

dogma demanded by most political parties is not easily compatible with the critical and dispassionate spirit of enquiry and challenge which should characterize the mental attitude and activity of a student."<sup>4</sup> Much the same point is made by G. L. Brook in "The Modern University," where he says: "... a graduate whose education has been more than superficial should have acquired an ability to see an opponent's point of view, a willingness to concede the force of his valid arguments, and a refusal to misrepresent them which he can carry into the affairs of everyday life. Such a man is not as a rule a good party man, for a man whose chief aim is the pursuit and open declaration of the truth as he sees it must sometimes be disloyal to his party." The narrow sectionalism and emotive propaganda of party politics are contrary to the ideals of a university, and it would be in the best interests of our universities for political societies along the lines envisaged by Professor Stock to be kept

off the campuses. Which was, in fact, what the Harcourt commission recommended.

This would also be in the best interests of this country. South Africa cannot afford to have the political comment of its students emasculated; and emasculated it undoubtedly would be if it had to be channelled through the spokesmen of various campus political societies representing only the more conservative students. There could be no corporate voice and, worse, that would not matter, as there could be no detached vision to be expressed by one.

It seems clear to me, then, not only that students have the right and duty to "dabble in politics", as that University Senator put it, but also that it is in the best interests of the universities and of South African society as a whole that student political activity should retain its present form.□

<sup>1</sup> Report of the committee of enquiry into Student Affairs. University of Natal 1968. p. 228

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Newman. The idea of a University. Langmans, Green & Co., 1947 p. 335

<sup>3</sup> Newman Op. Cit. p. 93

<sup>4</sup> Op. Cit. p. 242

<sup>5</sup> G. L. Brook. The Modern University. Andre Deutsch. London 1965 p. 12.

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## 'IN THE ILLICHIAN FIELDS'

by Patrick Kearney



Ivan Illich

In June and July of 1973 I had the privilege of studying at CIDOC (Centre for Intercultural Documentation) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and of attending seminars led by Ivan Illich, author of *Celebration of Awareness, Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality*.

As the calendar of this unusual Mexican institution states: "CIDOC is not a University but a meeting place for persons whose common concern is the reconstruction of society and the understanding of the effect of social and ideological change on the minds and hearts of men. It is above all an environment for contemplation and learning and not a headquarters for partisan action."

CIDOC was originally founded, early in the 1960's, to prepare North American missionaries for work in Latin America, by encouraging them to analyse their motives for wanting to do such work, and also to make in-depth studies of the contrasts between their own culture and that of the countries to which they were going. At the same time they were to learn Spanish. Now CIDOC has severed its official connections with the Catholic Church, and though priests and nuns still attend courses there (a Vatican ban having been lifted) CIDOC now draws a very much wider range of people whose concern is social change, as well as quite a number who simply want to learn Spanish.

NATAL SOCIETY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

There are three distinct activities sponsored by CIDOC: a library and publications section, a language school, and the Institute for Contemporary Latin American Studies (ICLAS). The library has a very fine collection of socio-political documents on Latin America, and the publications department sends very useful collections of papers relating to social change, to interested individuals and groups all over the world. The separation of the language school from ICLAS is of course a reflection of Illich's view that skill training should be separated from liberal education.

In the language school (the 'skill training' section) students have intensive sessions of five hours a day for four to sixteen weeks. Young Mexicans (most of them without any academic qualifications) have been trained to give instruction in Spanish, to groups of four students, in a highly disciplined and structured approach to language teaching. At the time of my visit there were close on 300 students learning Spanish in this way, and for someone who had spent 13 years 'learning Afrikaans' without succeeding in being able to speak that language, it was most interesting to see how rapidly these highly motivated adults acquired a new language!

Fees in the language school are 50 dollars a year (the CIDOC registration fee, paid also by ICLAS participants) and 30 dollars a week purely for the language classes. Those who enroll in the language school are not required to enroll in ICLAS, and vice versa; nor are they automatically entitled to attend ICLAS sessions unless they pay the fee required of ICLAS participants.

ICLAS (the 'liberal education' section) functions simply as an agency for free-lance teachers. Both teachers and students pay the 50 dollar a year registration fee, and 8 dollars a week for each week they participate. This entitles them to the use of the library and archives and to attend the *ciclo*, a session held each day in the garden at 11.00 a.m. These *ciclos* are not unlike the College Lectures at Natal University, except that they provide an opportunity for teachers to 'display their wares'. After this initial presentation of a new course, a student may enroll if he wishes: the teacher may charge a fee of up to 30 dollars (for a course of between 2 and 8 weeks), which he must collect himself.

Amongst the courses being offered in the summer of 1973 were the following:  
 "Pre-Columbian Religious Thought and its Survival in Mexico", "Alternative Approaches to Health and Sick Care", "Political Ideologies", "Pre-Hispanic Political Philosophy", "Deschooling as a method of social change" and of course Illich's own course: "Multiple Limits to Growth".

Because my visit was only to be a brief one, I decided to concentrate on Illich's seminar and to try to discover as much as I could about the background to his thinking. Advance notice of Illich's course introduced it as follows:

"Industrial growth is limited in several, equally fundamental and independent dimensions. Not only the overproduction of goods but also the professionalization of services can become destructive. The major tools of society must be inverted, as a necessary condition for a life-style which is both socialist and convivial."

All the meetings of this seminar took place in the beautiful upstairs garden (crupex covered and enriched with the singing of a great variety of birds). The class was divided into two groups the one Spanish-speaking and the other English-speaking (about thirty people in each). As the weeks passed, Illich made no secret of the fact that he found the Spanish speakers far more stimulating: they approached problems with an intensity founded on personal experience, while the English-speakers (chiefly North-Americans) were overly-intellectual in their approach.

Illich lost no time in informing the participants that we were gathered to discuss 'with discipline and austerity' his current concerns and interests. He has now moved on to other concerns than schooling and education, though each of these new concerns is closely linked with the idea of 'deschooling'. Illich's present concern is the transformations of language in the course of the industrial age, and how these mirror a changed philosophy. He noted that in the course of the industrial age a number of concepts that were formerly referred to by means of verbs are now much more commonly



An Ndebele hut in the Northern Transvaal.

referred to by means of nouns. Whereas people used to make use of verbs like 'to house', 'to move', 'to learn', 'to heal' — they now tend to refer more readily to 'housing', 'transportation', 'education' and 'health-care' — all of which have become commodities which must be provided for people rather than activities which people undertake on their own behalf. As long as provision is made in this way, there will inevitably be a shortage of these 'commodities'. In fact, social inequalities will be sharpened rather than reduced. The richness and variety of human life will be severely limited, so that progress will come to mean, for example, the arrival of township housing to replace the colourful housing of the Ndebele, or the easy availability of Wimpy hamburgers in the most far-flung jungle.

To depend on others for one's housing (or entertainment, health, learning, etc.), Illich stressed, is to allow oneself to be less than human, and alienated from reality. Clearly this is a concept with profound consequences for one's idea of world justice and development. It is worth noting that Illich has taken the ideas of pessimistic ecologists (Meadows, Jackson, Dubos, et al.) and given them a philosophical base. It is not only necessary for man to be more self-

reliant because of the scarcity of human and natural resources — it is also more desirable.

In order to protect both man and his environment from the destructive consequences of the industrial method of production, a variety of limits needs to be imposed upon growth, and the nature of technology used should be selected with great care (Illich tends to class the school and other institutions like jails and asylums as forms of technology). Like Jacques Ellul, Illich regards modern politics as illusory, while most people view politics as **the** arena where the destiny of men and nations is decided. Illich's contention is that it is actually the form of technology used that shapes society rather than the political process.

One example of a controlling technology which shapes man and society, and which Illich refers to very frequently, is the car, with its insatiable appetite for scarce resources like fuel and land. All 'developed' nations have allowed themselves to become addicted to the use of cars rather than to simpler means of transport (like the bicycle) which enable man to do his own moving, rather than taking over that function from him. In the field of



Urban African Housing.

education, said Illich, the library is rather like the bicycle, the school like the car. He made it clear that he is not simply reviving the neo-Luddite argument: he is not against technology as such, but against those technologies which leave man no alternative way of achieving his aims.

It is now close on five years since the publication of **Deschooling Society**, and a suitable time to consider how Illich's thinking on education has developed. For this reason I spent a considerable amount of time in the CIDOC library reading articles that Illich has published subsequent to **Deschooling Society**, as well as resource materials which he had put on 'reserve' for those taking his course.

The greatest change in his thinking has been in his attitude towards the concept 'education'. In **Deschooling Society** he attacked schools as a method of educating people, but continued to regard education as an ideal. Now he questions the value of education, and it is interesting to examine why.

In 1970, during conversations with the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, Illich learnt that Bishop Comenius, who is commonly regarded as the founder of modern school systems, was an alchemist. Subsequently Illich discovered evidence for Bloch's assertion in the form of a record which stated that Bishop Comenius founded an Alchemists' Lodge while he was in London in 1642.

In analysing terminology used in education today Illich found that practically all such words as **process, program, subject matter** and **enlightenment** were part of the technical terminology of the 'great art' of alchemy during the late 14th and 15th centuries.

In order to understand why Illich is so concerned about this connection between education and alchemy it is necessary to remember that alchemists were not only desirous of transforming base metals into pure gold, but that they hoped at the same time to have their own consciousness transformed in order that they might share in the 'great enlightenment'. Thus Pauwels and Bergier state:

The secret of alchemy is this: there is a way of manipulating matter and energy so as to produce what modern scientists call 'a field of force'. This field acts on the observer and puts him in a privileged position **vis-a-vis** the universe. From this position he has access to the realities which are ordinarily hidden from us by time and space, matter and energy."

What the alchemists believed actually happened in the transmutation of lead into gold was the regaining of the nobility of human nature, those qualities which Adam lost, and which are to be regained so that man may become the new man, differing from others in some complete and perfect way so that comparison with other men is no longer possible. It is clear then that from a Christian viewpoint, Alchemy denies the salvation and regeneration of all men through the incarnation,

death and resurrection of Christ, and substitutes for this an exclusive and quasi-magical transforming process.

Bishop Comenius' writings on education gave rise to a subtle but important change of emphasis — transference of the responsibility for education from the learner to the teacher. The accent was no longer to be on the learner's responsibility to study but upon the teacher's duty to instruct. Education became a process which was 'done to people', rather than an activity which they undertook on their own behalf. Once Comenius' approach became popular, people no longer thought of going to a school or university to 'read history or philosophy or the classics', but **to be educated**, to be, as it were, the subjects of a process undertaken by someone else. In our own age we state it even more crudely — the aim is to **get an education**.

The connection of alchemy with modern schooling practices becomes startlingly clear when one recalls that the alchemists had devised a series of 12 stages through which metals had to pass in order to become gold, and through which the alchemists' soul passed in the process of reaching the higher enlightenment. These 12 stages bear a rather disturbing resemblance to the 12 years of compulsory schooling through which we believe all children must pass in order to become fit for society! As Illich states:

The alchemist sought to refine base elements by leading their distilled spirits through twelve stages of successive enlightenment, so that for their own and all the world's benefit they might be transmuted into gold. Of course, alchemists failed no matter how often they tried, but each time their 'science' yielded new reasons for their failure, and they tried again.

Padagogy opened a new chapter in the history of the Ars Magna. Education became the search for an alchemic process that would bring forth a new type of man, who would fit into an environment created by scientific magic. But no matter how much each generation spent on its schools, it always turned out that the majority of people were unfit for enlightenment by this process and had to be discarded as unprepared for life in a man-made world.

Illich's thought might superficially seem to have little direct significance for the present political situation in South Africa, and in some respects his analyses of school would seem to be disproved by the history of schooling in this country. With this in mind I was anxious to discuss South Africa with Illich, and had one fairly lengthy conversation with him on this point. His first reaction to the merest mention of South Africa was that it is not a country that he likes to think about very much, in view of his experience of racial discrimination at the hands of the Nazis.

Then I posed him the following problem: if it is true, as he asserts, that schooling is a method of 'domesticating' people rather than 'liberating' them, why has the South

African government consistently refused to impose compulsory schooling on the black population, while its opponents have made this demand regularly. His reply was that if the government does really want to succeed in dominating the blacks and keeping them in a subservient position, then indeed it must impose compulsory schooling **and** integrate the universities! Unfortunately, immediately after this statement Illich was called away, leaving a somewhat dazed listener.

On reflection I came to see his view as not so extraordinary after all, especially if one bears in mind the depth of his analysis and the long-term view he takes. When there are so many signs of the future collapse of western industrial civilization, it does seem odd to be desperately concerned

that blacks in South Africa should be 'hooked' on our institutional patterns, rather than seek alternatives that will ensure genuine progress and a greater measure of social equality.

My visit to CIDOC and Mexico was over all too soon. I came away having thoroughly enjoyed the stimulation of participating in Illich's course, and meeting students from North and South America who are similarly concerned about the future. Research into the background of Illich's writings had convinced me more than ever of the significance of his analyses of contemporary society. I could not help wondering whether some sort of CIDOC is needed on the African continent, to study the effects of westernization, and intercultural contact.□

# PROVERBS OF WHITE POWER.

compiled by Vortex.

1. In order to maintain law and order, it is not sufficient that injustice be done. It must be seen to be done.
2. Let no-one say that we do not recognise quality when we see it. If we did not recognise it, how could we have been so accurate in our assaults upon it?
3. It is quite untrue to say that we object to dialogue as such. It is only **effective** dialogue that we condemn. Indeed the other kinds are a part of our policy.
4. Of course black people must be allowed to think for themselves. But it would be irresponsible to allow them to interpret their own thoughts.
5. Black people must think for themselves, that is, they must think creatively – in other words, in the way which we prescribe.
6. Federation is not enough. We insist that every homeland be accorded its holy right to be independent, self-respecting, neglected, and exploited.
7. Blacks must not be exploited by others, It is our prerogative.
8. If you don't have to make concessions, don't make them. If you do have to, still don't make them. When you **have** made them, say that you haven't. Unless of course you happen to be at the United Nations.
9. We have a right to most of the land in the country. History proves it. We wrote the history books.
10. If a person you dislike has broken the law, charge him. If he hasn't, ban him. If it isn't expedient to ban him, smear him. If it is awkward to smear him, put him on your black list: who knows what opportunities the future may offer?
11. If someone criticises one of your actions, be silent. If he demands an explanation, say that it is not in the public interest to give it. If he substantiates his criticism, again be silent. If he quotes you, say that you have been quoted out of context. When the fuss has died down, ban him.
12. Anything can be made legal by legislation.
13. Don't allow the country to be called a "police state". But make sure that it is one.