

# danger SCHOOL!

idac 16/17 document

This document was prepared for parents,  
teachers and pupils by members of the IDAC team

Babette Harper  
Claudius Ceccon  
Miguel e Rosiska  
Darcy de Oliveira

with the collaboration of Raymond Fonville.

Drawings (c) and lay- out by Claudius

## Foreword to the English Edition

This issue of IDAC Documents deals with the School,  
this ever-present institution of the modern industrial society.

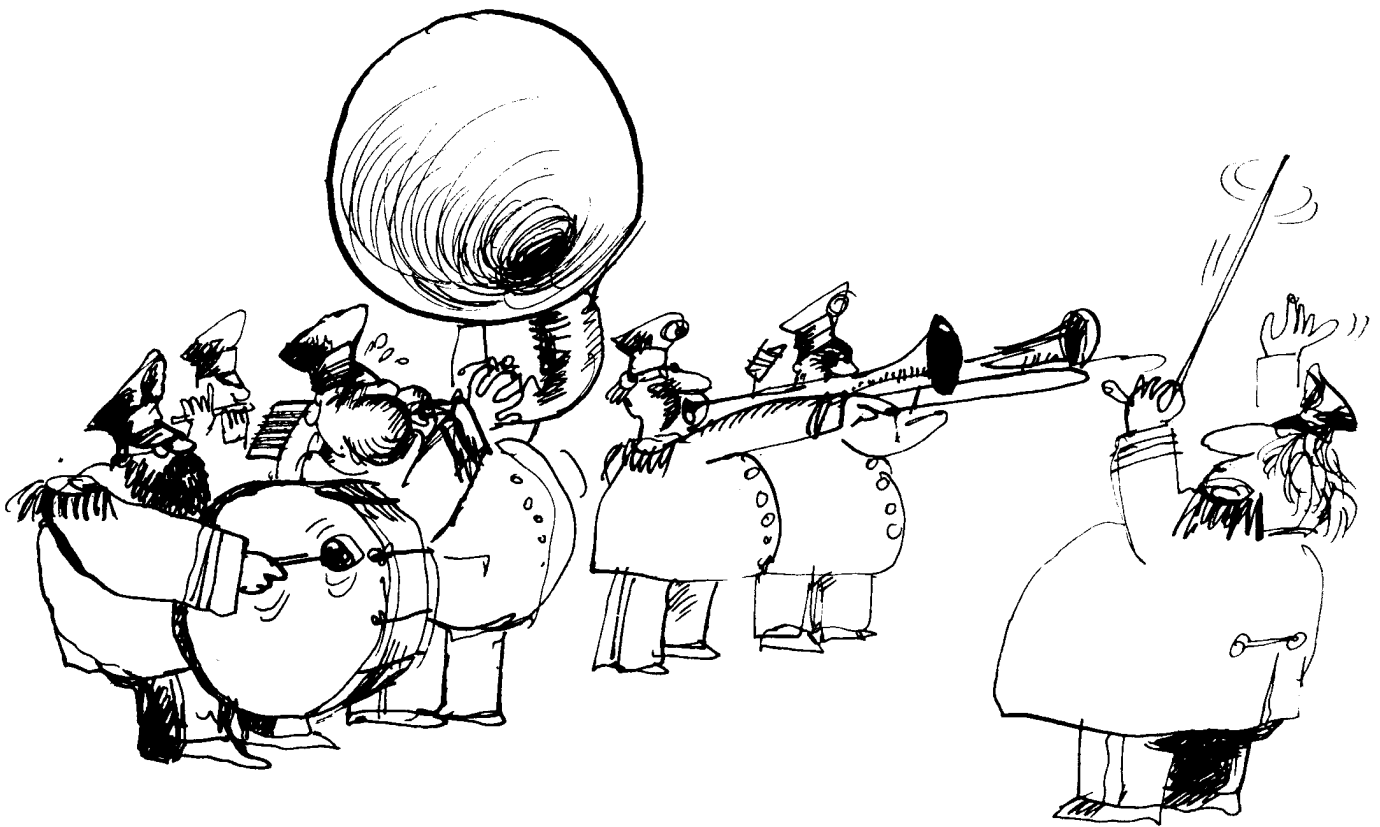
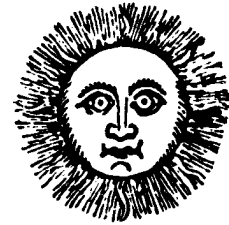
Our analysis is based on examples taken from the Western European context in which we live.

Nevertheless, the questions raised here have a broader reach,  
since they also concern the educational systems in other parts of the world,  
which have been influenced by this Western European model.

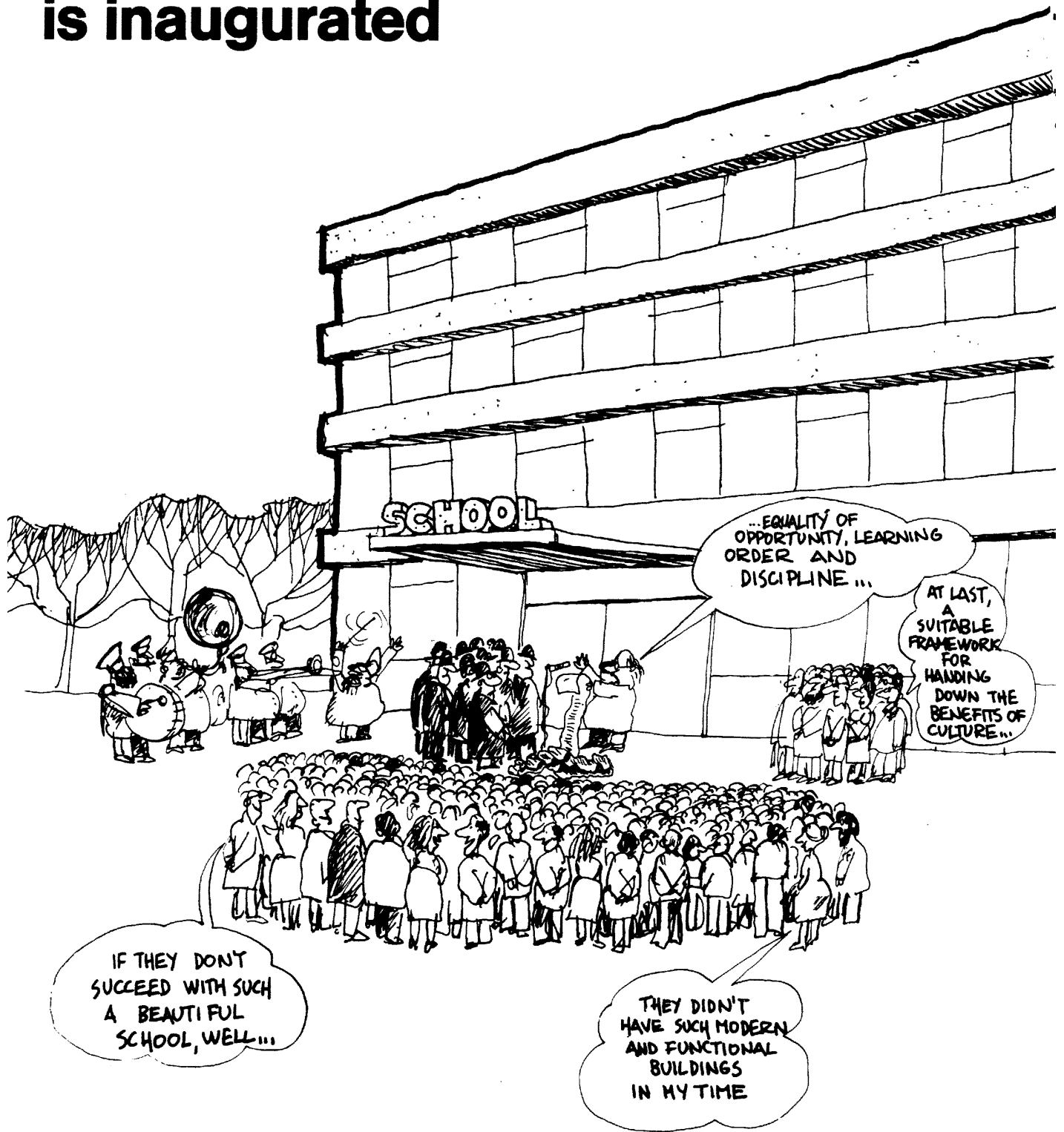
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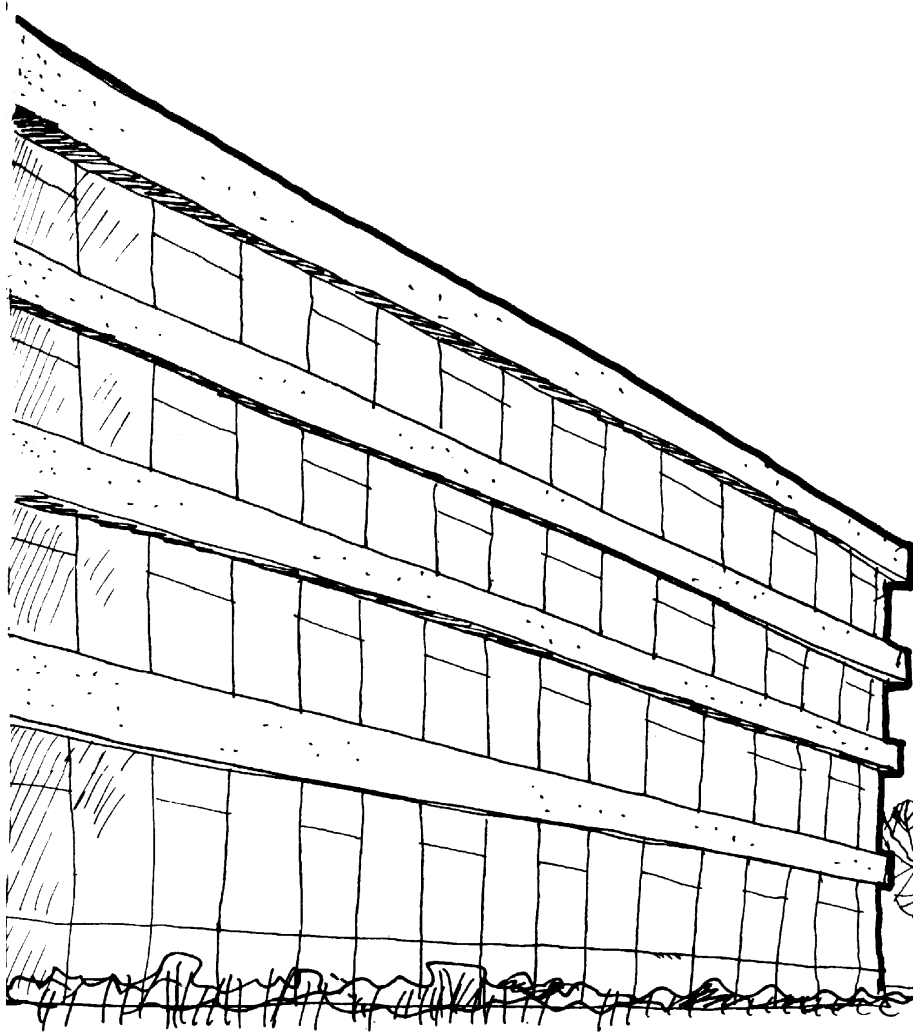
**IDAC 27 chemin de crets, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland.**

**One fine summer's day...**



# a new school building is inaugurated





**everybody  
is happy**

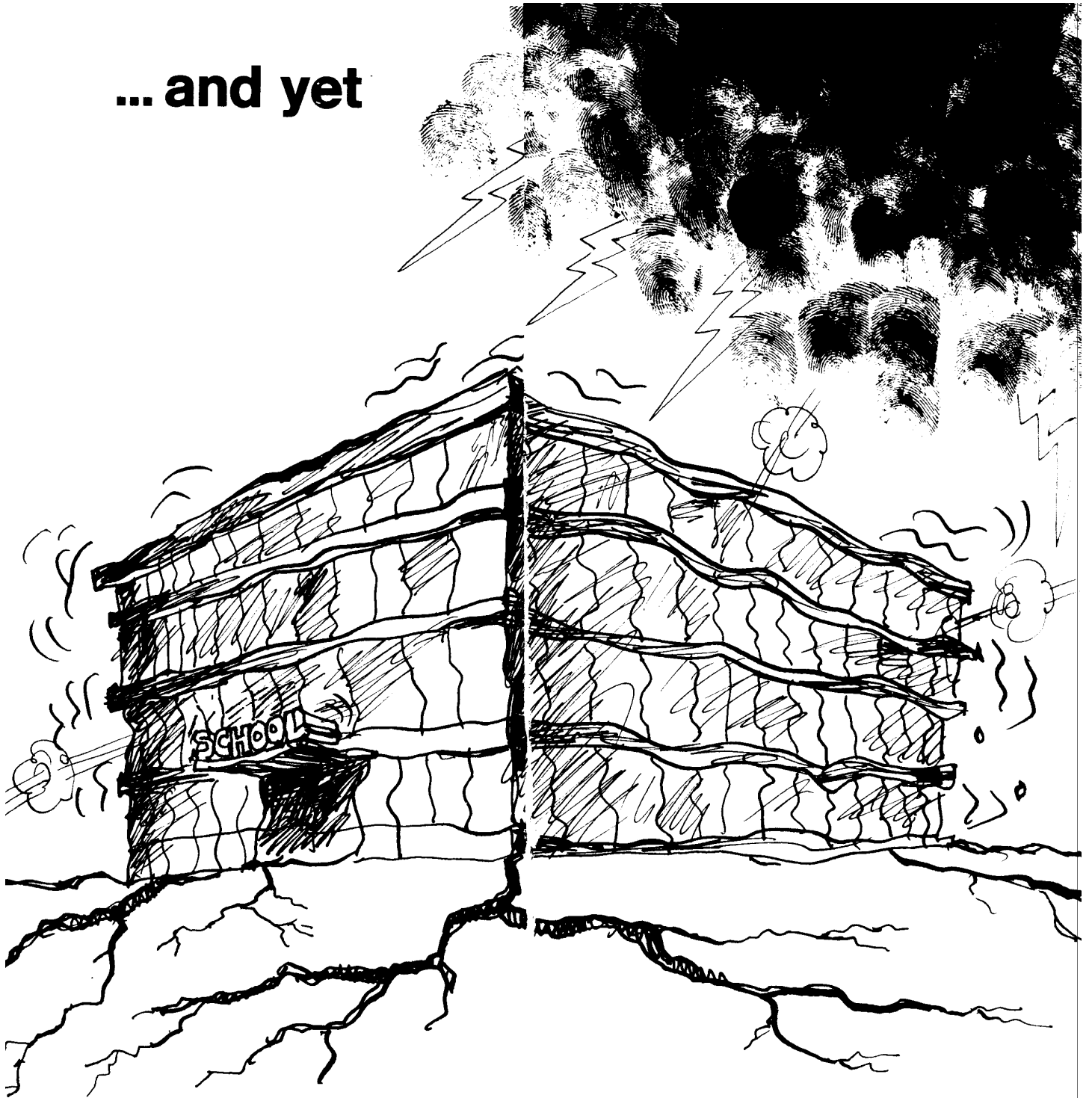
LET'S USE IT  
TO HAVE  
SOME FUN!

WELL, ANYWAY,  
IT'S NOT OUR  
BUSINESS

BUT  
THEY'RE  
DOING IT ALL  
FOR OUR  
GOOD

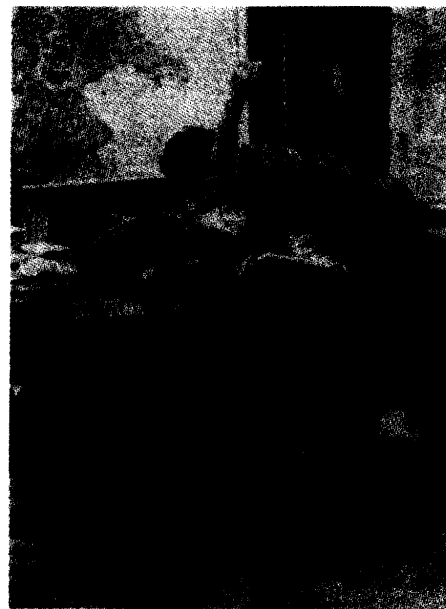
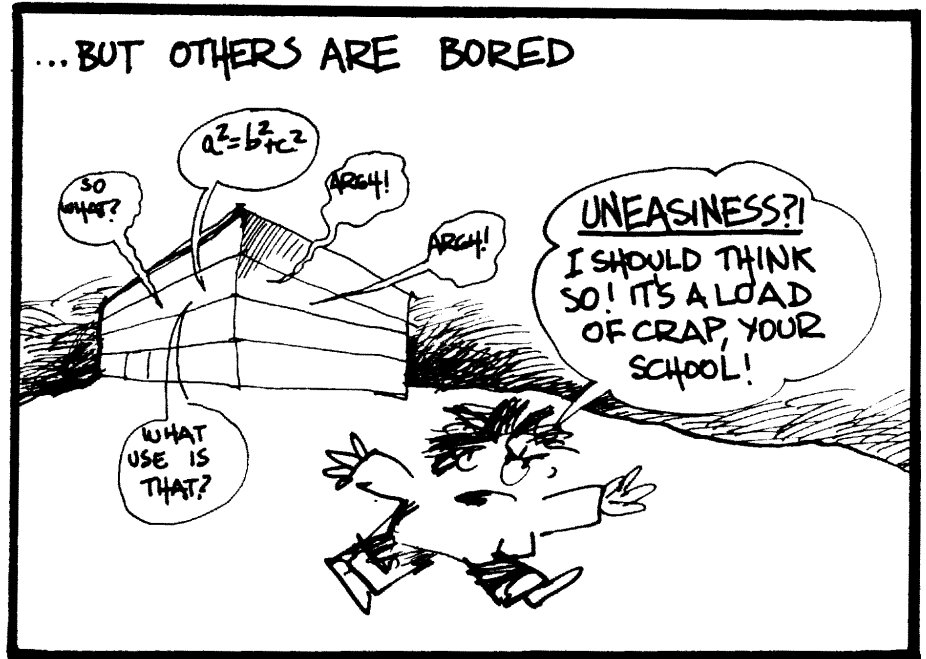
HEY, YOU!  
IT IS  
FORBIDDEN  
TO WALK  
ON THE  
GRASS

**... and yet**

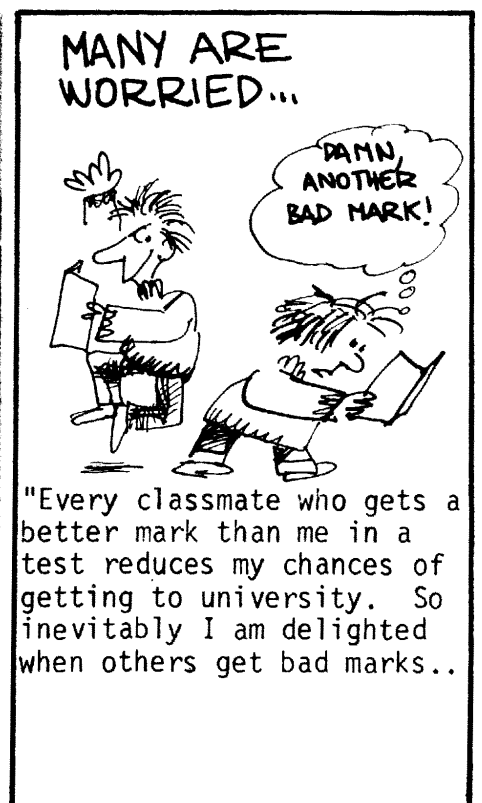


**there seems to be some uneasiness...**

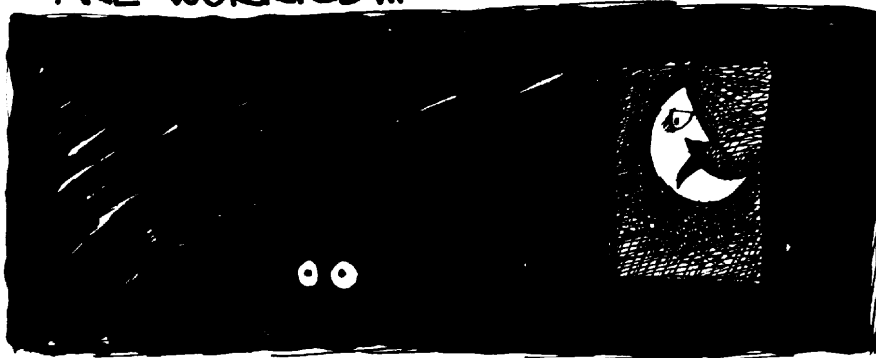
# Uneasiness among the pupils



... OR ON THEIR SCHOOLMATES...



ARE WORRIED...



"On the first day of school, the teacher told us that more than one-third would fail the year; he said this was proven by statistics."

### ...ARE SO WORRIED THAT IT MAKES THEM ILL

The school is also an institution which unbalances those most prone to psychosomatic disorders. The state of nervous tension in which they are kept by oral tests, compositions, examinations, the discipline of certain autocratic teachers, the shortage of physical activities and fresh air, the threats of demanding parents, and also the excessive desire of some children to do well, finally causes in many pupils chronic anxiety which affects the proper functioning of the internal organs. Quite apart from bedwetting of preschool-family origin, which may be abnormally prolonged by situations which repeatedly cause anxiety, there are many cases of headaches, digestive troubles, colitis, cardiac erethism and dermatitis which miraculously disappear during the holidays.

In fact, there is a risk in putting children day after day, into situations which take a heavy toll on the nerves. In the long run, the system becomes exhausted and reacts less and less well to emotional demands, internal lesions and "adaptive illnesses" may occur, preventing the pupil from reacting flexibly to new situations. The disastrous effects of these states on performance at school will be obvious to everyone.

BASTIN (1)

SOME  
ONLY ASK  
TO  
LEAVE  
SCHOOL

He wanted to be a cook, he was interested in that. He had a job prospect, starting immediately, friends of the family who were expecting him... He was furious that he still had two years of school to complete, during which he would do absolutely nothing :

"Two years sitting on my backside! You think they aren't prize idiots ?

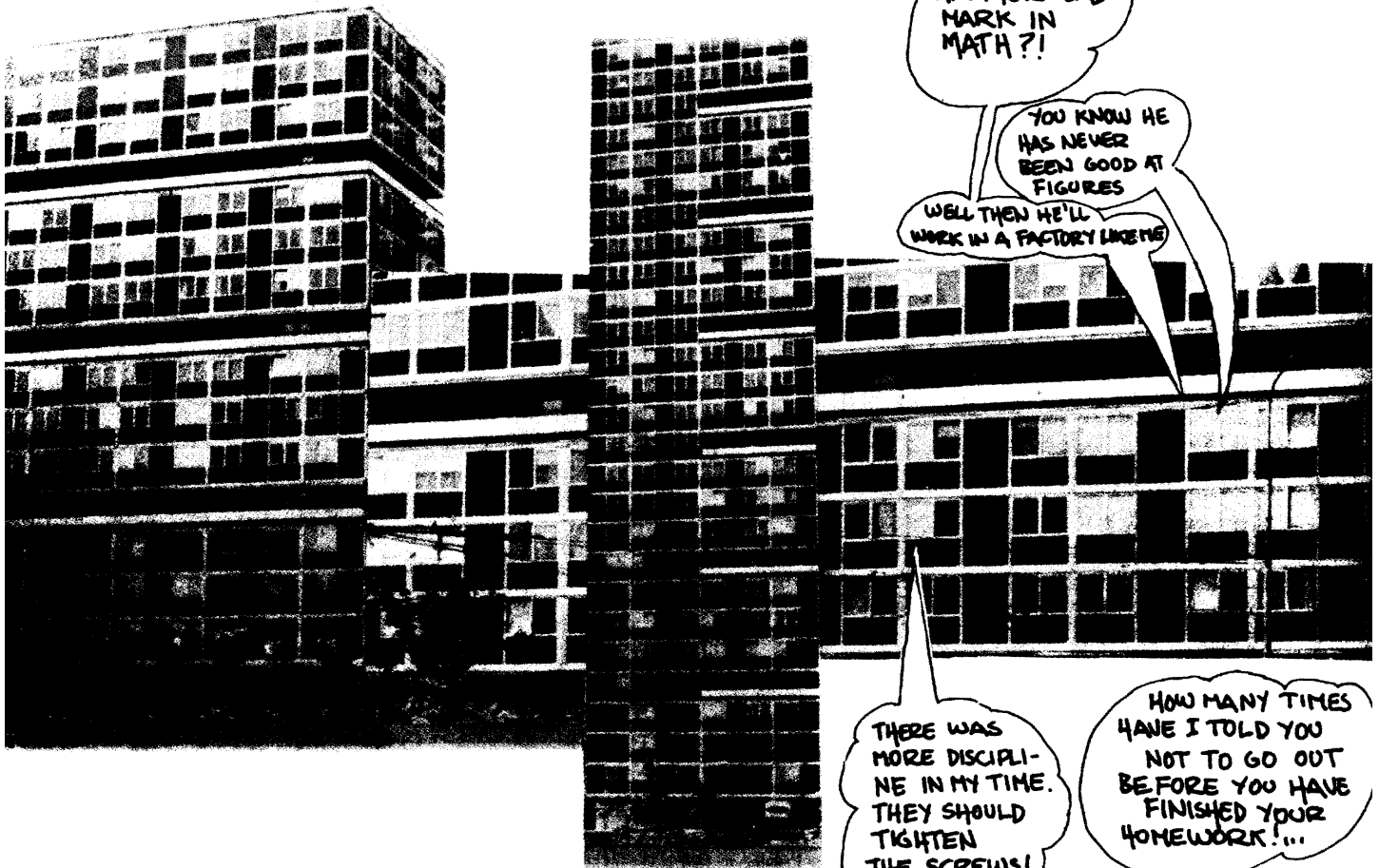
"Because for the moment, all right, I don't mind a slog. But if it's still available in two years I shan't feel like doing a damned thing anymore...

You know what I mean ? It may be that in two years, as I won't have started, I may no longer want to be a cook or anything else...

"Me, I get kicked around too much. I don't know, I'll steal cars... Something! ... In two years I may be in jail.

DUNETON (2)

# Uneasiness among the parents



"... It's a disaster, they are categorized too soon, too young, it's not fair!"

"The programmes and all that, they were made by upper-class people..."

"I say you can't go against nature; my daughter doesn't like to be shut up, she could work day and night and she still wouldn't succeed."

"... We don't know enough about it so we let things go, you know it's always a problem: we never went to school so it raises a problem."

"...They sent me some stuff but I can't make any decisions, they should know, I can't do anything, so there's no point in reading it, I have no power anyway, I have nothing."

"Parents have to take a refresher course for the first child, and perhaps start all over again for the second, because every teacher uses different methods."

"... We submit to the programmes, we are relegated to a position of subordinates by our authorities. They think we are incapable, but we could..."





IT'S A BAD RESULT,  
BUT SO WHAT -  
IT DOESN'T  
MATTER TOO MUCH  
FOR A GIRL

WATCHING  
TELEVISION INSTEAD  
OF DOING YOUR  
HOMEWORK?!

CAN I GO OUT  
AFTER MIDNIGHT,  
THEN?

"Since it is obvious that there is little point in homework when the child has no desire to do it, it would be logical to allow the child to decide himself if he wants to do any or not. The amount, at any rate, should be left to his own free will ... "

BAD MARKS  
AGAIN?!  
YOU'LL BE IN  
TROUBLE  
WITH YOUR  
FATHER  
AGAIN!

"... The question arises whether the selection should be made at that point ... It's a reflection of society, isn't it? There's a desire to build partitions, for example between the white-collars and the workers."

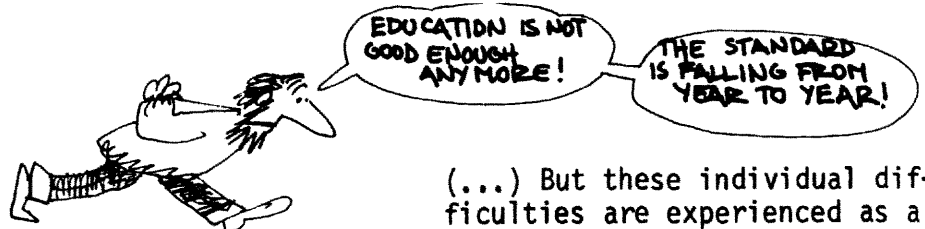
Faced with bad results, parents wonder whether they have taken enough care with the child, some even have guilt feelings, they are anxious because they are worried about their children's future.

"A girl leaves a secondary school at which the new maths is taught. She goes on to a vocational school where she is not allowed to use the new maths but must use the traditional method. So it seems that our children are being used as guinea-pigs."

# Uneasiness among teachers

SOME ARE SATISFIED...

...BUT OTHERS ARE WORRIED



“ In former times the classroom was the secret place where the teacher asserted his authority.

(...) The interplay of ideas between pupil and teacher was quite intense, quite rich and quite fruitful, so that the teacher felt intimately and profoundly fulfilled by it.

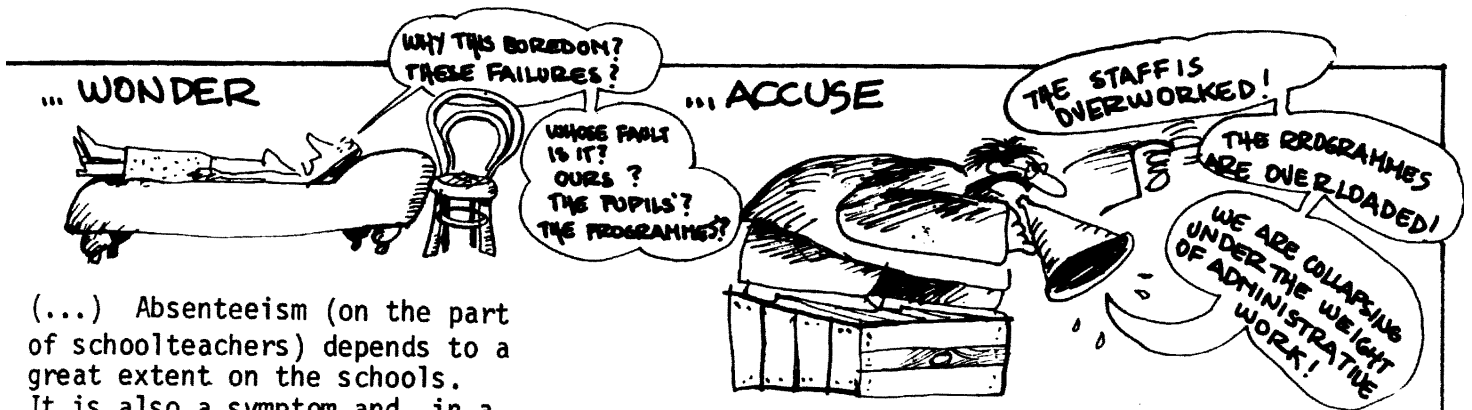
(...) Hence one can imagine the shock-waves caused by the crisis in the teacher-pupil relationship. First of all, at the level of the individual, the classroom is viewed with apprehension (by the teacher): it is no longer the place where you feel your own worth and achieve fulfilment as you meet the expectations of the pupils; instead, it is where culture is ignored or rejected and the teacher's contribution disputed.

(...) But these individual difficulties are experienced as a crisis of the system, and this is where the seriousness of the problem lies. There have always been teachers who did not succeed in arousing their pupils' interest; they were sometimes heckled. They didn't broadcast the fact, for it was obvious to everyone that it was their own fault. Today teachers speak quite freely of their difficulties with their pupils: they no longer think of them as a personal failure but as proof that the educational model has not been adapted to the situation; in their view, they are being asked to do something which is no longer meaningful, which cannot be effective any more and can therefore only lead them into a blind alley. The profession as practised only fifteen years ago has become unworkable.



FEEL THAT THEY ARE UNDER INDICTMENT





(...) Absenteeism (on the part of schoolteachers) depends to a great extent on the schools. It is also a symptom and, in a way, a consequence of the 'uneasiness'. For some teachers, it is a reaction of flight in the face of the challenge of the classroom, which has become too great. And doctors state that even some vocational illnesses are subconscious defences against a profession which is thought to be quite intolerable.

(...) In short, there is a crisis in the profession itself. It is not surprising that some react by fleeing from this profession, which has become impossible to practise in outmoded conditions: requests for secondment to the "National Centre for Tele-Education" (the traditional outlet for teachers who are ill or tired) are increasingly being received from young and respected teachers. At the same time, the somewhat mythical intention of changing to another profession can be seen to be spreading among the teaching community.

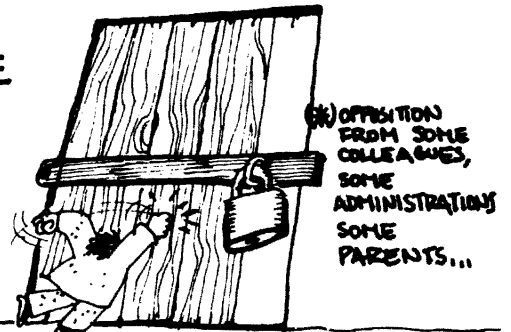
SUPPORT JOXE (19)

FOR SOME THIS IS BECOMING INTOLERABLE



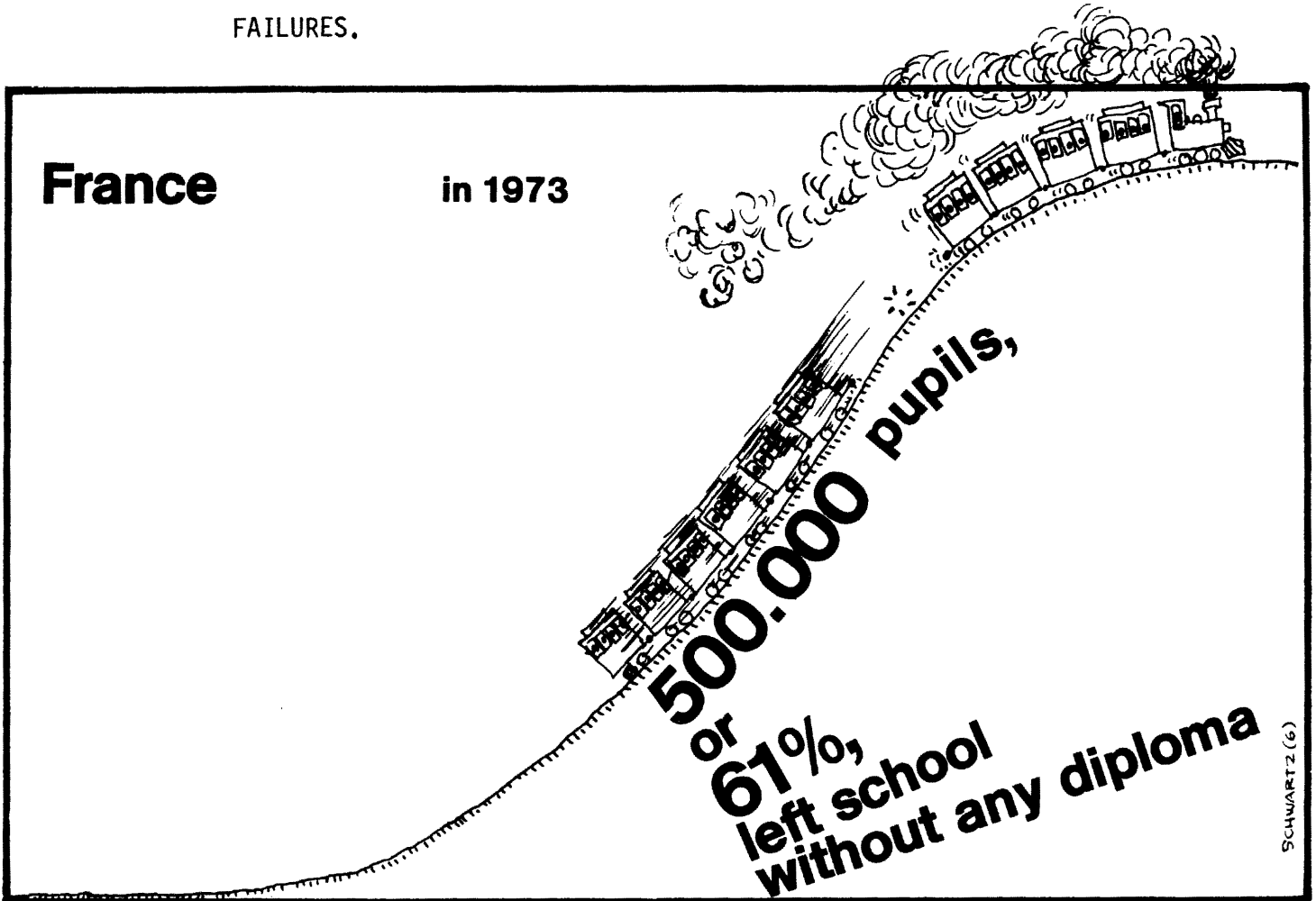
One cannot claim to be apolitical when one agrees to take on the task of sorting out the sheep from the goats, the workers from the bosses. We have not been told about it, but the teaching profession has completely changed over the past fifteen years or so. We were kept inside buildings, classrooms, walls, while everything around us was changing: society, life, values, the children and ourselves ... We go on using rules and structures designed -- very well designed, I repeat -- for teaching in the old days. It doesn't work, obviously. For the children or for us. Of course we try to hang on, to invent systems for ourselves. We change the arrangement of the tables in the classroom, we put our desks behind the pupils, at the back, at the side ... We brighten up the walls with engravings, posters ... We get up to increasingly complex tricks, which we call pedagogy, in order to appear scholarly, reassure ourselves and give ourselves some 'bite' ... It's killing us. And the whole fine structure just keeps on collapsing from year to year: the children become more and more disobedient, troublesome, inattentive, ignorant -- by our standards -- of beauty, and thus susceptible to social selection. And we become more and more disgusted.

THOSE WHO TRY TO CHANGE ENCOUNTER OBSTACLES OF ALL SORTS (\*)



# A great many failures

A SCHOOL IS EXPECTED TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTION, QUALIFICATIONS, DIPLOMAS -- IN REALITY, THE YEARS AT SCHOOL PRODUCE A STRIKING NUMBER OF FAILURES.



## Belgium

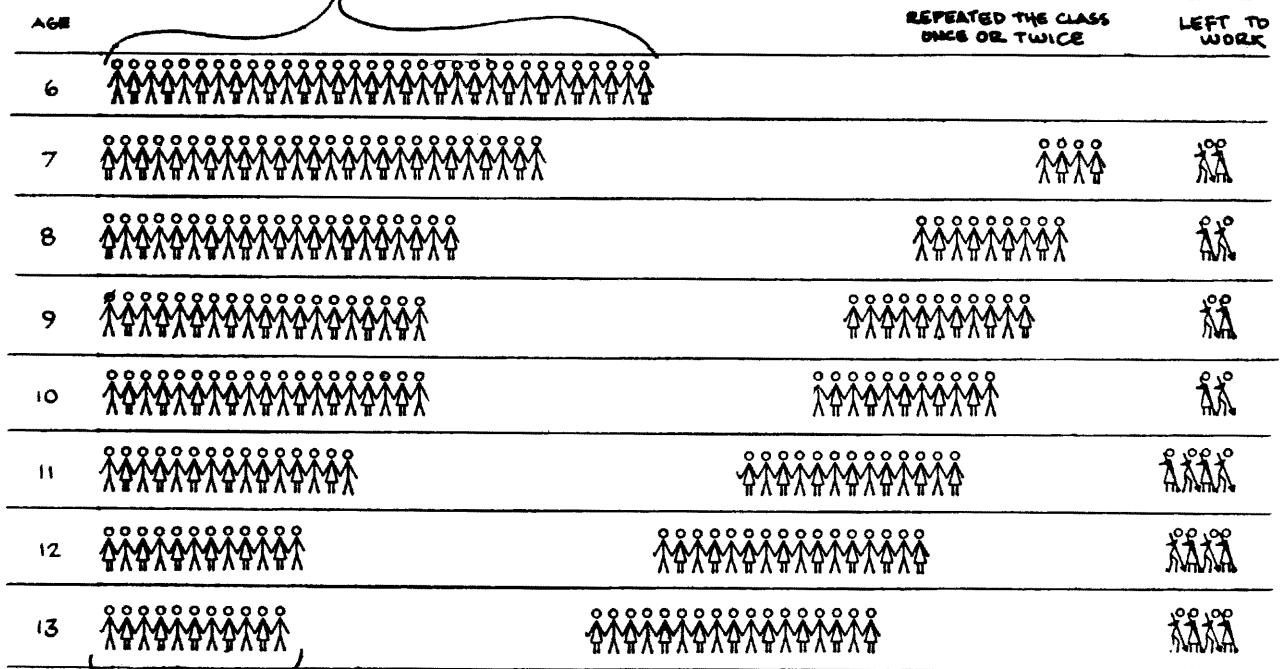
In Belgium, "there has never before been so much talk of failures at all levels of education. The statistics are alarming. The University Advisory Committee on Teaching (Belgian Ministry of National Education)

states that in 1960-61, in primary and general education, one-third of 1,368,590 children surveyed had fallen behind at school; between them they required at least 578,000 additional years of schooling."

CHILDREN HAVE TO REPEAT CLASSES FROM THE EARLIEST YEARS AND THROUGHOUT THEIR SCHOOLING.

# Italy

OF 32 CHILDREN WHO STARTED SCHOOL



... SEVEN YEARS LATER ONLY 11 HAVE NOT REPEATED A YEAR

As the study of children at Barbiana, carried out over a period of 8 years, shows: school "wastage" (repeating classes and leaving to work) is progressively affecting two-thirds of pupils.

BARBIANA (7)

THE NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO HAVE TO REPEAT A CLASS VARIES FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY. BUT DESPITE A DECLINING TREND, IT IS STILL HIGH.

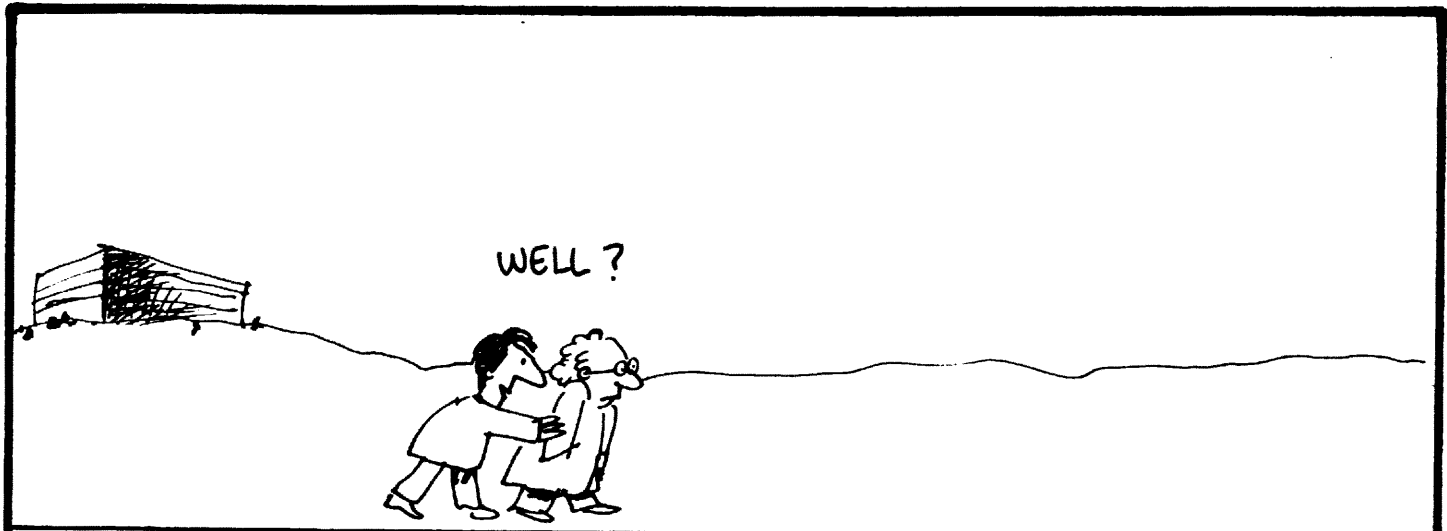
## Switzerland

Geneva (1974) :  
More than a third of 14-year old children are not in the class appropriate for their age.

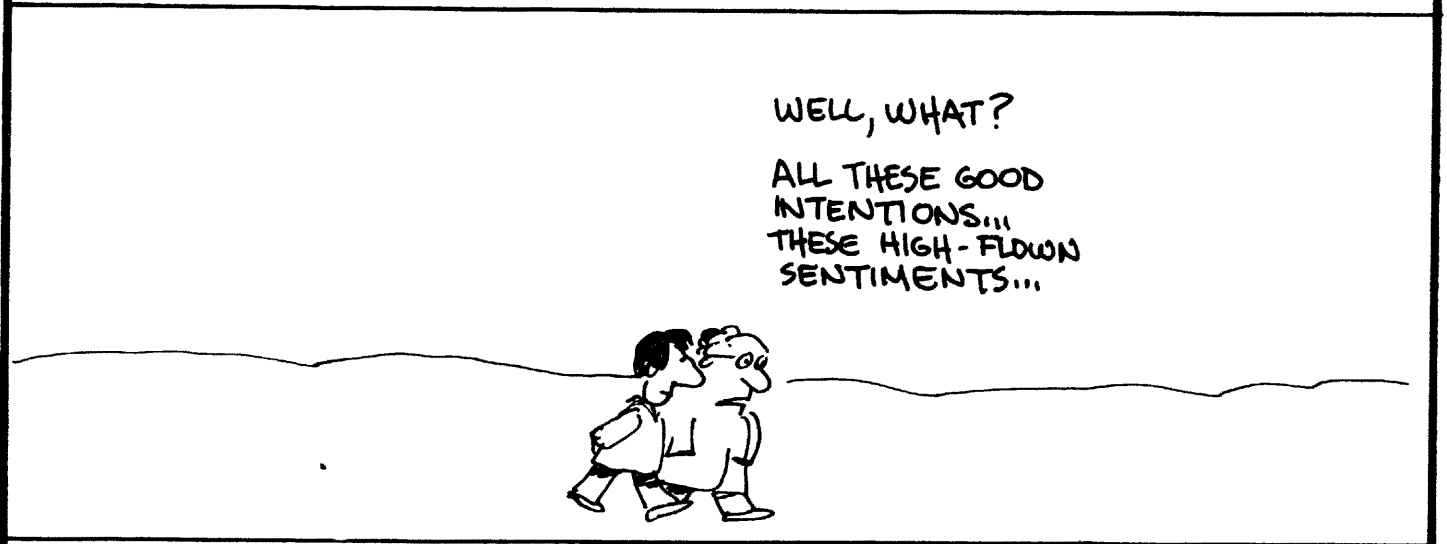
## Germany

A quarter of the pupils at intermediate school (Hauptschule), half the pupils in higher grades (Realschule)

and practically all pupils at grammar school have to repeat a class at least once. (1976)



WELL ?



WELL, WHAT?  
ALL THESE GOOD  
INTENTIONS...  
THESE HIGH-FLOWN  
SENTIMENTS...

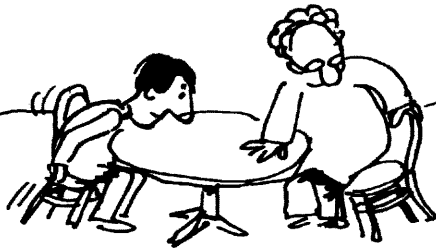


THESE FINE  
OBJECTIVES...  
ALL THESE  
HOPES...  
THIS GRAND  
TALK...

YOU'VE SEEN  
THE STATISTICS...  
IS THAT  
WHAT IT ALL LEADS TO?  
FAILURES, DISSATISFACTION,  
BITTERNESS,  
UNEASINESS...

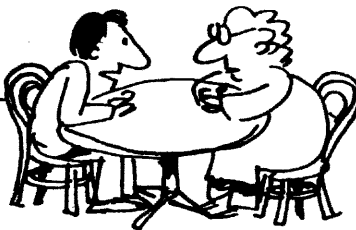


WHY IS THERE  
ALL THAT?

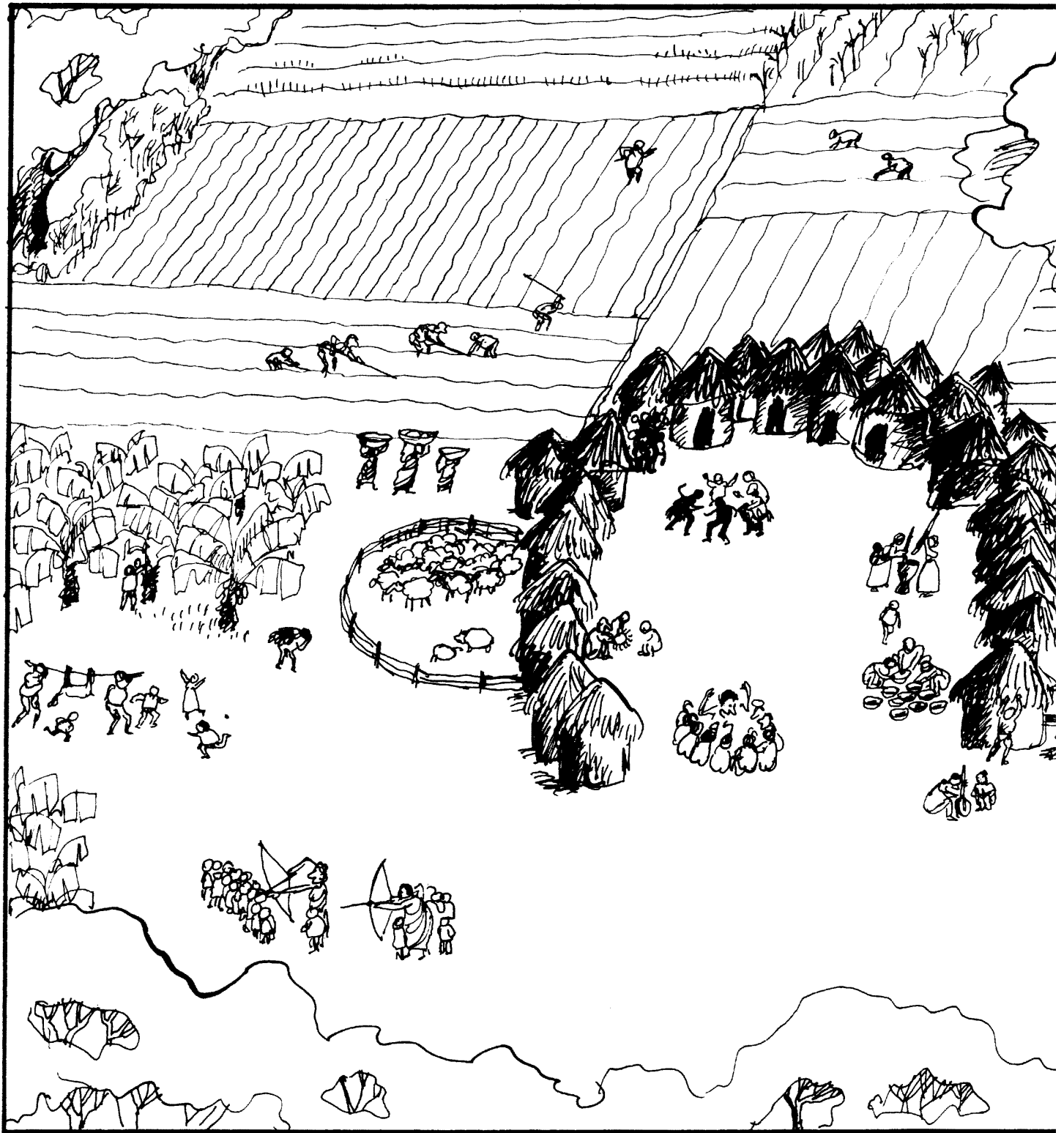


THIS SCHOOL... WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?  
WAS IT  
ALWAYS  
LIKE IT IS  
TODAY?

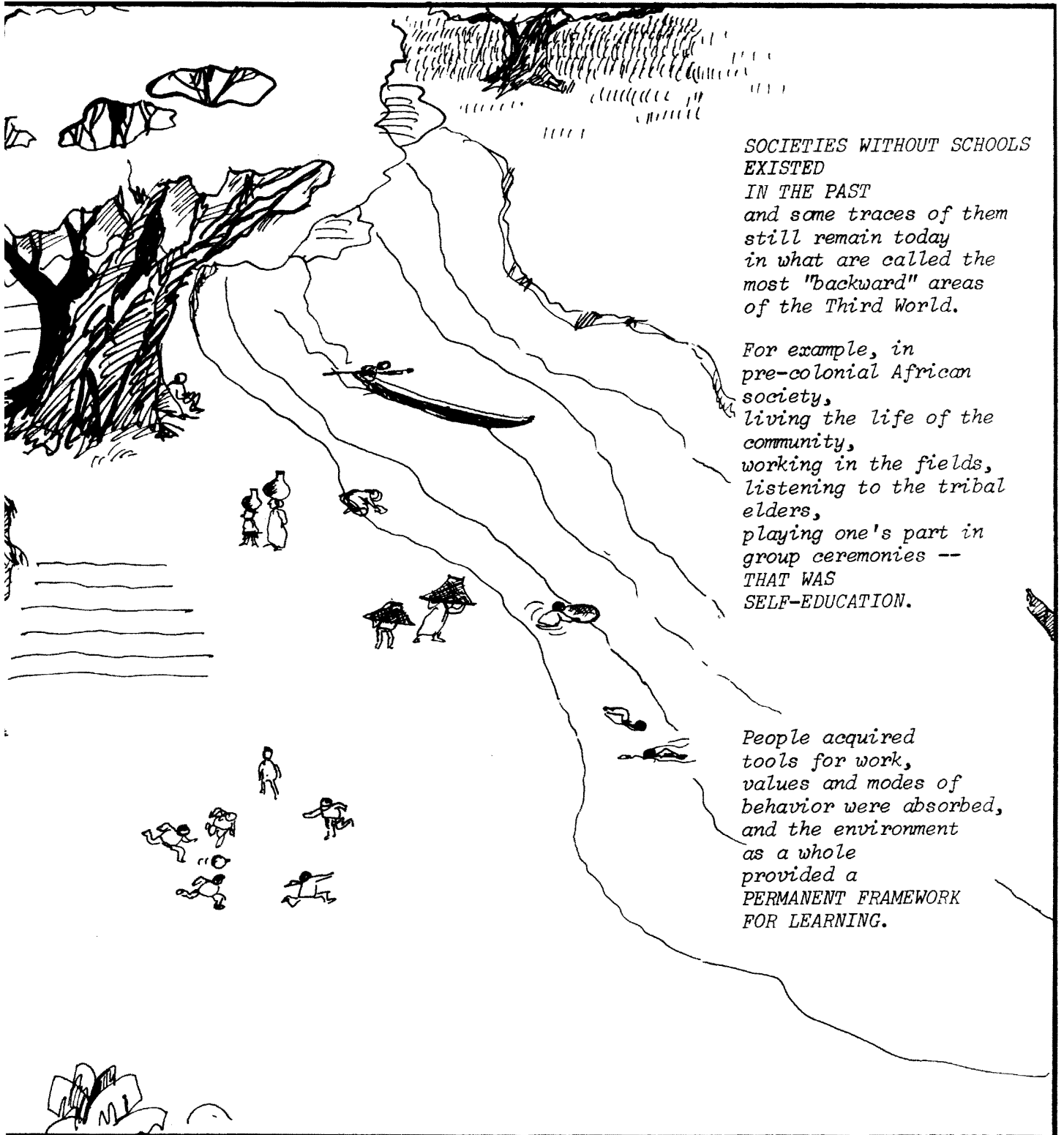
NO...



# Education without schools







**SOCIETIES WITHOUT SCHOOLS  
EXISTED**

**IN THE PAST**  
and some traces of them  
still remain today  
in what are called the  
most "backward" areas  
of the Third World.

For example, in  
pre-colonial African  
society,  
living the life of the  
community,  
working in the fields,  
listening to the tribal  
elders,  
playing one's part in  
group ceremonies --  
**THAT WAS  
SELF-EDUCATION.**

People acquired  
tools for work,  
values and modes of  
behavior were absorbed,  
and the environment  
as a whole  
provided a  
**PERMANENT FRAMEWORK  
FOR LEARNING.**





THERE WAS NO  
RECOGNIZED SCHOOLTEACHER

Every adult was  
a "teacher".

Children learned from their  
own experience and  
from that of others.

They learned by doing,  
so that  
knowledge,  
life  
and work  
were inseparable.

There was no  
tree of knowledge,  
only a branch  
flowering  
in the  
tree of life.

# The school of the gentry

It was in the Middle Ages that education in Europe became the PRODUCT OF THE SCHOOL.

This meant that an entire class of people (mostly members of the clergy) specialized in

transmitting knowledge and that this transmission took place in an artificial context, carefully isolated from the world of adults and cut off from daily life.





Over the centuries, these schools were to be reserved for the elite.

At first for the nobility, and later also for the bourgeoisie, which, as they grew in importance, came to claim the same privileges as the aristocracy.

The "others" -- peasants, workers, humble people -- were left with only practical

learning in and through their daily work.

The school of the gentry respected tradition and attached central importance to morals and religion, verbal skills and abstract thought. Scientific knowledge which could bring change counted less than rhetoric and Latin, the symbols of a tradition that had to be maintained in a world which was thought to be unchanging.

This bookish, refined and literary culture was in harmony with the pupils' background and met their aspirations.

For the inheritors of an aristocracy that was certain that its power would last forever, getting an education was synonymous with learning to think, to conduct oneself well, to BE A LORD AND MASTER.

*"In any civilized society, there are necessarily two classes of men: one which makes its living by manual labour, the other which lives on the income from its properties or the product of certain functions in which mental work predominates over physical labour. The first is the working class; the second I shall call the learned class.*

*Men of the working class soon need the labour of their children; and the children themselves need, at an early stage, to acquire knowledge of, and particularly familiarity with the customs of, the arduous work for which they are destined. They cannot therefore languish long in schools (...)*

*By contrast, those of the learned class can devote time to their studies, for they have more to learn in order to fulfil their destiny, including things which can only be learned when age has given the mind a certain level of development (...)*

*These are matters which are not governed by human will; they necessarily derive from the very nature of men and society: no one is capable of changing them ... We must start from invariables (...)*

*We may thus conclude that in any State in which proper attention is devoted to the education of citizens there must be two entire systems of instruction which have nothing in common with each other."*

*Destutt de Tracy (1802)*

# One school for the rich, one for the poor



The schools of the gentry were to remain as long as the rigid and hierarchical structures of the feudal world were not yet rendered anachronistic by the development of industrial capitalism.

The revolution in technology along with the invention of the machine and the use of new sources of energy, changed the landscape of the world completely. New social classes emerged: an industrial middle class, master of technological progress, took over the power of the agrarian aristocracy; a working class was created through the concentration of poor and unqualified labourers around the new centres of production.

In this world in transition,

schools remained the reserve of the elite. But faced with the economy's new need for technical and scientific qualifications, the contents of teaching underwent fundamental changes. The schools had to modernize.

The scientific disciplines took on a growing importance alongside the literary and classical fields.

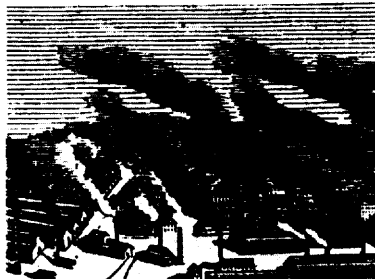
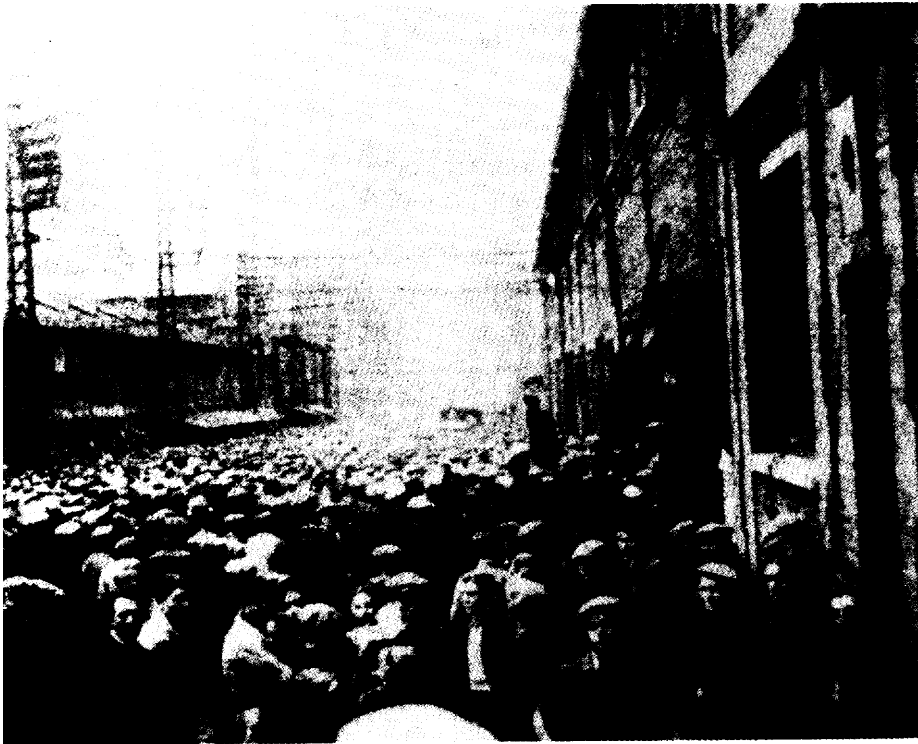
The dominant middle class was also concerned that the working masses, crowded into large industrial centres should acquire a minimum of instruction. These "ignorant people" had to be socialized, in other words, educated to become good citizens and disciplined workers.

Little by little, there appeared alongside the SCHOOL OF THE RICH, another school, the SCHOOL OF THE POOR. Its function was to furnish future workers with the minimum of culture necessary for their integration into the lowest ranks of industrial society.

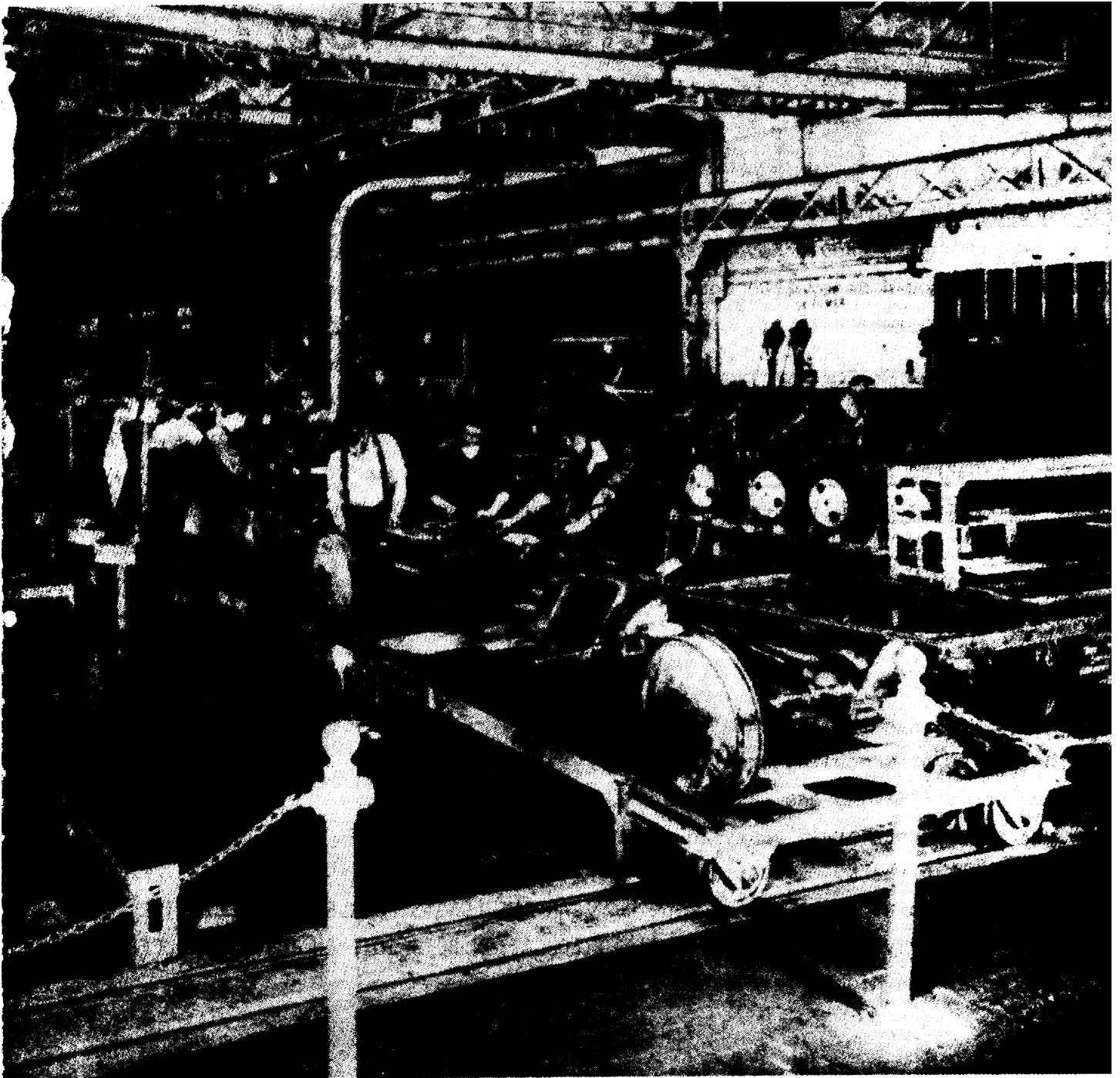
The coexistence of these two types of school gave rise to a situation of real SOCIAL SEGREGATION.

The children of working people went to "primary schools" which were not structured to give access to prolonged study.

The children of the elite followed a path separate from that of the nobility, and under the monopoly of the middle class.







PRISONERS OF MACHINES, SUBJECTED TO A SOUL-DESTROYING WORKING PACE AND SCHEDULE, AND OVER-EXPLOITED BY INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM, THE WORKERS GRADUALLY DEVELOPED THEIR CAPACITY TO STRUGGLE FOR THEIR RIGHTS.

# Towards a democratic school?

Access to education and culture became a priority demand : all should have access to a school and should enjoy true equality of opportunity with regard to it.

Free and compulsory education was seen as the key to this democratization of studies. The workers expected the school -- which would at last become a public service available to all -- to be an instrument for the liberation and emancipation of the disadvantaged classes.

These demands were eventually met. Over the years, the period of schooling grew longer: the minimum school-leaving age was raised from 10 years in France or 13 years in England to 15 or 16 years. Education free of charge, which had at first been accepted only for the early years, was gradually extended to cover the higher levels.

In this way, it was possible gradually to abolish the dual system of one school for the rich and one for the poor. From this point, all the children started their

education in a single school, and only after this school was there any SELECTION, in other words, separation of pupils into two main avenues: a long one leading to higher education, and a shorter one leading to technical or vocational schools and apprenticeship. This separation was now to take place solely on academic grounds: successful pupils took the long avenue, others the short one. This meant that selection, which had earlier been based on birth or wealth, was now carried out by the school, an apparent guarantee of fairness.

CAN THE LONG STRUGGLE TO DEMOCRATIZE EDUCATION BE SAID THEN TO HAVE SUCCEEDED ?

It all depends.

If by "educational democratization" you mean the fact that each year more and more pupils are staying on at school, studying longer and obtaining diplomas

YES, democratization has unquestionably occurred

- in France, in 1958 45% of young people were at school at the age of 16 and 17% at the age of 18; in 1972, the figures had risen to 67% and 27% respectively;

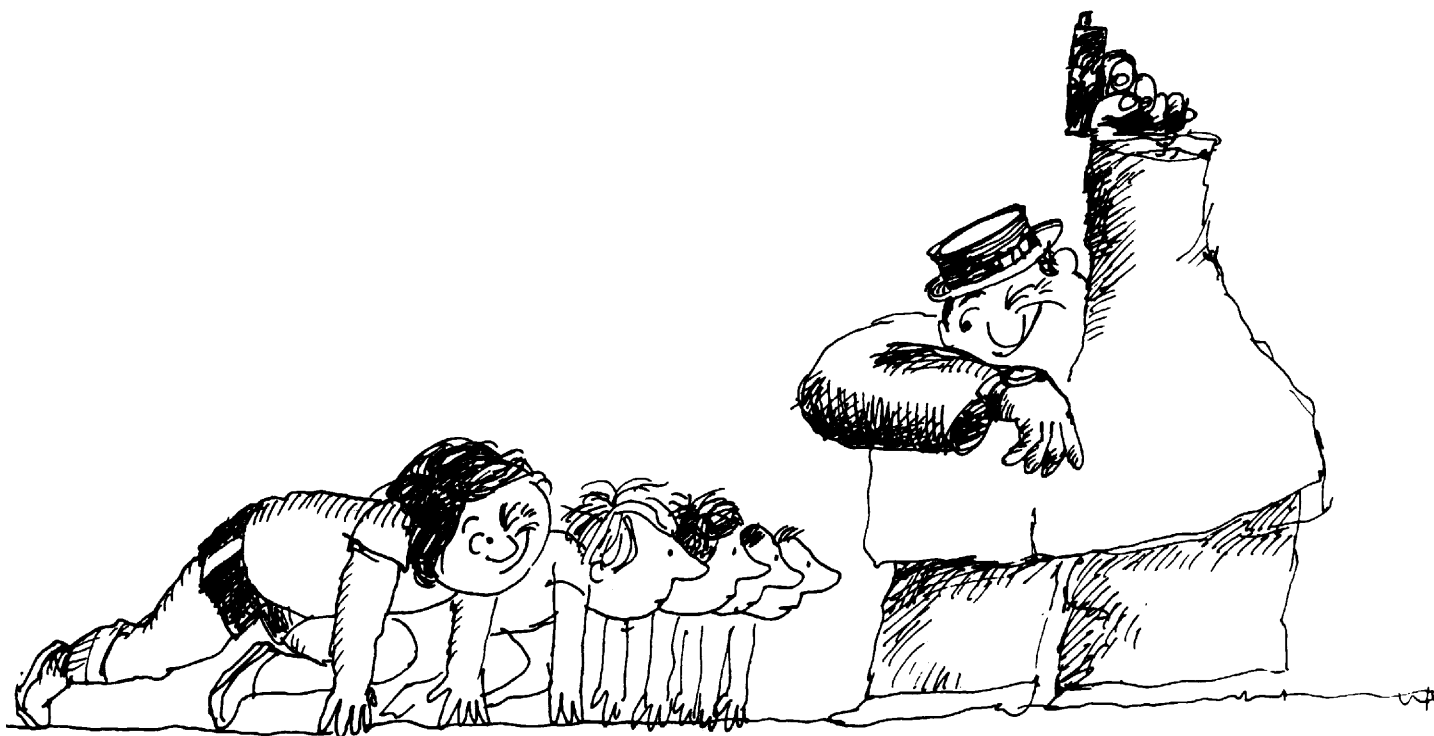
- in Geneva, the ratio of high-school students to apprentices rose from 1 high-school student per 2 apprentices in 1960 to 2 high-school students per 3 apprentices in 1975.

On the other hand, if "educational democratization" means the provision

of equal opportunity for children from different social backgrounds, NO, the struggle has not succeeded.

And yet, it might have been expected to, for all the conditions for equality of opportunity appear to have been met:

WITH THE SAME STARTING-POINT FOR ALL (the single school) AND THE SAME AVENUE OPEN TO ALL (compulsory and free education), THE "BEST", THE MOST "GIFTED" AND THE MOST "WORTHY" OUGHT TO SUCCEED, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR SOCIAL ORIGIN.



# What happens in reality?

TRUE, the children of industrial, agricultural and office workers now have greater access to education, but their chances of success remain much less than those of other social categories.

## social inequality remains

- in achieving success during the early years
- in progressing along the various avenues
- in further studies.

### 1. failures, falling behind

Children of the working classes fail and fall behind at primary school much more frequently than other children.

#### France :

According to figures issued by the Ministry of Labour (1974), 77% of children of manual and specialized workers had fallen behind at the end of primary school, against 16% of children of professional and managerial staff.

#### Belgium :

An earlier survey showed that there was an 80% failure rate for children from disadvantaged homes and 20% for children from moneyed families after 2 years of primary school.

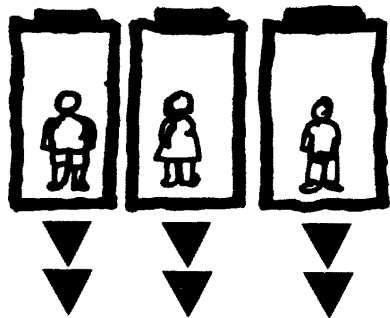


### 2. selectivity

Similarly, the distribution of pupils in the various educational avenues varies greatly according to social levels (even where academic results are the same).

#### France :

At the end of primary school, in classes for 'weak' pupils (sixth transition class), of a total of 100 pupils, 61.5% of pupils were children of workers and 0.5% were children of professional and managerial staff.



### 3. abandonment

As for the abandonment of studies, which is known to be related to falling behind in school, mostly the underprivileged levels of the population are affected.



A study by UNESCO (1970) confirms that the rate of abandonment ("starting directly to work") decreases with each step up in the social hierarchy. In France, it goes from 54% among industrial workers to 13% at professional levels.

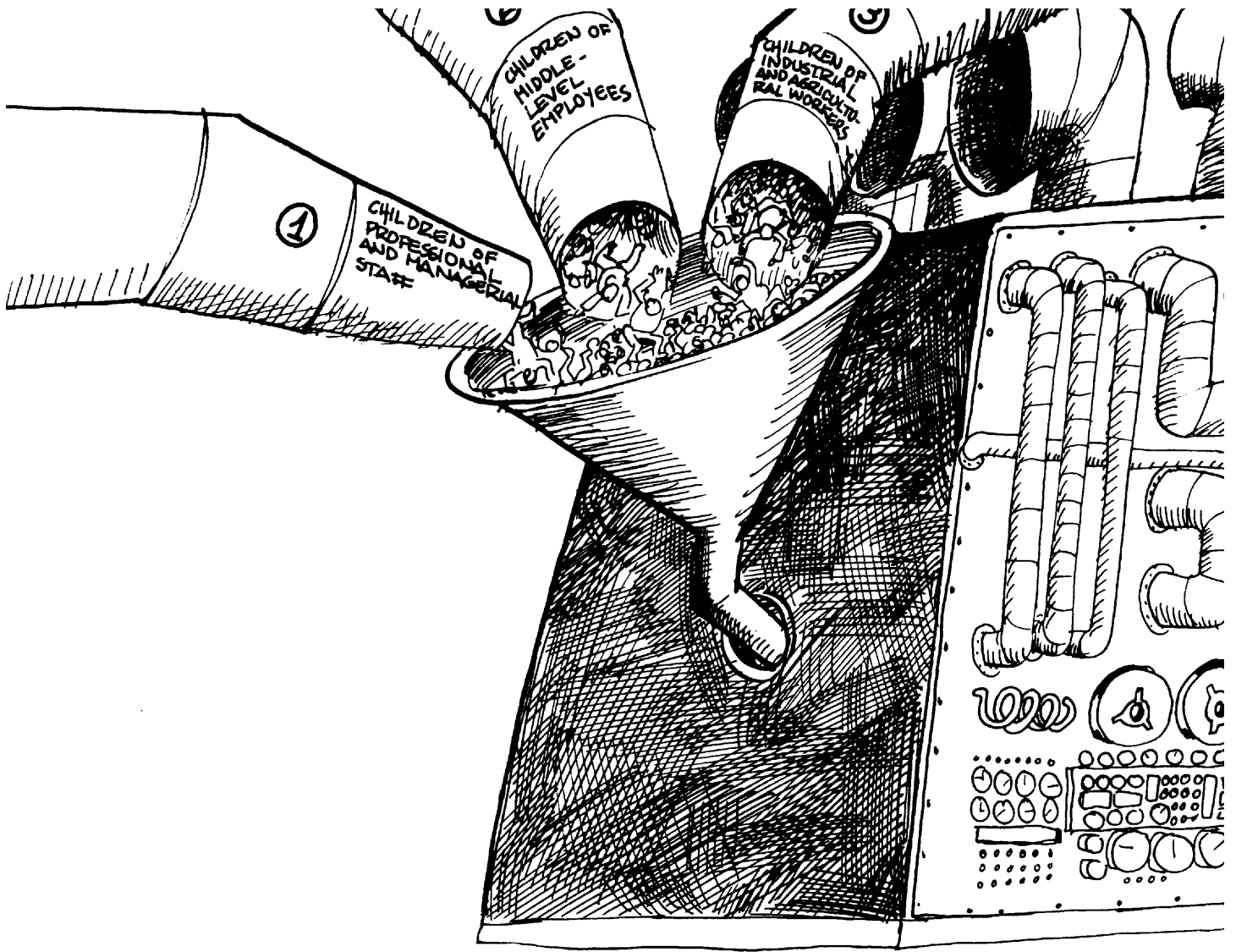
Switzerland (Geneva, 1976) :

- Of 3,200 adolescents from well-off families :

2,400 were in high-school (including 900 in private schools)  
800 were at technical or commercial schools or training as apprentices

- Of 4,150 adolescents whose parents are workers or low-level wage earners, the proportions are reversed :

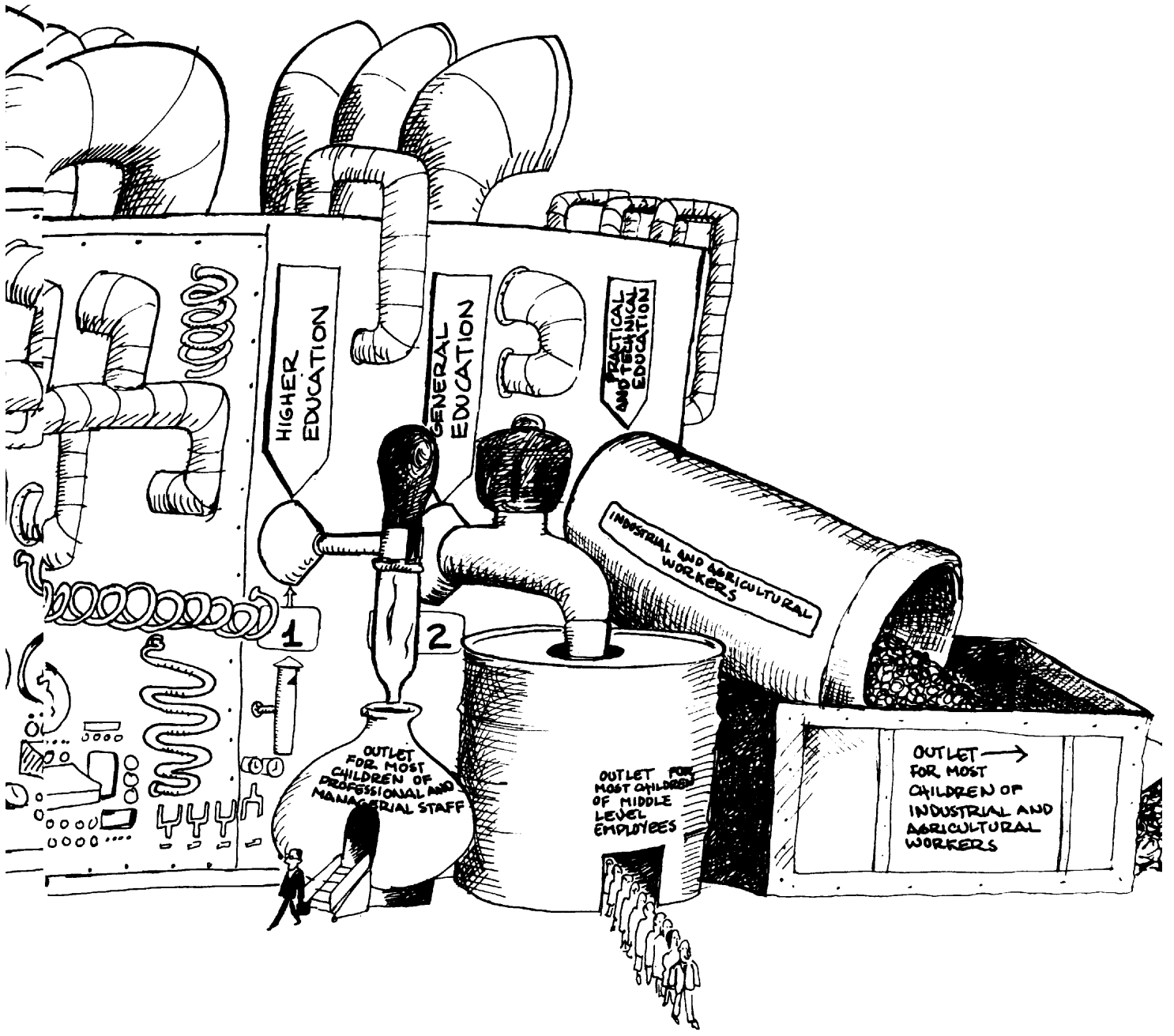
650 were in high-school (including private high-schools)  
3,500 were at technical or commercial schools or training as apprentices.



## like father, like son

All social classes recruit mainly from their own ranks. This is especially true in the extreme categories of the social ladder :

- 41.7% of the sons of professional and managerial staff go straight into jobs with the same status as their fathers.
- At the other end of the scale :
- 63.9% of sons of workers also become workers.
- As for sons of agricultural workers :
- 38.8% work as their fathers did while 34.9% become industrial workers.



YOUR SCHOOL CAREER LARGELY DETERMINES YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER

SO WHAT?

1

SO, YOUR PLACE ON THE SOCIAL LADDER IS DETERMINED BY RESULTS AT SCHOOL

NOTHING COULD BE MORE DEMOCRATIC!

2

ON THE CONTRARY: THE SCHOOL LEGITIMIZES A PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

3

YOU SAW FOR YOURSELF: CHILDREN OF WORKERS THEMSELVES BECOME WORKERS

...MOSTLY - AND THOSE OF MANAGERIAL CLASSES BECOME MANAGERS. THAT'S NORMAL

4

WHAT DO YOU MEAN "NORMAL" ?!

MY DEAR FELLOW - PEOPLE ARE GIFTED OR THEY ARE NOT. CHILDREN OF EXECUTIVES ARE GIFTED, LIKE THEIR FATHERS AND MOTHERS

5

AND I SUPPOSE THE CHILDREN OF WORKERS ARE STUPID?

LET'S SAY "NOT GIFTED" JUST LIKE THEIR PARENTS

6

GIFTS AND INTELLIGENCE ARE DISTRIBUTED UNEVENLY - NOBODY CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, NOT EVEN SCHOOLS OR SOCIETY.

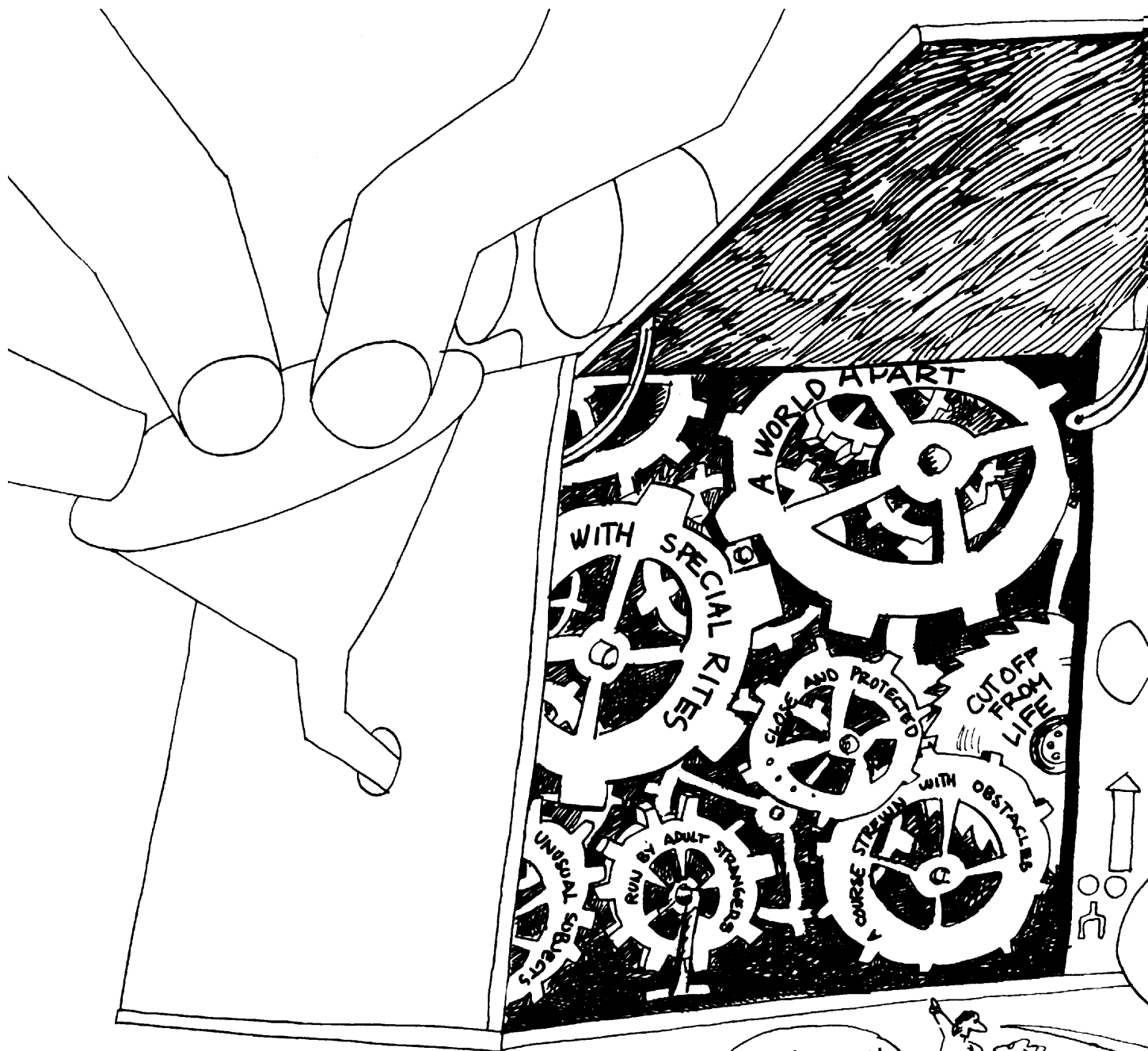
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THAT'S NOT TRUE!

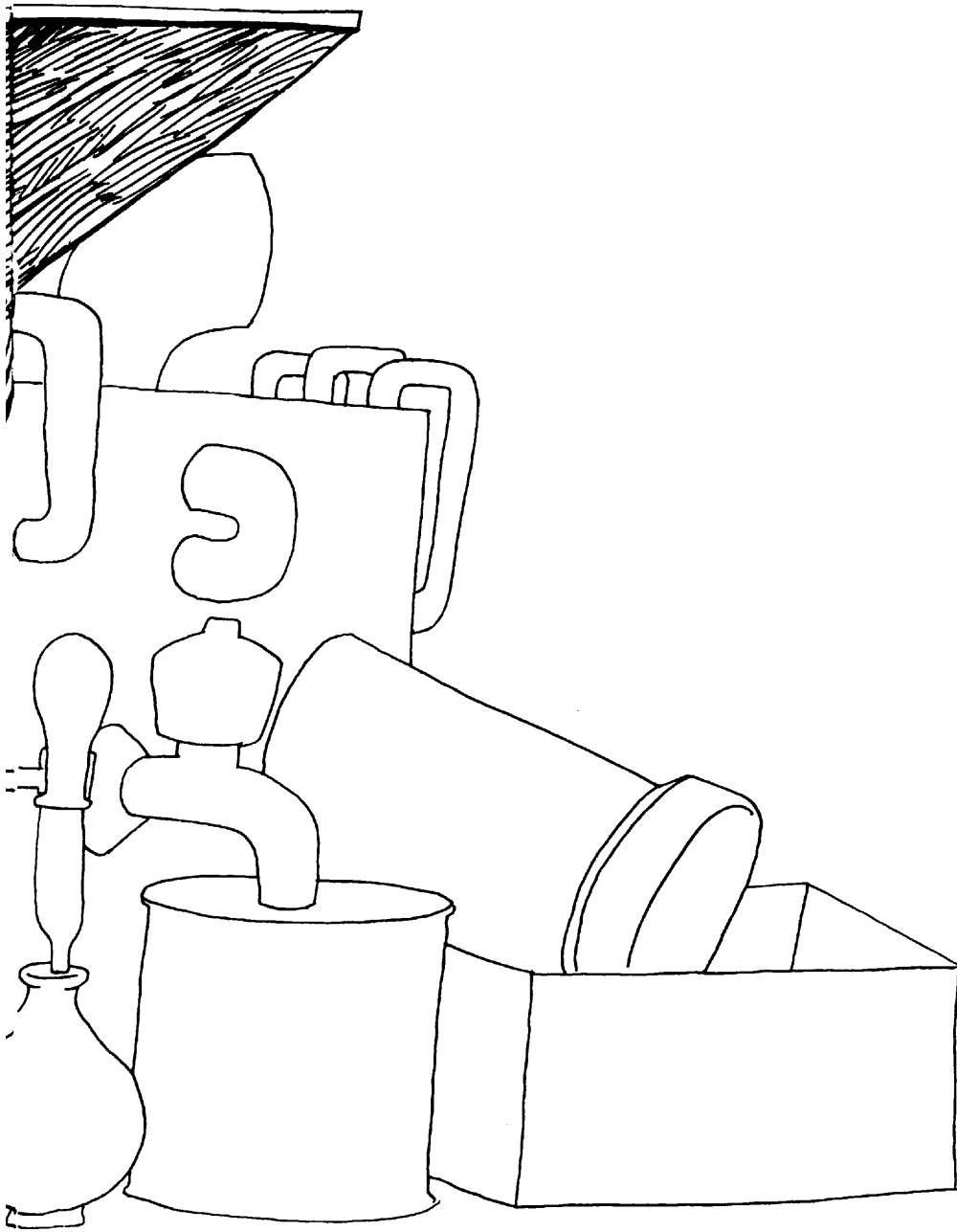
8







COME NOW!  
THIS MACHINE  
SEEMS TO BE RUNNING  
PRETTY WELL! BETTER  
NOT TO TOUCH IT! THAT  
MIGHT PUT IT OUT OF  
ORDER!

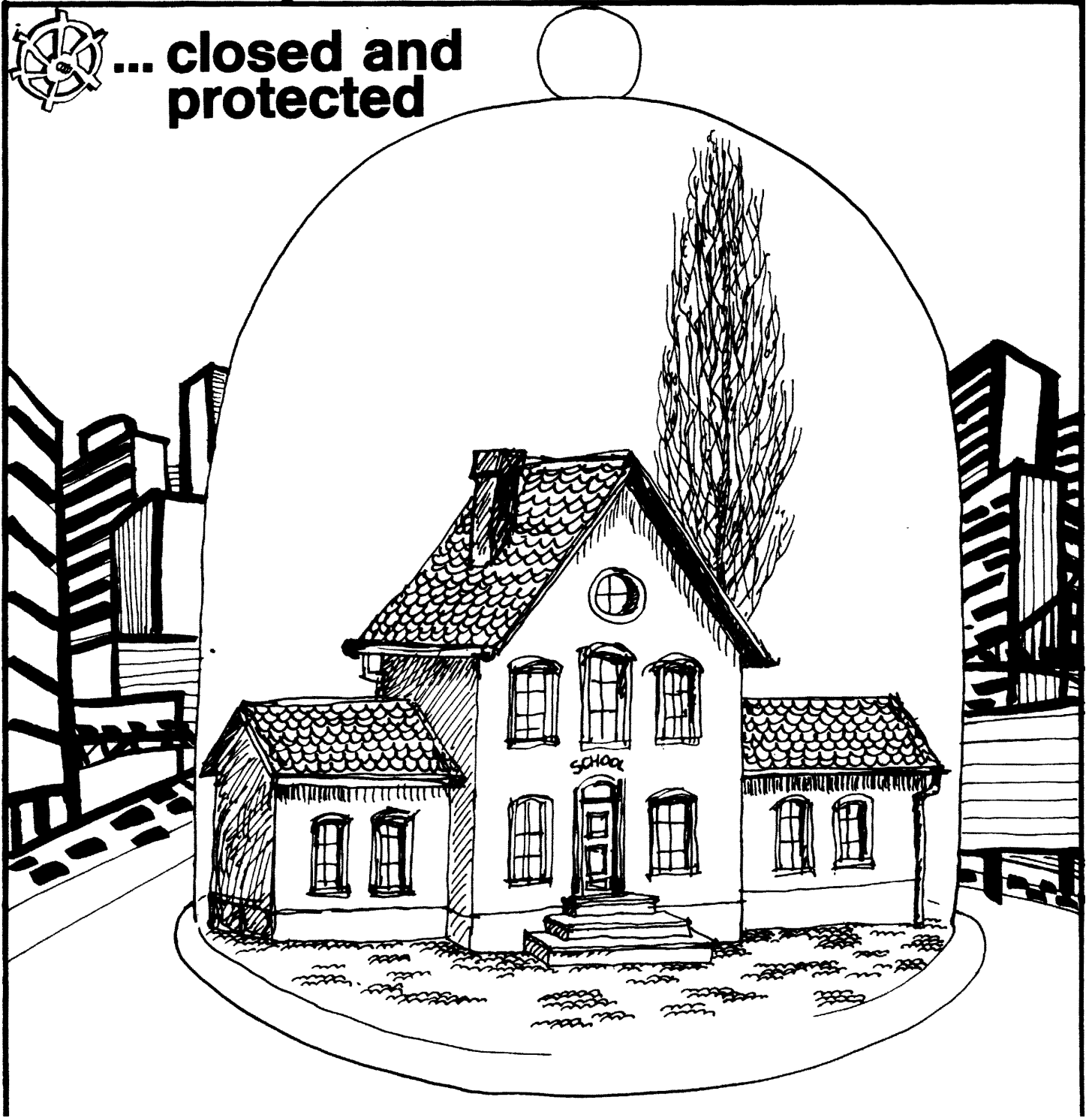


DON'T WORRY,  
IT IS ALREADY OUT  
OF ORDER! WE MUST  
DISMANTLE THE WHOLE  
THING TO SEE WHAT'S  
GONE WRONG.

# A world apart...



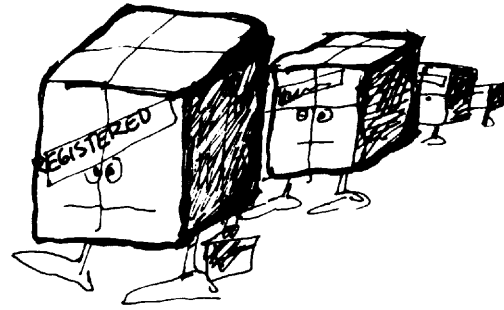
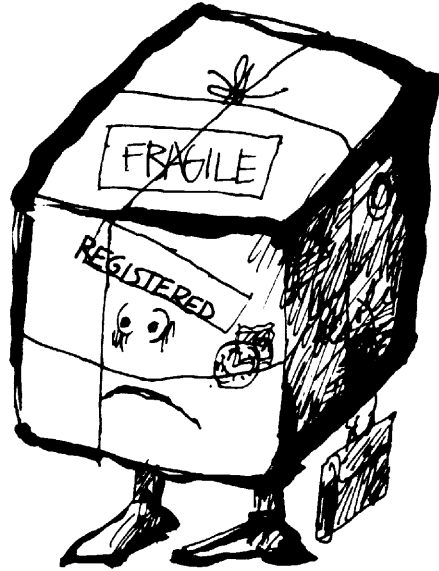
... closed and protected





... TO WHICH THE CHILD IS ENTRUSTED

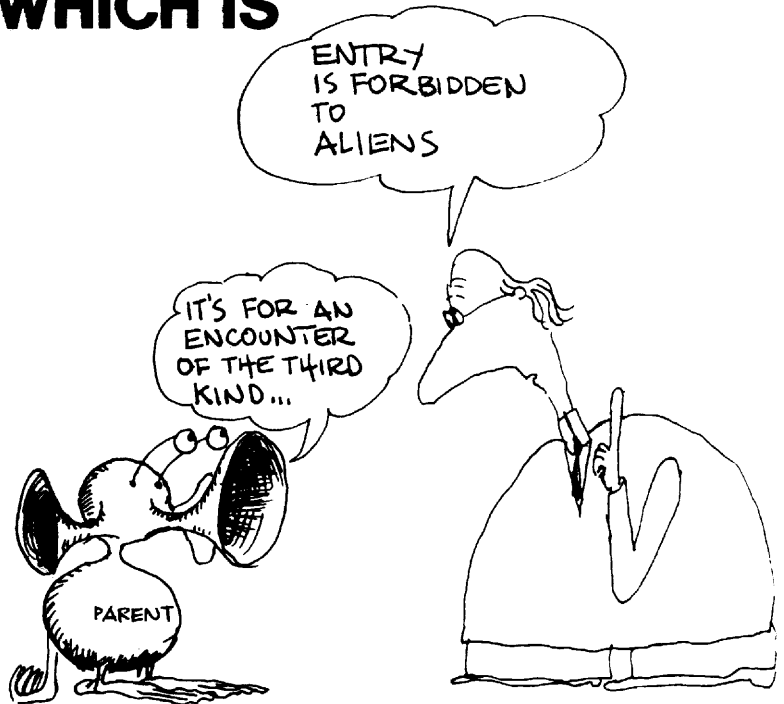
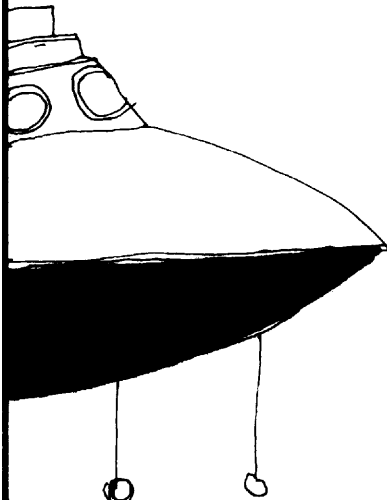
LIKE A REGISTERED PARCEL



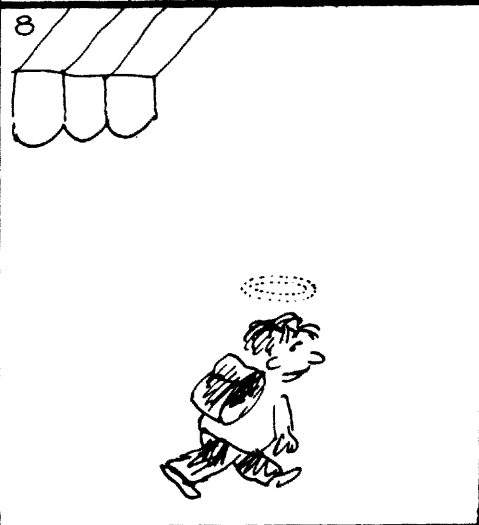
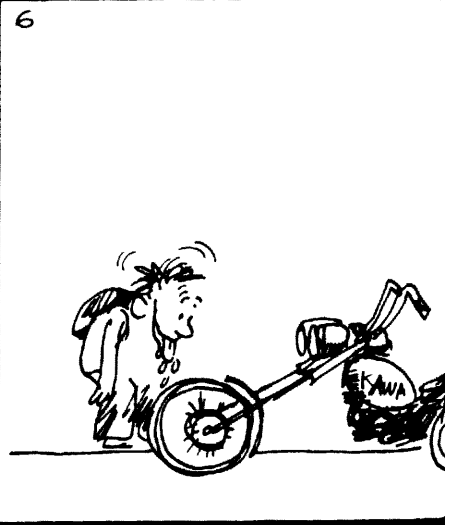
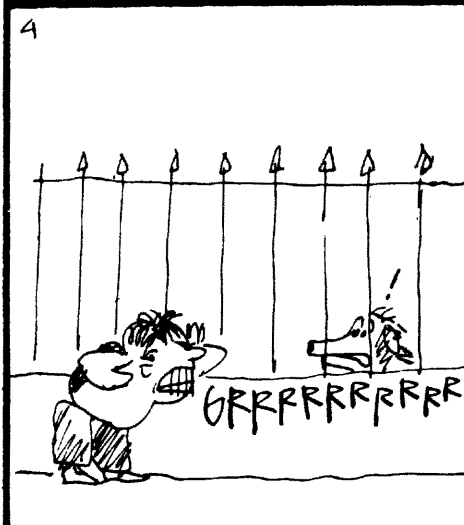
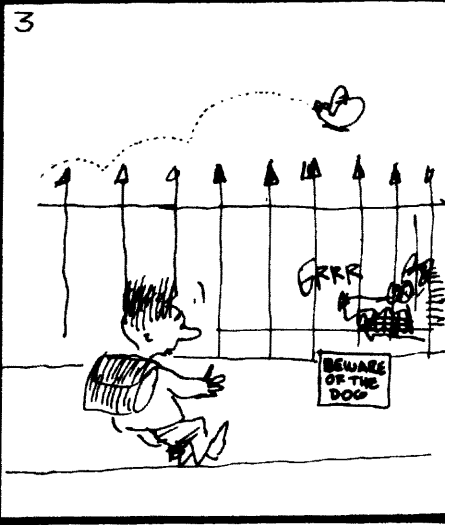
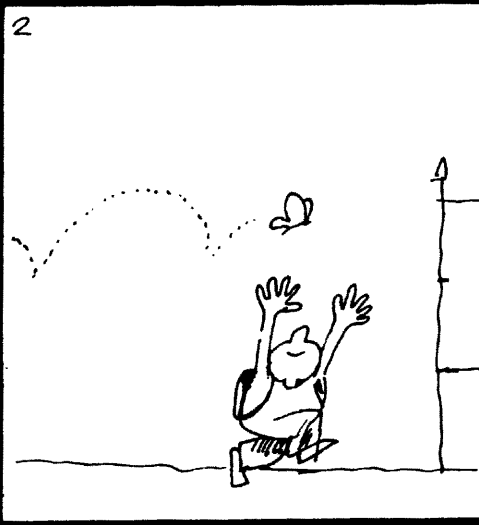
Wormy

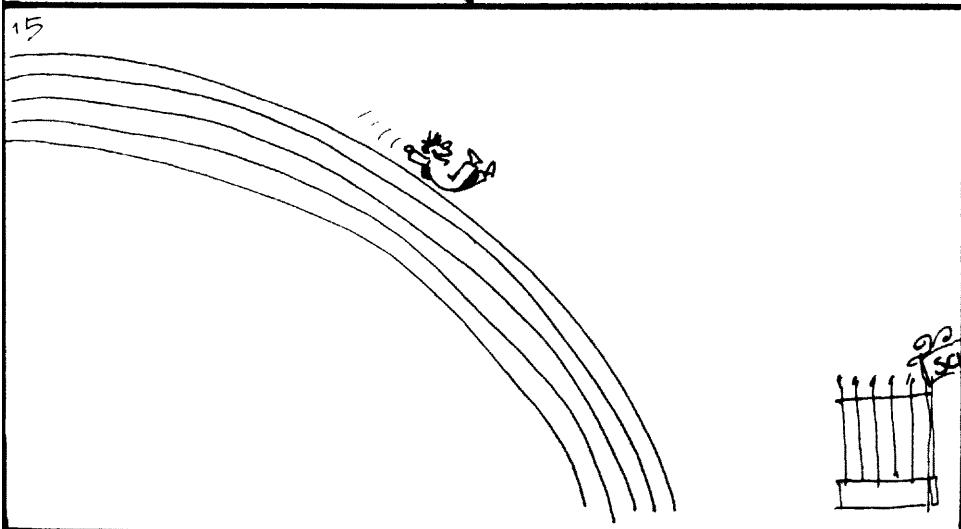
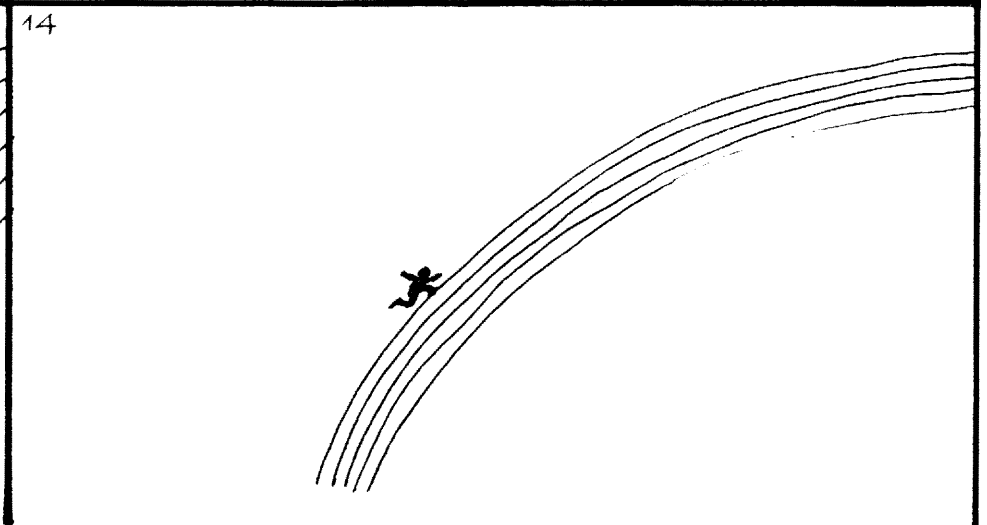


... ACCESS TO WHICH IS CAREFULLY GUARDED

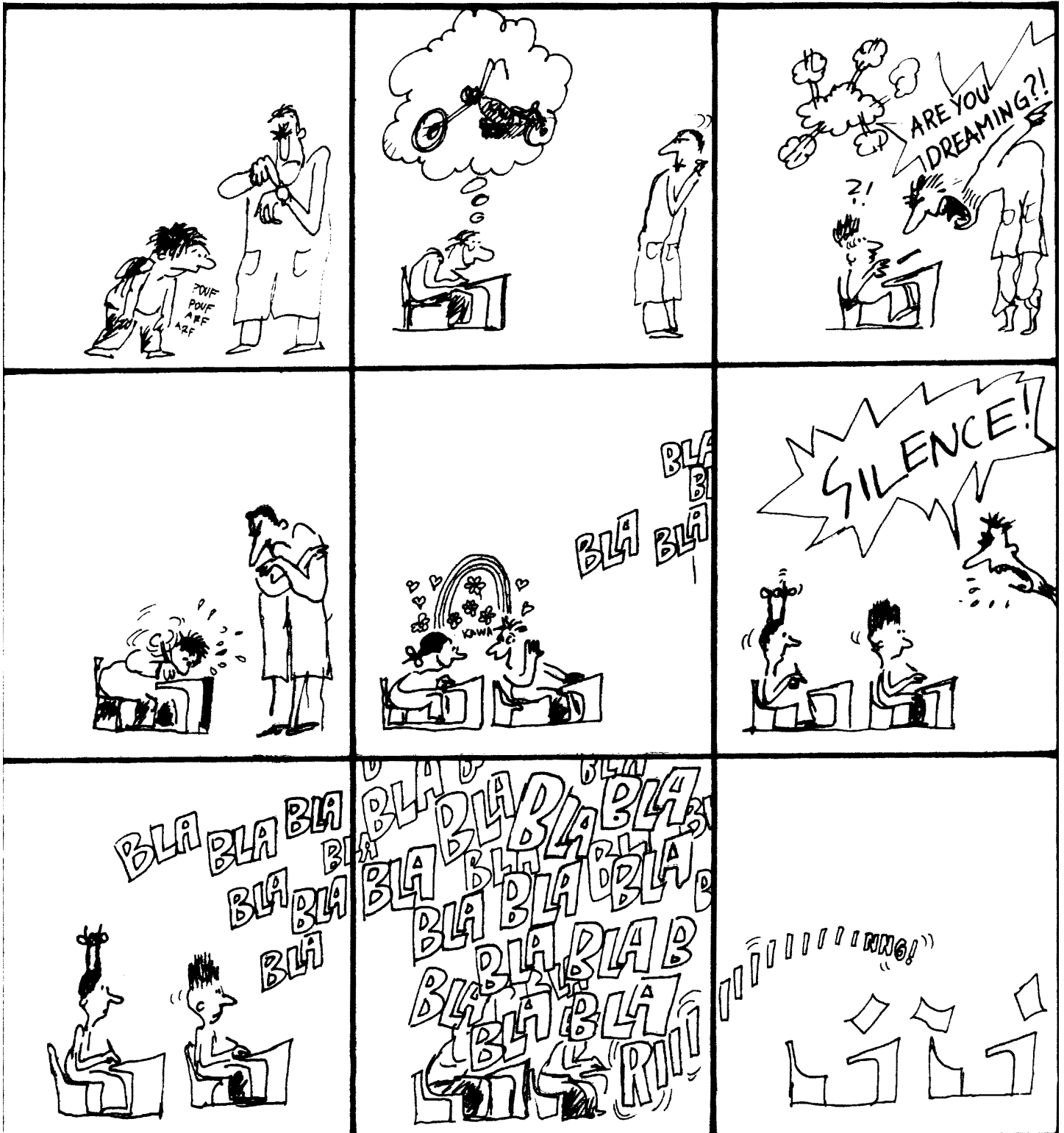


# CUT OFF FROM LIFE





# A WORLD OF UNCHANGEABLE RITES





# A WORLD OF SILENCE, OF IMMOBILITY



Pinned down there at the age of six, after the preliminary exercise of kindergarten -- ambiguous, complex and important, a kindergarten to which children go earlier and earlier -- children find hard chairs and have to listen to words for hours on end. Is it by chance that this bundle of new energy, this adventurous explorer is kept immobile, petrified, confined, reduced to contemplating the walls while the sun shines and to the anguished suppression of any desire to empty his bladder or even his bowels, 6 hours a day, at fixed times, except for

a few fixed minutes of playtime and holidays on fixed dates, for 7 years or more?

How better could one learn to fall to pieces ? It exhausts your muscles, senses, internal organs, nerves and neurons. It is a totalitarian lesson, and the most pressing one is not the teacher's lesson. The sitting position is acknowledged to be harmful for the body, its vessels and ducts, and that is how your Occidental has a rigid spine, congested tubes, constricted lungs, haemorrhoids and a flat bottom. For a century now children have scraped their feet, writhed and jumped up as if spring-loaded when the BELL goes (not to mention the 20% with curvature of the spine). These things are put down to their being troublesome, not to the immobility which is forced upon them: the blame is laid on the victim. No, this doesn't happen by chance. It happens by design, however obscure to those who carry it out. We must smash it. Physically smash the fantastic desire and enjoyment machine.



In class, we list the actions implicit in writing and speaking a language.

For the spoken language, I asked my 14 year-olds what the school had done

so far to teach them to speak.

Alan's reply was spontaneous :  
"We were told to keep quiet."

R.F.

The New School of Boulogne, an experimental school run by Centres d'Entrainement aux Methodes d'Education Active has been standardized. A boy of nine therefore went back to school to find himself in a "standard" class. He speedily came to a conclusion that is both naive and disillusioned :  
"Now we don't work any more, we listen." R.F.

# THE PUPILS

# KEEPS QUIET, LISTENS, OBEYS, IS JUDGED

He must conform to the model of a GOOD PUPIL.  
For most schoolteachers, a good pupil is

*"A docile, patient child who knows how to keep quiet and listen to what the teacher is saying. We give good marks to those who fold their arms!"*

*"A mind precociously turned towards words and ideas, and so capable of being interested in verbal and conceptual teaching and, hence, capable of making the effort required by such teaching (attention, perseverance, the will to memorize)."*

*"A child who attaches great importance to academic success, is hence filled with respect for everything that goes on in the school and is consequently willing to accept all school restraints with a good grace."*

Future teachers were asked about the qualities they considered of prime importance in a pupil.

Being ATTENTIVE

DISCIPLINED

DOCILE.

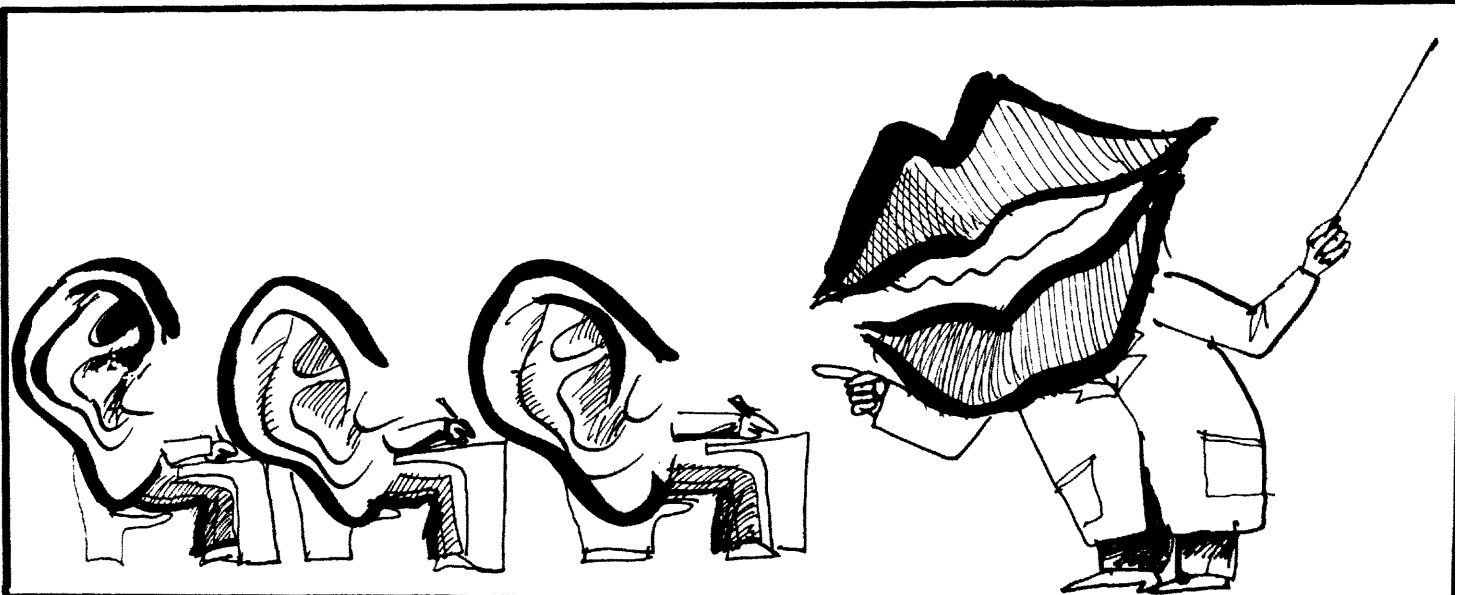
took first place in 41% of cases.

A CRITICAL MIND

THOUGHTFULNESS

did so in only 2% of cases.

P. FOURNIER (11)



# THE TEACHER TALKS, KNOWS, GIVES ORDERS, DECIDES, JUDGES, NOTES, PUNISHES



Note that in most cases this strict allocation of roles between teacher and child is seen as natural, NORMAL.

Normal, for example, that the pupil should have practically no say in deciding what happens each day in class (except to decide whether to work or not ...)

Normal that he should be totally dependent on the teacher's judgement to form a judgement of himself.

*This is how 10 year-old children answered questions about their worth at school :*

Antoine :

- Do you think you are a good pupil ?
- Not very.
- How do you know ?
- By my reports ... they say I am too noisy, not very good with other children ... they have said that several times ...

Luke

- Do you work well ?
- Quite well, yes.
- How do you know ?
- Because when my teacher corrects my work she writes 'good' or 'very good'.

Veronica

- Do you work well ?
- I don't know ... yes!
- How do you know ?
- I see if I get good marks.

## A WORLD IN WHICH ONLY FINE LANGUAGE IS ALLOWED

During his early years, a child has to learn to speak and write a language which is often neither his own nor that of his parents, STANDARD SCHOOL LANGUAGE, the only one recognized as being correct.

Anything in his spontaneous speech which departs from the standards of this language (expressions, sentence structure, pronunciation etc.) is picked out, corrected and penalized by the teacher, whether it is oral or written. In the hope, of course, that as they are continually corrected all pupils will eventually speak and write the language required by the school.

But the result is that some children will prefer to remain silent, rather than risk the reproach that they speak "badly", and reduce their written output to the bare minimum rather than exposing themselves to the traditional strictures ("poor vocabulary", "clumsy style", "bad choice of words" ...).

Linguists and psychologists both condemn the possible adverse effects of a method of learning which the child sees as deprivation and expropriation.

### E. Roulet :

"By trying in this way to eradicate from the child's language everything that does not conform to the standard norm, you discourage him forever from expressing himself (and are then surprised that the adolescent's capacity for expression is so poor and awkward!)

But the problem is even more serious and the damage caused still more insidious, since it does not affect only the child's ability to express himself: since the language spoken by an individual is an essential component of his personal and cultural identity and integrity, the strictures and sarcasms aimed at that language are bound to affect that identity and integrity."

### R. Berger :

"The identity which the child feels between the language he speaks and his individuality means that any corrective action taken with regard to his language may be interpreted as a value judgement on his person."

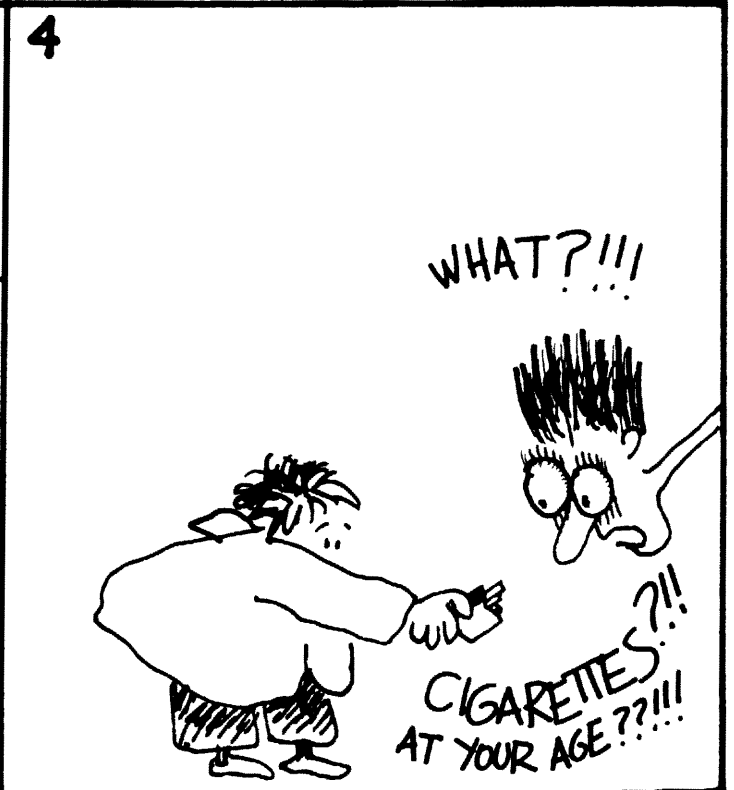
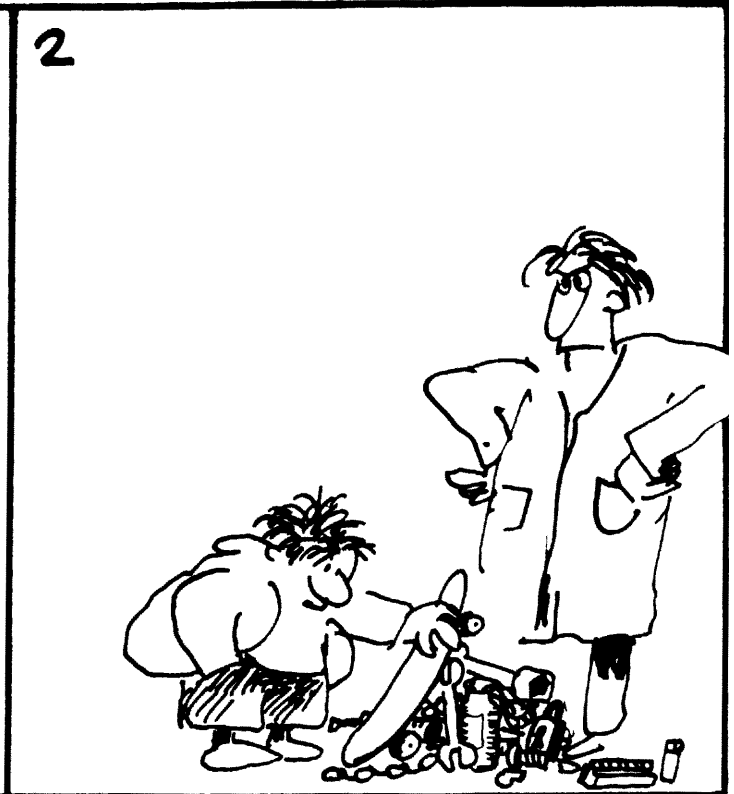


" ... After all, I am used to not understanding! I don't understand three quarters of what is said and what I am made to write at high-school -- *grammar*, science, morals -- and a good third of the words which I read, which are dictated to me or which I use. I have even noticed that the less I have understood in writing my texts, the more chance they have of coming first."



Romain ROLLAND  
("Le Voyage intérieur")

... WHERE ONLY WHAT IS AUTHORIZED IS ACCEPTED



5



6



7

HA!  
HA!  
ALL THIS  
MUST BE  
LEFT  
OUTSIDE!



dreams  
desires  
feelings  
sexuality  
curiosity  
initiatives  
adolescence  
politics  
personal experiences

WABUS/78



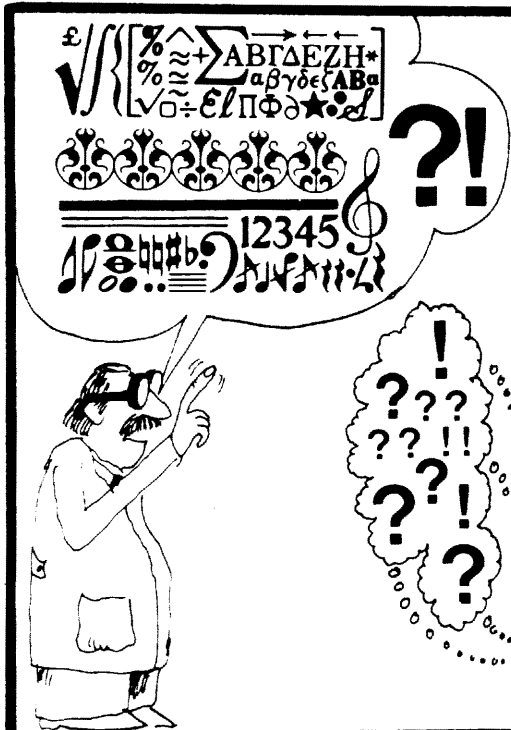
# A WORLD OF UNIFORMITY



The school treats all children in the same way, they all have to work at the same pace, with the same textbook and the same equipment, they all have to learn the same phrases, know the same words, they all have to acquire the same knowledge, they all have to pass the same exams at the same time.



# ... OF ARTIFICIAL COMMUNICATION



Most of the questions put by the school teacher and most of the exercises in expression which he sets are part of a context of artificial communication :

- the questions are not real questions, because the person asking them has the answers;
- the exercises are not messages of real significance, because the recipients already know what they contain.

The child therefore has to accept this convention, has to play the game. And in this game, "giving the right answer" must often get confused in his mind with "giving the answer (whatever it may be) that the teacher wants to hear" ...





## AND OF PUNISHMENTS

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will ~~not~~ not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.

I will not misbehave in class.



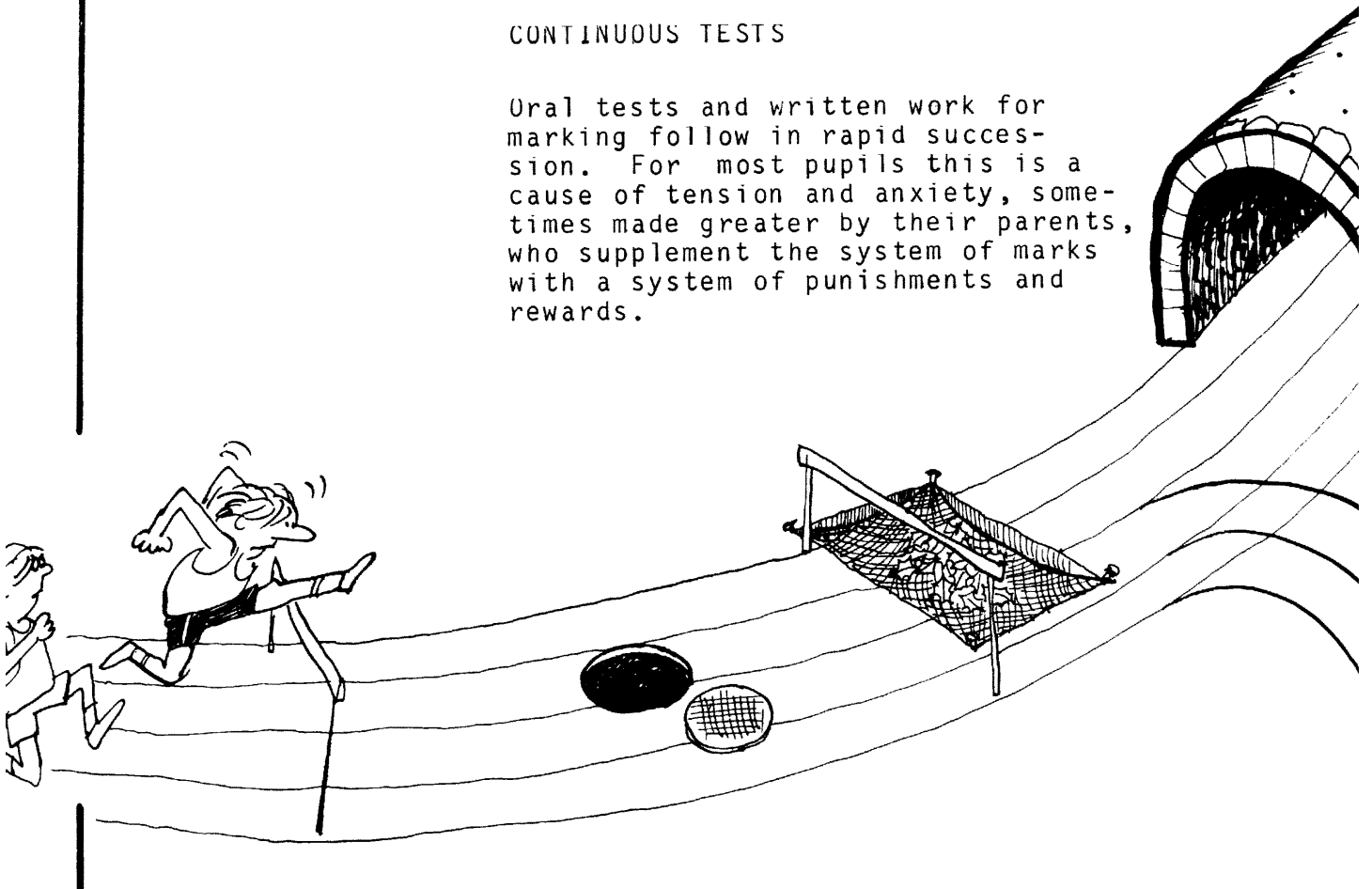
## ... WITH A COURSE STREWN WITH OBSTACLES

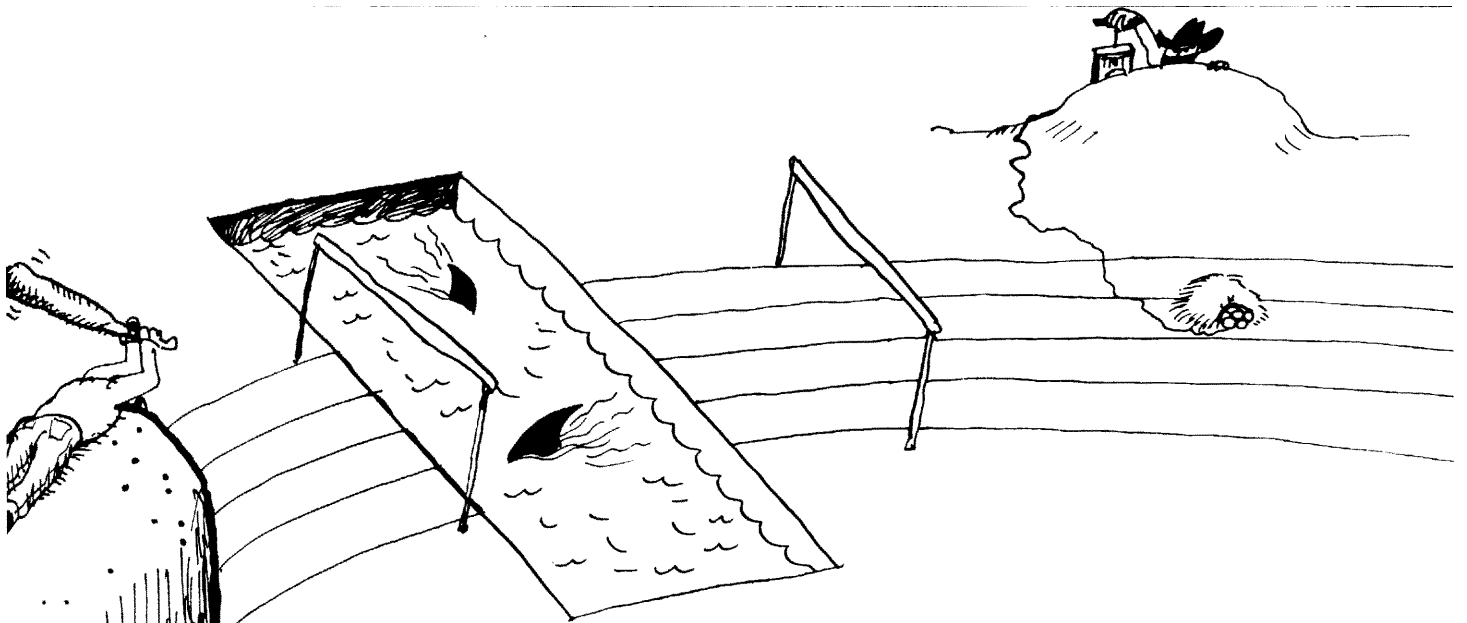
*"Exams should be abolished. But so long as they exist, at least make them fair. The difficulties should be made commensurate with those which may arise in life. If you make the exam more difficult, then you have a mania for setting TRAPS. As if you were making war on the kids."*

BARBARA (7)

### CONTINUOUS TESTS

Oral tests and written work for marking follow in rapid succession. For most pupils this is a cause of tension and anxiety, sometimes made greater by their parents, who supplement the system of marks with a system of punishments and rewards.





#### SELECTION AT THE END OF EACH YEAR

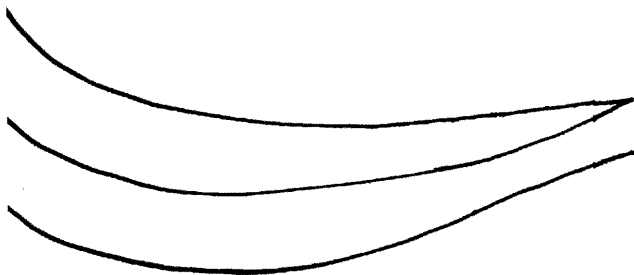
Academic knowledge is divided up into annual rations : each level has its set dose to be swallowed, the same dose for everyone (as if everyone learned at the same pace ...)

Only those who have absorbed the ration for the year may go on to the next level.

The others, as we know, have to **REPEAT THE CLASS**, as long as they are in the only school.

Later, when the school system becomes more diversified, pupils are mostly **SHUNTED OFF** to less demanding levels, sections and establishments (which, however, closes doors for them to the future).

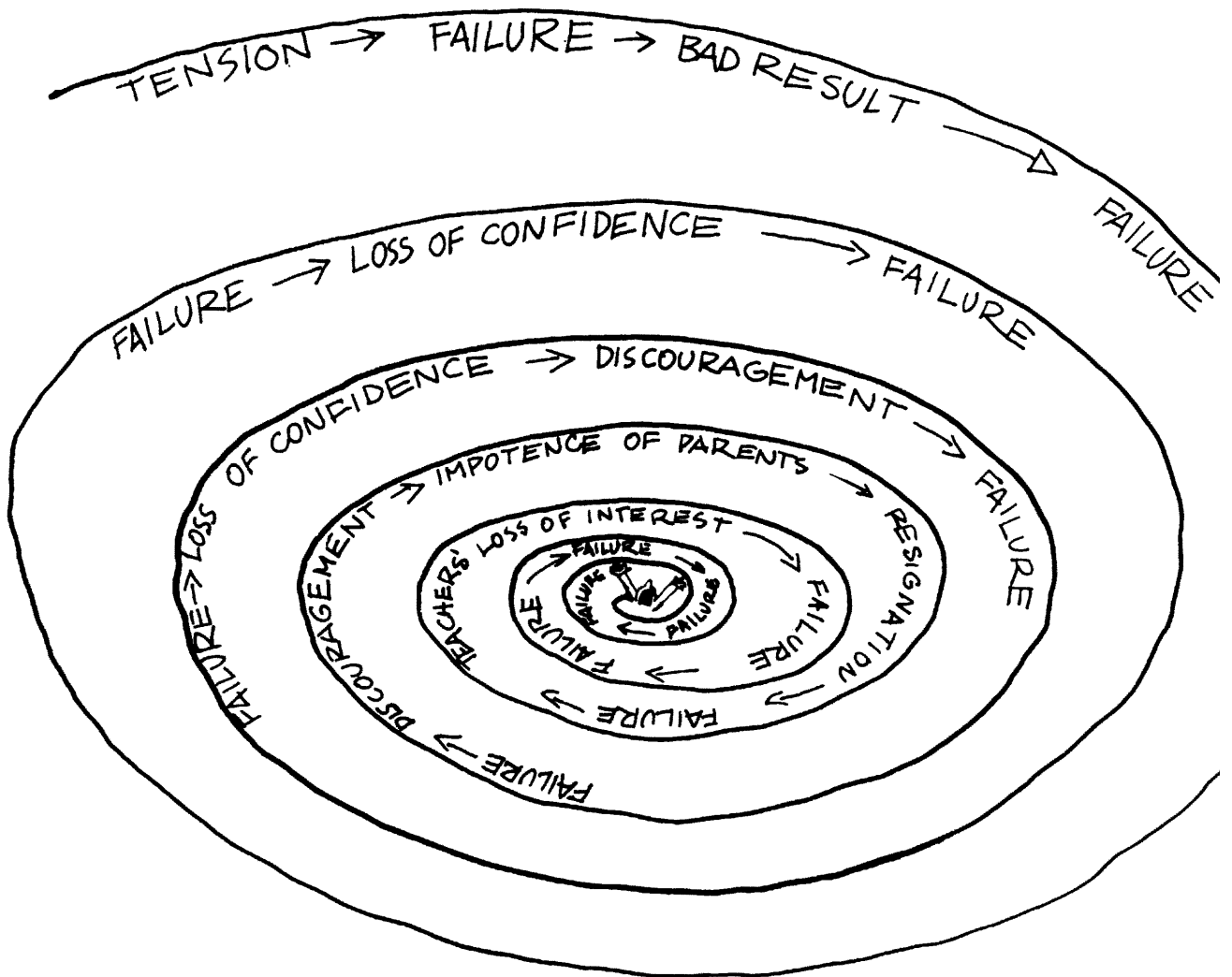
Lastly, when they reach school-leaving age, those who have piled up too many failures, who have fallen too far behind, are **REJECTED**.





ONE OF THE STRONGEST MECHANISMS CAUSING FAILURE SEEMS TO BE THAT TRIGGERED BY READING DIFFICULTIES.

LEARNING TO READ AFFECTS A CHILD'S ENTIRE SCHOOL CAREER AND CARRIES GREATER WEIGHT IN DETERMINING HIS CHANCES OF SUCCESS THAN HIS LEVEL OF INTELLECT.



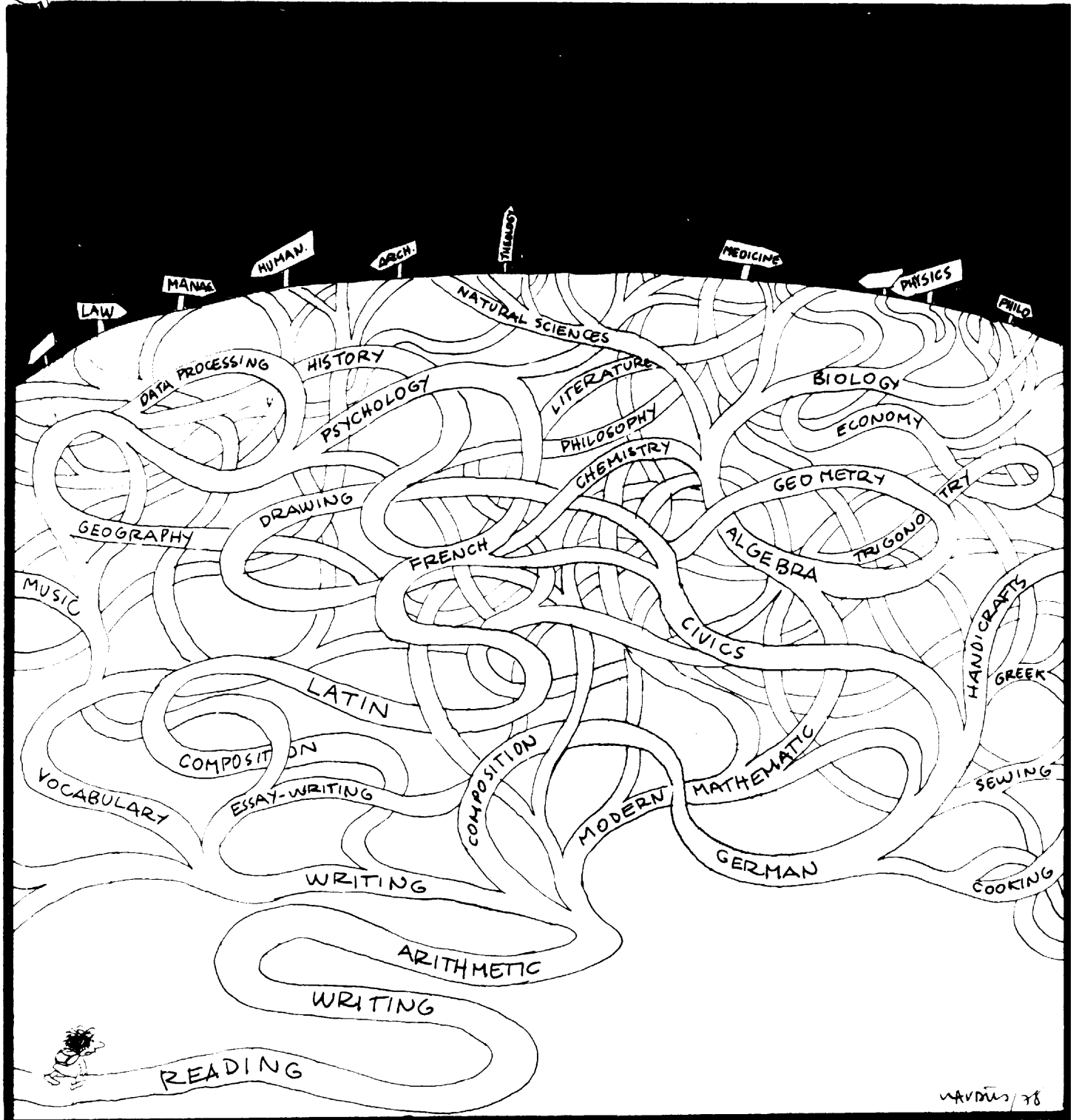
Jean Hébrard carried out a survey among teachers : "On entering the sixth class, pupils are speedily sorted out and those are picked out who can read well enough to work at home and prepare projects, those for whom reading can bring other knowledge -- which goes a bit further than the ability to read a novel. These will be the good pupils, those who will pass their school-



leaving exams. By definition, a good pupil is an independent pupil, capable of working alone at home. This group represents twenty-five per cent of the school population. The others have to struggle because of their inability to read usefully. And most of the time the sixth class teachers do not realize this fact. They merely say 'This child doesn't work' ... "



# A WORLD OF UNUSUAL SUBJECTS





**... WHICH HAVE  
NEITHER  
MEANING  
NOR  
IMMEDIATE  
USEFULNESS  
FOR THE  
PUPILS**



Children cannot by themselves feel the usefulness of the work imposed on them. The various school exercises, which are often repetitive and demanding, only rarely bear their own justification; they therefore evoke either tacit acceptance of the 'school convention' or sufficient fear of punishment to silence protest.

When protests such as ...

.. "grammar is stupid"....

.. "what's the use of maths ?"...

are made all the same, adults, whether they are parents or teachers, often have no other reply to give but

.. "You will find it useful later!"

.. "You will understand when you are grown up!"



## ... CUT OFF FROM REALITY

### CUT OFF FROM EXTERNAL EVENTS

which are impossible to 'programme' because of their richness, their variety and the fact that they cannot be foreseen.

### CUT OFF FROM EVERYDAY REALITY

of children, the kind of real experiences with which they would feel at ease.

### CUT OFF FROM PRACTICAL REALITY

which would make learning meaningful. (Rarely does one find a class in which writing serves as a medium of external communication or mathematics become necessary to find a solution to real problems).

# THE ECLIPSE

I had prepared a glass; I had smoked it with a candle so that we could watch this rare phenomenon safely in the classroom.

Some colleagues had come into the playground before the children returned; one of them asked ironically who had smoked the glass. There was a diffident discussion of the dangers of watching with the naked eye.

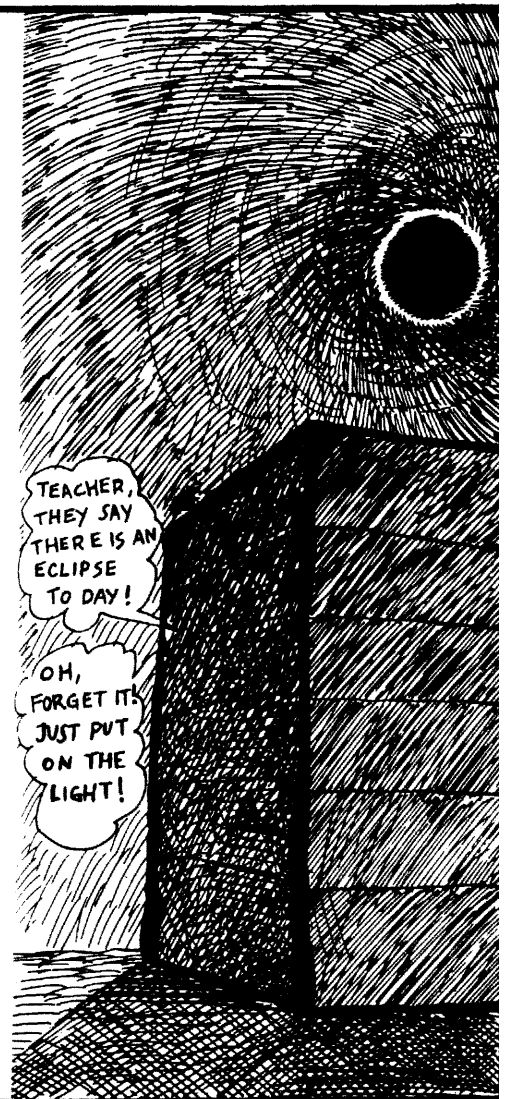
A colleague said :

"I'm not afraid, because my classroom is here and the sun is on the other side."

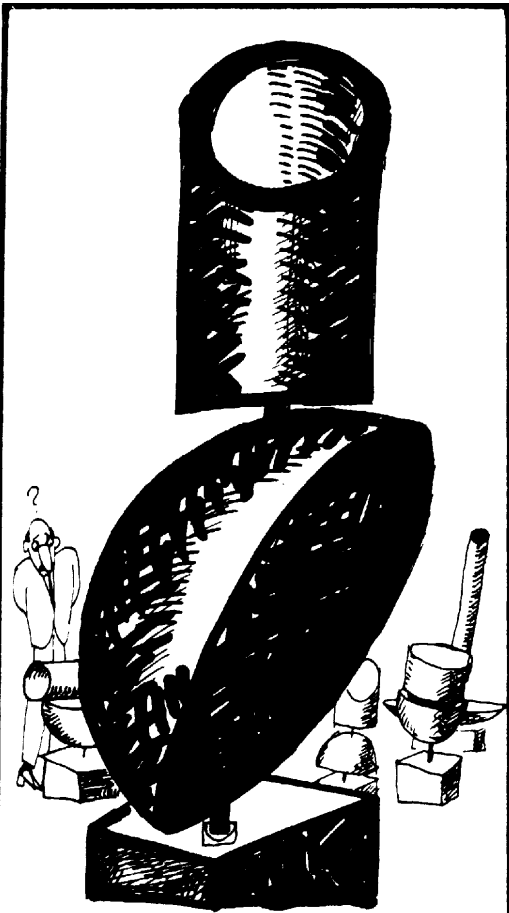
He simply could not imagine that a teacher could be anywhere else but in his classroom at 8:39, even when there is an eclipse.

The bell (which doesn't read the newspapers) rang at 8:39 and the flock of docile sheep filed in as the moon started to move across the orange and sombre disc that was the sun.

R.F.







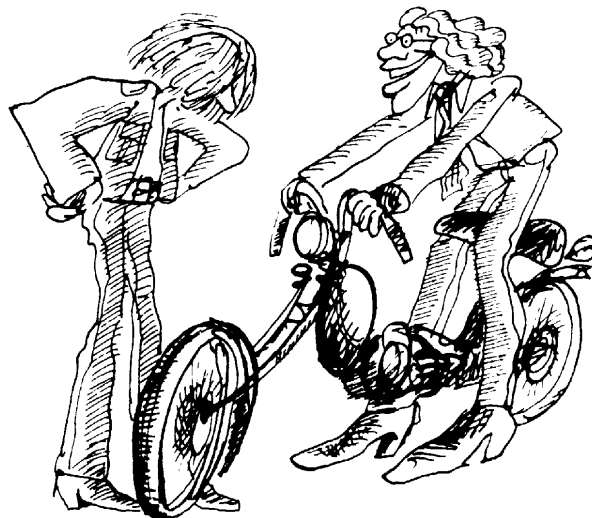
The geometry problem reminded one of a sculpture at the Biennale : "A solid is formed of a hemisphere surmounted by a cylinder whose surface is equal to three-sevenths of its own":

There is no instrument for measuring surfaces. In real life, therefore, it can never happen that the size of a surface is known before its dimensions. A problem like this can only be the product of a sick mind.

BARBIANA (7)

# HISTORY LESSON

The hour has struck and the teacher has entered, but the heated discussion among the pupils continues unabated ... Two pupils in this class at the Geneva High School are Spanish. The previous night, General Franco had ordered the execution of three Basque opponents, causing reactions throughout the world. The pupils turn to the teacher, ask his opinion, his help in understanding the situation better ... "Stop talking now and let's start the history lesson..." was his reply.



It must be realized that this baselessness and artificial nature of most of what is learned at school is one of the reasons why an entire sector of the school population loses interest and becomes bored.

Moreover, this state of being cut off from reality becomes so much a part of the pupils that they themselves gradually give up building the few bridges still possible between school and life.

Adolescents who, once they pass through the doors of the high school, think only of their mopeds and talk only of races, records and masking the engine, are often silent and disinterested at physics lessons concerned with speed.



## ... PARTITIONED OFF, SPLIT UP

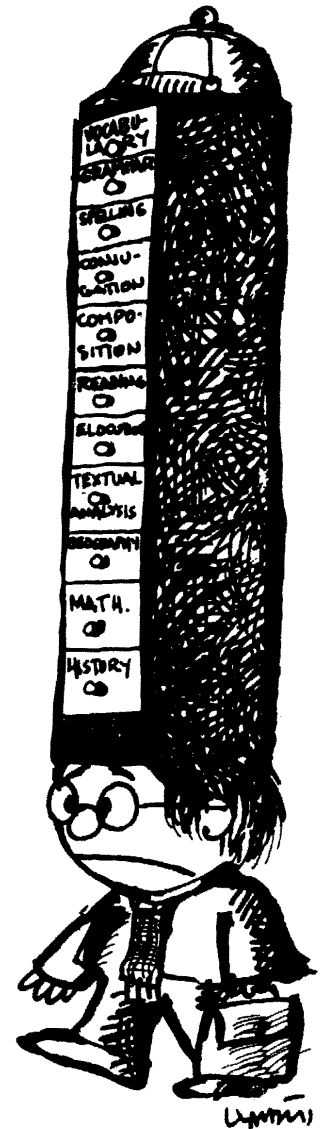
Because of the form learning takes, each piece of knowledge learned at school is carefully put in its own drawer, one for grammar, one for geography, one for history, one for spelling etc., none linked with any other. As long as you remain at school you will take them out when needed; but the pupil who has a well-stocked spelling drawer uses it only for dictations, filling his other written work with the most glaring errors.

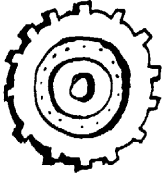
And of course the contents of these drawers are strictly ranked in order of importance. Some drawers hold things of great value. In the primary school, for example, one of the greatest riches which can be put in a drawer is spelling. Depending on whether a pupil has it or not, he may be allowed to continue his privileged studies. Others are much less highly regarded. Usually, it doesn't matter much at school if you have a drawer filled with music or beautiful drawings.  
(...)

Teaching of the mother-tongue as still practised in most classrooms is a typical example of arbitrary compartmentalization. It is cut into slices :  
vocabulary, conjugation, grammar, elocution, spelling, composition, reading, textual analysis. And yet when an adult speaks, reads and writes, it would never occur to him to say he is exercising his English, still less vocabulary or elocution. He will say :

- I have had a discussion with friends;
- I have glanced at the newspaper;
- I have consulted a journal;
- I have written a letter;
- I have made a fair copy of the report of the meeting, etc.

R.F.





## ... STRICTLY GRADED IN IMPORTANCE

THE HIERARCHY OF THE VARIOUS SCHOOL SUBJECTS IS EVIDENT BOTH IN THE DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF TIME DEVOTED TO THEM AND THEIR RESPECTIVE IMPORTANCE IN THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PUPILS.

IN THE EARLY YEARS, A PRIVILEGED POSITION IS GIVEN TO

VERBAL SKILLS - written and oral -

to the detriment of other forms of expression: gestures, pictures, music

INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITIES

to the detriment of manual activities;

AN ABSTRACT APPROACH

to the detriment of concrete approaches and experimentation





# A WORLD RULED BY STRANGE ADULTS

What are teachers ?

All powerful in their classrooms, masters of the destiny of the children entrusted to them, as some parents believe ?

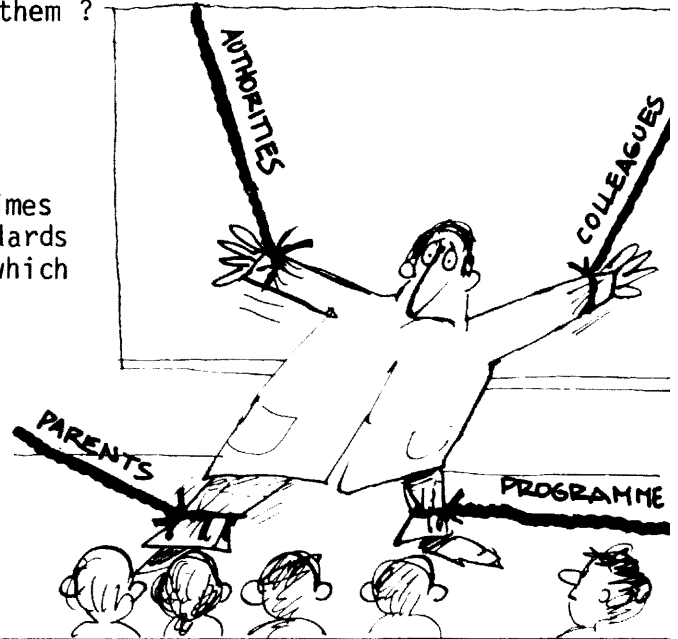
Or, on the contrary, are they simply performing at the service of an institution which could not run without them ?

They are caught in a system of constraints and checks similar to those which they impose on their pupils.

Some of them accept this system and even sometimes uphold it to the extent that they may set standards in their classes even more onerous than those which the institution wishes to set.

Others, on the other hand, want to find new horizons, opportunities for change.

## WHAT MARGIN OF FREEDOM IS THERE FOR THESE TEACHERS?



### 1... VIS A VIS THE AUTHORITIES,

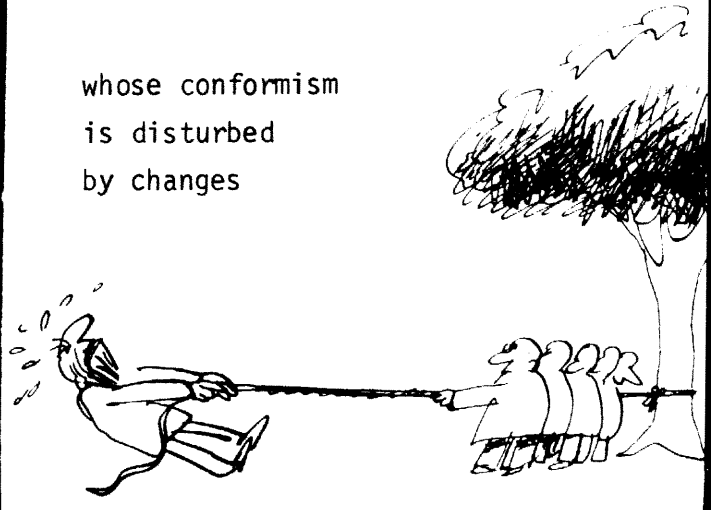


guarantors, in varying degrees of intransigency, of the norms of the institution ?



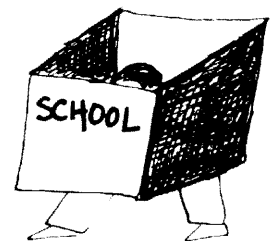
### 2... VIS A VIS THEIR COLLEAGUES,

whose conformism is disturbed by changes



In any event, acceptance by teachers of the educational system, its practices and justifications, is fairly widespread and clearly represents an efficient cog in the machine.

Never having left the educational world (going straight from school to college or university and then back to school as teachers), many of them have absorbed the school's customs and values: the importance of individual performance, for example, the overdevelopment of the intellect, being cut off from external reality.



### 3 ... VIS A VIS PARENTS

the links of society and sometimes even more effective guarantors of academic and social norms ?

It is not, of course, all parents whose supervision is to be feared: it is the ones who speak up or write to the newspapers, who have the power.



### 4 ... VIS A VIS CURRICULA

Tyrannical curricula to which a teacher has to adapt his approach at all costs because of the exams, because of next year -- because of the teachers for next year whose judgement he fears -- curricula which are accused of all evils.



Teachers undeniably influence children directly by their personality, their attitudes, their relationship with the pupils and the way in which they interpret the institution's instructions. This influence may be exerted without their knowledge.

## On mice and children

*\* A stupefying experience shows that there are rarely any dunces in class ....*

An American professor of psychology, Robert Rosenthal, once had the apparently preposterous idea of calling together twelve of his students, giving each of them five grey mice and giving them a few weeks to teach the mice to find their way through a maze. There was, however, one important detail: he whispered to six of the students that their mice had been especially picked for their particularly well-developed sense of orientation, and told the other six that, for genetic reasons, no great success could be expected from their mice.

In reality, these differences existed only in the minds of the students, since the sixty mice were identical in every respect. When the training period was over, Robert Rosenthal found that the 'overrated' mice had performed surprisingly well, while the 'underestimated' ones had hardly moved from the starting-point.

Buoyed by this result, Rosenthal wanted to try the

same experiment in a training area of a different kind -- a school. This was a strange adventure, the results of which have just been published in the United States (1), causing great embarrassment to teachers...

*Drawing of lots*

In May of 1964, Robert Rosenthal and his team arrived at an elementary school in South San Francisco, a poor area offering low wages, the home of many Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and families on welfare. In short, an area in which it is generally recognized that the performance of children at school suffers as a consequence of the fact that they are 'disadvantaged' by the milieu.

The intruders said that they were taking part in a 'vast study' undertaken by Harvard, financed by the National Science Foundation, on 'late developers'. Impressed by such grand-sounding credentials, the teachers opened wide the doors of their classrooms. The poor unfortunates were certain that they themselves, and not their pupils, were the subject of the investigation.

The contribution required of them nevertheless appeared to be eminently 'neutral'. They were merely asked to set, at the end of the school year, a 'new kind'



of test for the pupils in order to detect those who were capable of a spectacular spurt during the subsequent school year.

In reality, this was all faked. The test -- a standard IQ test -- was merely a pretext; the 'interesting' cases were chosen at random, twenty per cent per class, and their names were given in a deliberately offhand manner to the teachers: "Anyway, in case you are interested in the results of the tests we carried out for Harvard"... Having thus conditioned the



$E=mc^2$

teachers without their realizing it, the research team merely had to wait and see what transpired. A further test was given four months after the beginning of the new school year, another at the end of the year and the last one a year later.

The results exceeded all expectations, leaving Robert Rosenthal and his 'accomplices' gaping. The pupils who had been artificially selected as promising better results had progressed much more rapidly than the others! To quote two examples from dozens: José,

a Mexican child, had an IQ of 61 before he became a 'star' in the eyes of his teachers. One year later, his IQ was 106. A 'backward pupil' the year before, he had become, merely by a drawing of lots, a 'gifted' pupil. The same amazing change occurred in the case of Maria, another Mexican, whose IQ rose from 88 to 128. Asked to describe the behavior of these 'interesting cases', the teachers emphasized their 'gaiety', 'curiosity', 'originality' and 'adaptability'.

#### *The also-rans*

One point, however, should be noted: the progress of these pupils who had turned into 'stars' was not uniform throughout the investigation. The most appreciable gains in the first year were made by the youngest children and those in the second year by the older ones. Why this difference? The young ones, strongly influenced by the teacher witnessing their 'spurt', progressed more slowly when they changed teachers; the older children, on the other hand, were less easily influenced at the beginning but more likely to sustain their performance by themselves without the support of a teacher.

Another revealing feature of the survey was the fate of the 'also-rans' whose names were not 'whispered' to the teachers. As we have seen, their results were far less brilliant than those of their classmates. But more serious still is the fact that if one

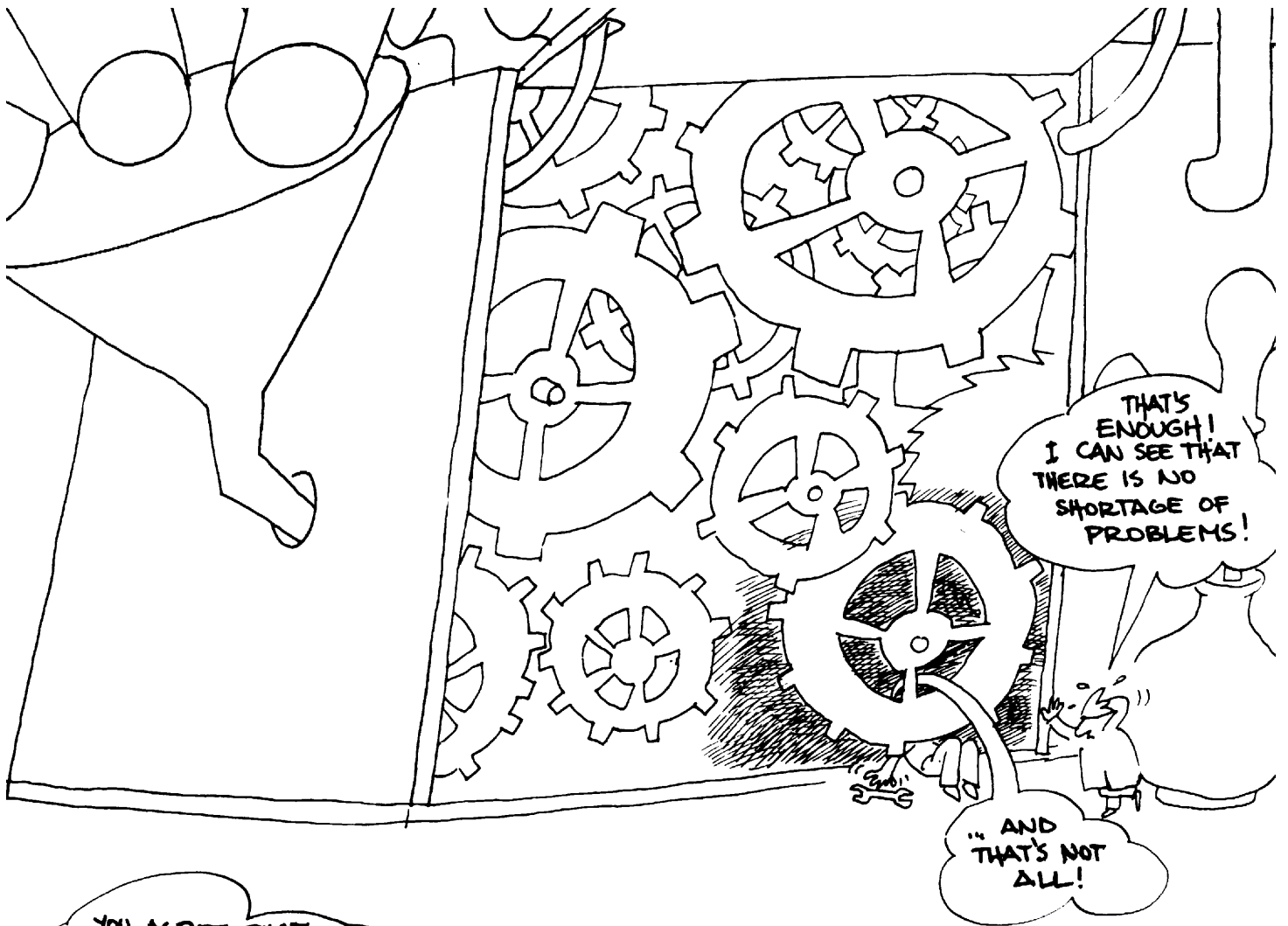
of them did stand out from the rest he was automatically marked down by the teachers to the level at which he ought to have been. In other words, the more progress he made, the more he was inappropriately ranked. Since it was not expected, his performance was considered undesirable. It merely upset the teacher's forecasts.

The investigation thus proved that, as in the case of the mice, the educator's artificial prejudices have a decisive influence on the behaviour of the pupil. In other words, good and bad pupils are creations of the teacher. The members of Professor Rosenthal's team thought for a time that the pupils whose names had been 'pinned' on the teachers had benefitted from more intense verbal communication with their teachers, which would have explained their progress. But they had to abandon this hypothesis. A study of the various successive tests showed that these children had progressed, not in verbal intelligence but in reasoned intelligence. It was an artificial designation alone that had transformed these potential 'dunces' into brilliant students.

In brief, the essential prerequisite for the success of a pupil or of a class is the teacher's belief in success. This would be the most economical reform of all. But also the most difficult to put into effect.

MARIELLA RIGHINI

- (1) Pygmalion in the classroom, by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobsen, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.



THAT'S ENOUGH!  
I CAN SEE THAT  
THERE IS NO  
SHORTAGE OF  
PROBLEMS!

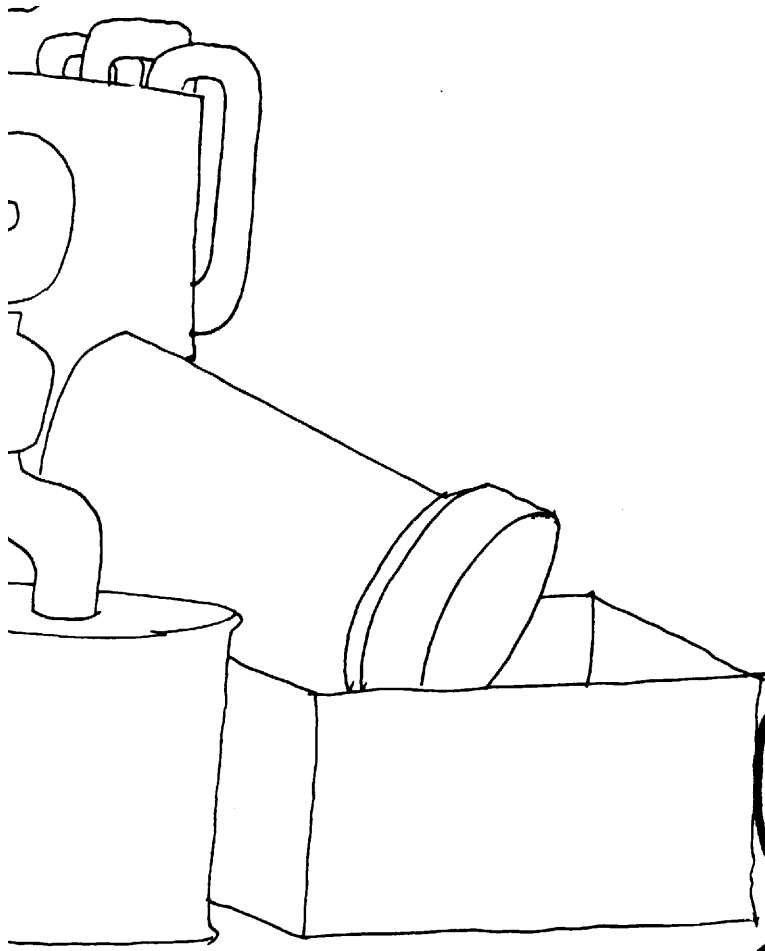
.. AND  
THAT'S NOT  
ALL!

YOU AGREE THAT  
THESE MECHANISMS APPLY  
TO EVERYBODY ... SO THOSE  
WHO SUCCEEDED PROVE  
THAT THEY ARE THE MORE  
INTELLIGENT ONES, WHILE  
THE OTHERS WHO ARE LESS  
GIFTED OR HAVE EMOTIONAL  
PROBLEMS ...

NOT SO FAST ... OF COURSE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES PLAY THEIR PART, BUT THEY DON'T EXPLAIN EVERYTHING, OTHERWISE WE WOULD BE BACK AT THE BEGINNING: CHILDREN FROM A WELL-TO-DO BACKGROUND WOULD SUPPOSEDLY BE MORE INTELLIGENT THAN THE OTHERS BECAUSE THEY SUCCEEDED BETTER... NO, MY FRIEND, IT'S MUCH MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT!...

BUT IS IT OR ISN'T  
IT TRUE THAT  
SCHOOLS TREAT  
EVERYONE THE  
SAME WAY?





CHILDREN COME  
TO SCHOOL CARRYING  
INEQUALITY IN  
THEIR SATCHELS. TO  
TREAT THEM EQUALLY  
IS TO MANAGE AND  
MAINTAIN  
INEQUALITY  
AND EVEN TO  
INCREASE IT.

SCHWARTZ (6)

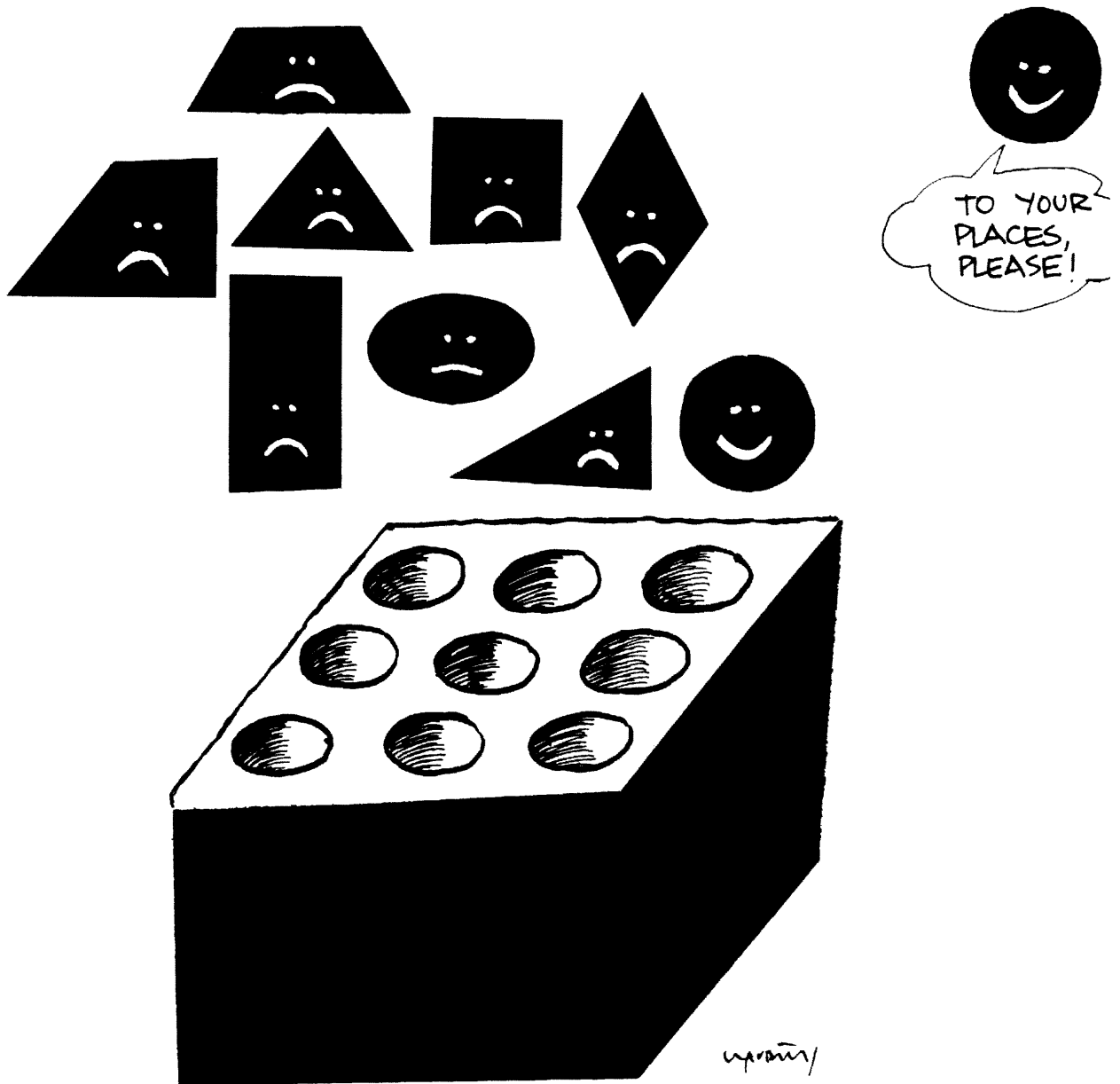
THAT IS EXACTLY THE  
HEART OF THE PROBLEM!  
THERE ARE VERY GREAT  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A  
CHILD FROM A WELL-TO-DO  
BACKGROUND AND A CHILD FROM  
A WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUND



WHAT ARE THE  
DIFFERENCES AT  
THE OUTSET,  
THEN?



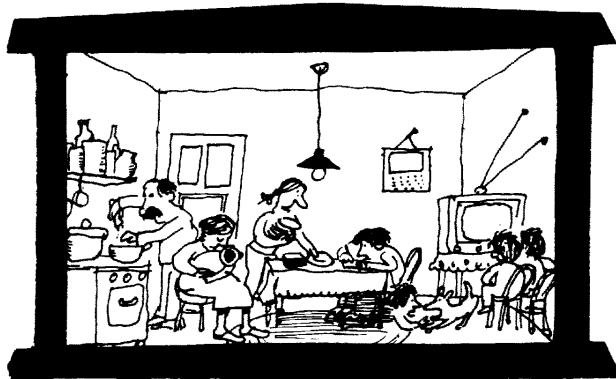
» The school takes no account of social and cultural differences





# 1. differences in the material conditions of existence

It is well known that living conditions, the place of residence, the neighbourhood, housing conditions and the time which parents can devote to their children all play an important part in ensuring a child's success during the early years at school, and are even more important when he has to choose between different paths (the time when income differences come especially into play).







## 2. differences in cultural background

A child going to school for the first time carries with him the experiences, attitudes, values, speech habits -- in other words, the CULTURE -- of his family, his social background; his intelligence, personality and emotions have developed through the absorption of these attitudes and values.

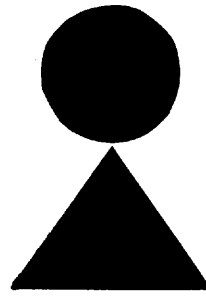
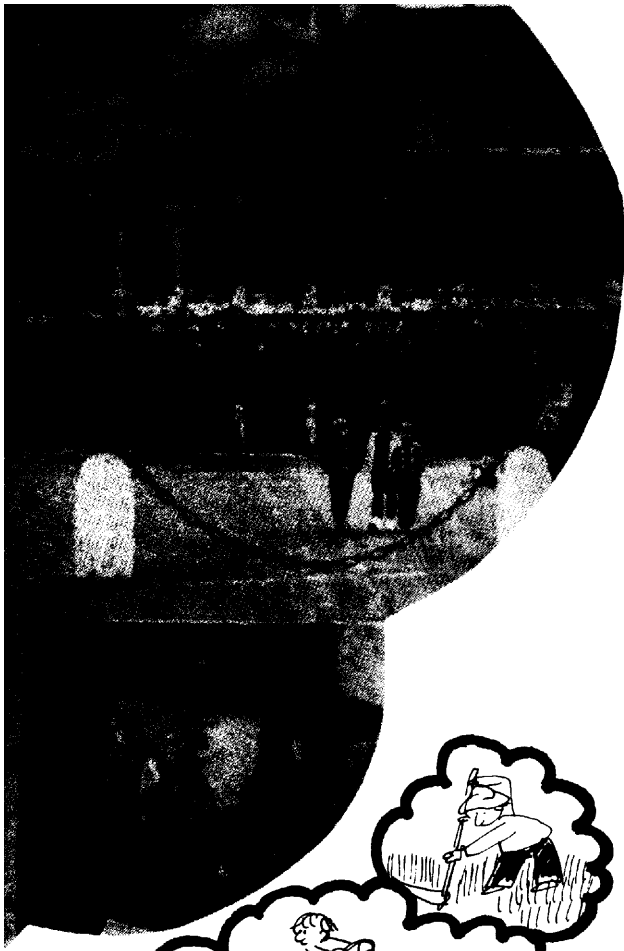
The culture of the school, however, is that of 'privileged' circles. Children of these social classes are accustomed to the same manner of speech as that required by the school; writing and books have formed part of their family world and have often been equated, since a very early age, with pleasure.

Because of this, these children will feel comfortable in the school, where they find the same speech, the same shelves full of books, the same culture. They will therefore have less of a feeling than others that they have been arbitrarily cut off from reality. They will accept school constraints more willingly and join more easily in the game of words, of abstract thought.

By contrast, children from a working-class background are bewildered by the speech, the customs, the academic values, all of which are too different from their own. In addition, they are at a disadvantage through not being able to use their speech idioms and their own experience. They are more put off than others by the lack of any direct meaning in their exercises and by the artificiality of the situations they experience in the classroom.

And this feeling of being uncomfortable, which may go as far as insubordination, often takes the form of awkwardness, reticence and the progressive emergence of a situation of failure.





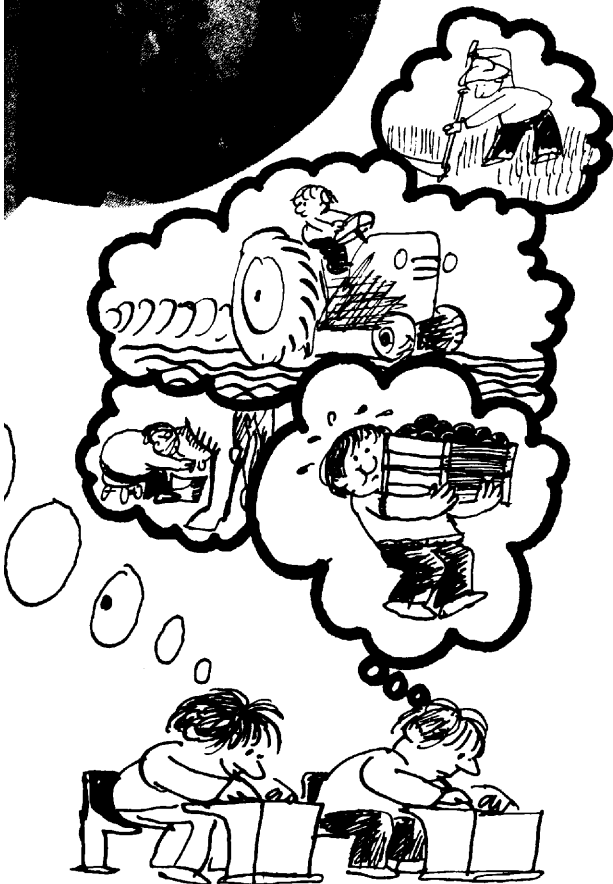
### 3. differences in life experiences outside the school

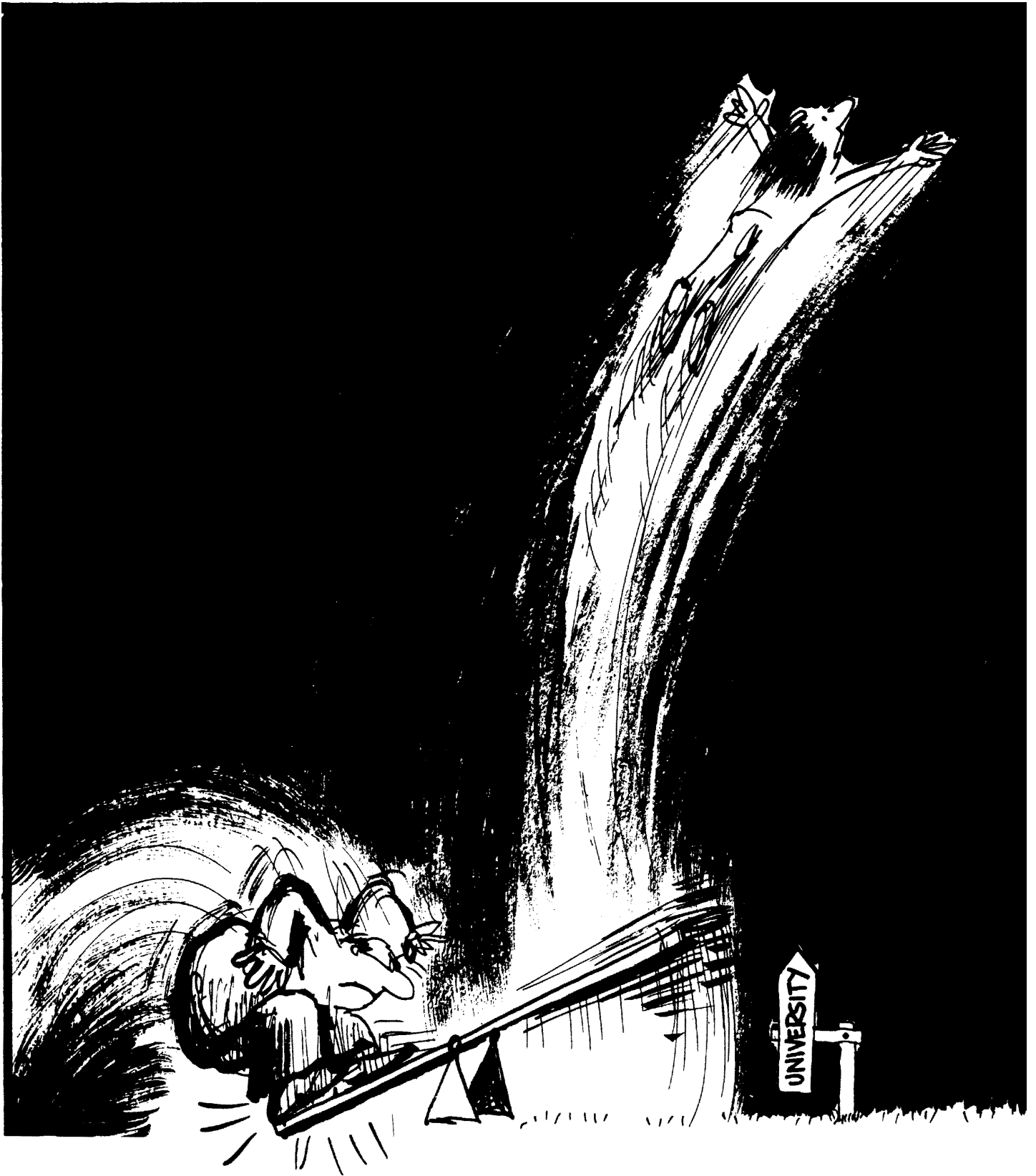
Children and young people enrich their lives by various experiences and knowledge gained outside the school.

But this experience and knowledge varies widely depending on the child's background, and it often happens that it is the children from what are called privileged backgrounds who can cash in on these attainments at school.

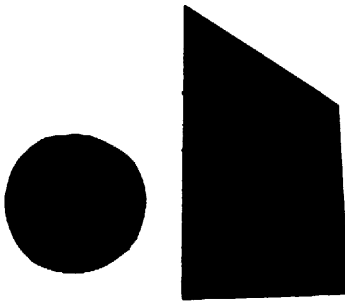
Reading, travel, theatre visits or TV programmes chosen in accordance with the criteria of 'cultivated' culture are intellectual baggage which can weigh heavily in favour of success at school.

WHEREAS OTHER EXPERIENCES,  
THOUGH EQUALLY RICH, WILL BE  
USELESS AT SCHOOL









## 4. differences in parents' attitudes to school

Educated parents have a familiarity with schools which is completely lacking in other parents.

They also have greater aspirations for their children; for some of them, a university career is more or less the normal thing.

If the child does not do well, the parents do everything possible to halt the machinery of failure: appeals to teachers, help at home, special coaching and, if necessary, transfer to a private school; in short, they are able to fight the school's verdict.

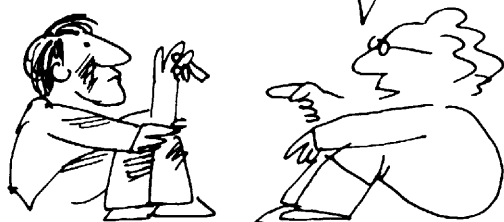
One secondary school principal even wrote to us: "The Constitution cannot guarantee equal mental development, equal academic aptitude for all." But would he ever say that of his own son? Wouldn't he force him to complete his secondary studies? Would he send him out to be a labourer?

Bourgeois parents, too, have difficult children. But they get them out of trouble.

BARBIANA (7)

FOR THE POOREST PARENTS, it is true that the school also represents a means of social advancement. But on the one hand, their ambition for their children is often less. On the other hand they usually feel defenceless against a school they are afraid to confront and whose judgement they scarcely dare question. So they permit failure more easily; then, when the time for selection comes, they will have less difficulty in resigning themselves to a short school career, in other words, to a shrinking of their children's professional horizons.

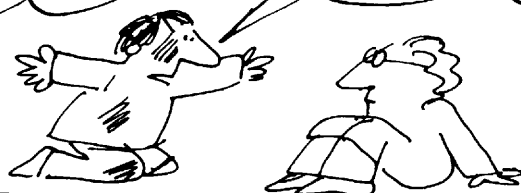
SO, IF I HAVE UNDERSTOOD CORRECTLY, SOME CHILDREN ARE UNLUCKY - LACK OF RESOURCES IN THE FAMILY, POOR SPEECH AND CULTURE ... IN SHORT, THEY ARE HANDICAPPED. SO IT'S NORMAL, THAT THEY SHOULD FAIL AT SCHOOL!



NO, MY FRIEND YOU HAVE NOT UNDERSTOOD CORRECTLY! YOU CLAIM THAT THE CHILDREN OF WORKING CLASS FAMILIES REALLY SUFFER FROM A CULTURAL HANDICAP, THAT THEIR INTELLECTUAL AND LINGUISTIC RESOURCES ARE INFERIOR TO THOSE OF OTHER CHILDREN ...



BEFORE YOU EXPLAINED THESE CHILDREN'S FAILURE BY INDIVIDUAL FAULTS AND DEFICITS - LACK OF GIFTS, EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS, CHARACTER FAULTS - NOW YOU ARE TRANSFERRING THIS EXPLANATION TO THE GROUP: YOU ARGUE THAT THERE ARE FAULTS AND DEFICITS THAT ARE INHERENT IN AN ENTIRE SOCIAL CLASS: POVERTY OF LANGUAGE, INABILITY TO THINK IN ABSTRACT TERMS, AND HEAVEN KNOWS WHAT ELSE

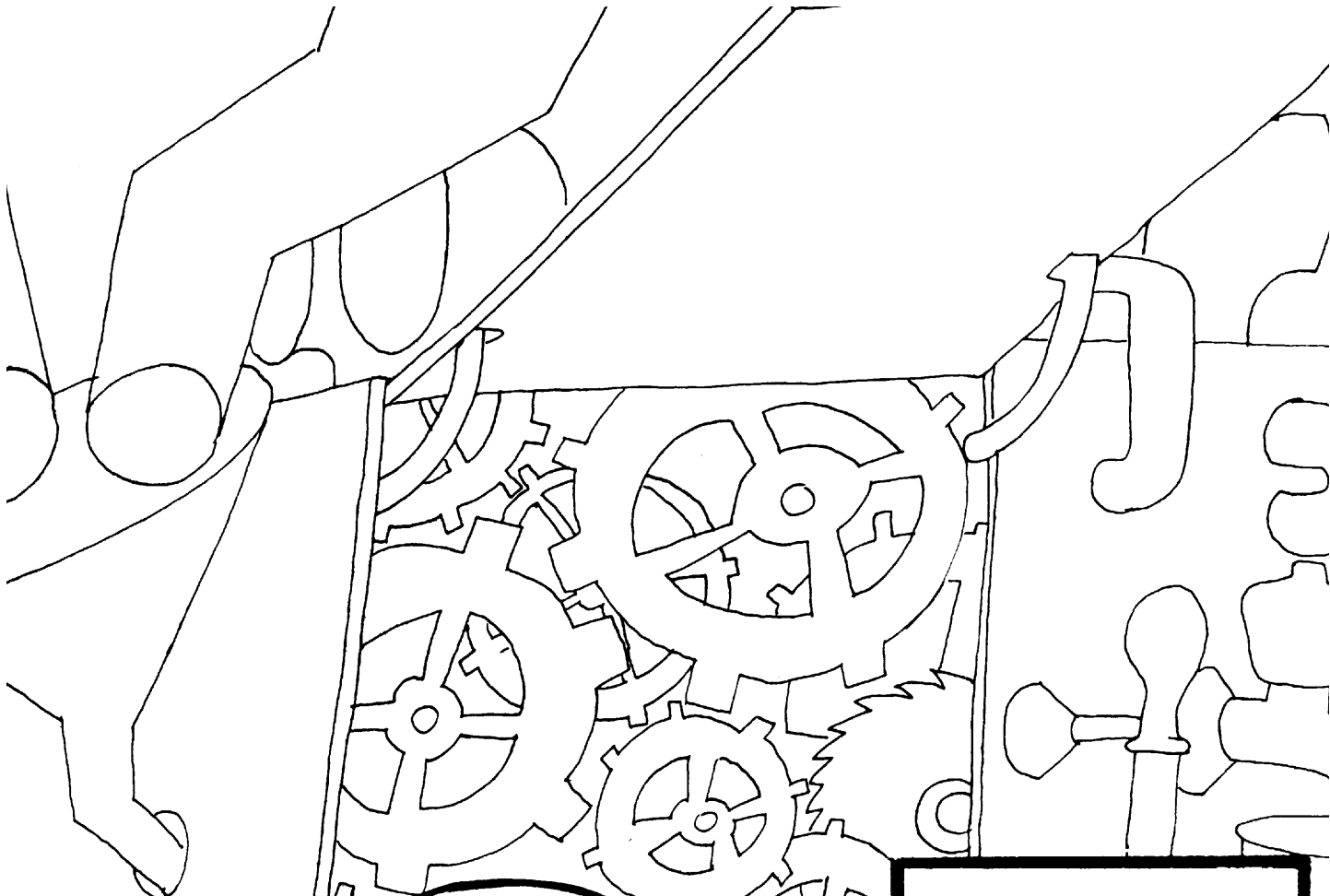


AND IN BOTH CASES, YOU, RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE RESTS WITH THE CHILD OR HIS FAMILY. ACCORDING TO YOU, THE SCHOOL AND SOCIETY HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

THIS INTERPRETATION LEAVES OUT THE MAIN POINT: IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE THE SCHOOL IMPOSES A SINGLE CULTURE, TO THE DETRIMENT OF OTHERS, THAT IT PLACES CHILDRE WHO DO NOT BELONG TO THAT CULTURE AT A DISADVANTAGE.

THE ONLY HANDICAP IS IN THE RELATION TO AN IMPOSED AND DOMINANT CULTURE



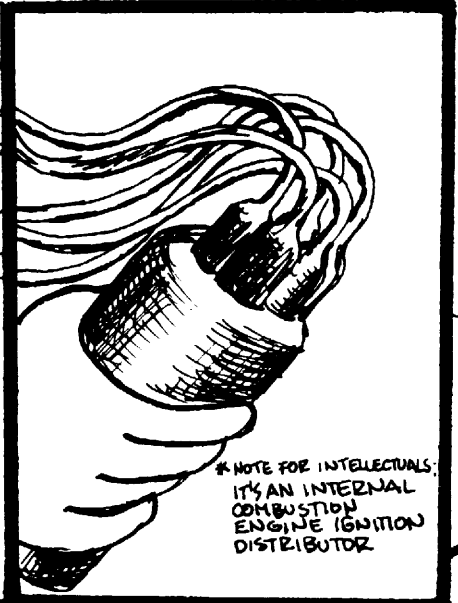


THERE'S ALSO THIS.

WHAT'S THAT?

IT'S A GADGET(\*) WITHOUT IT THE WHEELS WOULDN'T TURN.

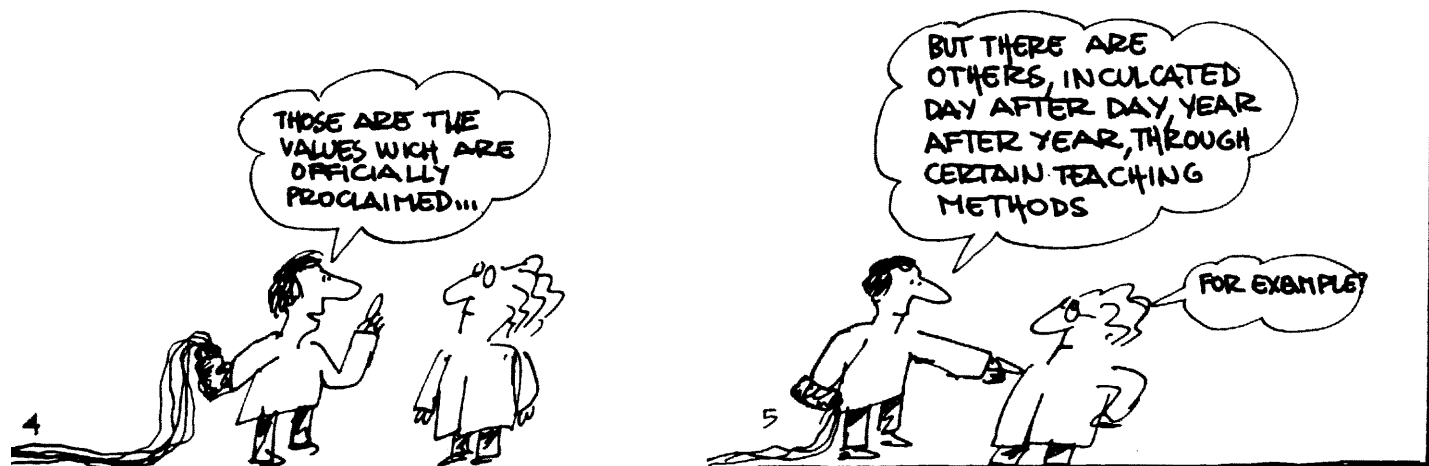
AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?



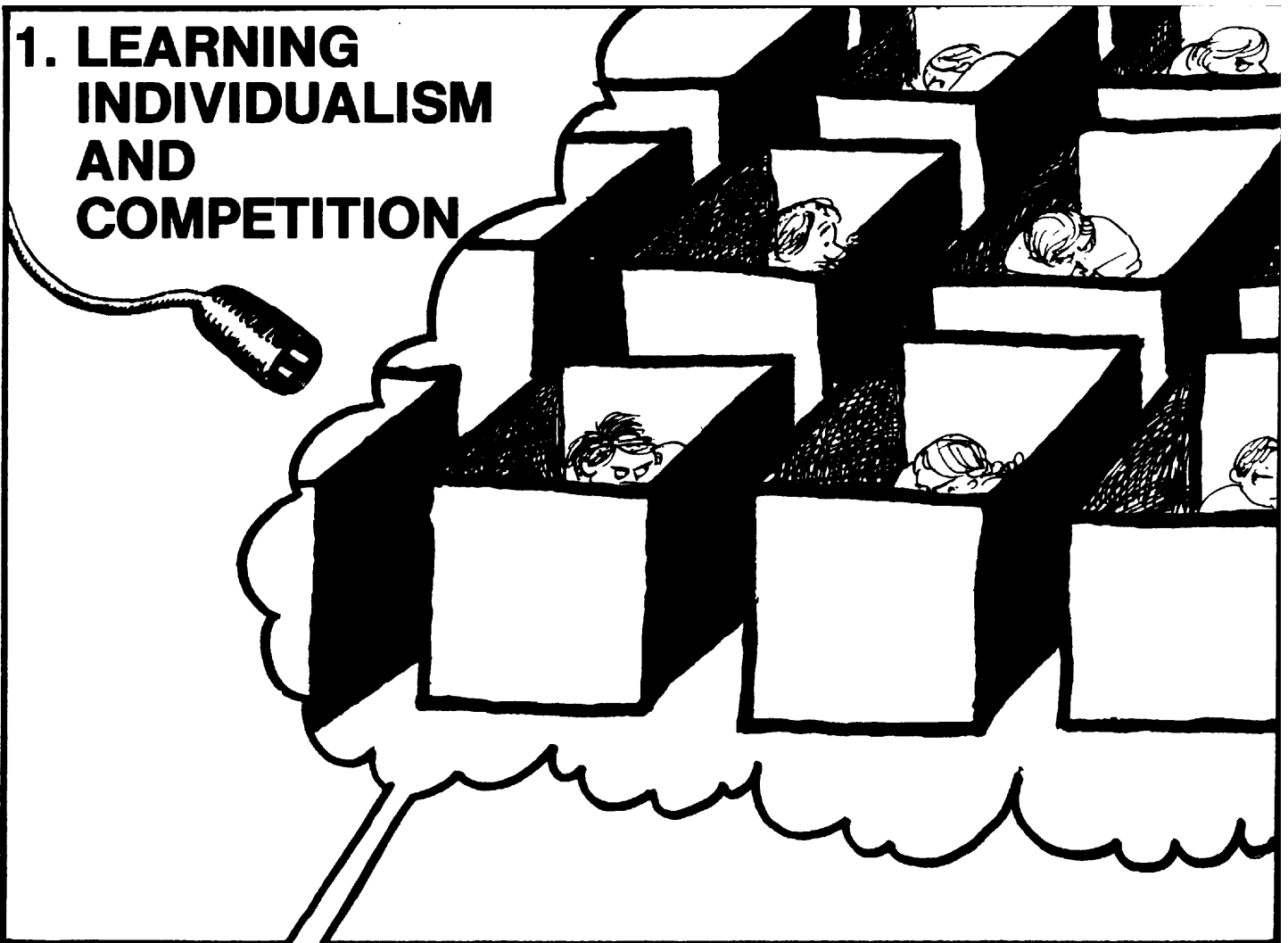
\*NOTE FOR INTELLECTUALS: IT'S AN INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE IGNITION DISTRIBUTOR

IT MEANS THAT...

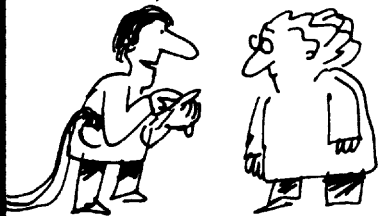
▶ ...THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE BESIDES MECHANISMS. AT SCHOOL YOU NOT ONLY ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE... YOU ALSO LEARN BEHAVIOURAL VALUES AND STANDARDS



# 1. LEARNING INDIVIDUALISM AND COMPETITION



FOR EXAMPLE,  
PROHIBITING CHILDREN  
TO TALK TO ONE ANOTHER  
IN CLASS.  
COMMUNICATION  
EQUALS  
CHEATING!!!



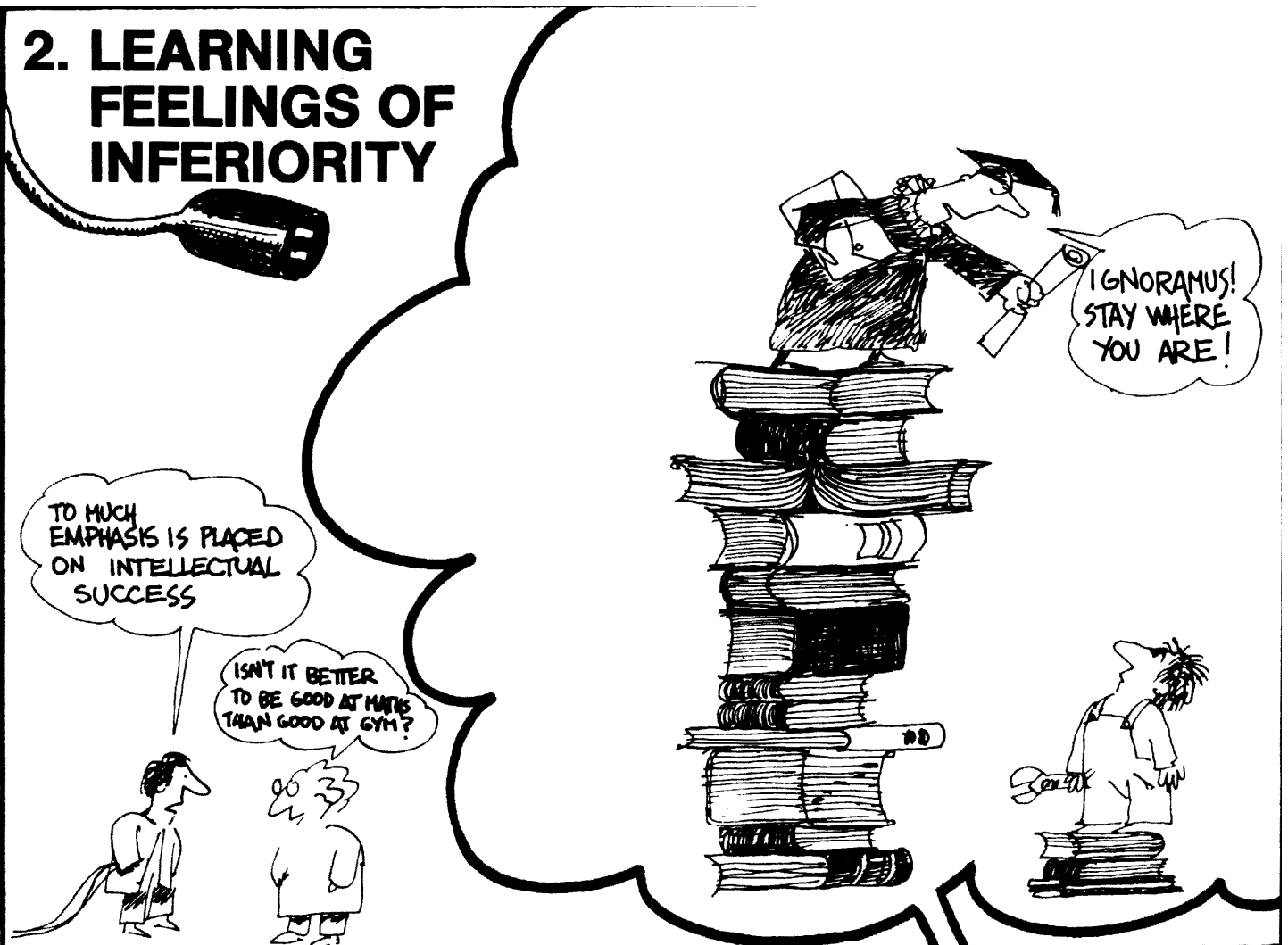
FAVOURING INDIVIDUAL  
EFFORT, WORK AND  
SUCCESS OVER TEAMWORK,  
SOLIDARITY AND  
CO-OPERATION



" MEANS INCULCATING  
INDIVIDUALISM,  
MISTRUST OF  
OTHERS



## 2. LEARNING FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY



TO MUCH EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON INTELLECTUAL SUCCESS

ISNT IT BETTER TO BE GOOD AT MATHS THAN GOOD AT GYM?

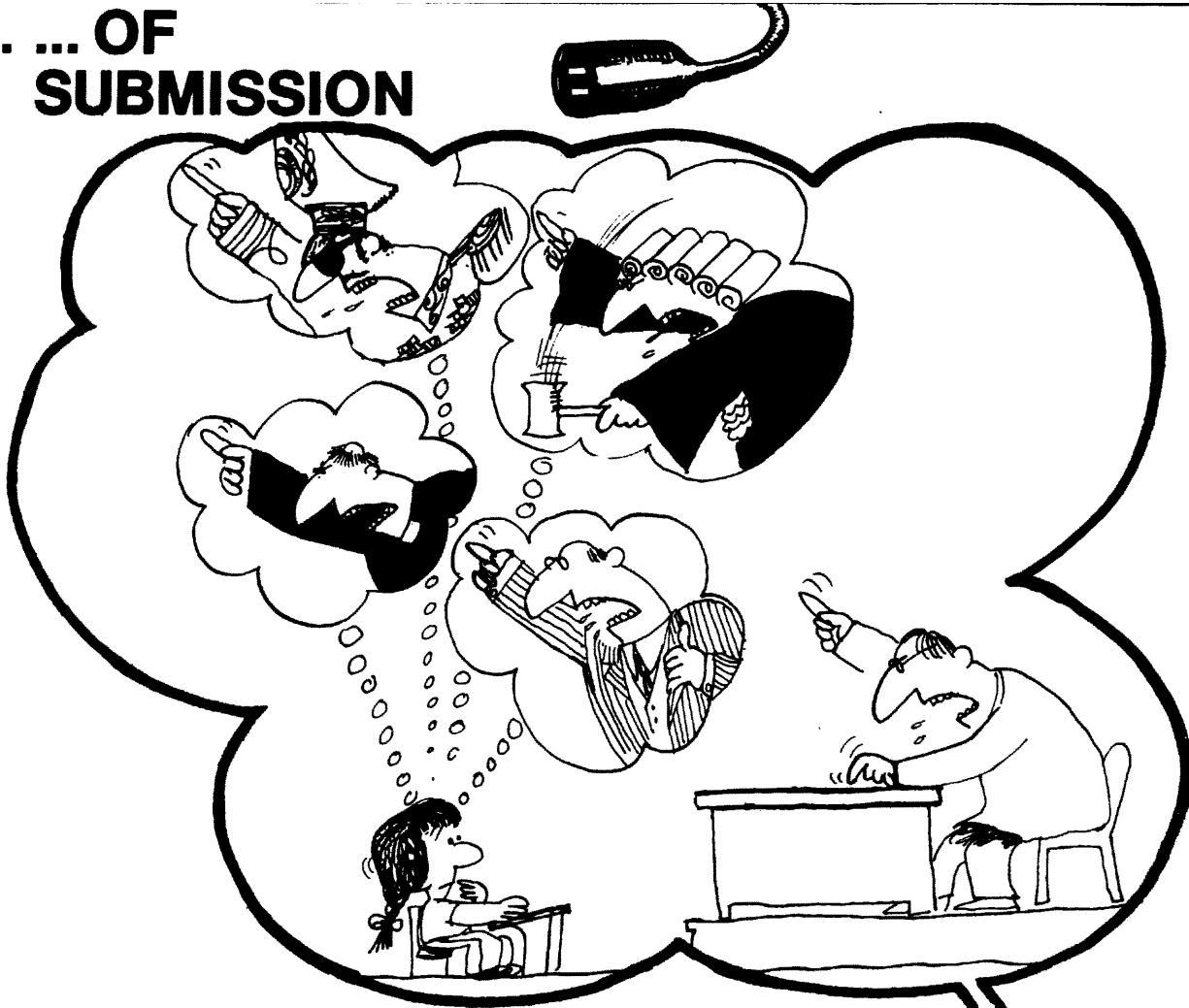
IGNORAMUS!  
STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

EXCEPT DURING THE INTER-SCHOOL ATHLETICS COMPETITION... MORAL JUDGEMENTS ABOUT THE PUPILS ARE MADE ALL THE TIME-THEY DIVIDED INTO 'GOOD' AND 'BAD' ...

... A MISTAKE IS CALLED A "FAULT"—GRADUALLY THIS INSTILS INFERIORITY FEELINGS IN SOME CHILDREN...

... AND ASSURES OTHERS THAT THEY BELONG TO AN ELITE AND HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE CONTEMPTUOUS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT

### 3. ... OF SUBMISSION



THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER,  
WHO SITS BY HIMSELF...



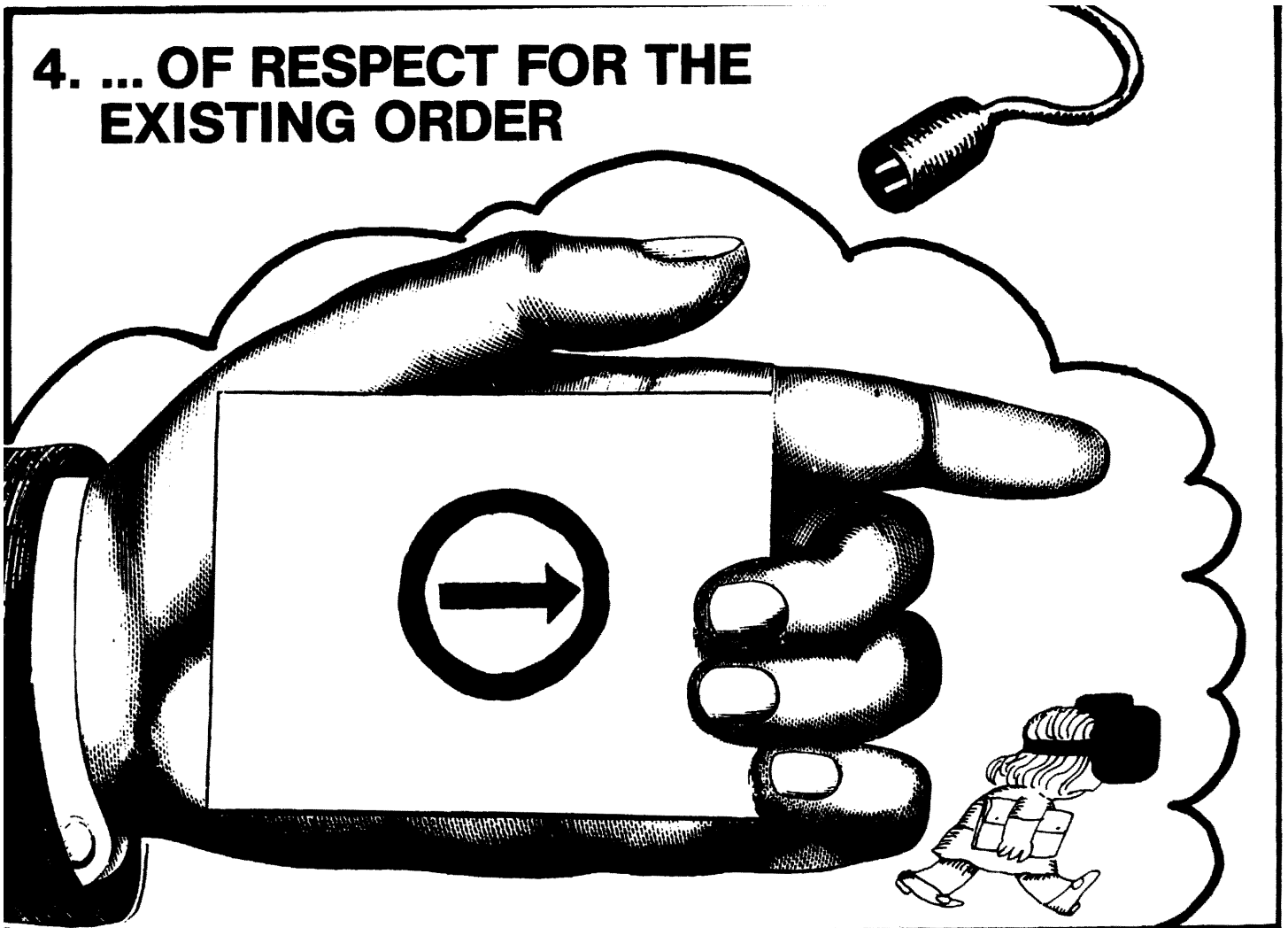
... AND IS THE ABSOLUTE  
AUTHORITY, IN THE END  
INSTILLS SUBMISSION ...



... AND MAKES THE  
PUPILS FAMILIAR WITH  
THE EXISTENCE OF  
A HIERARCHY, THE NEED  
FOR A LEADER.



# 4. ... OF RESPECT FOR THE EXISTING ORDER



THROUGH EVERYDAY PRACTICES, PUPILS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THE IDEA THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE METHOD, ONLY ONE TRUTH, ONLY ONE SOLUTION.

WHICH ONES?

"THE ONES EXPONDED BY THE TEACHER. THE PUPIL IS NOT EXPECTED TO BE SELECTIVE OR TO IMAGINE ALTERNATIVES

THAT'S GOOD! EVERYTHING IS THOUGHT OUT IN ADVANCE THEN, ISN'T IT?

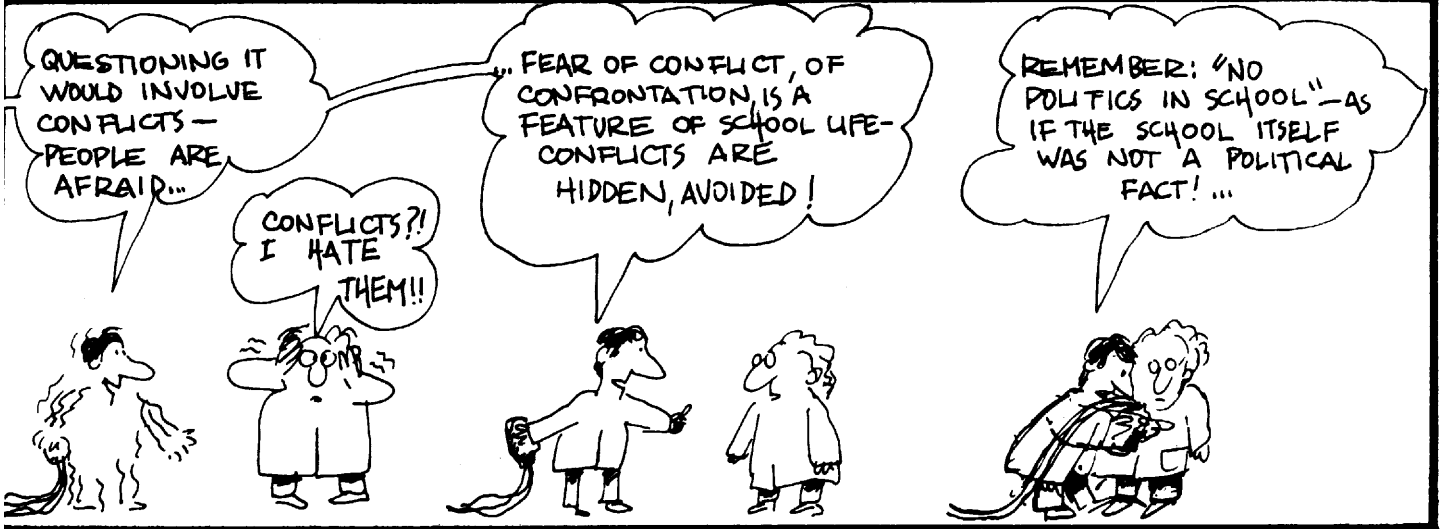
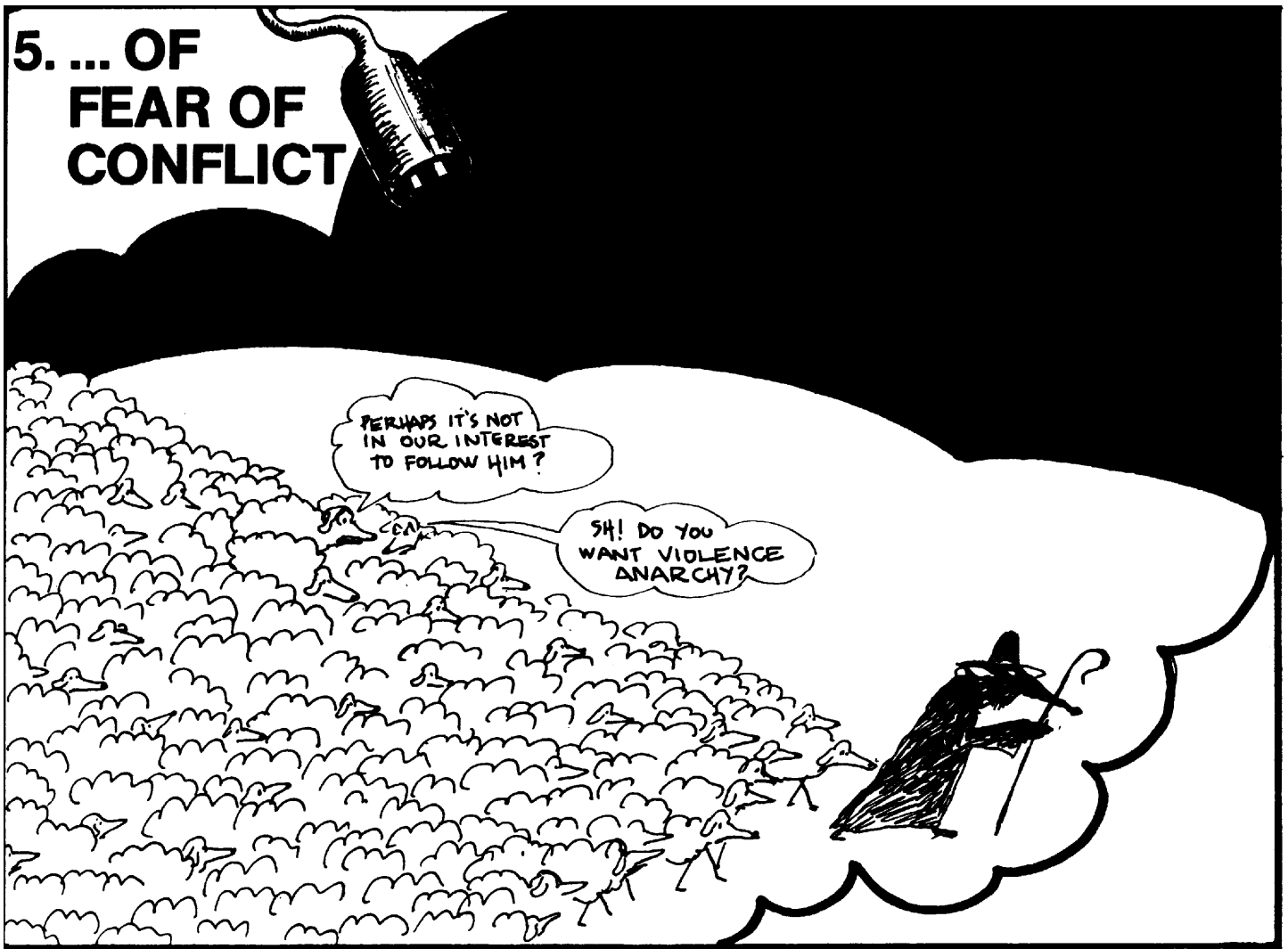
NO, THAT IS NOT GOOD. IT LEADS TO ABSORPTION OF THE STATUS QUO, THE ORDER ESTABLISHED BY OTHERS

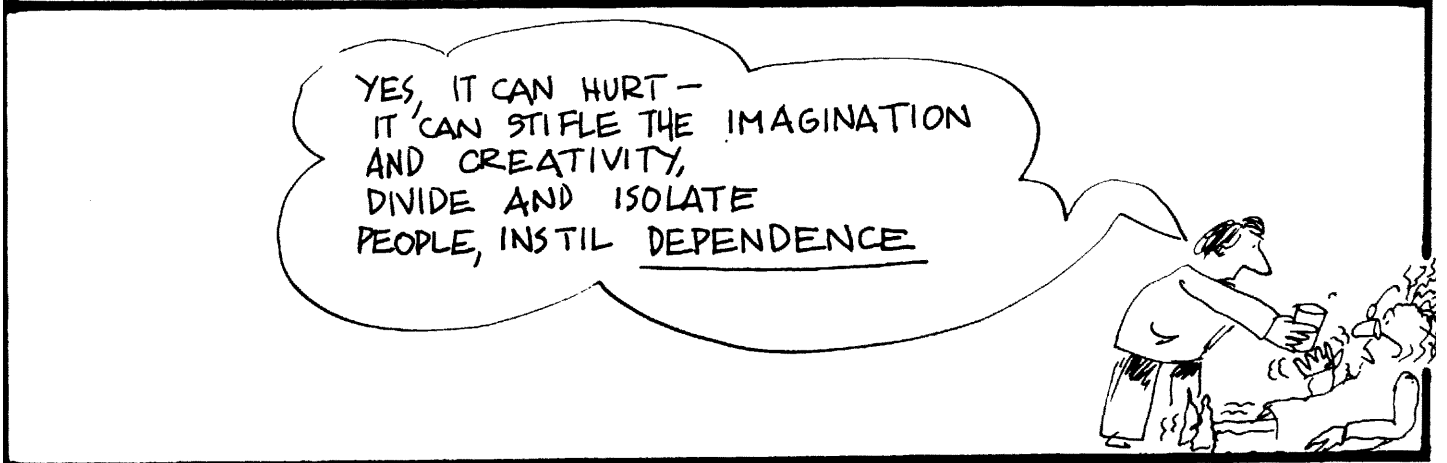
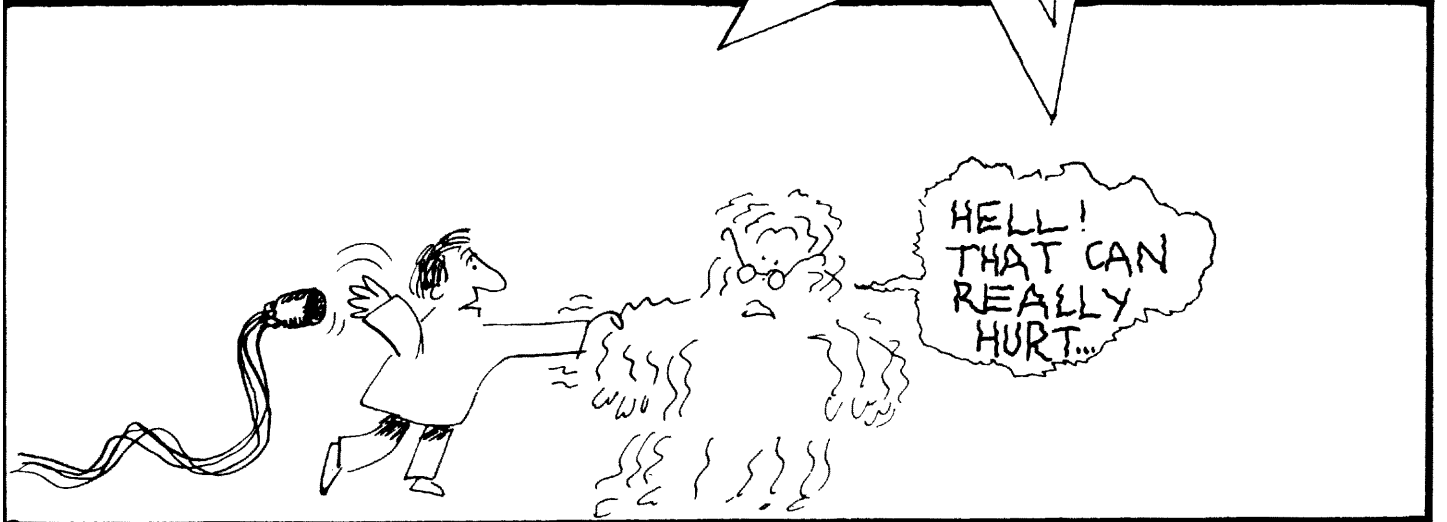
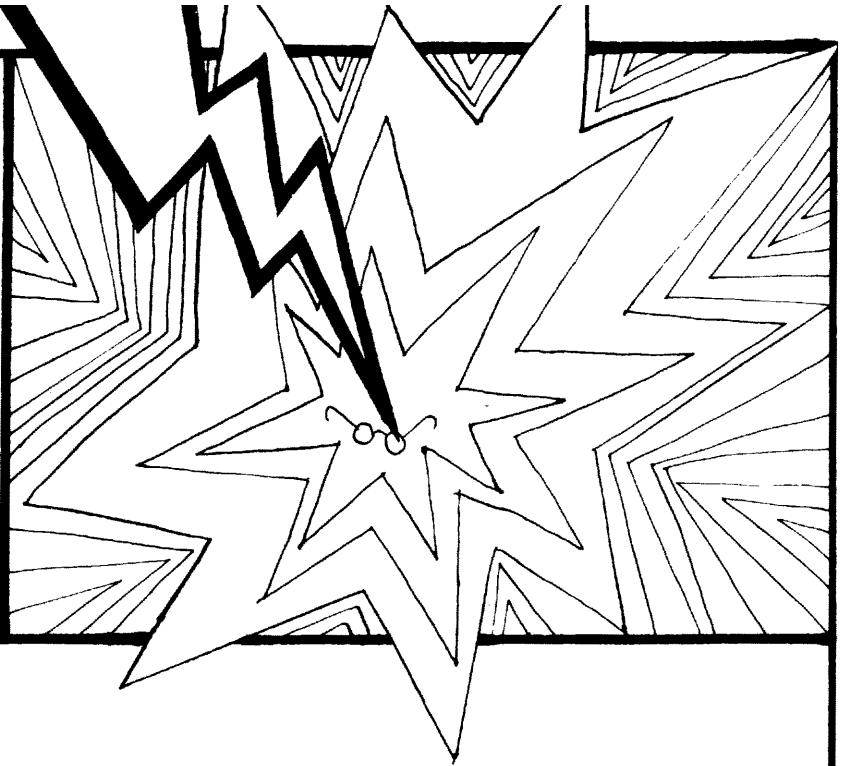
IF THEY DON'T LIKE, ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS TO CHANGE IT



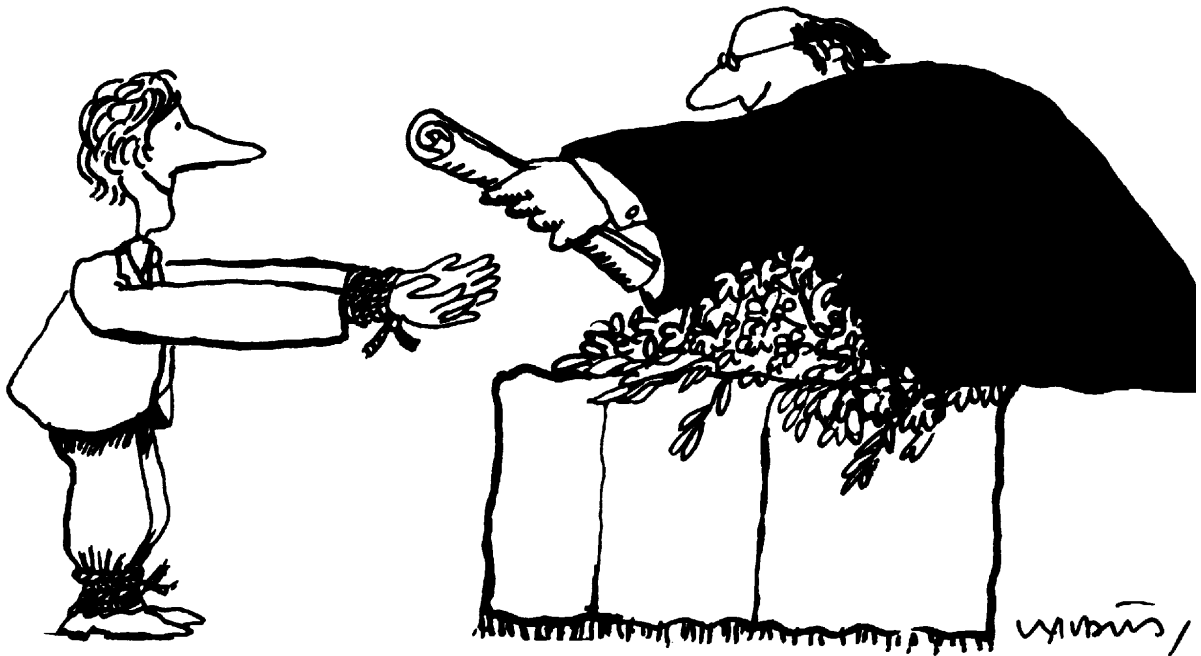


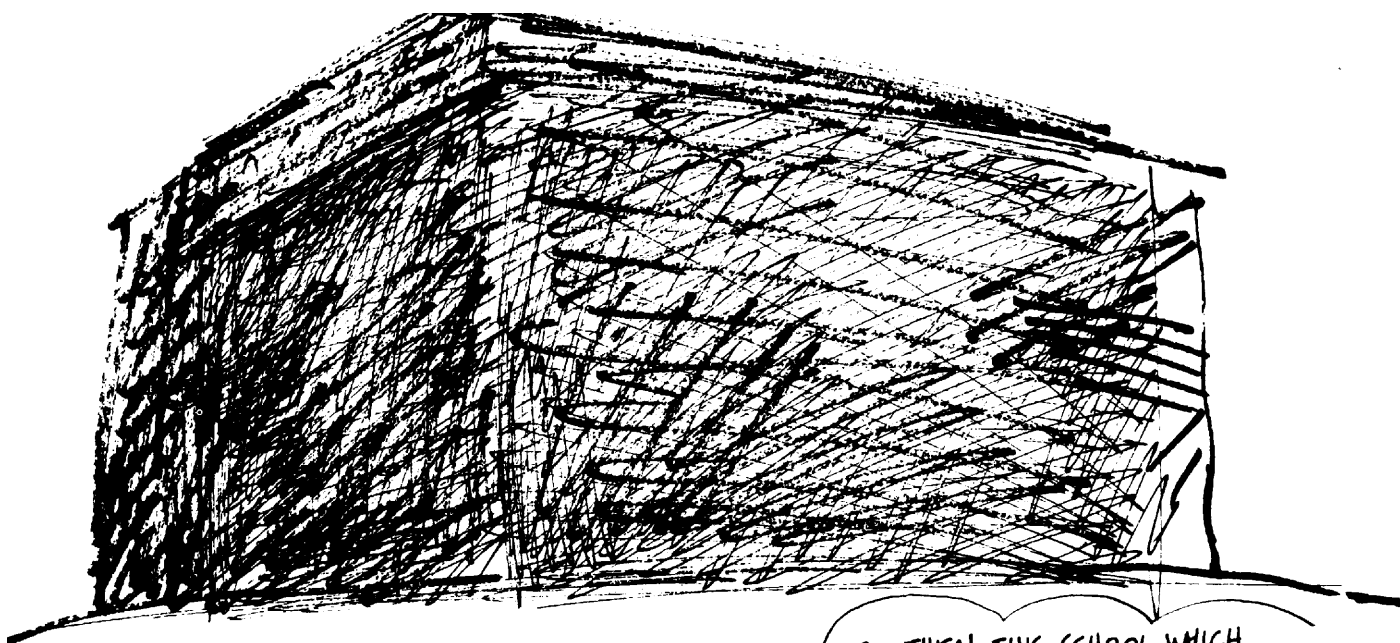
# 5. ... OF FEAR OF CONFLICT





School does not teach us how to speak a foreign language or even how to speak our own language; how to sing or to use our hands and feet; how to keep a healthy diet; how to make our way through the jungle of institutions; how to care for someone who is ill or to look after a baby. If people no longer sing but buy millions of records of professionals singing for them; if they don't know about good food habits but pay the doctor and the pharmaceutical industry to treat the effects of an unhealthy diet; if they don't know how to bring up their children but hire the services of 'nannies' with a State diploma; if they don't know how to repair a radio set or a tap, treat a sprain, cure the flu without medicines, grow lettuce etc., it is because the school has the unacknowledged mission of providing tailor-made workers, consumers, clients and subjects of administration for industry, commerce, the professions and the State.

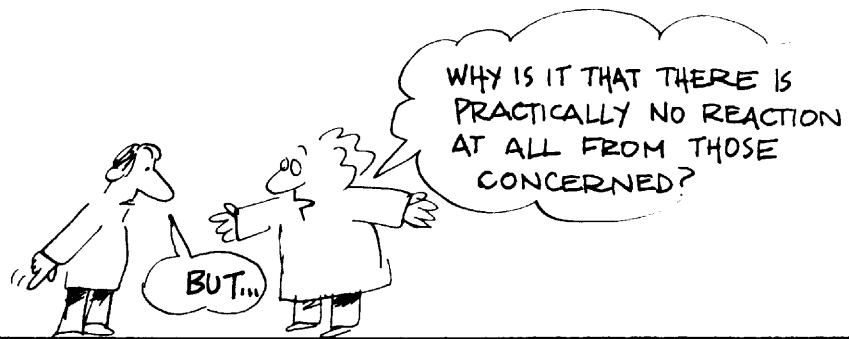




SO THEN THIS SCHOOL, WHICH WAS MEANT TO PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL, MERELY REPRODUCES THE INEQUALITY BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES?



THIS SCHOOL WHICH WE HOPED WOULD BRING EMANCIPATION AND LIBERATION IS IN REALITY MERELY AN EXPERIENCE OF DEPENDENCY?



*the pupils*

have they any power to bring about change ?

*the parents*

aren't they afraid to attack an institution which will decide what qualifications their children are to have ?

aren't those who are placed at a disadvantage by the system -- industrial and agricultural workers from whom you might expect a mass reaction -- victims of the all too facile explanations given of failures at school (lack of talent, laziness) ?

aren't they blinded by the individual success of a tiny minority from among their ranks, carefully 'played up' in order to weaken the statistics ?

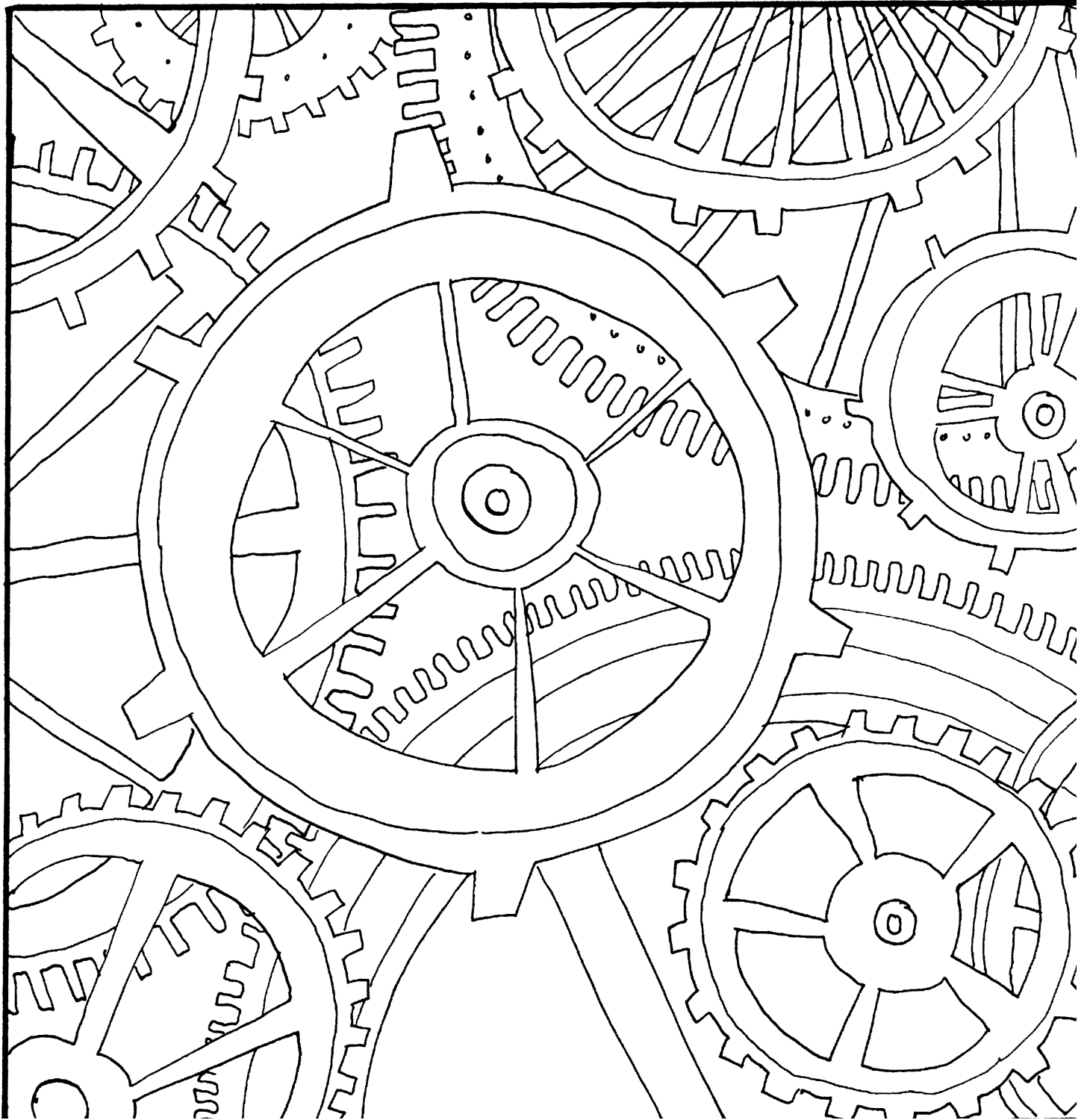
*the teachers*

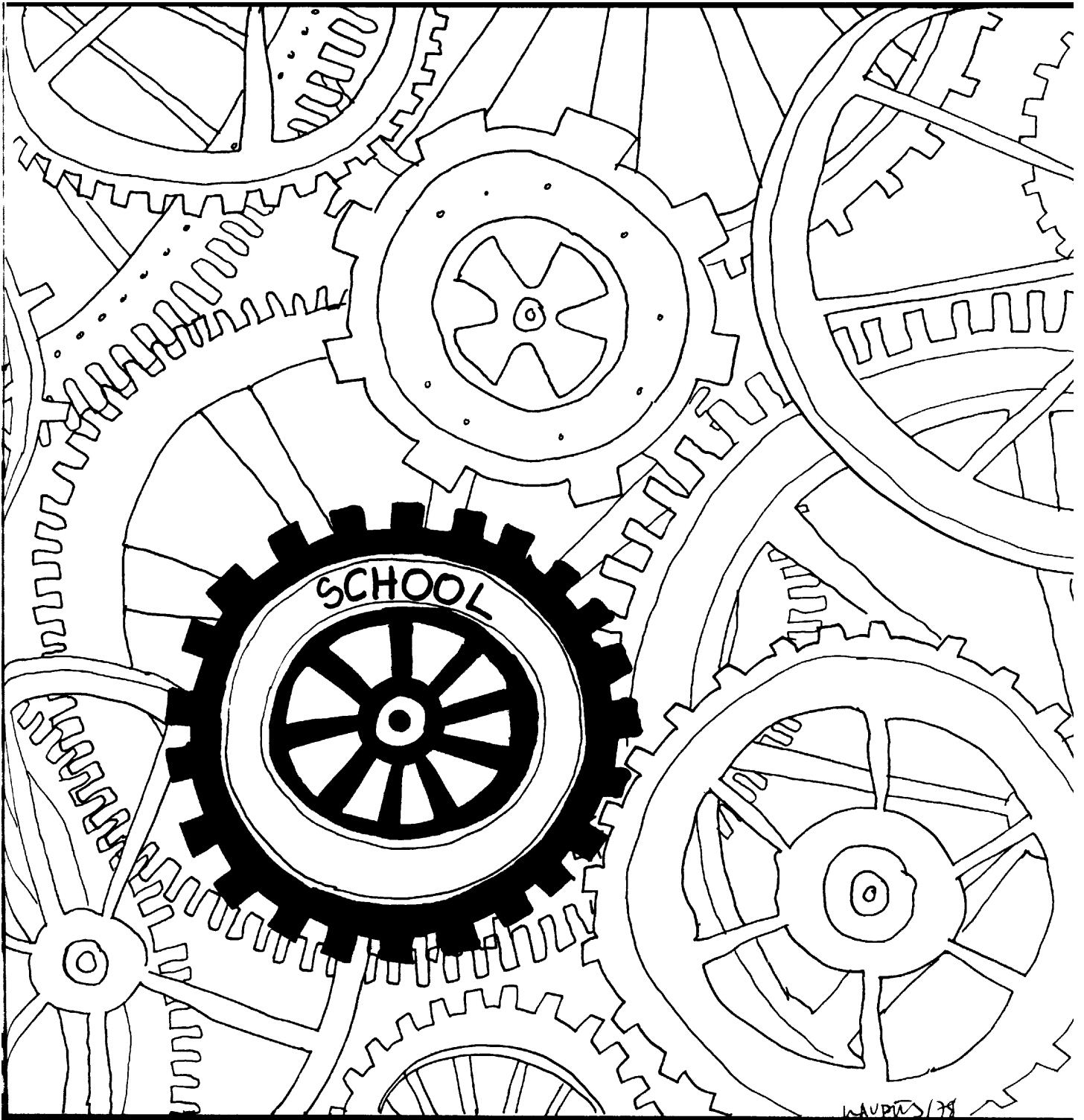
have they as individuals any other choice than the choice between submitting to the system or submitting their resignation ?

OR COULD IT PERHAPS, AFTER ALL, BE BECAUSE...



▶ ...THE SCHOOL IS ITSELF MERELY



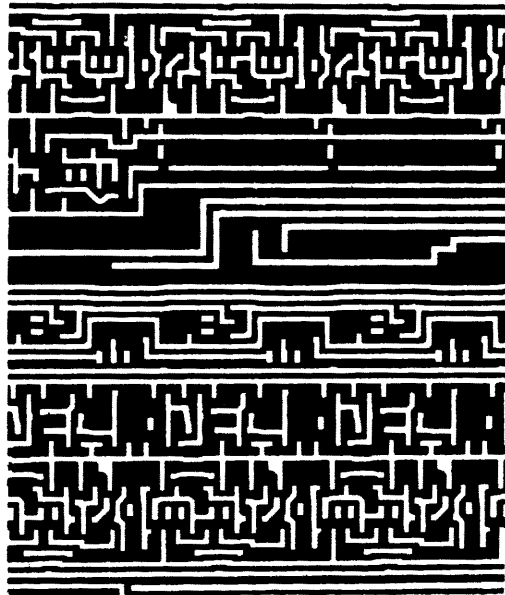


WAPIT/78

# A COG AMONG OTHERS?

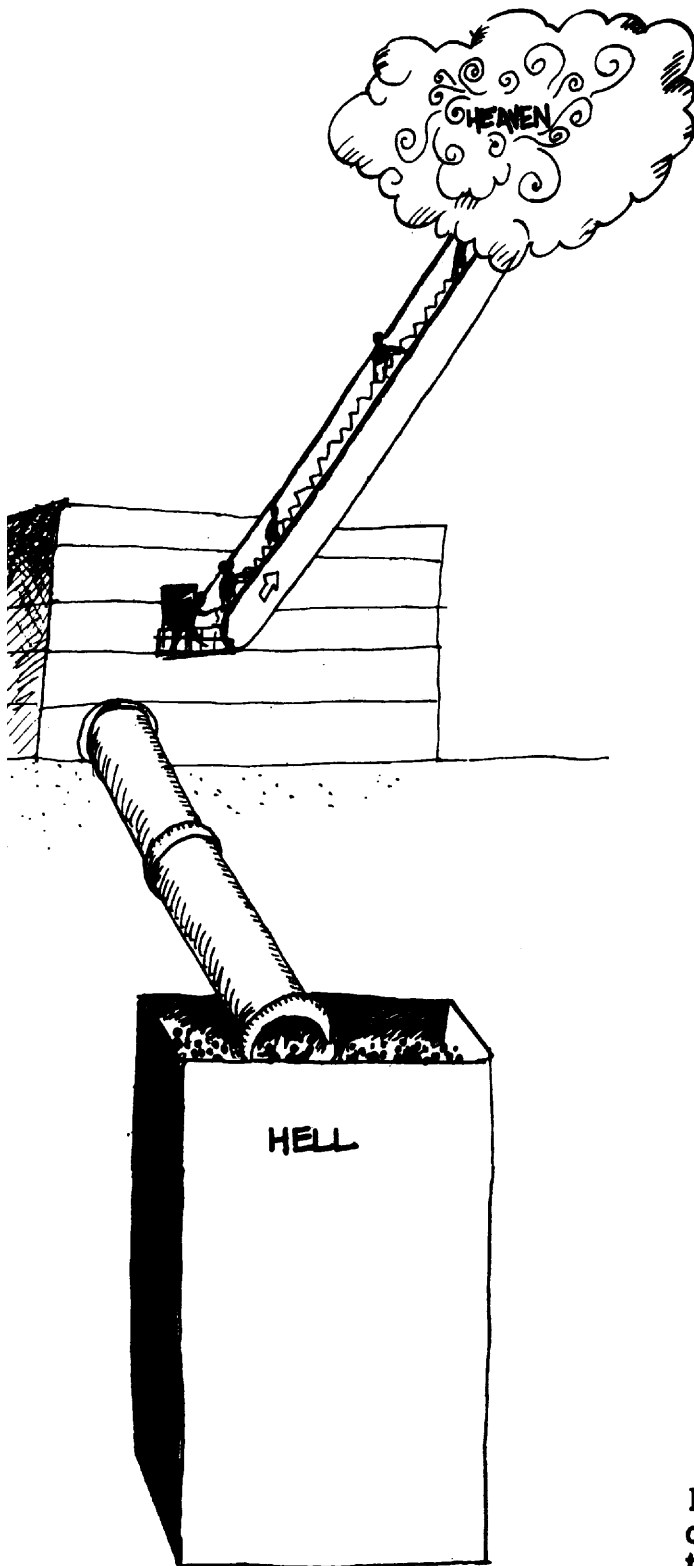


It might be said that this has always been the case and cannot be otherwise. The purpose of education in all societies is to prepare new generations for adult life, for life in the world of adults.



But it is also true that it is above all the requirements of the system of production, and the modes of production, that determines, at each moment in history and in each social context, what knowledge should be acquired and what values and behavioural patterns should be instilled.





But the organization of labour and social life in our industrial societies is based on the separation of intellectual design and management functions on the one hand, and the pure and simple tasks to be carried out, on the other.

This separation, which is discreetly called 'social and technical division of labour', lies at the heart of the division of society into two categories :

at the top, the minority who educate, administer and invent new knowledge, and therefore need highly specialized skills;

at the bottom, the majority of workers in factories, offices and shops, who are required to perform tasks laid down by others, sometimes arduous, often monotonous, which do not require advanced skills.

Subjected to this logic governing the division of labour, the school -- by its mechanisms of selection and exclusion -- reflects and strengthens the division of society into a hierarchy

on the one hand, through universities and technical colleges, it trains these super-skilled specialists -- research workers, engineers, planners, teachers or doctors -- whose competence will determine the fate of the others and the 'progress' of all;

on the other, as long as there are unskilled jobs or jobs requiring minimum skills, the school will also produce 'failures' In other words, those who, having failed in their studies and having been convinced of their inferiority, will have no other alternative but to take the least interesting and hence, 'naturally', the lowest-paid jobs.

In our hierarchical and unequal society, the output of school 'failures' is as important as the output of graduates.



*What we call 'education' today is a consumer good: it is a product manufactured by an official institution called a 'school'.*

*The more education a person 'consumes', the more fruitful he makes his future and rises in the hierarchy of capitalists of knowledge. Education establishes a new class pyramid to the extent that the major consumers of knowledge can subsequently claim to render more valuable services to their society.*

*Illich*

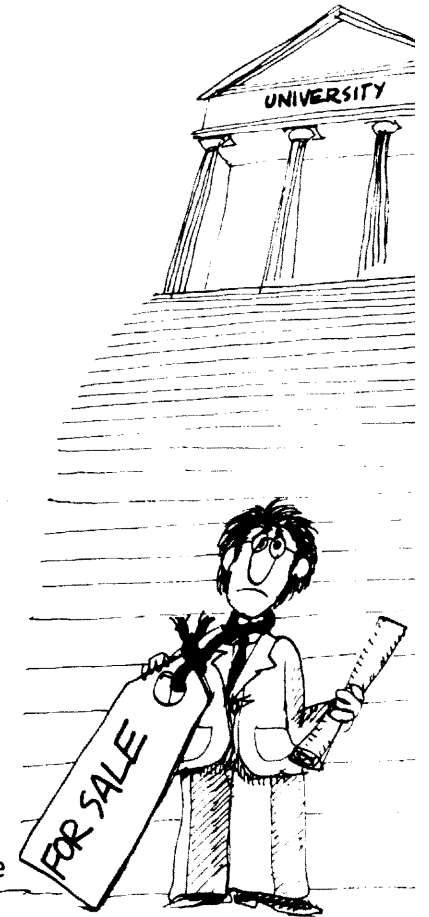
By providing knowledge and diplomas to some but not to others, by favouring a single form of culture, that of the privileged, over that of the working classes, by convincing everyone of the justice of the selection process, the school makes it appear quite normal and inevitable that society should be split in two, that there should be a division between the minority which thinks, orders, administers and controls, and the majority which carries out orders, obeys and submits.

And the school succeeds in doing this by untiringly teaching us that the specialist is the only one who knows, that only knowledge brings power, and that the acquisition of this knowledge depends on the number of years each pupil spends at school.

One might then wonder what purpose school serves for the majority of people who do not go on to higher education. Do they learn something useful before being sent back to the 'world of labour' ?

What they all learn is that you can do nothing by yourself or with others, with what is taught at school, since school qualifications are of no help whatsoever in improving our daily life or satisfying our most basic needs. In the final analysis, these qualifications -- if you have them -- enable us only to sell our own working capacity for a little more on the labour market.

With the proceeds of this sale of our own labour, which has itself become a commodity, we can then buy the services of a multitude of specialists on whom we have to depend for such simple and essential things as health care, nutrition, information, communication with others, recreation, etc.



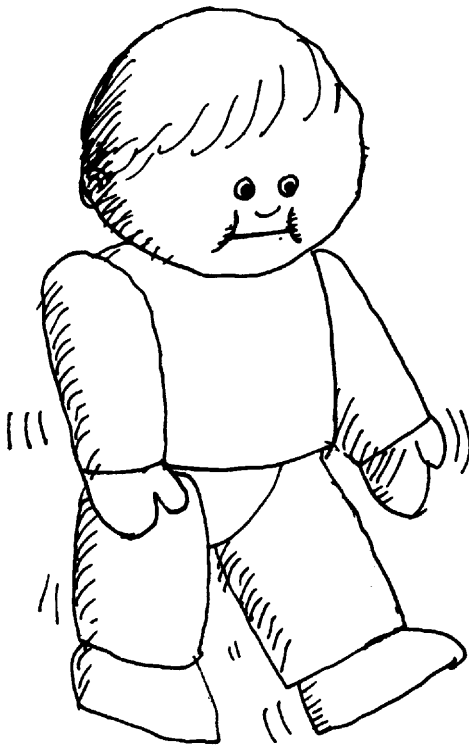
And so,  
by going through  
the experience  
of inequality  
and dependence,  
we end up  
by losing our  
capacity to work,  
to create,  
to live together.  
We end up  
by losing all ability  
to take a critical view  
of reality,  
all power to take stands  
and to create  
alternatives.



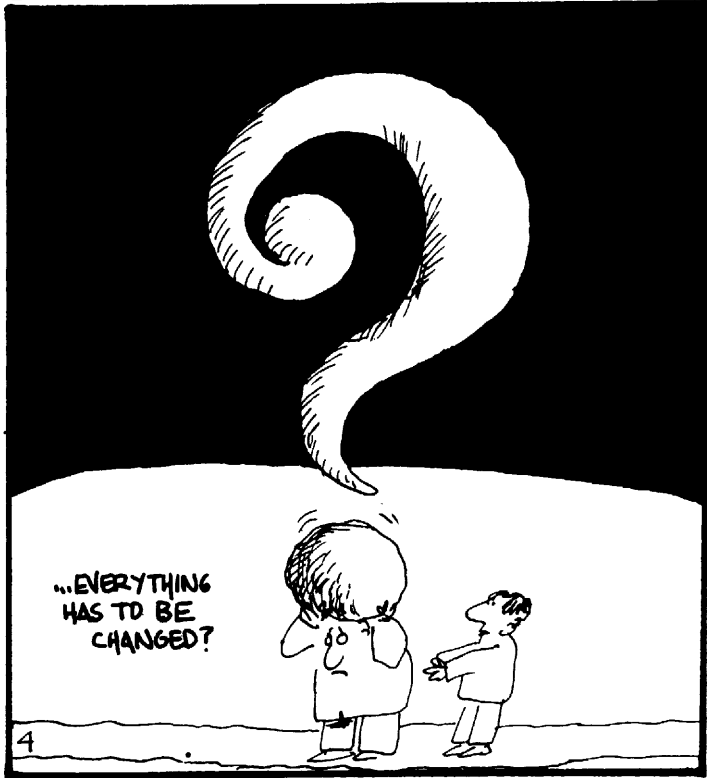
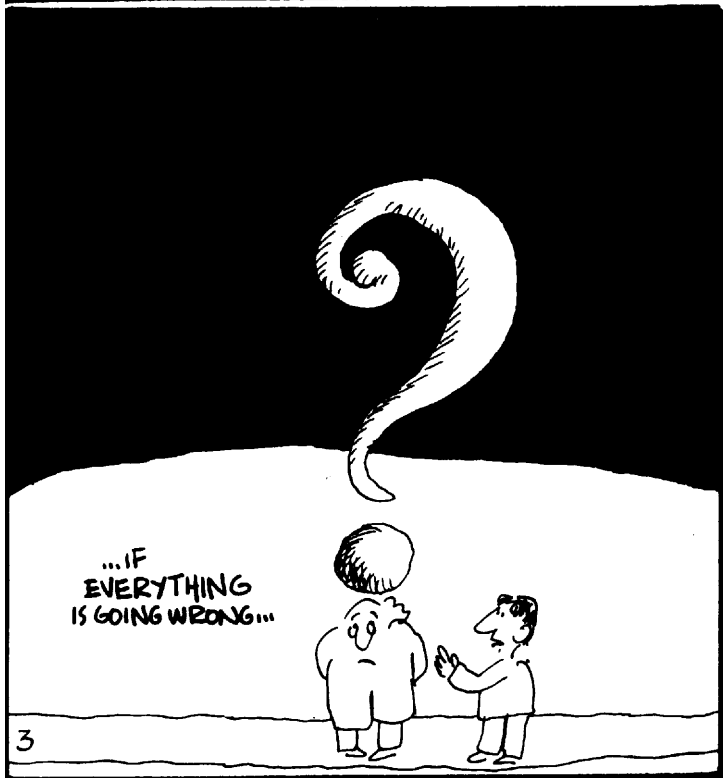
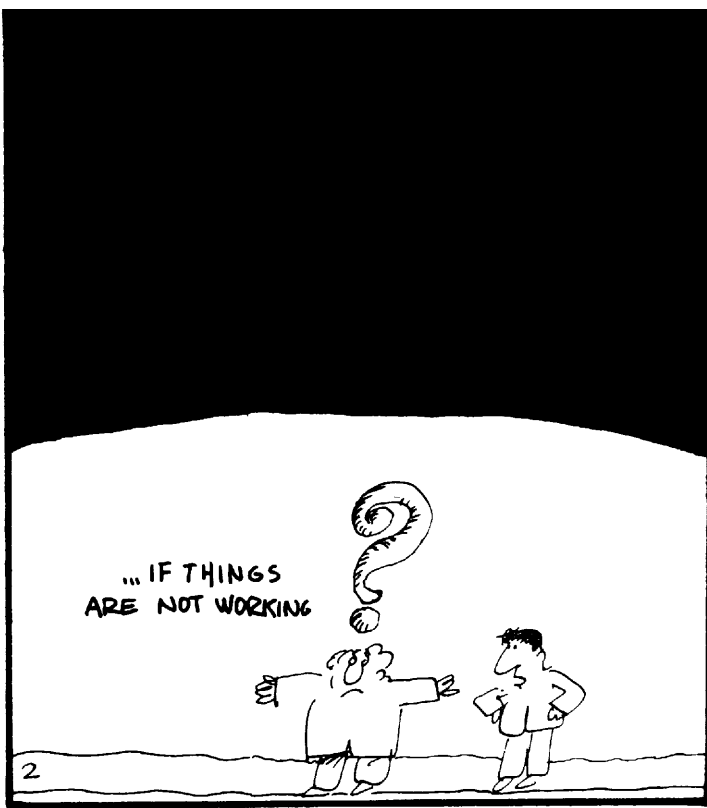
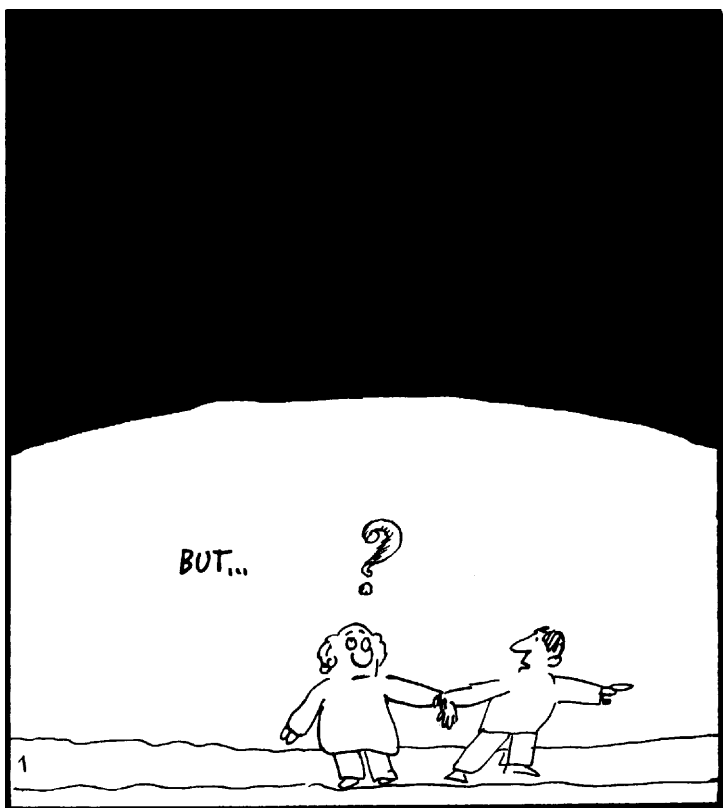
If the educator is the one who knows and the pupils are the ones who know nothing, then the former must give, deliver up, bring, transmit his knowledge to the latter. And this knowledge is no longer the knowledge of 'actual experience', but that of second-hand or transmitted experience.

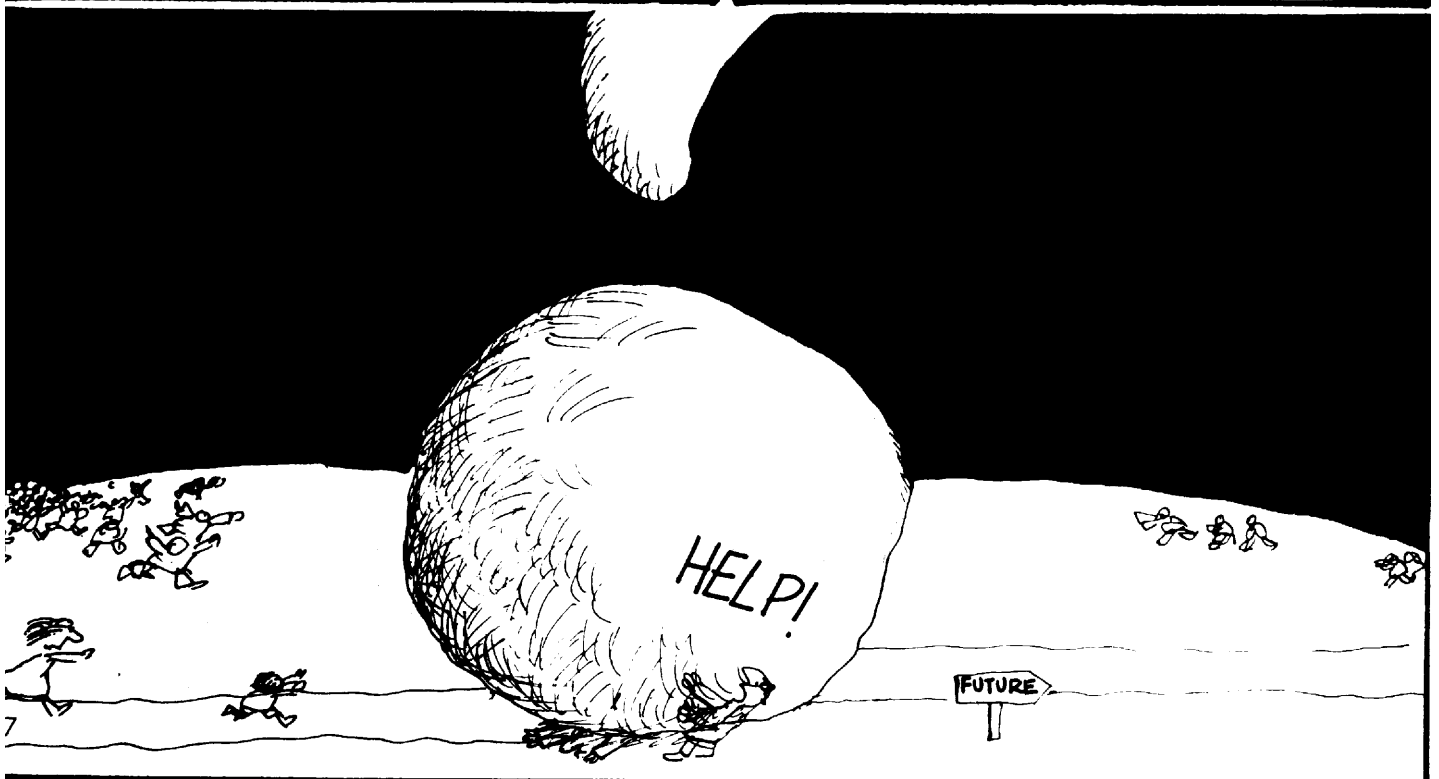
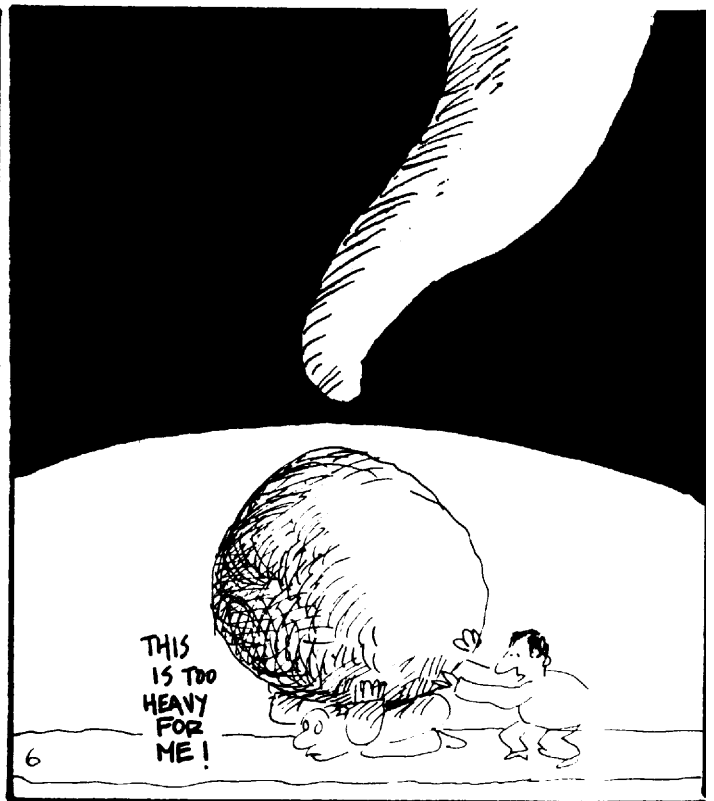
It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world.

The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.



*Paulo Freire*

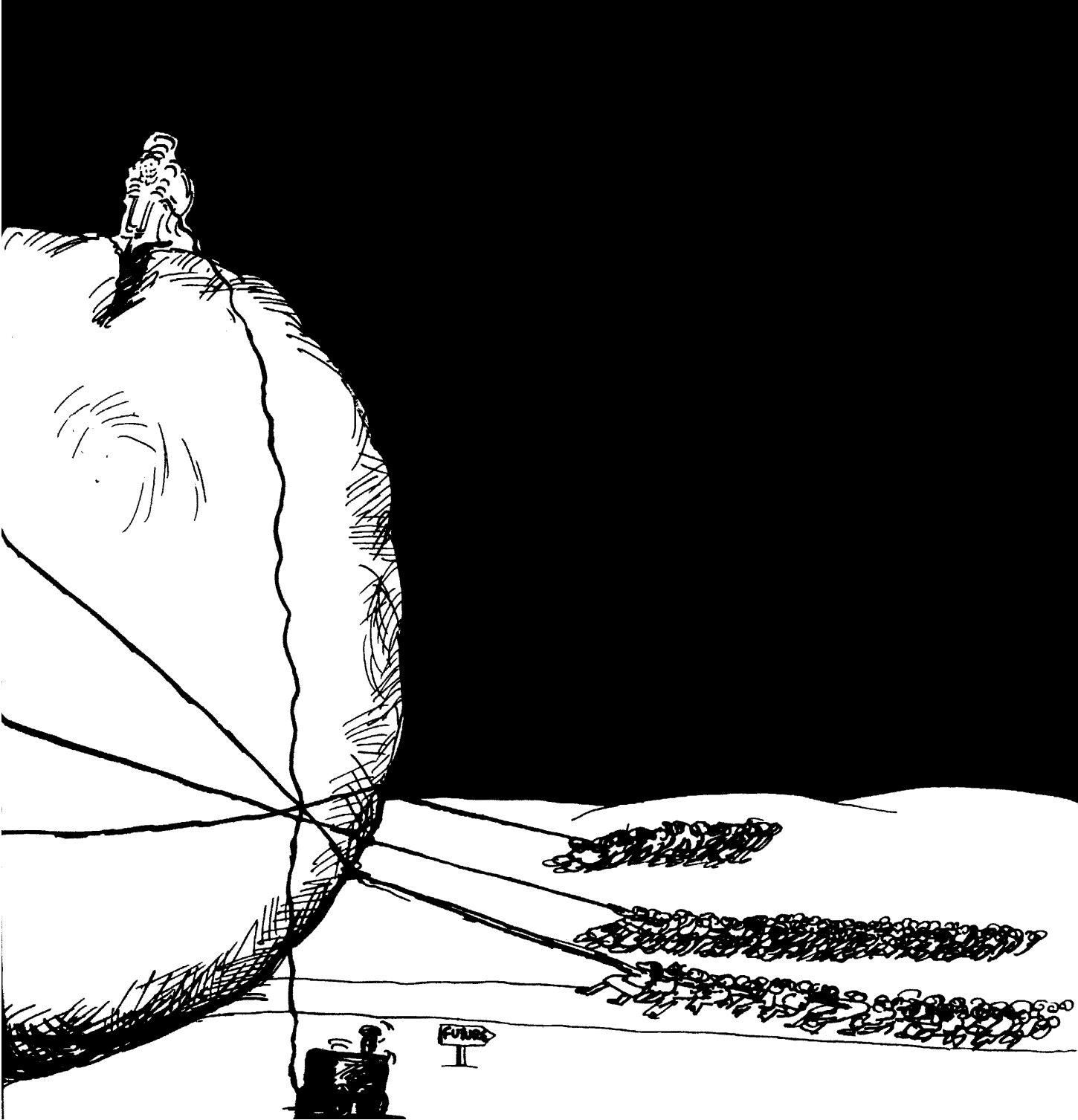


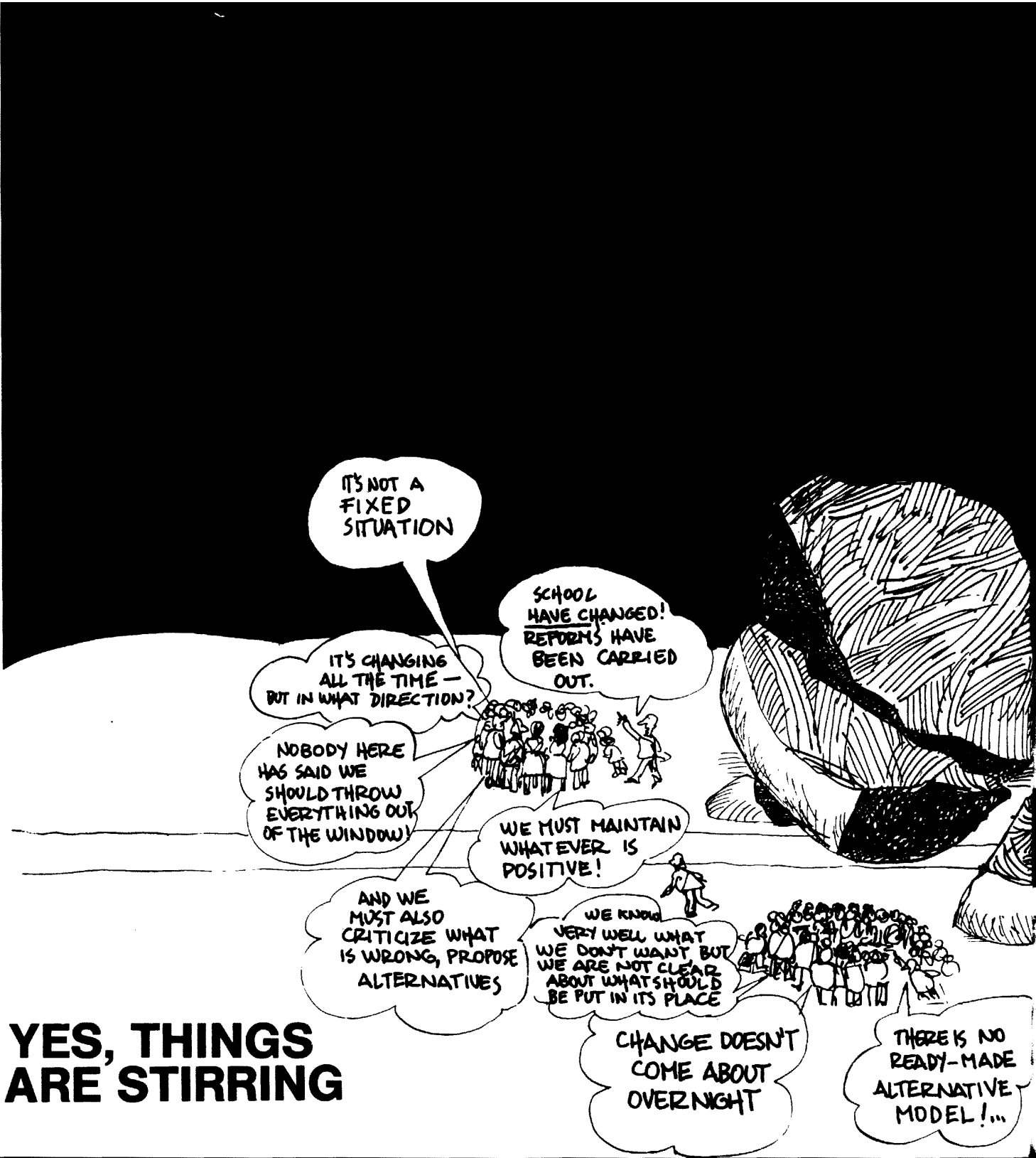


**AND YET THINGS DO CHANGE...**









IT'S NOT A  
FIXED  
SITUATION

IT'S CHANGING  
ALL THE TIME —  
BUT IN WHAT DIRECTION?

NOBODY HERE  
HAS SAID WE  
SHOULD THROW  
EVERYTHING OUT  
OF THE WINDOW!

SCHOOL  
HAVE CHANGED!  
REFORMS HAVE  
BEEN CARRIED  
OUT.



WE MUST MAINTAIN  
WHAT EVER IS  
POSITIVE!

AND WE  
MUST ALSO  
CRITICIZE WHAT  
IS WRONG, PROPOSE  
ALTERNATIVES

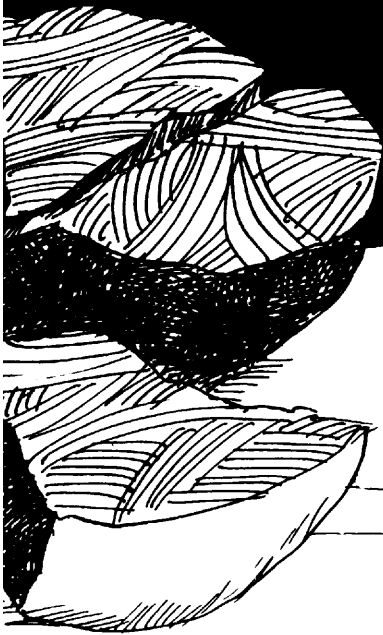
WE KNOW  
VERY WELL WHAT  
WE DON'T WANT BUT  
WE ARE NOT CLEAR  
ABOUT WHAT SHOULD  
BE PUT IN ITS PLACE



CHANGE DOESN'T  
COME ABOUT  
OVERNIGHT

THERE IS NO  
READY-MADE  
ALTERNATIVE  
MODEL!...

# YES, THINGS ARE STIRRING



ONE THING IS CERTAIN: IF WE WANT CHANGE, IT'S UP TO US TO BRING IT ABOUT!



THERE MUST BE DISCUSSIONS, CONFRONTATION OF IDEAS, PLANS, EXPERIMENTS.

WE MUST WORK TOGETHER!

IF WE ALL KEEP TO OURSELVES WE CAN'T ACHIEVE ANYTHING



EVERYBODY MUST PARTICIPATE IN THE REASSESSMENT

THE ALTERNATIVES WE PROPOSE MAY DETERMINE THE CHANCES OF THOUSAND



THE VALUES WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD ALREADY EXIST!



SOME EXPERIMENT HAVE ALREADY TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT PEOPLE REALIZING IT.

*it's  
stirring...*

Yes, it's stirring, crumbling, changing here and there because the school – like the factory, the hospital, like the whole of society – is not a prescribed entity, finished, unchangeable.

The school of today, despite its imperfections, its inadequacies, its faults, is no longer what it was 100, or even 10 years ago. It is not static, invulnerable. The form taken by today's school, is nothing more than

the precarious, provisory result of an on-going movement for change.

And this change often consists of small things, of simple actions, a variety of initiatives, which may sometimes fail but which nevertheless leave their mark. This process of change is the result, for the most part, of the actions of those teachers, parents and pupils who can hardly endure the school in its present form,

and who would like to create, would like to experience something different. It is the restlessness and the searching on the part of all those who feel dispossessed which stirs up the tensions, the conflicts, the hopes, the new alternatives.

A first stage in our work procedure – the effort to understand the mechanisms of the school – ends here. But this ending is also only provisory. The search must go

on for the new which is being born out of the old. However, since no-one has at their disposal a ready, global alternative to the existing situation, since the new is patiently constructed in a daily effort, we will continue our study by taking a close look at a few significant experiences in the construction of another school and of another education already in the process of being formulated. This will be the object of a future document.