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HOW TO BE A 'PROGRESSIVE'

SCHOOLNOW?

Progressive schools have a dated, prissy reputation.

How do they catch up with modern youth in town life?

The prewar image of progressive schools as communities run by bearded, godless, fornicating

anarchists for over-indulged, semi-delinquent

children, reared in an atmosphere of unbridled and

promiscuous freedom on a diet of grated carrots and

bare feet, has since been greatly muted. 'Some might-

argue that, apart from the menu, this is a pretty ac-

curate description of family life in the 1960s

anyway-though they can hardly hold the progressive

schools responsible for that. 7 '

' But if much of the progressive ideology has been

imbibed by middle class parents, at least in NW3, and

if the schools have lost some of their daring and their

experimental value, are they not now redundant and

anachronistic-their nonconformism-ossified into

ritual and their originality spent? What are the essen-

tial progressive ideals? How are these ideals put into

practice? Can the progressive schools find a way out

of their current dilemma?

Much of the early work of the progressive move-

ment was an emancipation from the rigours of con-

ventional education (beatings, bullying, buggery) and

several founders of progressive schools had unhappy

experiences at conventional schools. A key word in

the progressive literature is happiness. Thus, in the

aim of education is to find happiness . . . my primary

aim is not the reformation of society but the bringing

of happiness to a few children (A. S. Neill) and in only

a loved child is happy and only a happy child is

psychologically healthy (W. B. Curry). This stems

from a conscious revolt inspired by educational and

social reformers such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Russell

and Dewey-against formal, authoritarian, pedagogic

methods in teaching which tend to diminish the

pupils' individuality and which employ coercive

sanctions, with competition as an incentive. In

particular, the English public schools can, at their

worst, show a brutal insensitivity (from both staff and

pupils) to the needs of the individual.

- Reddie is Abbotsholme (1889) and Badley is Bed-

ales (1893) are generally acknowledged as founders

schools of the English progressive movement-though

both at first contained familiar vestiges of their con-

ventional counterparts-some uniform, pupils who

acted as prefects, cold baths, morning runs, etc. The

Quaker schools together with St. Christopher's (1918),

Summerhill (1924), and Dartington (1926), added

considerable variety of internal structure and diver-

sity in styles of boarding to give a polyglot pattern

to English progressive education. _

Despite this variety it is possible to extract some

common features. Not all progressive heads would

agree with the broad, radical sweep of this statement

of the aims of Kilquhanity House; founded in 1940

by John Aitkenhead: 'We were at inception against

war, violence, corporal punishment, uniforms,

authoritarianism . . . we were for love, life, nature for

freedom? This is in sharp contrast to the public

school model and is symptomatic of the values of the

New School's movement, as it was called initially.

The revolution sought to experiment with a child-centred

education run on rational and natural lines.

The progressive schools set outwith, at times, almost evangelical fervour to practice an existence based on abstract ideals such as freedom and equality. From Rousseau and the dignity of labour came a reaction to the lopsided academic curriculum of the later 19th century. The early progressive communities used their natural surroundings for study and even for subsistence. Instruction included some mastery of manual dexterity. both utilitarian and cultural thus. itsharing in tasks. particularly domestic ones, underlines the essential dignity of labour : : 3 the practical, aesthetic, emotional education given by crafts and arts is of value not only in itself but in promoting the growth of a balanced person."

Classes were small; staffstudent relationships were informal and even intimate; teaching methods. stressed activity; tidiscoveryii was the key to learning and the fruitful enjoyment of leisure. The formal authority system was minimised. pupil hierarchy was reduced, corporal punishment was rarely used. and pupils were often given some self-government. In contrast to the public school, 'several of' the new foundations were co-educational and many gave no formal' instruction in Christianity. They aimed to free the ' child from unnecessary restrictions, inhibitions and I prejudices, and to develop a balanced, tolerant, cultivated individual.

Having pFoved themselves to be Viable communities_where boys and girls could enjoy a creative environment without undue loss of virtue or academic attainment-the progressive schools fertilised the state .system; Their values particularly affected academic reorganisation; but there was also a social effect (as with school councils for pupils). Some former teachers and pupils later taught in state schools; but the inHuence largely derived from the fact that educationists, trainee teachers, and (parents read the publications of the movement or visit progressive schools. The progressive movement especially affected primary education and it has been an immeasurable achievement. One must be on guard, however, against schools and teachers who mouth the fashionable platitudes without altering their traditional practices. This can delude people into thinking uWeire all progressive nowii whereas the differences are often wide.

But some of this pioneering fervour in the progressive schools has been tempered by the social realities of the 1960s. Institutional requirements and external pressures (exams, parents, public opinion, inspection, economies, fear of pregnancies) often pose an urgent problem of identity. The pioneer progressive schools were small, almost family-like communities, where parents strongly supported the

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Maurice Punch -

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schools today: 1

Next week Royston Lambert

outlines his plans for Dartington, of which he is becoming headmaster.

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schools values. Today parental acquiescence is tempered by the rising cost of fees, and the need for children to succeed in external examinations to get into universities and the professions.

_ The schools were founded to protect inmates from the outside world till the laws governing conduct in the town are a compromise with a less free civilisation; idowntownn-the outside world_wastes its precious energy in worrying over trifles," (A. S. Neill). And they still think the outside world has values which would corrode their philosophy (an attitude shared by the public schools). So the schools either retreat from conventional success values (children at Neill's Summerhill, for example, leave at 16, thus avoiding the worst years of exam pressures), or else they formalise their methods and bureaucratised their structure in order to seek success.

But perhaps the most important change is in the children themselves. The inward-looking teenage culture, based largely on American heterosexual adult values, is proving stronger than the progressive ideals. These schools traditional espousal of cultural activities finds little echo among teenagers whose values are urban, cosmopolitan, hippy, way-out. The , progressive children of the 1930s felt rather superior because they were the trend-setters. But the teenage culture democratically makes the progressive boy or girl just another adolescent. And to contemporary youth an isolated rural environment, however beautiful is small consolation for the swinging urban scene where its all happening.

The progressive school is the product of an older generation. _Its basis-a sense of cultivated, social responsibility-is being corroded by youngsters more concerned with pop music, smoking, drugs, dancing, clothes and excitement. The pupils teenage world is the real world for them, because it defines taste, behaviour and (most importantly) heterosexual relations. Monteverdi has to compete with Ravi-Shankar, pottery with petting and weaving with television. It is instructive to notice the ' numerous prescriptions printed in the Independent Progressive School as if to emphasise that pupils may not do as they please. This is an attempt to counter the increasingly forceful teenage world which is out of sympathy with the liberal, moderate, tolerant ideals essential to progressivism.

In the past, the progressive school not only selected parents who would support its values but also often took children as early as possible. So children tended to come from permissive, liberated, intellectual homes and were soon drawn into the progressive atmosphere. This ensured the perilous continuity of a community
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which tries to realise relatively untrammelled individual freedom. But now that the progressive schools have proved their methods with selected children from the right homes, they could have a new task. The allegedly egalitarian principles in much progressive literature have never been put into practice. Children have usually been from well-to-do homes. Even where they have been given financial help (by the school or local authority), there has been little social mix. Unkind critics say that some progressive schools seem to have become exclusive approved schools for the problem children of divorced American parents. One of the few attempts to found a progressive community with working class children_-from a deprived, unskilled-worker slum environment-was Homer Lane's Little Common-

wealth? This ended badly, though it must be admitted that this was essentially a therapeutic community.

Some primary schools have adopted many of the principles of progressive education like child-centred activity learning, group teaching, project methods. But secondary schools remain the preserve of unenlightened, formal teaching methods and social organisation. One reason (perhaps rationalisation) for this is the stranglehold of external examinations which demand pedagogic methods that allegedly produce good results.

Progressive schools should now begin to take a much larger proportion of state pupils, from a wide selection of social strata. This could help revitalise the slightly insular, pretentious, apathetic atmosphere that sometimes prevails. They should try to make their ideals work with ordinary children as an example and an incentive to the state secondary schools. The experiences of Duane at Risinghill and McKenzie at Braehead are not very encouraging. But they indicate that the power of the headmaster is such that he can rapidly transform a school even with a hostile inspectorate and a divided staff. If the state is eventually to offer alternatives within a fully comprehensive system, why not state day progressive schools? Does a progressive school have to be in an isolated rural environment cut off from the wider society?

When people say that progressive schools are generally irrelevant, they ignore the fact that the progressive ideals of freedom, individuality, non-conformity and experimentation should always remain fresh. Their ideal should be the difficult one of Currys dictum that Dartington had no traditions except that it had no traditions. Unless radicalism seeks new causes it will atrophy.

THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF DISEASE

Physical illness can result from discontent, about job, home, way of life. Cure too can be as dependent on social as on physical circumstances.

Alfred H. Katz

Professor of Public Health
University of California
Los Angeles

Bodily illness has a large emotional and social content. Diseases which used to be thought of as purely physiological or biological are now known to require two kinds of condition before they can occur. One can class these conditions as "specific" (ie, specific to that disease) or "nonspecific" (ie, general to the sufferer's whole life). Among the specific conditions are: (a) genetic predisposition, as in diabetes; (b) deprivation, as of nourishment; or (c) an assault or threat. The main nonspecific condition is life crisis or stress.

Thus, one study of some 1,800 workers in the New York Telephone Company showed that 30 per cent of the people had some illness. A further 30 per cent of the employees had little or no physical illness (the criterion was fewer than three minor ailments, such as colds a year). The remaining 40 per cent were in between. The 30 per cent who had the major share generally had multiple illnesses; they suffered from several ailments simultaneously. Their pattern of illness was mostly established before they reached 18 years old. They were predominantly single women, living at home, and having to look after ill or ageing parents. They were very given to chronic, low-grade dissatisfaction with their status in life.

Hans Selye's classic description of physiological reactions to stress-the so-called 'general adaptation syndrome'-shows that the body mobilises to meet internal or external threat. The responses in the endocrine system and in other body systems are like combined alarm reactions and 'protective devices'. A study of duodenal ulcer in US army recruits has shown that three conditions are necessary: a specific physiological weakness, namely hypersecretions of acid; a specific psychological conflict or environmental stress; and an environment or situation that perpetuates the stress.

Extending these ideas to the social field we can differentiate between a normal reaction to an every-

SOCIETY AT WORK

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Who owns the family assets

Olive M. Stone

Reader in Law, London School of Economics

The most far-reaching provision of the Divorce Bill now before parliament is that enabling one partner to divorce the other, with or without the other's agreement, simply by showing that they have lived apart for the previous live years. This makes it urgent that the English law of- matrimonial property should be amended now. A bill to do this, the Matrimonial Property Bill, will receive its second reading in the House of Commons tomorrow.

It is frequently a subject for comment that, before anyone may obtain a licence to drive a motor vehicle, he must answer a number of questions about his physical condition and driving competence, and certify that he has read the Highway Code, but anyone may marry without receiving any instruction at all in the responsibilities and obligations of marriage. The bill provides that anybody applying to marry in England and Wales should receive a statement in' writing in simple terms of the matrimonial property rights of married people. .

The bill provides also that the rules themselves will be simplified and clarified. The principle behind the present law is that the property of the husband and the wife remain separate. This protects both parties from gold diggers and fortune hunters. But the principle has become, eroded and obscured by amendments to the Married Women's Property Act, 1882, and by the decisions of the courts (mostly made to help those married women with some earnings). Changes in the pattern of married life too call for a replacement of the legal chaos which is all that remains of that important act.

As passed by the House of Commons, the original Married Women's Property Bill of 1870 would have allowed a woman after the wedding ceremony to retain the same legal rights in her property as she had enjoyed before it. But the bill was emasculated by the House of Lords before being passed. So the act had to be amended four years later, and in 1882 the House of Commons succeeded in passing into law more or less what the Lords had prevented it from doing in 1870. Gradually the Married Women's Property Act, 1882, has been amended and superseded, and today the only operative sections are section eleven, which deals with insurance policies, and section 17, which enables either husband or wife to apply to the courts in a summary way to decide disputes between them about the title to or possession of their property. It is this section that the courts have seized upon in decisions since the last war. Most of these decisions have been based on the equitable presumption that property belongs to the

person who provided the money with which it was bought, even if it was bought in . somebody elses name. So, if a wife can prove that her own property or earnings were used to help to buy property (usually the matrimonial home) in the husbands name, the courts will usually say that they are entitled to that property in equal shares. (If the property is bought in joint names, the courts will always say that husband and wife are equally entitled, even though the wife may not have contributed towards its purchase at all.)

This kind of development has destroyed what is always advanced as the overwhelming advantage of the system of separate property between husband and wife, that is, its simplicity. Such developments also produce great anomalies. In theory, every man is by law obliged to maintain his wife unless she commits adultery or deserts him. So, under the present law, the woman with her own property or who continues to earn money after her marriage can insist that everything she owns and earns is hers alone, and that her husband must maintain her out of his property and earnings.

The slightly less grasping wife may, under the present law, use her husband's housekeeping allowance for living expenses and channel her own earnings either into buying property which is hers alone, or which mixed with her husband's payments will buy property which they own in equal shares. But many more wives use their earnings for household expenses, and particularly such things as clothes for the children and holidays for the whole family. These wives can claim nothing in return whatever.

Even when the wife can show that she used her earnings for such purposes by prior agreement with her husband, the Court of Appeal held in 1961 that whether she can claim any share in the matrimonial property bought depends on the exact terms of the agreement they reached (probably in a few disconnected sentences whilst they were amicably doing the washing-up late one night years before). In the 1961 case the wife was claiming, an interest in the matrimonial home on the grounds that the husband had been able to buy it because, by agreement with her husband, she had continued to earn money after her marriage and with her earnings had paid some of the household expenses. The Court held that if the husband and wife had agreed that they would put everything each of them earned into a, joint pool, and that out of that pool they would pay all their expenses, including the mortgage repayments on the home, then the purchase of the home would be a joint venture, and they would be entitled to it in equal shares. If, on the other hand, the agreement was that because of the husband's heavy expenses, including the purchase of the home, the wife was to earn money to assist him, then she had no claim to the home at all. She can claim nothing (except her right to be maintained provided she has not committed adultery

or deserted her husband).

The vast majority of women do not own property when they marry and do not earn after their marriage. They have no rights at all to property bought during the marriage. Their sole right, under the present law, is to bed and board during the marriage and no more, and to maintenance after divorce.

The Graham Hall report, The Report of the Committee on Statutory Maintenance Limits, Cmnd 3587, published last April, has shown conclusively that the vast majority of men cannot afford to maintain adequately even the children of more than one marriage. The legal right of a wife to be maintained after divorce applies to only a tiny percentage of women, usually women who could perfectly well maintain themselves out of their own earnings or property. Even then, the maintenance order is an affront to the pride and dignity of a woman who should be treated as of equal status with her husband. The order underlines her status as a mere dependant, a satellite of her former husband. It perpetuates the circumstances of the divorce, is often difficult to enforce and will almost certainly be reduced if the husband acquires a new family. Where there is no property in the marriage, the husband's theoretical liability to maintain his wife or former wife is in most cases a blatant piece of humbug, and should be exposed as such. The Matrimonial Property Bill which Edward Bishop MP will present for its second reading tomorrow retains the essential principle of separation of property operative in this country since 1883, by providing that all property owned by each party at the time of the marriage and any property which either husband or wife subsequently acquires by gift, devise, bequest or descent

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day stress and an abnormal one. An organism can overcome stress if its efforts are in the direction of reducing (or accommodating to) the stress, internal or external. But it will not overcome it if, abnormally, the organism's actions increase or perpetuate the stress.

As an example, consider the situation of parents who have a handicapped or retarded child. It is normal for the birth of such a child to cause serious emotional difficulties in the parents. It takes time for the parents to come to terms with the disappointment of not having had a normal child: to overcome their possible subjective feelings of guilt, shame or social stigma; and to give the child that extra warmth of acceptance and nurture he needs if he is to develop as much as he can. But if instead of working through these reactions internally, the parents keep revealing attitudes of rejection, shame and discomfort to the child, they will make his behaviour worse. Thus, the stress perpetuates itself. Even greater difficulties may ensue for parent and child.

Another example is that of a patient awaiting surgery because he has a heart lesion which needs to be corrected. Such patients often feel nervous about the success of the operation. This is normal. But in extreme cases the patient is so immobilised by his fear that he becomes a poor surgical risk and has a poor chance of recovery.

So, if we are talking about social psychological stress, "normality" is not a condition where nothing goes wrong. It is a condition where it is usual for things to be a little wrong all the time: disturbances constantly press on the body. Everyone is a little sick or disturbed most of the time. The body can then react to these pressures either normally or abnormally. Normality is a reaction that accommodates to stress in an expected span of time and reduces the disturbance so as to preserve homeostasis (or dynamic balance). And socially, illness is an event that disturbs the dynamic balance of the social group in which it occurs. On the other hand the general pressure towards homeostasis may also increase the stress on an individual and arouse illness.

A study of Seattle by Thomas A. Holmes illustrates many of these ideas. Holmes and his associates studied a large number of people in that city to check on those who developed clinical symptoms of tuberculosis and those who did not. They divided Seattle and its surroundings geographically into four socio-economic areas ranging from poor to rich. Among whites, tuberculosis was most frequent in the poorest areas and lowest in the wealthier. This held true for both males and females. But with Negroes and other non-whites this finding was reversed: the highest rates of clinical TB were among the inhabitants of the wealthier areas. Often they were professional people who had moved as pioneers into previously all-white neighbourhoods. Holmes seized on the resultant strains as helping to explain the TB rate. This team checked on how often people changed homes or jobs. Among both whites and non-whites those who developed clinical TB were highly mobile. They moved home five times on average while the two year study lasted. They also changed jobs more often. Fewer of them (than a control group) were married, widowed or divorced. Many of the TB patients were living alone in a furnished room. Holmes summed up the characteristics of the TB sufferers like this: They are transients in the neighbourhood.

in which they live. they have had multiie obs and
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guently, they have little family or kigshigr eigtion-
5M and are general y restricted In social contacts."
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that the \$00!?! varIa es in illness can be carefully
measured and compared. Poor social living orradjust
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friens or neighbours with whom they interact fre- '
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ment is an important forerunner of illness. Style of
life life dissatisfactions and inabiltiy to cope are a
kind of intervening variable.

How can we account for all this? Obviously. there
are many factors. The most important is that people
live in groups.

The primary group is the family. The somety in
which the individual is born makes him itsrmember
by influencing the ways in which he and his small
groups-family, peer, play, work-interact in solving
the tasks of each phase of human development. Ill-
ness, handicap or disability upset the equilibrium
both of the patient and of the small group he is
most deeply involved with. Emotional tensions, mat- e
terial worries, and such effects of illness as isolation.
fear, dependency and insecurity, arise in the patient;
but they also subject his family to chrommes.

Sociologists have pointed out that the ltneu
clear family (parents and their children) Is not well
adapted to cope with dependent adult members.

Institutions are required to carry some of the func-
tions once performed by the iiextendedli family
(where a wider span of generations and relations
lived together). Thus. according to one British study,
20 per cent of the patients leaving: hospital need a
drastic ahration in their living arrangements. Be-
cause of their illness, they could not return home.
With haemoehiliacs, a study I carried out shows
that the quality of early childhood experience-
especially the degree of .phySical independence and
physical activity encouraged by the father-is
crucial for establishing later social competence in. the
young adult and adult. Every parent of a chron-
ically handicapped or ill child faces some ttuncer-
tainty problems" which subject the family to stress.
With children there may be wide disagreement be-
tween the father and the mother about the rigour
with which a diet should be kept to, or about
physical restriction.

Each illness has its own special characteristics, and
each poses differences in the sick role for the patient
and his family. Thus. the bedridden are regarded
differently from patients who can walk. People with
some chronic non-visible disorders. like hyeerten.
sion, coronary lsease, diabe_tes or rheumatoid arth-
rTE's, are usually kept on their feet and at work by
continuous medical treatment. These patients do not
fit the stereotyped sick role. Their families fmd it
dimcult to exempt them from the usual SOClal obli-
gations. These patients seem neither well nor ill, and
their condition is usually not temporary but perma-
nent. Whether they prefer to be dependent or to be
active despite their illness, varies both With the fam-
ily situation and the individuals personality.

In general, families must adjust theIr customary,
routines and roles to the patients needs and to his
partial or complete invalidism. But family resources
are limited both economically and socially. It is
often hard to lool? after patients at home. Husbands

and wives have their own commitments-to the children. to their jobs. to one another for emotional and material support. Long-term illness in one member throws strains on the family relationships, quite apart from the material factors. If an adult.is'sick, the childrens need for care is often displaced by the needs of the sick- parent. But if a sick parent does accept a sick persons role of dependency. he must also accept a change in the law of authority within the family. Mental illness is a classic example of all this. The successful adjustment of schizophrenics on discharge from hospital relates not so much to the severity of their symptoms, as to the social setting they return to.

From these clinical observations how many conclusions for the treatment and management of . patients. We should not only study these stresses but also study the success that different ways of organising medical and social services have in overcoming them. Thirty years ago. Robert Lynd. the author of Middletown, in questioning the trends towards abstract or, ugrand theory" in the sociology of his time, posed the. questions: ttKnowledge .for what?'_' We must answer by saving., ttKnowledge fnr nee,"

The social causes
of disease

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