason that Britain particularly is able to do this . . . is because in that country, while there is no totalitarian state control of education and higher learning, there is nonetheless a tight rein on education and higher learning, in the sense that these facets of national life are given as

much respect and understanding as it is possible to give and accord them.

In this country, and in the United States the moreso, education and higher learning are, generally speaking, occupying last place in the thinking and the estimation and understanding of the great majority of citizens.

We in this country and our friends below the border live in perhaps the most bountiful countries in the world. We have everything we want, and need, materially speaking. And we have I firmly believe, the lowest mental and phys-

ical standards in the world . . . generally speaking. There is no REAL incentive to learn, or even to teach.

The result being education and higher learning are taken in almost an attitude of "could not care less" by all but a gallant few, and even they at times must wonder whether it is all worth it.

THIS, it is my firm belief, is one of the main reasons for the fact that Russia has successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile—and now has launched the world's first earth satellite. In short, we need education, and we need to educate ourselves to that need—NOW.