

**WE NEED LESS SCHOOL, NOT MORE -
Families, Communities, Networks, and the
Proposed Enlargement of Schooling
by John Taylor Gatto
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"We were making the future," he said, "and hardly any of us troubled to think what future we were making. And here it is!"

-- The Sleeper Awakes.....

A surprising number of otherwise sensible people find it hard to see why the scope and reach of our formal schooling networks should not be increased - by extending the school day or year, for instance - in order to provide an economical solution to the problems posed by the decay of the American family. People who lean in this direction are all around right now. One reason for their preference, I think, is that they have trouble understanding the real difference between communities and networks, or even the difference between families and networks. Because of this confusion they conclude that replacing a bad network with a good one is the right way to go. Since I disagree so strongly with the fundamental premise that networks are workable substitutes for families, and because from anybody's point of view a lot more school is going to cost a lot more money, I thought I'd tell you why, from a schoolteacher's perspective, we shouldn't think more school but less.

People who admire our school institution usually admire networking in general and have an easy time seeing its positive side, but they overlook its negative aspect - that networks, even good ones, take the vitality from communities and families. They make solutions to human problems mechanical, "by the numbers", when a slow, organic process of self-awareness, self-discovery, and cooperation is what is required if any solution is to stick.

Think of the challenge of losing weight. It's possible to employ mechanical tricks to do this quickly, but I'm told that 95 percent of the poor souls who do are only fooling themselves, the weight lost this way doesn't stay off, it comes back in a short time. Other network solutions are just as temporary: think of a group of law students networking to pass their college exams, but preparing a brief in private practice is often a solitary, lonely thing, just as dealing with a burst appendix must be.

Aristotle saw, a long time ago, that fully participating in a complex range of human affairs was the only way to become fully human; in that he differed from Plato. What is gained from consulting a specialist and surrendering all judgment is often more than outweighed by a permanent loss of a piece of your volition. This discovery accounts for the curious texture of real communities, where people argue with their doctors, lawyers, and ministers, tell craftsmen what they want instead of accepting what they get, frequently make their own food from scratch instead of buying it in a restaurant or defrosting it, and perform many similar acts of participation. A real community is, of course, a collection of real families who themselves function in this participatory way.

Networks, however, don't need or want the whole person, but only a narrow piece of him; if you function in a

network it asks you to suppress all the parts of yourself except the network-interest part - a highly unnatural act although one you can get used to doing it. In exchange the network will deliver efficiency in the pursuit of some limited aim. This will be seen to be a Devil's Bargain since on the promise of some future gain you must surrender your present total humanity. It will also be seen that if you enter into too many of these bargains you have split yourself into many specialized pieces, none of them completely human. And no time is available to reintegrate them. This, ironically, is the destiny of many successful networkers and doubtless generates much business for divorce courts and therapists of a variety of persuasions.

The fragmentation caused by excessive networking creates diminished humanity, a sense our lives are out of control, because they are. If we face the present school and community crisis squarely, with hope of finding a better way, we need to accept that schools - as networks - create a large part of the agony of modern life. We don't need more schooling, we need less.

I expect you'll want some proof of that even though the million or so people participating in education at home these days have begun to nibble at the edge of everybody's consciousness in recent years and promise to bite their way into national attention when details of just how impressive their success is get around a little more. So for those of you who haven't heard that you don't need officially certified teachers in officially certified schools to get a good education, let me try to expose some of the machinery that makes certified schooling so bad. And remember if you're thinking, "but it's always been that way"...that it really hasn't. Compulsory schooling in factory schools is a very recent, very Massachusetts-New York development. Remember, too, that until 30 odd years ago you could escape mass-schooling after school, but that now it is much harder to escape because another form of mass schooling - television - has spread all over the place to blot up any time spared by School. So what was merely grotesque in our form of national treatment of the young before 1960 has become tragic now that mass commercial entertainment, as addictive as any other hallucinogenic drug, has blocked the escape routes from mass schooling.

It is a fact generally ignored when considering the communal nature of institutional families like schools, large corporations, colleges, armies, hospitals and government agencies that they are not real communities at all, but networks. Unlike communities, networks - as I reminded you - have a very narrow way of allowing people to associate, and that way is always across a short spectrum of one, or at most a few, specific uniformities.

In spite of ritual moments like the Christmas Party or the office softball game, when individual human components in the network "go home," they go home alone. And in spite of humanitarian support from fellow workers that eases emergencies. When people in networks suffer they suffer alone unless they have a family or community to suffer with them.

Even with college dorm "communities," those most engaging and intimate simulations of community imaginable, who among us has not experienced an awful realization after graduation that we cannot remember our friends' names or faces very well? Or who, if he can remember, feels much desire to renew those associations?

It is a puzzling development, as yet poorly understood, that the "caring" in networks is in some important way feigned. Not maliciously, but in spite of any genuine emotional attractions that might be there, human behavior in network situations seems to become a dramatic act—a script produced to meet the demands of a story. And as such, the intimate moments in networks lack the sustaining value of their counterparts in community. Those of you who remember the wonderful closeness possible in army camp life or

sports teams, and who have now forgotten those you were once close with, will understand what I mean. Have you ever forgotten an uncle or an aunt ?

If the loss of true community entailed by masquerading in networks is not noticed in time, a condition arises in the victim's spirit very much like the "trout starvation" that used to strike wilderness explorers whose diet was exclusively stream fish. While trout quell the pangs of hunger - and even taste good - the eater gradually starves for want of sufficient calories.

Networks like schools are not communities in the same way that school training is not education. By preempting 50 percent of the total time of the young, by locking young people up with young people exactly their own age, by ringing bells to start and stop work, by asking people to think about the same thing at the same time in the same way, by grading people the way we grade vegetables - and in a dozen other vile and stupid ways - network schools steal the vitality of communities and replace it with an ugly piece of mechanism. Nobody survives these places with his humanity intact, not kids, not teachers, not administrators, and not parents.

A community is a place that faces people at each other over time in all their human variety, good parts, bad parts, and all the rest. Such places promote the highest quality of life possible, lives of engagement and participation. This hap-pens in unexpected ways but it never happens when you've spent more than a decade listening to other people talk~ and trying to do what they tell you to do, trying to please them after the fashion of schools. It makes a real difference lifelong if you can avoid that training&emdash;or if it traps you.

Another instance might clarify this. Networks of urban reformers will convene to consider the problems of homeless vagrants, but a community will think of its vagrants as real people, not abstractions. "Ron," "Dave" or "Marty" - a community will call its bums by their names. It makes a difference. People interact on thousands of invisible pathways in a community and the emotional payoff is correspondingly rich and complex. But networks can only manage a cartoon simulation of community and a very limited payoff.

I belong to some networks myself, of course, but the only ones I consider completely safe are the ones that reject their communitarian facade, acknowledge their limits, and concentrate solely on helping me do a specific and necessary task. But a vampire network like a school, which tears off huge chunks of time and energy needed for building community and family - and always asks for more - needs to have a stake driven through its heart and be nailed into its coffin. The feeding frenzy of formal schooling has already wounded us seriously in our ability to form families and communities by bleeding away time we need with our children and our children need with us. That's why I say we need less school, not more.

Who can deny that networks can get some jobs done? They do. But they lack any ability to nourish their members emotionally. The extreme rationality of networking at its core is based on the same misperception of human nature the French Enlightenment and Comte were guilty of. At our best we human beings are much, much grander things than rational, at our best we transcend rationality while incorporating its procedures on the lower levels of functioning. That is why computers will never replace people, computers are condemned to be rational, hence very limited. Networks divide people, first from themselves and then from each other, on the grounds that this is the efficient way to perform a task. It may well be, but it is a lousy way to feel good about being alive.

Networks make people lonely. They have no way to correct their inhuman functioning and still succeed as networks. Behind the anomaly that networks look like communities but are not lurks the grotesque secret of

mass-schooling and the reason why enlarging the school domain will only aggravate dangerous conditions of social disintegration it is intended to correct.

I want to repeat this until you are sick of hearing it: Networks do great harm by appearing enough like real communities to create expectations that they can manage human social and psychological needs. The reality is they cannot. Even associations as inherently harmless as bridge clubs, chess clubs, amateur acting groups or groups of social activists will, if they maintain a pretense of whole friendship, ultimately produce that odd sensation familiar to all city dwellers of being lonely in the middle of a crowd. Who has not felt this sensation who frequently networks? Having many networks does not add up to having a community, no matter how many you have or how often your telephone rings.

With a network, what you get at the beginning is all you ever get. Networks don't get better or worse, their limited purpose keeps them pretty much the same all the time, there just isn't much development possible. The pathological state which eventually develops out of these constant repetitions of thin human contact is a feeling that your "friends" and "colleagues" don't really care about you beyond what you can do for them, that they have no curiosity about the way you manage your life, no curiosity about your hopes, fears, victories, defeats. The real truth is that the "friends" falsely mourned for their indifference were never friends, only fellow networkers, from whom in fairness little should be expected beyond attention to the common interest.

But such is our unquenchable need for community and the unlikeliness of obtaining it in a network, that we are in desperation of any better solution, driven to deceive ourselves about the nature of these liaisons. Whatever "caring" really means, we all understand instinctively that it means something more than simple companionship or even the comradeship of shared interests.

In the growth of human society, families came first, communities second, and only much later came the institutions set up by the community to serve it. Most institutional rhetoric - the proclaiming of what is important - borrows its values from individual families that work well together.

Particularly over the past century and a half in the United States spokesmen for institutional life have demanded a role above and beyond service to families and communities. They have sought to command and prescribe as kings used to do, though there is an important difference - in the case of ancient kings once beyond the range of their voices and trumpets you could usually do what you pleased, but in the case of modern institutions the reach of technology is everywhere - there is no escape if the place where you live and the family you live in cannot provide sanctuary.

Institutions, say their political philosophers, are better at creating marching orders for the human race than families are, therefore they should no longer be expected to follow but to lead. Institutional leaders have come to regard themselves as great synthetic Fathers to millions of synthetic Children, by which, I mean, to all of us. This theory sees us bound together in some abstract family relationship in which the State is the true Mother and Father, hence it insists on our first and best loyalty.

"Ask not," said President Kennedy, "what your country can do for you, but rather ask what you can do for your country." Since the "you" in question is both real and human, and the country you are alleged to possess one of the most extreme of verbal abstractions, it will readily be seen that the President's injunction is an expression of a synthetic family philosophy which regards "Nation" as possessing a claim superior to the claim of "Family." If you see nothing wrong with this, then it is probable you also believe that - with a little skillful

tinkering - our schools will work just fine. But if you get a queer feeling at the image of yourself and family as appendages of an abstraction, then we are on the same wavelength. In the latter case, we are ready to consider that we may need less school, not more.

I want to examine the destructive effects the false claim of institutional prerogative has on both individual and family life, a destructiveness equally profound whether the claim comes from a government, a corporation, or from some other form of network.

If we return to our original discussion of networks it will be clear that every one of our national institutions is a place where men, women and children are isolated according to some limited aspect of their total humanity: by age, and a few other considerations in the case of compulsory schooling, by various other sorting mechanisms in other institutional arenas.

If performance in these limited roles is conceived to be the supreme measure of success, if, for instance, an "A" average is accounted the central purpose of adolescent life - the requirements for which take most of the time and attention of the aspirant - and the worth of the individual is reckoned by victory or defeat in this abstract pursuit, then a social machine has been constructed which, by attaching purpose and meaning to essentially meaningless and fantastic behavior, will certainly dehumanize the student, alienate him from his own human nature, and break the natural connection between him and his parents, to whom he would otherwise look for significant affirmations.

Welcome to the world of mass-schooling which sets this goal as its supreme achievement. Are you sure we want more of it ?

As we approach the 21st century it is correct to say that the U.S. has become a nation of institutions where it used to be a nation of communities. Large cities have great difficulty supporting healthy community life, partly because of the constant coming and going of strangers, partly because of space constrictions, partly because of poisoned environments, but mostly because of the constant competition of institutions and networks for the custody of children and old people, and to monopolize the time of everyone else in between. By reserving young and old from the working life of places, and by reserving the working population from the lives of young and old, a fundamental disconnection of the generations has occurred. The griefs that arise from this have no synthetic remedy and no vibrant, satisfying communities can come into being where young and old are locked away.

Here and there mutilated versions of community struggle to survive, and in places where cultural homogeneity has been fiercely protected, as in Bensonhurst in Brooklyn or Polish Hill in Pittsburgh, something better than that—but in the main, "community" in cities and suburbs is a thin illusion, confined to simulations like street festivals. If you have moved from one neighborhood to another or from one suburb to another and have quickly forgotten the friends you left behind then you will have lived the phenomenon I refer to. Over 90 percent of the U.S. population now exists inside 50 urban aggregations. Having been concentrated there as the end product of fairly well understood historical processes, there they are denied a reciprocal part in any continuous, well articulated community. They are profoundly alienated from their own human interests. What else do you think the meaning is that only half our eligible citizens are registered to vote, and of that half, a bare 50 percent do vote? In two party jurisdictions a trifle over 1/8th of the citizenry is thus sufficient to elect public officials, assuming the vote splits 55-45. We've come a long way down the road to making optional what used to be regarded as duty, but that is what alienation from community life quickly accomplishes—indifference to almost everything.

When you are offered institutional simulations of community, when you are offered a steady diet of networks, involuntary like schools, or "voluntary" like isolated workplaces divorced from human variety, your basic human needs are placed in the gravest jeopardy, a danger magnified many times in the case of children. Institutional goals, however sane and well-intentioned, are unable to harmonize deeply with the uniqueness of individual human goals. No matter how good the individuals are who manage an institution, institutions lack a conscience because they measure by accounting methods. Institutions are not the sum total of their personnel, or even of their leadership, but are independent of both and will exist after management has been completely replaced. They are ideas come to life, ideas in whose service all employees are but servo-mechanisms. The deepest purposes of these gigantic networks is to regulate and make uniform. Since the logic of family and community is to give scope to variety around a central theme, whenever institutions make a major intervention into personal affairs they cause much damage. By displacing the direction of life from families and communities to institutions and networks we, in effect, anoint a machine our King.

Nearly a century ago a French sociologist wrote that every institution's unstated first goal is to survive and grow, not to undertake the mission it has nominally staked out for itself. Thus the first goal of government postal service is to provide protection for its employees and perhaps a modest status ladder for the more ambitious ones, its first goal is not to deliver the mail. The first goal of a permanent military organization is not to fight wars but to secure, in perpetuity, a fraction of the national wealth to distribute to its personnel. By this relentless logic an adoption agency requires babies to justify its continuing existence and under such a dynamic it will seek to obtain babies one way or another, whether they "need" adopting or not.

It was this hidden aspect of teaching the young for pay - that such teaching would inevitably expand to protect the interests of teachers, not students, that made Socrates condemn the Sophists so strongly long ago in ancient Greece. If these examples trouble you, think of the New York City public school system where I work, one of the largest business organizations on planet Earth. While the education administered by this abstract parent is ill-regarded by everybody, the institution's right to compel its clientele to accept such dubious service is still guaranteed by the police. And forces are gathering to expand its reach still further - in the face of every evidence it has been a disaster for all its history.

What gives the atmosphere of remote country towns and other national backwaters a peculiarly heady quality of fundamental difference is not simply a radical change of scenery from city or suburb, but the promise offered of near-freedom from institutional intervention into family life. Big Father doesn't watch over such places closely. Where his presence is felt most is still in the schools, which even there grind out their relentless message of anger, envy, competition, and caste-verification in the form of grades and "classes." But a home-life and community exist there as antidote to the poison. This business we call "Education" when we mean "Schooling" makes an interesting example of network values in conflict with traditional community values. For 150 years institutional educators have seen fit to offer that the main purpose of an education is an economic one.

Good education = good job, good money, good things. This has become the universal national formula, flogged by Harvards as well as high schools. This prescription makes both parent and student easier to regulate and intimidate as long as the connection goes unchallenged either for veracity or in its philosophical truth. Interestingly enough, the American Federation of Teachers identifies one of its missions as persuading the business community to hire and promote on the basis of school grades so that the grades = money formula will become true by definition as it was made for medicine and law the same way after years of political lobbying. So far, common sense of businessmen has kept them hiring and promoting the old-fashioned way, using private

judgment and performance as the preferred measures, but they may not resist much longer.

The absurdity of defining education as an economic good becomes clear if we ask ourselves what is gained by perceiving education as a way to enhance even further the runaway consumption that threatens the earth, the air, the water and the atmosphere of our planet. Should we continue to teach people that they can buy happiness in the face of a tidal wave of evidence that they cannot? Shall we ignore the evidence that drug addiction, alcoholism, teenage suicide, divorce and other despairs are pathologies of the prosperous much more than they are of the poor?

On this question of meanings we've hidden from ourselves for so long hangs both an understanding of the illness that is killing us and the cure we are searching for: What, after all this time, is the purpose of mass-schooling supposed to be? Reading, writing and arithmetic can't be the answer because properly approached those things take less than 100 hours to transmit - and we have abundant evidence that each is readily self-taught in the right setting and time.

What are we doing then locking these kids up in an involuntary network with strangers for 12 years? Surely not so a few of them can get rich! Even if it worked that way, and I doubt that it does, why wouldn't any sane community look on such an education as positively wrong, because it divides and classifies people, demanding that they compulsively compete with each other and publicly labels the losers by de-grading them literally, identifying them as "low-class" material? The bottom line for the winners is that they can buy more stuff! I don't believe that anyone who thinks about it feels comfortable with such a silly conclusion. I can't help feeling that if we could only answer the question of what it is exactly that we want from these kids we lock up, that we would suddenly see where we took a wrong turn, how we're going about getting what we want the wrong way. At that point I have enough faith in American imagination and resourcefulness to believe we'd come up with a better way—in fact, a whole supermarket of better ways.

One thing I do know, most of us who've had a taste of loving families, even a little taste, want our kids to be part of one. One other thing I know is that eventually you have to come to be part of a place, part of its hills and streets and waters and people - or you will live a very, very sorry life as an exile forever. Discovering meaning for yourself, and discovering satisfying purpose for yourself is a big part of what education is. How this can be done by locking children away from the world is beyond me.

An important difference between communities and institutions is that communities have natural limits, they stop growing or they die. There's a good reason for that: in the best communities everyone is a special person who sooner or later impinges on everyone else's consciousness. The effects of this constant attention makes all, rich or poor, feel important because the only way importance is perceived is by having other folks pay attention to you. You can buy attention, of course, but it's not the same thing. Pseudo-community life, where you live around others without noticing them, and where you are constantly being menaced in some way by strangers you find offensive, is exactly the opposite. In pseudo-community life you are anonymous for the most part, and you want to be because of various dangers other people may represent if they notice your existence.

Almost the only way you can get attention in a pseudo-community is to buy it because the prevailing atmosphere is one of indifference. A pseudo-community is just a different kind of network - its friendships and loyalties are transient, its problems are universally considered to be someone else's problems (someone else who should be paid to solve them); its young and old are largely regarded as annoyances, and the most

common shared dream is to get out to a better place - to "trade up" endlessly.

Unlike true communities, pseudo-communities and other comprehensive networks like schools expand indefinitely just as long as they can get away with it. "More" may not be "better" but more is always more profitable for the people who make a living out of networking. That is what is happening today behind the cry to expand schooling even further, a great many people are going to make a great deal of money if growth can be continued.

Unlike the intricate, sometimes unfathomable satisfactions of community and family life, networks always present their successes as mathematical displays of one-upmanship: "How many 'A's?" How much weight lost?" "How many inquiries generated?" Competition is their lifeblood and the precision suggested by the numerical ranking of performance is their preferred style.

The quality-competition of businesses, when it happens, is generally a good thing for customers, it keeps everyone on his toes doing his best. The competition inside an institution like a school isn't the same thing at all. What is competed for in a school is the favor of a teacher and that can be won or lost by too many subjective parameters to count; it is always a little arbitrary and sometimes a lot more pernicious than that. It gives rise to envy, dissatisfaction, and a belief in magic. Teachers, too, must compete for the favor of administrators arbitrarily dispensed, carrying with it the promise of good or bad classes, good or bad rooms, access to tools or denial, and other hostages to obedience, deference, and subordination. The culture of schools only coheres in response to a web of material rewards and punishments: "A"s, "F"s, bathroom passes, gold stars, "good" classes, access to a photocopy machine - everything we know about why people drive themselves to know things and do their best is contradicted inside these places.

Truth itself is another important dividing line between communities and networks. If you don't keep your word in a community everyone finds out and you have a major problem thereafter. But lying for personal advantage is the operational standard in all large institutions, it is considered part of the game in schools. Parents, for the most part, are always lied to or told half-truths; parents for the most part are considered adversaries, at least that's been true in every school I ever worked in. Only the most foolish employees don't have recourse to lying since the penalties for being caught hardly exist - and the rewards for success can be considerable. Whistle-blowing against institutional malpractice is always a good way to get canned or relentlessly persecuted. Whistle-blowers never get promoted in any institution because, having served a public interest once, they may well do it again.

The Cathedral of Rheims is the best symbol I know of what a community can do and why we lose a lot when we don't know the difference between these human miracles and the social machinery we call networks. Rheims was built without power tools by people working day and night for 100 years. Everybody worked willingly, nobody was slave labor. No school taught cathedral building as a subject.

What possessed people to work together for a hundred years? Whatever it was looks like something worth educating ourselves about. We know the workers were profoundly united as families of friends, and as friends they knew what they really wanted in the way of a church. Popes and archbishops had nothing to do with it; Gothic architecture itself was invented out of sheer aspiration, the Gothic cathedral stands like a lighthouse illuminating what is possible in the way of uncoerced human union. It provides a benchmark against which our own lives can be measured.

At Rheims, the serfs and farmers and peasants filled gigantic spaces with the most incredible stained glass windows in the world but they never bothered to sign even one of them. Neither Harvard nor anybody else knows who designed them or made them because our modern form of institutional boasting did not yet exist as a corruption of communitarian feeling. After all these centuries they still announce what being human really means.

Communities are collections of families and friends who find major meaning in extending the family association to a band of honorary brothers and sisters, they are complex relationships of mutual job and obligation which generalize to others beyond the perimeter of the homestead.

When the integration of life that comes from being part of a family in a community is unattainable, the only alternative, apart from accepting a life in isolation, is to search for an artificial integration into one of the many expressions of network currently available. It's a bad trade and we should begin thinking about school reform by stopping these places from functioning like cysts, impenetrable, insular bodies that take our money, our children, and our time and give nothing back.

Artificial integration that controls human associations - think of those college dorms or fraternities - appears strong but is actually quite weak; seems close-knit but in reality its bonds are loose; suggests durability but is usually transient. And it is most often badly adjusted to what people need although it masquerades as being exactly what they need. Welcome to the world of school. Do we really want more of it? I don't.

In recent years I've given much thought to the problem of turning the compulsory school network into some kind of emotionally rewarding community because a move seems to be afoot to do the reverse, to enlarge substantially the bite that schooling takes out of a young person's family time, community time, and private time. Trial balloons are floated constantly about this in the press and on TV, that means that some important groups are preparing to extend the reach of compulsory schooling in the face of its genuinely ghastly record. My Jewish friends would call that chutzpa but I take it as an index of just how confident these people are that they can pull it off.

Schools, I hear it argued, would make better sense and be better value as 9-5 operations or even 9-9 ones, working year-round. We're not a farming community any more, I hear, that we need to give kids time off to tend the crops. This New World Order Schooling would serve dinner, provide evening recreation, offer therapy, medical attention, and a whole range of other services which would convert the institution into a true synthetic family for children - better than the original one for many poor kids, it is said, and this will level the playing field for the sons and daughters of weak families.

Yet it appears to me as a schoolteacher that schools are already a major cause of weak families and weak communities. They separate parents and children from vital interaction with each other and from true curiosity about each other's lives. Schools stifle family originality by appropriating the critical time needed for any sound idea of family to develop - then they blame the family for its failure to be a family. It's like a malicious person lifting a photograph from the developing chemicals too early, then pronouncing the photographer incompetent.

A Massachusetts Senator said a while ago that his state had a better literacy rate before it adopted

compulsory schooling than after. It's certainly an idea worth considering whether or not schools didn't reach the limits of their possible efficiency long ago, and that "more" for schools will make things worse, instead of better.

Whatever an education is, it should make you a unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish you with an original spirit with which to tackle the big challenges; it should allow you to find values that will be your road map through life; it should make you spiritually rich, a person who loves wherever he is, whoever he is with, whatever he is doing; it should teach you what is important, how to live and how to die.

What's gotten in the way of education in the United States is a theory of social engineering that says there is ONE RIGHT WAY to proceed with growing up. That's an Egyptian idea symbolized by the pyramid with an eye on top that's on the other side of George Washington on our one-dollar bill. Everyone a stone defined by his position in the pyramid. This theory has been presented in many different ways but at bottom it signals the world view of minds obsessed with the control of other minds, obsessed by dominance and strategies of intervention to maintain that dominance.

It might have worked for ancient Egypt but it certainly hasn't worked very well for us. Indeed, nothing in the historical record provides evidence that any one idea should dominate the developmental time of all the young, and yet aspirants to monopolize this time have never been closer to winning the prize. The humming of the great hive society foreseen by Francis Bacon and by H. G. Wells in *The Sleeper Awakes* has never sounded louder than it does to us right now.

The heart of a defense for the cherished American ideals of privacy, of a man's home being his castle, of variety and individuality lies in the way we bring up our young. CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE. Put the kid in a class and he will live out his life in an invisible cage, isolated from his chance at community; interrupt the kid with bells and horns all the time and he will learn that nothing is important; force him to plead for the natural right to go to the toilet and he will become a liar and a toady, ridicule him and he will retreat from human association, shame him and he will find a hundred ways to get even.

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE..

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH CRITICISM,
HE LEARNS TO CONDEMN.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH HOSTILITY,
HE LEARNS TO FIGHT.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH RIDICULE,
HE LEARNS TO BE SHY.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH SHAME,
HE LEARNS TO FEEL GUILTY.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH TOLERANCE,
HE LEARNS TO BE PATIENT.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH ENCOURAGEMENT,
HE LEARNS CONFIDENCE.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH PRAISE,
HE LEARNS TO APPRECIATE.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH FAIRNESS,
HE LEARNS JUSTICE.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH SECURITY,
HE LEARNS TO HAVE FAITH.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH APPROVAL,
HE LEARNS TO LIKE HIMSELF.

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH ACCEPTANCE AND FRIENDSHIP,
HE LEARNS TO FIND LOVE IN THE WORLD.

---DOROTHY LAW NOLTE..

The habits taught in large scale organizations like schools are deadly. Think for a minute, by definition individuality, family, and community are expressions of singular organization, never of one-right-way thinking on the grand scale. Private time is absolutely essential if a private identity is going to develop, and private time is equally essential to the development of a code of private values - without which we aren't really individuals at all. Children and families need some relief from government surveillance and intimidation if

original expressions belonging to them are to develop. Without these freedom has no meaning.

The lesson of my teaching life is that the structure and theory of mass-education is fatally flawed, it cannot work to support the democratic logic of our national idea because it is unfaithful to the democratic principle. Ours is still the best idea for a nation there is, even though we aren't living up to it right now.

Mass-education cannot work to produce a fair society because its daily practice is practice in rigged competition, suppression and intimidation. The schools we've allowed to happen can't work to teach non-material values, the values which give meaning to everyone's life, rich or poor, because the structure of schooling is held together by a Byzantine tapestry of reward and threat, of carrots and sticks. Those things have no connection with education - working for official favor, grades, or other trinkets of subordination, that is - they are the paraphernalia of servitude, not freedom.

Mass-schooling damages children. We don't need any more of it. And under the disguise that it is the same thing as education, it has been picking our pockets just as Socrates predicted it would thousands of years ago. One of the surest ways to recognize education is that it doesn't cost very much, it doesn't depend on expensive toys or gadgets; the experiences that produce it and the self awareness that propels it are nearly free, in fact. You can see it is hard to turn a dollar on education although schooling is a wonderful hustle, getting better every day,

Sixty-five years ago Bertrand Russell, the greatest mathematician of this century, its greatest philosopher, and a close relation of the King of England to boot, saw that mass- schooling in the United States had a radically anti-democratic intent, that it was a scheme to artificially deliver national unity by eliminating human variation, and by eliminating the forge that produces variation: the Family. According to Lord Russell, mass-schooling produced a recognizably American student: anti-intellectual, superstitious, lacking self confidence& emdash;with less of what Russell called "inner freedom" than in the citizens of any other nation he knew of, past or present. These schooled children become citizens, he said, with a thin "mass character", holding excellence and aesthetics equally in contempt, inadequate to the personal crises of their lives. He wrote that in 1926.

American national unity has always been the central problem of American life, that was inherent in our synthetic beginnings and in the conquest of a continental land mass. It was true in 1790 and it is just as true, perhaps even truer, 200 years later. Somewhere around the time of the Civil War we began to try shortcuts to get the unity we wanted faster, by artificial means. Compulsory schooling was one of those shortcuts, perhaps the most important one. "Take hold of the children!" said John Cotton back in colonial Boston and that seemed such a good idea, eventually the people who looked at "Unity" almost as if it were a religious idea did that. It took 30 years to beat down an opposition which was fierce, but by the 1880s it had come to pass - "they" had the children. For the last 110 years, the one-right-way crowd has been trying to figure out what to do with the children and they still don't know. Time to try something different.

"Good fences make good neighbors," said Robert Frost. The natural solution to learning to live together in a community is first to learn to live apart as individuals and as families. Only when you feel good about yourself can you feel good about others. But we attacked the problem mechanically, as though we could force an engineering solution by crowding the various families and communities under the broad, homogenizing umbrella of institutions like compulsory schools. In working this scheme the democratic ideas that were the only justification for our national experiment were betrayed. The attempt at a shortcut continues, and it ruins

families and communities now just as it always did then. Rebuild these things and young people will begin to educate themselves - with our help - just as they did at the nation's beginning. They don't have anything to work for now except money and that's never been a first-class motivator, as our Vietnam War experience should have taught us. Break up these institutional schools, decertify teaching, let anyone who has a mind to teach bid for customers, privatize this whole business - trust the free market system. I know it's easier to say than to do, but what other choice do we have? We need less school, not more.

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