

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Correspondents: Arthur Lombardo
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A Comment on "Freedom and Bureaucracy in the Schools"

Kinnelon, New Jersey

Dear Editor:

I could hardly believe that I was reading what I was reading. What began like a Model-T Ford turned out to be an Apollo program rocket. Let us hope that Donald Arnstine's indications¹ of what is needed in education (for example, true freedom) are supported more adequately with attention than the Apollo program will be hereafter supported by federal funds. Attention: those who read an article in many spurts over several sittings, do not leave the Arnstine article after the first few pages. It is a "sleeper" or a "dark horse," a real educational "O. Henry."

As one who has worked within bureaucratic educational systems, I had often thought that if the right people were in administrator and follower positions, the systems would move more smoothly. This, however, was like seeking a 300 horsepower rather than a 200 horsepower car. No matter the change, it was still a car. While reading Arnstine's article I began to realize that,

¹ Donald Arnstine. "Freedom and Bureaucracy in the Schools." In: Vernon F. Haubrich, editor. *Freedom, Bureaucracy, & Schooling*. 1971 Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1971.

perhaps, no, *actually*, a plane would be a better way to travel. Now I have an inkling of what might have run through the mind of those who bred work horses when they saw the reasonableness of motor driven vehicles. Shades of "future shock"!

Basically, Arnstine develops the thought that bureaucratic schools seeking efficiency are not beneficial to people. Promotion of submission so that behaviors are more easily channeled (for example, observed and categorized) facilitates compliance in schools, just as city ghettos often reinforce compliance to a "loser-image." What is lost in many schools is the self-confidence in one's own thinking process, given up by order of the "King" (authority-subordinate system).

It may be natural for school-reformer types to read Arnstine's article as a support for their own anti-authority (for example, anti-principals, anti-superintendents) attitudes. This might be a put-down of leadership and an encouraging of freed followers (which is somewhat like a band of extreme anarchists). My perception of Arnstine's message is that he advocates neither, but rather calls for shared leadership and, therefore, active responsibility for education among the many.

From my view within school systems,

Arnstine is probably correct in that the change to truly free (that is, humane and honest) schools would be effected sooner by parents, students, and teachers than by administrators and board of education members. This is not to say that the latter are mean and stupid and the former are kind and intelligent. Rather, it can be perceived as a result of those in traditional rein-holding positions usually seeing their role as causing

the direction of those whose reins they hold. Horses should be seen as coming before carts. More clearly put: first things first. For each to go his own way, namely to think and be honest, there simply cannot be just the way of a leader in the autocratic sense.

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An Open Communication to Dale Alam and All ASCDers

Platteville, Wisconsin

Dear Editor:

How timely your "open letter" to radicals *et al.*,¹ as it comes almost literally on the "heels" of the 1971 ASCD Conference, which was, for me, truly one of the most worthwhile, stimulating conferences ever. And yet, it left me heartsick—a malaise from which I am rapidly recovering, now that I am back in contact with some very perceptive, real students—and a few colleagues with like remaining attributes.

As some co-action-lab participants may remember, I was quite verbal during our sessions, as a result of intense involvement and interest in what was happening. I attended the Conference in the face of Wisconsin's

austerity budget (special permission to leave the state, even at my own expense), because I needed to check out my perceptions of trends in education against others' views. I was beginning almost to believe others' implications that I was overreacting (is there such a thing?) and getting worked up over issues that did not exist.

So, in spite of talking a lot, I am also a relatively sincere, empathetic listener. I did a lot of real listening in St. Louis. I would like to share with you a few of the assumed-to-be-significant points I heard. They are as follows:

1. It was reaffirmed loudly and clearly that "the money well is running dry," which is not news to school people.

2. The paying public is demanding "accountability" of the schools; that is, evidence that schools as institutions, as well as individual programs and teachers, are actually producing the results that they claim to be.

¹ Dale Alam. "An Open Letter to Radicals, Radical Liberals, Moderate Radicals, and Radical Extremists." *Educational Leadership* 28 (6): 614-16; March 1971.

3. Accountability demands results that can be seen, and thus measured.

4. It is easier to "see" results in the cognitive and psychomotor domains than it is in the affective domain (no new news, either).

5. The way to be able to show results to the wary public is to write all objectives in behavioral terms, and then observe and quantify the relevant behaviors.

6. It is possible to assume (or pretend) that all learning can be behaviorally defined and stated, and not be a behaviorist. (Wow!)

7. If, all learning goals are stated behaviorally, teaching will almost magically become more effective (and efficient, a "good" word), students will become more motivated, learn more, and be happier with school, and the public will be satisfied because they can see the results.

8. All affective learning outcomes can be stated behaviorally, but since the public is more concerned with cognitive and psychomotor outcomes, and traditionally we've never really focused on affective learnings anyway, go ahead and try to get at affective behavioral objectives. Meanwhile, don't get "shook" if it's too hard, but keep showing the public outcomes like eight out of ten free throws, high achievement test scores, and reading profiles above the norms, and they won't get too upset with your school. In fact, they'll probably not care at all, as affective outcomes are not really crucial to school success, anyway.

9. As school-related professionals, we know that affective learnings are of utmost importance, but if it's a choice between our "jobs" (and I mean "jobs") and providing authentic learning conditions for kids, the kids have to take seconds again.

10. Don't feel guilty about the accountability impact (behavioral goals, performance contracting, "systems" approaches, competency approaches, measurement madness, etc.) because it may help a few teachers; and, after all, education is always subject to a pendulum effect, and in a few years the pendulum will begin to swing back to where we can do what's *really* right. In the meantime, the kids will just have to do their best with what we can do for them.

Perhaps you can now see why I came

from the Conference a little upset, and why I relate so empathetically to your article. It certainly relates to what I "heard" in St. Louis, and so cleverly and appropriately deals with other issues, such as tenure, which are an integral part of the package problem here noted.

It seems to me that even ASCDers are finally succumbing to the pressures which have already made stimulus-response trainers of many teachers, administrators, and professors of education. I did not think ASCD would compromise, and maybe the majority are not, but it seems that many are trying desperately to deal with the conflict by attempting psychologically to live with two mutually exclusive learning theories, pretending they fit comfortably together when they really do not. The results can only be much personal anguish and educational confusion. ASCDers have seemingly sold out, are running scared and trying to justify it with techniques and approaches, first and foremost being behavioral objectives.

It took much courage, honesty, and humility, it seems to me, for Jerome Bruner to say, on the last night of the Conference, to the membership that *The Process of Education* contains some limitations which need to be recognized and dealt with by all who would educate. As I sat in Kiel Auditorium that night, I could not help but wonder if the "sell-outs" could really afford to admit to consciousness the reality of his message. In the last action lab on Wednesday, it appeared that many had not dared to consider the implications of what happens when it is assumed that the structure of knowledge is educative almost independent of the person involved.

Your letter, Mr. Alam, really says it. May all ASCDers read it again, and thoughtfully, affectively respond in depth. Kids' educations are at stake. Keep writing and keep doing! Dare the schools attempt to influence the social order? Or must we again float, or even swim, downstream?

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