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A JUDGE AND JURY FOR BETTER EDUCATION

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The population explosion will be followed by the mutual massacre of hundreds of millions of people led by demagogues who will rouse the rabble to rob and murder the nations across the borders. Only one thing can help: better education. We must teach children the value of democracy, the vice of despoty, the necessity of co-operation, the unselfish work for the common good. We must show them what can destroy their peace and their lives. Foremost in this new education must be a new school subject that is not yet taught in any school, college and university: a simple semantics that can teach children how to recognise and avoid these words which can incite hatred in the family, in the community, in the nation, and in the family of nations. Otherwise none will be left to bury the dead.

Now let us ask a pertinent question. Who are mankind's worst sons, and who are mankind's best sons? The worst are those who destroy, the best are those who create. The worst are the criminals who murder, rape and rob. The best are the pioneers of new ideas for helping humanity.

Alas, mankind's best sons are often treated worse than the worst criminals. A criminal gets a fair trial by judge and jury, a counsel for the defence, and the right to appeal to higher courts. If he is condemned to prison, all his worries about the next rent, the next meal, the clean shirt are taken care of. If he wants to write, he is given pencil and paper free. Many a creative work came to light in the merciful seclusion of a prison cell. If his counsel can convince the judge that the murderer is mentally unstable, he is transferred to a sanitarium, set in a beautiful park, with nurses in attendance, and with leisure for life. The taxpayers pay billions for their worst sons, the criminals.

But if a man has committed the crime of a new creative idea which radically overturns the old idea taught in schools and universities, then he usually receives no mercy. The teachers and professors won't admit that their teaching was false. They refuse the pioneer a hearing and recognition. They do not recommend him for a research or publication grant, and they all too often condemn him to a life of frustration and despair.

Max Planck said that a new idea does not gain ground by convincing the professors who profess the old idea. It gains ground as they die out and young minds take over. When this happens, the pioneer is usually dead too. But how much more could he have done had he been given the same merciful treatment a criminal gets from society?

Let's not be misled by the achievements of the scientists who work marvels in nuclear physics and satellite rocketry. The billions for them comes from the military budget. Let us turn instead to those pioneers in education who have really helped humanity. Let's realise the treatment they have received at the hands of the official educational authorities. Here are a few examples only.

Three hundred years ago they laughed about John Aubrey's educational ideas. They refused him the meanest teaching job. Today most of Aubrey's ideas are accepted, but not all. Aubrey had the crazy notion that all children in sea-faring England should be taught to swim. But the educational authorities of many countries still refuse them the few lessons. They prefer to let them drown by the thousands.

Three hundred years ago Jan Komenski (Comenius) put pictures into schoolbooks. How long did they refuse to accept this idea? Not very long. Only two hundred years. Comenius condemned the cane. But they still beat buttocks in many countries. They still take "an apple for the teacher" teaching children how to bribe authority. When Louis Braille invented his writing for the blind, the French Academy rejected it, and his headmaster forbade him to teach it. When Friedrich Froebel invented and opened his private "Kindergarten", they sent the Prussian police and closed it down.

A thousand years ago some Arab mathematician used the Hindu numerals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 and the zero 0 for the decimal system. How long did it take until teachers and professors stopped pestering their pupils with multiplying MMMCCCCLVIII by DCCLIX? Not very long. Only 600 years. G.B. Shaw said that only a revolution will force them to simplify English spelling and grammar.

During the French revolution, they changed - under threat of the guillotine - to the decimal system in weights and measures. But in English speaking countries, the United States and the British Commonwealth, they still teach and cling to the horrors of inch, foot, yard, chain, mile, grain, dram, ounce, pound, stone, ton, pint, gallon, bushel, barrel, etc. etc. causing the loss of millions of working hours every day. They don't press for the change to the decimal system, and they were able to defeat the men and women who cry for a better education for a better world.

Columbia University found recently that it takes up to 15 years for an improved teaching technique to reach 3% of American school, and 50 years to reach the rest. How many more years to reach all the schools of mankind? Two hundred years or more? What can we do to help our children and to force the authorities for changes in the educational methods. How can we stop them to cling to the outdated methods, to the idiotic irregularities in all languages, to the teaching of higher mathematics to millions of boys and girls who are not gifted for it, and who will never need and never use it, to the memorising of dates of wars, and massacres, and marriages of murderous kings, and other utterly useless subjects. How can we induce them to teach children honesty and truth, the value of democracy and the vices of dictatorship? What can we do to help those best sons of mankind, the pioneer's of new ideas in education?

In the despotic countries the people can do nothing. In the democratic countries we could man the barricades and start shooting. But this will only bring to the fore the generals and demagogues. The country will be worse off than before. So let us take heart and let us follow the teaching of the great Mahatma Ghandi, who taught his people civil disobedience without the use of violence.

We can vote for a party which promises better education. But we would soon find that the appointed minister of education is only a tool in the hands of the top officials in the ministry of education. The ministers come and go, but they stay on, and they refuse to be told that their old methods are not good any more. We haven't chosen them, and we can't chase them. But we can take them to court and charge them with criminal neglect of the children of the nation. In order to understand the gravity of the situation, and the extent of criminal neglect by the directors of education let us consider the following question.

Our world is in a monstrous mess. Whom should we blame for this? The milkmen, or the midwives, or the marmelademakers? Or the men who claim and proclaim that only they are competent to bring-up, lead-forth (Latin e-ducere) mature citizens for a mature society? Only they are to be blamed, and when we consider the useless subjects taught in schools we realise the extent of criminal neglect of the leaders of education. For this crime there is a court in every country. Let us consider one example.

In a country where swimming and rescuing lessons are not taught in school, children drown every week. If a few determined citizens, together with the griefstricken parents, would enlist the help of some retired men of the legal profession, they could bring a charge of criminal neglect against the director of education and his top officials. There would be an uproar in the papers, and the whole nation would take an intense interest, because everyone has a hatred of the uninspiring way of our schoolmasters who made him suffer in school. No doubt, the educators would try to delay and dismiss the court action. If this happens one thousand mothers would lay down in front of the ministry of education and parliament, and let themselves be carried off limply by the police. Next day another thousand mothers would lay down and the next day another one. In addition, some thousands of fathers would declare that they won't pay any taxes, preferring to go to prison instead. The government would have to turn music halls and theatres into prisons - or tell the educator to instal swimming and rescuing lessons forthwith.

The publicity of such actions would be terrific. Suddenly the whole nation would realise that the gods of schools and universities have neglected their duty towards the most treasured possession of the nation, the children. More and more court cases could be started by showing the utter waste of time and money and unhappiness created by the useless subjects taught in school. We would demand the teaching of ethics, altruism, fairness, co-operation, honesty - and semantics, the tool for recognising the fallacious speech of demagogues and dictators who bring untold miseries and death upon the nation.

But suppose the old officials press through a law making such court actions impossible. Then the citizens would instal their own court of enquiry. As said before, retired men of the legal profession could organise a court with judge and jury, and could conduct enquiries into all cases of malpractice in education brought to their knowledge. Suppose a student has been wronged by his teacher or professor. His father complains to the headmaster or university senate, but his case is heard behind closed doors, and usually dismissed with some empty phrases. Now the father goes to the private court of enquiry. They invite the

defendant to appear, or to name a counsel for his defence. If he ignores the court the worse for him. All duties of this court are to be performed voluntarily and without pay as an honour. The hearings will be conducted in the evening or the week-end, when everyone has time to come and work, and hear and judge on all malpractices in education.

Every pioneer of a new idea in education who has suffered in the past at the hands of the official educators can come forth and prove to the judge and jury, and through the press to the whole nation, the value of his new idea. A committee may be set up to try the idea out in a sort of Sunday school. Then judgement shall be pronounced, and the official educators who refused to test the good idea should be condemned in open court. The government - if it wants to stay in power - would have to listen to the court hearing, and would have to act on the clamour of the whole nation.

These pioneers who have spent their time, their savings and earnings in bringing out educational and scientific journals, giving thus the educational pioneers a medium for their ideas, but have been refused any financial help for their educational publishing venture could come forth too, and by bringing their case to the knowledge of the nation could be helped in their altruistic publishing venture.

It can be done - if we want to do it. The time is ripe, because the educators condemn themselves already in many books and articles, which however are written in such a highbrow slang that the ordinary citizen is unaware of the catastrophe. If we don't educate our children for maturity in citizenship, and for co-operation with our fellowmen - then nobody will be left to bury the dead. Let us therefore raise a cry for revolt against the educators, for civil disobedience, for a judge and jury for better education for a better future of a better humanity.

I reprinted this editorial in my new book "The Invention and Discovery that will change our lives." on the pages 359 -366, and I have added the following lines:

The main aim of the Tribunal is to help the pioneers of new educational ideas so that they can help mankind. Now suppose we have established this Tribunal, and it has recognised the value of works of educational pioneers whom the official educators still refuse recognition. What could we do then?

We would have to find the money to give the pioneers what every criminal gets for a limited time: a rentfree room, meals, clean clothes, etc., so that they can write their text books. We would have to find the money to print these books and to test them in experimental schools with children and adults.

Where can we find the money? Another begging bureaucracy? No!

We could convince our lawmakers to alter slightly the Copyright Laws. At present, the authors of new books, new music, new paintings, etc., enjoy royalties for about 50 years. After this time, their works are "free". The laws could be changed so that free works of art, as for instance a new edition of Shakespeare, new records of Beethoven, new reproductions of Rembrandt, etc., should yield a small royalty to help those living creative geniuses who produce idealistic works for the education of a better and happier humanity.

The End.