

Reading, 'Riting an' 'Rithmetic

A view on education by Howard Brayton

1970 saw the centenary of the Foster Education Act, the act that made provision for compulsory education in this Country. Prior to 1870, education was provided, in the main, by voluntary bodies, whose sole concern was the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Hence the British system of education, caters primarily for the intelligent, and to a large extent, ignores the average and below. You may be forgiven for believing that behind the jovial façade of the 1970 celebrations, all was well. The converse is in fact true, as the following quotations indicate.

What is education?

The teacher sees education as something to do with drawing out latent powers, cultivating values and attitudes and providing a rich environment in which growth is stimulated ¹

Education is a leading out, a drawing forth; not an imposition of something on someone; an eliciting of what is within him. ²

Education is what is left when you've forgotten everything you learned in school. ³

Education is too serious a matter to be left in the hands of professional educationalists. ⁴

What of the schools?

The educationalists go on the hypothesis that their system is all right and the children all wrong. It would be better to go on the opposite hypothesis and see how we get on. ⁵

The schools blunder on at tremendous expense, bulldozing over the pupils' resistance to crammed information and unintelligible discipline, turning out angry confused robots. ⁶

Apart from the rudiments of reading, writing and counting, the great majority of people have not been much affected by their classroom work. ⁷

In the secondary modern school ability is running to waste and delinquency. ⁸

Teachers lack the power of relating education to life. ⁹

Can it be shown that the acquiring and forgetting of vast quantities of knowledge has been of value? ¹⁰

What is tragic and far reaching is the ineffectiveness of education itself. Everywhere there is a feeling that education bears little, if any, relation to the needs of the people and the problems of life. ¹¹

It certainly seems that these children experience a great deal of frustration in school, and their inability to engage in meaningful talk must be an important contributory factor in their hostility towards school. ¹²

Academic teachers tend to like only those children who are good at their subject. ¹³

"It has been decided that I must stop educating you and get you through exams." ¹⁴

What is important is not examination results, but our concern for each other. ¹⁵

School ... is a brief irrelevant prelude to work. ¹⁶

Howard Brayton – February 1972

- 1 *Children in Distress* Alec Clegg & Barbara Megson
- 2 *On the Art of Reading* Quiller couch
- 3 *Eton headmaster*
- 4-10 *A Question of Living* *Escape from the Classroom* *The Sins of the Children* *State School* RF McKenzie
- 11 Prof. Men Morris Bristol University
- 12 *Young teachers and Reluctant Learners* Charles Hannam et al
- 13,14,15 *Rising Hill: Death of a Comprehensive School* Leila Berg
- 16 *Horizon* BBC 12/10/71