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Educating for Delinquency

Section one

Introduction

I'm concerned, in this talk, with those young people who should not be coming into our remand homes. The function served by remand homes and approved schools has been seen as necessary, society being what it is, as a safety net to catch those whose fall has not been saved by the usual social agencies. And, apart from the diagnostic aspect of the homes, we all here have seen youngsters who benefited personally by their brief remand. Some, cowed and frightened reacting against vicious home circumstances have developed positively in the residential setting, where they find that the adults are concerned, predictable and constructive in ways they may not have experienced in their own families. Behavioural changes under, stable, understanding and supervised conditions help us identify the young person whose core problem originates within his home or community and who needs another chance, and a different experience.

On the other hand the arrogant youngster, ringleader in local crime, may defy his parents and teachers so openly that he develops an exaggerated sense of his own power, and a contempt for others. Particularly those in authority, at home or in society. The remand home provides him with a 'reality check', an experience of external rules. It requires him to fit in with the needs of others. In a highly controlled, structured situation, it is difficult for him to exploit others. Aggression and insolence are no longer effective social tools. In these instances the remand home can provide the young person with a chance to carry out some reality testing. In some cases, an opportunity to find out for himself what sort of person he really is, or wants to be. It also enables us to observe him in a controlled setting, away from home, where we can form our own opinions about him in a different set of circumstances to those that led to his arrival in custody.

But there are also other children in the remand homes who shouldn't be there. Firstly, children with an underlying personality problem which has not been recognised or treated, or for whom facilities do not exist. Secondly, those brought up in uncongenial circumstances where education and moral codes are not highly valued, and who attend schools where their needs are not effectively met. From boredom or conflict with school, to truancy, petty larceny and sleeping rough (and then having to steal to eat) is not an unfamiliar cycle. Once the search for casual excitement away from school begins, a court appearance may be inevitable.

The burden of my remarks will largely concern these latter two categories: the 'disturbed', who need specialist individual help, and the 'aimless', whose needs are met neither at home nor school. How many of these youngsters come before the courts who should not be there? How far is their court appearance the function of inadequate, inappropriate, unavailable or poorly distributed educational and clinical provision?

Section Two

Community structures and social behaviour

The increase in delinquency rates over the years has only been matched by the theories to account for it. Now I do not propose to provide you with a theoretical overview of causes, the first probably being 'original sin' and I've never quite mastered the others. But I do want to point out those sins of commission or omission for which we, as society in general, are responsible.

Working in Lancashire, in areas of old, run down, neglected housing, as well as Newtown overspill areas, allowed interesting comparisons. It seemed, at times, as if we were almost encouraging some youngsters to offend. And that, in terms of community, 'new' was not necessarily 'better.'

What does this mean in a real life context? How do the estates and buildings influence the community and structure the behaviour of the residents? Well, of course, the overcrowded, downtown, terraced slum may reveal certain positive features. The very physical closeness, which we tend to condemn, out of hand, may provide the child (possibly not to his pleasure) with the close attention of several adults who are in a position to check and modify his behaviour.

We have learned the importance of kinship in such areas. Physically, the fact that the house possesses no front garden or yard, and the living room looks directly out on to the pavement, means that children playing in the street are still under the supervisions, however reluctantly, of the residents. An informal community censor is generated which monitors and structures the activities of those playing in the street.

Many 'slum' working class districts are stable, safe and law-abiding. Others may have additional problems. A sudden influx of newcomers or a rapidly changing population can temporarily eclipse these structures and lead to a situation where there is a reluctance, on the part of residents, to continue taking responsibility.

In the case of 'new town re-housing' there are no such 'built in' community structures in the first place. People are dispatched to modern houses with gardens front and rear, or to tower blocks of flats. Opportunities for close interaction between communal living and play areas are limited. Parents in the house are separated from the streets by the garden. Where there is a tradition for the children to play in the garden, supervision may be present. But many working class children tend to mix largely with the age group, and the meeting ground is the unsupervised street or open area. Housing design can influence the link between adult supervision and child play.

For children living in blocks of tower flats the problem is even more acute and it almost compels children to play away from the blocks, particularly if the noise and confusion inside is not to be intolerable. As a result the child's link with adult social values is lessened, and the influence of the peer group, which may have quite different standards, is enhanced.

For some adults, the separating out of people into these living arrangements may generate anonymity and a disavowal of responsibility. Where no sense of community responsibility exists, then people may become isolated, individual units.

This can place additional burdens on the mother. Where she is overburdened by the demands of her children and lacks support from her husband, where she is harassed, inadequate herself, demoralised or uncaring, short of hope, patience and money, then what opportunity is there for the children to learn acceptable, socially responsible behaviour? Some will, of course. But others may develop free from the checks and constraints of adult values and standards.

For many, the rule will be that of immediate excitement, and living for the impulse of the moment. Unless significant events intervene, their inheritance and upbringing give them a sound preparation for coming before the juvenile courts.

Returning to our newly built overspill area, what sort of facilities do we find for the young, in general, or the "at risk" in particular? Well, there will be no cinemas, no coffee bar, no suitable rugged play area, no bowling alley, and 'No ball games on this grass'. Those who look old enough may visit the numerous public houses, well-known agents of social control. When gangs of bored, restless youths roam loose, how re-assuring it is to know that at least alcohol and perhaps drugs are available to prevent acts of senseless vandalism, to protect windows, 'phone booths and victims from attack.

Even with our present understanding of how children become socialised and learn to accept mutual, reciprocal social obligations, it is obvious that many who are the focus of our concern today will continue to develop in socially disruptive directions unless someone intervenes. And, if we stand idly by, then we tacitly condone this 'apprenticeship in delinquent behaviour,' an apprenticeship which many of our youngsters fully serve. Remember, this young person brought into this Remand Home today has been through successive crises long before the remand ~ each crisis a warning to us of what might be happening.

Why have the measures we have taken not worked? What are the lessons to be learned from the way we are dealing with such problems at the moment? Perhaps if we look at what happens to the child or adolescent while he is in our professional care we may see how much grease we put on the slippery slope.

Section Three

Factors associated with schooling

THEME: system link: schools + in class

We now appreciate the link between schooling and pupil maladjustment. Burt and Howard listed several contributory conditions, among them an uncongenial teacher, repeated absence or frequent changes of school. There is also the 'star pupil' from a deprived junior school who is "ordinary" in the grammar school. Or the child whose parents over-value education

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giving rise to the former's acute anxiety over failure. The main theme of this talk is the additional handicap suffered by those children from areas of difficult social conditions, whether overspill or downtown, where there is inadequate support from home, or community facilities.

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I question the assumption often made that what is needed are simply more facilities. Instead we must evaluate the way the existing facilities or social agencies work and how effectively they meet the individual needs of children in these areas. The most important single institution in this respect is the school.

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The terms of reference of the great reports on education over the past decade was not specifically children who come before the courts, but it is useful to study the interaction between the "vulnerable" or "delinquency prone child" and his school. What sort of picture does he present to his teacher?

From my observations in schools and Remand Home, the child who comes before the courts offers a host of maladaptive responses in the classroom. These range from acting out aggression or defiance, to passive and contemptuous non-co-operation. And he probably truant.

What effect does this have on his teacher? He will probably leave. Describing schools in deprived areas, the Newsom report tells us "there was only an even chance that a woman who joined the staff later than the beginning of the Christmas term in 1958 would still be there in September 1961. For men, the odds were two to one against,"

What happens to make teacher and taught equally reluctant to attend? If unacceptable or "delinquent" behaviour could be viewed as a partial failure of socialisation, how ready is such a child for conventional schooling? For instance, he may not feel certain actions are wrong, and will therefore do them if detection is unlikely. He may have real difficulty in making a relationship with others and consequently, if social demands are made of him, his response may be aggression or refusal rather than co-operation. And, during adolescence, the physiological changes of puberty may combine with the social pressures to put further stress on his emotional balance.

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Now consider such a pupil in the context of his first years in a secondary school, where the seeds of alienation are often sown. If, as we have seen, he has difficulties in making effective relationships, then the secondary system of specialist teaching may offer few opportunities for him to develop a close relationship with any one teacher. The school may, to the pupil, seem to comprise few adults whom he can get to know well and trust. This is heightened by the transfer from a junior schools, relatively small, where one teacher deals largely with one class throughout the week, to a comprehensive school staffed by teachers unable, because of specialist timetabling, to get to know anyone child as well as they would like.

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Some will inevitably find this transfer traumatic. From the top end of a junior school, in a class with a well-known teacher, to a different class, sharing many different teachers

throughout the day and week, in a school with up to 2000 older and apparently more important pupils. It was the psychologist, James Hemmings, who warned of the correlations between isolation/ alienation and maladjustment, delinquency and suicide.

Having kicked away the junior school props of status, familiarity and security, we introduce 'supermarket schooling,' in which child becomes an impersonal consumer, the teacher, a remote purveyor. Bells ring every 35 minutes and children wander, or charge, from room to unsettled room. One pupil may have 12 – 17 different teachers in a single week. And if the school operates a system of 'setting' the pupil may have to relate to many different groupings of classmates as well as changes of teacher.

Many pupils will be sufficiently mature to cope with and benefit from such a system. But for those of poorly developed social adjustment and/ or low academic attainment this type of organization can trigger feelings of stress, alienation and aggression. In other words, they way in which the school is organized may influence the developing maturity, behaviour and socialization of its pupils.

We must, therefore, look for ways of so organizing schools that we avoid putting stress on the vulnerable and instead develop structures that may assist the pupil's positive emotional and psychological growth. We will return to this.

If we recall the high staff turnover in difficult schools it is obvious that more is wrong than school organization alone. Teacher morale is at a low ebb, Now, how far is this due to inappropriate or inadequate preparation for the actual demands of the job? If you are adequately equipped for the problems you meet, then you are more likely to enjoy job satisfaction and to continue in it. How many teachers have been adequately prepared to diagnose and help the unsettled pupil or slow learner in the ordinary school?

In many colleges there are signs of a greater attention to these factors, but this has not always been the case. And do we yet give sufficient time to preparing teachers for the behaviour problems they will inevitably meet? We may now recognise the reading difficulty - but not yet the behaviour problem. While the latter may cause agonising concern to the young teacher and wrongly handled may cause distress to teacher and child alike. Many adolescents in conflict with their parents, or whose homes are seemingly uncaring, are dependent on their teacher for adult warmth, friendliness and recognition. This is, potentially, a second chance to correct personality distortions or unhappiness. Yet it also involves risks for teacher and child, as in any relationship where power or dependency is involved; and requires insightful, compassionate understanding.

Again, what preparation do we give our teacher for these sorts of demands? It is obvious that the teacher has a key role to play in preventive work or in accurately diagnosing the child suffering from stress, and who may need specialist help. Where this happens, then many a child at some crossroads in his development may be guided away from trouble, or helped in coming to terms with a personal or domestic crisis. Without such support, how many drift into accumulating difficulties until they come before the courts, hardened, damaged and unrepentant?

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The final aspect of schools that I wish to deal with is the curriculum. You probably share memories of the incongruity between task and doer. The children underprivileged, socially and personally unaware of their dependence on others in society and the reliance of others on them. A reliance that they will not destroy phone boxes, sabotage railway lines "to see what happens". Will not indulge in vandalism for casual excitement.

Yet many of the educational tasks or experiences we provide to help put their life into a meaningful context were often bizarre, or at best quaint. The geography lessons I taught, in a secondary school, were preceded by what can only be described as a powerfully taught biology session. The resultant confusion produced such anomalies as 'the alimentary canal runs from Liverpool to Manchester.' (Now, living and working in the north west of England, that provokes a wry response). So much of the secondary school curriculum was (and is) a mix of the totally out of date (a junior school teaching about 'rods, poles and perches' in its maths lessons) or a series of unrelated stories and episodes. For instance, attempts to spin adventure and relevance round 'A day in the life of a lumberjack,' 'The adventures of Bonnie Prince Charlie' or 'Hop Pickers in Kent.' Don't try it!

curriculum relevance!

What is the relevance of these lessons to the young people in our old, decaying inner cities, or Newtown housing estates? What understanding do they provide of their social context and opportunities? And the mutual, reciprocal obligations implied by living within a community?

Since the Newsom Report more is now being introduced in attempt to remedy this outmoded approach. Numerous curriculum projects, many of them beginning to investigate interdisciplinary enquiry, have been undertaken in the past decade. Charity James, director of Goldsmiths Curriculum Laboratory, describes her approach;

"It is no good talking about objectives, because there are different objectives for every child ... We need constant reminders, especially in the early yearly years of secondary schooling, of the primary school experience that children learn as they are ready."

I think most of us would accept the first part of her statement. Good teachers expect more from the bright and give encouragement to those who are struggling. But we are probably rather more wary of notions of 'readiness', which can often be a prescription for doing nothing at all. The psychologist Jerome Bruner warns that:

"readiness is a mischievous half truth ... because it turns out that one teaches readiness, or provides opportunities for its nurture, one does not simply wait for it."

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Curriculum developments need introducing with understanding and sensitivity if we are to avoid a collision between teacher and pupil. If the work, from the pupil's perspective, is irrelevant, inappropriate or too demanding, then the unwilling, the disturbed, the struggling will not conceal their disdain or boredom. This, in turn, may threaten or dishearten the teacher, increasing the alienation.

The bored pupil does not see the purpose of this type of education (and indeed what purpose is there?) and may seek to exercise his talents elsewhere, away from the school. Hanging around in the town centre, at the Pier Head, in the abandoned sites. Seeking the casual excitement and companionship of similar, alienated pupils. A court appearance will be the likely outcome

Can we be quite sure that nothing happened in school to push that way rather than lead him another?

It is genuinely difficult to interest and involved some pupils, but since we compel their school attendance we might at least make it worthwhile and even interesting. This year we will be spending nearly £2,300 million on education – more than we spend on defence. Surely for that price we can make school attendance preferable to non-attendance for those bored teenagers?

We are now preparing for the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen. But unless that extra year's schooling is part of a revised, relevant and personalised educational system, then, for some pupils on our estates, it may be a preparation for Approved School as surely as the V1th Form has been a preparation for college or university. One may require three 'A level' passes, the other three court appearances.

My negative perspective on some of our secondary schools is intentional. The aim has been to point out the lesson that, what happens within the school can profoundly affect not only the learning but also the personal growth of the pupils, And where the school is out of step with the needs of the individual pupils and the community, then we are truly educating for delinquency.

Section Four **Provision for disturbed children:** **An unwitting conspiracy?**

“Tower Hamlets juvenile court sent a girl aged 13, who had committed no crime, to an Approved School after two months’ of effort by the borough Children’s Department to find a place for her in a special school for maladjusted children had failed. The Chairman of the Bench had been told that where was no hope of the girl being offered a vacancy in a school for maladjusted children.”

‘The Manchester Guardian’, October 3rd, 1969.

Two months before this press item, the counsel of the eleven year old girl in Newcastle, sentenced to life detention last year for strangling two small boys, withdrew her appeal against that sentence. Although the girl is, at present, receiving limited psychiatric care in an Approved School, there is no suitable hospital which could do better for her.

“A West Riding magistrate complained that when the Bench wanted to refer a child to a local child guidance clinic it was often six or seven months before he received his first appointment.”

'The Manchester Guardian,' June 17th 1968.

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The above article also stated that "more 14 year olds appear before the courts than any other age group, and Home Office statistics show that just over a third of all first offenders are reconvicted within 5 years. But for children under 14, the rate of reconviction is 53%"

Incidence of maladjustment among school children

We cannot assess how many children come before the court for lack of the provision of the appropriate facilities. But we can survey what facilities are available for the disturbed, and how they are distributed.

First of all, what is the incidence of maladjustment among young people? This is difficult to assess for a number of reasons, not least the absence of an agreed working definition of the term 'maladjusted.' In 1946, the then Ministry of Education gave an estimate of 1% in any school year. In the early 1950s the Underwood Report quoted a figure between 5% and 12% as needing treatment at any one time. In 1960, Brandon, in Newcastle, defined 20% of that city's school population as being 'clinically maladjusted,' only half of whom received medical or other advice and support. More recently still, the National Child Development Study, directed by Mia Kellmer-Pringle, gave us a figure of 15%.

Hospital provision for maladjusted children

How far are our disturbed young catered for in hospitals, clinics or special schools? Two years ago, Giustina Ryan described how the Ministry of Health, in 1964, asked the 15 Regional Hospital Boards to expand their psychiatric facilities for adolescents. At that time the number of hospital beds available for mentally ill adolescents was 180, for the whole of England and Wales. The ministry proposed a target of 1,100 beds.

By July 1966, the number of beds had increased by no more than 34, making 214 in total.

How close are we now, in 1969, to that 1964 target of 1,100? According to latest figures, supplied by the National Association of Mental Health (NAMH) the current figure is 259 beds. Of these, well over half are in the south of England. A point not lost on many of us who have come to today's Blackpool conference.

Now, Ministries do not make estimates or set targets lightly. So we can assume that 1,100 to be a conservative estimate of the beds needed. And yet, we have yet to achieve one quarter of that conservative estimate.

Special school provision for maladjusted children

The position is little better for those children waiting for a place in a special school for the maladjusted. According to the Department for Education (DES) figures, only about 5,000 children have been found a place in residential schools, nearly half of which have been provided by independent and voluntary bodies. If we include special classes in mainstream LEA schools, plus full time and part-time units, the total places available still do not exceed 8,000. The 'waiting list' in January of this year was 1,375 children.



Little wonder Tower Hamlets' juvenile court was unable to place that 13 year old girl. Little wonder so any disturbed children find themselves in Approved Schools, for lack of alternative facilities.

If these children were physically ill, injured or starving, then two courses would follow. We would clamour for the appropriate specialist treatment and facilities. In the meantime we would look after them as well as possible. We would not neglect, berate or punish them as a group for the medical conditions they suffered.

What is the situation for the mentally ill or disturbed child? Well, I do not subscribe to the view that all delinquents are mentally ill. Nor that the mentally ill are delinquent. Nor that all disturbed children need specialist schooling. But there is strong evidence that, under current practice and provision, some mentally ill young people are treated as criminals.

Provision of Child Guidance Clinics

Not all disturbed children need special school or hospital treatment. Many can most appropriately be helped in the setting of a Child Guidance Clinic (CGC).

Opinions differ, as in most fields of mental health, about the effectiveness of treatment. Hans Eysenck cryptically describes psychotherapy as "an unidentified technique, applied to unspecified problems, with unpredictable outcomes. For this technique we require rigorous training."

The CGC clearly possesses no magic wand, nor crystal ball. But it does contain staff with training in the psychological basis of the child's problem, and how this may affect behaviour in school. And an important aspect of the clinic's work is its consultative role to other agencies for preventative and diagnostic services. The educational psychologist, in particular, has a specific role to play, in this consultative context, with the schools.

However, there are insufficient staff to cope with the number of individual referrals, two things tend to happen. Firstly, the clinic has insufficient time to carry out its treatment role, and reverts to 'referring on' children to treatment or attention from other agencies – which may or may not exist. And if they do exist, are likely to be similarly had pressed. The work of the clinic focuses on vain attempts to reduce the size of the waiting list, and avoid the sort of criticisms made by the West Riding magistrate and the media.

The second consequence is that there is little or no time for the consultative role to schools and other agencies, so strongly advocated in the Sebohm Report.

In other words, little direct or indirect intervention or treatment can be carried out. The CGC runs the treadmill or routine, full-time 'ascertainment' of maladjusted and slow learning pupils. Opportunities for consultation and co-operation with youth employment officers, probation officers, children officer's and other relevant workers are negligible.

What is the extent of this situation today? Well, there are interesting and marked regional differences in the distribution of Child Guidance facilities. Despite the number of clinics in

England and Wales, increasing from 38 in 1938 to 439 in 1969, the regional pattern is uneven. For instance, in the current edition of 'Mental Health,' Giustina Ryan points out that nearly half of the psychiatrists, educational psychologists and psychiatric social workers are attached to clinics in the south of England, an area which contains only one third of the school population.

The ratio of children clinic appointments to school population again shows marked regional discrepancies. The overall ratio for England, Scotland and Wales combined, is 1:119. But the variation across regions is from 1:216 to 1:76. In general, CGC provision is poorest in the Northern regions, as we noted with hospitals.

Table 1 highlights the differences.

Table 1. Number of children seen at Child Guidance Clinics in the four regions, as a function of school population.

	School population	Children 'Appts' at CGC	Ratio
Southern Region	560, 820	6,741	1:83
Northern Region	581, 955	2,847	1:216
South West	533, 419	5,751	1:93
North West	1, 135,706	6,471	1:175

If we compare the Southern Region with the Northern region, areas of similar school population, we see that more than twice as many children in the Southern Region attended child guidance clinics. It might be argued that southern children have more problems, and of this we have no real measure at the present.

One index, relevant to today's Conference, is the comparison between the number of children aged 14 – 17 years found guilty in a magistrate's court in each of the above regions, during one year. Detection rates, sentencing policy and other issues intrude, but this should provide a rough and ready guide. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of young people aged 14 – 17 years found guilty in a magistrate's court during one year, in four regions.

	Number found guilty
Southern Region	2, 020
Northern Region	3,885
South West	1,735
North West	6,775

More young people are found guilty of offences in magistrates courts in the North and North West, as a proportion of the population, than in the South and South West. The proportions are reversed for ratio of those attending Child Guidance Clinics.

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This, of course, does not demonstrate that the existence of CGC facilities 'prevents' offending, though this might be possible, but it does indicate the large number of young people with difficulties in the North and North West for whom CGC facilities are not available.

In respect of young offenders, the problems are presented in the northern regions, the CGC facilities are in the south and south west.

How does this affect the argument? It means that some areas have disproportionate problems of children coming to court, and the maladjusted or difficult young person who needs treatment is less likely to receive it.

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What an outcry there would be if other groups of children who needs help or treatment were denied on ground of the regional disparity of facilities. Yet we accept this regional discrepancy with the same unconcern with which we have for years accepted the regional discrepancies in the provision of Grammar School places.

Where several children in one area or school are denied treatment, the results can be cumulative. I have seen the negative affects of a group of severely aggressive, out of control teenagers in school for children with learning difficulties. With little or no prospect of a place in a school for maladjusted teenagers, their low 'IQ score' was seen as grounds for placement in the ill-equipped school for slow learners. Providing 'relief' for the mainstream school, at the expense of the special school. And at no benefit to the difficult teenagers placed there.

In turn, an Approved School eventually will doubtless relieve the special school, but the damage to pupils and schools will already have occurred. The real culprit being the lack of appropriate facilities and staff.

"There is no hope in the foreseeable future of offering conventional psychiatric or social person to person service to all adults or children who are seriously maladjusted."

The Seebohm Report,
Para 344.

How many more children will land up in court before we address the shortcomings in our provision?

Section 5.

Prevention and Compensatory Education

Granted the deficiencies in our social services, identified by Seebohm, what can we do about it?

In respect of hospital units and schools for maladjusted children the outlook is unpromising. 'Beds' or 'units' imply the presence of highly trained staff, and this lack will continue to

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impede progress. The Ministry of Health describes career prospects in mental subnormality and child psychiatry as 'excellent' – reflecting the lack of applicants rather than the excitement of the career opportunities.

Child Guidance Clinics will also be hampered, in their traditional functions, by the shortage of child psychiatrists. The Summerfield Report found that, in 1965, the full time equivalent of 110 child psychiatrists were employed in England and Wales – 21% below the modest target of the Underwood Committee. To recap, Underwood had recommended one full time psychiatrist, two educational psychologists and three psychiatric social workers (PSWs) per 45,000 school children.

The Summerfield Report ('Psychologists in Education Services') added that only seven or eight senior registrars qualify as child psychiatrists each year, and half of these fill vacancies caused by retirement or mortality. The numbers of psychiatrists available to work in LEA CGCs is expected to decrease.

Those who find this staffing prospect discouraging can do little except make their opinions known and attempt to exert pressure on the relevant authorities. I welcome the role of the press in drawing the attention of the wider public to the inadequacy of facilities and provision. And I applaud the actions of those magistrates who voice their concern and distaste when faced with the 'choice' between recommending a facility which does not exist (although the need does) or sending a young person to an Approved School.

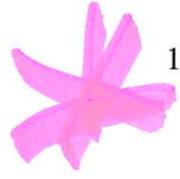
It is unfortunately the case that public outcry seems to be needed before we can obtain the resources to improve the lot of those dependant on our mental health services. The recent example of the power of public disgust over the existence of 'hospitals for the subnormal' is one instance.

The position in regard to the supply of educational psychologists is more hopeful. The Summerfield Report proposed a more flexible approach to professional training, aimed at providing one educational psychologist for every 10,000 school children by 1990. The present overall position is one educational psychologist for approximately 20,000 school children. (When I started work as an educational psychologist, in 1965, my allocation was a population of 30,000 school aged children.)

My concern for the remainder of this presentation is to ask whether or not we are making the most effective use of the facilities we do have, and to suggest ways of improving the way they operate.

First, let us consider Child Guidance Clinics. When treatment is rare and supportive services meagre, then traditional ways of working are not appropriate. Priority should be given to identifying the most seriously disturbed children and making the life of administrators uncomfortable and harrowing until suitable treatment or placements can be found or developed.

For the remainder of their 'non treatment' time, staff of the CGC should be away from the sanctity and security of the clinic and working with the schools, the Children's Department,



the probation officers and others in the 'field' who have to deal, on a regular basis, with children in difficulties.

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There must be a wholesale commitment to prevention and compensatory activities, in the 'real life situation', where the problems occur. One or two centres have begun experiments in these directions. Waltham Forest CGC and the Tavistock's 'Neighbourhood Schools Service', which provide after school consultation to teachers, are both good examples.

School Based Measures

Remembering our earlier concern about issues that need improving within the school, what else can we do? Well, this is one area where I am optimistic about what is possible.

Despite the emotion and controversy over the closure of Risinghill Comprehensive School in London, in 1965, a number of important and encouraging outcomes emerged from the welter of cross-fire, accusation and counter accusation.

A new headteacher, Michael Duane, took over a school in significant difficulties, with a high proportion of pupils failing academically, and an undue proportion coming before the courts. Controversially, he abolished corporal punishment, introduced a child-focused approach to education and gave greater responsibility to the children for their own education. What was achieved in the following years? Table Three provides some evidence.

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Table Three
GCE Exam results at Risinghill Comprehensive School 1960 - 1964

GCE Exam Results		
Year	Subjects entered	Subjects passed
1960	18	5
1961	32	16
1962	39	20
1963	59	34
1964	80	42

In 1960, ninety-eight children in the school were on probation. By 1964 that number had dropped to nine.

There have been many conflicting accounts of what happened within the school, and I would not applaud all of Leila Berg's emotive account, but the above figures at least hint at the impact the school can make on the behaviour and attainment of its pupils.

Sir Alec Clegg, Director of Education for the West Riding of Yorkshire, describes one of his schools where, fifteen years ago, the undesirable behaviour was such that corporal punishment had no effect. New buildings, and more importantly a new headteacher and fresh approach combined to make its delinquency rate the lowest in the county. He also described a mining area where two large schools were united under one headteacher, with a revised system of education. The Chief Constable's figures showed a decline of 20% in the juvenile crime statistics - in the face of a national tendency for such figures to rise.

how is this in context?
Ref

Dennis Stott, a psychologist working in Glasgow, demonstrated the importance of identifying the 'vulnerable child' and providing additional support and shielding from social and educational stress. Earlier this month the N.U.T. produced a report advocating cushioning the 'delinquency prone child' from stress in school.

What steps should we be taking in schools? First and most importantly, we must accurately identify and assess the child's problem. And this needs to include the type of area, its social problems, the type of schools and its particular problems, and, above all, the unique, individual child. We must avoid temptation of tying labels, such as a 'Newsom child', round a child's neck. We must avoid the mistake of referring to 'Educational Priority Area children', since the assumptions about the characteristics of children in such areas are not necessarily true about any one, specific child or family within it.

As Sancho Panza warned Don Quijote; "Take care those things over there are not giants, but Windmills." Incorrect diagnosis doesn't help the child, nor ease the helper's task. Enthusiasm alone never was and never is sufficient. Knowledge and skill, harnessed to enthusiasm is required.

Teacher competence is the most important single factor in a school's success. When the closed-circuit educational television has switched off, the teaching machines are cooling down, the overhead projector now discarded and the educational visit concluded, these experiences are structured, interpreted, valued or devalued by the individual teacher in the classroom. The quality of his relationship with his pupils and the context into which he puts his work with the children is the ultimate index of achievement. If, as we keep stating, we need teacher - pupil interactions of greater depth, warmth and frequency than is currently the case, what sort of preparation do our teachers need?

Teacher Training Colleges must concentrate far more on helping their students gain a greater understanding of the way children naturally develop and, most importantly, the type of behaviour problems likely to be met in the classroom. Edge Hill is one such college where students have the opportunity to develop an awareness of the importance of social and community factors on a child's school performance and behaviour. Mia Kellmer Pringle has stressed the importance of our teachers being better prepared to note the early danger signals. And that it is the teachers themselves who are our greatest hope for making an effective difference in the lives of the children in our schools. Good teachers can help children succeed against the odds.

What is the final conclusion? We have looked at the reasons some of our children come before the courts, and identified the contribution of a lack of resources and provision, community and school factors . In some communities and schools we seem to be educating children for a life of delinquency. But perhaps we don't need more hospital units, Child Guidance Clinics, or special schools for the maladjusted. The real resources we need are already available, if we but knew it. They are within the schools and their teachers. Are we willing to make the changes?

Gerv Leyden

usual!
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critique

PROPOSALS?

CONC is a Home?

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