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THE WIND
that blew the Teacher's Hat off

by DONALD McLEAN

In a changing and shrinking world, means of communication between teachers must be extended. There must be personal involvement and we must "feel the winds of change on the flesh of our common humanity."

WHEN I was a very small boy I attended a very large school. The headmaster was, we heard, a great scholar, but he had an aloof manner which told us without words that he had no interest in our type of humanity. He concentrated on the Senior Leaving Examination and seldom spared a glance for the beetles, geckos, small boys and other fauna of the junior school ground. We would see him walking in the senior grounds with a back as stiff as a poker in a suit as black as coal. He usually wore one of those hard round hats known to us as a 'hard-hitter'. It was a hat that pressed tightly on his forehead and when he took it off a red weal remained for several minutes.

I remember the day when the headmaster became aware of our existence. It was a cold windy day and my companion, a ragged sharp-faced urchin nick-named 'Frogs', because his name was Marsh, had blue legs. He never wore shoes and stockings because, he said, "I reckon only sissies wear them thin's", but we all knew better. The playground talk was "Frog's old man's a booze artist an' he shot through so they put 'im in for not payin's maintenance or somethink". Playing near the high fence that divided the secondary school from the primary, we saw the headmaster walking deep in thought in the grounds. A gust of wind lifted his 'hard-hitter' higher in the air to land and bump and roll across the junior playground.

Frogs and I, and half-a-dozen others set off. Like a pack of hounds we followed that hat until it lodged in a garden bed. We all knew the penalties for walking on gardens so the pack stopped; Frogs and I, more ruthless in sycophancy than the rest, rushed on to rescue the dusty and dented hard-hitter.

As we stepped over the pansy border, both of us grasping the prize, the master arrived, stern and straight, "Hm! My hat I think. What are the rules about garden beds?" His voice suggested the ring of steel and I seemed to detect a pungent smell of gunpowder in the air.

"We are not allowed on 'em, sir, but—"

"What is the penalty for walking on a garden?"

"You get the cane, sir, but —"

"Go to my office boys. I'm afraid you must be punished."

And punish us he did. Not very severely but quite enough to satisfy my not very demanding tastes. After the caning he asked Frogs to remain while I went back to school. It was only after several years that I realised that it was not a coincidence that Frogs appeared at school a couple of days later in warm clothes and the first shoes and stockings we had ever known him to wear.

Almost every day, after that incident, the headmaster came to visit the Junior School. "Ah! How do you do, my lad? No more garden-trampling I hope," or, "How are your studies progressing, my boy?" 'My lad' contained a gritty grain of reproof, but he used for 'my boy' a voice that made me think of cocoa and warm toast. He began to show more interest in our work; he came to hear us read and helped our young teacher, by what I know now were demonstration lessons. As he was a superb tea-

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cher we enjoyed these and school seemed to be a better place.

When I hear people repeating Mr. Macmillan's apt phrase "the winds of change", I think of that headmaster and the teachers of Australia whose hard hats of assumption are being blown sky-high by the winds of change.

The wind that blew our headmaster's hat off increased the range of his concern.

Concern is the teacher's motive force.

"To Be is to Be Related"

We live as fully as we relate to other human beings and to our environment. The greater the number of human beings we accept as friends and the wider our concept of environment the richer we become; the greater the range of our concern the stronger our humanity. In the past we Australians have concentrated upon national interests, good examination results and our own high standards of living. Suddenly we are aware that national interests require a world perspective, most of the children of the world are denied education, millions live close to the starvation level, countless thousands suffer and die from diseases that could be cured if there were enough doctors and medical supplies. And these things concern us as immediately as Frog's blue legs concerned his headmaster.

One of the changes of most significance to teachers is the new conception in Asian and African countries of education as the key to the solution of many problems of food supply, health and industrial development. But before we can prepare our pupils for this new world of changed human relationships we have to change ourselves.

We Australian teachers have, in general, considered that we were doing pretty well by the children of our country and little more could be expected. After all education is free, compulsory and secular so everything is fine. But we have been somewhat shaken in recent years by figures like these:

> "It has been estimated that there are some 860 million children and youths in the world between the ages of 5 and 19. Of this population, only about 30 per cent are enrolled in primary schools and about 7 per cent in secondary schools and higher institutions. The remaining 63 per cent are not enrolled in any kind of school. Furthermore, this school-age population is now increasing at the rate of between 15 and 20 million each year and by 1970 will probably reach a number well over 1,000 million."
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> — UNESCO Chronicle, Jan.-Feb., 1959.

The Karachi Plan

Anyone who appreciates education must feel involved in that silent tragedy, and relieved to read of the Karachi Plan.

Fifteen Asian countries, at a Conference in Karachi, drew up a plan to provide, within twenty years, universal primary education for all children in the following countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Laos, Malaya, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The magnitude of this task is staggering. Now, in 1961, there are roughly 130 million primary school age children in these countries of whom about 65 million do not attend school, but Asia's annual population increase is such that by 1980 there will be approximately 237 million such children.

Africa has similar problems which Unesco is trying to solve under the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. But African and Asian countries are not wealthy. Where are they to find the necessary teachers, buildings, books, equipment, training colleges, money? Most of them have an agricultural economy and no industrial revolution, similar to that which has made universal education necessary and practicable elsewhere, has occurred.

This is a means for practical exercise of every teacher's concern. Teacher in South Africa will no doubt find their own ways of helping deprived chiidren.

The Education Committee of the Australian Unesco Committee is trying to discover ways and means by which Australians can help to advance the Karachi Plan. One way in which this could be done is through a world-wide organisation of teachers, and others, to be called, let us say, "Friends of Unesco". The organisation's general aim would be to provide channels of communication between teachers in prosperous countries and those of under-privileged countries. Through the Unesco Gift Coupon Plan children would help other children and schools would adopt special schools. At present some organisations promote Unesco's work but the Friends of Unesco would be individual teachers organised for this single purpose

of corresponding with teachers in other countries, discussing their problems, encouraging them, sending books and stationery, offering genuine personal friendship on a teacher to teacher basis.

The members would need some sort of central clearing house, possibly Unesco headquarters in Paris. Their pledge could be a simple promise to write regularly to at least one teacher in another country and to teach their pupils about the work of U.N.; their privilege of membership could be the right to have Unesco information material, and their badge, the lamp "from which all the world's lamps can be lighted".

Involvement and concern are personal, we cannot feel them satisfactorily through the thick administrative layers of, for example, a teachers' union, a government department or a learned institute, we need to feel the winds of change on the flesh of our common humanity and to let our restrictive hard-hitter head-covers blow far out to sea, while we give a little more attention to children who are not in the examination class and not of the same skin colour as ourselves.

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