

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FREE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

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There are approximately five hundred free schools in North America. Their philosophical and cultural antecedents can be traced back to the age of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Tolstoy. The influence of these men upon the pioneers of North American alternative schools is considerable, and many modern free schools operate according to principles developed in Europe during the past two centuries.

Free schools appear, mainly in two locations: the centres of large cities, or rural mountain and farmlands. The city free schools may be described as either suburban or urban. There are considerable differences between schools located in these different environments.

Two characteristics of free schools which tend to exercise a powerful influence over their development, success or failure, are technology and design. In this thesis the affect of technology upon the schools is discussed, and a plan for the design of a free school in the light of the influence of technology is offered.

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PREFACE

This study of the alternative schools movement in general and the most recent North American type of alternative school, the free school, in particular, has three sections: a historical review of trends in alternative education in Europe and North America which influenced the development of the free schools; a description of American and Canadian free schools -- where they are located and how they operate; and a systematic model for planning a free school, developed in the light of both the author's observations of the characteristics, successes and failures of current free schools, and on recent developments in educational technology.

The study was effected by research into the methods, programs and personnel of one hundred and twenty-six free schools in North America.¹ A letter was written to each of one hundred and eighty schools requesting published statements, bibliographies, filmographies, and rationale. Replies were received from one hundred and twenty-six schools.

Additional material was obtained from the following organizations:

The American Summerhill Society

The New Schools Exchange

¹Appendix I.

The Radical Education Project
This Magazine Is About Schools
The New England Free Press.²

The New Schools Exchange lists, for 1970-71, three hundred and eighty-four free schools and colleges in the United States and Canada. The one hundred and twenty-six schools from whom material was received represents 32.8% of the total number listed by the exchange. Since the commencement of this study in March 1970, the number of free schools estimated to be in operation in North America has risen to approximately five hundred.³ Thus the schools used in this study represent 25% of the total number of free schools. It is my intention to present a systematic approach to the development of a free school, based upon an understanding of educational technology, in order to enable future free schools to take advantage not only of the information provided by the successes and failures of the past, but also of the structural strengths of educational technology.

²Appendix IV and V.

³New Schools Exchange Newsletter, February, 1971.

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INTRODUCTION

In Europe and North America during the past century an alternative to an established public system of schooling has usually developed after that system has been generally accepted. The move to establish alternatives is usually made by an individual or small group of people and often is seen as an attempt to maintain diversity by provision of learning and teaching environments which may be different from the public schools. Most of the alternative institutions which have emerged throughout recent history have been started by individuals, have been described as "experimental", and frequently have been short-lived. With the exception of a small number of alternative schools most, during their lifetimes, have had little or no effect upon the public education systems beside which they operated. For example, Russian education was unaffected by Tolstoy's alternative school at Yasnaya Polyana in the 1860's;¹ France had remained educationally unmoved after Rousseau published Emile;² in Switzerland, Pestalozzi's attempts to operate schools at Neuhof and Stanz according to the principles of naturalism produced much frustration and little

¹L. Tolstoy, On Education (Chicago: University Press, 1967), p.233 ff.

²J.J. Rousseau, Emile (London: Dent and Sons, 1963), p.13.

immediate educational change.³ Seven of the eight progressive schools operating in Britain⁴ during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have either closed or remained isolated adventures for the rich: only Summerhill has made any real impact, and that mainly outside of Britain.

In North America the influence of alternative forms of education has differed considerably from that of Europe. Since 1873 when Frances Parker initiated changes in the schools systems of Quincy, Massachussetts,⁵ what may be termed a tradition of alternative schools has developed across the continent. What was for Parker, and for Marriette Johnson thirty years later, an individual attempt to practise a personal philosophy, has changed greatly with the changing nature of America; it is, in the 1970's, a continent-wide movement of approximately five hundred schools.

Definition of an alternative is limited in the dictionary to "a choice between two or more" things.⁶ Thus any privately or publicly operated institution calling itself an alternative may be considered to be contributing to the available choice. The more alternatives there are the

³G.L. Gutek, Pestalozzi and Education, (New York: Random House, 1963), p.29.

⁴R. Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools (London: Pelican, 1969), p.13.

⁵See Chapter 1, p.34

⁶Funk and Wagnall's Standard College Dictionary (Toronto: Longman's, 1963), p.44.

greater the choice. Peters (1968)⁷ writes: "There is an important sense in which life must be for education, not education for life." And those parents who consider the local public school system inadequate, may well seek an alternative school which comes closer to their educational aspirations for their children. These aspirations may be linked to a particular religion, social doctrine or educational philosophy. Any school able to meet those aspirations may be an acceptable alternative.

No attempt is made in this study to describe all the various alternatives to the public schools of North America. The study is confined to one specific type of alternative school, usually referred to as a free school, which differs from most public and many private schools by virtue of what are often considered to be radical departures from accepted practices. Proponents of these particular schools have bestowed upon them the label "alternatives". Though not the only alternatives to the regular schools, they have existed in a variety of forms for over a century, having emerged in North America in the early nineteenth century, in a spirit of rebellion — sometimes positive, sometimes negative — not only against public schools, but also in a more general way against many aspects of North American culture.

⁷R.S. Peters, "Must An Educator Have An Aim?" Concepts of Teaching, J.B. MacMillan and T.W. Nelson, eds., (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), p.98.

The "alternative schools movement" as it is sometimes called, comprises a small group of private schools offering an education, a way of life, a philosophy in some cases, which is claimed to be more child-centred, more flexible and less hampered by traditional trappings of public schools such as curricula, examinations, schedules, timetables and uniformity. These are the free schools; and what they claim to offer children who can afford to attend, is a "free" education.⁸

The word "free" raises considerable problems which are included in various discussions throughout this study. No free school to the knowledge of this author has succeeded in defining freedom; in fact most schools make no attempt to do so. Possibly the free school aspiration is contained in a definition of God quoted by author John Fowles, who describes Him as "the freedom that permits all other freedoms to exist." Further, because they represent a considerable departure from accepted educational traditions of many communities, these particular alternative schools frequently have sought a common bond, a common point of identity, and, until recently, have found it in the word "Summerhill". However, A.S. Neill, the founder, makes no claim of total freedom for his pupils, and does in fact qualify total freedom through the General School Meeting.

⁸Note the word "free" does not refer to costs. (cf. Appendix III).

At Summerhill the freedom is from the chain of unending supervision which Neill feels exists in most public schools. It is for the pupil, freedom to participate in a personally selected learning process via the General School Meeting. If the school be described as a system whose component parts are the physical facilities and people it is at Summerhill and at many similar schools, the General Meeting that integrates those components. In this sense the freedom of the free school is a process which facilitates the interaction of components. Thus no attempt is being made by a free school to claim to have discovered, or to be promoting, total freedom. The freedom of the free schools is best described as an attempt to produce an environment within which all other freedoms may exist. Further, no school known to this author has claimed to have achieved this environmental utopia.

A further characteristic of these schools is dealt with throughout the study. It rapidly became clear to the author that the variety of philosophies of education apparent within the free schools movement draws attention to the inadequacy of such words as "free" and "alternative". Even the word "school" places restrictions on function to which some people have objected. However, the term "free school" does describe to this author's satisfaction the schools used in this study; thus that is the term that will be retained. The meaning of this term will be delineated in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Alternative Schools in North American Education

The New Schools Exchange, a small organization in Santa Barbara, California, publishes annually a "Directory of New, Innovative Schools in the United States and Canada." The 1971 edition lists over five hundred schools. Seventy-five percent of these schools commenced operation between 1968 and 1971.¹ A major characteristic of these particular schools is the degree of flexibility or "freedom" they offer to their students and teachers — a flexibility not usually found in most public schools.

Coming increasingly into the picture of North American education through the writings of such men as Paul Goodman and John Holt,² the philosophy of what A.S. Neill (1966) has termed "freedom — not license" in education is put forward as a possible alternative to, or change in public systems. It is this philosophy which is reflected to some considerable extent

¹This information comes from brochures and statements sent to the author by directors of free schools. Foundation dates were not available from all schools.

²J. Holt, How Children Fail (New York: Pitman, 1964), and P. Goodman, Compulsory Miseducation (New York: Random House, 1962).

and in a great variety of ways by the schools listed in the New Schools Exchange Directory.

From a philosophical viewpoint the advent of the free schools, far from being the educational alternative, is really one manifestation of a general swing from traditionalism to various forms of naturalism in education. In fact, in a broader sense and particularly in centres of free school activity across the continent, the swing is more than merely educational. However, the purpose of this study will place the educational aspects of the swing at the centre of discussions.

Public school systems, reflexive of North American cultural norms which developed during the first half of the nineteenth century, established formal institutions. Their base was what Kandel (1938) described as "inert ideas", consisting of pre-packaged programs of information planned in sequences, delivered in courses and offering what many opponents felt was precious little for a learner to do other than sit and listen.³ What eventually blossomed as a full-fledged philosophical movement called in general terms naturalism, began before the traditional period of American and Canadian educational history, grew during the growth of traditionalism in education, and parallel to it, rather like a small dog snapping at the heels of a giant, and only recently rose to challenge in significant numerical form.

³I.L. Kandel, Conflicting Theories of Education (New York: Russell and Russell, 1938), p.2.

Naturalism and traditionalism appear to oppose each other; similarly free schools and public schools appear to clash. Yet, in philosophical terms this appearance is deceptive. It is not necessarily true that traditionalism is evil, that the public schools are obsolete, or that naturalism and the free schools are the panaceas for all ills. Naturalism in education, and the few schools which have represented this philosophy, developed with traditionalism in education. As knowledge of communication processes increased during the past two decades so the number of schools having a naturalistic base increased. From this came the present day movement in alternative forms of schooling.

Kandel points out the importance of understanding that the philosophy of education which has produced, as one of its many branches, the free schools, should not be seen as a new alternative to an old and static process.

There is a tendency on the part of those who would deny that anything can be learned from the past to dismiss all educational practices up to the present as making for a static society or aiming at the transmission of mere knowledge. Those that follow this tendency are apt to forget that, inadequate as they may have been in many respects, the aims of education in the past were social in intent and were directed to the promotion of the welfare of societies The purpose was there, even if later studies have proved the inadequacy of the psychology upon which it was founded.⁴

Naturalism had its beginnings in Europe with Rousseau and later with Pestalozzi and Tolstoy. It is characterized by

⁴Kandel, Op. cit., p.2.

its many branches such as instrumentalism, logical positivism, and existentialism, and by its assertion that nature is the only reality worthy of consideration by man, who is himself the apex of this reality.⁵ Rousseau held that man was not morally evil, but that his environment was to blame for unpleasant human behaviours. Thus, in educating a child a teacher needed to be aware of the child's environmental background in order that the child could be brought to an understanding of his environment and his relationship with it. The morality that had to be preserved was that between man and nature.⁶ For the naturalist the only valid form of knowledge is that derived from experience. Rousseau for example relied upon structured experience for Emile to learn. And in later years in America curricula in naturalistic schools was experience-centred. An example of such a school is John Dewey's University Elementary School in Chicago.

The major difference between the aim of natural education and the aims of the traditional education is that the latter appears to concentrate upon what Dupuis and Nordberg describe as "the development of man's highest powers via study of literature, philosophy and the classics"⁷ while the former concerns itself with the development of the whole child,

⁵A. Dupuis, and R. Nordberg, Philosophy and Education (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1968), p.79.

⁶B.F. Skinner, The Technology of Teaching (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p.87.

⁷Dupuis and Nordberg, op. cit., p.88.

the entire natural organism. The resulting differences between the two forms in terms of classroom behaviour are difficult to categorize: generalisations would not do justice to either form. However, it appears that the basic difference is between teacher control on the one hand, and a child-centred approach on the other. The final decision about what will be learned will be, for traditionalists, in the hands of the teachers, and for the naturalists in the hands of the child. Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon in Switzerland was based upon the philosophy of naturalism and is described in some detail later in the chapter. American educator Francis Parker introduced several Pestalozzian practices into the school district of Quincy, Massachusetts between 1873 and 1880.

Today's free schools are, to a considerable extent, and to varying degrees, naturalistic in educational philosophy. They are by no means the only examples of naturalism in education. However, being private schools frequently operated by small groups of people, they have tended to evolve via the traditions of the earlier naturalistic schools such as those of Pestalozzi and Dewey. The problems of massive population growth and of greatly increased demands for public education, have contributed to the growth of large public institutions throughout the United States and Canada. The very size of these institutions is not conducive to the development of naturalistic practices. Thus the public schools have tended to develop along traditional lines, while the free schools have

remained largely isolated from the main economic and administrative streams of education, in small pockets of largely middle-class privacy. It is in this state that most free schools exist today. Some cater to the needs of the poor but most are financially available only to the middle-classes.

Types of free school reflect to some extent the various types of naturalism, particularly progressivism, instrumentalism and existentialism. Just as the University Elementary School was the brainchild of John Dewey, an instrumentalist, and Summerhill and brainchild of A.S. Neill, a progressivist, so today's free schools tend to develop according to the philosophy of education of individuals or very small groups of people. Dupuis and Nordberg point out that most modern philosophies are of change, but none so much as instrumentalism, which they describe as "the philosophy of change, par excellence."⁸ Fundamental to the instrumentalist is the associated metaphysical denial of the supernatural and of traditionalism, and the application of a problem-solving method of ascertaining man's relationship with his environment. Importance is attached in education, therefore, not to the God-centred ideals of traditionalists, nor to the development of hierarchical structures, but rather to the solution of the practical problems of this world, and the education of all students to the full extent of their capabilities. Some of the

⁸Dupuis and Nordberg, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

free schools described in Chapter Two of this study are instrumentalist.

Some other free schools claim to be founded and operated according to the principles of existentialism, and attempt to function on the basis that neither traditionalism nor the modern philosophies are valid. Existentialism represents a reaction against philosophies in general. The only thing that matters is "man as a free agent involved in living"⁹ and all that matters in education is the provision of freedom for the child to unfold as a "whole individual". The example of the teacher is important in terms of personal lifestyle rather than the imparting of knowledge. This particular approach is characteristic of many free schools in which teachers are mainly individuals doing whatever interests them most, practically or academically, and whatever they are proficient in, with the children working along with them. In any existentialist free school, provision should be made for each child to develop along whatever philosophical lines he selects. Thus it is difficult to judge any one school as being completely existential, in view of the middle-class nature of most free schools and the polarized urban or rural location which tends to group people according to physical limitations of age, location and finances rather than of individual philosophy.

⁹T. Brameld, Patterns of Educational Philosophy (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p.67.

Historical and Cultural Antecedents
Socrates and the Sophists: Origins of the Free
School Movement

It is possible to travel back into history far beyond the age of John Dewey and Frances Parker, to the time of the ancient Greeks, for whom education was "a spiritual affair"¹⁰ and discover a dichotomy concerning the role of education and the interpretation of 'techne' — the application of theory to practice. The sophists' brazen determination to turn education into a paid profession contrasted sharply with traditional attitudes and contributed to the creation of a rift between them and Socrates in the fifth century. In this situation it is not immediately clear which school should be termed the "alternative", that of Socrates or that of the sophists. Kitto (1951) suggests the nearest modern equivalent of the term sophist is "professor"¹¹ and Elizabeth Lawrence has written:

The sophists were founders of pedagogy, and their influence is still seen today wherever education bows to form rather than content.¹²

Kitto describes Socrates' major effect upon Athens in the following terms:

No-one in Athens could give a definition of any moral or intellectual virtue which would survive ten minutes'

¹⁰Elizabeth Lawrence, The Origins and Growth of Modern Education (London: Penguin, 1970), p.24.

¹¹H.D.F. Kitto, The Greeks (London: Pelican, 1951), pp. 166-168.

¹²Lawrence, op. cit., p.25.

conversation with this formidable stonemason
 Faith in the polis too was shaken, for how could the polis
 train its citizens in virtue seeing that nobody knew what
 it was?

And if the polis was the established form then Socrates was,
 in a very grand manner, the progressive who

cried out upon the folly of democratic Athens, which
 was careful to consult the expert in a trifle like the
 building of a wall or dockyard, but in the infinitely more
 important matter of morals and conduct allowed anyone
 to speak his uninstructed mind.¹³

The sophists on the other hand, may have influenced
 an all-embracing, widely-available education system in the
 same way (according to present-day advocates of alternative
 schools) that modern "professors" are influencing public
 education, in that they produced or catered to specialists
 and the job market. Kitto describes this activity, for the
 ancient Greeks, as the establishment of "a real cleavage
 between the enlightened and the simple, with the natural
 result that the educated classes . . . began to feel that
 they had more in common with each other than with the
 uneducated."¹⁴

Socrates opposed the reduction of education to a
 plane on which it dealt only with the immediate, material
 matters and basic skills, and ignored the overall nature of
 being human. And while this philosophy is different to the
 instrumentalism of Dewey, it is similar to the naturalism of

¹³H.D.F. Kitto, op. cit., p.167.

¹⁴Ibid., p.168.

Tolstoy and Neill on the one hand, and the more traditional progressivism of Reddie and Hahn. Furthermore it is a philosophy which continually reappears in many modern free schools, either in part or in whole.¹⁵

Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was primarily responsible for the initial development of naturalism in education. Between 1757 and 1760, in France, he wrote Emile. In the book he expressed his own views on childhood because,

The wisest writers devote themselves to what a man ought to know, without asking what a child is capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man.¹⁶

Much of what Rousseau wrote in this book was an indictment of traditional French culture and values, yet it was applauded as the outstanding statement of its time on the natural growth of children and on childhood. Emile was not written for teachers but for one mother and her child; yet it has become one of the most important guides for educators. It reflects, for children, what Socrates pleaded for in men: a sense of value derived from nature.

This education comes to us from nature, from men, or from things. The inner growth of our organs and faculties is the education of nature, the use we learn to make of this growth is the education of men, what we gain by our experience of our surroundings,

¹⁵Skidelsky, op. cit., pp. 71-239.

¹⁶J.J. Rousseau, Emile (London: Dent and Sons, 1963), p.1.

is the education of things.¹⁷

Having asserted that true public education can only be found in Plato's Republic, Rousseau establishes on paper what may be described as a theoretical free school situation in terms of today's definitions. Emile is the pupil: Rousseau the teacher.

I have therefore, decided to take an imaginary pupil, to assume on my own part, the age, health knowledge and talents required for the work of his education, to guide him from birth to manhood when he needs no guidance but himself.¹⁸

He suggests the best tutor for Emile would be another child, but failing the availability of one, takes on the task himself — a task which he sees as primarily helping the child to discover "the duties of man".

The child-centredness of Emile's education was a remarkable innovation in its time and set the scene for later explorations on naturalism in schools such as Pestalozzi's at Yverdon.

The conditions for Emile's learning were rigid; he learned no more words than Rousseau considered he needed; he was taught no grammar. He would, Rousseau hoped, experience pain: "Emile shall have no head-pads, no go-carts . . . let him run about, let him struggle and fall again and again." In this way, claimed Rousseau, "my pupil will hurt

¹⁷Rousseau, op. cit., p.6.

¹⁸Ibid., p.18.

himself more than yours, but he will always be merry."¹⁹
 He excluded from Emile's vocabulary the words "obey", "command",
 "duty" and "obligation"; he emphasised the words "strength",
 "necessity", "weakness" and "constraint".

The similarities between Rousseau's wishes for children and those of Pestalozzi and A.S. Neill are quite apparent. Neill for example has prided himself on the facilities for his children to run free, and on his non-interference. For Rousseau, as it was to be later for Pestalozzi and Tolstoy and Neill and a good many others whose work is described in Chapter Two of this study, the key to success with children lay in "well-regulated liberty".²⁰ And it should be noted at once that virtually no free school educator in present times has, to the knowledge of this author, defined that phrase.

While Pestalozzi employed Rousseau's brand of naturalism, Tolstoy was not in such complete agreement with Rousseau's manipulation of Emile. The problem of regulating liberty has beset many free schools, and the lack of one workable solution is a primary cause of the variety of forms of naturalism apparent within the free school movement. Definition of freedom is absent from most free schools, with the exception of those few operated by existentialists for whom

¹⁹Rousseau, op. cit., p.42.

²⁰Ibid., p.57.

freedom is absolute, and whose problem is how to handle the anguish, abandonment and despair which grow from freedom. Tolstoy preferred not to place the tutor in such a dominant role: thus while Emile has little control over his fate during his childhood, the children at Yasnaya Polyana a century later were not obligated to attend school, or, if attending, to participate. This is a procedure adopted by many free schools today.

Boyd (1956)²¹ suggests that the enduring lesson of Emile "is that the educator should take full account of the human nature, and especially the nature of the child." He makes a further point, which has relevance for free schools. The procedures one might adopt to establish what one considers to be the ideal learning situation, have, he observes, their own built-in problems.²² The resolution of these problems is dependent upon the educator's personal philosophy. Rousseau possessed certain beliefs: that man as a natural being is good; that the way of the good life is hard; that a child gains little or nothing from the opinions of society. He resolved the problems of Emile's education by resorting to these maxims. It is because each free school educator decides upon an individual philosophy and both applies it in the conceptualization of the school and reverts to it for

²¹W. Boyd, Emile For Today (London: William Heineman, 1956), p.170.

²²Ibid., p.172.

the solution of problems, that there is such variety within the free schools movement.

The process of applying a philosophy is, as Skinner (1968) points out, technological, in that the natural world comprises the harmonious combination of exploration, discovery, observation, reward and punishment.²³ Thus the need for a standardized and neutral approach to conceptualization of an individual philosophy is extremely important. The neutrality of nature was Rousseau's primary concern in wanting Emile taught "by natural things".²⁴ And as nature is neutral, so technology is neutral, and that aspect of technology which may be called technique, and which is manifest in the design of systems, has a standardized and neutral form conducive to conceptualization of an individual philosophy. Since this conceptualization is the primary step in producing an institution, it is as necessary for a free school educator to objectively design a school as it was for Rousseau to select a specific environment for Emile.

Pestalozzi

Certain aspects of Rousseauian naturalism had considerable impact upon another educator who made a major contribution to the development of alternatives to traditional education, Johann Henreich Pestalozzi. That man is naturally

²³Skinner, op. cit., p.153.

²⁴Ibid., p.104.

good and is corrupted by social environment, is a basic principle of naturalism, and as such it is common to both Rousseau and Pestalozzi. And that education may be instrumental in "blocking the distortions of an unnatural environment, and in allowing a child to develop according to his natural goodness"²⁵ is a conviction that was part of Rousseau's Emile in the 1760's and Pestalozzi's Leonard and Gertrude in 1781, and was the basis of subsequent books such as How Gertrude Teaches Her Children, in 1801 and Epochs a year later.

Gertrude, "the perfect working-class housewife and mother"²⁶ reflects Pestalozzi's philosophy of natural education in the way she rears her children in the novel's village of Bonjol. And the major aspects of that natural education may be delineated as follows: A distorted environment is the source of evil; the reformation of that evil may be achieved peacefully through an education which is home-based, and utilizes the "natural moral, intellectual and physical powers" of man to produce self-sufficient individuals.²⁷ To this end Gertrude educates her children in much the same way that Rousseau educated Emile. The naturalistic principles expressed by Pestalozzi in the book were at that time theories;

²⁵Gutek, op. cit., p.11.

²⁶Ibid., p.35.

²⁷Ibid., p.36.

at no future time, not even at Yverdon, did an educational situation develop which produced the self-sufficient individuals to which Gutek refers. The attempt to do so, however, became world-famous.

Pestalozzi wrote Leonard and Gertrude partly because practical application of his theories became impossible when financial mismanagement forced closure of his first school at Neuhof. This school, for fifty boys and girls between the ages of six and eighteen years, was operated according to two principles: self-activity and economic independence.

Pestalozzi's sympathy with the peasant, and his conviction that economic independence was related to possession of a definite vocational skill caused him to develop the Neuhof school institutionally along the lines of a home. Each child learned the elements of farming in the summer, and handcrafts, particularly spinning in the winter. Academic subjects were taught by means of group recitations, occurring during the children's work in the fields or at the spinning wheel.²⁸

The school's own economic independence only lasted for five years, and, in 1779, it closed.

The high ideals at Neuhof, together with practices such as recitation, are today closer to the traditional public schools of America and Canada than they are to the free schools. However, certain ideas which were born in Neuhof have

²⁸Gutek, op. cit., p.30.

recurred in some free schools. Although much of what goes on in North America's free schools is more a result of contemporary environment than of a continuing tradition, some tradition, some continuing thread does run through the past two centuries to the free schools of the 1970's, and the same principles of naturalism introduced into Neuhof do reappear today. In British Columbia, for example, a free school near Argenta, recently closed. The school, called View-point non-school described itself as a place in which children could become part of a rural family. In the school children learned farming and academic subjects. Similarly, in the same province, the Kootenay Folk School near the town of Nelson invites students of all ages to become part of a rural family whose classroom will be wherever the group is, and whose subject will be whatever the group is doing. In both of these western Canadian schools a type of rural family life occurred which was similar in philosophy if not in all practices, to Pestalozzi's school in Neuhof.

Another type of free school which emphasises its role as a community is the urban "movement" school, in the large American cities. Two such schools are described in detail in Chapter Three of this study. One of these two schools, the Newark Community School, in New Jersey, emphasises the acquisition of skills and economic independence as the major goals for its predominately negro student population.²⁹

²⁹Chapter Three, p. 62.

Pestalozzi had a further opportunity to run his own school in 1799, twenty years after Neuhof closed, when he was appointed director of a government orphanage in the war-racked city of Stanz. He had eighty pupils in his charge, but the school only remained open for five months. However, even during that short time he was able to re-apply some of the techniques originated at Neuhof. Gutek notes that even in five months it was noticeable that learning was "coming from innate powers" of the children.³⁰ Excursions and nature-study trips were an integral part of the learning environment at Stanz, and Pestalozzi was anxious to make the school work. Green (1969) writes:

His exertions were almost superhuman. He was the first to rise and the last to go to bed, and even in bed he would continue to teach his children. He had no school materials. Nature, and the children's daily needs were the only "tools" available. His difficulties were increased by the attitude of the surrounding people, who looked on him as the instrument of a hated government, and a heretic to boot, who was endangering the souls of the children.³¹

Necessity and an uncooperative environment were powerful factors in Pestalozzi's work at Neuhof and Stanz. Lack of facilities and the poverty of his students were instrumental in shaping his philosophy and methods. While this same situation was apparent in Yasnaya Polyana and Summerhill, it is by no means the case with a considerable

³⁰Gutek, op. cit., p.39.

³¹J.A. Green, The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi (New York: Greenwood, 1969), p.44.

number of free schools today, whose fee structure alone limits them to the relative security of the middle-classes. There are few free schools motivated primarily by poverty. "Movement" schools such as those previously referred to at Newark and San Francisco are motivated largely by political and economic pressures associated with poor Blacks, and are comparable to that extent to Neuhof and Stanz.

The school at Stanz was taken over by the French army in April 1799. Pestalozzi worked in two more government elementary schools, both for short periods before establishing, with the financial assistance of friends, his own institute in an old castle in Yverdon, in 1804. Between 1805 and 1810 Yverdon was to northern Europe what Summerhill became, in later years to the free school movement: the primary working example of naturalism in education. Herbart, Owen, Bell and Froebel all visited the institute; Froebel worked there for a time. All were attracted by the method of natural education.

Although the daily schedule for a pupil at Yverdon appeared quite traditional if compared to the unstructured modern free school, it was for its time, revolutionary. Lessons accounted for up to ten hours of a school day which began at 6:00 a.m. Pupils' time between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. was strictly regulated; military drills were taught; each pupil consulted with Pestalozzi five times a week, and each teacher three times in addition to a staff meeting on Saturdays. The curriculum included language, geography, science, mathematics,

drawing, singing, reading, handicrafts and gardening.³²

For an explanation of natural education as exemplified by Pestalozzi, reference should be made to Swansong, published in 1826. In this book Pestalozzi defines elementary education as "the result of the efforts of humanity to offer such guidance to the course of nature in the unfolding of the capacities and powers as would confer upon the individual the enlightened love, the cultivated intelligence and the practical good sense of the race."³³ Further, he summarizes his point of view at the conclusion of the book with a statement that could have been his own epitaph:

Examine everything, hold to that which is good, and if you conceive anything better, add it to that which I, in love and truth have endeavoured to give you . . . and, at any rate, do not cast aside the whole of my life's effort as a thing of the past deserving no further attention.³⁴

There is something in the mood of this final statement that reflects much of what is attempted in free schools today and has been attempted both in Europe and North America in the past. What is discussed throughout this study is a series of attempts by various individuals to establish places for natural education in which, by individual or group effort, the course of nature, the way in which systems and their component parts interact, may be understood by children.

³²Green, op. cit., p.46.

³³Ibid., p.220.

³⁴Ibid., p.221.

There is a similarity between Pestalozzi's success and his effect upon education on the one hand, the influence of the free schools on education in North America today on the other. Neill's Summerhill has often been the subject of abuse by critics. Rafferty (1970)³⁵ calls Neill a "quack"; Louise Bates (1970) accuses him of knowing "so little about child behaviour" and describes him as "like a small bad boy who, somehow or other finding himself in a position of authority, throws out all the usual rules."³⁶ Similarly, Karl Blochmann the nineteenth-century German educator, was critical of Pestalozzi's inconsistency between theory and practice at Neuhof, and writes: "he hurried to the higher branches of instruction, before supplying the solid foundations of acquaintance with the lower."³⁷ A short section of Chapter Two of this study is devoted to the pressures brought to bear on some current free schools.

Study and analysis of the relationship between an educator's approach to children and the amount of abuse he gets from people is not a function of this thesis, interesting though it would be. However free or alternative schools are susceptible to the label "deviant" and may therefore share a common experience in the harsh criticism that is heaped upon

³⁵Hart Press, Summerhill: For and Against (New York: Hart, 1970), p.2.

³⁶Ibid., p.65.

³⁷Green, op. cit., p.32.

what are essentially no more than genuine attempts to improve the quality of learning. For example, Popenoe (1970), a former Summerhill student, describes Neill's philosophy of education in terms very similar to Pestalozzi's own definition of his own aims. Popenoe writes:

His basic philosophy is that if a child is given love and complete approval to do as he pleases — provided that what he does is neither dangerous to himself nor annoying to others — then he will grow up to be a happier, more mature adult.³⁸

This may be compared with Pestalozzi's concept of the relationship between instruction and freedom of will:

Man's improvement is, for me, only the advance of the race towards Humanity, and the sole eternal basis for such an advance is love Education proper to our nature leads to love, not a blind, but a seeing love, in which our moral, intellectual and practical powers unite thereby constituting our humanity.³⁹

It is more the spirit of Pestalozzi's work that has affected subsequent educators than his methods of instruction, even though Herbart, founder of the lesson plan, once criticised Pestalozzian techniques as "wanting in respect of the cool-headedness necessary to the use of a scientific method."⁴⁰ It is a spirit which bridges a gap between Rousseau on the one hand and Tolstoy and the British progressives on the other, providing a base for the experiments of Neill and others who followed him in North America.

³⁸J. Popenoe, Living at Summerhill (New York: Hart, 1970), p.25.

³⁹Green, op. cit., pp.76-77.

⁴⁰Ibid., p.170.

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, progressivism was a branch of naturalism which developed in Europe as an offshoot from the schools of Pestalozzi and Froebel. Progressivism developed most completely during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the first quarter of the twentieth century in Britain. After its deterioration in that country, certain aspects of it were transferred to North America.

British Progressivism

That 70% of Summerhill's students are American, and many American free schools are styled after Summerhill,⁴¹ gives an indication of the origins of many free schools on this continent. Indeed, two branches of an organization designed to establish Summerhill-styled free schools in America, have opened in New York and San Fransisco since 1968. Robert Skidelsky (1970) describes the various trends in the shaky evolution of British progressive schools, and describes some of the elements in that development which may have provided a framework for the North American schools. He identifies three waves of progressivism in British education: the New School Movement in the 1890's, the renewal of efforts after the First world War, and a third in the 1930's. Further he identifies three pioneers of progressive education, Cecil Reddie, the founder of Abbotsholme, A.S. Neill of Summerhill, and Kurt Hahn of Gordonstoun. He describes the eight major

⁴¹New Schools Exchange Newsletter, which lists all known free schools in North America.

progressive schools, Abbotsholme, Dartington Hall, Kilquhanity, Atlantic College, Bedales, King Alfred School, Summerhill and Gordonstoun. Skidelsky is concerned in his study of the progressive schools movement with firmly established schools only, and in attempting to assess whether or not the "progressive impulse in England"⁴² is advancing or declining, he points out several characteristics of present-day progressive schools that indicate decline, or at best, compromise:

The English progressive schools movement stopped growing after 1940. The Second World War was not followed by a great outcrop of new progressive establishments, as the First World War had been. With the single exception of Atlantic College, no new progressive school of any importance has established itself since the war. A number have closed down. Others, like Summerhill and Kilquhanity have survived only with difficulty. The ones that have done well, like Bedales and Gordonstoun, have become more orthodox.⁴³

Having identified several major trends in the British progressive movement, Skidelsky offers some reasons for the decline:

The modern school is undoubtedly more humane than its predecessor. There is much less corporal punishment. The curriculum in many schools has been widened There is much exciting experiment in new teaching and learning techniques.⁴⁴

In the sense that progressive educators sought a 'coherent process' and attempted to establish a community with important social lessons to be gleaned from shared problems and experiences, the emergence of some of these same characteristics in public education has contributed to the decline of the progressive movement.⁴⁵

⁴²Skidelsky, op. cit., p.243.

⁴³Ibid., p.243.

⁴⁴Ibid., p.243.

⁴⁵Ibid., p.22.

Thus Skidelsky traces a movement of progressive schools through three "waves" of rebellion against class structures, traditional emphasis upon the use of education as a means of preserving the controlling power of the upper classes, (not entirely opposed by all progressives): and a lack of meaningful direction apparent in British schools, to a point at which they have lost their thunder, as the changes for which they stood have, to a certain degree, been incorporated into the public system.

Skidelsky's observations about Summerhill, are possibly some indication of the direction the faded energies of British progressivism might have taken:

Today . . . the school (Summerhill) has sixty children of both sexes, most of them Americans. Summerhill has indeed become something of a mecca to American visitors, and A.S. Neill the prophet of a minor but growing transatlantic cult . . . for Neill . . . this is welcome, if belated homage, bestowed characteristically, not by his own country, but by the traditional home of enthusiasms, the New World.⁴⁶

This is an indication of where the Summerhillian wave of progressivism went after it began to fade in England, since there exists in the United States and Canada, in a noticeable minority of the population, the same move towards alternative schools today as evolved in Britain fifty years ago.

⁴⁶Skidelsky, op. cit., p.15.

Diversity in Education: a role for
the Free Schools

Reference has been made in the preceding pages to the role played by the developing philosophy of naturalism in education during the past two centuries, and particularly in the past century. Precisely what the function of education is in any society, has been a controversy of ever-increasing dimensions both in North America and Europe. Krishnamurti (1953) for example, defines that function in the following terms:

The function of education is to create human beings who are integrated, and therefore intelligent. We may take degrees and be mechanically efficient without being intelligent. Intelligence is not mere information: it is not derived from books, nor does it consist of clever, self-defensive responses and aggressive assertions Education should help us to discover lasting values, so that we do not merely cling to formulas or repeat slogans; it should help us to break down our national and social barriers instead of emphasising them, for they breed antagonism between man and man.⁴⁷

Illich (1969) in an essay weighted heavily against American public education suggests that while a radical change in the concept of function is necessary, it is extremely difficult to achieve.

We find it nearly impossible to conceive of comprehensive social changes in which the educational functions of schools would be . . . redistributed in new patterns among institutions we do not now envisage.⁴⁸

⁴⁷J. Krishnamurti, Education and the Significance of Life (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p.14.

⁴⁸I. Illich, Celebration of Awareness (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

The problem of function is an old one, and contrasting statements are legion. From Moscow at the time of Tolstoy's boyhood comes a statement by the Russian Minister of Education: "Learning . . . is useful only when like salt, it is used and taught in due measure, having regard for the position in life of its recipient."⁴⁹ And that particular emotion was evident when Abbotsholme was founded, and is still a subject for heated debate whenever reference to equal opportunities in education for minority groups in the United States and Canada is discussed. If the traditional, class-oriented approach to education were acceptable there would have been no problem of function. But as naturalism has crept into the minds of educators, the problem has come to exist. In Britain it occupies much of the energies of the Schools Council, and in North America it is reflected in the highly critical writings of men such as John Holt, Herbert Kohl, Edgar Friedenberg and George Leonard,⁵⁰ all of whom are highly critical of traditionalism in public education, and all equally concerned with the function of an education system. It has caused Morris (1967), a member of the Schools' Council, to propose a list of what he terms "the challenges arising from deeper understanding of human learning and development":

⁴⁹W.H. Kilpatrick, Source Book in the Philosophy of Education (New York: MacMillan, 1934), p.21.

⁵⁰J. Holt, How Children Fail (New York: Pitman, 1964); H. Kohl, 36 Children (New York: New American Library, 1967); E. Friedenberg, Coming of Age in America (New York: Random, 1963), G. Leonard, Education and Ecstasy (New York: Delacorte, 1968).

- (i) Intrinsic motivation is better than any other kind.
- (ii) Optimal development of mind and personality is a very slow matter.
- (iii) Adult conceptions of subject matter are inappropriate until a fairly late stage of development.
- (iv) Thought and feeling belong together.
- (v) A child's self-image is of vital importance to him, and many of our traditional ways of behaving towards children are grievously damaging.
- (vi) Children — and young people — want to give as well as receive.⁵¹

Taba (1962) points out that very few Americans disagree about the importance of education, in fact, "the very attacks upon the schools express the faith of the American public that the schools matter, because of their influence not only on individuals but on society as well."⁵² Commenting on the dominant position held in American schools by traditionalists, she writes: "(It is) at once a curse and a blessing". Further, she makes an observation which may well have considerable bearing upon the current growth of alternative schools:

No doubt they (the high expectations) have given American education a certain vigour by insisting that it respond to social ideologies and needs. They have also made it more subject to passing hysterias, and the changing moods

⁵¹B. Morris, "The Implications For The Schools", The New Curriculum (London: H.M.S.O., 1967).

⁵²H. Taba, Curriculum Development, Theory and Practice (New York: Harcourt, 1962), p.16.

of the public than may have been good for a healthy development. Anyone tracing the various trends in curriculum development in the United States will note a zig-zag movement in which one trend swallows another, with an almost unbelievable discontinuity in theoretical thought.⁵³

Illich (1969) develops his own theories on the expectations Americans hold for their education systems. Rather than an "educational" movement within the schools, he sees political and industrial power behind the haphazard, yet strongly traditional development of American education. He describes that system of education as,

a recent, imaginative, social invention, perfected since World War II and historically rooted in the American frontier. The creation of the all pervasive school establishment, tied into industry, government and the military, is an invention no less original than the guild-centred apprenticeships of the Middle Ages.⁵⁴

There is therefore, much debate concerning the nature and function of education. The differences between the views of Illich, Krishnamurti, and Morris are slight; and references made previously in this chapter to the views of Dupuis, Nordberg and Kandel reveal similarly a common objective, namely the improvement of the quality of education, and considerable disagreement about how this is to be achieved. Further, this problem has already been traced in this chapter back in history to the time of the ancient Greeks. Illich's call for radical changes in attitude towards the function of education, is not very different from the pleas of Socrates for the Greeks.

⁵³Taba, op. cit., p.17.

⁵⁴Illich, op. cit., p.111.

The gentleness of Krishnamurti's directives are similar to those of Pestalozzi. Where Morris offers his own modest list of observations, Taba had gone previously beyond them to reflect upon the reasons by discontinuity has been the major characteristic of American education.

In the sense therefore that North America is the scene of many conflicting viewpoints concerning the function of education, it may be hypothesized that this continent, and in particular the United States, with its history of religious, economic and educational diversity provides a natural environment in which alternative schools in general, and free schools in particular may develop. It is not the purpose of this study to speculate on the influence of such developments upon the public education system. However, it is worth noting that in Britain, where progressive education has had several minor eras, some of the present trends in public education suggest the adoption on a widespread basis of many of the principles of naturalism which were previously the sole property of the progressive schools. Skidelsky attributes much that is presently appearing in Britain's public education system to the progressive movement:

Nor has progressive thought failed to make an impact on social attitudes . . . whether the progressives take an unmixed pride in the revolution that they helped to unleash is again doubtful: they would approve of anti-Vietnam demonstrations, but not the pop and pot and promiscuous sex that often accompany them.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Skidelsky, op. cit., pp.243-244.

Whether or not this same absorption is occurring in North America is at present less clear. Several cases exist in which principles found in a variety of different approaches are apparent in some public schools of such places as Campbell River, British Columbia;⁵⁶ Burlington, Vermont;⁵⁷ Portland, Oregon;⁵⁸ North York, Toronto;⁵⁹ and doubtless other public systems in both Canada and the United States.

The more widespread open-plan elementary schools of North America have little in common with free schools. Open-plan schools are much greater in number than free schools, and cater to many more children. And, in terms of their de-emphasis of traditional classroom and text-book oriented methods in favour of more pupil interaction, they are close to the free school philosophy, which frequently emphasises the importance of the close relationship between the individual and his environment.

In other ways, though, there are considerable differences between the two types of school. There is great variety among the free schools, and the fact that no two

⁵⁶Campbell River High School is experimenting with voluntary attendance.

⁵⁷Shaker Mountain Free School has been incorporated into Burlington's public education system.

⁵⁸John Adam's High, is ungraded and has voluntary attendance.

⁵⁹In 1970 the North York Board of Education opened an experimental free school for some senior high school students.

interpretations of free-school philosophy are the same is a major characteristic of the movement. Open-plan schools, however, tend to function more within traditional guidelines which may differ by virtue of differences in provincial or state educational policies, rather than according to the wishes of individual principals. Also, open-plan schools are integrally linked to a public education system in any city, which moves in well-defined steps through the elementary schools and high schools to a standardized graduation point. On the other hand, many free schools tend to stay away from this system.

Britain's new "infants" schools, in which a child is provided with a multitude of things to do, and is encouraged to choose and explore according to his own interests, have provided a philosophical model for a number of free schools. However their practical similarity to free schools is greatly limited by virtue of age range, in that most free school children are older than seven years. More important, there are clear differences in the cultures in which the two types of schools grow. The infant schools are products of a national, government-controlled education system, and, therefore, function with the financial support of the state. The free schools of North America, are, for the most part, isolated from the societies within which they exist, to a point sometimes bordering on hostility.

It is possible that the present epidemic of free schools, as in Britain, will have to reach a more complete

stage of evolution, and offer a clearer philosophy and methodology before this absorption process will take place to any noticeable degree.

This may prove to be a difficult barrier to overcome, since a single definition of free schools is difficult to come by. Concerning the progressive movement, Cremin has written:

The movement was marked from the very beginning by a pluralistic, frequently contradictory character . . . throughout its history. Progressive education meant different things to different people, and these differences were only compounded by the remarkable diversity of American education.⁶⁰

If the present trends in the free school movement are similar to those of the early Progressive movement, this same diversity will prevail, not only making integration difficult, but possibly revealing it to be an undesirable concept in two countries as multi-national as are Canada and the United States.

Francis Parker and John Dewey

It would be valuable at this point to examine relevant thoughts of two men responsible for the introduction into America of educational ideas which paved the way for the growth of various types of alternative schools, including the free schools. Those two men are Francis Parker and John Dewey.

⁶⁰L. Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York: Knoph, 1961), p.x.

"Colonel" Parker, (the title was retained after his service in the Union Army) followed a path — or rather carved a path — into alternative forms of education during the 1870's and 1880's. He worked as a country schoolmaster, and finding himself unable to accept many of the practices in the school, left it in his search for ways to improve upon it. Two and a half years of travel in Europe, part of which was spent with Pestalozzi at Yverdon, enabled him to experience various innovations that he decided to apply to school systems in America if he had the opportunity.

After his return from Europe, he was appointed superintendent of schools in Quincy, Massachusetts. There he was able to practise some of the European innovations. Fundamentally his approach consisted of the replacement of traditional texts and set curricula with a series of experiences for children through newspapers, journeys and teacher-made materials. These ideas were taken straight from Yverdon. In the words of Cremin,

The program was an immediate success and attracted national attention as the Quincy system Parker himself decried the fuss, protesting that there was nothing at all novel about the Quincy approach. 'I repeat' he wrote in his report of 1879, 'that I am simply trying to apply well-established principles of teaching, principles derived directly from the laws of the mind'.⁶¹ The methods springing from them are found in the development of every child. They are used everywhere except in school.⁶²

⁶¹One may suppose "the laws of the mind" to mean whatever was philosophically important to Parker.

⁶²Cremin, op. cit., p.130.

In 1880, after seven years at Quincy, Parker became Principal of Cook County Normal School in Chicago. Here he further developed the successful practices of Quincy in an effort "to move the child to the centre of the educational process, and to interrelate the several subjects of the curriculum in such a way as to enhance their meaning for the child."⁶³ He organized the school like a model home, a miniature democracy. "The principle derived directly from the laws of the mind" which he employed included grammar from conversation and writing; the introduction of drawing; learning geography from the immediate environment. All elements of learning were viewed as "vehicles for child expression; all began with what had meaning for the children themselves."⁶⁴

In 1894 John Dewey and his wife moved to Chicago and visited the practice school of Cook County Normal. Two years later Dewey established the first privately-sponsored progressive school in the United States, the University Elementary School, a place in which he could apply and develop his own educational theories.

In The Philosophy of Education, Dewey wrote of his primary concern with the relative function of education — of schools as outward manifestations of national and local

⁶³Cremin, op. cit., p.131. (c.f. Skidelsky, op. cit., p.92 and pp.169-170).

⁶⁴Ibid., p.133.

culture, as agents of acculturation. Dewey was perhaps more concerned with the philosophical question of relationship between the school and the practical world, than was Parker, for whom philosophy was not the starting point. If man's basic philosophy, he held, is of democracy, we must see it as an educational principle. Dewey felt that a philosophical history centred around theological and supernatural values, had left man a legacy of concern for reality at the expense of solving practical problems. The effect of this state upon education had been, he felt, the development of a close relationship between teaching processes and a theologically-based philosophy — a philosophy which he felt was full of ideas, but was irrelevant in terms of immediate problems and current attitudes of children. He explained his viewpoint by suggesting the existence of a gigantic self-deception by which educational systems apply themselves to the teaching of a supernatural, theologically-oriented philosophy in a world crying out for solutions to practical problems. In terms of acculturating youth, the education systems in theory, would perform well, producing if they succeeded, myriad "Renaissance" men and women, perfect spellers, in love with poetic analysis and Shakespeare, searching for the essence of scientific truth. As an ideal, Dewey felt this was excellent, however in a world of intense practical involvement, a system devoted to such high principles may seem out of place. The result he felt, was that people were educating themselves to live not

in the present but in the past.

The extent to which the state of affairs in education described by Dewey in the late nineteenth century may be said to exist now is difficult to ascertain on a nation-wide or state and province-wide basis, since much diversity exists in education which was not there in Dewey's day. The influence of progressivism upon British education, as noted by Skidelsky; the apparent incorporation into public education systems of free schools and free-school ideas in North America, have both already been described and would suggest that the movement towards more practicality in education, however small that movement is at present, implies that Dewey's instrumentalism has modified public school traditionalism in a minor way.

In "Democratic Faith and Education", Dewey writes:

Many of the ideals of America have collapsed — the opposite of predictions for peace have resulted in wars; instead of the hoped-for peace and enlightenment. It had been assumed that enlightenment would wither away the need for politics and thus produce freedom and respite from poverty.⁶⁵

In relating the educational systems of the United States directly to the national philosophy, Dewey saw the educational institutions — reflections of the relative values of community, geography, economics and religion — as mirrors, and like subsequent progressives, he did not really expect change to come from within. Dewey considered the isolation of

⁶⁵Cremin, op. cit., p.30.

the school from life outside school to be the isolation of knowledge from action.

The schools seldom teach science and technology as agencies capable of coping with human problems. Changes that have taken place in teaching and subjects have been emergency concessions to world problems.⁶⁶

Summary

It has been the purpose of this chapter to introduce and discuss some of the philosophical aspects of education that appear to have contributed to the development of various types of alternatives to one form of public education. One of those alternatives has been identified as the free school. It has been stated that the process of education has been disputed in many cultures — a dispute traceable back in history to the time of Socrates and the Sophists in ancient Greece.

The history of alternatives in education appears to be the history, during the past two centuries, and particularly in the last century of the growth of naturalism in education. Most public schools in North America are traditional, and most alternatives to traditionalism are naturalistic, especially free schools. There is a thread of developing naturalism running through education, from Rousseau's Emile, through Pestalozzi's experiments, the innovations of the British progressives. The thread has been brought across the

⁶⁶Dewey, op. cit., p.74.

Atlantic by Parker and Neill, and developed in America by Dewey and many other educators, whose work will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF FREE SCHOOLS - I

Definition

The term "alternative school" may be taken here to refer to a place established to initiate, develop and provide an environment for living and learning, for children — and to some extent for adults — whose educational needs are not met, for a variety of reasons, by the public school systems of the United States and Canada. Any private school, therefore, be it a church school, or an institution established to provide a particular brand of education inadequately handled by a public school system, may be called an alternative school.

"Alternative" in the context of this study refers to those private or state-run schools, usually called free schools, offering an education in the broad context of the philosophy of naturalism. The differences between public and free schools, which become apparent as the free schools are described in this chapter, do not wholly concern any particular element of public school methodology; free schools do not universally oppose, or seek to change the content or the classroom methods which are commonly part of the public schools systems. However, a majority of free schools do set up

learning situations which include voluntary student attendance, and small classes, and which emphasize equal participation in the operation of the schools by students and teachers, and the right of the student to influence what and how he will learn. Most free schools hold no examinations and offer no certificates.

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine in detail some of the free schools of North America, describing their operation and grouping according to their broadly-based philosophies.

The Alternative Tradition

The preceding chapter dealt primarily with some of the elements in the educational history of Europe and the North American continent, which appear to have contained the seeds of the modern free school movement. From this emerges a picture of these schools as having existed, if sparingly, for about a century in both Europe and the United States. When it is borne in mind that Summerhill in England operates today according to almost exactly the same format it had forty years earlier;¹ that Tolstoy's school at Yasnaya Polyana in Russia was similar in origin, method and size to many modern free schools;² and that Marriette Johnson's Organic School in

¹A.S. Neill, Summerhill (Hart Press: New York, 1960), Introduction.

²L. Tolstoy, On Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p.233.

Fairhope Alabama³ operated under the same concepts as Summerhill, there appears to exist what may be termed a tradition within the framework of the purpose and methods of the free schools.⁴

The statements of philosophy of some of the educators in the early alternative schools, reveal the varied approaches to education which were developing in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century — and not all of them were particularly liberal or naturalistic.

The school has evolved from the principles introduced into it by the teacher and the pupils. In spite of the preponderating influence of the teacher, the pupil has always had the right not to come to school, or having come, not to listen to the teacher. The teacher has had the right not to admit a pupil, and has had the possibility of bringing to bear all the forces of his influence on the majority of pupils, on the society, always composed of school children.

These words, written by Tolstoy in 1862 describing his school at Yasnaya Polyana in Russia, embody some of the principles held a century later by many of the Canadian and American educators who operate free schools. In the sense that Tolstoy operated his school for the twofold purpose of providing the local village children with some form of schooling and of putting some of his own principles of naturalism into practice, it is similar in origin to a large number of present-day free schools.

Similar to Tolstoy's words are those of John Dewey

³Cremin, op. cit., p.149.

⁴Tolstoy, op. cit., p.234.

concerning the University Elementary School which he operated in Chicago in 1896:

If we have permitted our children more than the usual amount of freedom, it has not been in order to relax or decrease real discipline, but because, under our particular conditions . . . their entire development of body and spirit (can) be more harmonious and complete.⁵

A.S. Neill, writing about the beginnings of Summerhill, states:

We set out to make a school in which we should allow children freedom to be themselves. In order to do this we had to renounce all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training, all religious instruction.⁶

And Neill's statement of intentions may be contrasted with the more traditional objectives of Cecil Reddie on the subject of his own progressive school, Abbotsholme, in Staffordshire, England, in 1889:

The tertiary school I am endeavouring to organize is not intended to suit the whim of a few faddists, but the normal wants of the Directing Classes of a Reorganized English Nation.⁷

Finally, to illustrate further the variety of interpretations placed upon the word "alternative", reference can be made to a statement by Kurt Hahn who opened Salem School, a progressive institution in Baden, Germany, in 1919:

We believe that present-day civilisation is diseased, often sapping the strength of the young before they are grown up, that he who is meant to serve our civilisation must be fortified against it; that education can build

⁵J. Dewey, The School and Society (Chicago: University Press, 1900), p.128.

⁶Neill, op. cit., p.4.

⁷Skidelsky, op. cit., p.91.

up protective tastes and habits likely to provide immunity.⁸

As these statements of purpose and intent show, the alternative schools movement is neither new nor simple. It goes back a century in time to a Russia in which any minor innovation or experiment in education was the realm of the wealthy classes, of which Tolstoy was a member. His educational philosophy, as explained in the book On Education, had its roots in a reaction against Rousseau's concept of the ideal society, in which individual freedom was obtained by subjugation to social authority. In much the same way, John Dewey's University Elementary School was an experiment, a reaction against "the regime which lays so much stress upon the products of the machine."⁹ And Neill's reaction was similar, being directed against a social and educational philosophy based "upon an adult conception of what a child should be."¹⁰

Each of these educators established his school as an alternative to a growing social mood manifest in developing public education systems, of what was seen by them as domination by one philosophy of traditionalism. However, the concern was not so much with the characteristics of traditionalism as it was with the lack of any other philosophy. None of these men saw his school as the only alternative, and none felt it necessary that the public schools should be

⁸Skidelsky, op. cit., p.232.

⁹Dewey, op. cit., p.126.

¹⁰Neill, op. cit., p.6.

abolished.¹¹ The schools they established were not accepted in their time as models for change, nor have their basic principles been copied by the majority of educators, or even by a reasonable minority. No similar schools are known to this author to have been opened in Russia during the remainder of the nineteenth century. What little experimentation there had been the public sector during the first two decades of the twentieth century, was overshadowed by the great advances in public industrial education, and basic national literacy before the third decade began.¹² In North America, in the sixty years following the opening of the University Elementary School, the only alternative schools which appear to have been operated were Marriette Johnson's Organic School in Fairhope, Alabama, in 1907, and the Catlin-Gabel School in Portland, Oregon, in 1930.

The development of alternative schools in Europe, particularly in Britain, should be noted for two reasons. Firstly it was a far more pronounced movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than was the case in North America. Secondly some of the concepts and principles of the European progressive educators — particularly the British — have been developed in North America during the

¹¹Neill came close to this idea. cf. Summerhill (Montreal: NFB, 1966). However, Ivan Illich has proposed that the schools be closed. cf. De-Schooling Society (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

¹²M. Fainsod, How Russia Is Ruled (New York: Harvard, 1953), p.111.

past decade. Skidelsky's identification of three waves of progressivism in education in the 1890's, 1920's and 1930's,¹³ is elaborated in his book, English Progressive Schools, in a way that suggests considerable interweaving of personalities and ideas.¹⁴ He points out, for example, that the influence of Homer Lane and Wilhelm Reich upon Neill was considerable; that, therefore, many of Neill's views on sexual freedom were formulated during his meetings with Reich,¹⁵ and that the emphasis at Summerhill upon the importance of the child and on the doctrine of approval and kindness as the best ways to bring out "the good" in children are precisely the same as those of Lane's Little Commonwealth.¹⁶ The incentive to Kurt Hahn, who pioneered Gordonstoun, was a meeting he had with three students from Reddie's Abbotsholme in Germany in 1903.¹⁷ Thus, compared to the early isolated examples of North American alternative schools, be they progressive or free schools, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it seems that this interwoven background of people and ideas which is behind Summerhill and Gordonstoun, and which filtered into North America, had

¹³Skidelsky, op. cit., p.13.

¹⁴Chapter One of this Study.

¹⁵Skidelsky, op. cit., p.177.

¹⁶Homer Lane was Neill's analyst between 1916-1917.

¹⁷Skidelsky, op. cit., p.184.

its origins in Europe, in a small but complex circle.

The schools operated by Tolstoy and Dewey were overshadowed by growing public systems. They survived nevertheless as experiments, as sources of mild interest in a world not very much concerned about education. After the Second World War however, when men began turning their attention to the potential of communications and the forces of technology began to be felt especially in the richer, more heavily populated industrial regions of America, the social and economic pressures upon public education, coupled with the changing cultural patterns, caused renewed interest in education in general, and also in the free schools.

Many private schools opened during the post-war years to 1960, among which were Berkwood School in San Francisco in 1948, and the Little School in Seattle in 1959, both of which operated according to the principles of natural education as exemplified by Pestalozzi and Parker. In 1960 Neill published Summerhill, which contributed to the increasing interest in his school, on both sides of the Atlantic. Renewed interest in the instrumentalist philosophy of John Dewey in North America focussed more attention upon possible alternatives to traditional schools.

It appears therefore, that for this particular time in North American educational history, free schools are one manifestation of a varied growth in alternative forms of schooling. It also appears that if their influence were felt

publicly and their principles incorporated into the public school systems in the same way that Skidelsky claims happened to the British progressive schools, they will eventually become obsolete.

Three Early Alternative Schools

A detailed examination of the school at Yasnaya Polyana, The University Elementary School in Chicago and Summerhill in England will reveal some of the original philosophies, or aspects of naturalism in the free schools movement.

The School at Yasnaya Polyana

Tolstoy prior to 1860 had read, and partly disagreed with Rousseau, not so much with his view of the capacity of education to liberate the individual as with his suggested method by which the direction of liberation was predetermined by the tutor. Tolstoy's concept of education was closer to that of Pestalozzi and Neill than to Rousseau. His application of what was essentially a modified Rousseauian naturalism to the traditional educational scene of mid-nineteenth century Russia, was unique, being based upon the concept that the individual will learn if he has the personal freedom to do so and in learning will understand the nature of order, and want it.¹⁸

¹⁸Tolstoy, op. cit., p.234.

The more the pupils become educated the fitter they become for order, and the more strongly they themselves feel the need for order.

Learning, Tolstoy felt, was based upon volition, upon natural laws — largely the laws as exemplified by Rousseau in Emile. Like Neill later, he saw discipline growing naturally from submission to natural laws and the worst kind of robot being produced by a system of bells, programmes and regulations. The essence of this liberty was the right of all children; it was in the way this liberty was best understood in relation to the settling of disputes between children, which he saw as the focal point of their progress toward social adjustment.

I am convinced that the school ought not to interfere in that part of the education which belongs to the family; that the school has no right, and ought not to reward and punish; that the best police and administration of the school consists in giving full liberty to the pupils to settle their disputes as they know best.¹⁹

Tolstoy placed considerable faith in the process of natural laws and was convinced that, freed from the artificial impositions of adults, children would adjust to their environment naturally and develop a respect for order in the form of laws, and learning in the form of a teacher. His program contained the elements of an ordered structure similar to that of a public school:

1. Mechanical and Graded Reading.
2. Writing.
3. Penmanship.
4. Grammar.
5. Sacred History.
6. Russian History.

¹⁹Tolstoy, op. cit., p.234.

7. Drawing.
8. Mechanical Drawing.
9. Singing.
10. Mathematics.
11. Talks on the Natural Sciences.
12. Religion.²⁰

His rationale was straightforward. Of Mechanical Reading he wrote:

The problem is of guiding people to understand the contents of books written in the literary language. The knowledge of the literary language is necessary because all the good books are written in that language.²¹

His description of how children became disgusted with their own "soiled, torn and horribly scribbled" notebooks, and requested lessons in penmanship, is a good example of the philosophy in action. His account of how teachers taught history at the school has similarities of intent if not practice to modern free-school approaches.

The children gather and the teacher reads from the Bible. Then all begin to speak at once. When there are too many voices speaking at the same time, the teacher stops them, making them speak one at a time When the teacher notices that some have not understood anything, he makes one of the best pupils repeat it for the benefit of those who have not understood.²²

The University Elementary School

Introducing a recent edition of Tolstoy's book On Education, R.D. Archambault describes him as "less a pre-

²⁰Tolstoy, op. cit., p.227.

²¹Ibid., p.261.

²²Ibid., p.293.

Deweyan theorist and more a precursor of A.S. Neill"²³ in other words, less an instrumentalist and more a link in a chain of naturalism in education which began with Rousseau and found its present home in Summerhill. Archambault implies that it would be a mistake to suggest too many similarities between the school at Yasnaya Polyana and the University Elementary School. Nevertheless, there are some similarities; as is often the case with alternative schools, they are similarities of motivation and process rather than of specific codes and lessons. Unlike Tolstoy, Dewey was a philosopher whose concern for education sprang from his desire to redirect trends in American philosophy away from the impracticalities of theological values, toward something more practical. His reaction was against what he saw as a national philosophy of traditionalism, rather than opposed to one specific education system.

The Elementary School was a philosophical model, an experimental laboratory in which Dewey might discover a new truth, a new method of "making learning more useful to men",²⁴ by relating the school "so intimately to life as to demonstrate the possibility and necessity of such organization for all education." The reasoning behind the processes in Dewey's school was similar to Tolstoy's. Dewey posed three questions:

²³Tolstoy, op. cit., p.viii.

²⁴Dewey, op. cit., p.110.

- (a) What can be done to break down the barriers which have unfortunately come to separate the school life from the rest of the everyday life of the child?
- (b) What can be done in the way of introducing subject-matter in history, science and art that shall have a positive value and real significance in the child's own life?
- (c) How can this instruction (of basic subjects) be carried on in such a way that it will appeal to the child in its own right? ²⁵

Dewey's program was based on a concept not found at Yasnaya Polyana, that "the child gets the largest part of his acquisitions through his bodily activity, until he learns to work systematically with the intellect."²⁶ And to this end his school was structured along three main lines: shop-work, cookery and textile work, because every sense organ, as well as a great amount of practical and intellectual work is involved in these activities; history, mainly the history of man as a practical being, a maker of things; and music and art. These courses seem quite rigidly organized, differing from those of the public school more in their stated aim than method. And other similarities with public system attitudes are apparent. Dewey's statements on discipline, in which he refers to the need, in view of large numbers (105 students), for "certain fixed and somewhat external forms of keeping order"²⁷ are modified by the concluding part of his

²⁵Dewey, op. cit., p.118.

²⁶Ibid., p.121.

²⁷Ibid., p.128.

programme description, in which he confirms that the general direction of his purpose is the achieving of practical relevance rather than natural harmony:

The everyday work of the school shows that children can live in school as out of it, and yet grow daily in wisdom, kindness, and the spirit of obedience.²⁸

Although, therefore, there are differences between Yasnaya Polyana and the Elementary School, certain things are common to both: they both were alternatives, and both emphasised the right of the child to influence its own education; and both were concerned with developing the whole child through a close and meaningful relationship between the human being and nature.

Summerhill

In 1927, Alexander Sutherland Neill, a Scots dominie, moved his small private school from Lyme Regis in southern England to Leiston, a small town in Suffolk. He retained the name he had given the school, Summerhill, and took with him most of his old pupils, boys and girls aged between five and fifteen years. Neill's motivation for operating Summerhill was similar in several ways to Tolstoy's in Russia, but angrier, directed more towards changing established public attitudes as he saw them. Summerhill was potentially as structured as Dewey's Elementary School, but was not based

²⁸Dewey, op. cit., p.129.

upon as clear a philosophical mood of enquiry as was Dewey's instrumentalism. Neill saw the child as Tolstoy had seen him, and created an environment designed to foster the free-spirited development of the individual.

I had taught in ordinary schools for many years. I knew the other way well. I knew it was wrong. It was wrong because it was based upon the adult conception of what a child should be, and of how a child should learn. The other way was dated from the days when psychology was still an unknown science My view is that a child is innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he is capable of developing.²⁹

Children at Summerhill had both nothing and everything demanded of them. They were not expected to attend classes; they were not expected to be able to either read or write; they were not expected to obey their elders. But the inevitable vacuum left by the lack of external demands facilitated the development of one of Neill's most important ideas: that, freed from all imposed discipline, the individual and the group will develop its own structure. Thus the children at the school were given completely equal rights with the staff.

No-one is allowed to walk on my grand piano, and I am not allowed to borrow a boy's bicycle without his permission. At a General School Meeting the vote of a child of six counts for as much as my vote does.³⁰

This, Neill claims, considerably reduced fear in adult-child relationships, making the children much less susceptible to

²⁹Neill, op. cit., p.4.

³⁰Ibid., Introduction.

influence by adults. This is something which Neill describes as:

The finest thing that can happen to a child. You cannot make children learn music or anything else without to some degree converting them into will-less adults. You fashion them into acceptors of the status quo — a good thing for a society that needs obedient sitters at dreary desks, standers in shops, mechanical catchers of the eight-thirty suburban train — a society in short that is carried on the shabby shoulders of the scared little man — the scared-to-death conformist.³¹

At Summerhill Neill emphasises a definite structure developing more through the interaction of children than that of adults. The outward appearance of a school day at Summerhill is similar to that of many English boarding schools: breakfast at 8:15; beds made by 9:00; lessons until 1:00. It is the fact that there are no set activities in the afternoons and that between 5:00 and 10:00 at night activities rooms such as art and wood and metal shops are used by the children, that produces some eight hours of voluntary work per day from most of them.

Summerhill to A.S. Neill is not simply a school: it is a way of life, a way of enabling a child to discover his own interaction with his environment. It was not started as a model, yet it is, today, serving as one. Just as Tolstoy was wary of what he saw about him in education, so Neill exhibited a distaste for public schools which had contributed towards the development of a society which was held "anti-life values".

³¹Neill, op. cit., p.12.

If we feel like questioning today, we can pose a few awkward questions. Why does man seem to have many more diseases than animals have? Why does man hate and kill in war when animals do not? Why are there so many suicides? So many sex crimes? Why Negro hating?³²

The difference for Neill between the public schools and his is the difference between a structured form of academic learning and a comparatively unstructured way of living; it is the difference between traditionalism and naturalism in education. It is this difference of approach that has become the model for some free schools in North America.³³

Although Summerhill has become increasingly well-known on both sides of the Atlantic, it is still by no means a universally popular concept, even among free-school advocates. There are many types of free school, and although the Summerhill model is the most popular, it is by no means the only type of free school. In Britain, a certain degree of suspicion about the school has existed almost since its inception. "The Go-As-You-Please School"³⁴ one newspaper called it, adding: "and a lot of local farmers still think Neill is mad." These same suspicions have grown alongside the North American Summerhill-type schools.

³²Neill, op. cit., p.24.

³³Summerhill is not the only British model. The Leicester Infants School have also stimulated several free schools and are currently influencing a number of public schools.

³⁴Reuters, "That Dreadful School Now A Model?" Montreal Star, April 1970.

Neill's replies to criticism are dogmatic and unyielding. What, he demands to know, is this "anything" which his children do not know or learn?³⁵ How does Summerhill not relate to the world when it is a part of it? What are "unhealthy" attitudes towards sex? What is so inherently good about adult authority that it should be accepted on principle? Rather, he suggests, it is the public schools, where ritualistic behaviours forbid learning and isolate children from each other; it is present-day adult attitudes towards sex which present it as crude and sinful; it is the farcical attitude towards the world harboured by politicians that makes obedience to authority a mockery:

How can we have happy homes with love in them when the home is a tiny corner of a homeland that shows hate socially in a hundred ways? All the Greek and math and history in the world will not help to make the home more loving, the child free from inhibitions, the parent free of neurosis Only love can save the world.³⁶

The important factor which emerges from reference to alternative schools of a previous century is the great similarity of views which exists between Tolstoy and Neill on the one hand and the present-day educators. Neill is the link, having bridged both in his physical lifetime and in his educational experience the span between the early British progressives and the modern North American free school educators.

Concepts of naturalism which can be traced back to,

³⁵Reuters, op. cit., pp.87-92.

³⁶Ibid., pp.91-93.

and even beyond Rousseau, are apparent at Yasnaya Polyana, and again in Summerhill, and are now being incorporated into not only many free schools, but some public systems also. Rousseau wished to see Emile running free about the fields and meadows of Northern France, falling, feeling pain, but growing "merry"; Tolstoy held the same ambitions for the children in the village of Yasnaya Polyana; Neill provides for the same thing at Summerhill. All three men demanded much from their children but offered respect rather than discipline. Many modern free school educators appear to behave in a similar way towards their children.

More important however, is the picture of themselves that Tolstoy, Rousseau and Neill present to educational history. They are three individuals who made public and practised what they believed was a better way of educating children than the usual traditional manner. It is this capacity for an individual to strike out on his own in education, frequently against heavy economic and environmental odds, to practise what he believes that is the most powerful characteristic of the free schools, and perhaps one of the best existential learning situations a teacher can offer his pupils.

Dewey's instrumentalism took a different, more structured form. A philosopher before he was a teacher, Dewey attempted to practice and further his philosophy through his own school. He and Rousseau are the philosophers: Tolstoy,

Pestalozzi and Neill are the practitioners.

The Isolation of the Free Schools

The problem of opposition and its quality of isolating the free schools is evident among such schools across the continent. Summerhill is not the only alternative school to have come under attack — rightly or wrongly — from outside. Nor is Pestalozzi the only person to have been continually criticised by local townsfolk. It happens to a number of schools, for a variety of reasons. For example, Saturna Island Free School in British Columbia was closed by the Provincial health department; the principal of The Village School in New Gloucester, Maine, wrote: "We have a beautiful group of students and people helping. The parents are the main problem."³⁷ The director of Redwoods Free School in Santa Rosa, California wrote: "An alternative school for children in our monopolistic society, needs all the resources it can garner to survive."³⁸ The principal of Headlands School in Mendocino, California, wrote: "Our kids are mostly pretty happy, the staff is in good spirits — we have several disgruntled parents — our biggest problem."³⁹

³⁷The New Schools Exchange Newsletter, No.31.

³⁸Ibid., No.31.

³⁹Ibid., No.31.

In reply to a written enquiry from an interested parent, a teacher in Collaberg School in Stoney Point, New York, wrote: "It would be unwise of you to count heavily on our school's being here next year. We're tied up in court right now. It seems the town of Stoney Point doesn't want us to occupy these buildings of ours."⁴⁰ And Harold Horwood, one organizer of the now defunct Animal Farm Free School in St. John's, Newfoundland, wrote:

The school's main problems come from outside, from a campaign of slander, lies and vituperation such as I would never have believed possible if I hadn't experienced it. Almost from the day it (the school) opened, there was an organized attempt to close it, all of it stemming from a few people who got a mad on every time they saw a boy with long hair, or a girl in a maxi-coat. The sheer murderous hatred of people whose only crime was that of being young, was the ugliest manifestation of human psychology I've ever seen The one thing a nominal Christian will never forgive is the actual practice of those principles to which he gives lip-service.⁴¹

Although the free schools have increased considerably in numbers, the isolation of each within its own community is still often apparent, rising to a point quite frequently, where opposition forces closure.⁴² The most powerful opposition seems to come from religious organizations, newspapers and town councils, and represents, on a level of what may be termed citizenship, the same clash between

⁴⁰Private communication to the author.

⁴¹H. Horwood, "Animal Farm", St. John's Evening Telegram, June 10, 1970.

⁴²H. Gardner, "Your Global Alternative", Esquire Magazine, August, 1970.

the forces of traditionalism and moderation and those of liberalism and naturalism. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the outcome of these clashes is similar to the long-term, wide-range outcomes of the meeting of traditional and naturalistic philosophies in education, in that several states and communities who, a few years ago were either ignorant of or antagonistic towards progressive or free schools, have now taken steps to incorporate some of their philosophies into public school systems. What was earlier considered unnecessarily liberal has now, in some instances become "family grouping" "non-gradedness" or "open-plan". Skidelsky points out,⁴³ that British public schools have undoubtedly been influenced by the progressive movement of which Neill was a major part.

⁴³Skidelsky, op. cit., p.243.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE FREE SCHOOLS - II

Types of Free Schools

Free schools come in a variety of forms, and could be grouped in a variety of different ways. For the purposes of this study it seems necessary to select a system of grouping which most easily facilitates description without detracting from the important consideration of the philosophies of education. It has already been stated that philosophically the majority of the schools practise some form of naturalism which may range from the simplistic forms of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, through the instrumentalism of Dewey to the other extreme of existentialism. However it is frequently very difficult to align any one free school with a specific philosophy, and thus description according to philosophical grouping becomes very difficult.

Social and economic factors play an important part in the operation of free schools, controlling them to a considerable extent, as they do any institution. In many ways, therefore, it is easier to group the free schools economically or by location than any other way.

Location is, for most free schools, the main consideration since, from a social point of view the city represents to some free schools an enormous source of free material, while for others it is a threat to a person's relationship with nature. Furthermore, for some free schools location is dependent upon what age limits are to be set: very young children will probably not live away from home, whereas teenagers will. Most rural free schools in Canada, for example, are populated primarily by teenagers, whereas a considerable number of suburban schools cater to the very young. Thus, in terms of the social and economic factors, grouping according to location facilitates the general description of many free schools, and at the same time, leaves leeway for consideration of individual philosophies. For these reasons this method of grouping has been preferred over others.

Certain characteristics are common to most free schools. Most of them are situated in or near to large cities in heavily populated regions. Most of these cities are university towns, in which it may reasonably be assumed there exist pockets of high interest in education. In the major American cities, many of which have poor ghettos free schools are frequently started in storefronts. In the wealthier parts of the United States and Canada, there exist some comparatively well-endowed suburban free schools.

If the free schools were grouped according to their

raison d'etre, two types would emerge: those schools whose origins are positively based upon a strong, well-supported educational philosophy such as one of the various forms of naturalism, and those schools which emerged as reactions against the nebulous "establishment". However, it is worth noting that even with this division, location would place the former group predominately in the rural and suburban areas, and the latter group in the cities.

Rural Free Schools

Rural free schools are often situated on farms. And their location is closely linked to their philosophy which often emphasises the close relationship between man and nature. In a national and continental environment increasingly dominated by large cities the farm is symbolic of an attempted return (albeit aided and abetted by machines), to nature. The rural educator hopes that with the help of a few well-chosen mechanical devices he and his school can construct an environment almost free from what he considers to be the unnatural pressures of the city yet close enough to the city to enable his children to sample urban life occasionally.

Often linked to the decision to locate rurally is the desire on the part of some free schools to emulate the spirit of Summerhill. In a rural setting a group may, it is hoped, build an environment more conducive to

learning than that offered by the local public education system. The most important point is the philosophy behind the community and of prime importance is equality, especially respect for the point of view of the child. And as in Summerhill, so in rural Canadian and American free schools, the weekly General School Meeting with its one-person-one-vote base is fundamental to the structure of the school. In most rural free schools therefore, decisions will be those of the majority. Each individual in the school will, it is thought, be affected with an overall sense of self-discipline, resulting in most people trying to make a decision work. However equally important is the time factor. People, especially children, often look no further into the future than a few days, and appropriate allowance must be made for this. Thus at Summerhill decisions made one week may be upheld, annulled or reversed seven days later according to the experience and feeling of the majority.

The General Meeting is an integral part of many free schools: it is seen as a return to basic democracy and is quite efficient because the numbers involved are usually fairly small. It is in the General Meeting that a child perhaps only five or six years old, may discover that he can, to some extent, direct events which will affect his life, that his reaction to the world is no less important than that of an adult. In such a rural

community situation it is hoped that the child, having lived through say a year of General Meetings, may come to understand the power and effectiveness of his own experience — at times discovering similarities between his thoughts and those of others; at other times discovering himself to be alone. Thus by the age of seven or eight years, the child may well be able to respect and effect group decisions.

A.S. Neill records in Summerhill that he was once accused by an American psychologist of isolating his children from "the real world". His reply was that the real world to him was just as much natural as it was artificial, just as much trees and rivers as it was concrete and tarmac; the one thing Summerhill offered that a lot of city schools did not was space. This sentiment is often shared by free school educators in North America, who find farm or country houses offer more stimulating environments than do the cities. Stittikuk School in Orono, Maine, is typical of many rural schools in this respect:

Located on sixteen acres of land . . . most of the land is flat, with places suitable for soccer fields and ice-skating. There is a small stream running through the property and into a pine wood on the northern side of the land. There is land available for growing trees, fruit, flowers and vegetables. Buildings include a large farmhouse, an attached barn (already remodled as a summer theatre), two smaller buildings and a large brick house. There

is ample space for diverse projects.¹

Pinehenge, a free school following the Summerhillian model, and claiming to be experimenting with methods gleaned from the British Infants Schools, is located on two hundred acres of farmland in the mountain and lake country near Waterford, Maine. Its occupants have adapted a house and two barns in the following manner:

The central building contains dormitories, a library, science lab, classrooms, an art area, and the dining room. One barn has been converted into dormitory space, photographic lab, ceramics area and free play area.²

Lewis-Wadhams School, operated by Herbert Snitzer, author of Summerhill, A Loving World, is located on one hundred and twenty-five acres of woods and meadows near Westport, New York. Here there are ten buildings used as dormitories, study areas, a library, a photographic darkroom, pottery and art sections and a science laboratory. The emphasis is on a naturalist philosophy, close to the Summerhill model.

Satya, near Lincoln, Massachusetts, has 32 acres of quiet, wooded land that abuts the Minute Man National Park There are two open areas for a sports field and gardening, and a number of trails through the woods which will be used for hiking and cross-country skiing. A pond on the property needs some work but it can be developed into a good swimming and skating area.³

¹"Stittikuk School" brochure, (Orono, Maine, 1970).

²"Pinehenge" brochure (Waterford, Maine, 1970).

³"Satya" brochure (Lincoln, Mass., 1970).

Here, the emphasis is on community living. At Satya, decisions are made at a Summerhill-style General Meeting, and the program the school offers reflects the need to cater to the individual: classes are offered in algebra, calculus, geometry, history, logic, human sexuality, and dancing; and "we plan to hike, camp, cut logs, fish and learn about the forest."⁴

In western America rural schools have been established frequently with this same objective, to get close to the countryside. Caspar Community School near Mendocino, California, was moved early in 1969 from an urban setting to a ten acre site. Finegold Ranch School, near Fresno, California has six hundred acres in the Sierra Nevada foothills, offering:

a natural family relationship in a rural environment. There are countless oaks and pines, dramatic ravines, gently rolling meadows, steep hillsides and huge granite boulders — places to enjoy in a group or to be alone.⁵

Timberhill, near Cazadero, California, has "seventy acres of fields, woods and hills Deer abound. We border on thousands of acres of undeveloped land."⁶ Both this school and Finegold Ranch are basically Summerhill-type schools.

⁴"Satya" brochure (Lincoln, Mass., 1970).

⁵"Finegold" brochure (Fresno, California, 1970).

⁶"Timberhill" brochure (Cazadero, California, 1970).

There is a considerable range of other rural free schools, among which may be mentioned The Open Community School in Claverack, New York; The Minnesota Summerhill School, situated on an island in Spring Lake outside of Minneapolis; The Study-Travel Community School in Sheffield, Massachusetts, whose students and teachers spend over half the school year travelling; Collins Brook School in Freeport, Maine; The New Education Foundation in Glendale, Oregon; Bridge Mountain at Ben Lomond, California. In each of these schools certain principles are commonly held. The philosophy is not of traditional schooling but of living. It is believed that, withdrawn from the pressures of an urban environment, groups of people can live together on a basis of equality, regardless of age. It is believed that a group such as this can produce an involving learning situation which enables a child to understand his growing sense of harmony with all life forms. The presence of deer, or of trees becomes as important as the presence of another human being; a ravine or hill as challenging as a library or photographic darkroom. Nature is used by the people who wish to learn about it and how to live in it rather than how to dominate it.

An interesting characteristic of the rural free schools' approach to living is apparent in their buildings. There are three characteristic structures: the farmhouse, the barn and the experiment. Students of Pacific High

School, in Palo Alto, California were among the first in the free schools to experiment with different structures, mainly geodesic domes. An article in the school magazine, "Umbilicus", describes the projects:

Domes cost little to build, they blend in with our surroundings and provide living space for those of us who live on the forty acres belonging to the school. Ten domes have been built so far. We used plywood for most of them. Jay Baldwin, our designer-teacher, designed a plastic pillow-dome, which is a new development.⁷

Both Lewis-Wadhams School and Collaberg in New York have constructed domes.

Domes are not the only type of experimental structures. Students at the New Education Foundation in Oregon build very simple wooden cabins to blend in with the surroundings. At the Study-Travel Community School the main dwellings are Mongolian yurts, tent-like structures made from grass and wood, which can be easily erected or dismantled, as required by travelling students.

The conversion of a ranch or farm into a school is interesting. Small mountain farms, pressured out of existence as significant contributors to agricultural economies have, in several instances, been converted into free schools. This has occurred in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, California, Ontario and British Columbia. In some cases, where the schools have become stable, the farms

⁷"Umbilicus", School Magazine, Pacific High School (Palo Alto, 1970).

have grown productive again, but for a different reason: animals have been reared not only for their products, but for their company; crops, often grown organically, that is without chemical fertilizers, have provided not only sustenance, but a continually changing and very involving experience for children, being a different form of life for them to experience.

In Canada there were, until mid 1971, five farm free schools in Saturna Island, Nelson, Kootenay and Osoyoos, all in British Columbia, and at Everdale Place in Ontario. The Saturna Island Free School, which was closed in September 1971 by the British Columbia government, because it did not meet health board standards, was situated on twenty-eight acres of waterfront property on one of the Canadian Gulf Islands. Its principal, Tom Durrie, wrote of it:

Since we try to make economical use of our land, everyone has an opportunity to participate in caring for animals, fruit and nut trees, garden produce and shade trees. Children can find out something about the particularly human function of growing and harvesting plants and animals for eating.⁸

The Director of the Okanagan Wilderness School in Osoyoos, described how the location was selected:

In order to become acquainted with the land, and to be certain about it, one adult and one child spent a full year on the land living without shelter or other conveniences Our school is located so as to permit exclusion of social and technological illusions, as well as protection from immediate

⁸"Saturna Island Free School" brochure (Saturna, B.C., 1970).

pressures and perverse activities . . . we feel that aloneness in a peaceful environment is a vital, basic, need.⁹

The Kootenay Folk School, unique in North America, based upon Scandinavian Folk School models, could probably only function in a rural environment. It represents an attempt to harmonize relationships within a natural setting. Based as it is upon a very old form of European school, it reflects some of the most basic principles of Pestalozzian naturalism:

Our materials are very personal: our minds, hands, hearts and souls Our classroom is where we are — planting trees, splitting logs, gathering berries, shovelling snow, conversing by the fire.¹⁰

Situated on fifteen acres overlooking Kootenay Lake in the Purcell Mountain Range of Central British Columbia, the school is open "to people of all ages who feel they might contribute to our study of North American consciousness."¹¹ The school is quite different from the Okanagan Wilderness School. Its curriculum is determined by the individuals and the place they happen to be in at any time: whatever they are doing is the lesson: the fifteen acres is the classroom. There is no direction or guidance offered, no-one seeking out a time and a place for others, as was the case

⁹T. Anderson, "Okanagan Wilderness" (Osoyoos, B.C., 1970).

¹⁰"Kootenay Folk School" brochure (Nelson, B.C., 1970).

¹¹Ibid.

at Osoyoos.

View Point Non-School in Argenta British Columbia is a smaller operation run by a family who opened their twenty-four acre farm to children under the age of twelve years. Although much of the organization of this school is directed by adults ("Our aim is to guide children toward participation in life"), the setting is of utmost importance; environment is the dominant characteristic of the children's experience. "In place of curriculum, we offer participation in the life of a rural hom."¹² The participation referred to however, is directed; children are guided towards whatever the adults consider to be "participation in life".

Of all the Canadian free schools considered in this study, View Point appears to offer the most restrictive program in terms of educational aims. And, as with the Kootenay Folk School, similarities with Neuhof and Stanz are immediately apparent. Attendance at Kootenay Folk School is considered on a monthly basis, often for families in the summer, and is not, therefore to be the only educational environment of its participants nor is the children's experience necessarily to be confined to a teacher-student relationship with adults. However, at View Point, the farm is operated by adults and the children live there

¹²"View Point Non-School" brochure (Argenta, B.C., 1970).

instead of going to school. In a sense they are exchanging one set of relationships with parents and relatives, for another with the people who run the farm. At the same time they may not be receiving the variety of educational experiences available to children in less isolated free schools.

Everdale Place, probably the best known free school in Canada, follows more conventional approaches to learning than any other free school in that it offers students a full range of subjects and classes. At the base of the entire curriculum, however is the natural world of living things:

We were pleasantly surprised by the pumpkins and watermelons and other gourds, large and tall sunflowers. Corn was plentiful, as were carrots, peas, tomatoes, etc. We garden organically, using only natural fertilizers At some time it would be nice to feed the school mostly with our food. That way we can be sure of what is going into it, and therefore into our bodies.¹³

The importance that is attached at Everdale to the preservation of the environment, has clear similarities to the various examples of naturalism in education, described in this study, from Rousseau through to Neill. Everdale's basic philosophy of education is that learning must be related closely to the natural environment of plant and animal life. For this reason, the fact that in 1968 "the barn caught fire and we lost valuable equipment, vehicles

¹³R. Davis, "The Everdale Place", This Magazine Is About Schools (Toronto, Spring, 1969), supplement.

and, most heartbreaking, half our animals,"¹⁴ was as great a set-back to the school as possibly the loss of a resource centre might be to a larger public school.

While it may be said that rural free schools practice a very simple form of natural education, it is not true to equate that simplicity with a lack of intensity or variety. Emile would probably have enjoyed Everdale: Pestalozzi and Tolstoy would have enjoyed teaching there, or at the Kootenay Folk School, or at any one of the numerous farm and ranch schools in the United States. They would all have been intrigued at the Study-Travel-Community School, and would probably have seen it as an extension of their own somewhat confined efforts a century ago. They would, possibly, have all felt that View Point Non-School was too isolated, too far away from people, to have much relevance today. John Dewey would have seen similarities between the University Elementary School and Everdale but probably not, in a practical methodological sense, with any other rural free schools. Kootenay Folk School is far from being instrumentalist, nor are many of the farm and ranch schools. Pacific High in Palo Alto, in which students and teachers experiment with a variety of practical living structures and crafts, is closer to Dewey's instrumentalism.

Thus, while it is difficult to establish philosophical

¹⁴Davis, op. cit.

cohesion among the rural free schools, it is quite easy to identify the principles of natural education, and trace them back in some ways to the pioneers of natural and progressive movements.

Suburban Free Schools

Of all the free schools, the group most immediately identifiable with the middle-classes is the large number of suburban free schools. While suburban and urban free schools have in common the fact that they are alternatives to traditionalism in education, there the similarity ends. There appear to be two major differences between the suburban schools on the one hand and the rural and urban schools on the other. Firstly, the suburban free school is frequently a day-school, operating from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. and using a lot of parents as teachers and helpers: consequently its influence over the total development of the child is considerably less than that of the rural school which is a twenty-four hour-day experience, and the inner city urban school which is often the only place for its students to go for the majority of their waking hours. Secondly, suburban and urban schools are mutually exclusive, because of class and economic conditions. The poor cannot afford the fees of the suburban schools, and middle-class children have little incentive to attend schools situated in the poorer, lower-

class parts of the city, nor are they invited to do so. This is not meant to suggest that racial or economic barriers are set up by the free schools, but rather to emphasise the differences in motivation and standards of the different economic groups.

Other differences are revealed in some schools. For example, suburban free schools appear to be more organized, more formally structured than urban schools, in fact some suburban free schools appear to have evolved into something closely alligned to the progressive elementary school, or perhaps the British Primary school. In this sense it would be most realistic to suggest that suburban free schools, many of which flourish in a way uncommon outside of the suburbs, may be more advanced than their rural and city cousins, and may be more attractive to larger numbers of people than the rural and urban free schools are. In some cases the line between a state-operated elementary school and well-endowed progressive free school is a fine one.

Seattle's Little School is a good example of this. Founded in 1959, this suburban free school now has 175 children enrolled at the comparatively moderate fee of \$880.00 per annum. The school began, as many others have, in a Unitarian Church basement, and is now one of the larger free schools in North America. Its philosophy is that of Summerhill, as far as that principle may be applied

to pre-school and kindergarten children; there are, in the school, no bells and no standard texts; all activities are child-centred within a broad framework of a program of studies which includes reading, mathematics, science, language music and art. "There are no grades, no failures, no reports." An anonymous gift of \$105,000 in 1969 enabled the school to purchase nine acres of wooded land upon which a large, barn-like structure was erected. Later plans called for classrooms, a performing arts centre, a learning centre, all with no partitions, and costing in all approximately \$680,000. The principal of the school has written: "What we need is not a school for exceptional children, but rather an exceptional school for children."

Articles about the school refer to the maintained flexibility of its program. This particular approach to learning has appealed to at least some individuals prepared to invest money in it. Finances have been a major problem with many free schools, and it is interesting to see what a free school can develop into if it has the money. The principal of the Little School has been able to overcome the financial problem without apparently sacrificing the free school principle, which is again an interesting point in view of the number of free school advocates who view with horror the possibility of soliciting financial help from industry and the "establishment". The Little

School functions as a free school within an environment which it seeks not to change but to make into a learning experience. This is another interesting point since, the ability of a component part of any system to harmonize with its environment is fundamental to the working of that system as will be shown in Chapter Five. A free school cannot be considered as isolated from its environment and, as was pointed out earlier, many free schools have failed when they clashed with the local environment.

There are several other suburban free schools with a similar relationship between Summerhillian principles and suburban realities. The Muraco School in Winchester, Massachusetts is one example. The buildings are centred around an instructional materials centre. The school's stated objectives are linked directly to the work of John Dewey, which places control of the school in the hands of the teachers, and seeks to combine, in a practical way, the freedoms of naturalism with the instrumentalism of a carefully structured curriculum. Thus this particular free school differs from most rural schools and also from the Little School of Seattle. It is situated in a sophisticated part of a relatively wealthy state, is well-endowed, and, like the Little School, appears to bridge a gap between the extremes of public school traditionalism and Summerhillian freedom.

The aim of the Muraco School is to nurture the growth and development of the individual child, intellectually,

emotionally and socially . . . our primary aim and responsibility is to seek out each child's interests, ways of learning, needs and abilities To accomplish this we strive to establish within each child a desire for learning which, in turn, will develop the interest and aptitude to acquire the basic skills.¹⁵

The list of suburban free schools is long. Examples are, East Hill School in Ithaca, New York, established in a salvaged public school building; The Cambridge Free School in Massachusetts; The Prospect School in North Bennington, Vermont; The urban School of San Fransisco; and Midtown School in Los Angeles. Although these latter two schools do not suggest by their names that they are suburban, they are actually located on the edge of large cities.

These schools represent only one type of free school, the teacher-controlled, instrumentalist school — of which John Dewey's University Elementary School was an example. They are the suburban alternatives to the public system, in which the freedom of Summerhill and the culture of the American middle classes, meet in a compromise that brings together the need for a child-centred school and the traditional structures which ensure that such child-centredness and freedom does not produce a generation of individuals incapable of surviving in the world. The "alternative" they represent is of learning rather than living, as opposed to the rural free school

¹⁵"The Francis J. Muraco School" brochure (Winchester, Mass., 1970).

for whom the opposite would seem to be the case. Most suburban free schools are day-schools and day-care centres,¹⁶ and this fact alone modifies the Summerhillian style which many of them adopt. Often they are well-endowed: the Muraco School pays its staff for all positions; The Little School offers a maximum salary of \$7,200, whereas many rural schools rely largely upon voluntary help. Suburban free schools often have many children — larger numbers, in some cases than will be found in some small state schools. The Little School has 240 children; Midtown has 90; The Urban School has 90 also; and The Muraco School has 550. Again, the large numbers will tend to modify the Summerhill idea and perhaps change the concept of freedom to suit the particular environment.

Endowment, especially from business and foundations influences the schools also, especially in the philosophy. The problem is initially seen as the adoption of a philosophy attractive enough for potential benefactors. Some suburban free schools are quite heavily subsidised from a variety of sources — a fact which may well draw them closer to accepted public school approaches. It is partly because of their apparent need, and perhaps desire, to bridge the gap between public and private schools that the suburban free schools appear to be the most fully-developed

¹⁶At the Little School in Seattle, children enter at the age of three.

and least free, in the Summerhill sense, and potentially the most likely to succeed in progressive education. They are reminiscent of the British progressive schools, seeking not to radically alter culture, but to humanize a specific part of the culture, education; they are closer to the instrumentalism of John Dewey than the simple naturalism of Pestalozzi or Neill.

The principal of the now defunct Craigdarroch Free School in Victoria, British Columbia has stated that it may no longer be necessary for that city to have a free school, since the public system has changed in favour of several of the principles previously the sole property of the free schools.¹⁷ The Little School in Seattle is subsidised by local industry; The School in the Barn at Fredericton has one student whose fees are paid by a local welfare agency; Shaker Mountain Free School, near Burlington, Vermont, has been incorporated into the city's public school system; the North York School Board in Toronto initiated in 1970 a free school experiment for a number of high school students; recent debates in New York State and California concerning an educational voucher system, whereby parents may send their children to the public school of their choice; all indicate, to some small extent, the bridging of a gap between the philosophies of traditionalism and naturalism in education.

¹⁷Personal communication to the author.

The suburban free schools may therefore, provide an indication of future trends. They are approaches to education which can be incorporated easily into public systems. They may represent something of a new compromise, satisfying eventually a significant number of parents and teachers to a greater extent than either the more radical free schools, or the traditional public institutions.

Urban Free Schools

The urban free schools differ considerably from their rural and suburban counterparts. Often they are very local in flavour, ethnic and isolated, frequently poor and often operated out of small apartments, YMCA gymnasias or storefronts. They are the most reactionary and most social of the free schools. The great majority of free schools are not radical at all: naturalism is not a violent or reactionary philosophy. They exist as examples, for those parents and children who need and can afford them, of other ways of schooling. They are not usually established to overthrow the existing schools, though this is almost the case in some particularly poor ghettos. Any schools which might be defined as radical are frequently situated in the poor ghettos of large American cities. These are the schools that have grown out of deep emotional concern by some individuals, for the children in financially-deprived areas, a reaction against unacceptable social

conditions. Often staffed with volunteers — groups of parents, social workers, university students and interested local people, these urban schools frequently exist on the meanest of budgets, being thrown back upon invention in the face of inadequate public facilities. Necessity rather than design motivates frequent involvement in local matters.

The location of the urban free schools often determines the types of pupils — many of them negro — who will attend. This in turn influences student attitudes towards political environment and social behaviour. Hence the urban free schools are often both the poorest and the most involved in local politics of all the free schools. They are often peopled by students and teachers whose motivation for attendance is social and whose educational aims do not necessarily include the traditional pauper's middle-class aspirations. Objectives may well be the improvement of local living conditions rather than the ultimate selection of a few individuals to rise out of the ghetto. In this sense the philosophy may be of desparation and of deep social involvement. Lack of money and education tends to limit that involvement to local areas, producing several interesting educational situations. It could produce a group of relatively insular students with little knowledge outside of their own environment; or it could make such demands upon personal ingenuity and, being

local, offer so much immediate feedback that students may develop the capacity for very rapid understanding of and reaction to social problems.

The New Community School in Oakland, California is typical of the urban free schools in terms of its location and activities. Describing itself as "an independent college-preparatory community school devoted to secondary education", the school, most of whose students are Black, functions "on Julius Nyerere's dictum that the educational system must emphasize cooperative endeavour, not individual advancement."¹⁸ The emphasis is largely upon reconstruction of social environments relevant to minority groups. The word "necessity" frequently occurs on written statements of the school. The inadequacy of public education facilities in urban areas is seen as creating a necessity for community organized schools; there is felt to be a necessity for provision of an educational institution in which local problems can be worked out; it is felt necessary to get away from the diverse political pressures exerted upon public schools, which makes specialization and potentially controversial programming virtually impossible.

There is a certain degree of urgency in the published curriculum of the New Community School. The program offered, while it contains the traditional subject

¹⁸All quotations concerning this school are taken from "New Community School", a brochure issued by the school in 1970.

matter, also includes "simulation of City Council Meetings" in which "the whole school was mobilized for four hours to simulate the conflict which develops when local interest groups clash over political issues"; "Decorate the City", which was a simulated attempt, using photography and movie-making, crafts and modern art studies, "to bring human creativity to the streets of the city"; and an "Urban Survival Test" which consisted of closing up, in a totally dark and empty room in a hall of science, a group of students who tried to create their own replica of an urban eco-system. Ecological balance, related to both the city and the total natural environment, features in many aspects of the program. Ecology trips to regions such as the Monte Christo Mountains of western Nevada are offered to students who would otherwise spend most of their time in the city.

The New Community School is directed towards certain specific objectives, such as creativity within the city, and awareness of environmental problems, to Black American history, all of which are seen as parts of the essential knowledge of a minority group within the city. Certain characteristics, such as the poverty of many of the students and the lack of facilities are clearly cause for concern. Nevertheless safeguards have been built into the structure wherever possible. "Acceptance of Credit" agreements have been worked out with various schools and

colleges, including Berkeley School Districts and Merritt Junior College, San Francisco State and the University of California. The school claims graduate degrees for several of its seventeen staff members, and California State Teaching Certificates for others. Thus while the students may lack the money for extra facilities common to many schools, they do have for a maximum fee of \$150 per month, access to a variety of relatively well-equipped individuals and ultimately can continue their education after leaving school.

Equally interesting is the Black urban free school in New Jersey, the Newark Community School. Organizer Eric Mann has written:

We differ from A.S. Neill's (orientation) when he declares his primary job is to bring happiness to some few children The Newark Community School is a Movement School Our ultimate success must be measured in terms of building a movement to take over and change the public education system of Newark.¹⁹

The school, which opened in 1967, is described as a "radical alternative". It is very political; Mann describes it as follows: "We expect other radical community groups will be part of the movement for educational reform."²⁰ The public enemies are revealed: "Store-owners, welfare officials, school administrators, police, landlords and city officials", all of whom are seen as "usually

¹⁹E. Mann, "The Newark Community School", The New England Free Press (Newton: Mass., 1967).

²⁰Ibid., p.2.

unresponsive to the desires of the ghetto people". The educational problem is seen clearly, and it is pointed out by Mann that in three ghetto elementary schools in Newark, Stanford Reading Tests placed the grade six scores 1.8 years below the national average, and mathematics two years behind. The absence of middle-class skills is recognized by Mann as a great hinderance to individual achievement. Public schools are seen as being of little value to ghetto children, and if something is to be done to resolve the desparate situation involving not just education, but the whole social structure of the poor Black ghetto, the community school becomes a necessity.²¹

Closely linked to this is the structuring of the educational environment so that both in subject learning and in relationship with the rest of the world outside the ghetto, some sort of immediate gratification is possible, leading hopefully to further individual or social action. The Urban Alternative School may well be able to utilize its own sense of self-realisation to great advantage for minority groups. For a Black child in urban San Fransisco or Newark, trailing his White middle-class counterpart in most basic skills, individual choice, social action and rapid feedback in education, and the resultant possibility of discovering his own effectiveness,

²¹Mann, op. cit., p.3.

would be far more attractive a proposition than the standardized acquisition of middle-class values offered by the local public schools.

In Newark Community School, for example, the problem of the ghetto students not obtaining the basic skills in reading and mathematics, and consequently rejecting learning in schools at an early age, is recognized, and an attempt is made to incorporate these skills into the program in such a way that they do not hamper the more local objectives. Reading, for example consists of a combination of what are called "free-choice books" and others grouped according to specific areas in the curriculum. Any skills requiring development would be treated as they were seen to arise. The same is true of writing which is unstructured, uncontrolled, and only evaluated verbally without reference to marking scales. The school's history course "taught from the point of view of specific problems and trends rather than through the chronological presenting of events, emphasizes local situations."²² A sample unit entitled "The History of Insurgent Minorities" includes, in order, the civil rights movement in Newark, Christianity as a political movement, American slave revolts, anti-colonial movements, the Zionist movement and the civil rights movements in

²²Mann, op. cit., p.3.

the south.²³ Offered also are courses in the basic skills in auto repairs, appliance repairs, and also sex education and theatrical productions. In this way the school attempts to combine necessary skills and new action.

The Newark Community School, like the New Community School, is of a special kind. Both are listed as free schools, which in effect means that they are unstructured in terms of bells, timetables and graded learning schemes; and both have developed, in keeping with the ways of the free schools, along their own individual lines. They are an interesting element in modern education, being attempts, albeit based upon necessity, to place the school right in the local environment, and to gain educational satisfaction from involvement with the immediate world.

The strong element of necessity which can be seen in the development of the urban free schools makes them potentially very influential in local educational development. The attempt to place the school right in the centre of the environment, which has traditionally been viewed as undesirable inasmuch that middle-class-domestic public education does not advocate the ghetto as a desirable way of life, represents a reversal of attitude towards the ghetto. It presents the often crowded, and frequently poor environment of the inner city as a place to be changed rather than avoided; and it seeks to use this environment

²³Mann, op. cit., p.3.

rather than that of the White middle classes as a resource for learning.

Other free schools existing in the poorer parts of large cities, include the following: Cabbagetown in Toronto Ontario; St. John's Newfoundland, where, until recently, Animal Farm operated primarily for drop-outs and runaways; Madison, Wisconsin, where Freedom House, a private school for poor and working-class drop-outs opened in 1970; Newark, where Ironbound, a White version of the Black Community School, operates; Ridgevill, South Carolina, where the Indian School operates under the motto: "Control of one's education is control of one's destiny";²⁴ and East Harlem, where there are a group of schools called The Black Schools; and Houston, Texas, where Chinquipin, a small school operates for poor, gifted children.²⁵

Other urban free schools operate across the continent with the objective, like the suburban schools, of improving local educational facilities rather than immediately changing cultural processes. They are not, in Mann's words: "Movement Schools" like the Newark Community School, but are, rather, small and quiet institutions for city children.

²⁴It is, perhaps somewhat ironic that this "motto" of a free school should also be the motto of all Americans. See Taba, op. cit., p.16-17.

²⁵Information about all of these schools is available from The New Schools exchange, Canon Perdido, Santa Barbara, California.

An example of this type of urban free school is The First Street School, in New York's East Village, a free school established "more or less as an antidote to the dehumanization of the public school system."²⁶ Set up in 1964 as an integrated community day-school of one-third Puerto-Rican, one-third Negro and one-third White children, it was an American Summerhill school, holding fast to Neill's principles, yet modifying them, as is so often the case, "according to the exigencies of operating a day-school in New York."²⁷ Unlike the Newark and Berkeley community schools, it was heavily sponsored, but remained open only until 1966, when it closed for lack of funds.

Similar free schools, such as the City School in Minneapolis; the Fifteenth Street School in New York; the larger Fayerweather Street School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Montreal Free School in Quebec, function in downtown areas primarily because the city is seen as a stimulus and resource centre for the children. Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Tolstoy, Neill, and most of the British Progressives placed their experiments with natural education in rural settings. The application of those same principles to an urban setting is yet another North American variation on the early European schools.

²⁶G. Dennison, "The First Street School" (Newton, Mass., The New England Free Press: 1967).

²⁷Ibid., p.2.

It is interesting that the urban schools most prone to failure appear to be those oriented away from social involvement. The Barker School in North Vancouver has closed; so has the First Street School in New York; Montreal's Free School has come close to financial collapse; both the Free School and Craigdarroch School in British Columbia have disappeared; so has Vancouver's New School.

The ghetto schools however, while not flourishing, continue. The reason may be twofold: motivation and parental trust. The ghetto school is closely allied to the state of the ghetto people, and is not so much simply an alternative to an established system, as it is the only place available; people depend upon it and its teachers because they offer a degree of hope; money is not a major issue. However, the opposite is the case with the middle-class urban schools in which survival is not seen to be at stake. With these schools sponsorship by local businessmen is involved and fees are often very high; for example, the City School charges \$900 per annum for a twelve-year-old child; Fayerweather asks for \$1475; Rochester Educational Alternatives in New York State charges \$1000. To middle-class parents the free school is a personal experiment which, at any time of apparent failure, can be replaced by the ever-open doors of the public school.

Free Schools Compared

Suburban and urban free schools differ from rural schools in several ways. Where the rural free school indicts the city, the urban school uses it. Where one is a way of life, the other, at least in its suburban form, is more often a way of learning. The word "alternative" means something different in the city. Where the rural free school is primarily concerned with man's relationship with nature, the city school uses the city as a natural resource and frequently emphasises man's relationship with other people. Whereas rural free school children will visit the city knowing they are not part of it, the city children will periodically retreat to the country. Thus for one the base is rural and the city is one aspect of nature, to be visited occasionally; for the other, the people in the cities are the important part of school, and the countryside is a place to visit. Naturally both types of school are by no means opposed to the location of the other: for many rural schools, trips to the cities are frequent, and for many city schools trips to the country, often prolonged camping excursions are a built-in part of the curriculum. Philosophically they are close to each other in advocating a child-centred approach to schooling, and placing a considerable amount of responsibility upon a child to influence its own education.

There are some differences in structure: the rural school demands a lot of initiative and collective hard work from its members, and thus attracts and caters for adolescents, rural free schools are usually boarding schools so fees often ranging between \$750 and \$3000 per annum severely limit the type of student who can enrol. City schools often avoid these problems and are able to cater for younger children and charge much less, because in most cases they are day schools only. Availability of resource people and voluntary teachers, together with the lack of need to supply food and accommodation, has meant that fees in city schools can frequently be as low as \$800 and rarely higher than \$1000. Some city schools work on a pay-what-you-can basis.

This in turn provides for a much more varied group of students in the urban and suburban free schools, covering a greater economic and age range than is usually found in rural schools. And this in turn influences the nature of the learning that takes place in the schools. The urban school is not the major influence on its students: in fact, given that parents choosing urban free schools for their children do so because of similar attitudes towards learning, it is likely that, in the eyes of the child and parent, the school is one of a considerable number of things in life. However, in the rural free schools, many children are away from home and dominated by what goes on

at the school for many days, even weeks at a time.

City schools are frequently linked to universities. Many schools are established by university teachers and are frequently staffed by student volunteers. For example, Chapel Hill, a suburban free school in North Carolina,²⁸ states that fifteen of its thirty-four students are children of university professors. Theoretically, therefore, these schools are going to be introduced to new concepts and educational materials that may never reach the rural schools. No evidence is available to this writer concerning the effect of the universities upon the philosophies of the free schools linked to them.

Thus for some people the urban free school is less escapist, more realistic, practical and instrumental in philosophical terms than is the rural school. Parents whose children attend an urban free school can retain a considerable measure of influence over their children if they wish, whereas this is unlikely where rural schools are concerned. Parents in the cities, especially the larger cities, may also have several schools to choose from, whereas this is unlikely in rural areas, and it is unlikely that there will be several rural schools close to each other.

²⁸"The Chapel Hill School" brochure (North Carolina: 1970).

Summary

Free schools appear to be directly linked to, or extensions of various branches of the philosophy of natural education as it was expounded by Rousseau and Pestalozzi, and as it was practiced by A.S. Neill. They are commonly opposed to traditional forms of public schooling. They are, however controlled, as public schools are, by economic and societal pressures.

It is possible to describe the free schools in terms of location and, for the purposes of this study, this method has been preferred, for its simplicity, over others. It is fully recognized, however, that other criteria could have been used, including division according to philosophy. However, although the majority of free schools could be described as naturalistic rather than traditional, the variety of types of naturalism makes it somewhat difficult to accurately describe the educational philosophy of any particular school. There are schools in which it is fairly clear John Dewey would have been more at home than A.S. Neill, and there are schools more conducive to the ways of Pestalozzi than those of Neill. Furthermore, there are free schools which would attract all the early pioneers, and some that would repel them. Thus it is difficult to describe the schools in purely philosophical terms, and is more reasonable, especially to

the free schools to group them according to location, and then, within each grouping to describe individual approaches.

What is revealed in this chapter is that the variety of types of free schools is the main characteristic of the natural education movement in North America. Within a network of about five hundred free schools, each individual educator will structure his particular environment to suit his own philosophy.

Extrapolation from this present point suggests that eventually the public and free schools may come together, with the former being modified in the light of the successes of the latter, as happened with the British progressive schools and the public education system in that country. It has been pointed out²⁹ that the influence the free schools is slight at present, but that there is evidence to suggest a modification of some public schools to incorporate some free school practices and methods. It has also been suggested that the developments in Britain may have stimulated some of the current free schools in North America. Thus it is predictable that eventually North American public schools be similarly affected by what began in Europe as some isolated experiments in natural education.

²⁹Chapter One, p.20.

CHAPTER FOUR

FREE SCHOOLS IN A TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The preceding chapters have dealt primarily with development, in philosophical and sociological terms, of free schools in Europe and North America. The question arises in connection with those North American free schools which exist today, of the kind of relationship existing between the schools and the national, technological culture within which they operate. How are the free schools influenced by a technological culture? Is the reaction to technology positive or negative? What aspects of modern technology are utilized by the schools? In other words to what extent does educational technology exist within the free school movement?

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the influence of technology upon the free schools; to identify historical trends which have brought about that influence and its acceptance or rejection; and to suggest ways in which the products and techniques of the technological society are used by the free schools.

Technology Defined

Technology is a word derived from the Greek 'techne'

and meaning the theory behind any practice. The technology of industrial production is the ways in which theories of productivity are applied to the practical task of producing material things. The technology of education is the application of theories of learning, of philosophy of children, of environments, to the function of education. Commonly, technology provides for the conceptualizing of an idea, its systematic planning, subsequent operation, monitoring, modification and maintenance. Chapter Five of this study discusses the application of the technological process to the planning of a free school.

There is nothing new about technology as a philosophy, as a way of approaching a problem. The rationale behind man's wars, institutions and systems of government, can be traced back to the ancient Greeks at least, if not beyond them. What is relatively new is the proliferation of the products of technology, and the impact those products are having upon cultures in general, and education in particular.

The Impact of Technology

Toffler (1970) sees this impact as one which causes what he describes as a disease "future shock",¹ this being the effect upon man of the imposition of a new

¹A. Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Bantam, 1970), p.2.

culture upon the older one with which he is familiar. The new culture is the combination of the products of technology which had their origins in the old culture -- products which are both physical and psychological. The old culture, according to Toffler, is the one we had, in which institutionalized behaviour slowly developed with little threat of assault from within or without. For man, living with the old, the shock is the sudden collision with the new. The accelerated rate of change, brought about by the recent great increase in technological activity, demands a response from men which they had never been prepared to make to a culture whose very base is instability and change.

The major aspect of our technological society to which Toffler refers is the development of diverse means of communication: it is because man's knowledge can now explode and implode simultaneously, in that both our capacity to communicate to others and our capacity to absorb a world-culture from a large number of sources, have moved beyond literacy, to "multi-mediacy", that man, at the receiving end of numerous devices, systems and multi-media, finds himself challenged by the change occurring in his culture and what he knows about it. Carpenter (1963), suggests that the cultural shock man experiences, in terms of the changes in his forms of communication and in the ways in which he designs those

forms, have taken place within the concept of language.² Where the verbal and non-verbal aspects of English, French, Swahili, Chinese, or any language, were the prime means used by man to define and explore his culture, other means have now developed, namely television, radio and film, in which these same verbal characteristics have been retained and the non-verbal characteristics have been organized, and sequenced into an audio-visual structure similar to verbal languages yet having different symbols. Carpenter writes:

English is a mass medium. All languages are mass media. The new mass media- film, radio and television, are new languages, their grammars as yet unknown. Each codifies reality differently; each conceals a unique metaphysics . . . the natural course is for a culture to exploit its media biases.³

The Impact Of Technology Upon Education

It has been the realm of the schools to explain the culture, via the language, to the young. Thus the cultural, or future shock for educators has been the challenge to the institutions, built around a print technology, of the broadening of the definition of technology to include not only the original print concept, but to go beyond that into a world of machines as well as men and the process by

²E. Carpenter, "The New Languages", E. Carpenter and M. McLuhan eds., Explorations in Communication (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p.162.

³Carpenter, loc. cit.

which the cybernetic relationship of the two produce reproductive systems. McLuhan writes:

The sheer quantity of information conveyed by press, magazines, film, t.v., radio, far exceeds the quantity of information conveyed by school instruction and texts.⁴

It is important that technology and media not be confused, for the latter is part of the former. Komoski writes:

Thus, technology refers to any man-made device, process or logical techniques designed to systematically produce a reproducible effect.⁵

Komoski's definition goes beyond McLuhan's media-oriented observation and points to the necessity of associating education, in terms of planning and organization, with technology rather than with media. Technology is a philosophy concerned with the systematic design of processes, techniques and devices. Ellul (1964) points out that technology is usually viewed in terms of machines and, while indeed the machine may be pure technique, it is only a manifestation of a human thing — a way of approaching production, whether it be of ideas, behaviours, or material things. Within the overall context of technology, one aspect has been therefore, the application of technique to communications, with the resultant development of various

⁴M. McLuhan, "Classroom Without Walls", Carpenter, E. and M. McLuhan, op. cit. p.1.

⁵P.K. Komoski, Educational Technology, November, 1969, p.74.

media, such as film, telephones, radio, television and computers, which have had tremendous impact upon the availability of knowledge, and man's capacity to absorb and communicate. While it is not only at this point that technology has affected education, it is through these media that one aspect of technology has been seen to affect teaching.

Gagné (1968), offers a definition of educational technology which attempts to bring together both the technique of systematic planning and the products of technology in a way that reverses the hierarchy and depicts technology as "in a sense, educational engineering":

Educational technology can be understood as meaning the development of a set of systematic techniques, and accompanying practical knowledge, for designing, testing and operating schools as educational systems.⁶

It need not be assumed, therefore, that the only impact made upon education by technology has been through the new media. Educational technology, defined in the terms of all man-made devices, processes and techniques — and those designs occurring outside of human endeavour — means that most aspects of any school, including, notably, its print-oriented curricula, programming and timetabling, as well as what are often relatively minor physical additions such as audio-visual machines, and the more important educational processes such as programmed

⁶R.M. Gagné, "Educational Technology as Technique", Educational Technology, 1968, Vol.8, pp.5-14.

instruction, educational television and computer-assisted instruction, are all aspects of educational technology. And, as our culture has become increasingly influenced by systematic approaches to design and the production of a multitude of processes and devices which have changed man's individual role in society, so the schools have been challenged to respond.

The challenge is not for a total change: that would not be possible in technological terms, since, within definitions such as those of Komoski and Gagné a traditional school is technological. The challenge is rather that the schools become more completely technological, in that they organize systematically rather than haphazardly. Whether they are "traditional" or "free" is a point of philosophy: the extent to which they apply theory to practice is the extent of their technology. Thus the term educational technology is as applicable to a free school as it is to a public school, and it's outcome as relevant to a free-school pupil as to a public school child.

Technology and the Free Schools

It is impossible to divorce the activities of any free school known to this author, from the pressures or side-effects of technology. People who operate the inner city free schools of Newark and Los Angeles, Toronto and San Fransisco attribute many of the problems they feel they

are tackling to the overall cultural effect of large corporate empires, whose value systems serve only to widen economic and cultural gaps to the detriment of the poor. On the other hand, students of Vermont's Study-Travel Community School, or of Pacific High School in Palo Alto, California, or of many other middle-class free schools, may be said to be using the mechanical products of technology to their own advantage by travelling around their country, by filming, publishing books and magazines and teaching mechanics and engineering. No free school known to this author would refuse to use any of the products of technology commonly found in every day life.

Certain questions arise concerning the relationship between the free schools and technology. Are free schools a direct result of the impact of technology? The answer is no, they are not. Historically, the development of various alternatives to public education in Europe and North America was the result of many different social and educational situations, as was described in Chapter One of this study. In Europe the early experimenters each had something to say about established educational practices in justifying their own approach. Rousseau wrote of Emile, "my pupil will hurt himself more than yours, but he will be merry."⁷ Tolstoy's school at Yasnaya Polyana was in opposition to the generally

⁷Rousseau, op. cit., p.42.

accepted Russian model of strict discipline.⁸ Pestalozzi developed at Yverdon, a system of natural education which was an alternative to the rigidly disciplined, lock-step schools of nineteenth-century central Europe. Marriette Johnson wrote of the demoralizing effects of bells and timetables in schools in 1907, and John Dewey, in developing naturalism into instrumentalism at the University Elementary School of Chicago, was in opposition to many of the traditional elements of American education. Although each educator was openly attacking the lock-step approach to public education — an approach which was rigidly systematized, and heavily controlled — they were opposing an educational philosophy of traditionalism, not the mechanics or dynamics of technology. It is noteworthy that Tolstoy, Dewey and Neill structured their schools as much as any public school, and that Tolstoy's disagreement with Rousseau concerned the structuring of Emile's freedom by his tutor. Thus the experiments of naturalism were structured, but to the end that the child would have more freedom, not less, as was the case with the public schools. In this sense, each of those educators, rather than opposing technique, was invoking it against the haphazard and irrational structures of traditionalism.

The situation is similar today. The majority of free schools cater primarily for the children of the middle-

⁸Tolstoy, op. cit., p.243.

classes and offer "programs" which, while they may be very flexible, are frequently structured along course lines in a way similar to that of the public schools. As will be described in Chapter Five, many of the most successful free schools have been carefully structured and systematically designed, and several of those that have prematurely ceased to exist, fell foul of poor planning. Most of the free schools which failed and were described in Chapter Two, were poorly planned.

Secondly, there arises the question of the opposition which the free schools appear to have for technology. Is the expression of opposition to public education an opposition to a national culture and hence to technology? Again the answer is no. There frequently appear in free school literature, expressions of opposition to a variety of ideas and practices, found either in society in general, or in public schools in particular. From the Storefront Learning Center in Boston comes the statement:

Such humanizing centres (as the Storefront Learning Center), on neutral territory, are gravely needed if education is to be redirected to meet the needs of the urban child.⁹

From School, in Seattle, comes the following:

Fed up with the degrading and humiliating experience of our children in "the system" we determined to at least have a school for them.¹⁰

⁹Alternative Schools Exchange Newsletter, No.30.

¹⁰Ibid.

And from Ortega Park in Santa Cruz comes the fifty-point Continuum for teachers, a list of situations "commonly found in high schools". The author, Anthony Barton, of Ortega Park Teachers College, suggests a small face, smiling, be drawn beside each listed point which a teacher knows exists in his school. Part of the list is as follows:

- A notice on the wall prohibiting something.
- A computer terminal dispensing programmed instruction.
- A bulletin board with a timetable pinned to it.
- A janitor who sweeps the corridors regularly.
- Large television sets used by whole classes to watch ETV.
- A room serving no particular purpose.¹¹

A statement by Dr. Richard Suchman, Director of the College, gives direction to those commonly-expressed objectives of the free schools:

Institutional structures exist not in brick and mortar and state laws. They exist in the heads of people It is regarded as efficient to assemble 40 students in a room and have one teacher deliver knowledge to them all at the same time. It is regarded as even more efficient to put that lecture on videotape and deliver that knowledge to 1000 students at the same time year in and year out There are hundreds of such myths that perpetuate the rituals of education and inhibit an open-ended, exploratory attitude towards education.¹²

Finally, a statement by Entwistle (1970), which is close to describing what those who express concern about public education mean:

Educationists have a tendency to contemplate educational

¹¹Alternative Schools Exchange Newsletter, No.30, p.3.

¹²Ibid., p.2.

change apart from the dynamics of the outside world; for them education is a causal factor upon which the recreation of our civilisation must wait. Yet clearly what faces us is not the prospect of having the means to create an educational utopia, frustrated only by the unpleasant facts of life outside our classrooms. Nor is it a matter of waiting patiently while the environment laboriously responds to educational innovation. The danger we face is of a rapidly changing world of industry, commerce and the professions, with its attendant social and cultural change, to which education, burdened with obsolete concepts and techniques, fails to respond.¹³

Entwistle's point concerns an attitude close to that of the free schools, that an automated, technologized society, if it provides man with dignity and a means of living adequately, "is neither catastrophic nor as destructive of our humanity as some of our science fiction seems to imply."¹⁴ His accusation of obsolescence against the established school systems is frequently echoed by free school advocates. It is not technology that is being attacked, but rather an education system whose operational knowledge of technique is obsolete, or missing entirely. The call for systematic, dignified human learning situations which operate in full awareness of technological realities of our age, is similar to that of the free schools, and, far from being anti-technology, is pro-technology. If the free schools are opposed to anything, it is obsolescence and a lack of understanding of the nature of a technological

¹³H. Entwistle, Education, Work and Leisure (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), p.112.

¹⁴Entwistle, loc. cit.

society, and, further, a lack of opportunity to learn about it, within most public schools.

Free Schools and the New Media

A third question concerning the free schools and technology refers to the use the schools can make of the mechanical products of the technological society. The main answer to this question would deal with technique and the free school attempt to systematize its organization, which is dealt with in the next chapter. The second answer concerns the use the free schools make, and the attitude they express towards the technology of education, primarily concerning print, and the new communications media, such as radio, film and television.

Most free schools are poor, including some in the suburbs of large cities. There are very few schools known to this author which are able to afford the new media. Schools attached to universities and others which have been fortunate enough to receive grants and endowments, have invested in such media. Pacific High School in Palo Alto, California has produced films and photographic displays and Everdale Place in Ontario has been involved in photography and television. Apart from these two examples, there appear to be few free schools with any very sophisticated equipment.

What is more often occurring among urban free schools is not the purchase of specific items of audio and visual media, but rather association with various "underground" and alternative television and radio stations. Morse (1971) makes a pertinent observation concerning the relationship between free schools and the new media:

The alternative school uses media differently (from the public school), both internally as a direct learning aid, and externally to link individual schools with the free school movement at large.¹⁵

He goes on to describe some of the "underground" media agencies in various American cities which prove attractive to free school children, and quotes Gene Youngblood, who wrote in "Print Project America":

In what is being called the Alternative Television Movement, an increasing number of young people are . . . teaching themselves. In Amsterdam The Video Workshop; in London TVX Video Coop; in San Francisco And Farm Homeskin, the National Center for Experiments in Television, New People's Media Projects; in Los Angeles Nan June Paik's Video Lab at the California Institute for the Arts. The largest concentration of alternative television groups is in New York City. Recently the New York State Council on the Arts allocated \$263,000 to the Jewish Museum to establish a Center for Decentralized Television.¹⁶

Neither Morse nor Youngblood describes exactly what these various video groups are producing. The point Morse makes which is relevant to this study is that of all the new media, video tape appeals most to the free

¹⁵D. Morse, "The Alternative," Media and Methods, Vol.7, No.9, May 1971, p.28.

¹⁶Ibid., p.63.

schools. He describes the portable videotape recorder as "the one item that will tempt the most backwoods communal school into the cash economy."¹⁷ His justification for this concentration on videotape by those free schools that can afford it, is as follows:

Shut out of the commercial market on economic grounds, and at the same time searching for more authentic materials . . . the alternative schools have chosen to grow their own. Basically this means tape: audio and video. Not only are the portapak VTR's adaptable . . . but they provide access to the growing number of underground tape banks, and the chance to "loop" into the larger system.

It is interesting that Morse refers to the "system", for implicit in the function of any mechanised device are organization and sequencing. Thus there arises the picture of the free school voluntarily asserting its freedom via the media of a technological society. The point is similar to that made earlier in this chapter, that free schools do not appear to be opposed to the philosophy or organization associated with the word "technology", but rather to the irrelevance of educational systems which operate without reference to the characteristics, both good and evil, of a technological society.

There is no evidence among the schools known to this author, and referred to in this study, of free school opposition to new media, particularly video tape and film. There is evidence to suggest that a variety of alternative

¹⁷Morse, loc. cit.

media agencies primarily involved with videotape, operate in various centres in the United States. It is worth noting that 45% of the known American free schools are situated in the three cities, New York, San Fransisco and Los Angeles, mentioned by Youngblood as being the centres of alternative television activity.¹⁸ Insofar as free schools are simply groups of people exploring themselves, each other and their environment, there is no reason why they should not be anxious to utilize the communications media available to them.

The future relationship between free schools and technology, particularly educational technology as defined at the beginning of this chapter, depends upon two things: the directions taken by the free schools of the future, and developments in educational technology. It has been suggested in Chapter One that what will ultimately remain of the free schools will be what originally caused them, the philosophy of naturalism and its application to education in a variety of forms. In such a case it would seem that the base of the educational process will remain the public school system, modified by the inclusion of alternatives from those offered by the free schools, and any other alternative schools, and streamlined by inclusion of those technological devices and processes which make a humane system of education economically and culturally viable.

¹⁸Appendix III.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MODEL FOR PLANNING A FREE SCHOOL

Introduction

The preceding chapters have been concerned with the development of the free schools, the various educational philosophies which have contributed to that development, and the relationship between the free schools and the technological society.

This chapter will deal with the application of the methodology of technology to the organization of an individual free school in the light of the philosophical developments described in the first two chapters. It will consider various special situations which arise in the establishing of a free school, and suggest ways in which such considerations as the need for systematic planning, utilization of resources and environment and avoidance of major financial problems, might be incorporated into the design of a free school.

The chapter will propose initially that systematic planning, including consideration of a specific approach, is essential if a free school is to avoid some of the major educational financial problems that have beset many alterna-

tive schools in the past. The introduction and exploration of the nature of systematic planning will be followed by a discussion of how to approach planning: various approaches will be described and the one which appears most suitable, selected.

What Is A System?

Andrew and Moir (1970) describe systems as being, in a sense as old as life itself:

Every living organism grows and changes throughout its lifetime, and has some capability, however limited, to sense the changing environment and to adapt or survive by modifying or adjusting itself.¹

Probably the clearest illustration of this idea is the concept of the solar system which is a whole made up of inter-relating component parts, the planets, moons and asteroids, whose specific nature and movements maintain the system in what appears to be a constant state. One might also examine the physiological and nervous systems of the human body, each of which is a whole made up of interacting components. Similarly an automobile, a factory which produces automobiles and a city which houses an automobile factory, can all be studied as systems containing components. The whole automobile is itself an output of the factory, which is, in turn, a component of the city. Thus not only may any-

¹G. Andrew and A. Moir, Information Decision Systems In Education (Illinois: Peacock, 1970), p.2.

thing be defined as a system, but everything is also a component, and every component is a system.

Andrew and Moir point out further, that while there is nothing new about systems, what are new "are the tools to collect, assimilate, measure, report and interpret" information.² In other words, it is contemporary man's awareness and utilization of the system which is new. Hall and Fagan (1956) define a system as "a set of objects together with the relationships between the objects, and between their attributes."³ By "objects" they mean the components; "attributes" refers to the properties of those components; and "relationships" "those that tie the system together." Thus if the sun and all that wheels around it is a system; the planets, moons and asteroids are the objects; the size, weight and velocity of each object are its attributes; and the way in which the objects perpetuate the system by virtue of their attributes, are their relationships.

In terms of educational institutions, the school may be defined as a system; its materials, staff and students may be defined as its objects; their abilities, strengths and weaknesses are their attributes, and the relationship between these objects and attributes will, or will not, tie the system together. Similarly it must be noted that any

²Andrew and Moir, op. cit., p.2.

³A.D. Hall and R.E. Fagan, "Definition of a System", Modern Systems Research For the Behavioural Scientist, ed. W. Buckley (Chicago: Aldine, 1968), p.81.

school is a component part of a larger community. And, within any school, each component is a system itself, and each relationship is a system. For example, the instructional system, the curriculum system, the supervisory system, the discipline system, office routine, classroom organization: each is a whole comprising interacting parts.

The Free School As A System

The question arises of whether the word "system" could, or should be applied to the planning of a free school. The three main characteristics of the alternative schools movement were described in the preceding chapters. Firstly the movement is characterized by the continuous attempts of its proponents to establish schools which offer a way of learning based upon the naturalism of Rousseau and Pestalozzi rather than the traditionalism of the public schools. Secondly the movement is characterized by the great variety of interpretations placed upon the phrase 'natural education' by the free schools, and the rate at which they were born and died. It was hypothesized that the final success of the alternative schools movement might be the incorporation of the principles of natural education, to some extent, into the public education system. And a third characteristic was identified as the frequent high fees charged by some free schools, which resulted in the elimination from student bodies of all but the children of the affluent in many cases, and the

disenfranchised in a few others.

These considerations give rise to certain questions about the fundamentals of certain free schools. It is a function of this chapter to suggest that a free school is essentially a system, a whole with components; and that the objectives of its originators can be achieved if it is treated as a system and planned systematically. Many free schools do not survive for very long, falling prey to the emotional stresses of the participants, the lack of funds, loss of faith by parents, or eviction from temporary buildings. Although this transient nature may be the strongest characteristic of the free schools, it produces too often for those who see their dreams fall apart a sense of frustration, and renders the school in the long term, little more than an interruption of the public education of the children involved. Problems such as this have beset several Canadian free schools, for example, in Vancouver, Montreal and Victoria.⁴

External pressures also have their effect upon the free schools. Harrassment from surrounding communities has caused upset and failure. Summerhill was for years, known as "That Dreadful School";⁵ the defunct Animal Farm in Newfoundland, Saturna Island in British Columbia and

⁴See Chapter Two, p. 59-61.

⁵Reuters, "That Dreadful School Now A Model?" Montreal Star, April 1970.

Collaberg in New York were all heavily criticised by the press and local citizenry. The question of why this occurs is only answerable by the individual schools. However, the extent to which such confrontations could be either avoided or turned to advantage, with systematic planning and adequate organization, must be considered.

Thus the question arises: how thorough is the educational planning of a free school? While it is difficult, in fact unnecessary to doubt the sincerity of the free school educators, it is reasonable to ask how complete and realistic are their objectives? Have all the ramifications of these objectives been fully understood? Have all the components of the system been defined and utilized? What alternative organizational structures might produce the same results?

Answers to these questions are not easily found within the free school movement. There may be many reasons for this: many free schools are operated by people with very little knowledge of philosophy, education or planning; some few free schools are obviously financial concerns rather than educational institutions; many are isolated within one class group; a considerable number of free schools do not last long. In trying to establish precisely what the educational philosophy of any one free school is, involves, as was pointed out in Chapter Two, considerable problems. The philosophies of education revealed are as varied as the schools themselves, ranging from instrumentalism, which

relates human endeavour to the solution of practical problems, through Neill's progressivism, to the almost existential nature of a place like Vermont's Study-Travel Community School.

The ways in which free schools came into being have been touched upon several times in the preceding chapters. Reasons why particular schools emerge in certain places are varied, and the educational philosophies that determined the nature of any free school may be equally varied. A major problem with many free schools is that no particular philosophy was behind the establishment of what are essentially educational institutions purporting to offer alternatives to public schools, which frequently do operate according to a specific philosophy.

Typical among the antecedents of free schools are the reactions of small groups of teachers and students who wish to leave behind the traditionalism of public systems; the decisions of a group of middle-class mothers to form a cooperative day-care centre; the attempts of poor Blacks to organize politico-educational institutions for the children of the ghettos; and the considered, well-planned, attempts of highly-educated men and women to provide a genuine alternative to the public schools in a particular community.

It is not possible to equate these reasons with any one established philosophy, although many of the free schools

are experiments in natural education. The extent to which the people who operate the free schools may be classified with one particular movement, such as progressivism, or Deweyism, is debateable. As was pointed out in Chapter Two, there are some schools in which Dewey would have felt very comfortable and others in which he might have been very uncomfortable. Some free schools are radical, while others are very rigid and expensive. McIver (1971) suggests that the new progressives are primarily published educators who, having

a thorough familiarity with the public school systems . . . are struggling to produce radical educational change in those systems.⁶

He further points out

When the main thrust of education is to emphasize the intellectual development and to ignore knowledge that is of interest and relevance to students, then the experience of the student is ignored.⁷

In this sense the efforts of the large number of free school proponents to offer learning situations in which the acquisition of knowledge that is of interest and relevance to students is the primary function of the school, would classify them with, and possibly beyond the level of the new progressives. The difference is one of location as much as philosophy, in that free school educators have

⁶J. McIver, "The Tradition of the New Progressives," Teacher Education, Spring 1971, pp. 44-45.

⁷Ibid., p.47.

decided against trying to change the public school systems from the inside. This point is clarified by Davis (1971) who, in discussing the implications of the Danish Folk High Schools for American education, writes:

Just as the Danish Society no doubt owes part of its high level of social concern to the influence of the high schools, it is even more true that they owe part of their continued existence to a society which believes in supporting education — both inside and outside the system.

This poses a double question for the would-be radicals in education in the U.S. Real experimentation, real initiative cannot exist within the system. Outside the system however, there is little or no likelihood for economic support for a radical educational enterprise. What should one do? Should one try to work outside the system, with the advantages of freedom and the handicap of limited funds?⁸

Davis is identifying a major dilemma for free schools. Is it necessarily the best course to operate outside of the public system, without a clear educational tradition, and without the financial equipment to develop one? Or would one be closer to the mainstream of modern educational thought, by remaining, like Holt, Kohl, and Kozol⁹ inside the public system?

There is no particular virtue for a free educator in being labelled 'progressive' or 'social reconstructionist'

⁸M. Davis, A Model For Humanistic Education (Ohio: Merrill, 1971), p.105.

⁹John Holt, Herbert Kohl and Jonathon Kozol are three Americans who have voiced opposition to, and suggested changes in, the public schools. Holt, in a personal communication to the author, felt that free schools would fail by being outside of the mainstream of education.

or 'existentialist', even though there exist such people within the free schools, if economically he is to remain isolated and ineffective. MacIver refers to the existential nature of Dewey's concern with "the disintegrating effects of considering man to be a bundle of separable components which were all subject to the same control of reason,"¹⁰ and suggests that evidence of the validity of Dewey's concern can be found in the practices of an educator such as Kohl, who revealed that students "who had been unmoved by orthodox approaches to the curriculum", found work that was intellectually stimulating "outside of the curriculum, yet inside the public school."

Planning A Free School

Such a situation could arise with the free schools, in which this same existential concern for the whole person, this view of a human being as a system with interacting, rather than separable, components is often at the base of the operation of the school. The examination of the Newark Community School in Chapter Two, and similar consideration of various inner city free schools in San Fransisco, Montreal, Vancouver, and virtually any large North American city, reveals the common desire of the participants to reconstruct their society according to what

¹⁰MacIver, op. cit., p.47.

is essentially a naturalistic, at times existential, principle.

However, what any educator has to be clear about before defining his philosophy of education, if he is prepared to admit that such a thing is possible, is to define what he means by "philosophy" and "education". Where planning any school is concerned, be it public or free, an understanding of the meanings of these two words is, as Reid (1958) points out, frequently slight and often absent.¹¹ And, whereas with the public schools, certain national, provincial, or city regulations and procedures facilitate the establishment of a school with little or no reference to any specific philosophy, where the free schools are concerned, the situation is entirely different. The major challenge that can be thrown at free school educators concerns the impracticality of operating a free school while admitting to know little about the philosophy of education, and the impossibility of stating objectives for a free school without knowing or being able to conceptualize what is meant by the words "free" and "school".

Thus, to summarize, a major question for advocates of free schools, concerns their philosophy of education: what it is in relation to other philosophies; if it is, in actuality, part of an established philosophy; to what extent it is a composite of several philosophies; and most of all,

¹¹L.A. Reid, Philosophy and Education (New York: Random House, 1965), p.xi.

how clearly understood it is by those who would use it.

In the opinion of this writer, the question is answerable. Certain facts seem apparent: that there is a considerable upheaval in education all over the continent today; that many educators are searching for ways of improving upon traditional methods; that the free schools do not collectively present themselves as a new, or workable philosophy of education; that, in fact, there appear to be numerous variations and contradictions within the free school philosophies.

If man views his education of himself as a whole, and defines his institutions as some of the components of that whole, then, in terms of the complete system, free schools are alternatives to be considered by the total society, and to have whatever influence upon the total educational scene, as society will accept. As such, the free schools can afford to stand alone, not to adhere to any particular philosophy, and to avoid all labels for as long as they are not collectively grouped to offer another composite of previous ideas.

This is the freedom of the free schools: they are, in a chronological sense, the unattached young, exploring ways as they occur to them, and too involved in this individual exploration to be able to synthesize their collective position — yet. Thus they have no need to associate themselves directly with any established philosophy,

yet they have a great obligation to provide, individually, two things: an eventual philosophy of education, albeit a clarification of what is being done now; and a sufficiently successful operation that their philosophy becomes clear, examinable and thus potentially adoptable.

The opposition within the free schools is not so much towards the public school systems, as it is to certain aspects of the public philosophy of education, which is seen as a conglomerate thing that has grown more in size than credibility. The fact that most free schools offer to prospective students, some statement of facilities and objectives, indicates a basic awareness of the inevitability and value of structure. And it may be hypothesized that many of the free schools that fail, do so because of a lack of adequate planning and foresight. As MacIver put it: "The new progressives are rediscovering an old tradition, not establishing a new one."¹² And if the free schools may be viewed as a type of new progressive, then historically they are, with their successes and failures, their multiplicity of philosophies and their strengths and weaknesses in planning, emulating a considerable number of educators of the past two centuries.

If therefore, the philosophy of education, the planning, the free school itself, are each viewed as both wholes and components, the following patterns emerge:

¹²MacIver, op. cit., p.29.

(a) The overall view of education is that of the total society; the free schools are to some extent components of that system and, to a greater extent, are alternatives which must be considered as the needs and functions of the system develop.

(b) As an individual part of the total educational scene, each free school is a whole in itself, whose components must successfully interact according to a definite philosophy if the school is to operate in such a way that it will really function as an alternative.

(c) In the light of the total education system, the free schools cannot collectively or individually see themselves as the alternative to the system, nor should they function as though eventually they will provide the basis for all education. Rather, in terms of the total system, they should be alternatives along with other private and public institutions, whose individual philosophies may contribute to, and change, the total picture. Thus the free schools must be, in themselves, viable: each school's philosophy must be clear, and each must have been planned sufficiently well for the stated objectives to be achieved. And, since each free school is a system in itself, it must, in turn, be provided with alternatives, so that just as it challenges the greater system, so it may be similarly challenged. The question seldom asked at present is, what comes after the free schools?

Approach To Planning

There are various ways of approaching planning of any kind, and the question of what sort of plan is required for any purpose is particularly necessary where free schools are concerned. What view of the proposed school will give the planners the best and most complete picture of where they are going and what they will finally achieve?

Two things need to be considered: the approach, and the general idea. Boguslaw (1965) identifies four approaches to design and five ideas of planning. The four approaches are referred to as formalist, heuristic, operating unit and ad hoc.¹³ Each one represents a different way of looking at the question of planning. The formalist approach uses construction of models. A model can be defined in several ways: it may be a working model, a replica of a larger object, such as might be constructed by someone intending to build a bridge, or a house; or it might be a theoretical replica of a physical object or concept, or idea, in which case it may well be mathematical; or it might be an analogue model, a synthesis of several mathematical or theoretical concepts. Any of these models may well apply to the planning of a free school, depending

¹³R. Boguslaw, The New Utopians (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp.9-23.

upon the planner's view of freedom and definition of a school. But almost inevitably, a plan for a free school will be a model, which may be the result of one approach or of a combination of approaches. Since the free school philosophy is so varied and, at times, contradictory, it would be wrong to assume that any one type of model could be constructed.

A second approach is heuristic, being "one that uses principles to provide guides for action . . . even in the face of completely unanticipated situations."¹⁴ An example of an heuristic approach would be the playing of a game of chess according to a combination of documented moves gleaned from an instruction manual, and intuitive moves by the players.

A third approach is that of setting up an operating unit. This is characterized by the careful preselection of people and machines possessing specific characteristics. An example would be a learning system or a module that guarantees to teach a student a limited curriculum, concerning, for example, the solution of the problem of how to solve a quadratic equation, or how to program a computer. For example, if the task to be completed, was the winning of a car race, a carefully pre-selected team of men and machines would be brought together and directed in a certain fashion with a view to winning the competition by

¹⁴Boguslaw, op. cit., p.13.

virtue of their combined abilities.

The fourth approach identified by Boguslaw is the ad hoc approach. This is characterized by a lack of planning, and uses no models or principles or carefully selected components, but rather depends upon present reality only for its motivation.

The importance of selecting an approach — of choosing a style of play — is quite apparent where free schools are concerned. There are in existence today free schools whose activities, or lack of them, would identify their origins with any one of the four approaches. It could be said, for example, that The University Elementary School of John Dewey was a formal model, established according to specific principles, and thus heuristic in origin, and formalistic in operation. Similarly, it might be said that some of the free schools that have closed had been victims of ad hoc designing.

The approach is the attitude towards the problem held by those who are to attempt a solution; the approach selected will influence the choice of components, people and materials. The interrelationships between these components will be used to construct a solution. Those schools, for example which were planned in an ad hoc fashion and closed, may have been ended by the very same ad hoc situations as existed when they began. This is not a suggestion that closure, or the ad hoc approach is wrong:

indeed, it may be a characteristic of the present education system that existence in a non-institutionalised form is as important an alternative as a formal institution such as a free school may be.

More specific than the selection of an approach, and following immediately behind it, is what Boguslaw terms "system ideas". If the first step in handling the problem is the selection of an approach, which is dependent upon personal philosophy, the next step is the choosing of a system. Boguslaw refers to his system ideas as connective, control, interdisciplinary and organism.¹⁵ Each idea represents an overview of the kind of system which is to be used. The connective idea is an overall view of the system as a whole comprising connected parts. The base of the control idea is that results of a given set of actions be consistent with values. The interdisciplinary idea is a linking of specialists; the big picture idea the production of a team; the organism idea is the comparison of a society with an organism of mutually dependent parts.

There are clear links between the approaches and the ideas. An operating unit utilizes the interdisciplinary idea; a model has connective ideas; heuristics is the utilization of controls. Thus in the systematic approach to planning, the following two initial steps are suggested; first, the selection of an approach to the problem of

¹⁵Boguslaw, op. cit., pp.29-43.

planning; and secondly selection of a system idea that will facilitate the approach.

It has already been stated that rigid approaches and specific systems cannot apply to the free schools. Rather the approach and idea which produce the desired organization will be those of the individual or group. No attempt is made here to propose a limiting structure but rather the opposite, to facilitate the operation of the structure which most completely facilitates the wishes of the people in the school. Therefore, the two initial steps proposed in the previous paragraph must be preceded by a definition of philosophy of education.

The approach which appears most to characterize the free schools is the heuristic approach in that many schools, including most of those described in the preceding chapters, are established by groups of individuals who profess to share a common philosophy of education and whose objective appears to be the control of their creation to the extent that it will reflect that philosophy. Their initial objective in planning should therefore be the production of a theoretical model of their conceptualized school — a model which could be adapted and changed until viable, then applied.

One modification of the three steps suggested above, would be, therefore, as follows: delineation of philosophy of education; conceptualization of the approach which here

it is suggested would most effectively be heuristic, but which would depend ultimately upon the type of model being developed; selection of the control idea; production of a theoretical model. In this way, many of the problems that would arise as the school operates will have been foreseen in the planning.

Overall consideration must be given to the question of flexibility. The definition "free school" is very difficult to pinpoint, since the meaning of both those words depends very much upon the individuals operating the schools. There is no reason why there should be only one definition of free; certainly if there were only one, then all approaches to the establishment of a plan would be the same. However, with the type of planning suggested here, the objective is the facilitating of possibilities desired by the individual schools, thereby maintaining the individuality and flexibility. And the organization of approaches suggested is offered as a possible way of channelling a point of view, opinion or philosophy along a route that will lead eventually to a viable institution. The selection of a particular approach and idea of planning may bring together two apparently different situations, which appear often to be independent of each other, and yet which are both vital parts of a free school: emergent and established situations.

Boguslaw defines an established situation as "one in

which all action and environmental conditions are predictable,"¹⁶ and an emergent situation as "one in which some of these conditions do not prevail." He illustrates the point in the following manner: "A multiplication table is an established situation Painting a masterpiece involves dealing with an emergent situation — as does the creating of the multiplication table."

In a sense, a free school is like the multiplication table designed to facilitate the painting of the masterpiece. Similarly, the planning of the free school is essentially an emergent situation designed to produce an established situation which will facilitate many emergent situations. This emphasises the need for not only precise planning but also a clear conceptualization of the type of plan needed. A free school, if it is to be like many of the present free schools, must be a highly structured framework within which anybody can do virtually anything educational without disturbing everybody else. The facilitating of this multiplicity of situations within a free school can only be achieved within a clear structure.

The best example of how this works in many existing free schools is the General Meeting, which is a highly structured situation designed to handle emergent situations. Johnny throws water at Sophie, and an emergent situation has arisen. The immediate method of handling it, at the meeting,

¹⁶Boguslaw, op. cit., p.8.

is to invoke an established situation such as, for example, "Thou shalt not throw water." However, the rule remains only for as long as it has relevance. Thus, "Thou shalt not throw water" can easily be changed, perhaps to the complete opposite, upon Sophie and a majority of the others expressing enjoyment of the experience.

The question of how compatible flexibility and planning are is therefore directly related to the interweaving of established and emergent situations with educational philosophies and economic and psychological realities. Consideration of approaches and system ideas is an attempt, therefore, to ensure an interweaving of those elements that will produce a workable plan and ultimately, a practical institution.

Organization

Once an approach to planning has been identified, the organization of the plan will follow. Fiebleman and Friend (1969), suggest that before any organization is attempted, there needs to be a clear understanding of what organization is.¹⁷ And they suggest that the study of organization must be approached from two standpoints: statics and dynamics. The statics and dynamics of the

¹⁷J. Fiebleman and J.W. Friend, "The Structure and Function of Organization", Systems Thinking, ed. F.E. Emery (London: Penguin, 1969), pp.30-55.

organizational structure are similar to Boguslaw's established and emergent situations in that each of the eight "rules" is a statement describing one of the characteristics of what is essentially an established situation. Similarly, the dynamics of organization are those aspects which emerge as a system operates, and which will both act upon and be controlled by the established organizational structure. Concerning statics, they offer what they call "eight rules of organization." These rules describe in essence the need for systematic development of a plan. They are offered here because they may serve to draw further attention to the need for understanding of definitions and processes as well as factual materials in planning.

Their eight rules are as follows:

1. Structure is the sharing of sub-parts between parts.
2. Organization is the one controlling order of structure.
3. One more level is needed to constitute an organization than is contained in its parts and sub-parts.
4. In every organization there must be a serial relations.
5. All parts are shared parts.
6. Things in an organization which are related to parts of the organization, are themselves parts of the organization.
7. Things in an organization which are related to related parts of the organization are themselves parts of the organization.

8. The number of parts and their relations, constitutes complexity.¹⁸

What do these "rules" mean, and what is their significance in the planning of a free school? In their simplest terms, they refer to the whole-component-inter-relationship structure discussed earlier. What is being stated is that a whole thing is made up of interrelated parts each of which is a whole in itself; and that function is directly related to the interactions of the parts.

Concerning the establishing of a free school these "rules" specify the need for the same approach to planning indicated by Boguslaw in his discussion of approaches, and by Andrew and Moir in their definition of a system: that organization is an effective way of making something work. The structure of the free school is, therefore, according to the first "rule" the sharing between the various parts of the schools of all the materials and people that came together to make the school. Those materials and people have certain relationships with each other because of the organization of the structure.

Combining this expressed need for an approach to planning with the knowledge of organization offered by the eight "rules" a further step may be added to those already suggested for the plan, and that is the selection and organization of components. Thus the plan now becomes, as follows:

¹⁸Fiebleman and Friend, op. cit., p.30.

Definition of philosophy of education;
 Conceptualization of the approach;
 Selection of the control idea;
 Selection and organization of components to form an
 interacting group of parts which comprise, through
 interaction, a whole.

The individual or group starting a free school, having adequately defined their philosophy of education, decide how they will approach the execution of that philosophy, and how they will organize a system to implement it. It has been suggested that the heuristic approach is the one most easily applied to the free school situation and that the control idea best facilitates this approach. Thus, what is suggested here may be described as follows:

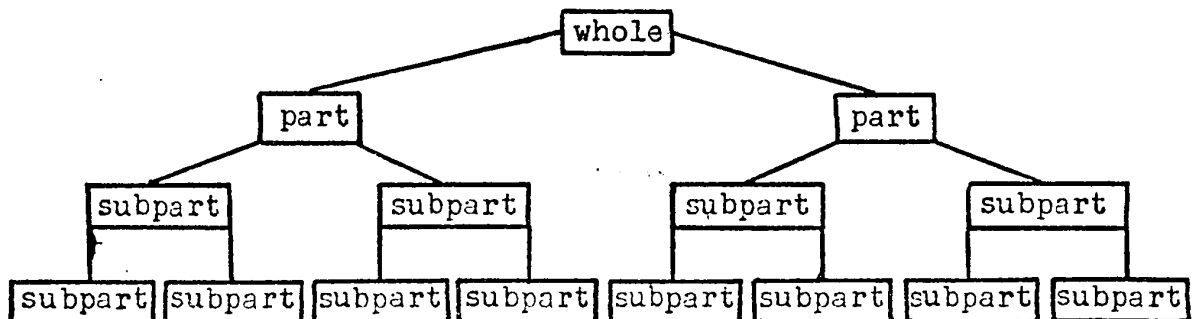
Step One: Definition of philosophy of education.

Step Two: Application of the heuristic approach to planning.

Step Three: Application of the control idea to the approach to planning.

Step Four: Organization of the plan according to the rules of organization.

This structure would produce a diagrammatic plan as follows:



The resulting structure is a pyramid in which the goal — which in this particular plan is defined as the existence of a free school — comprises a number of components, which are labelled here "parts", each of which is a whole in itself, and therefore divisible into its own parts, which are labelled here "subparts".

This system of planning, while facilitating the development of any philosophy, and thus preserving the variety of individual approaches to free schools, ensures that a considerable amount of knowledge about the interaction of the various parts of the school will be understood before the school comes into operation.

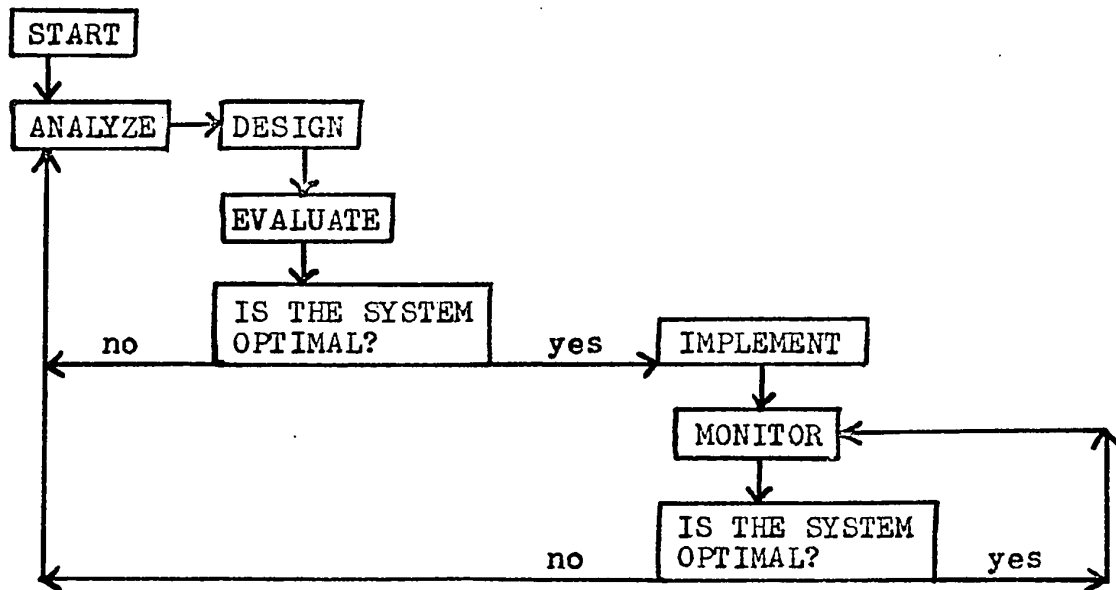
Interrelationships

The setting up of the plan for a free school can be considered after the organizational aspects of planning have been worked out. The task is to produce a plan which will, by interrelating the components, produce a workable whole. A device which facilitates a clear view of these relationships is the flow chart.

The flow chart is an organizational device by which the components are linked, by a series of steps, each of which describes a different process, and which together provide an overview of the relationships between the components.

Banghart (1969) suggests that there are many

possible flow charts, and "no cookbook recipe that (offers) a step by step outline"¹⁹ because the flow chart is the stepping off point from general considerations of the nature of organization to the solution of a specific problem. He suggests a flow-chart design which proposes eight steps, and which incorporates the various stages of organization previously discussed. The flow-chart is as follows:



START is the first step in the chart and means begin thinking about the process. ANALYZE — which has many implications — refers to the business of conceptualizing the problem, defining philosophy and establishing why the whole needs to exist at all. DESIGN refers to the process of setting up the activities in sequence so that the relationships between the components defined in the analysis

¹⁹F.W. Banghart, Educational Systems Analysis (London: MacMillan, 1969), p.37.

is clearly established. EVALUATE refers to a process hitherto not considered, namely the necessity of checking all processes once they are established, to ensure that the best plan has been devised. This involves the question of alternatives, which has particularly interesting implications for free schools. The best system will be obtained by selection and combination of the established plan and the best alternatives to the various processes within that plan. For every process decided upon, alternatives must be considered. The more alternatives there are, the more possible it will be to modify the existing process so that it becomes more efficient. And since alternatives will arise when the process is operating, it is in the interests of efficiency that they be foreseen as far as possible. Since control and knowledge are directly related, it is not being suggested that consideration of alternatives will result in a perfect process, but rather as efficient a process as can be obtained. Thus evaluation is the process of examining the design and double-checking, and modifying where necessary.

IS THE SYSTEM OPTIMAL? This means "Will it work as well as showing how the system will be monitored better than any alternative?" — a question which again provides for a rechecking of the design. Unlike the evaluation process, this requires a direct answer, yes or no. If no, then one must return to the conceptualization, to the

analysis of the original idea and start again; if yes, then the design can be implemented.

MONITOR means watching and checking on the implemented design, the whole system, to ensure that it is functioning as desired. Should it cease to operate as designed, then the planners must return to the plan again and ascertain what has changed.

The flow chart is, therefore, not a blueprint, but rather a series of processes incorporating not only the model of the whole, but the business of establishing and maintaining that model.

Le Baron (1969) offers a series of steps through which a planner might move towards establishing a workable plan. They are similar to Banghart's flow chart, but do not include a feedback device for monitoring. These steps are as follows:

- One: Conceptualize the problem universe.
- Two: Define the subsystems.
- Three: State the objectives.
- Four: Develop alternative procedures.
- Five: Select the best alternatives.
- Six: Implement the system.²⁰

The basic procedure is the same as Banghart's, consisting of steps which begin at the level of conceptualization, and move through the interrelationships of the components, including alternatives, to implementation. An aspect of

²⁰W. LeBaron, "Systems Theory: Some Applications to Curriculum and Instruction." Systems Development Corporation, Falls, Church, Virginia, 1969, pp.4-19.

LeBaron's philosophy of education that makes these steps attractive for free schools, in his awareness of the need for flexibility, for avoidance of any plan whose very nature demands it be rigidly followed. He writes:

Too much technology in education has not been planned around the real educational needs of people: too much money has been spent without adequate breakthroughs in learning, and viable alternatives. The single most significant reason appears to be a too narrow definition of the problem situation. Coupled with this appears to be the apparent inability to develop alternatives within the schools — at least so that many choices are available for consideration.²¹

This criticism has relevance for the free school movement, since most free schools see themselves as the alternatives to which LeBaron refers. It must be noted that LeBaron and Banghart both place emphasis upon the need for a wide choice of possible ways in order that the best one ultimately be selected.

Thus concerning the planning of a free school, the course of action proposed here which may produce the greatest likelihood of success is to be a combination of several specific processes in a framework of steps designed to facilitate the interrelationship of all the components of the school. In the form of a prescription that amounts to little more than an elaboration of the saying "Look before you leap", they are as follows:

Step One: Conceptualize the School; define the philosophy of education.

²¹LeBaron, op. cit., p.20.

- Step Two: State the objectives of the group forming the school.
- Step Three: Develop alternative procedures.
- Step Four: Select the best alternative.
- Step Five: Define the various components.
- Step Six: Implement the plan.
- Step Seven: Monitor the process.
- Step Eight: Decide whether or not it is working.
- Step Nine: The answer to step eight will be either yes or no. If yes, then continue monitoring the process; if no, return to step one.

A simpler way of describing these steps, and one which is closer to the saying just quoted, is as follows: Conceptualize the school and what it is to do; state the objectives; define the physical features and curriculum design; develop alternatives to the procedures in the design, select the best alternative; implement it; see if it works, and if it does not, start again.

What has to be considered when these nine steps are applied to the planning of a free school? The answer can be gleaned, to some extent, from the operations of existing free schools. What follows is an analysis of the various aspects of each step which appear to be the major considerations of present free school educators.

Step One: Conceptualization of the School

This involves primarily definition of a personal or group philosophy of education which will lead to the

establishment of a number of principles about the proposed school, including the objectives of the school, alternatives, and how they are to be applied, and an analysis of the cost of implementing the school, not only to those who will operate it, but also to those who will attend it and those in the environment who will be affected by it including those who may attempt to close it because it is too costly. Additionally, the component parts of the school will need to be defined, and the factors which will integrate those components. It has been previously stated that the components are the many individuals, materials and ideas that will ultimately be combined to become the school. The integrating factors are the processes and relationships which will bring about this combination.

It was stated in Chapter Two that a possible method of defining many free schools was by location. It was pointed out that location was determined in many cases by the personal philosophy of those who established the schools; or in other cases particularly in urban areas, environmental conditions were the motive for the establishment of the schools in a particular place. It was further pointed out that another method of describing the general types of free schools was by reference to the *raison d'etre* — a method obviously closely linked to the question of philosophy, which revealed two primary motives, one the reaction on the part of a group or an individual against a

local school system, and the other a more positively based attempt by a group of educators to set up and develop a school outside of a public system but not necessarily in opposition to it.

Examples of schools which have been established at least partially as a reaction against another system, are the Shire School in San Fransisco, Syracuse Free School in New York State, and Bay High School in San Fransisco. A statement from Shire School, concerning its students, is as follows:

Some come to Shire because they couldn't fit into the rigidity of the public schools Some, especially the older kids are turned off to most 'school learning' by years of public school.²²

And students of Syracuse Free School wrote:

We are faced with a number of severe limitations. First of all, we have grown up in America and gone to public schools until this year. Thus we have been taught the society's values For example, at the beginning of school we viewed ourselves as students, and found some adults to be our teachers. We assumed that schools had "teachers" who taught, and "students" who learned.²³

From the introduction to the booklet on Bay High School, comes the following indication of motivation:

Most of the students felt that the public high schools were failing them both intellectually and emotionally. They wanted a learning situation which encouraged

²²"The Shire School", brochure (San Fransisco: February 1970).

²³"Syracuse Free School", brochure (Syracuse, New York, 1969).

freedom and the pursuit of individual interests.²⁴

In contrast to the motivations expressed above, are those of five other free schools. At Pinehenge School in Maine, for example, this contrast is immediately apparent, as the school reveals itself to have been based upon a positive philosophy, and to have used specific models:

Our educational philosophy is predicated on much of the Leicestershire method of free or open academics used in some British schools . . . Pinehenge is, to the best of our knowledge, the only school that incorporates a Summerhill community environment with the academic freedom of the Leicestershire model.²⁵

Similarly, the Early Learning Center, in Boston,²⁶ the Fayerweather Street School,²⁷ and the Monmouth Day School in New Jersey,²⁸ are all based upon the same Leicestershire model.²⁹

Both of these very general definitions of origin, while they suffice to identify trends are insufficient when

²⁴"The Bay High School" brochure (Berkeley, California, 1969).

²⁵"Pinehenge School" brochure (Waterford, Maine, 1970).

²⁶K. Burt, "Mother invites Children to Learn" The Christian Science Monitor (Boston, February 17th, 1970), p.1.

²⁷Untitled statement of philosophy of Fayerweather Street School (Cambridge, Massachusetts: June 8, 1970), p.1.

²⁸"The Monmouth Modern Day School" brochure (Morganville, New Jersey, 1970).

²⁹c.f. W.P. Hull "Leicestershire Revisited", unpublished manuscript, available from New England Free Press (Boston, 1964).

applied to the individual school. Thus the initial step of the plan should be a clear definition of philosophy.

Step Two: Stating Objectives

This is the first point at which general considerations are developed into specific organizational processes. These objectives may well be exemplified by two questions, whose answers will provide a clear statement of objectives. Firstly, what changes in children's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are desired? How will the learning environment and resources ensure that these changes occur? Secondly, can the operation of the school as a goal in itself be defined? And an additional question relating to the two previous ones: what plan can be devised by which alternative organizational forms can be fully considered, and, wherever appropriate, included?

Considerable detail needs to be accumulated about the sort of school desired, the degree to which it will be affected by outside conditions, and how it will be structured for maximum flexibility, or control. It is worth noting the capacity of a free school to be rigid and inflexible, and for this model for design to allow any individual to impose his will upon the structure. It may be compared to Tolstoy's statement about his school at Yasnaya Polyana: "The teacher has had the possibility of bringing to bear all the force of his influence upon the majority of his

pupils."³⁰ It may also be compared with Skidelsky's account of one apparent failure by A.S. Neill, concerning a little girl who stated upon leaving Summerhill: "I knew you were just like every school master — a boss."³¹

Following a definition of objectives related to the operation of the school as a learning or living place, attention can be directed towards the objectives of the design. The plan proposes two aspects to this part of the whole, as previously stated: understanding of behavioural changes desired, and the operation of the school as a goal in itself. For the first aspect, what is called 'the instructional system' is an excellent device through which these objectives can be attained. And the second aspect can be understood and controlled by the "educational service system,"³² which is employed to define and explicate alternative ways of achieving the school's goals.

The instructional system is a whole in itself and its components follow the patterns of others in other parts of this plan, concerning the preparation of objectives, selection of components and procedures, cost analysis, coordination and evaluation. Objectives must be very precisely defined, related to a philosophy of education and stated in operational terms. And sequencing

³⁰Tolstoy, op. cit., p.233.

³¹Skidelsky, op. cit., p.164.

³²LeBaron, op. cit., p.12.

of those objectives must be in order of priority according to viability. Taba defines sequencing in such a way that it offers a great deal of flexibility:

Much of the confusion and difficulty in developing cumulative and continuous learning comes from the fact that in setting up sequences in curriculum designs, only the sequence of content is considered, while the sequence of powers and competencies is largely overlooked.³³

It is characteristic of most free schools, with the possible exception of the "movement" schools in New Jersey and San Fransisco, that most forms of behavioural sequencing will be avoided. Yet, in attempting to ensure that a child has freedom to control much of his own learning, the free schools are obliged to establish a structure that enables this to happen. And any free school that has as one of its objectives changes in a child's behaviour, or certain capabilities, must consider in that structure, powers and competencies as well as content in fact more so than content. The most common structure among North American free schools is the Summerhill model, in which the educator attempts to facilitate whatever he can ascertain to be the powers and competencies of the child. In Neill's case, for example, this was achieved by what were called Private Lessons, or non-interference, but not with content sequencing.³⁴

The following excerpt from a statement of free

³³H. Taba, Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p.429.

³⁴Skidelsky, op. cit., p.167.

school philosophy which does not refer to content sequencing but is concerned with children's powers and competencies, comes from Finegold, a rural free school in Fresno, California. The philosophy is stated as a series of objectives, in the following terms:

. . . that children must be allowed to learn who they are, and what they want to be . . .

. . . that self-searching is the key to the student's ability to develop individuality . . .

. . . that the student must be provided with as much as he or she is capable of learning in the areas best for the individual according to needs, interests and abilities . . .

. . . that the teacher serve as a guide . . .

. . . that competition should play no part in the learning process . . .

. . . that truth always originates in a minority of one . . .

. . . that self-confidence and self esteem arise from achievement . . .³⁵

The emphasis here is on the need for children to be "self-searching". This may be traced back to Yverdon, to Rousseau, to Dewey. The principles indicate that the school will attempt to be a place in which the path an individual chooses to take will be as much as possible his own affair; that the school will seek to provide him with access to everything and facilitate his acquisition of personal truths. To facilitate this, the school provides the following

³⁵"Finegold" brochure (Fresno, California, 1970).

environment:

The buildings, orchard and garden are grouped in about a twenty-acre area in a small valley through which runs Finegold Creek. The remainder of the 600 acres is wild and primitive, and was recently an operating cattle ranch. There are countless oaks and pines, dramatic ravines, gently rolling meadows, steep hillsides and huge, granite boulders Nearby Millerton Lake provides warm weather recreation. Yosemite, King's Canyon and Sequoia National Parks are but an hour's drive from the school. The curriculum is moulded to fit the needs and capacities of the individual student. It includes art, music, sciences, philosophy, math, language-arts and communication, various crafts, physical and social sciences, independent study State-required courses are, of course, taught at the appropriate grade level.

It is important to emphasise what objectives are being sequenced. Taba's original statement drew attention to the need to sequence powers and competencies when designing a curriculum as well as content. It is suggested here that for many free schools this point is very important, to the extent that consideration of powers and competencies is frequently seen as more important than content. In terms of the planning procedures being discussed here, it is suggested that: (a) most free schools see the sequencing of powers and competencies as natural to a child; (b) therefore, in planning a free school a structure should be designed that enables the individual child to sequence his own powers and competencies; and (c) that in operational terms, this means designing a situation in which content is subordinate to natural development. Whether one rephrase this in Reddie's terms as "character building" of England's Directing

Classes, or see it as similar to Neill's wish to free children from public schools, or Illich's suggestion that schools be closed, it is clearly a part of the philosophy of natural education, and has a history that stretches back two centuries.

The educational service system is a subsystem, "charged with the accomplishment of specific objectives which are only a part of the total educational program."³⁶ Its employment at this point in the plan is to facilitate the achieving of the other main objective, the operation of the school as a goal in itself. There are two points to be made here. Firstly, an alternative, to be effective, must exist in some recognizable form; secondly, there must be a point at which initially emergent situations come together to form an established situation upon which one can build. Thus the school is an important thing in itself. It must be: it must exist. It is suggested here that this important objective can be achieved if a service system designed purely for that purpose is included in the planning of the second step. Obviously the operation of the school is fundamental to the achieving of most other objectives. Therefore, while this service system can be independent insofar as it is not directly concerned with the other objectives, it must be designed in such a way that it interacts with the other components in the system

³⁶LeBaron, op. cit., p.12.

to form the whole.

Step Three: The Components of the School

Step Three extends the previous step from concern with processes, to components. The physical plant, location, curriculum, learning resources, materials, grading, may all be defined. Also the problems, both educational and environmental, can be examined. Where is there a common educational philosophy? Where and with whom are compromises to be arranged? Will compromises and alternatives work, or present new problems? How friendly are the local people and government? To what extent will their lives be affected by the presence of the free school? What sort of psychological and sociological demands will the school make upon these people? To what extent will laws, behaviour patterns and conventions outside of the school effect its operation or existence? Does the environment appear to facilitate future growth? Such questions, related to all the people and things which make up the school and its environment, need to be asked at this point.

The components of the free school are, therefore, the parts of the whole. These comprise a great variety of things. And the potential problem with this list of components for a free school is the way in which their interaction may reduce the spontaneity and the school's capacity for change. Thus it is important from the start that the initial step of defining philosophy be applied to the selection of components: in other words, what goes into

the school has to fit the expressed concept and objectives, or the school will not work. It is important, for example that buildings and grounds be defined in terms of what is required as well as what exists, is owned, leased, rented, what is known to be available, and what may be constructed. The Study-Travel Community School in Vermont, offers a variety of possibilities, which illustrate: a farmhouse with a certain number of rooms, and materials for building tents, yurts, and domes.³⁷ For this school, as with Satya in Massachussetts, and Timberhill in California, not only is owned property listed, but nearby public property also. "Satya has . . . 32 acres of quiet, wooded land that abuts the Minute Man National Park."³⁸ "Timberhill . . . borders on thousands of acres of undeveloped land."³⁹ The availability of resources outside, yet close to the school, and the potential development of physical facilities are both components of the school.

Curriculum is at the base of most schools, reflecting, again, the philosophy of education of the people who operate them. Thus at this point in the plan, this, the major component should be defined. Curriculum has to be seen as not only a part of the whole, but as a whole in itself, in

³⁷"The Study-Travel Community School" brochure (Putney, Vermont, 1970).

³⁸"Satya" brochure (Massachussetts, 1969).

³⁹"Timberhill" brochure (California, 1970).

relation to its own components, materials and special situations. It must, therefore, possess its own objectives.

Taba emphasises the need for a curriculum design:

In order to develop a design for a curriculum it is necessary to identify its basic elements Perhaps one way of identifying these elements is to consider the major points about which discussion needs to be made . . . the aims and objectives, the content and learning experiences and evaluation.⁴⁰

And in reference to the importance of a clear, strong philosophic base to curriculum, she writes:

An effective design also makes clear what the bases of the selection and the emphases on the various elements are For example, a design should make clear whether its objectives are derived from considerations of the social needs as revealed in the analysis of society, the needs of individual development as revealed by the analysis of the nature of learners, and their needs as individuals — or both.⁴¹

Further, she warns of the dangers inherent in a design which has no rationale, which results in "a curriculum framework with a high overtone of prescription because the requirements regarding content or the nature of the learning experiences, are difficult to explain, and seem to demand a docile acceptance of directives by those who implement the curriculum in the classroom."⁴²

Taba's proposed "model for curriculum design" is similar in structure to the suggested plan offered here for the development of a free school, in that it is not for the

⁴⁰Taba, op. cit., p.422.

⁴¹Ibid., p.423.

⁴²Taba, loc. cit.

design of a specific school, but facilitates the educational plans of individual students. Therefore, it is worth consideration as a good general model for curriculum design for a free school. It should be emphasised at this point that most free schools do have curricula. They are not "free" in the sense that a general licence is granted to all participants to act independently of each other; on the contrary, the point is interaction, not independent activity. Thus the curriculum is as important for a free school as it is for any other type of school. This model is offered here because not only does it provide a possible structure but also it is a structure based upon the need to provide flexibility within a group function and this has relevance for the free schools.

Taba's model is as follows:

1. Objectives to be Achieved

<p>Determined by Analysis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Culture and its needs ii. The learner, and learning processes and principles iii. Areas of human knowledge 	<p>Classified by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Types of behaviour ii. Content areas iii. Areas of needs. 	<p>Levels of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Overall aims of education ii. School objective iii. Specific instructional objectives
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2. Selecting Curriculum Experiences

<p>Determined by what is known about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge Development Learning Learner 	<p>Dimensions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content Learning experiences 	<p>Affected by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources of the school Role of other educative agencies
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3. Possible Centers for Organizing Curriculum

<p>Determined by requirements of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuity of learning Integration of learning 	<p>Centers of Organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subjects Broad fields Areas of living Needs, experiences Activities of children Focussing ideas etc. 	<p>Affected by: and Affecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School organization Methods of using staff Methods of accounting for learning
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Taba's model (continued):

4. The Scheme of Scope and Sequence

Determined by:	Dimensions of:	Affected by:
Requirements of scope and learning	Scope and sequence of content	Centers of organizing curriculum
Requirements of continuity of learning	Scope and sequence of mental operations	

Examination of Taba's model reveals considerable flexibility and a distinct attempt to avoid producing a set of objectives which are too narrow or limiting. The interpretation of her suggested means of determining "Objectives to be Achieved" for a free school suggests the initial step is analysis of the determinants — the outside influences — of the curriculum. These are the things that will affect its nature, such as the culture, the people, their philosophies of education, their knowledge and abilities, and the ideals within which they function as a group.

Using this as a starting point, Taba's second step is the selection of curriculum experiences, that is, deciding what will happen in the curriculum. This is to be determined by what is known by the educators about the nature of knowledge, and the nature of child development and learning. And it will be affected by such determinants as "the role of other educative agencies" — which in this

case may well be the public schools -- and by the resources of the free school.

Determination of the points upon which the organization of the curriculum and the "scheme of scope and sequence" will centre, allows the designer of a free school curriculum a considerable amount of control relating to the school's environment and philosophy. And again it must be emphasised that control plays an important part in many existing free schools. In all schools known to this author, one person was in control, albeit in an administrative sense, and had some sort of power over what went on in the school. It is from the defined philosophy of the school, and consequently from the degree of integration the educator wishes to impose upon the curriculum, that the objectives, activities and experiences will be selected. This process could equally well be applied to the design of such schools as The Everdale Place in Ontario, or Muraco School in Massachussetts, both of which have a set curriculum offering certain subjects and specific lessons, as it could to Summerhill, which has teachers, but no organized lesson structure or predetermined curriculum objectives. Similarly the scope and order of progression of any part of the curriculum remains, with this model, securely in the hands of the participants of the school.

This model, therefore, while it is a set guideline, offers the free school the advantage of ensuring that an

educator's wishes for his school will have been considered in the light of the objectives, people, plant resources, learning resources, which include all printed materials, radio, television, programmed instruction, and computer-assisted instruction, and environment which comprise the school. In this sense the curriculum will fit the school, rather than the school fitting the curriculum.

Having established a curriculum supported by various materials, and relating specifically to the objectives of the school, the free school educator is now in a position to consider special problems — educational and environmental — such as grade and age considerations, and factors of isolation, wealth and poverty — that is, elements which are not automatically covered by the objectives and curriculum proposed.

As with much of the plan suggested here, the degree to which it is applicable to a free school is the degree to which the people involved wish to take it. Skidelsky records that a considerable number of children in Britain's progressive schools, especially Summerhill, Kilquarity, Bedales and Dartington Hall, came from "broken homes" and were "problem children"; he describes Summerhill as emphasising therapy.⁴³ In these cases, the degree to which consideration of individual problems has been taken, is great. However, a contrast may be made by reference to

⁴³Skidelsky, op. cit., p.20.

Chinquipin School, a free school in Baytown, Texas, where intelligent poor boys are admitted, and delinquents or disturbed children not allowed in,⁴⁴ and Green Valley in Florida, which operates strictly for the disturbed children of the rich, and charges \$12,000 per annum.

Step Four: The Selection of Alternatives

This is the next stage in the plan, and is the point at which the initial nature of the school will be decided. To what extent is it to be isolated, rural, urban, public, part of something bigger, self-contained, technologized, systematized? In essence, what is to be meant by the words "free" and "school"? The question of the inclusion of a process by which alternatives to established procedures can be considered, has been mentioned earlier. The interesting thing is that this point implies, more than any other, that the free schools not see themselves as the form of education that Man has always been waiting for, the ultimate school system. There have to be alternatives to everything, and it is at this step in the plan that there must be alternatives to the systems being designed to produce an alternative. Thus the free school is revealed to be an institution and its processes and methods to be capable of correction and

⁴⁴Skidelsky, loc. cit.

modification. The objective is efficiency, so all alternatives must be considered to all components within the school, and to all interactions and processes. It is possible therefore, that, after due consideration of possible alternatives to the various processes comprising the free school plan that the ultimate function may be the non-operation of the school as an institution, and the incorporation of its principles into the public system. This is certainly the expressed wish of Eric Mann of the Newark Community School, and may well be the ultimate goal of many free schools. The important thing here is that the final design be based upon a clear philosophy and contain a curriculum which has been developed in the light of existing components, and determinants, and that, in all cases, the best method of achieving a philosophical objective has been adopted. A question which arises for this author, is: Are there any free schools in existence that are not operating primarily to develop and maintain the best system of learning they can, but rather are ignoring alternatives to themselves their subsystems in the interest of self-preservation? The answer appears to be affirmative, and may be linked to the lack of a well-established national acceptance of the concept of alternatives in North American education. The American and Canadian culture does not publicly support any educational institution than is not part of, or

associated with a public system. Thus the privately-operated free schools are in the same position today as were the progressive schools of the nineteen thirties in Britain -- struggling for the right to be considered, rather than assuming themselves to be viable alternatives.

Step Five: The Development of Alternative Organizational Forms

The aspect of educational technology that needs to be considered at this point concerns the selection of alternative organizational forms. How does an educator go about selecting technological alternatives? The scope of educational technology was described in Chapter Four and it was pointed out then that the word "technology" should not be limited to definition of devices, or media, or only to the logical organization of things. Rather, it had a broader scope, best described by Komoski as "any man-made device, process or logical technique designed to systematically produce a reproducible effect."

Such a definition embraces not only the mechanical products of technology such as the machines and media which frequently find their way into many schools, but also processes leading to the design of the schools, and their environment and curricula. Thus most, if not all decisions concerning the school will be technological decisions, and the various processes by which alternative organizational

forms will be established will also be technological in that they may be developed according to the systematic processes necessary for any design.

The main consideration, therefore in the development of alternative organizational forms, is that they be developed according to the same systematized process being used to design the whole school. Ultimately, the technological decision does not concern the operation of any device or devices, but rather the process envisioned within which any people or device, print or machine, may be effectively utilized. The organizational forms resulting from such considerations will then be viable alternatives.

Step Five takes step four a stage further, and is concerned with the actual development of alternative organizational forms. The question remains the same: are there better ways of doing what the school is attempting to do? And today this involves consideration of technology, especially those aspects and products of technology related to education. That certain specific instructional, or self-instructional aims may well be facilitated relatively inexpensively by programmed learning and contingency management as well as machines, is rarely disputed. Whether the use of machines or of technological method is a desirable educational thing, has been dealt with in Chapter Four. Inevitably the whole question of the relevance

of the free schools is raised here. In the light of modern achievements in educational media and technology, and in the light of the changes occurring in the public schools, how relevant is a free school? If it is within the realm of many children — especially middle-class children whose parents can afford free school fees — to obtain a wealth of information without reference to any institution, should not the free school advocates support this educational freedom by closing down and setting their students free? Obviously many points must be considered by individual schools on a matter such as this. However, the point to be made is that once it has been recognized in step four that there must be alternatives, and that they need to be adopted every time they reveal themselves as being better than an existing process, the plan must be flexible enough to be able to change when alternatives are adopted. New organizational forms must be able to develop when needed.

Step Six: Implementation of the Plan

It is not the purpose of this plan to examine the many various forms that implementation may take. It is perhaps the nature of the free schools that such an examination would involve describing every free school. The interpretation that can be placed upon the plan, and the direction the final school may take, is very broadly

based. Indeed it has been the purpose of this chapter to suggest a device whereby the flexibility demanded by an institution such as a free school is made possible both educationally and economically. There is no guarantee with this or any other model that the implementation process will automatically mean that the school will operate as desired. The design is for the implementation of a set of principles, based upon a clearly-defined philosophy, and may take any one of a large variety of physical forms, ranging from an institution created according to rigid principles, to no physical plant at all.

Three examples serve to illustrate this concept. The Kootenay Folk School in British Columbia, offers what it calls "a curriculum" expressed in the following terms:

Our classroom is where we are — planting trees, splitting logs, gathering berries, shovelling snow, conversing beside the fire.⁴⁵

And the Study-Travel Community School in Vermont has put travel at the base of its curriculum, with students spending as much as six months in a school year travelling. Thirdly, John Holt, speaking about free schools, suggested one limitation which the schools imposed upon themselves to which he objected, was the term "school": the sooner they released themselves from that label, the sooner they

⁴⁵"Kootenay Folk School" brochure (Nelson, B.C., 1970).

would be able to expand to encompass the ever present, and largely free facilities of their environment.⁴⁶ He felt the school was much less important than its environment, and would facilitate learning more when it placed the environment at the base of its curriculum.

Implementation, therefore, can only be described here as the culmination of a series of processes. What any school will look like if implemented after these steps have been followed is impossible to predict, since the whole object of the plan is to preserve the individual character of each school.

The variety of possible models has been discussed previously, and, in the light of the planning procedures suggested so far, the most likely model to be produced would be a theoretical plan of the school in operation, with those intending to operate it simulating the processes and the interactions of the components. Simulation of the various situations which may arise is an important exercise within the plan. It is, to all intents and purposes, the implementation of the plan, and thus is realistic. If handled thoroughly it will be a lengthy process in which the game of free school will be played with participants simulating projected situations, recognizing and developing areas of conflict, and arriving at solutions which may be set objectively within the overall framework of the school,

⁴⁶Personal communication to the author.

and whose consequences may in turn be considered.

A considerable number of free school educators would not accept that a theoretical model was necessary prior to actually operating a free school. The argument against such a model is an interesting one and typifies the vitality of the free school movement. One of the most involving aspects of the free school movement is the unifying effect upon participants of meeting common problems and attempting to solve them. A thoroughly explored model may well completely eliminate many problems, which is desirable. However, it may also have the less desirable effect of eliminating the important human interaction which would have taken place during the attempted solution of the problems. In this case step six would be the opening of the free school for those who may see the model as detracting from the importance of the interaction.

Step Seven: Monitoring the School

This seventh step involves watching the various processes, and recording the results so that the degree of effectiveness is known. This way the need for alternatives is easily identifiable. Ways of monitoring are numerous. In many existing free schools the prime monitoring device is the Weekly General Meeting, which has been described in Chapter Two. In such a meeting the participants of the school gather together to discuss what is essentially the

operation of the school, and to decide what will be retained and what changed. Not all power for change is vested in the participants: even at Summerhill ultimate authority belongs to A.S. Neill. However it is unlikely that he would consider it correct at Summerhill to abuse that power by making it any more than administrative responsibility. Monitoring the school from the point of view of the teachers is one thing: doing it from the children's point of view is different. Their ideas of what is effective will not necessarily be the same as those of the teachers. Whose judgement is to dominate? At what point should such monitoring and evaluating processes be taken out of the hands of the children? Questions such as this will have to be decided before the General Meeting can be considered an adequate monitoring device. Whether or not tests, examinations, parent-teacher discussions, would be utilized as monitoring devices is another thing that would have to be decided before the plan could be finally implemented.

In many public schools these devices were accepted as adequate monitors of both pupil and teacher behaviour. They may well be equally effective in a free-school situation, but they may not all be necessary. For example, most free schools are very much smaller than public schools, and the interaction of the members is more intense, than would be possible in an institution comprising up to two thousand pupils. Also, in many free schools parents are continually

involved in a variety of organizational and teaching roles, which may provide much interaction between them and the children and teachers. Thus formal meetings may be extraneous. Furthermore, many free schools do not hold examinations and only coach for them upon receiving an individual request: thus the examination is not necessarily a viable monitoring device. It is important, therefore that these various devices be explored in relation to the characteristics of the individual school before certain ones, or certain aspects of some devices, are selected as necessary.

The final question asked in the plan is "Is the school working?" If the answer, after monitoring is yes, then everything can keep going; if however, it is no, then the planners have no choice but to return to the point of conceptualization and work through the processes to find out why it isn't going as they wish. Thus, monitoring and deciding at a certain point whether or not the system is working are as important to the maintenance of freedom in a free school as are the processes which set it up.

Conclusion

In conclusion it must be re-emphasized that the plan presented in this study is not a guaranteed path to success, nor is it meant as a rigid set of rules designed to take freedom out of the free schools. The original question

posed concerned the establishment of an environment in which children could grow in whatever direction their individual personalities and group behaviours would take them. It is considered, by this author, impossible for any group of people to establish a workable, satisfying environment without adequate planning. Much of what has been suggested here involves the application of techniques usually associated with industry rather than education and particularly natural education. However, it must be pointed out that much of what is claimed to be amiss in traditional public schools may well be attributable to a lack of planning. There is probably no free school in existence that would want to be likened to a traditional public school, even though statistically in the city of Vancouver during 1970, five free schools closed, one was opened, and four public schools were built,⁴⁷ which would suggest that the free schools were less able to sustain themselves in that city than were their public counterparts.

To avoid the sterility often attached to systematic planning, only certain elements of systems design have been suggested, and combined with specific approaches and ideas. It is not suggested that a free school planner stick rigidly to this plan, but rather that from consideration of it will come a clearer conception of the sort of thinking

⁴⁷Information about the public schools is available from the B.C. Department of Education. Information about the free schools is from brochures and personal communications to the author.

which may be necessary before a free school can be opened.

Summary

It has been the purpose of this study to examine the free schools of North America. To this end, it has been necessary to consider the origins of various alternative schools in Europe and North America over the past two centuries; to examine the free schools as they are at present in North America; to relate the free schools to the technological culture within which they have developed; and to offer some proposals concerning the establishment of a free school, and the need for careful planning.

The information in this study has been gathered together from a variety of sources over the past two years, 1970 and 1971 and during that time this author has learned much about the people who operate these schools and the children who attend them. He has seen free schools, mostly in Canada, that have been happy places, and free schools that have appeared to be very unhappy places. Since this study began, many of the free schools that existed then have closed; other new schools have opened: and in keeping with the as yet short lived free school tradition, the scene has changed a great deal in two years.

However, there exist at the end of 1971 more free schools -- probably seven hundred, according to the New Schools Exchange -- than ever before. And research done by

that same exchange reports the existence of well over a thousand public schools that have adopted some of the free school principles.

It is to the people in those seventeen hundred schools across the continent who are attempting to naturalize education and future designs of free schools, that this study may be of some use.

APPENDIX I

List of schools contacted for purposes of this study:

Canada:

Animal Farm, St. John's Newfoundland.
Argenta Free School, Argenta, B.C.
Barker Free School, 6251 Overstone Drive, Vancouver West, B.C.
Everdale Place, Hillsborough, Ontario.
Kootenay Folk School, Box 46, Proctor, B.C.
Montreal Free School, St. Mark St., Montreal, P. Que.
Okanagan Wilderness School, Keremeos, B.C.
Saturna Island Free School, Saturna, B.C.
The School In The Barn, 136 Aberdeen Street, Fredericton, New Brunswick.
View-point Non-School, Duncan Lake, Argenta, B.C.

United States:

A New Kind of School, 1212 University Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii.
Anada Retreat, Box 18272, San Fransisco, California, 94118.
Athenian School, Danville, California.
Back Door School, Mill Valley, California.
Bar 717 Ranch School, Hayfork Trinity County, California 96041.

Bay High School, 1744 University Avenue, Berkeley, California.

Berkeley School, Box 418, Berkeley, California.

Berkwood School, 1809 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, California.

Bridge Mountain Foundation, 2011 Alba Road, Ben Lomond, California.

Camp Abelard, Hunter, New York.

Canyon School, Box 141, Canyon, California.

Capuchin Friars School, St. Elizabeth Friary, 128 Burleigh, Milwaukee.

Cambridge Free School, 5 Hayward Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Catlin-Gabel School, 8825 S.W. Barnes Street, Portland, Oregon.

Centennial School, Lehigh University, Pennsylvania.

Chapel Hill Independent School, P.O. Box 136, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Caspar Community Workshop, 55 West Street, New York.

Celeste, SS Route, Box 211, Corrales, New Mexico.

Chinquipin, Baytown, Texas.

City School, 427 Cedar Avenue, Minneapolis, Missouri.

Collaberg School, 206 3rd. Avenue, N. Indian Rocks, Florida.

Cuanda School, East First Street, New York, New York.

Discovery Room For Children, 160th Street, New York, New York.

Enlightenment Incorporated, Box 595, Garberville, California.

Early Learning Centre, 12 Gary Road, Stamford, Connecticut.

East Hill School, Ithaca, New York.

Fayerweather Street School, 74 Fayerweather Street,
Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Fifteenth Street School, 206 West 15th Street,
New York, New York.

Forallones Institute, 440 Bohemian Hi-Way, Freestone,
California.

Francis J. Muraco School, Winchester, Massachusetts.

Franconia College, New Hampshire, 03580.

Free High School, 424 Lytton Avenue, Palo Alto,
California.

Finegold, Box 28, Star Route, Fresno, California.

Free School, 20 Oxford Road, Albany, New York.

Friends World College, Mitchell Gardens, Westbury,
New York.

Greenbriar School, RR 2, Box 173, Bastrop, Texas.

Green Valley, Box 606, Orange City, Florida.

Halcyon Ashram School, RDF 2. Franklin, New Hampshire.

Hampton Day School, Box 604, Bridgehampton, New
York.

Headlands School, Box 855, Mendocino, California.

Helen Bush/Parkside School, 405 36th Avenue,
Seattle, Washington.

Hillside Farm, Sardine Creek, Box 517, Gold Hill,
Oregon.

Hudson Montessori School, Hudson, Ohio.

Independent School of Buffalo, Amherst, New York.

Learning Tree, 3822 Mayfield Avenue, La Crescenta,
California.

Learning Place, 2020 Fell Street, San Francisco,
California.

Lewis-Wadhams School, R.D. Westport, New York.

Little School of Seattle, 6556 35th Avenue,
N.E. Seattle, Washington.

Los Angeles Free School, 1719 Clinton Street,
Los Angeles.

Meeting School, Ridge, New Hampshire.

Metropolitan Learning Centre, c/o Portland Public
School, Portland, Oregon.

Mexican-American Culture Group, Susanville,
California.

Midtown School, 4155 Russell Avenue, Los Angeles,
California.

Minnesota Summerhill Community Box, 271 Spray
Island, Minn.

Monmouth Modern Day School, 24 Union Hill Road,
Morganville, New Jersey.

Monterrey Peninsula Free University, Monterey,
California.

Nairobi College, Palo Alto, California.

Newark Community School, Newark, New Jersey.

New Education Foundation, Glendale, Oregon.

New Community School, Oakland, California.

New Directions Community School, 445 Tenth Street,
Richmond, California.

New School, 2741 Guildford Avenue, Baltimore,
Maryland, 21218.

North American Student Cooperative, 515 East
Jefferson, Michigan.

Open Community School, Claverack, New York.

Orange County Free School, Anaheim, California.

Ortega Park Teachers College, 540 Santa Cruz Avenue,
Menlo Park, California.

Pacific High School, Box 311, Palo Alto, California.

Paideia, P.O. Box 14131, San Diego, California.

Panther Mountain Commune, Muller Road, Shandaken, New York.

Pegasus, Box 657, Hayward, California.

Peninsula School Ltd., Menlo Park, California.

People Of Elm Hill, Plainfield, Vermont.

Pinehenge School, Waterford, Maine.

Pinel, 3655 Reliez Valley Road, Martinez, California.

Presidio Hill School, 3839 Washington Street, San Fransisco, California.

Prospect School, North Bennington, Vermont.

Radical Synectics for Education, P.O. Box 710, Oakland University, Michigan.

Randolph School, South Avenue, Woppinger Falls, New York.

Residential College, East Quad, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Riverdale School, 11733 S.W. Bregman, Portland, Oregon.

Redwood School, 4501 Old Trenton Road, Santa Rosa, California.

Rotchester Educational Alternatives, Rotchester, New York.

Santa-fe Community School, P.O. Box 2241, Santa-fe, New Mexico.

Satya, P.O. Box 237, Lincoln, Mass., 01773.

School in Rose Valley, Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

School, 4418 Woodlawn Avenue, Seattle, Washington.

Shire School, 239 Sadowa Street, San Fransisco, California.

Stittikuk School, Bannoch Road, Orono, Maine.

Stonesoup School, 202 Jasmine Road, Altamonte, Florida.

- School of the Arts, Stillwater, New Jersey.
- Storefront Learning Center, 90 West Brookline, St. Boston, Mass.
- Study-Travel Community School, Box 201 Putney, Vermont.
- Sudbury Valley School, Middlesex, Mass.
- Summerhill Ranch, Topanga, California.
- Syracuse Free School, Syracuse, New York.
- The Indian School, Rt. 2, Box 140, Ridgeville, S. Carolina.
- The School, c/o James Bay School of Social Sciences, Irvine, California.
- Timberhill, 35755 Hauser St., Cazadero, California.
- Touchstone Center, 86th Street, New York.
- Toward a New School 225 Lafayette, Wood-dale, Illinois.
- Urban School, Washington Street, San Fransisco, California.
- Valley Cooperative School, 263 Dupage Street, Elgin, Illinois.
- Van Duzen School, Star Route, Box 156, Bridgeville, California.
- Village School, New Gloucester, Maine.
- Voyage Without A Name, Rt. 1, Box 4242, Longwood, California.
- Warehouse, Cooperative School, 465 My. Auburndale, Mass.
- Williams School, 141 Grove St., Auburndale, Mass.
- Wilson Campus School, Mankato State College, Mankato, Minnesota.
- Upland School, 1825 Upland St., Boulder, Colorado.
- You and Me, 6th St., S.W. Washington, D.C.
- Youth Action, 1956 Ala Moana, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96815.

APPENDIX II

List of American States and Canadian Provinces
in which there are free schools:

Canadian Provinces

Alberta	1	Nova Scotia	1
British Columbia	6	Ontario	9
New Brunswick	1	Quebec	1
Newfoundland	2		

American States

Alabama	1	Maine	11	Oklahoma	1
Arizona	3	Maryland	3	Pennsylvania	9
California	118	Massachusetts	26	South Dakota	1
Colorado	9	Michigan	11	Rhode Island	1
Connecticut	7	Minnesota	4	Texas	4
Washington D.C.	7	Missouri	9	Vermont	10
Florida	3	New Hampshire	9	Virginia	2
Hawaii	6	New Mexico	7	Washington	10
Idaho	1	New York	44	West Virginia	1
Illinois	8	New Jersey	5	Wisconsin	5
Iowa	2	North Carolina	3		
Kansas	3	Ohio	10		
Kentucky	1	Oregon	14		

APPENDIX III

List of fees of ten illustrative rural free schools, including the lowest and highest fees known:

Chapel Hill School, North Carolina	\$1000
Everdale Place, Ontario	\$1500
Saturna Island Free School, B.C.	\$1600
Minnesota Summerhill School, Minnesota	\$2000
Open Community School, New York	\$2150
Study-Travel School, Vermont	\$2500
Lewis-Wadhams School, New York	\$2850
Pacific High School, California	\$2850
Pegasus, California	\$3750
Green Valley, Florida	\$12000

List of fees of ten illustrative urban free schools, including the lowest and highest fees known:

Animal Farm, Newfoundland	\$0
Chinquipin, Texas	\$0
Shire School, California	"Pay what you can."
Berkeley Free School, California	\$800
Rotchester Educational Alternatives, N.Y.	\$800

List of fees (continued):

Little School of Seattle, Washington	\$850
City School, Minnesota	\$920
Midtown, California	\$950
Barker Free School, B.C.	\$1000
Learning Place, California	\$1000

APPENDIX IV

Organizations dealing primarily with
Alternative Schools:

The American Summerhill Society,
6063 Hargis Street,
Los Angeles,
California, 90034.

The New Schools Exchange,
301 Canon Perdido,
Santa Barbara,
California, 93101.

APPENDIX V

Magazines and publishing organizations handling
Alternative Schools Material

New England Free Press,
791 Tremont Street,
Boston, Mass.

The New Schools Exchange,
301 Canon Perdido,
Santa Barbara,
California, 93101.

Radical Education Project,
Box 561 - A,
Detroit, Michigan, 48232.

This Magazine Is About Schools,
P.O. Box 876,
Terminal A,
Toronto, Ontario.

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