SELF-GOVERNMENT

When we founded the school we resolved to have no government from above, and self-government was, as it were, forced on the children. Much has been said and written about the iniquity of “forcing” self-government on children. Some time ago at a meeting of progressive school teachers in London the theme was self-government. Two teachers from progressive schools got up and each told the same tale—that they had given their children self-government, and in three weeks the children came and beseeched them to bring back the old way of benevolent adult authority. Currie of Dartington Hall sat by me.

“For God's sake, Neill,” he said impatiently, “get up and tell them what self-government is. You are the only man in the room who has had it for years.”

I declined. “What's the good?” I said wearily. “They don't want to believe that self-government can succeed.”

The school that has no self-government should not be called a progressive school at all. It is a compromise school. You cannot have progression unless children feel completely free to govern their own social life. When there is a boss, freedom is not there, and this applies more to the benevolent boss than to the disciplinarian. The child of spirit can rebel against the hard boss, but the soft boss merely makes him impotently soft himself.

Is it worth while giving the arguments for self-government? I wonder if it is. All that it is necessary to say is that one weekly general meeting is, in my opinion, of more value than a week's curriculum of school subjects. The educational value of practical civics cannot be over-emphasized. The child realizes the value of self-government and in Summerhill the pupils would fight to the death for their right to govern themselves.

Our system of self-government has gone through various phases and changes. When we had six pupils it was a kind of family affair. If Derrick punched Inge she would call a meeting and we would all sit round and give our opinions. We had no jury system; the verdict and sentence were given by show of hands. As the school grew bigger this family method gradually changed, and the first change was the election of a chairman. Following that came trial by jury, a jury elected on the spot by the chairman. The culprit had the right of challenging any member of the jury, but this seldom happened; only occasionally would one hear the protest: “I won't have Bill on the jury, for he's a pal of Pat's (Pat being the plaintiff who got punched).”

During the last year or two we have had another form of government. At the beginning of each term a government of five is elected by vote. This sort of cabinet deals with all cases of charges and acts as a jury, giving punishment. The cases are read out at the general Saturday night meeting, and the verdicts are announced. Here is a typical example of such a procedure:

Jim has taken the pedals from Jack's cycle because his own cycle is a dud and he wants to go away with some others for a week-end hike. The government after due consideration of the evidence announces that Jim has to replace the pedals and be forbidden to go on the hike. The chairman says: “Any objections?”

Jim gets up and shouts that there jolly well are (only his adjective isn't exactly “jolly”).

*Editor's note: This continues the excerpts begun in vol. 3, 1944, 220ff.
"This isn't fair," he cries. "I didn't know that Jack ever used his old crock of a grid; it has been kicking about among the bushes for days. I don't mind shoving his pedais back but I think the punishment unfair. I don't want to have the hike cut out."

Follows a breezy discussion. In this it transpires that Jim should have a weekly allowance from home, but it hasn't come for six weeks and he hasn't a bean. The meeting votes that the sentence be squashed and it is duly squashed. But what to do about Jim? Finally it is decided to open a subscription fund to put Jim's bike in order . . . and he sets off on his hike happily.

Usually the government's verdict is accepted both by the culprit and the community. On appeal I cannot remember a government sentence being increased. The ordinary procedure on an appeal is for the chairman (nearly always a pupil) to elect a jury to decide the appeal, and in the case of Jim and the bike the jury had disagreed and had left the decision to the general vote.

Certain classes of offenses come under the automatic fine rule. If you ride another's cycle without permission there is an automatic fine of sixpence. Swearing down town (but you can swear as much as you like in the school grounds), bad behavior in the cinema, climbing on roofs, throwing food in the dining room, these and others are automatic fine rules. Punishments are nearly always fines . . . half a pocket money or miss a cinema. When, recently, Paxton Chadwick (Chad) was tried for riding Ginger's bike without permission, he and two other members of the staff, who had also ridden it, were ordered to push each other on Ginger's bike ten times round the front lawn. Four small boys who climbed the ladder of the builders erecting the new workshop were ordered to climb up and down the ladder for ten minutes on end. A jury never seeks advice from an adult, well, I can remember only one occasion when it was done. Three girls had raided the kitchen larder. The government fined them their pocket money. They raided the larder again that night, and the jury fined them a cinema. They raided it once more, and the government was gravelled what to do. The foreman consulted me.

"Give them tuppence reward each," I suggested.

"What? Why, man, you'll have the whole school raiding the larder if we do that."

"You won't," I said. "Try it."

They tried it. Two of the girls refused to take the money, and all three were heard to declare that they would never raid the larder again . . . they didn't for about two months all the same.

If I am giving the impression that our self-government is only a police court I am giving the wrong impression. It sometimes happens that no one has broken a law during the week. The function of the government is to make all laws and to discuss social features of the community. At the beginning of each term bedtime rules are made by vote . . . you go to bed according to your age. Then questions of general behavior come up. Sports committees have to be elected, end of term dance committee, the theatre committee, bedtime officers, down town officers (who report any disgraceful behavior out of the school boundary). The most exciting subject ever brought up is that of food. I have more than once wakened up a dull meeting by proposing that second helpings should be abolished. Any sign of kitchen favoritism in the matter of food is severely handled, but when the kitchen brings up the question of food wastage the meeting is not much interested. Children's attitude to food is essentially a personal and self-centered one. Incidentally I remark that Summerhill food is excellent. All visitors praise it, and the children are mostly un-
conscious of it, which is as it should be. Good feeding should come before everything else in a school. No school should require the tuck box system, and when children are well fed the sweets they buy with their pocket money do no harm. Children like sweets because their bodies crave for sugar, and sugar they should have.

In our government meetings all academic discussions are eschewed; children are eminently practical, and theory bores them. They are concrete and not abstract. I once brought forward a motion that swearing should be abolished by law, and gave my reasons . . . I had been showing a prospective parent round with her little boy. Suddenly from upstairs came a very strong adjective; the mother hastily gathered her son to her and went off in a hurry.

“Why,” I asked in the general meeting, “should my income suffer because some fathead swears in front of a prospective parent? It isn’t a moral question at all; it is purely financial. You swear and I lose a pupil.”

My question was answered by a lad of fourteen.

“Neill is talking rot,” he said. “Obviously if this woman was shocked she didn’t believe in Summerhill, and even if she had sent her boy, the first time he came home saying Bloody or Hell she would have taken him away.”

The meeting agreed with him, and voted my proposal down. But the swearing business is always cropping up, for it is indeed a matter of moment, so much so that I shall devote a chapter to it later.

The general meeting often has to tackle the problem of bullying. Bullying is not so rife in Summerhill as in strict schools, and the reason for that is not far to seek. Under adult discipline the child becomes a hater, and as he cannot express his hate of adults with impunity, he takes it out of smaller or weaker boys. This element is absent from Summerhill, and practically every case of bullying is a family one. That is if Peter has a younger brother at home who is the favorite (or the imagined favorite) of Daddy or Mummy, Peter will unconsciously bully the younger boys in the school. But again the only child will bully. At present we have a girl of ten who has come straight from a convent (where she could only take a bath if she had a cloak to hide her nakedness). She bullies the others badly, for she is full of hate and insincerity. We have boys and girls who are really nice kids, but they bully in the process of finding their power outlet. Very often a charge of bullying when investigated by a jury amounts to this, that Jenny called Peggy a lunatic. Juries are pretty hard on bullies, and I notice that the present government has underlined its bullying rule on the notice board . . . All cases of bullying will be severely dealt with.

It is a fact that any child who persistently complains of being bullied is always a bully. Sadism and masochism are closely allied, and the bullied child always gets some sort of pleasurable satisfaction in being the victim.

Sometimes a case of stealing is brought up. There is seldom any punishment for this, but there is always reparation. Often the government will come to me and say: “John pinched a bob from David. Is this a case of psychology or shall we bring it up?” If I consider it a case for psychology I tell them to leave it to me, and I give John a few Private Lessons, known as P.Ls. Later I shall describe these P.Ls. If John is a happy, normal boy who has done what we have all done—pinched a bob—I leave the government to charge him, and all that happens is that he is docked of his pocket money until the debt is paid. No culprit ever shows any signs of defiance or hate of the authority of his peers. I am always surprised at the docility they show when punished. This
term four of the biggest boys were charged with doing an illegal thing—selling articles from their wardrobes in the town. The law was made on the grounds that it is unfair to the parents who buy the clothes and also unfair to the school, because when kids go home with things missing the parents blame the school for carelessness. The four boys were punished by being kept in the grounds for four days and by being sent to bed at eight each night. They accepted the verdict without a murmur. On the Monday night when everyone had gone to the town cinema I found Dick in bed reading.

“You are a chump,” I said. “The government has all gone to the cinema. Why don’t you get up?”

“Don’t try to be funny,” he said.

This loyalty to their own democracy is an amazing thing. It has no fear in it and no resentment. I have seen a boy go through a long trial for some antisocial act; I have seen him sentenced and then the next case would come on. The chairman elects a new jury for each trial, and as often as not the boy who has just been sentenced is elected as a jurymen. The sense of justice that children have has never ceased to make me marvel. And their administrative ability is great. As an education self-government is something of infinite value. I have often heard sensible speeches from children who could not read nor write. They do not become prigs either, and any sign of priggishness is frowned upon by the community. One boy of eleven, a strong exhibitionist, gets up and draws attention to himself by making long involved remarks of obvious irrelevancy. At least he tries to, but the meeting shouts him down. The young have a sensitive nose for insincerity.

One of the drawbacks in self-government is that popularity too often pushes aside ability. At the beginning of each term Bert is always elected as a member of the government, simply because he is a general favorite. But Bert has not outlived his antisocial component and is more interested in breaking than in making laws. So that regularly each term Bert is accused of being hopeless as a government member and by general vote he is thrown out. Joe, a quiet capable lad of seventeen, an excellent social member, fails to be elected because he is not popular. Sometimes a motion is brought forward that only citizens over twelve should be allowed to vote in a government election, on the ground that the small children have no ideas on ability and merely vote emotionally. It has never been carried, and the vote of a seven-year-old has the same value as my vote has.

In our scheme of self-government there is a peculiar dictatorship element. This is a body known as the Big Five. Five elder pupils. Their function is the guardianship of the school reputation outside the school. Any crime taking place outside the school grounds comes before the Five. When two girls took money from the pockets of a visiting hockey team they were tried by the Five. The Big Five has unlimited power, even that of expulsion, a power they have never wanted to use, but one which makes it a thing to respect, for expulsion from Summerhill would be to any child an unspeakable tragedy.

I have expelled pupils myself, that is I have arranged that children should leave, taking care that a proper place was found for them beforehand. In the very few cases in which this has happened my action was prompted by the knowledge that the child in question was a danger or a nuisance to others. That is a difficulty that every teacher is up against: shall I sacrifice twenty children for one? Lucy came from a convent at the age of thirteen. She hated everyone, and bullied her room mates. When at last two girls told me that they didn’t want to come back next term because of Lucy I got her mother to send her to a dance school in London. John,
aged fourteen, turned out to be an incurable bully. He would hit a small child in the eye just for fun. I had to send him away. Ned, a boy we had had for years, could not live through his gangster stage, so we sent him to Texas, where he lived with the cowboys for over a year. He now has come back to us with his gangster stage behind him. How I wish that Texas were nearer! In each of these cases the general meetings had again and again complained of the presence of these children in the school. I confess to a feeling of failure in such cases, for previously I have scoffed at schools which solved their own problems by expelling undesirable elements, doing nothing to help the ones expelled. It is some consolation to feel that in each case we have seen to it that the child was not sent back to harsh discipline and moral lectures. And in each case we have done it only after making a brave attempt to help the individual by psychological means. All children are not to be helped by analysis. Some of them won't have it, and they don't see why they should. When an adult goes to a psychoanalyst he feels that he wants to be cured, but if a wild girl is sent to me from a convent she has no desire to be cured, and without the cooperation of the patient every psychologist knows that there is nothing to be done. I find that between the ages of eight and eighteen children do not want analysis, and if one forces it on them the result is nil, for the child simply withdraws into itself and sits silently through the lessons.

Yet children in what I call the latent period will react to social analysis if the environment is one of complete personal freedom. After all Summerhill means personal freedom to be what you like, so long as in being what you like you do not interfere with the freedom of others ... which is about all that you can demand of anyone. But this means that your neighbors must have a reasonable standard of living.

A Summerhill child would feel cramped in being himself if he lived in a community that thought the word damn was sinful or that stealing was immoral. You can only be free when you live among others who have the same idea of freedom as you have. An example of that is that of the Public School boy who came to us when seventeen. A week after his arrival he chummed up with the men who fill coal carts at the station, and he began to help them in their loading. He came in to meals with his face and hands all black, but no one said a word. No one cared. It took him a good few weeks to live down his Public School and home idea of cleanliness. When he gave up his coal-heaving he once more became clean in person and dress, but with a difference: cleanliness was no longer something forced on him; his dirt complex had lived itself out. So on a hot day boys and staff will sit at lunch shirtless. No one minds. Summerhill relegates minor things to their proper place—indifference, but this morning crossing the Line I walked into the dining room for breakfast without my jacket, and the chief steward very quickly informed me that that was not allowed. If Summerhill went to sea I guess that it wouldn't shine in stiff hot evening shirts as we have to do on this ship, nor would anyone worry if you came to lunch in bathing trunks.

It is the broad outlook that free children acquire that makes self-government so important. Their laws deal with essentials, not appearances (saving the down town laws which are the compromise with a less free civilization). "Down town," that is the outside world, wastes its precious energy in worrying over trifles ... as if it matters in the scheme of life whether you wear dress clothes or say Hell. Summerhill, by getting away from the outward nothings of life, can have and really has a community spirit that is in advance of its time. True, it is apt to call a spade a bloody
shovel, but any navvy will tell you with truth that a spade is a bloody shovel.

In this ship, crossing the equator for the first time, I see so much of what is unessential in life. Most of the passengers talk of what does not matter, and I think that few of them really are aware of life at all. To many passengers ship life is a lazy, flirtatious or restful holiday. Food is in plenty, and if the entertainment is on the childish side that is partly due to lack of space. Yes, life is pleasant. In the heat all you have to do is to cry: “Steward!” and an obliging youth in white comes at once with an iced drink. But when you are aware of things you see a ship as something different. The stewards appear to get up early and finish very late at night. They are all pasty-faced, for they seldom see the sun. Obviously they have a hard life on any ship. They are not always in white; they wash and scrub while the passengers sleep and dance. Yet most people take them for granted, possibly excusing their indifference by thinking that the end-of-the-voyage tip covers a multitude of services. To enter the dining-room without a jacket is in this life on ship an important shortcoming but to be unconscious of stewards is the thing to do apparently.

Summerhill has its maids, and they work long and hard, and perhaps I ought to begin my reforms at home, but Summerhill maids are not considered inferiors. They dance with us, and our bigger lads take them to dances in the town. They are not asked for deference and respect for employers (Ivy always addresses me as “Neill”) and they all appear to be happy in their work. Work is necessary, whereas the frills of service, the bowing and scrapping are not only unessential but degrading. Stewards look as if they hated their job, and I heard of one recently, who, rather than wash up his plates and cups, threw a thousand of them through a porthole.

Summerhill has its insoluble problem of its middle-class population, yet the future of the world is obviously one of socialism of some kind . . . and in the creative society of the future sincerity and a standard of values will count for much. If all schools had real self-government—not the brand that makes the pupils do the dirty police work for the teachers—a new generation would face life with a high standard of public morality, and a scheme of values that eliminated the non-essentials.

I have failed to convey in words what self-government really is like. Every Saturday night at eight we have a full meeting. A chairman is elected on the spot, and the success of the meetings depends largely on whether the chairman is weak or strong, for to keep order among seventy vigorous children is no easy task. The chairman has power to fine noisy citizens, and under a weak chairman the fines run up too much. The staff takes a hand, of course, in the discussions, but as a rule I do not take part. In any “trial” I dare not take a part, for I must remain a neutral. In fact I have seen a lad charged with an offense and get away with it with a complete alibi, after telling me in his P.L. that he had done the deed. I must always be on the side of the individual. That leads on naturally to the next chapter.

BEING ON THE SIDE OF THE CHILD

Summerhill owes its psychology to the greatest child psychologist of our time, Homer Lane. I wrote my Dominie’s Log in 1915, knowing nothing of psychology at all. It was a groping book: I felt that schooling was all wrong, but did not know how to put it right. I read the report of a lecture by Lane, and in 1917, when I was a cadet in the artillery school at Trowbridge, I made a week-end visit to the Little Commonwealth, in Dorset. I arrived in time to see a self-government meeting, and a breezy one it was. The Commonwealth was divided into houses,
and one house was attacking the other on its disorderliness, saying that the rest of the Commonwealth was kept awake late at nights by the unseemly noise coming from the unsocial house. I forgot how the meeting ended; all I remember is my surprise to see a company of delinquent children manage their social affairs so easily and cleverly. The meeting went on till eleven, and then Lane sat and talked to me until three in the morning. It was a new world that he opened up to me, and when next day Lane invited me to come and help when the war should be over, I was delighted. But by the time I was free to go back to civil life the Commonwealth had been closed, and I got a job in King Alfred School, in Hampstead. Luckily Lane had come to Town, and I not only went to every lecture he gave, but also became his patient for analysis.

Lane was a genius, and like all geniuses was erratic. He sometimes said wild things that could not be proved, and as an analyst he was often unsatisfactory because he was always moving on to something new. A dream would suddenly give him a new theory and he would spend the rest of the session expanding his new theory . . . fascinating but hardly the best analysis. Throughout his whole career, however, Lane never wavered from his belief that love alone could cure, and it was his conception of love that made him stand out as a great man. To Lane love was not a sentimental thing, not even an emotional thing; love to him was being on the side of a person, love was approval. His success with delinquents was due to his loving them. I used to think that children are not conscious of this kind of love, but I had a proof that they are. I had a youth sent to me, a real crook, who stole cleverly. A week after his arrival I had a telephone message from Liverpool. "This is Mr. X speaking (a well-known man in England) and I have a nephew at your school. He has written me asking if he can come to Liverpool for a few days. Do you mind?"

"Not a bit," I answered, "but he has no money. Who will pay his fare? Better get into touch with his parents."

On the following afternoon the boy's mother rang me up saying that they had had a phone message from Uncle Dick, and so far as they were concerned he could go. They had looked up the fare, and it was 28 shillings, and would I give Arthur 2 shillings.

Arthur had put through both calls from a local box and his imitation of an old uncle's voice was perfect. It was obvious that he had tricked me, for I had given him the 2 shillings before I was conscious of being done. I talked it over with my wife, and we both agreed that the wrong thing to do would be to demand the money back, for that was what had been happening to him for years. My wife suggested rewarding him, and I agreed. I went up to his bedroom late at night.

"You're in luck today," I said cheerfully. "I jolly well am," he said.

"Yes, but you are in greater luck than you know," I said.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, your mother has just telephoned again," I said easily. "She says she made a mistake about the fare: it isn't 28 shillings, it is 38 shillings. So she asked me if I'd give you another ten bob," and I carelessly threw a ten shilling note on his bed and departed before he could say anything.

He went off to Liverpool next morning, leaving a letter to be given to me after the train had gone. It began: "Dear Neill, I have discovered that you are a greater actor than I am." And for weeks he kept asking me why I had given him that ten shilling note. I said to him: "How did you feel when I gave it to you?"

He thought hard for a minute and then he said slowly: "You know, I got the biggest shock of my life. I said to myself:
Here is the first man in my life who has been on my side."

Here was a case of being conscious of the love that is approval, but I should think that usually consciousness is late in coming. In past days, when I had much to do with misfits and crooks, I again and again rewarded them for stealing, sometimes stole with them, but it was only after a few years when the child was cured that he or she had any realization of the fact that my approval had helped them.

Approval is just as necessary for normal children as for neurotics. The one commandment that every parent and teacher must obey is this: Thou shalt be on the child's side. The obeying of this commandment is the success of Summerhill, for we are definitely on the child's side, and the child knows it unconsciously. I do not say that we are a crowd of angels. There are times when we adults make a fuss, as I did over my potatoes. If I were painting a door and Robert came along and threw mud on my fresh paint I should swear at him heartily, because he is one of us and what I say to him does not matter. But suppose Robert had just come from a hateful school and his mud-slinging was an attempt to get his own back against authority, I would join in his mud-slinging because his salvation is more important than a door. It isn't easy. I have stood by and seen a boy treat my precious lathe badly; I knew that if I protested he would at once identify me with his stern father who threatened to beat him if he touched his tools. I confess that as I grow older I find it more difficult to approve of the spoilt child in everything he does. Maybe courage lessens. A few years ago we had a spoilt boy of ten who had ruled his home by threatening to jump from a window if he did not get his own way. One day his sister came to me in terror: "Frank says he'll jump from his bedroom window if I don't give him sixpence," she cried, "and I don't have sixpence."

I went upstairs and found Frank poised on his window sill.

"I'm going to jump," he said tensely and glared at me.

"I know," I said. "That's why I came up. I want to see it. Go on, jump."

He looked at me and his look said: "You dirty dog, you see through me."

But I was not courageous there, for I knew that Frank was bluffing. The strange thing is that you can be on the child's side even though you may sometimes swear at him. If your life is on the side of the child's life the child realizes it, and any minor disagreement you may have about potatoes or scratched motor wings does not disturb the fundamental relationship. It works negatively rather than positively. When you treat a child without bringing in authority and morality the child feels that you are on his side, because in his previous life authority and morality were policemen who restricted his activities. And children deal much with negatives. When a girl of eight passes me and says in passing: "Neill is a silly fool," I know that that is her negative way of expressing her love. Children do not love so much as want to be loved, and adult approval means love to every child, whereas disapproval means hate. Just before I sailed last week I overheard a boy of sixteen say: "The school will be queer without Neill. Gosh, if the head in my last school had gone off to South Africa wouldn't we have had a binge!"

The attitude of the children to all the staff is similar to their attitude to me. They feel that the staff is on their side all the time.

The most frequent remark that visitors make is that they cannot make out who is staff and who is pupil. It is so true: the feeling of unity is so strong when children are approved of. Thus there is no deference to staff as staff. Staff and pupils have the same food and both have to obey the
community laws. The children would resent any special privileges given to the staff, and when I used to give the staff a talk on psychology every week, there was a muttering that it wasn’t fair. I changed the plan and made the talks open to all over twelve, and every Tuesday night my room is filled with eager young folks who not only listen but give their opinions freely. When I saw that among the subjects the children have asked me to talk about were The Inferiority Complex, The Psychology of Pinching, The Psychology of the Gangster, The Psychology of Humor, Why did man become a moralist? Masturbation, Crowd Psychology... it is obvious that such children will go out into life with a broad clear knowledge of themselves and others. When you approve of children you can talk to them about anything and everything, for approval will make any inhibitions fly away. But the question arises: Is it possible to approve of children if you do not approve of yourself? And the further question arises: Is it possible for any man to approve of himself? It depends largely on what Dr. J. C. Young calls awareness. If you are aware of yourself you can approve of yourself, or in other words the more conscious you are of yourself and your motives the more likely you are to be an approver of yourself. Our self-disapproval comes mainly from infancy, and a large part of it originates from the conscience about masturbation. The unhappy child is one who has too big a conscience about masturbation, and the taking away of this conscience is the greatest step to advance.

The happiness and verve of Summerhill children is largely due to their having got over their guilty conscience about masturbation and sex. They are led to approve of their bodies, and to have no sense of shame about sex. In our open discussion on masturbation boys and girls asked questions on masturbation quite openly without any embarrassment. One boy who has not outlived the smutty side his prep-school gave him, tried to be pornographic, but the others shut him up, not because he was being pornographic but merely because he was sidetracking an interesting talk. All children are pornographic either openly or more often secretly, but the least pornographic are those who have no moral taboos about sex in their infancy and early childhood. For that matter adults are pornographic too, especially men. It is a fallacy that women are more pure-minded than men... what is purity anyway? but in the main a man’s club or bar or canteen is much more likely to be pornographic than a woman’s Rural Institute. Pornography is directly proportionate to sex repressions, and I am sure that later on our pupils will be less inclined to pornography than the children brought up under hush hush methods. As Derrick said to me when he came back on vacation from the university: “Summerhill spoils you in one way... you find chaps of your own age too dull. They talk about things I grew out of years ago.”

“Sex stories?” I asked.

“Yes, more or less. I like a good sex story myself, but the ones they tell are crude and pointless. But it isn’t only sex; other things too. Psychology, politics... I don’t know, but I find myself tending to chum up with chaps ten years older than myself.”

I have more than once mentioned the sincerity of free children. This sincerity is the result of their being approved of. They have no artificial standard of behavior to live up to, no taboos to restrain them: they have no necessity to live a life that is a lie. But under adult discipline a child must live a lying life, for the mainspring of discipline is fear of censure or punishment. Punishment from their fellows does not involve fear, but when an adult punishes fear comes automatically, for the adult is big and strong and awe-inspiring
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and, most important of all, a symbol of the feared father or mother.

On Sunday nights I tell the younger children a story about their own adventures. I have done it for fifteen years, and the strain on the imagination is great. I have taken them to Darkest Africa, under the sea, over the clouds, to heaven, to hell. Some weeks ago I made myself die and Summerhill was taken over by a strict man called Muggins. He made lesson-going compulsory, and if you said Dash you got caned. I pictured how they all meekly obeyed his orders, and those three to eight year olds got furious with me.

"We didn't. We all ran away. We killed him with a hammer. Think we would stand a man like that?"

In the end I found I could only satisfy them by coming to life again and kicking Mr. Muggins out of the front door. These were mostly children who had never known a strict school, and their reaction of fury was spontaneous and natural. A world in which the master was not on their side was an appalling une for them to think of, not only because of their experience of Summerhill but also because of their experience of home, where Mummy and Daddy are on their side also (if they weren't they would send their children elsewhere).

THE PRIVATE LESSONS

I never teach. My main work is giving Private Lessons. Most of the children do not require psychological attention, but there are always a proportion just come from other schools, and the P.Ls. are intended to hasten their adaptation to freedom. If a child is all tied up inside he cannot adapt himself to being free. Hence I have a timetable.

The P.Ls. are informal talks by the fireside: I sit with my pipe in my mouth and the child can smoke if he or she likes. The cigarette is often an easy means of breaking the ice. When a big boy came from a Public School and I asked him to come and have a chat with me, I noticed that his fingers were yellow with nicotine. I took out my cigarette packet and offered it to him.

"Thanks," he stuttered, "but I don't smoke, sir."

"Take one, you bloody liar," I said with a smile, and he took one.

Here I was killing two birds with one stone. Here was a boy to whom headmasters were stern moral disciplinarians to be cheated every time. By offering him a cigarette I was showing that I approved of his smoking. By calling him a bloody liar I was showing him that I could meet him on his own level, and at the same time attacking his authority complex by showing that a headmaster could swear easily and cheerfully. I wish I could have photographed his facial expression during that first interview. He had been expelled for stealing.

"I hear you are a bit of a crook," I said. "What's your best way of swindling the railway company?"

"I never tried to swindle it, sir."

"Oh," I said, "this won't do. You must have a try. I know lots of methods," and I told him a few. His mouth gaped. This surely was Bedlam he had come to. The Head telling him how to be a better crook? Years later he told me that that interview was the biggest shock of his life.

But now that problem children are nearly eliminated it may be asked what necessity there is for P.Ls. What kind of kids need them? The best answer will be a few illustrations.

Lucy, the infant mistress, comes to me and says that Peggy seems very unhappy and antisocial. I say: "Righto, tell her to come and have a P.L." Peggy comes over to my sitting room.

"I don't want a P.L.," she says as she sits down. "They are just silly."

"Absolutely," I agree. "Waste of time. We won't have one."
She considers this. "Well," she says slowly, "I don't mind a tiny wee one." By this time she has placed herself on my knee. I ask about her Daddy and Mummy and especially about her little brother, who is a very silly little ass.

"He must be," I agree. "Do you think that Mummy likes him better than she likes you?"

"She likes us both the same," she says quickly, and adds: "She says that anyway." Sometimes the fit of unhappiness has arisen from a quarrel with another child, but more often it is a letter from home that has caused the trouble, a letter perhaps saying that her brother or sister has got a new doll or bike. The end of the P.L. generally is that Peggy goes out quite happily.

With newcomers it is not so easy. When we get a child of eleven who has been told that babies are brought by the doctor it takes some hard work to free the child from lies and fears. For naturally such a child has a guilt sense toward masturbation, and that sense of guilt must be destroyed if the child is to find happiness.

Among young children I find bed-wetting the most difficult problem of all. I have had but little success in curing it. When it is a case of repressed masturbation (the wetting being masturbation in sleep and therefore guiltless) it is easy, but I have found bed-wetting among children who have never had repressions about sex at all. Fundamentally it is a regression to infancy; the motive is to be a baby again and be tended by mother. The cure should result from letting the child have its motive fulfilled, but in a school it is impossible to do this, even if the mother substitutes there are willing to help. In general the cure for any habit is the living out of it, and it is wrong to try to force a child to grow up. All punishment and talks make bed-wetting more fixed than ever. Hard as it is, we must approve of the wetting if we are to help the child, only our approval will not cure so swiftly as the approval of Mummy.

Some years ago we had a small boy sent to us because he messed his trousers all day long. His mother had thrashed him for it, and in desperation had finally made him eat his feces. You can imagine the problem we had to face. I have a vague idea that I mentioned this lad in an earlier book. Briefly his case was that of a boy with a younger brother. The messing began with the birth of the brother, and the motive was apparently: "He has taken Mummy's love from me; if I am like him and mess my trousers like he messes his nappies, Mummy will love me too."

I gave him P.L.s. and showed him what his motive was, but it is only in textbooks of psychology that cures are sudden and dramatic. For over a year that boy messed himself three times daily. No one said a bitter word to him, and Mrs. Corkhill, the nurse then, did all the cleaning without one word of reproach... but she did protest when I began to reward him every time he did a really big mess. During all this period the boy was a hateful little devil... no wonder! He stayed with us for three years, a nice lovable lad, absolutely clean after his cure. His mother took him away on the ground that she wanted a school where he would learn something. He came back to see us after a year at such a school, came back a changed lad—insincere, afraid, unhappy. He said he would never forgive his mother for taking him away from Summerhill, and he never will. Strangely enough, he is about the only case of trouser messing we have had in fifteen years. I am sure that every case is one of hate against the mother for starving of love.

Nowadays I never have to deal with extreme cases like this. No small child requires regular P.L.s., and the ideal circumstances are where a child demands a P.L. Some of the older ones do. There was Charlie, aged sixteen, who felt very
much inferior to lads of his own age. I asked him when he felt most inferior, and he said when they were bathing, because his penis was much smaller than theirs. I explained to him how this arose. He was the youngest child in a family of six sisters, all much older than himself; there was a gulf of ten years between him and his youngest sister. The household was a feminine one (the father was dead) and the big sisters got all the jam and did all the bossing. Hence he identified himself with the feminine in life so that he, too, could have power.

After about ten P.L.s. Charlie stopped coming to me. I asked him why. "Don't need P.L.s. now," he said cheerfully, "my tool is as big as Bert's now."

But there was more in the short analysis than that, for he had been told that masturbation would make him impotent when he was a man, and his fear (and desire) for impotency had affected the physical. So that his cure was also due to the destruction of his guilt complex and the counteraction of the silly lie about impotency. Charlie left the school a year or two ago and is now a fine, healthy, happy youth who will get on in life.

Then there is the case of Sylvia, not really a sex case at all. Sylvia has a stern father who never praises her, who, on the contrary, criticizes and nags her all day long. Her one desire in life is to get father's love, and she sits in my room and weeps bitterly while she tells her story. Hers is a difficult case to help, for all the analysis of the daughter will not change the father. I see no solution until she is old enough to get away from home, and I have warned her that there is a danger that she may marry the wrong man merely to escape from the father.

"What sort of wrong man?" she asked.

"A man like your father, one who will treat you sadistically," I said. This is a sad case. With us Sylvia is a social, friendly girl who offends no one, and at home she is said to be a devil. Obviously it is the father who needs analysis, not the daughter.

Another insoluble case is that of little Florence. She is illegitimate and doesn't know it. My experience is that every illegitimate child knows unconsciously that it is illegitimate, and Florence assuredly knows that there is some mystery behind her. I have told the mother that the only cure for her daughter's hate and unhappiness is to tell her the truth.

"But, Neill, I daresn't. I don't care a damn myself, but if I tell her she won't keep it to herself, and my mother will cut her out of her will."

Well, well, we'll just have to wait till the old lady dies I am afraid. You can do nothing if a vital truth has to be kept dark.

Child analysis is extremely difficult during the latent period. An old boy of twenty came back to stay with us for a time, and he asked me for a few P.L.s.

"But I gave you dozens when you were here," I said. "I know," he said sadly, "dozens that I didn't want, but now I feel I want them."

Nowadays I give up any analysis or shall I call it re-education if there is a resistance against it. With the average child when you have cleared up the birth and masturbation question and shown how the family situation has made hates and jealousies, there is nothing more to be done . . . Curing a neurosis in a child is a matter of the release of emotion, and what release of emotion any child or adult can get out of being told that he has a Birth Trauma complex or a mother-castration wish I cannot discover. I recall a boy of fifteen I tried to analyze. For weeks he sat silent, answering only in monosyllables. I decided to be drastic, and at his next P.L. I said to him: "I'm going to tell you what I think of you this morning. You're a lazy, stupid, conceited, spiteful fool."

"Am I?" he said red with anger. "Who
do you think you are anyway?" From that moment he talked easily and usefully.

One of the most charming analyses was that of George, a boy of eleven. His father was a small tradesman in a village near Glasgow. The boy was sent to me by a Glasgow doctor. His neurosis was one of intense fear. He feared to be away from home, even at the village school, and he screamed in terror when he had to leave home. With great difficulty his father got him to come to Summerhill: he wept and clung to his father so that the father could not return home. I advised him to stay for a few days. I had already had the case history from the doctor, and the doctor's comments were in my estimation correct and most useful. The question of getting the father to go home was becoming an acute one. I tried to talk to George, but he wept and sobbed that he wanted to go home. "This is just a prison," he sobbed.

I went on talking and ignored his tears. "When you were four," I said, "your little brother was taken to the infirmary and they brought him back in a coffin. (Increased sobbing.) Your fear of leaving home is that the same thing will happen to you . . . you'll go home in a coffin. (Louder sobs.) But that's not the main point, George, me lad: you killed your brother."

Here he protested violently, and threatened to kick me. "You didn't really kill him, George, but you thought that he got more love from your mother than you got, and you sometimes wished he would die, and when he did die you had a terrible guilty conscience because you thought that your wishes had killed him, and that God would kill you if you went away from home as punishment for your guilt."

His sobbing ceased, and next day, although he made a scene at the station, he let his father go home. George did not get over his homesickness for some time, but the sequel was that in eighteen months he insisted on travelling home for the vacation alone, crossing London from station to station alone, and he did the same on his way back to school. He was one of the nicest lads I have known, bright and intelligent. After two years he came to me.

"I'll be leaving at the end of this term," he said.

"But why?"

"I must. I like Summerhill a lot, but my folks are not very well off and it'll be cheaper to stay with them and go to Greenock Academy (but it wasn't Greenock). Anyway I'm cured now and I don't need Summerhill."

We were all very sorry to lose him, and when, three weeks ago, the father sent us a local paper showing that George was in the prize list of his Academy, we were all happy about it.

More and more I come to the conclusion that analysis is not necessary when children can live out their complexes in freedom, yet I see that in a case like that of George freedom would not be enough. In the past I have analyzed young thieves who refused to come to P.L.s., and in three years they were cured also. I have puzzled much about this business of curing . . . In the case of Summerhill I say it is love that cures, approval, freedom to be true to self. Of our seventy children only a small fraction has P.L.s., and when I return from my lecture tour in South Africa I hope to reduce the list of P.L.s. drastically, and spend some time working with the children in handwork and dramatics and dancing.

Here I take up a question that is often put to me: "But isn't Summerhill a one man show? Could it do without your P.L.s.? Could it carry on without you?"

Summerhill is by no means a one man show. My wife is just as important as I am, and her reaction to children is as psychological as my own. In the day by day working of the school she is much
more important than I am, and much more efficient in handling business affairs and parents and correspondence. Still she and I are important, for it is our idea of non-interference that has made the school. But the staff, although it does not handle psychology, has a psychological attitude to the children, that is, like my wife and myself, they know \textit{what not to do} . . . which is less dangerous than knowing what to do. I know I could leave the school for a year feeling that the staff would carry on in the right way . . . I have nothing but praise for our staff. In most schools where I have taught the staffroom was a little hell of intrigue and hate and jealousy. Our staffroom is a happy place . . . but it is so difficult to keep the kids out . . . and the spites so often seen are absent. That is because under freedom the adults acquire the same happiness and goodwill that the pupils acquire. Sometimes a new member of the staff will react to freedom very much in the same way as children react: he may go unshaved, stay abed too long mornings, even break school laws. Luckily the living out of complexes takes a much shorter time with adults than it takes with children.

I find hardly any fear of thunder among our small children: they will sleep out in small tents through the most violent of storms (the government makes a law that all tents must be far away from trees and wire fences). Nor do I find much fear of the dark. Sometimes a boy of eight will pitch his tent right at the far end of the field, and he will sleep there alone for nights. Freedom encourages fearlessness, and I have often seen weedy, timid little chaps grow into sturdy, fearless youths, but to generalize would be wrong, for there are introverted children who never become brave. Some folks keep their ghosts for life. And the chief difficulty in dealing with ghosts is our ignorance of prenatal conditions, for no one knows if a pregnant mother can convey her own fears to her unborn child. If a child has been brought up without fear, and in spite of that still has fears, then it is possible that he has brought his fears with him. On the other hand, a child must acquire fears from the world around it. Today even small children cannot help hearing about Abyssinia and poison gas and coming wars with their bombs. Fear must be associated with such things, but if there is no unconscious fear of sex and hell to add to the reality fear of gas and bombs, the fear of these will be a normal one, not a phobia. A phobia is a fear of a symbol. Fear of a lion is genuine fear; fear of a house spider is a phobia.

I only give P.L.s. for emotional purposes. If a child is unhappy, I give him a P.L., but if he can't learn to read or hates mathematics I do not try to cure him, because reading and counting are of so little moment in life. Sometimes in the course of a P.L. it comes out that the inability to learn to read dates from Mummy's constant promptings to be "a nice, clever boy like your brother," or the hatred of maths. comes from dislike of a previous maths teacher. Maths., however, have a complicated psychology, and the symbols get mysteriously linked up with sex symbols just as numbers do. I have seen the lifting of the masturbation guilt destroy the anti-maths. complex.

[To be continued]
Projeto Arte Org
Redescobrindo e reinterpretando W. Reich

Caro Leitor

Infelizmente, no que se refere a orgonomia, seguir os passos de Wilhelm Reich e de sua equipe de investigadores é uma questão bastante difícil, polêmica e contraditória, cheia de diferentes interpretações que mais confundem do que ajudam.

Por isto, nós decidimos trabalhar com o material bibliográfico presente nos microfilmes (Wilhelm Reich Collected Works Microfilms) em forma de PDF, disponibilizados por Eva Reich que já se encontra circulado pela internet, e que abarca o desenvolvimento da orgonomia de 1941 a 1957.

Dividimos este “material” de acordo com as revistas publicadas pelo instituto de orgonomia do qual o Reich era o diretor.
01- International Journal of Sex Economy and Orgone Research (1942-1945).
02- Orgone Energy Bulletin (1949-1953)
03- CORE Cosmic Orgone Engineering (1954-1956)

E logo dividimos estas revistas de acordo com seus artigos, apresentando-os de forma separada (em PDF), o que facilita a organizá-los por assunto ou temas.
Assim, cada qual pode seguir o rumo de suas leituras de acordo com os temas de seu interesse.
Todo o material estará disponível em inglês na nuvem e poderá ser acessado a partir de nossas páginas Web.

Sendo que nosso intuito aqui é simplesmente divulgar a orgonomia, e as questões que a ela se refere, de acordo com o próprio Reich e seus colaboradores diretos relativos e restritos ao tempo e momento do próprio Reich.
Quanto ao caminho e as postulações de cada um destes colaboradores depois da morte de Reich, já é uma questão que extrapola nossas possibilidades e nossos interesses. Sendo que aqui somente podemos ser responsáveis por nós mesmos e com muitas restrições.

Alguns destes artigos, de acordo com nossas possibilidades e interesse, já estamos traduzindo.
Não somos tradutores especializados e, portanto, pedimos a sua compreensão para possíveis erros que venham a encontrar.
Em nome da comunidade Arte Org.

Textos da área do desenvolvimento infantil

Texts from the area of child development

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