

ISN'T JOHNNY READING YET?

by

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Steve Berman of Brookline is a friendly, articulate young man of 19. He is perceptive, intelligent, and quite capable of describing and analyzing in minute detail his entire educational history. He is the son of a distinguished Brookline physician and looks quite comfortable in the casual attire of the prep schooler. And when you speak with him at length, you feel that here is someone eager to make his mark in the world. Yet when he graduated from the Cambridge School in Weston last June, his parents considered the event as something of a miracle.

Why? Because Steve is dyslexic -- he could not learn to read. Or so the educators told his parents when Steve was in first grade at the Michael Driscoll School in Brookline. They called Steve a "severe dyslexic." He reads now, but it took twelve years of blood, sweat and tears in four private schools at the equivalent cost of two Harvard educations to do it. And no one has measured the

price paid in emotional terms. "I knew I could learn to read," says Steve, "but I didn't know if I would find anyone who could teach me."

From that first grade in public school Steve's parents sent him to the newly founded Carroll School, which was then located in Newton. The Carroll School had been created specifically to help dyslexics. But for Steve, being taken out of a regular classroom and put in a school with problem kids was a terrible blow to his ego. He knew he was intelligent, yet here he was among the "learning disabled." It became a painful, draining experience. "It was normal coming home every night miserable," he relates. "It wasn't the school's fault. They were just getting started."

Steve stayed at Carroll two years, then was enrolled at the Brimmer-May School, a regular private school in Brookline. "It was a respite," recalls Steve, "because it was a normal atmosphere. I didn't learn much, but I spent a year recovering from the emotional battering I had taken the year before." But Steve still wasn't making much progress in reading. So his parents put him in the Krebs School in Lexington, a new school for kids with learning problems. Steve spent five years there, traveling from Brookline to Lexington every day, twelve months of the year.

It was during his third year at Krebs, however, that something very peculiar happened to Steve. He began to realize that being a "dyslexic" gave him a sort of favored status, so he stopped learning. "It's a phase that many dyslexics go through when they begin to realize that they can learn but don't want to give up that special status." Thus, Steve's last two years at Krebs were difficult, emotionally and academically.

His parents searched for another school. They decided on the Cambridge School in Weston. It was a lucky choice, because it was there that Steve finally

began to find himself. "My second year at Cambridge was the most powerful academic year of my life. I got a straight A average." It was the moral and academic support of the school's staff, particularly Steve's counsellor, Paul Johnson, that did it for him. So Steve graduated, and he was also accepted at Amherst, another achievement to be proud of. But what an agonizing ordeal those twelve years were!

There are millions like Steve all over America who find out in primary school that they have a "reading problem." It is never suspected that something may be wrong in the way reading is being taught, that indeed there may be a "teaching problem" rather than a learning one. So the youngster gets stuck with the label. If he comes from a professional or upper middle class family like Steve he is called "dyslexic" and sent to private schools for remediation, and eventually he learns to read. Others, however, are not quite so lucky. They remain in the public school and do the best they can. They are usually held back in the second grade but then are promoted from year to year in a system that either doesn't seem to care or simply doesn't know what to do.

Only the most obvious and severe cases get any attention. And occasionally parents, when they become aware that a problem exists, will raise a fuss. But usually nothing happens since most youngsters manage to hide their reading deficiency very well. Since their deficiency is a source of embarrassment, the less attention they draw to themselves, the better they feel. One young man I know told me that he always managed to go to the bathroom to avoid having to read aloud in class. He graduated from Lincoln-Sudbury High School, which is considered one of the best in the Boston area, yet he is a functional illiterate.

The awful truth is that there are thousands and thousands of functional

illiterates with high school diplomas in our society who must cope in a world that assumes literacy on the part of anyone who's gone to school. Most functional illiterates resign themselves to their handicap, turn down jobs or promotions that require more literacy than they can handle, and live in constant dread of discovery and embarrassment. At the age of 24, my Lincoln-Sudbury friend now feels cheated. "They thought they were doing me a favor by promoting me," he complains bitterly. "I wanted to be a veterinarian. But I can't read or write good enough to go to college."

And sometimes illiteracy can lead to near tragedy, as in the case of Helen P., a young mother of 26, who moved through public school via social promotion, married a carpenter, and now has three children. She always bluffed her way through reading and writing situations until she gave one of her children a near-fatal dose of medicine because she couldn't read the instructions. She's finally decided to learn to read.

Many functional illiterates merely get tired of faking it and then look for help. One of the few places they can go to is The Reading Institute of Boston, a private tutorial school on Newbury Street which specializes in teaching adult functional illiterates to read. The institute was founded in 1950 by a Brookline couple who had taught in the public schools and had become aware of the reading problem. The school was the first of its kind in the Boston area. Today the institute is owned and operated by Marvin Joslow, son of the founders. "We don't handle the severe cases as do the Carroll, Landmark, or Kingsley schools," Joslow explains. "We deal with skills problems rather than medical or emotional one. Our students are usually those who lack basic skills due to educational deficiency or deprivation."

Up to 1965, 90 percent of the school's students came from the private sector. But during the Vietnam war the institute was discovered by the Veterans Administration which didn't know what to do with the many disabled veterans who were eligible for the G.I. Bill but could not read or write well enough to get into college or pursue technical training.

"Virtually everyone they sent us was functionally illiterate," Joslow said. "Then the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission found us. They couldn't offer educational rehabilitation to offenders who were illiterate. So we've become an important resource for them."

I interviewed some of Joslow's students. One was an intelligent 34-year-old truck driver who had gone to school in Cambridge and New Hampshire and not learned to read above a third grade level. To compensate for his deficiency, he developed excellent techniques of memory. But he felt terribly frustrated and limited by his handicap. It was his marriage to a college girl, however, that finally motivated him to seek help. The worst part was simply overcoming the embarrassment in having to ask for help. First he went to the Massachusetts School Department, but was told that they had no courses for adult illiterates. Then he called some schools listed in the Yellow Pages until someone referred him to the Institute. The Institute tested him and found that he had virtually no phonetic knowledge of the alphabet at all.

A second student, aged 30, born and raised in Roxbury, was told in public school that he was a slow learner. So they put him in a special class where he learned nothing. "I don't think they really wanted to teach me," he said. "It was like a 'Welcome Home, Kotter' thing. I wanted to work, but we played games, drew pictures and sold candy." Through Mass. Rehab. he had been sent to the Institute.

The third student, who had also been through the Boston school system, described what it was like for an illiterate to shop in a supermarket. He relied mainly on label pictures for information. If the package or can had no picture, he would not buy it unless he was already familiar with it. His biggest problem, however, was adding up his money. He was 27.

Then there was a 28-year-old Vietnam veteran who had been to school in Brookline and Jamaica Plain and could only read on a third-grade level. "I always needed a private tutor. I couldn't learn in a crowd. I'd get too embarrassed." He was glad that he was finally learning to read. "Everywhere you go you gotta read. In stores, in restaurants, if you can't read you're lost. I love to hang around intelligent people. I love to hear them talk. You're a second class citizen if you can't read."

What was interesting about all of these functional illiterates is that they had all gone to public schools. So compulsory public education was no guarantee of literacy. And what was even more interesting was that all of them could be taught to read, if the proper instruction methods were used. After all, the Institute had a 100 percent success record with those who went through its instruction. So if this were the case, what were the public schools doing that was causing such "learning problems" in the primary grades?

It's a question that many Americans have asked but which has not been answered. In fact, everyone is quite aware by now that we have an incredible reading problem in America among people who have had years of reading instruction in our schools. A recent CBS three-part television special hosted by Walter Cronkite concluded that at least 15 percent of all 17-year-olds are functional illiterates. They cannot read above a third-grade level. HEW statisticians

tell us that more than 23 million Americans are deficient in reading, writing and computing skills, and 40 million more possess just the minimal skills necessary for survival. Then, there are all those reports about falling SAT scores indicating that even the brightest and the best aren't as bright or best as those of previous generations. Karl Shapiro, the eminent professor poet, summed it up in these words: "What is really distressing is that this generation cannot and does not read. I am speaking of university students in what are supposed to be our best universities. Their illiteracy is staggering."

And everybody wonders why. We spend more money and time educating our children than any nation in history, so why isn't Johnny reading better? Why can't he write a decent letter? Why can't he do long division? Maybe it's precisely because we are spending so much money that we aren't getting the results we expect. Maybe the educators have learned very simply that the worse they do as educators the more money is poured into education. Tons of money. If this sounds horribly cynical, it's not without reason. However, prepare yourself to learn that there are potential scandals in American education worse than Watergate. But first some background knowledge is essential.

Americans first became aware that they had a reading problem back in 1955 when Rudolf Flesch published his famous Why Johnny Can't Read. Flesch had written his book to explain why more and more primary-school children were having difficulties learning to read, difficulties which parents had begun to notice and get upset about in the 1940's. In fact, by 1944 the difficulties were so widespread that Life magazine could publish an article on the subject, declaring, "Millions of children in the U.S. suffer from dyslexia which is the medical term for reading difficulties. It is responsible for about 70% of the school

failures in the 6- to 12-year age group, and handicaps about 15% of all grade-school children."

Flesch's book was the first attempt on the part of anyone to explain to the public why all of this was happening. He wrote: "The teaching of reading -- all over the United States, in all the schools, and in all the textbooks -- is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense." Then he went on to explain that from about 1930 to 1950, beginning reading instruction in American schools had been radically changed by the professors of education from the traditional alphabetic approach to a new look-say or hieroglyphic approach. This was news to a lot of parents who assumed that their children were being taught to read the way they had been taught. How else could you possibly learn to read, they wondered.

The educators tried to explain their new method. One of them wrote in Parents magazine in 1935, "When you and I went to school we learned to read in the following order: alphabet, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences. Today, more rather than less attention is given to each of these steps, but the order is exactly reversed." Educators had assumed that by reversing the natural order of instruction, the pupils would learn to read faster and better, but the very opposite happened. But rather than admit that their methods were at fault, they began to find all sorts of things wrong with the kids. For example, in 1935, William S. Gray, head of the University of Chicago's School of Education, father of Dick and Jane, and leading exponent of the new look-say method, listed a few of the things that were wrong with children having trouble learning to read via look-say: mental deficiency or retardation; defective vision; auditory deficiencies; congenital word blindness; developmental alexia; congenital alexia; congenital aphasia; dyslexia; strephosymbolia; cerebral dominance; ambidexterity;

and emotional instability.

Other writers in the professional journals added their own exotic terms to the growing lexicon of reading-disability diseases: binocular imbalance, lateral dominance, word-deafness, acuity dominance, sinistral and mixed manual-ocular behavior, eye-muscle imbalance, poor fusion, ocular blocks, endocrine disturbances, lateral preferances, vertical rotation in visual-motor performance, perceptual retardation, dyslexaphoria, monocular vision, neural confusion, ocular-manual laterality, sociopathic tendencies, prenatal and paranatal factors, social maladjustment and, when everything else failed, minimal brain damage. One writer related the blood picture to reading failure, another related a child's first memories of accidents to reading failure. There was no end to the things that were wrong with children who couldn't learn to read via the look-say method.

Flesch was the first to fault the educators instead of the children, and you can imagine the kind of response his book got from the educational establishment. The parents might have loved him, but the educators hated him, and there wasn't an educational journal in the country that did not bitterly attack Flesch for sticking his nose into their business. In fact, to strengthen their control of reading instruction in this country, the writers of the new look-say textbooks formed, in 1955, the International Reading Association (IRA) which instantly became a powerful lobby for the look-say method, thus institutionalizing the vested interests of a small but immensely influential group of professors of education turned textbook writers, and guaranteeing that little reform would take place. The royalties William S. Gray, first president of the IRA, earned from Dick and Jane, is estimated in the millions. Mabel O'Donnell, creator of Alice and Jerry, one of the many competitors that cropped up to cash in on the

popularity of look-say, earned \$2,700,000 in royalties.

While Flesch was the first to publicly fault the educators, he was not the first to question the soundness of their new method or confront them with the potentially harmful effects of their malpractice. The first to do that was Dr. Samuel T. Orton, a neuropsychiatrist, who, in 1929, published an article in Educational Psychology reporting that there was a large group of children who could not learn to read via the new look-say method. He warned that this method "may not only prevent the acquisition of academic education by children of average capacity but may also give rise to far-reaching damage to their emotional life."

Orton had discovered all of this in the late 1920's while investigating cases of reading disability in Iowa where the new method was being used. Orton was the first to develop a vocabulary to describe the symptoms of reading disability and he was the first to pioneer in its treatment. He set up a clinic at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York which became the training ground for others who entered the field. Neurologists at Massachusetts General Hospital heard about Orton's work and in 1934 sent a young neuropsychiatrist by the name of Edwin Cole down to New York to be trained by Orton. After six months of training, Cole returned to MGH where he set up its well-known Language Clinic. In a short time, Boston became an important center for the treatment of reading disability.

I interviewed Dr. Cole at his office at MGH where he has conducted his clinic for forty-four years. I asked him why Orton had not been able to convince the educators of the harmfulness of their methods.

"Orton wasn't very tactful," replied Cole. "He created great fuss and fury

among the educators because he was so highly critical of look-say. He talked with Gray and Gates and the others who wrote look-say textbooks. They said he didn't know anything about education. Pretty soon polarization took place, and Orton became a taboo subject among the educators."

So the educators had had some warning from a prominent medical man who was already treating severe reading disability cases. By the 1940's, schools across the country were setting up remedial reading departments to handle the growing number of kids with reading problems. In fact, remedial teaching was becoming a whole new educational specialty with its own professional status. So there was no lack of knowledge among educators that the look-say method was causing reading disability, since they were the ones also coming up with some of the cures.

Americans, of course, are used to the venality and greed of politicians and businessmen. But when it comes to educators, somehow we expect them to behave with greater idealism. But the simple truth is that money and power do to educators exactly what they do to just about everyone else. Dangle a million dollars in front of a professor of education and strange things begin to happen. He becomes a monopolist. He trains teachers to teach his way, using his textbooks, bought in enormous quantities from his publisher, and he organizes a professional organization with colleagues eager to share the pie, and in no time the entire profession is controlled. Of course, no monopoly can last forever, but you can try to make it last as long as possible. So if you want to know why Johnny isn't reading yet, it's because there's too great a vested interest in the wonderful world of reading confusion and the lucrative method of instruction that causes it.

But why hasn't some honest educator blown the whistle on all of this, you

might ask. The answer is that few people have had the time or patience or knowledge to get involved in the nitty gritty of beginning reading instruction except those whose livelihoods depend on it. And if you're worried about your job in a field where you are instantly replaceable, you're not going to rock the boat, especially if there is nothing tangible to be gained by it. Besides, the promoters of look-say were smart enough to know that the pie was big enough for a sizeable group of them. So when Rudolf Flesch blew the whistle, the IRA came down on him like a ton of bricks. In fact, the IRA was so effective in counteracting Flesch, that it wasn't until the mid-sixties that a publisher of any size dared to come out with a basal reading program based on the alphabetic approach. Knowing the look-say bias of the establishment, it took guts to go against the pedagogy of so many prominent and progressive professors of education.

The word "progressive," incidentally, is important, for look-say became an integral part of the progressive education program which de-emphasized intellectual or academic skills in favor of social skills. Thus, the dispute over methods soon became polarized, with conservatives generally advocating phonics, and liberals and progressives promoting look-say. But there were a lot of cross-overs. Flesch himself was a socialist, but he believed that even little socialists should be able to read.

However, there is one prominent educator who has managed to defy the IRA and get away with it. She is Professor Jeanne Chall of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who published her own study of reading instruction methods in 1967 with the help of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Twelve years after Flesch, Chall basically came to the same conclusion that her predecessor had come to: that the alphabetic approach to beginning reading instruction was superior to the look-say approach. Her findings had a positive impact on reading

instruction, but not as deep an impact as one would have hoped for or expected. But at least she created within the reading instruction field a renewed respect for the alphabetic approach, which was now called "coding and decoding." But it was not enough to produce the kind of radical change that was necessary. The IRA chieftans were quite critical of Chall, and their grip on the reading instruction field was too pervasion for any substantial change to take place. It has been rumored that Chall was offered a quarter of a million dollars to author a reading instruction program by one of the major publishers and that she turned it down because she did not want to have a vested interest in any particular program. That would have destroyed her credibility as an independent scholar.

This matter of vested interests is perhaps the biggest scandal in American education. Everybody knows about it, everyone gossips about it, but nobody writes about it. If you value your standing within the establishment, you just don't expose such things to public attention. If professors of education can become millionaires by monopolizing teacher training and textbook writing, that's their good fortune. But if in the process they are promoting a form of educational malpractice that is destroying the literacy of a nation, something must be done about it. Must we forever tolerate teaching methods that continue to send millions of kids to reading clinics and assign millions of others to lives as functional illiterates? If any other industry or profession had the rate of failure that the reading instruction profession has, it would have been investigated, sued, fined, or put out of business.

The simple truth is that if the educators really wanted to, they could solve the reading problem tomorrow. All they'd have to do is simply return to the instruction methods and textbooks used before we had the problem. But, surprise! You can't use those old textbooks, let alone find them. State laws now mandate

that new textbooks be purchased every few years, that is, new textbooks with new copyrights. Also, unfortunately, the reading problem is no longer simply the reading problem. It's been subsumed under a host of other problems involving basic skills. Not only can't Johnny read, he can't write, speak, compute, or think effectively. In short, Johnny is a total mess. The educators blame the family, television, social change, divorce, permissiveness, the decline in religious faith, and the Vietnam war for Johnny's sorry state. But all you have to do is take a tour of your local American high school to know that the academic chaos you find there has its source in the educational system itself and its philosophy or lack of one.

If there is academic chaos in American education it's because there is no field in which planned obsolescence is better and more systematically practiced than in education. I defy anyone to find an old-style arithmetic book on the shelves of your relevancy-obsessed college of education library. Teaching styles, textbooks, and curriculum content have changed more frequently and radically in the last thirty years than Detroit's car models. And the sole reason for much of this "innovation" is money. Indeed, one must hand it to the educators in that they have become the most skilled group in America at getting the government to hand them a continually fatter share of the tax dollar. But, at last, the taxpayer is beginning to wake up.

Meanwhile, the federal government has gotten into the act with its Right-to-Read program. The director of the program in Massachusetts is Joseph J. Tremont, a congenial, level-headed PhD from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. His office is in the Statler Building in Park Square. Dr. Tremont worked with Dr. Chall on her book, Learning to Read: The Great Debate. So he knows the ins and outs of the reading problem pretty well.

"Our budget this year for upgrading reading programs in Massachusetts was \$100,000," Tremont explained. "But reading-failure compensatory programs in the state got \$38,000,000 in 1978 through Title One." So it really pays to create reading failure!

"Teachers are the key," said Tremont. "But the best teachers are drained upwards in the hierarchy." So where does this leave us? "Actually," he continued, "kids are learning to decode pretty well these days in the elementary grades. But once they learn to read there's no practice, no use. In terms of sheer functional illiteracy things are improving. But in terms of ultimate goals the situation seems to be getting worse."

Head of Right-to-Read's Advisory Council is Jean H. Slingerland, a highly literate lady who headed Harvard's Expository Writing Program for freshmen in 1973-74. She got a first hand view of how the brightest and best were faring in the literacy department. "I was appalled and astonished to find that they were matriculating students at Harvard whose reading and writing skills represented a tremendous obstacle to their success." When I asked for her prognostication of the future, she replied, "Things are going to get worse, much worse, before they get better. Harvard is paralyzed by its past glory."

Dr. Tremont then added: "The problem of literacy in this society will be solved when Harvard decides what it wants its graduates to be able to do."

But what do we do until Harvard makes up its mind? What do we do with the millions of adult functional illiterates beyond our help? What do we do with those millions already in the educational pipeline? And how do we protect from educational malpractice the little ones just entering the educational system?

Dr. Cole had told me that children were coming to him much earlier these days. "Parents are more aware of these problems and recognize them earlier."

This business of LD -- Learning Disability -- is now widely discussed. Personally, I don't like the term "learning disability." The deaf and blind are learning disabled. But dyslexics are usually quite normal. There are a lot of misleading terms and concepts thrown around. For example, minimal brain damage. There's no proof of actual damage in the brain. Eye exercises are baloney. And there's even a fellow in Philadelphia who has kids crawling all over the floor to cure their reading problem. It's strange how unscientific we can be."

What method did the MGH clinic use, I asked. "We use the Orton-Gillingham method, originated by Anna Gillingham. Dr. Orton was lecturing in New York one night in the late thirties when a lady approached him. She recommended an intensively phonetic system of reading instruction for dyslexics. She set it up for Dr. Orton, and it has been the basis of our approach ever since."

Dr. Cole was also instrumental in creating the Carroll School. "I'd always resisted the idea of a separate school for dyslexics. But in the 1950's and 60's there was such an increase in the school population, that the dyslexics could no longer be given the special attention they needed. So when Samuel Lowe, a very concerned parent, persuaded me to set up such a school, I agreed to do so. We took over an existing school in Newton, then moved it to its present location in Lincoln."

I visited the Carroll School's attractive, woodsy campus at the old Storrow estate in Lincoln and talked with its slim, fortyish Headmaster, Alan Forsythe. Prior to coming to Carroll in 1975, Forsythe had spent eight years teaching at an Ivy League prep school in Washington, D. C.

"Before Carroll, there was no school for language disabled kids," he said.

"Is that another term for dyslexia?"

"Dyslexia is such a garbage term. It's bandied about without much accuracy. A language disabled kid is one with normal or high intelligence who can't decode. The reading problem is usually just the tip of the iceberg. They have a lot of trouble directing themselves. They usually have motor skill problems. These kids are different -- freaky different. Almost all of them have a problem sequencing time."

How did the Carroll School help them, I asked.

"We use Gillingham for reading, and apply Gillingham techniques to math. We team teach but maintain a basic class curriculum. We do everything a traditional school would do. We work hard on cursive handwriting. We teach grammar like crazy. These kids need grammar more than others because they need structure. A lot of public schools no longer teach formal grammar. In other words, we give a very formal traditional kind of basic skill education. We have small classes with a minimum of auditory distraction. These kids need quiet so they can concentrate."

I began to think of the kind of education I had had in the public schools of New York during the 1930's. We had quiet. We had phonics. We had cursive handwriting. We had grammar. We had structure. And it was all free. And there were no reading problems. Everyone learned to read. To get the same kind of education today, you had to go to a special private school at a cost of \$4,750, which is the tuition at Carroll.

Modern education has wandered so far from the traditional function of the school as a teacher of basic academic skills, that traditional techniques are used only as remediation after the damage has been done by the prevailing experimental pedagogy.

"Educators keep chasing butterflies," Dr. Cole commented when I asked him what he thought of the open classroom. "Rote learning is now out of fashion, but it's needed. You've got to train memory." He suggested that I investigate the curriculum of the schools of education, which he characterized in rather uncomplimentary terms. "They emphasize technique rather than knowledge."

I asked Forsythe about the future of the Carroll School. "We're going to get more students," he said. "Public schools are not dealing with basic skills, and competency tests will require more remediation. Tenure prevents the public system from getting rid of its incompetents. So they're stuck."

"Who pays for these referrals?" I asked.

"Two thirds of our students come to us under 766. The state pays for tuition and transportation. The learning disabled adolescent is a very difficult person, and today's public schools can't handle him. Last year, 80 percent of our students were twelve and older. In a way, we've become an alternative Junior High School."

The Carroll School also has a new gymnasium, which has greatly enhanced its program.

So the reading problem has become the language-disabled or learning disability problem. And now, with 766, there is even more confusion over terminology than ever. The term dyslexia was used by Dr. Orton to describe the condition of those youngsters who could not learn to read via look-say; and because Orton was a medical man, the term dyslexia took on clinical overtones. So remediation became equated with medical treatment, and the student became a patient. But the medical profession cannot be accused of meddling in education or making a disease out of a learning problem, for when parents were faced with the problem of a child who

apparently couldn't learn to read, they went to their doctors, not their educators.

Is a functional illiterate simply a dyslexic who has never gone to a doctor or a clinic? Probably yes. But most functional illiterates do not have the other problems usually associated with dyslexia: poor motor coordination or poor sequencing. There are a lot of perfectly normal kids who read poorly and cannot write simply because they haven't been taught to do so. Most of the problem today is simply due to instructional incompetence, malpractice, experimentation, and an educational philosophy that has downgraded academic and literacy skills in favor of social skills. So what we have in America is not so much a reading problem, or a learning disability problem, but a teaching problem. Our educational philosophy -- or lack of it -- has created widespread teaching disability. And this is the major problem of American education today.

Teaching disability is caused by our schools of education, through which our teachers must pass in order to obtain certification. Ever since Horace Mann and his associates established the first American state teachers college in Lexington, Massachusetts, in 1839, the teachers colleges have been a source of the worst kind of educational quackery and experimentation. That very first teachers college, believe it or not, taught both Phrenology and the look-say method of reading instruction in its first year! And the quackery hasn't stopped since. But in the first 75 years there were enough countervailing influences to keep the quackery under reasonable control. Today, quackery prevails throughout the system; it is the norm, while traditional methods are reserved for the eccentric and "freaky different."

The literacy of a nation is determined by its educators, and in America, that means by its teachers of teachers. This relatively small group of professionals

insulated from public pressure, is literally determining the future of American civilization. Contrary to popular belief, the future of this country is not being made by its businessmen, or politicians, or bureaucrats. It is being made by educators who determine what is and is not to be taught in our schools. The educators are shaping the minds of our people, and the mind of a nation determines its future.

What can be done? At this point not very much. As long as public education is America's biggest river of tax-derived cash flow, the system is bound to get worse. The educator today, climbing the hierarchy of bureaucratic power, is motivated by sheer greed. The system now is so self-serving, that to put a child in it is to make him a victim of its inherent corruption. The child can only be saved by parents who are aware of the situation and can afford to send him to a halfway decent private school. John Holt advises keeping the child out of school altogether. Not a bad idea when you consider the alternatives. Personally, I prefer the private tutor. An hour of tutoring is worth ten hours in the classroom, which makes it far more economical than one would suppose. Also, tutoring can be conducted in pleasant home surroundings, eliminating the need for elaborate public schools. But where does one find the tutors? Through advertising. This, of course, does not solve the problem for the nation. But first you must understand that the national problem has no solution. There are only personal solutions to individual problems: private schools, church schools, tutoring, or home instruction. No child need be a victim of teaching disability where so many good alternatives are available.