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ABSTRACT

Illich will not succeed in disestablishing the school, but he is teaching us to deschool our values. Proponents of deschooling are not only offering a brilliant critique of contemporary schooling but are also stimulating us to make education freer. Without basic political change we cannot disestablish the school; nor do we think it desirable to do so. Meantime, we should attempt to find out what some of the educational effects of partial deschooling would be. We can develop experimental programs to test the results of freer education on selected groups of people, disadvantaged and privileged, educationally stimulated and apparently unmotivated. We can also examine the effects of deschooling on the secondary level. If a voucher system is tried experimentally, we can evaluate the effects of changing the locus of educational control from school and state to family and informal community. A voucher system would afford parents the right to choose among various alternatives for schooling their children: minority moral education, integration, technical education, apprenticeship, self-motivated learning, etc. It will, however, need to demonstrate its ability to encourage democratic pluralism rather than to license discriminatory division. With these experiments and others that freer learners, parents, and educators will be stimulated to devise, we can cease to justify educational freedom solely by declaring it an "inalienable right." (Author)

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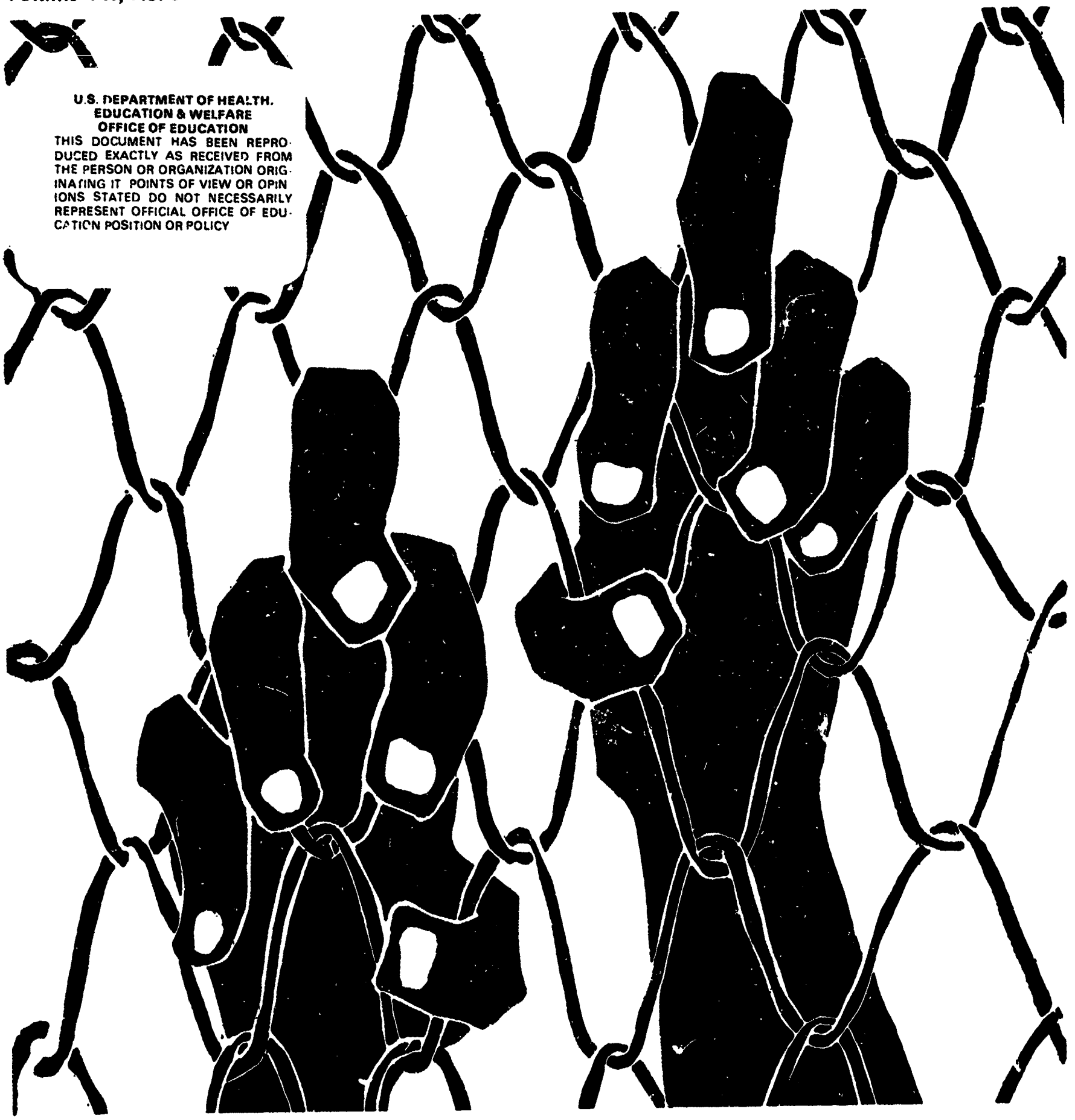

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DESCHOOLING AND THE DISADVANTAGED: IMPLICATIONS OF THE ILLICH PROPOSALS

Gertrude S. Goldberg

Ivan Illich has framed a declaration of educational independence: a guarantee of the "inalienable right" to learn what one chooses.[1] Illich maintains that in order to liberate the learner from the unnatural control of prescriptive and compulsory schooling, we must disestablish the public schools. Such a proposal departs radically from reforms like free schooling and even from the voucher system, which would break up school monopolies and replace them with competing educational structures.[2] The voucher system, according to Illich, "condemns itself by proposing tuition grants which would have to be spent on schooling."[3] Anything short of disestablishment and deschooling is insufficient because schools, no matter how free they claim to be, are always directed.[4]

Reforms like free schooling and the voucher system are designed to prepare workers and citizens more effectively for the same society, whereas deschooling is an attempt to effect major changes in political, economic, and cultural structures. Since Illich considers the school responsible for teaching men and women how to be modern producers and consumers, he views it as the major institutional bulwark of our false economy. The abolition of school, he holds, is an essential component of radical social change. Indeed, he insists that revolution in education can and must precede political change.

Were Illich's work an isolated plea for disestablishment or in itself less widely read, we might perhaps take his proposals less seriously and certainly less literally. A program so utopian, one that in the final analysis seems antithetical to the concept of society, is perhaps best regarded as a stirring manifesto, a means of mobilizing discontent with the present system and of channeling criticism in the direction of freer education. Yet, Illich devotes much space to describing the new relational structures that would replace school and would facilitate education that is free of social control. And he considers any program that does not include deschooling "demagoguery calling for more of the same."[5] In any case, many individuals are taking his proposals seriously, and other prominent critics are urging deschooling or educational change close to it.[6] Perhaps some of these individuals fail to distinguish between free schooling and education free of social control. Possibly they are unaware of the social and political implications of leaving direction with the learner. Or, some of them may not recognize that educational liberty would fail to benefit the disadvantaged, for it implies the differential ability to utilize freedom that we associate with inequality. Still others, perhaps willing to risk anarchy in order to free society of the undesirable controls that are now imposed by schools, may fail to scrutinize the assumption that radical change in education can precede political revolution. They seem to fall into the familiar trap of believing that schooling—or deschooling—can change society. By evaluating the salient attributes and implications of deschooling, we hope to raise the level of debate on these issues from that of eloquent declaration to rational dialogue.

[1] Illich's proposals are set forth in **Deschooling Society**, New York: Harper and Row, 1970. Further and more recent elaboration of his ideas are found in "After Deschooling, What?" **Social Policy**, vol II, September/October, 1971, pp. 5-13.

[2] The Office of Economic Opportunity has given consideration to an experiment in which public education monies would be given directly to parents in the form of vouchers, or certificates, which the parents then could take to the school of their choice, public or private, as payment for their children's education. See, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Economic Opportunity, **A Proposed Experiment in Education Vouchers**, OEO Pamphlet 3400-1, January 1971.

[3] **Deschooling Society**, p. 16.

[4] Illich is probably right in asserting the inevitability of directed schooling. In a study of free vs. directed schools, Nicolaus Mills concludes that freedom in nondirected schools was "covert" rather than "overt." Freedom "was not leeway for the students to do as they pleased. Rather it was freedom to choose from a number of options: to discover what courses interested them, to learn at an individual rather than at a group pace." "Free Versus Directed Schools: Benefits to the Disadvantaged," **IRCD Bulletin**, September 1971, vol VII, No. 4, p. 9.

Paul Goodman holds the view that free schools, in the best cases, are "administrative gimmicks to get around compulsory education laws." ("What Rights Should Children Have?" **The New York Review of Books**, September 23, 1971, vol XVI, p. 21).

[5] **Deschooling Society**, p. 75.

[6] Paul Goodman writes that the conclusions in Leila Berg's essay, "Moving Towards Self-Government," (**Children's Rights: toward the Liberation of the Child**, New York, Praeger, 1971, pp. 9-50) "agree with those of Holt, Dennison, Huberman, and myself. All of us have come to hanker after deschooling society altogether, except perhaps for socially deprived or psychologically disturbed children." (op. cit., p. 21).

As early as 1962, Goodman wrote: "Very many of the youth, both poor and middle class, might be better off if the system simply did not exist at all." (**Compulsory Mis-Education and the Community of Scholars**, New York: Vintage Books, 1962, p. 31.)

Education and Social Control

Social control is intrinsic not only to schooling but to any system of education that is formally established by the community. As Anthony F. C. Wallace concludes, "there is ... no human society on the face of the earth which concedes to *any* individual the right to learn anything he chooses."[7] Indeed, the definition of education often implies direction by others rather than control by the learner. For example, Durkheim defined education as "the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not ready yet for social life."[8] The function of education he observed, is "to adapt the child to the social milieu in which he is destined to live...."[9]

Unless proponents of deschooling are merely urging freedom at all costs—because it is an "inalienable right"—they must also consider it adequate preparation for social life. Yet, Illich rejects both moral and technical education, the two types of direction which are traditionally associated with such preparation. What kind of social milieu, we ask, is implied by an education which does not concern itself with job training and with the values and norms of future citizens?

De-Moralizing Society

Moral education, when provided by the community, is an attempt to convey a set of socially-approved standards to all children in a society. Societal cohesion depends upon shared ideas and sentiments, on rules of conduct and goals of action which most people in a society can agree about. If the community ceases to provide moral education through its schools, it runs the risk not only of value conflict and societal fragmentation, but, depending upon the extent to which other institutions stress this form of socialization, of insufficient character training as well. Children in different social milieu may fail to learn the common values of a society, and ultimately, there may cease to be such a core of ideas and sentiments. Or the socialization of all or some groups may simply be deficient in moral influences. The implications of omitting morality from the educational system are different, depending upon whether one considers the teaching of group and community loyalties or the training of more general values and rules of conduct.

Moral education: deficient or distorted: While proponents of deschooling find it officious for education to teach what is right and wrong in and out of school,[10] other critics of American socialization feel that children do not get enough of this kind of training anywhere. Urie Bronfenbrenner, for example, maintains that both school and family, the two potential agents for conveying socially-approved values, are not sufficiently potent influences.[11] Schools tend to restrict their role to subject matter in order to avoid the risk of religious persuasion, and families spend increasingly less time with their children. Instead, TV and peer group are more constant companions and more powerful influences. Thus the values of school and family are undermined by the often conflicting and usually more compelling message of media and youth culture. The implication of Bronfenbrenner's position is that a formal educational system without moral influence exacerbates the trend toward an upbringing which is already deficient in it. It leaves this function with a family system which wants to delegate more and more of its responsibilities to outside socializing agents, which is not only unwilling but probably incapable of doing the job. Indeed, Paul Goodman acknowledges that as bad as schools are, many homes are worse.[12]

There is little doubt that we risk increased societal fragmentation if we free education of moral control without assigning it to another community-wide institution. Durkheim, for example, argued that a society was impossible unless education provided this type of moral direction:

> If one attaches some value to the existence of society...education must asssure, among the citizenry, a sufficient community of ideas and of sentiments, without which any society is impossible; and in order that it may be able to produce this result, it is also necessary that education not be completely abandoned to the arbitrariness of private individuals.[13]

It could perhaps be argued that we have available in our day, unlike that of Durkheim or Jefferson, media other than the school which can convey common ideas and sentiments to all. When Jefferson designed his three-year public-school system, it was necessary to create a new institution to weld a new democratic morality because there was no other single agency that would reach all young persons in the society. However, if we were to depend upon the media to teach common values and norms, we would first have to assure that it represents public rather than private interest, a goal that is very difficult to accomplish short of public ownership—which would be resisted even more than strict public regulation. In any case, the teaching of morality is probably best done by a live group media which affords interaction between an adult leader and a group of young people, as well as among the latter. Thus a school class or a youth group established in a community center is preferable to TV for teaching morality, despite the ubiquity of the media.

The ideas and sentiments to which Durkheim referred were respect for reason, for science, and for democratic principles. If these were the values that were conveyed by adult institutions, perhaps advocates of deschooling would be less eager to weaken the moral education that children get. Instead, school, parents, and TV often emphasize undesirable values: consumership, credentialism, and wasteful production,

[7]Anthony F.D. Wallace, "Schools in Revolutionary and Conservative Soc eties," Social and Cultural Foundations of Guidance, edited by Esther M. Lloyd-Jones and Norah Rosenau, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968, p. 197.

[8]Emile Durkheim, "Education: Its Nature and Role," Education and Society, translated and with an introduction by Sherwood D. Fox, Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1956, p. 71.

[9]Ibid., p. 79.

[10]See Deschooling Society, p. 31.

[11]Urie Bronfenbrenner, Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R., New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970, p. 100.

[12]Compulsory Mis-Education, p. 31.

[13]Durkheim, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

rather than values conducive to human development.[14] Instead of democratic principles our children learn a paternalistic patriotism, "how to feel like children of the same state."[15] They have been urged to achieve, not for their own development or for community welfare, but for national defense—in order to outpace our adversaries in space.

The crass and corrupt values that our children learn are, we feel, more alarming than either value conflict or weak exposure to such moral influences. It is not that school, family, and media disagree but that each fail to demonstrate the primacy of life over property, knowledge over credentialism, social worth over financial success, and truth over public relations. Were it not for the mild dissonance that some of our young people experience, they would be far more accepting than they are of adult ideas and sentiments that are the very antithesis of constructive human values. The question, then, is whether it is necessary to create anarchy in order to rid ourselves of anti-social moral education.

Morality and the peer group: Different positions concerning the relationship between moral socialization and formal educational structures are associated with divergent attitudes toward the role of the peer group. Illich views school as the source, or at least the continuing stimulus, to age grouping and to separate childhood, which is really a modern phenomenon. "If there were no age-specific and obligatory learning institution, 'childhood' would go out of production."[16] The peer group that Illich would create by his new educational structures is composed of "partners in inquiry." It would take people out of neighborhoods and age-graded groupings and match them according to interest. Deschooling would break up the so-called "natural" peer group which is, to some extent, a product of school or of the mentality that regards friends as those who are born during the same school year or who attend the same class.

Bronfenbrenner, on the other hand, is concerned about the negative moral influences of the unsupervised peer group and would increase its exposure to adult influences. The Russian peer group, he reports, is graded and age-segregated, but it is supervised by adults and thus reflects rather than rejects societal values. One may consider Russian youth too conforming and docile, the products of a totalitarian society in which the State controls all institutions—family, media, school, peer group. Yet, one may nevertheless be worried about the impetus that deschooling would offer in this country, if not elsewhere, to an anti-social peer group.

There is reason to fear that many youngsters would not take up the option to learn what they wish or to join a group of partners in inquiry. Adolescent peer groups may resist corrupt adult values and may help us recognize the gap between creed and deed. But they can also become anti-social gangs which reflect adult corruption or their own brand of inverted values. Slum adolescents have long exhibited a tendency to become a separate society, alienated from parents and community institutions. The slum peer group is often a delinquent subculture, a gang committing anti-social acts akin to those that are increasingly engaged in by more affluent teen-agers.

It may, perhaps, be argued that disadvantaged groups, whose youth have traditionally been more oriented to the peer society than higher-status youngsters, would be affected more severely by the absence of moral education. It is true that lower-income parents, for understandable reasons, have less energy and time than middle-class parents to take on some of the moral functions the school now assumes. The responsibility for moral education may be a bigger burden for the lower-class family than for more advantaged groups, but it is doubtful that the school, though now assigned this function, succeeds in influencing the character training of disadvantaged youth. The values of the school are often out of context with the family and community interests of minority-group children; hence the proffered influence is usually rejected. Indeed, one goal of minority group parents who have attempted to achieve community control of local schools has been to increase continuity between home and school values.

Group and national allegiance: If deschooling has only slightly different implications for the character training of higher and lower status groups, education that omits allegiance to the state does affect the disadvantaged differently. Our schools were established to teach men and women "those facts which history exhibiteth" in order that they might be able to discern tyranny and find the fervor to defend liberty.[17] Jefferson's educational system attempted to develop loyalty for what was, in retrospect, "a new nation conceived in liberty...." It was a democratic status quo that one should be proud to defend. Schools were established to teach principles akin to what Durkheim means by "ideas and sentiments which are at the base of democratic morality."[18]

The democratic morality that children learn, however, is particularly dissonant to disadvantaged groups. It is a distortion of democratic principles, the inculcation of respect for an established order that supports privilege in the name of "liberty and justice for all." It is the imposition of majority interest—or minority, depending on what groups are thought to benefit sufficiently—in the name of majority values. There is, of course, reason to question whether the new nation was responsive to all groups, particularly those without property. In any case, the teaching of patriotism to disadvantaged groups today, particularly to a racial caste, is an attempt to bind them to a status quo that does not meet their needs. Community control, which teaches blacks to be proud of their group and to consider themselves worthy of equal treatment, has made them aware of their disadvantages, of how democratic principles do not extend to them. It is not anti-democratic but anti-status quo.

[14]A number of observors have pointed out that it is not so much that we fail to intone humanitarian ideals but that such teachings are hypocritical because our actions bely these stated values. Kenneth Kenniston, for example, has referred to the gap between social creeds and deeds. (Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Harvest Book, 1968.)

[15]Deschooling Society, p. 31.

[16]Ibid., p. 28.

[17]Thomas Jefferson, "A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," The Complete Jefferson, Containing His Major Writings, Published and Unpublished, except for His Letters, assembled and arranged by Saul K. Padover, New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1943, p. 1048.

[18]Durkheim, op.cit., p. 81.

Of particular importance to community control of education is what Anthony Wallace considers the supreme value in moral education: the stress on behavior that enhances the welfare of the group, or does not retard it.[19] Black-power strategists, who have influenced community control experiments, maintain that because black people have suffered as a group, their liberation lies in group action.[20] Integration, they claim, advances the individual, often a middle-class black, but leaves the great mass where they were and without potential leaders, who move up and out of the ghetto. In their view, such individual advancement robs the ghetto of those potential leaders who have been successful enough to move up and out.

It is possible that deschooled education would enable a significant minority to develop intellectual competence, which, in turn, might become an important group asset. The development of ideologies, the framing of strategies, and the documentation of disadvantage are all intellectual tasks which are vital to groups that are mobilizing themselves to overcome disadvantage. Yet, there is no reason to anticipate that egotistical, self-directed education would provide leaders for minority groups. For such an education fails to stress a commitment to one's group, a conviction that individual advancement must not be at the expense of group progress.

Dilemmas of minority-group education: While moral education may be conducive to group loyalty, it often appears to handicap minorities by placing insufficient stress on intellectual or technical competence. Preference for one or the other type of learning emphasis for minority-group students depends upon how one conceives of individual and group advancement in a post-industrial society.

It is clear that certain educational decisions in areas where blacks have gained influence over local schools, as in Newark, stress different or additional learning matter from majority schools. The black-dominated Newark Board of Education voted to permit the Black Liberation flag to be flown in classrooms in which fifty percent or more students were black. The comment of Mayor Kenneth Gibson, also black,– "...the flag remains as only a symbol that cannot teach children to read"[21]–suggests the conflict between moral and technical education for minority-groups in a society where majority emphasis is on training people to do jobs. It can be argued, on the one hand, that until the disadvantaged catch up in labor-market skills they remain behind. On the other hand, group power, made possible by solidarity, can get them the jobs without the credentials, particularly if skills are relatively unimportant. In the absence of clout, some will be discriminated against, even with the credentials.[22] Indeed, labor-market statistics have shown for some time that a high school diploma for a black is no particular advantage. A midway position on this issue is that enhanced group pride will contribute to group solidarity as well as to the ability to learn academic skills.

Programs that have succeeded in improving academic achievement of blacks have stressed the standard curriculum, and those which have enhanced self-image through emphasizing group culture and racial and ethnic pride have not necessarily remedied defects in formal education.[23] Yet, we have not measured which type of success, moral, technical, or intellectual, is more likely to lead to group or individual mobility, since we have tended to evaluate programs on the basis of academic rather than subsequent occupational or economic advancement. However, one program that has been viewed enthusiastically by many observers combines a highly disciplined standard curriculum with what is clearly the value emphasis of moral education. At Harlem Prep School for black teen-agers, educational achievement is not seen as a means of escaping from the community but of rendering it service.[24] For a disadvantaged group within a society that stresses job training for the majority (even though this may often consist of mere credentialing) it would seem a good strategy for schooling to combine both types of education.

Majority vs. minority morality: As our discussion has shown, deschooling would have different implications for minority and majority groups. The more privileged groups do not need the public school to bind the loyalties of their children to existing societal arrangements. Indeed, their youth have often been educated privately. The public schools serve their interests by attempting to gain the allegiance of less privileged youth who, in the absence of such indoctrination, may be less accepting of their lot. Deschooling would thus free the poor of an education that teaches majority morality. Hence it would contribute to weakening of majority control. On the other hand, if disadvantaged groups were able to gain control of schools in their communities, they would have at their disposal an important resource for developing their own minority morality and, in turn, the group solidarity upon which advancement depends. Community control would gain them a positive resource rather than merely free them of a negative one. It is not that the poor need to be free of moral education but of majority control that is exerted through the educational system. They need minority rather than majority moral education.

Inasmuch as community control is very difficult to achieve and has been stricken down by State authorities where it was achieved on a local level, it seems unrealistic to base minority educational hopes on this option. However, a voucher system that would enable parents to establish such schools in their community, if they wish, would seem to offer the possibility of achieving some of the group goals that community control offers. The locus of choice would be the parent rather than society or local community, not the learner. However, without common morality and careful safeguards against racism, regular or reverse, the voucher system could be a new public license for discrimination and segregation.

[19] Wallace, op. cit., p. 195.

[20] See, for example, Stokeley Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America, New York: Vintage Books, 1967, p. 54.

[21] "Black Symbol," New York Times, December 5, 1971, Section 4, p. 3.

[22] Using partial regression techniques to control for social origin and formal educational qualifications, Beverly Duncan and Otis Dudley Duncan found that Negroes fall significantly behind all other minorities and the majority (white native sons of native fathers) in occupational achievement or socio-economic status. The authors conclude: "The evidence of discrimination against the American Negro in the competition for jobs is difficult to discount." ("Minorities and Process of Stratification," American Sociological Review, June 1968, vol 33, pp. 356-64.

[23] Nicolaus Mills, op. cit.

[24] Ibid., p. 7.

It is also possible to argue that minority morality can be developed outside formal educational structures, through churches, social movements, youth serving agencies, etc. If intellectual competence were developed in school, perhaps these other institutions could encourage group solidarity and particularly influence potential leaders to put their education at the service of the community. While these agencies would provide minority morality, they would not obviate the problem of societal fragmentation, the lack of community-wide agencies to teach common morality. Competing ideologies are necessary and desirable in a society, but not in the absence of basic principles which all accept, no matter how much they disagree about subsidiary issues. Once again, though, it may be preferable to increase anarchy in order to flush out the corrupt value system.

If minority morality is strong enough, there may, as we have indicated, be less need to stress technical learning for the disadvantaged. Much depends upon whether one considers schooling necessary training for skills or required ritual for jobs. In the latter case, political power may gain what school credentials often fail to achieve, particularly for blacks. Deschooling proponents maintain that school is not needed to prepare workers for most jobs and that education for *all* groups can therefore be freed of unnecessary subservience to the labor market. In the following section, we shall discuss the implications of an education that is not geared to manpower development.

Education and the Labor Market

The position that education need not be controlled for purposes of the labor market is based on two major assumptions. One, which we have already noted, is that people do not need a decade of schooling to prepare them for most jobs. What needs to be mastered could be learned on the job or in a far less protracted course of study than is now required, indeed compulsory. However, Illich bases his position on a more basic critique of the economic system. He argues that we do not need many of the present goods and services, that these products merely expand GNP and keep men employed. We are influenced, largely in school, to want these goods and services, but, according to Illich, we can do without many of the products and hence many of the jobs.

Illich is arguing that educational freedom is possible because modern technology enables man to relinquish the productive role. Producing the necessities of life has ceased to take up his time. The available hours can either be filled, as they are now, by stimulating a demand for and providing inessential services and wasteful goods. Or it can be used to make a limited range of more durable goods and to provide access to institutions which can increase the potential for human action. There will be much time for joyous leisure: not ennui, but intensive work and play. Such action is best promoted by learning which is an end in itself and which needs no external reinforcement. The learner is under no other control or curriculum than that which the subject of his choice dictates. In a society where men are to a great extent free of labor-market control, education which stresses intellectual and cultural development is functional. And schooling which does not prepare people to handle leisure is dysfunctional; it leads to wide-spread boredom and depression.

A choice that was unthinkable for man in earlier ages, that between unemployment and joyful, active leisure is "inevitable" for post-industrial man.[25] The choice of freedom is thus a necessity dictated by a particular state of industrial development and not a matter of a timeless value, an inalienable right. The question then is not whether we are for or against freedom but whether free education is a historical imperative.

Wealth and Welfare in a Post-Industrial Society

This view of the post-industrial economy is quite similar to that of Robert Theobald and of the Triple Revolution group, although it is primarily concerned with education rather than with guaranteed income. Theobald and his colleagues have urged that we prepare for "freedom from work" by guaranteeing an income to everyone, in or out of the labor force.[26] Illich, though proposing the education for this post-industrial economy, never specifies how men are to support themselves if they are not among the few who produce durable goods and work in active institutions.

The failure to deal with the problem of income seems a major omission in view of the fact that we are not dealing with a "leisure class" but with a large sector of society that may be without jobs. Not only the poor, who are always fired first, but many others would find themselves without work. There is, of course, the possibility that what people learn out of choice, interest, or aptitude will come to be valued by others and convertible into jobs and income—writing, sports, art collection, etc. Knowledge and competence would be the key to wealth rather than schooling and credentials. While choice might be influenced some by what would sell, labor market stimuli play a weaker role in the motivation for such vocations than in most other work. Many of these jobs could be learned through free education, and training for other work—the production of durable goods and of beneficial services—could be delayed or on-the-job; thus it would not contaminate or constrict the educational process. But, in the absence of any income guarantee—and even with a minimal one—the struggle for jobs would be fiercely competitive, and we might be forced to devise even more protracted rituals than schooling in order to select the "fittest."

[25] Deschooling Society, p. 63.

[26] See, for example, Robert Theobald, editor, The Guaranteed Income: Next Step in Economic Evolution?, New York: Doubleday, 1966.

Need or Dependency

Critics of the Triple-Revolution position have tended to consider it premature in view of the quantity of unmet needs in our society and all others. This debate hinges on the definition of need. Some years ago, Galbraith observed that advertising and salesmanship actively stimulate wants, that "production only fills a void that it has itself created."[27] Illich concurs, but he also considers many services unnecessary. He maintains that we are taught, primarily in school, to want and to depend upon institutional treatment. We learn that we must rely on experts rather than teaching ourselves, or ministering to others.

Although Illich does not deal with the problem of inequality, one may infer that if we were no longer taught to need such an excessive amount of goods, the poor would feel less deprived and the rich would be less greedy. Yet, the one group in our society that has shown the greatest indifference to post-industrial products (in addition to a few intellectuals) are contemporary, upper-status youth. Interestingly, their education has come closer to the one Illich proposes than that of the less-privileged classes, but they are also affluent enough to have been sated with goods. It is not clear whether freer education or increased distribution of wealth is more likely to make us less needy. There is little doubt that a system of education more geared to the development of inner resources would decrease the desire for superficial goods and increase resistance to advertised need. Yet, it is important to remember that for a great many people, especially the poor and near poor, needs remain unmet and uninflated.

Social utilities: The trend among social policy experts to redefine social need may seem to be symptomatic of a mentality that has become schooled to institutional treatment. Alfred Kahn, for example, argues that "social change creates new prerequisites for adequate social life in industrial communities."[28] He conceives of many social services as "social utilities" in order to emphasize that we should not consider ourselves any more inadequate or dependent because we need these services than those who need public utilities like roads, water supply, electricity, mail delivery. Martin Rein and S.M. Miller use the term "amenities" to emphasize that services enhance the quality of life rather than meet a narrowly conceived need.[29] A wealthy society, these social planners would argue, can do better than to define need in terms of scarcity; it can afford to provide modest services to all. Indeed, proponents of greater equality and of the welfare expansion they feel would accomplish this, find it strange to be put in the same camp with those who stimulate demand for commercial products—particularly since the inflation of such needs often keeps us from investing our surplus in welfare or from redistributing existing resources.

Whatever redefinition of social need has occurred, it would be incorrect to view school as the source of this expansion of increased dependency. It is also an illusion to think that deschooling would increase independence—or is it rugged individualism?

In our country, the school is the one service that is so completely a social utility—universal, provided without stigma of dependency, vitally needed by all—that it is no longer regarded as welfare.[30] Those who would move welfare in the direction of the utilities model would hope to emulate the schools in these respects, but they have not found that universal schooling teaches us to want very much welfare. We are still a "social-security state" in which the better and less coercive services go to those who establish their rights through attachment to the work force rather than through such universalistic criteria as citizenship, age, or need. If we made a few halting steps toward recognition of social insecurity, it was under the insurmountable pressure of a major depression and not as a result of manipulative schooling. Despite our commitment to universal schooling we are far less a welfare state than other societies that spend less on schooling and have provided compulsory education less long. It is, in fact, a major limitation of Illich's work that it fails to recognize significant differences in societies and differing educational needs depending upon the stage of industrial development and prevailing value orientations. The approach is sweeping in scope, but perhaps it is too global.

Although we do not share the view that the need for welfare services is inflated, we do consider the appetite for goods excessive and wasteful of natural resources. Indeed, HEW pollution is a misleading metaphor; some services may be destructive of people, but service industries do not deplete the environment. Furthermore, there is, as we shall describe later, a trend toward more *active welfare*, a concept which implies more service and more independence.

Although deschooling would not and should not decrease the need for social utilities, there are important reasons why education should give more freedom to the learner. Illich and others are correct in stressing that many jobs do not require schooling.[31] Indeed, an education that stressed morality or community service would probably do more to improve the job functioning of many workers than increased emphasis on skills training.[32] Freed from unnecessary labor-market constraints, education would enrich life, especially leisure, if it allowed the learner more latitude. For some, freedom would perhaps encourage intellectual development, which would be a desirable foundation for academic and professional work—one that may also increase sensitivity to the social consequences of such occupations. The cultivation of intellect is also likely to increase the ability to reject what is artificial, ugly, and false. And finally, as we have

[27] John Kenneth Galbraith, The Affluent Society, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958. esp. "The Dependence Effect," pp. 152-60.

[28] Alfred J. Kahn, "Investments in People: A Social Work Perspective," Urban Studies Center, Rutgers University, 1963, p. 6. See also, Theory and Practice of Social Planning, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969, esp., pp. 178 ff.

[29] Martin Rein and S.M. Miller, "Poverty, Policy, and Purpose: The Dilemmas of Choice," Social Policy: Issues of Choice and Change (essays by Martin Rein), New York: Random House, 1970, p. 225.

[30] Yet, education conforms to Eveline M. Burns' widely accepted definition of social welfare: "... any income, benefit, or service to individuals or families which is provided by the organized institutional methods in response to stimuli other than those operating in the economic market or arising out of the mutual obligations of the family or the relationships of individuals to individuals." "The Financing of Social Welfare," New Directions in Social Work, Cora Kasius, editor, New York: Harper, 1954, p. 132.

[31] See for example, Ivar Berg, Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery, New York: Praeger, 1970.

[32] However, no amount of moral persuasion will inculcate a commitment to community service when workers, especially if they are poor and black, are, in fact, excluded from full community membership.

tried to indicate, potential leaders of disadvantaged groups need intellectual as well as moral education. Yet it is not clear whether deschooling would accomplish these desirable educational results. In the section that follows, we shall try to anticipate the educational effects of deschooling, particularly for those groups most handicapped by present schooling and other institutional arrangements.

The Educational Effects of Deschooling

Deschooled education is designed for a "well-motivated student who does not labor under a specific handicap" and who therefore "often needs no further human assistance than can be provided by someone who can demonstrate on demand what the learner wants to learn to do."[33] Unlike present teachers, who are moralists, custodians, and therapists, deschooled educators would keep out of people's way, merely facilitating access to educational resources. The assumption is that without compulsory schooling, which distorts the natural impulse to learn, individuals will be motivated to seek partners in inquiry and teachers of skills. Illich observes that the ability to inspire others to learn is rarely combined with the capacity to impart a skill. But, since motivation is a given, it is the skills teacher who is the keystone of deschooled education.

Self-Motivation

We simply do not have enough experience with self-motivated learning to base an educational system on it. In all likelihood, some children need no more than the opportunity to pursue their learning interests by being helped to find skills teachers and partners in inquiry. Illich assumes that most are so motivated and that the rest are handicapped. Yet, for many children, perhaps the majority, mild direction may optimally serve what is probably moderate motivation. And still others, not necessarily handicapped, may require more forceful schooling.

Illich prefers delayed learning to external motivation or manipulation for those not eager to learn when they are young. He proposes an edu-credit card so that they can accumulate educational entitlements to be used later in life. Yet, the problems of motivation may be compounded if we desist from directed learning for the young who do not direct themselves. Jerome Bruner has observed that if certain basic skills are not mastered first, later more elaborate ones become increasingly out of reach.[34] Some late learners will go through all of the necessary steps, but the learning of such simple skills as number concepts and phonics is likely to be of inherent interest to the young, even if they do not ask to learn to read. The more mature learner must be sufficiently motivated to put up with the discomfort of learning simple skills when he is no longer a child.

The Meaning of Motivation

A central issue in this discussion is what we mean by motivation. Is it the desire to learn the history of one's people, to play the piano, to speak a foreign language, to design a building? Or is it the interest in the skills which must be mastered in order to achieve these goals? Is motivation to play the piano enough to sustain the course of study that is dictated, not by arbitrary ritual or curriculum, but by the subject matter itself? Perhaps only the very avid and diligent can endure the endless practicing, not of music, but of isolated passages, scales, and arpeggios, without the encouragement, intervention, even prodding, of their teachers. We need to be far clearer about the meaning of motivation and its relationship to educational outcomes before we can blanketly urge self-directed learning for all.

Deschooling and the Disadvantaged

We do not know how many children in any social class fit the model of the well-motivated learner, but Illich seems to think the poor are less likely than the affluent to take advantage of educational opportunities early in life. He observes that they "lack most of the educational opportunities which are casually available to the middle-class child"—conversation and books in the home, vacation travel, and a different sense of oneself.[35] In fact, he proposes the edu-credit card in order to "favor the poor." Evidently the impulse to learn is a natural one than can be easily distorted not only by an education which is probably more prescriptive in the case of the disadvantaged but by an environment that does not stimulate it. Or perhaps motivation depends upon such stimulation and cultivation.

Whether less able to be employed or to enjoy life, people will be handicapped so long as they delay their education. Furthermore, given the boundaries of the lives of the adult poor, one is not at all sanguine that their later experiences will provide them with the "casual advantages" they missed when they were young. If the environment is deficient in stimulation, why delay compensatory opportunities? Perhaps if they were followed by freer schooling or by direction that is motivated by educational rather than disciplinary goals, headstarts would be less likely to peter out.

The main beneficiaries of deschooled education will be those groups in which self-motivated learning has higher incidence. Indeed, many middle- and upper-class parents would welcome such education for their children, if not for the restive and roving poor. Deschooling would offer the better-motivated a tutorial system for which their parents would otherwise pay heavily. Free education may thus be like other publicly-provided equal opportunities—museums, libraries, cultural centers—that are unequally used. It will

[33] **Deschooling Society**, p. 68.

[34] Jerome Bruner, "Education as Knowledge Transmission," **Social Foundations of Education: A Book of Readings**, Cole Brembeck and Marvin Grandstaff, editors, New York: John Wiley, 1969, p. 16.

[35] **Deschooling Society**, p. 6.

resemble these resources in that it will primarily benefit and subsidize the affluent who have developed the capacity to use them.

Although Illich maintains that deschooling is an essential component of any radical program in the 'seventies, those concerned with inequality in our society would want to rate any proposal on the basis of how it benefits the disadvantaged, whether or not this criterion is a mark of radicalism. Ironically, the trend toward more radical social criticism, of which Illich's work is a prominent example, has not necessarily signaled a shift toward greater concern for the poor. In the early 'sixties, emphasis was upon social reform, upon lessening disadvantage, which was defined largely in terms of quantitative deficit in income and education. As we have become concerned about the quality of our advantages, however, we have tended to become less aware of the quantity of others' disadvantages. Even though intended to favor the poor, deschooling would primarily improve the quality of upper-class education and might actually diminish the educational levels of the disadvantaged.

Educational and Social Change

The tendency to rely on cultural revolution is characteristic of some radical strategists who have perhaps become discouraged by the current decline of liberal and radical political activity. The "greening of America" is a revolution in attitudes or "consciousness" that may include political revolution in its final act, if at all.[36] Illich clearly wants to change the economic system and feels we can do so by deschooling, by ceasing to teach people to want meaningless goods and services. Until we learn this, he maintains, political change will only result in more of the same.

We have already indicated that deschooling would not necessarily break the consumer spiral and would not necessarily encourage equal educational or social outcomes. Yet, it seems important to show that radical changes in education, deschooling as well as any other, must be preceded by major political changes. The education which leads to the organization of disadvantaged constituencies must take place out of school and without deschooling.

Political Resistance to Educational Change

Illich's belief that we can begin with educational change is partly dictated by expedience. He stresses that the school is under attack from many quarters and is thus a vulnerable institution. "The risks of revolt against school are unforseeable, but they are not as horrible as those of a revolution starting in any other major institution."[37] "School," he also writes, "is not yet organized for self-protection as effectively as a nation-state, or even a large corporation."[38]

Such a position overlooks the fact that a serious attack on any major institution would evoke political and corporate defenses. If, as Illich recognizes, the state has established the school in all societies, what reason is there to believe that its disestablishment would not be resisted by government?

While relatively vulnerable schoolmen may have control over educational decisions at the level of local government, the pattern of influence is very different at the State level, which has the say regarding important school policy. The State is not only the chief source of public school revenues but the seat of Constitutional authority to establish schools. Although States have delegated much authority to local school districts, the actual and potential control of education by State governments is vast. It includes not merely the power of the purse but influence over important areas like curriculum, certification, and consolidation of districts.[39] In this respect, it is important to point out that despite the successful mobilization of neighborhood groups in New York City, the State legislature flatly turned down community control proposals in the Spring of 1969.

There is little doubt that a basic decision such as one to abolish the public schools would arouse many potentially powerful actors at the State level. Many individuals do not exercise their influence over small educational issues because they are not dissatisfied with basic policies. In the case of disestablishment or any other major change, however, it seems unlikely that the economically powerful would be so unaware of the important social functions that school plays that they would merely welcome the opportunity to reduce their taxes. If they do not recognize how crucial a role school plays in shaping consumers and increasing GNP—they and the writer would probably accord more persuasiveness to commercial advertising—they are undoubtedly conscious of their dependence on it for purposes of social control. If schools fall short of inculcating patriotism and respect for the social order, the privileged would urge not disestablishment, but greater emphasis on moral education. The economically powerful also depend upons schools to teach prospective workers how to behave on the job, to screen employees through the credentialing system, and to teach skills which they may regard as basic education for the labor market. There is also the enormous constituency of parents in all social classes who are certain to recognize that disestablishment of the school robs them of a daily babysitter for twelve years. In fact, there is reason to expect that if the State did not compel children to attend school, their parents would.[40]

[36]Charles Reich maintains that a revolution is taking place in people's "consciousness" or values. "It [the revolution] will originate with the individual and with culture and it will change the political structure as its final act." **The Greening of America**, New York: Random House, 1970, p. 4, and passim.

[37]**Deschooling Society**, p. 49.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Michael W. Kirst, "Introduction to Part II: Politics of Education at the State Level," **The Politics of Education: at the Local, State, and Federal Levels**, Kirst, editor, Berkeley, Cal.: McCutcheon, 1970, p. 215.

[40]Discussing the political and legislative prospects for deschooling may seem to lose sight of the rhetorical framework of deschooling proposals, particularly those of Illich. For the emphasis on rights connotes constitutional strategies and court action. Illich considers schooling ultimately the illegal right of one person to oblige another to attend a meeting. (**Deschooling Society**, p. 94). It may be that deschooling proponents can look to the courts to rule compulsory schooling illegal, just as integrationists found the Federal judiciary more responsive than the legislatures on any governmental level. However, deschooling, and certainly deschooled education may require positive legislation in addition to court rulings. Furthermore, even if the legislatures could be bypassed, implementation of any court decision depends upon politics—values, beliefs, and interests of the communities affected. (For a discussion of deschooling strategies, see Everett Reimer, **School Is Dead: Alternatives in Education**, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971, esp. "Strategy for a Peaceful Revolution," pp. 173-84.)

The Sequence of Change

If we cannot and probably should not disestablish the schools, we do need to learn different values. Recent trends among consumers of goods and services suggest that people are becoming educated to new conceptions of their needs outside of school and that this new consciousness will lead to political mobilization. As a result of educational and organizational efforts by Ralph Nader and his associates, we are beginning to define our consumer needs differently and to free ourselves from persuasive advertising. In the area of welfare, minority leaders and "teachers of the poor" like George Wiley, Richard Cloward, and Frances Piven have helped public assistance clients to know their needs and rights, to demand cash benefits and to resist coercive case services.

We are learning that we are all disadvantaged as consumers of goods, that we have been under a mistaken illusion that if we organized ourselves as wage earners we would earn more money and hence more buying power and freedom. However, we will also stress consumer unions, when we recognize, as conservationists and consumer leaders are trying to teach us, that we do not have genuine choices of goods and services but merely the option of purchasing one of several identical goods that have been differentiated by what their advertisers choose to stress.

In the case of services we are not even under the illusion that present institutions offer us choices, but we are coming to recognize that there are alternatives to "take it or leave it" in welfare. The welfare rights groups have begun to demonstrate and to teach others that they are citizens and that there are political means, admittedly less direct than those of the market, of making institutions respond to their needs. They are also demonstrating that action, assertion, and independence are not inimical to institutionalized welfare. Our definition of self-help, unlike that of Illich, assumes institutional welfare—services and cash benefits—but associates it with these active efforts to make institutions responsive to individual and communit, needs. We need not risk *laissez-faire* or a fatuous regression to self-help and charitable private initiative in order to mitigate institutional control and over-dependency.[41] *Active welfare* is a humane alternative to coercive treatment and to societal neglect.

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Conclusion

Illich will not succeed in disestablishing the school, but he is teaching us to deschool our values. With great force, he has shown us how schooled our minds and lives have become—how we substitute lessons for making music and intruction for playing the game. We are unable to recognize our worth unless we can judge it by the standards of the school. To a certain extent, we all resemble the young woman who felt lost because she could not rate herself as wife and mother—unlike school "where at least you got a grade." We have trouble teaching ourselves or learning informally with others. Assignments rather than the desire to learn or know are the only educational stimuli to which many are able to respond. Small wonder that some of us, schooled to an advanced age, find ourselves newly degraded each time we return to school. In order to justify their service, teachers must make students feel uneducated, no matter what their prior knowledge or experience is. Illich has helped us to recognize why we long to grow up, to obtain the last credential—the right never to regress to school again.

Deschooling proponents are not only offering a brilliant critique of contemporary schooling but are stimulating us to make education freer. Without basic political change, we can not disestablish the school; nor do we think it desirable to do so. In the meantime, we should attempt to find out what some of the educational effects of partial deschooling would be. We can develop experimental programs to test the results of freer education on selected groups of people, disadvantaged and privileged, educationally stimulated and apparently unmotivated. We can examine the effects of deschooling on the secondary level; less ambitiously, we can reduce the amount of required subjects, or offer some courses in the community rather than in the school. If the voucher system is tried experimentally, we can evaluate the effects of changing the locus of educational control from school and state to family and informal community. A voucher system would afford parents the right to choose among various alternatives for schooling their children: minority moral education, integration, technical education, apprenticeship, self-motivated learning, etc. It will, however, need to demonstrate its ability to encourage democratic pluralism rather than to license discriminatory division. With these experiments and others that freer learners, parents, and educators will be stimulated to devise, we can cease to justify educational freedom solely by declaring it an "inalienable right."

[41] William Irwin Thompson observes that as minorities of the right and left and dissident intellectuals attempt to escape state socialism they may be attracted to "Dr. Illich's anarchistic capitalism." "We Become What We Hate," New York Times, July 25, 1971, Section 4 p. 11.

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