

Joel H. Spring,

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callous will miss his point: the primary purpose of the school system is social control for a corporate state, and for an economy which has as its goal the efficient production and the disciplined consumption of growing amounts of goods and services. Eight decades of pedagogical reform within the school were justified as the means to increase indirect, pervasive, and effective social controls notwithstanding the humanistic freedoms which served as platforms for the reformers.

Unless criticism of educational systems directly questions the possibility of humanistic education through obligatory confinement (even though this confinement be the result of benevolent seduction into "free" schools) the present wave of new educators will only contribute to making the schools more effective in the production of members of a machinelike society. This conclusion appears clearly in the final chapter in which Spring contrasts Fromm and Ellul with McLuhan.

Education and the Rise of the Corporate State could soon become standard reading not just in educational but also in economic, political, and cultural history.

INTRODUCTION

It was Edward Krug's *The Shaping of the American High School* that first interested me in the meaning of American liberal rhetoric as applied to education. Education, like democracy, is something everyone in America says they support, but exactly what they mean by education is never clearly stated. Liberalism in the twentieth century in both its early Progressive form and later development has staunchly supported education as a cure for social and economic problems. This, of course, had been Horace Mann's dream in the nineteenth century, but its full institutional realization occurred in the early twentieth century. For the past seventy years public educational institutions have played a leading role in campaigns to end urban poverty and crime, Americanize foreigners, heal the wounds of race relations, and rejuvenate an often sagging democratic spirit.

The purpose of this book is to explore the exact meaning Progressives gave to public education during its most formative period at the beginning of the twentieth century. Who were the Progressives is a highly debatable and elusive question. For the purpose of my study I am defining as the main body of Progressives those American leaders who adopted as the image of the good society a highly organized and smoothly working corporate structure. Members of this group of Progressives held

a variety of positions in society. They were labor leaders, corporation heads, financiers, politicians, political philosophers, and educators. It is the basic thesis of this study that this image of society played an influential role in shaping the form and direction of American public education in the twentieth century.

The image of the good society as a highly organized corporate structure was the result of city living and large scale industrial organizations. Urban life impressed Americans with the need for efficient and organized government to counter the potential chaos caused by packing millions of people into small areas. The same form of chaos was felt in industrial competition and labor strife. The organizational model which promised a solution to these problems was the large corporation run on the lines of scientific management. Specialization, cooperation, and scientific planning offered a means by which an ever increasingly complex society could organize its institutions.

Education reacted to this image in two major ways. On the one hand education adopted the goal of training the type of man required by this type of organization. This meant teaching the student how to cooperate with others and work in groups. This resulted in class and school programs designed to socialize the student and prepare him for a life of cooperation. On the other hand education was viewed as one institution working with others to assure the progress and efficient operation of the social system. This meant that the schools trained pupils in the specialized skills required by the new corporate organization. Ideally the students would be able to leave school and directly enter a social niche. To a great extent children became a form of natural resource that was to be molded by the schools and fed into the industrial machine. Vocational guidance and the junior high school were two of the important results of this form of thinking.

One reason these changes in education were adopted was because of support by the business community. Education which supplied industry with manpower was good for business and, according to some, what was good for business was good for society. Business supported many of the innovations in

education because they promised a healthier and better trained worker. For instance, industrialists supported cooking classes because it was felt the worker would be more contented and efficient if his wife knew how to manage the family money and prepare healthy meals with inexpensive food items. Business also supported social activity programs in the school because they needed and wanted men who would cooperate with fellow workers. Organized industry wanted the organization man.

These changes in education also reflected a definition of individualism which stressed cooperation and self-sacrifice to society. One function of the schools was to assure that something called "selfish individualism" was rooted out. The cooperative man, according to this definition, gained his individualism through a unique contribution to society. This meant performing a specialized role in the social organism. The schools supported something called individualism by training the individual for that specialized place in society. The popular educational phrases of "individualizing instruction," and "meeting individual needs" meant nothing more than educating a child for the role it was determined he would fill in society.

If educational rhetoric was at all representative of Progressive rhetoric, it suggests a pattern of thinking that might have been present in the early stages of twentieth century American liberalism. In this rhetoric the good society meant the efficiently organized society that was producing the maximum amount of goods. Man was viewed as a raw material whose worth was determined by his contribution to the system. Large organizational units and centralized government were accepted as the best forms of social institutions. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, the attitude became one of what can you do for your country, not what can your country do for you.

The relationship between Progressive politics and the development of the American public school in the twentieth century has largely been neglected. Lawrence Cremin's pioneer book, *The Transformation of the Schools*, dealt with the problem in very general terms without ever specifically relating Progressive ideology to specific changes in the schools. Cremin's broad approach to the topic left untouched important areas of