

Going to School Vs Getting an Education

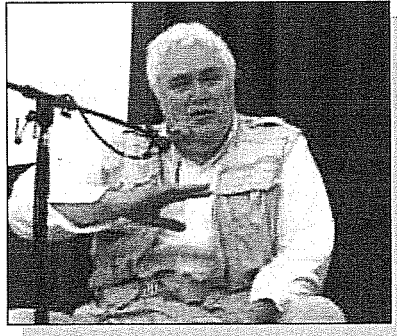
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by

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Going to School Versus Getting an Education

It's a great pleasure to be with you. This is the second time I have been in Salt Lake City. Three years ago, I was here at the Snowbird Resort for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, who had paid to assemble 50 teachers from around the country to design a school of the future. The third day of the deliberations at Snowbird, it dawned on me that the school had already been designed and a group of facilitators were there to elicit from the fifty assembled teachers their approval for the school that had already been designed.

So at the point, although I stayed at Snowbird, I was no longer part of the charade. I did enjoy Salt Lake City, and because of your dedication to family here, I think that you're one of the inspirational spots in this country right now. There certainly is a hothouse for family destruction in most places out there.

Before I begin this presentation, which will take about an hour, I have several apologies to make. I arrived at your airport at 2 o'clock this afternoon and a reporter had flown in from San Francisco to intercept me, and he and I were together until five. So if this presentation is a little bit rough, it's because I haven't gotten my sea legs back again.

Also, it was certainly my fault, but I wasn't aware until two days ago that I was going to make a formal presentation to the group, so I finished this at 6:15 this morning and caught the plane at 8:00. Let me tell you in advance what that means. I usually have a first draft that is very rough and bristly (because I was born and grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) and then succeeding drafts become more and more gracious. But you have the first draft area. So you get to see what would have hidden behind all those honeyed words.

The Future's Real World of Learning

A few years back, the Harvard School of Government issued some advice to its students on planning a career in the new international economy which it believes is arriving. It warned sharply that academic classes and professional credentials would count for less and less when measured against real world training. The writers found ten qualities essential to successfully adapting to the rapidly changing world of work. See how many of these you think are regularly taught in the schools of Utah. (Of course, any state could have filled that blank.)

- The first thing Harvard said would be essential is the ability to define problems without a guide, not to *solve* problems, but to *define* them without a guide.

- The second necessity was the ability to ask hard questions which challenge prevailing assumptions. I don't know about Utah, but I have never been in a school that would have welcomed kids to ask hard questions that challenged assumption.
- Third, was the ability to quickly assimilate needed data from masses of irrelevant information.
- Fourth, the ability to work in teams without any guidance.
- Fifth, the ability to work absolutely alone.
- Sixth, the ability to persuade others that your course is the right one.
- Seventh, the ability to conceptualize and reorganize information into new patterns.
- Eighth, the ability to discuss issues, problems, and techniques in public with an eye to reaching decisions about policy.
- Ninth, the ability to think inductively and deductively, and
- Tenth, the ability to think dialectically.

Now, in 1926, Bertrand Russell, who was asked to comment on the Russian revolution, which was a recent phenomenon at the time, said that in his opinion, the most radical social undertaking in human history was what was going on in the United States, because children were being deliberately denied practice in thinking dialectically. So, I don't know if we have changed in the nearly 70 years that have intervened, but I don't think so.

Our Current Educational Trend--A Dead End

From where I sit, and I have been sitting around schools for 30 years, I don't think we teach any of these things as a matter of school policy, and for a good reason. Schools, as we know them, couldn't function at all if we did. Furthermore, the price of teaching these things and the way they need to be taught, would be so much less than we are currently spending, that our society would enter an economic crisis simply by displacing so many unnecessary occupational titles.

None of the schools I ever worked for were able to provide any important parts of this vital curriculum for children. All of the schools I worked for taught nonsense up front. And under the table, they taught young people how to be dumb, how to be slavish, how to be frightened, and how to be dependent. There is too much money locked up in teaching this way for the school establishment, and its invisible outriggers in the teacher-college business, the publishing business, the school bus business, the construction industry, and so on and on and on, to surrender the monopoly structure of government schools easily. And, of course, there's more than money at stake.

It took me a decade of school teaching to realize that schooling and education are concepts at war with each other. The lessons that every public school I've seen in the past 30 years taught had little to do with reading, writing and arithmetic. Any good teacher will tell you, if they trust you, that those considerations are on the periphery of concern in schooling. They may not be on the periphery in an individual teacher's agenda, but certainly in the school's agenda, they are. Being a good teacher is a bad way to get ahead in pedagogy.

If you would like some examples of that, we have Jaime Escalante who was driven from his school, Garfield High, last year, even though he had attained some national prominence. And we have the phenomenal black woman, Marva Collins, who was teaching third graders in inner city schools in Chicago, Shakespeare and Plato, and was driven from her school and now has a fine private school with a world reputation.

Am I telling you something, though, that you really don't know? Schools as we have arranged them are bad places for children to grow up.

I include the schools generally thought of as good schools in that indictment, and I would suggest to you that this is sufficient explanation by itself why 650,000 families nationwide have taken their children from public authorities and are educating them at home. That number is predicted to double in the next five years unless restrictive legislation stops it.

Home schooled kids are on the average both bright and impressively human, simply because they are allowed to learn free of bells, free of bogus experts, phony sequences, constant intervention, and similar junk. Their pedagogy is real. Mine was that of a witch doctor. If journalists did regular comparisons between home schooling and government variety schooling, forced government schooling would slowly be exposed for the bizarre and unnatural growth on its host society that it really is.

At the Expense of Our Children's Minds and Characters

Oddly enough, on the day before I came here, someone mailed me two essays by or about Brigham Young, and he apparently thought the very same thing at the beginning of School. Stay away from it.

I am not suggesting that most of the personnel involved in maintaining this dangerous institution really understand the complex nature of what it is they do wrong. Most are hard working, decent people. Many are talented, intelligent people. They are trying to make a living operating a social machine that was handed to them. They are tired at the

end of the day, angry at what they consider unfair criticism, discouraged by the attitude of children. But the school institution is structured in such a way that their living can only be achieved at the expense of children's minds and characters.

Teachers and principals did not make it that way, and they have very little power to change it either. It is, as I have said elsewhere, a political thing. The mechanism itself is a work of genius, far beyond the reach of little people, except those few willing to take risks to sabotage it, and, of course, the great army of home educators assembling silently which will destroy it in time if not driven from the field.

Poor Little Rich Kids?

Schools create most of the problems they then scream for money to solve. In my long experience, poor children are almost as easy to teach as prosperous children if you go about it the right way.

First, you need to assume that they want to learn to be their best selves just like every kid does before schools get hold of them. I learned that by actually teaching poor children. There was some difficulty, of course, in fact, a lot of difficulty. But only an inconsequential part of it came from the children. The lion's share was from superintendents, principals, assistant principals, school boards, testing authorities, State Department of Education representatives, teachers' college personnel. etc.

As my kids began to achieve success, they were met-not with cheers on the part of school authorities and other teachers-but with anger and derision. You see, instead of one kid floating up from the bottom, what was happening were dozens and dozens of people who had been identified as permanently peripheral, speaking before the United Nations, starting businesses, winning city-wide essay contests, and in competition with the elite of New York City. It wasn't supposed to happen! So the reaction was anger and derision.

Teaching kids to teach themselves, which is a principle which constituted about 95% of my success, and which has been practiced by good parents all through human history, is such a monumental threat to the school institution on all its levels, that many safeguards have been set up to see that it does not happen.

I've spent a number of years thinking about this problem. I've written a couple of books about it, and I intend to write a couple more. But the best service I can render you in the short time we have together, is to layout a blueprint of the invisible curriculum schools teach. It is this curriculum, expensively maintained by rivers of tax money that

makes schools, in my opinion, the single greatest problem in American life. Not kids. Schools.

A Lesson in "Confusion"

The first lesson schools teach is confusion, because they have too many people, too much space, and too much money-which must be spent and then justified. Schools teach too much. They allow no time for learning. Virtually nothing selected by schools as basic really is basic. Virtually none of the school sequences are logically defensible. Schools teach the un-relating of everything.

Take mathematics, for instance, and you will be able to check on me with this next example. The very great mathematician, one of the greatest of this century, Alfred North Whitehead, said in the book he wrote in the 1920's called *The Aims of Education*, that the way we teach math is crazy, disconnected, bewildering. Pick his book up at the library. It will be there, I promise you. Then ask yourself why your school officials haven't read it-or if they've read it, why they haven't acted on it. But don't blame them too much. Almost all the power they seem to have is imaginary. Schools teach confusion. Disconnected facts are not the way to a sane young mind. But just the opposite.

A Lesson in "Class Distinction"

The second thing schools teach is class position. Schools teach that the children are born into a class and must stay in a class to which they are assigned. This is an Egyptian view of life which strongly contradicts the natural genius of this nation's history.

Grouping children by standardized test scores, or even grouping them by age, is an inherently stupid and vicious practice. It is difficult for me to contain my contempt for the very private agendas it serves. And I want you to know I speak as a registered conservative in New York City. It's a party called the Conservative Party, and I run for office every two years in Harlem as a conservative, and naturally, I don't get elected.

A Lesson in "Indifference"

The third lesson our schools teach is indifference. With bells and many other means, they teach that nothing is so important that it is worth finishing.

The gross error of this is monumental. If nothing is worth finishing. then by extension nothing is worth starting either. Few children are so thick-skulled that they miss the

point. School is a liar's world where people like myself are constantly declaring the importance of learning, while our actions in the environment say something different. It is no wonder the children give up.

A Lesson in "Emotional Dependency"

The fourth lesson our schools teach is emotional dependency. By an animal trainer's use of petty rewards and punishments, carrots and sticks, we condition children to subordinate their own learning patterns to the whim of some servant of the state.

We teach that human dignity, even in matters as basic as toilet habits, is at the disposal of others. Many people have remarked how degraded and dishonest children have become in the modern era. But they have failed to locate the cause in the daily training which we have arranged for them.

A Lesson in "Intellectual Dependency"

A fifth lesson schools teach is intellectual dependency. In schools, teachers tell you what to think about, how long to think about it, what order to think about it, and what evaluation the authorities insist you place on ideas and their management. If you cannot, yourself, imagine any other way to learn, I suggest you read Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, or any biography of Andrew Carnegie, or a book called *The Double Helix*, published a few years ago about how DNA was discovered by two kids playing games with an oven.

School, as we have arranged it, does not develop the mind. It bends minds to fit pre-arranged patterns. After schooling, the mind of a child will never again be totally complete—a good way to treat people you don't like much. or fear, — but a bad way to treat free citizens.

A Lesson in Fragmentation

The sixth lesson schools teach is self-alienation and fragmentation. From about 1890 until 1930, a period when a cult of "scientific management" took hold, and we got the towering edifice of school administration—school philosophers would proudly proclaim alienation, the suppression of self, to be one of the great social benefits of schooling.

In fact, like a good teacher, let me cite one reference that I'm sure you'd find in any local college library. The U.S. Commissioner of Education, from 1889 to 1906, was a man called William Torrey Harris. Mr. Harris was the leading Hegelian philosopher in the

United States, a frequent house guest of John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie. He was a man who assured Collis P. Huntington, a railroad magnate, that the schools had been scientifically designed not to over-educate, because Huntington was worried that if kids learned how to think, they wouldn't fit into the jobs that were available for them.

Threats to the System

Harris said in a book he wrote in 1906 called *The Philosophy of Education*, that the purpose of schools was better achieved in dark, ugly corridors than in open grassy spots, and that schools would not work unless the children could be alienated from themselves. In school ~ families, cultures, and religions are anathema. You need only hang around school people for a long time, as I have, to realize quite how unwelcome parents are in schools. The actual work and traditions of a community are considered dangerous to the order and discipline of schooling.

Let me tell you the philosophical reason why these things need to be kept at arm's length by schools. Nineteenth century philosophers, who in fact created the institution we're all a part of now in one way or another--men like Auguste Comte and Georg Hegel in Germany--considered any private source of power or meaning to be a detriment to the total control of life by the State. They taught that schooling should break children away from their families, their cultures, their religion, their neighborhoods, and any other private source of strength. They should teach children not to trust themselves, but to wait to be instructed, to be judged, to be numbered by authorities.

In the early 20th century, the great American efficiency engineer, Frederick Taylor (who is some distant relative of mine) taught the same lessons indirectly, and they were learned by the managers of schooling. It is better school business to pretend the children are blank tablets to be written upon, than to acknowledge the obvious truth that they are not.

The Next Generation--Incomplete and Undeveloped

As a result of the lessons our schools teach today ~ although these were not always the lessons we were taught ~ we're turning out incomplete and undeveloped young men and women who grow older, but are unable to grow into adults no matter how old they get. We produce children who are at best indifferent to the dishonest world of schools, and at worst angry children who hit back at us, hurt each other and hurt themselves.

School is like a hospital where you go to get hurt. We continue to grow crops of children who have trouble connecting the present to the future, and trouble connecting the present to the past. We turn out year after year a mass of children who are morally numb

because we have taken the meaning out of growing up. A frightening percentage of these kids have a taste for cruelty as you might expect, from being confined in an ugly plastic chair, in an ugly square room, in an ugly cheese box building for twelve years with bells ringing in their ears.

We produced children who are obsessively materialistic and turn them loose into an economy which cannot conceivably satisfy those material wants. So they are perpetually dissatisfied, whining, envious and self-hating. And we demand that our graduates be passive, obedient, grateful for a hand-out, fearful of real work, and most of all, we demand that they be made too timid to solve problems for themselves. They must wait for a teacher, a social worker, a TV set, a computer program, or a government official to tell them what to do.

It's All in the Game

The game the government schools engage in has little to do with teaching children to read. Bertrand Russell said in 1928, that the very act of schooling millions of children as if they were a large mass of fish, is the most radical act in human history. The reason we do it this way isn't because it's cheaper or better, but just the reverse; because it is more expensive, and it dumbs children down into a tractable mass. Mostly this happened because we have chosen to take the easy way out, decade after decade for most of this century.

Right now we are engaged in the most colossal self-deception in history. School is not a way to learn. It is a "jobs project," plain and simple. And it is a way to steer contracts to school service businesses, and it has been made into the single largest component in the American economy.

School is a bad place for children, because we over-teach, we over-buy and we over-administrate. By doing this we remove both the situation and the incentive through which all learning takes place.

Consider the irony. To change the way we do the school thing, so our children can be educated instead of schooled, could provoke an economic catastrophe that a planned economy has no way of handling. We have fashioned a disaster in our schools, and it is not subject to any swift remedy by tinkering with the structure we already have. We will live with its toxic by-products for the foreseeable future, and this catastrophe, in my opinion, extends far beyond urban slums. It reaches into fine homes, and into private schools as well.

Ugly Evidence

Let me give you the ugliest piece of evidence for that. Our teen-age suicide rate has soared in recent years. The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, which keeps these statistics, estimates that the real rate of teen-age suicide is 6 times higher than the statistical tabulation-although that is certainly alarming enough. Parents and local authorities often hide the real cause of death out of compassion or shame. Keep in mind it is almost always sons and daughters of the prosperous who kill themselves ~ almost as if having experienced the best a materialistic life has to offer; these children are saying, "If that's all there is, I'd rather be dead."

Our type of schooling obscures the real issues that education is about ~ issues caught in questions like "Who am I, and what sort of human being do I want to be, and does life have any greater meaning than what I can see around me?" Our type of schooling makes learning impossible, and without an education, young people go insane or just give up.

Confining a child with random strangers unknown to the family almost every day of his natural youth, denies him even the rudiments of privacy. Confining him in a classroom structure is like a nightmare of Karl Marx, conditioning him to bell/buzzer responses at short intervals like a daydream of Pavlov. All these are bizarre perversions of reality. They destroy the ability to think independently, to value quality, to concentrate ~ even, I think, to love one another.

Policing the Innocent

We have institutionalized the division of social classes in our school classes. We have used the police power of the State to create a virtual caste system, complete with millions and millions of untouchables. The crisis in the general community (by general community, I mean our entire country, ocean to ocean) is begun and nurtured by the school structures we maintain.

All the dependency pathologies, drugs, television, helplessness, commercial entertainment, alcohol, violence, and more, grow directly from the massive dependency we force upon children from the first grade onwards. All the aimless quality of our culture is a mirror of the schoolroom where millions of children sit, unable to fill their own hours, unable to initiate lives of meaning in their own existence. The passive spirit imposed by television is only the illegitimate alter-ego of a passive spirit imposed by the classroom.

*on shoulder of Gatto
Bogd. K Packer*

We have been doing this sort of thing for a remarkably short time in a historical sense. It only became obsessive, this need to remove children totally from their families and the working world, since the end of the First World War. It was the Red scare after the Communist revolution in Russia that was most proximate cause, I think.

It's Time to Stop

But whatever ultimately started it, it's time to stop. There are many wonderful and tested, wonderful and inexpensive ways to inspire children to provide a first-class education for themselves. We all know a few of them. In the past year, I have had a chance to meet and speak to groups of home schoolers ... {from} Boston [to] Portland, ... and in 42 states. Starting as a skeptic, I came away feeling like Ezekiel when he saw the wheel. But I'll save that speech for another time.

Let me read to you a resolution. I spoke in Wichita, Kansas, two weeks ago. A resolution being debated by the Kansas House called "House Concurrent Resolution" (but I can't see the number here-it's obscured), called "The Role of Public Schools in Contemporary Society," reads as follows:

"Whereas public schools are the primary institution for the rearing of children and the transmission of values, and whereas families, churches, and other social institutions are no longer able to successfully fulfill these responsibilities; therefore, public schools shall be the principle care-giving institution in this State." *

I, fortunately, was with 2,000 people at the Wichita Home Educator's Conference who said in one voice, "Over our dead body!"

I don't want to leave you with visionary suggestions. I certainly have some of those, but think I have some very practical, inexpensive ways to immediately impact your schools.

I think the first thing we have to recognize is that we are going to have to deconstruct schooling--not education--but schooling. We have to minimize the school aspect. And

* My information about this resolution was in error, but I did not know that at the time of my presentation. I had come across a satire on the direction the Kansas Department of Education was taking, and unaware of the dark humor it intended, took it for literal fact. Nevertheless, the "truth" the quotation carries is being brought about deliberately in state after state. ~ J. T. Gatto

that's going to require the courage to challenge deeply rooted assumptions and the stamina for a long struggle as the school monster fights back. I want to leave you with a few practical suggestions, as I said.

The First Step-Decentralize

Shut down central school boards and district school boards. These entities serve no useful purpose, and they constantly interfere with local enterprise and mandates. They are grotesquely expensive.

Decentralize down to the neighborhood level and with this one bold move, families could be given control over the professionals in their children's lives. Each school under this new government would have its own citizen managing board, elected from the school neighborhood and including representation for all groups, and referenda as a court of last resort....

School corruptions like the milk-price rigging scandal, or the textbook racket, or favored teacher deals, will virtually cease when the temptations inherent in remote central authority, personal empire-building, bulk-purchasing, and so on, are ended. And billions of dollars currently wasted in useless central administration can be returned to tax payers.

Lest you think that simply an insult, let me tell you that in New York State alone, there are more school administrators than in all 13 countries of the European Economic Community. I don't know how many are in New Jersey and Connecticut, but I have a funny feeling ~ there are a lot.

Let Everybody Teach

The second suggestion I have for you is a really simple one that is in use all over the world~not in every country of the world, but in many, many places. And it was in use in the United States from 1850 until about 1900. Make everybody teach!

There should be no such thing as a non-teaching principal, a coordinator, a specialist, an assistant principal or any other category of school employee who doesn't actually spend time in face-to-face interaction with the kids. The talk-down administrative model is a form of robbery and even if it were free, it's based on ignorance of how educational things get done, or indifference to it. Besides wasting billions of dollars, talk-down administration demoralizes teachers, discourages parents from active participation, and it confuses students.

Real educational efficiency will never be available to schools as long as schools run on a factory model. And save yourselves a fortune when you decentralize this way, recognize that there is no proper shape or place for a school building. The construction industry would like you to think so, but there isn't. Schools can be everywhere and anywhere.

In Wichita, Kansas, Bob Love of the Love Box Company—who was the founder of the first private school in the State of Kansas Wichita Collegiate, still listed in the reference book as one of the finest private schools in the country ~ has just opened a private school with his son inside the Love Box Company. And it works in and out of the boxes being constructed!

Measure Accomplishment on a Performance Basis

This is another suggestion, to measure accomplishment by performance, as well as against a personal standard. Standardized tests, like schools themselves, don't work. And they have lost their moral legitimacy. They correlate with nothing of human value. Their very existence perverts curriculum into an advanced preparation for the extravagant ritual administration of more tests.

Why are we doing this? Nobody out there in the audience, whether they agree or disagree with what I'm saying, would dream of hiring somebody on the basis of a test ~ unless they ran a government agency! If you run a newspaper, and somebody walks in and says, "I want to be a reporter. I've gone to journalism school. Here are my A's. Hire me," you'd throw the nut out the door! Would you hire an auto mechanic because he scored well in his auto training school?

Everything that sensible people rank and evaluate is done by *performance*. So, tests are useless as predictors ~ unless the competition is rigged in advance-or unless you say as a legislature that only the people who score well on tests will be eligible for these licenses. The test of whether you can drive is driving; . Whether you understand health or not is whether you're healthy. And whether you can write a legal brief is the brief itself. Performance testing is where genuine evaluation is always found. Close down the testing racket

Open the Schools

The fifth suggestion I have is to install permanent parent and community facilities in every school. We need to create a tidal movement of real life, in and out of the dead water of schools. Open these places on a daily basis to family and other community resource

people, and rig these rooms with appropriate equipment to allow parent partnerships with their own kids, and others.

One of the greatest things I stumbled onto before I knew about home schooling, was that I would send a contract home to every kid that passed through my hands. I would say that at any time, you and your son or daughter together can write a piece of curriculum and use it in lieu of any piece of curriculum I have. And furthermore, if it takes several days to do that, I will cover that with the other teachers (not telling the principal of course).

End Certification

End the teacher certification monopoly. It makes colleges rich. It's thirty cents out of every dollar in the United States College market. It supports an army of unnecessary occupational titles. It deprives children and competent adults of valuable connections with each other.

The licensing monopoly is richly deserving of all the disgust we can pour on it. Let anyone who can demonstrate performance competency before a citizen board, or a school faculty, or a parent body, be licensed to teach. The legendary private schools of this nation—Exeter, Andover, Lawrenceville, Choate Hall, Groton, Culver Military, Hotchkiss, St. Paul's, would not dream of hiring a certified teacher.

Certification itself, I was told at Lawrenceville, is in many cases the best evidence that a dependent, slavish and unselective mind is present. Now, I think that is horrifying. If the elite children of the nation are spared certified teachers (and I'm certainly a certified teacher myself) then I think the certification mechanism is a bad way to protect children. It's a good way to protect jobs, though.

Reestablish Stimulating Learning Experiences

Restore the primary experience base we have stolen from kids' lives. Kids need to do things, not sit in chairs. The schools die of confinement to chairs, addiction to bells, worship of tests, and utter dependence on low grade secondary experience in the form of semi-literate text workbooks. And blackboard notes crack children away from their own innate understanding of how and why to learn. Let children engage in real tasks, not synthetic games and simulation.

Field curriculum, critical thinking, apprenticeships, team projects in the community, independent study, and other themes of primary experience must be restored to the lives of the young. That, of course, is what I did over the last twenty years.

Offer the Freedom to Read

Suggestion #8 is to dismiss the army of reading and arithmetic specialists, and similar armies of specialists and coordinators in other areas too.

The reading empire, with its insane methodologies and routines, has turned us from a nation of readers that we were when Tom Paine wrote, and Alexis de Tocqueville visited. DuPont DeNemours wrote a book in 1812 called *National Education in the United States*, in which he said that less than four Americans out of every 1,000 cannot read, write and do numbers competently. (He was, of course, the founder of the DuPont fortune, a man who had a monopoly on gun powder in the War of 1812.) And these kids argued so well that he predicted in 1812 (in a book that will be available in a Salt Lake library, I'm sure) that America would inevitably end up with more lawyers than any other country in the world. And last year, "The Wall Street Journal" said that 10% of the lawyers in the world are right here in this country. He was a good predictor.

Children cannot learn to read the way reading experts teach reading. The apparatus of the reading teacher and the reading class is the best guarantee that multiple failures will ensue. The problems of reading instruction have been mostly artificially induced by the school setting and school procedure. Take away the profit from the reading business and the disease will begin to cure itself.

I visited in the last six weeks two schools that do better, which are certainly open campuses for any of you here to visit. One is in Philadelphia. It teaches kids ~ all sorts of kids ~ to read fluently difficult material by the time they are four and five. I was in awe of what I saw. The school doesn't teach at all! It takes the mothers in, gives them a week's workshop, and shortly afterwards, their children are reading in such a way that~I mean, it would raise the hair on my head if I were a younger man. The name of this school, by the way, is the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential. It's on 8801 Stenton Avenue, exactly on the Pennsylvania line with Chestnut Hill, and it is just amazing to look at it

Twenty miles west of Boston, is another school, called the Sudbury Valley School. It has been open 26 years and was founded by one of the youngest physics professors in Columbia University's 20th century history. The man was a professor in his early 20's.

His wife is a professor of bio-chemistry. This school takes kids from kindergarten through 12th grade, and utterly refuses to teach them reading or arithmetic,

They will not teach it unless the kids come up and negotiate for lessons. They've never had a kid that didn't learn to read fluently, but as the proprietor told me, some of them learn to read at 4 and some of them learn to read at 8, like his son did. And some learn to read at 9, 10, or even 11 as Woodrow Wilson learned--and he was president of Princeton before he became President of the United States.

In regards to reading ,we all kick into this very, very easy and natural, "on-our-own" schedule. The best way to corrupt that is to sit people down and tell them. "You will read 'A' for length 'B', and answer question 'C'....."

Now, I only have two more suggestions.

The Right to Privacy

Understand that total schooling ~ *total schooling* ~ is psychologically and procedurally unsound. Give children some private time and private space ~ perhaps on a collegiate model, some choice of subjects, some choice of methods, and even some choice of the company they keep. And if that sounds like a college, it was meant to. Give them freedom from constant surveillance and record-keeping.

Keep from numbering children and ranking them and labeling them so the human being can't be seen under the weight of tags he carries. To what useful end do we do this? It is a stupid and a cynical use of authority.

The Right of Free Choice

And, finally, what we're going to have to do, and what I predict to you we will do ~ whether we are allowed to or not ~ we have to provide legitimate choices.

A strong element of choice and anti-compulsion is essential to education. There is no one right way to grow up successfully. That emperor has no clothes. One system schooling has had a century and a half to prove itself. Right from the beginning it was making excuses why it couldn't get the job done. The first large scale school panic took place in 1854, two years after the compulsion schools were opened in the state of Massachusetts. Tax credits, vouchers, or some more sophisticated means, are necessary to encourage a diverse mix of plans for the different logic of growing up.

Unscrambling the Egg

Only sharp competition can reform this mess. The people who gave us the mess cannot do it. Providing this competition should be the overriding goal of public policy.

I thank you very much.

