

Adolescents in Industry

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I see about 2,000 young people a year, one third of them coming from secondary school for the first time, one third of them changing jobs (sometimes many times), and about one third having been in their jobs for a year or more, so I can get a fair cross section of the secondary modern school-leavers, particularly the lower section which I describe as the 'Newsom' section.

There is no beginning to adolescence. It is a biological continuum and each stage is rooted in the one before; it must therefore be realized that the need is for team work. I am going to talk about school because for so many youngsters what happens in school is reflected later in adolescent maladjustment. We are not dealing at school with circus animals; we are dealing with individuals developing attitudes of mind. I must preface any remarks I make about work by mentioning some situations in the school that condition what happens on leaving. This is both important and urgent and I think we are missing some urgent needs. Problems arise so much from situations and the degree of preparation in facing them. The need in the modern world is for awareness, understanding, insight, discrimination and the capacity to make value judgments. The school next to the home is the medium for transmission and modification of a culture. The school could and very often does do a great deal to compensate for home deficiencies and to prepare future parents, so that the homes themselves are influenced either for good or ill. It also affects very considerably the situation at work, particularly as regards human relations.

My admiration for the school is second to none but as a civilized society it is time we thought more clearly about our aims. Time relationships are changing and time is not on our side; change is accelerating. We are approaching a chain re-action, a push-button age, when many things can happen so rapidly that lack of foresight, the price of unpreparedness, is disaster. So often with the young as with other things, we are treating symptoms and stopping gaps and we may be overwhelmed by events for lack of vision, of preparation and the will to achieve desired ends.

As doctors, we are interested primarily in health which is an evolutionary idea. Better general education is absolutely essential to the future, not only for development of the nation, but to enable the medical profession to cope. Every situation is multi-factorial; we are looking for wholeness and health, and they have a common root. Social disability is an aspect of social health, a compound of the environment and attitudes, and we might ask ourselves—what is a handicap? Educational failure which afflicts so many of our school leavers is, in the modern world, a much worse handicap than the loss of a leg. The real problems of health today are not physical, but attitudes of mind. We are frequently being reminded of the responsibility of the doctor for the development of what is described as the 'tablet age'; a pill for every ill, resulting in much witch doctoring and iatrogenic disease. Tension which so often we seek to remove by tablets, has been described as 'the irritation producing the pearl in the oyster'; it is really the stimulus to effort and needs a balance. For the young today there are no longer generally accepted rôles. Rapid changes lead to uncertainty and anxiety, and anxiety often breeds fear and possibly hate.

There is a breaking of old and recognized groups, and there is anonymity of movement. Movement may be good but if it is too rapid too early, if it means licence as

much as liberty, then perhaps it is not always good for the young. I do not think it is going too far to say that health and survival depend on increasing maturity, adaptability, understanding and discrimination. Youngsters leave school in the crisis of adolescence and change from the relatively undifferentiated boy or girl to the fully mature adult male and female, virile, potent, intellectually aware and critically acutely conscious of things which previously had not really impinged on their horizon. Also, they are experiencing the fantasies, the drives that come from the awakening of the sex impulse, which is part of the total creative force. I have sometimes felt that it is a not unreasonable analogy to say that they go from the minicar to the helicopter, with different gadgets, different rotors and almost a different medium and power. The body is the symbol of the self; there is a crisis of identity, a search for the self and a rôle. Eric Erikson described the most important need of adolescence as being for integrity; defining integrity as the capacity to live by self-chosen values. Ultimately, the adolescent is helpless in the world unless he has some capacity for making judgments and living by them, something to hang on to, and associated with this is a sense of need for relationship and communication, a feeling of uniqueness. Too often he is left alone without any help at all. So the transit from school to work is complicated by (a) the social situation; (b) metamorphosis; I have often been taken to task for applying metamorphosis in the wrong way to the adolescent. When we are talking about the vital flowering of the human being, then I think it is a change from water insect to dragonfly and something that cannot be covered by the mere term 'transformation'.

For many of them, on leaving school, there is sudden access to financial freedom, which can be a good thing, but unprepared and inexperienced, it brings them freedom from the family. It also brings, for many, power without responsibility. Adolescents are subject to the social influence of the admass cult, the 'we' teenage cult; 'we' and 'they'. There is exploitation, on a devilishly clever basis, of all the naturally strong instincts of sex, and materialism, as the basis for status, and ranking. The craving for significance which humans feel is crudely twisted.

I saw an article the other day by Henry Miller in which he was talking about the world going to hell and saying that he didn't try to influence the young but left them to their own devices. If we had been born on a desert island, we might have been irredeemably subhuman. We know what happens to people on isolated islands or any other places when syphilis or tuberculosis is introduced. Adolescents are a susceptible and vulnerable population, and if we simply allow them to wander without ourselves applying any value judgments or helping them to apply value judgments for themselves, it is rather like seducing a girl; introducing her to prostitution, and then complaining that she has no sense of values or self respect. I rather prefer the world 'vulnerable' to brittle, but I think brittle is part of vulnerability. The young are learning to swim in a new element. They are sensitive, volatile and ambivalent. Habits, maybe lifelong habits, crystallize. They are very suggestible and idealistic. I would like to make a plea for the young. I have seen this lower or 'Newsom' school section and what a magnificent set they are. What fantastic waste of talent and ability there is amongst them. There is a lot wrong with the society in which they are growing up. Of course, since they are in a ferment of vitality and virility, they represent a threat and a competition to adults, and that often leads to resentment and violent reaction on both sides.

Chronological and biological age

There are two time-scales of particular importance to the adolescent, the chronological and the biological; some are beginning adolescent change, chronologically, at an age when others are ending it—late and early developers. Entering and leaving school is based on a chronological time-scale and this is sometimes disastrous. There is a dangerous fallacy at the moment in using the same arguments for raising the school leaving age from 15 to 16 as we did when raising it from 14 to 15. The difference for

many young people, particularly the early developers and those who have opted out of school, is not one of degree but of kind in their approach to many of the problems, and school can be quite the wrong place for them. In present circumstances, we have neither staff, accommodation, equipment nor curriculum. It can be an interference with human dignity. School experience is often disastrous and there has been a gradual opting out.

I often use the analogy of experimental rats placed in a progressively more frustrating situation. They become more and more disturbed. Finally, they react in two different ways either becoming conformist, almost catatonic, apathetic, or becoming irritable, antagonistic, hysterical. In our social system and in our school system we can see quite a lot of each of these types of 'opting out'. Quite a large number have accepted failure; there has been a waste of talent and they are unprepared for the use of leisure. A term I am fond of is 'physical literacy'; a very large number of the children who leave our schools today are physically illiterate. Lacking primary academic ability they need to think with their hands and speak with their bodies and these talents have not been developed. I think schools do their fair share in producing delinquents. One headmaster referred to 'the youngsters who leave school as soon as possible and then come back to do damage'. One wonders what imparts such a sense of grievance to youngsters that they feel they must come back and break it up. Of course they don't always come back to the schools, they break up things outside. This is not the only reason for destructive tendencies, but educational failure and a sense of grievance and frustration which ensues is certainly one of the major elements.

One of the commonest characteristics of the approved school child is educational failure. *The Lancet* recently carried an article on the 'Challenge of delinquency' and, after all, delinquency is a common form of social ill health. Sometimes it is a sign of a forward looking individual who wants to break up something that really should be broken up. *The Lancet* suggested that "more concern and attention to child care and mental health might prevent some of the more alarming aggression from developing, particularly with better education, and further provision for leisure. Schools must reciprocate support for the family and the community."

Why drop-outs? In the U.S.A. the problem of school drop-outs and delinquency is a vital one. It has been seriously suggested that the school leaving age be put down from 16 to 14 again, and that provision, phasing-out, in different circumstances, should be made for those children who opt out so completely from the present educational system. In school too many of our children are 'done to' and not 'done with'; they leave school with no sense of participation and they have therefore no sense of significance. If there is no sense of significance and no sense of participation, you cannot expect a sense of responsibility. In industry, employers complain bitterly about the section who show no sense of responsibility, but it is very often the employers who have not shown a sense of responsibility in feeding back to the schools some of the experience which they have had, so that the educational system could be reinforced and improved. They want cheap material and then complain that it is shoddy. Industry has grossly neglected responsibility for education. People are more important than machines. Some leave school with no sense of communication; emotionally, verbally and physically inarticulate.

One of the chief complaints of a high proportion of the children I have seen is about repetition in the final year or years at school. In the last year they complain of being treated like children and of not having help in understanding personal relationships on an adult basis; of having no help in human relationships, of which sex is a part. In other words, they have not been treated as rational people able to discuss reasonably important aspects of living in society. Again there are many complaints of no interest in the lower forms, or no interest in the early leavers and there certainly are quite a

number of bright children in the lower forms who have just opted out of learning and have become slightly bitter, slightly resentful, and constantly on the watch for a chance to get their own back in some way. Some of these youngsters when they leave school, in spite of experience at school, try to go to classes for further education. They find there people who are better prepared than themselves and their poor standard of English and mathematics makes them feel inadequate. They get another bitter experience of failure. I think this is one of the reasons why there is such a disastrous failure rate at our colleges of further education. We are not handling the youngsters in the way in which they need to be handled.

Unfortunately, the curriculum is still conditioned largely by academic activities. It needs to be said again and again that many children think with their hands and speak with their bodies and neglect leads not only to physical illiteracy but handicaps verbal and emotional development through restricted power to communicate. Raising the school-leaving age in present circumstances will produce biological conflict on a much bigger scale than we have had up to the present. I was interested to see that Mr Gordon Walker recently, with great complacency, said that "the majority of those affected would remain at school unwillingly". I think, in effect, many are going to be given detention in the name of education, to be called a privilege and made compulsory.

There is already trouble in the schools for those who want to learn. There is already a large section of the educational sphere where the teachers are doing their best to keep quiet those who do not want to learn and are unable to teach those who do, and in spite of this a large number of children are trying to stay at school. There is a distinct shortage of staff. There is a turbulent turnover of young, inexperienced and immature teachers, many of whom soon leave teaching for other occupations. Many of the teachers are subject-orientated and unable to take an interest in individual children, and many of the young teachers are less mature than some of the youngsters they are trying to control, and accommodation and equipment are lacking. I do not want you to think that I am against the raising of the school-leaving age but if we are going to do something let us face the consequences, and not perpetrate a disastrous educational swindle on many of these children.

On leaving school many of the more able children are placed by their schools. Many headmasters have boasted to me of the children they have placed in apprenticeships and I have said, "Yes, but I'll bet there is a list twice as long of children about whom you know nothing, who give you a pang of conscience every time you think about them and wonder what's happening to them". Many headmasters have said the list of unknowns is twice as long.

The abler children can be more easily placed and this is what is happening. The more intelligent children go into better firms where they are better looked after and can go to colleges of further education. It is indeed a system where 'to him who hath shall more be given'.

The Youth Employment Service

The Youth Employment Service which is supposed to look after these youngsters is rapidly becoming a second class service for second class citizens. I have the utmost admiration for some of my dedicated friends who have given so much of labour and life to the Youth Employment Service under conditions which are almost unendurable. The trouble again is that after leaving school with this unhappy background there is no continuing contact and there is a complete ignorance, in many circles, of what is actually happening to these youngsters when they get into the work sphere. To use the analogy of a new element, we need more lifelines across the pool, more experienced swimming instructors, and better plimsoll lines.

What are the health needs of young people in twentieth century terms at this stage,

how can they be selected for care in this changing situation where nobody knows when something may emerge which needs contact and communication which can be so useful? Are we more interested in development or more interested in salvage and cure, or indifferent?

Under the scheme of voluntary contact it is claimed that those who need help are likely to get it, and that any compulsory element in contact would be a denial of liberty. I would like to make a comment on the futility of this claim for the Youth Employment Service, which I consider potentially one of the most useful and vitally important services in the country. At present youngsters must come of their own free will and those who need help are sometimes those who are least likely to come. A statutory contact is merely an opportunity to administer efficiently and to know what is going on, and out of statutory contact you have the opportunity to form a relationship. If we are going to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 16 we are not going to ask these youngsters whether they want to stay, we are not even going to consider whether, for certain of them, it is a biological insult to detain them when they are not suited for school any longer and when the school has nothing to offer them. What makes it right to exercise pressure in this arbitrary fashion and to refuse any sort of continuing tutorial relationship for them when they leave school, and when we might develop through the Youth Employment Service something of the system which students are fighting for in the universities?

Care may be taken over placing, but good placing is sometimes completely ruined by the way they are handled at work by people who may be technically competent but have not a clue how to handle adolescents. Training of the lower grades of management on the shop floor is really a vital need in industry. Some passive individuals stay too long in one job and become resentful because their talents are not noticed; they feel exploited and start to drift; other rebellious ones can never settle down. Both need help and neither can be reached by any of the means at present available. There is a need in the present society for what might be called self-disciplined mobility, and this demands a continuing link.

The loss of the Sergeant Major

Another factor that needs more attention is what the army calls 'loss of the R.S.M. element'. Many able children previously did not get to grammar schools and universities and some became the core of the British Army, the Regimental Sergeant Major or senior N.C.O., literally the backbone of the army. They were also the backbone of the shop floor and the foreman, supervisor type. Today, these people are going forward on their merits to universities and the higher grades of occupation, and it is a question of doing more with less resources. A great deal of criticism by older people in industry of the younger ones is due to lack of insight into a changing situation in the type of individual available for training.

There is too much emphasis on division and segregation. I think there is real value in the true comprehensive school which is a very expensive form of education. It does avoid segregation and could do much to help young people to grow up with an understanding of each other's needs—the good, the bad and indifferent, the more able leading, the less able getting an incentive from the more able, and giving them a sense of cohesion as the next generation rather than dividing them on the basis of a meritocracy.

Another adverse factor in the situation is that apprenticeships cannot start until 16, and many of the youngsters want to start learning and earning at 15, but the colleges of further education cannot take them. So they spend a year as tea boys and often lose interest and give up all idea of further learning. Then, there is the problem of excessive length of apprenticeships. Some of them are poorly devised, unsupervised and monotonous. It has been agreed that the basic skills of a wide range of trades

can be learnt intensively in nine months, yet youngsters have to go through five years of what in many cases is nothing but a form of cheap labour and exploitation. Many jobs in industry today are more fit for the mentally handicapped than for the average individual; many youngsters go from light airy modern schools to dirt and noise and drab repetition. We should do far more than we are doing at present to make factories fit to live in as well as to work in. There is the shortening, we hope rapidly, of working hours. Too often this is merely scope for more overtime, to earn more pay in order to buy more conventional necessities. We have a great need for better preparation for leisure and much greater facilities. Here, the condition of 'physical illiteracy' is a major handicap. The schools leave the young unprepared.

· Let me take a look at some of the Services, needs and opportunities.

The appointed factory doctor

The appointed factory doctor has been dismissed as sometimes bringing medicine into disrepute and he has been described in the *British Medical Journal* in terms which suggest that he is relatively incompetent and irrelevant; neither of which is true. The chief medical inspector of factories has boasted that neither in detail nor in principle has examination by the appointed factory doctor changed from inception of the post, which is 130 years. I wonder whether you could have a more damning indictment of neglect by general practice, because most of these doctors are general practitioners, or a more damning indictment of a government department for total lack of leadership. The post is to be abolished. We are going instead to produce more difficulties; to have divinely inspired teachers and the school health service—already overwhelmed—to select those who may need some help in the three years of succeeding work. These unfortunate young people are going to be given certificates (a red card system) which makes it impossible for them to be employed until they are produced, a beautiful example of nineteenth century medicine perhaps, but scarcely worthy of the twentieth century. In effect we are going to abolish what remains of any interest in young people as a whole. No study of development and developing need, only a rubber stamp. When the Inter-departmental Committee sat after the Boer War to decide why the physical condition of the recruits was so disastrous, it led to the setting up of the school health service. Several Certifying Surgeons as they were called then (not Appointed Factory Doctors), gave evidence as general practitioners which could not be faulted today in terms of the best medical thought. This has been ignored by the Ministry. In other words, there is nothing new under the sun; it only needs to be said again and again until something *does* happen.

I would ask you this. Is there perhaps something to be said for a transfer to the Ministry of Education of care for young people in industry as an extension of a re-organized educational and school health service which, in due course, is going to take them over, because it is proposed eventually that young people should be detained at school until 18? We must think biologically. We need a phasing-out process, provision for continuing learning while earning—as a life-long growth of experience.

At the moment the lower 20–30 per cent of the unskilled, the leaderless, the socially handicapped, the educationally defective, are the exploited and the ignored. I have heard a large number of youngsters say they were glad they were caught, they were glad they had been to an approved school, they were glad they were under probation service because for the first time in their lives there were people who had taken an interest in them.

Medicine and education are absolutely indivisible and it is not inappropriate to say that it is time medicine took a great deal more interest in education. I think this would lighten our work ultimately as doctors. I would like to see the school health service become a *corps d'élite* of medicine, attracting the cream of general practitioners

as specialists within the field of general practice for the specialty of developmental medicine, which is taking over paediatrics and school health and looking at the child in his period of development until he becomes adult. Specially-selected and specially-trained general practitioners should be the catalysts with teachers who are specially trained within the schools, stimulating all teachers to participate through interest and understanding—part of a therapeutic society, providing a situation for the young to develop discrimination and judgment. There should be a phasing-out process linking school and work as a continuum. The Youth Employment Service, reorganized, should be regarded as a senior extension of the educational service, projecting into the work sphere and should correspond, for the early school leavers, to the tutorial service in universities. The appointed factory doctor could for the moment afford the Youth Employment Service vitally needed opportunities for contact with the Newsom section. The A.F.D. would correspond to the Student Health Service in the university. The basic link, at present, would be the statutory duties, opportunity for contact, of the Appointed Factory Doctor. These would later be transferred or modified according to experience. The double link—

Teachers — Y.E.S.

School Medical Service — A.F.D.

—would link naturally with the school psychological service, the probation service, youth centres, and Adolescent Psychiatric Centre, the general practitioner and homes. At last there would be an integrated service for youth. The whole complex could be stimulated by association with a university department and common basic courses at a teacher training college. I think we should be able to do much more to aid development and social participation. Learning to live and enjoy life, is truly a function of education and medicine in community.

Discussion

Dr Poole (Bristol): I would like to ask Dr Herford about the training of young doctors and teachers, I think there is a serious gap in co-operation between the educational and the medical profession until we have that co-operation, how can we follow these counsels of perfection?

Dr Morgan (Bristol): What has been done about the use of leisure? Leisure will increase and very possibly antisocial trends will also increase with it unless this country makes sensible arrangements. I believe that in Switzerland there are such arrangements; even though it is a free country there is a certain amount of compulsion about the use of leisure for the younger age groups.

Dr Herford: I think that through inter-disciplinary sessions at teacher training colleges attended by general practitioners who are going into the school health service and by educational psychologists and youth officers, probation officers and all the rest, we could get a basic philosophy which would help a great deal to prepare the way for the future. As regards provision of facilities for leisure and the implementation of the Howell Report which suggested linking youth clubs and schools in preparation for leisure, we do need to do a great deal more.

Dr Poole: Mothers would readily bring babies and small children to clinics to discuss with health visitors and doctors the best for their children, but they do not seem