

More Friedenberg . . .

be the same and the premises the same, and that just maybe the means of reaching that end will change. Also, if these premises are going to change, at what level do you think they will change — at the administrative level, or at the classroom level, the teacher-student relationship, or any other level?

FRIEDENBERG:

In a way, of course, the curriculum has largely been a pretext in the last 30 or 40 years, and the last educational crisis we had before the present one was over the fact that apparently the Russian children really were learning math and American children weren't. Nobody was paying much attention to the fact that, for most people in school, the actual curricular function is one of trained incapacity. Kids were learning well enough, but what they were learning was not the course of study, but what they were supposed to do and what they were not supposed to do.

I had a student in one of my tutorials yesterday who commented that one of the things that turned her off about the schools was that they thought it was more important to keep the children in line than to have them learn anything. And I disagreed with her about that. I said that I thought the schools thought it was extremely important to have them learn to stay in line, and that was really what was being taught. The other things more or less come and go. Sometimes they're really important and when they are, they'll learn, and other times they're not.

Society, without becoming any more basically respectful of individuals, is certainly going to allow them a great deal more freedom, and it will go further than the way some executive training programs now attempt to lure applicants by saying you can never wear sideburns in the office.

Going back to what you asked me about why I had come to Dalhousie — what do you think the connection is that the counter-establishment for experimental education and 3/4 of the central figures in Toronto around whom it's been happening are Nova Scotian. It certainly isn't because Nova Scotia is one of the most swinging parts of Canada, and it may well be the opposite.

It's simply that anyone growing up here thirty years ago would have got very clearly in his mind the idea that some things were good and some things were bad. Things were

supposed to be some ways and not supposed to be others. And this you get, I'm afraid, through a degree of discipline, sometimes an amount of depression. But if there isn't too much of it, you slough off the content, while still retaining the possibilities. And you can't then simply turn into another directive person, although you are equally unlikely to ever want to live as your parents did. You at least have the idea that you can be quite sure that some things are better than others, and that is what the American middle-age, middle-class (generally speaking) lacks. Can you name something that John Lindsay absolutely wouldn't do?

GAZETTE:

What about the Dal education department — good or bad?

FRIEDENBERG:

Well, I don't think anybody knows at the present time. About 70% of it is new, so its going to have to shake down before I or anyone else will know whether its relatively good or relatively bad. I say relatively because there is one thing that I think one has to say against all education departments which is unlikely to not be true of this one, although one can work on it.

But one reason that education departments are held in comparative disesteem in most universities is a rather sound one. They aren't really academically respectable, if by academically respectable you mean, as I do, sharing some of the basic intellectual commitments and independence, tutative independence, of the disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

Education departments have been more like schools of agriculture, in that they tend to assume, as other social science departments do not, that they ought to perform a service, a critical or analytical function for the existing institutions. Nobody in the economics department would agree that an economic department ought, by virtue of being an economics department, to provide support for the International Monetary Fund or the Royal Bank or anything like that. Instead, its function is to critically examine economic institutions.

Now again, I realize that one can make too much of that, that the ethical neutrality that that is based on has its own forms of biases built in but it's nothing as crude as the

assumption that it is the natural function of an education department to provide services to the school.

I think it is the natural function of the Education Department to examine the process of education and make an independent determination of how and in what ways the schools contribute to or impede it, and what their relationship is to the rest of society.

Schools are loosing their legitimacy, and education departments that cling too closely to the schools will lose their's. And I don't think society is going to continue to spend \$30 or \$40 billion a year as it is in the United States to run schools for which nothing can be proved. Too many questions are being raised with the basic research done. With that money you could put most of the Black population of the United States on the dark side of the moon where they wouldn't be a problem. I would think with our record we'd be more likely to try something like that.



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