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Bianca, You Animal, Shut Up!

Our problem in understanding forced schooling stems from an inconvenient fact: that the wrong it does from a human perspective is right from a systems perspective. You can see this in the case of six-year-old Bianca, who came to my attention because an assistant principal screamed at her in front of an assembly, "BIANCA, YOU ANIMAL, SHUT UP!" Like the wail of a banshee, this sang the school doom of Bianca. Even though her body continued to shuffle around, the voodoo had poisoned her.

Do I make too much of this simple act of putting a little girl in her place? It must happen thousands of times every day in schools all over. I've seen it many times, and if I were painfully honest I'd admit to *doing* it many times. Schools are *supposed* to teach kids their place. That's why we have age-graded classes. In any case, it wasn't your own little Janey or mine.

Most of us tacitly accept the pragmatic terms of public school which allow every kind of psychic violence to be inflicted on Bianca in order to fulfill the prime directive of the system: putting children in their place. It's called "social efficiency." But I get this precognition, this flash-forward to a moment far in the future when your little girl Jane, having left her comfortable home, wakes up to a world where Bianca is her enraged meter maid, or the passport clerk Jane counts on for her emergency ticket out of the country, or the strange lady who lives next door.

I picture this animal Bianca grown large and mean, the same Bianca who didn't go to school for a month after her little friends took to whispering, "Bianca is an animal, Bianca is an animal," while Bianca, only seconds earlier a human being like themselves, sat choking back tears, struggling her way through a reading selection by guessing what the words meant.

In my dream I see Bianca as a fiend manufactured by schooling who now regards Janey as a vehicle for vengeance. In a transport of passion she:

Gives Jane's car a ticket before the meter runs out.

Throws away Jane's passport application after Jane leaves the office.

Plays heavy metal music through the thin partition which separates Bianca's apartment from Jane's while Jane pounds frantically on the wall for relief.

All the above.

You aren't compelled to loan your car to anyone who wants it, but you are compelled to surrender your school-age child to strangers who process children for a livelihood, even though one in every nine schoolchildren is terrified of physical harm happening to them in school, terrified with good cause; about thirty-three are murdered there every year. From 1992 through 1999, 262 children were murdered in school in the United States. Your great-great-grandmother didn't have to surrender her children. What happened?

If I demanded you give up your television to an anonymous, itinerant repairman who needed work you'd think I was crazy; if I came with a policeman who forced you to pay that repairman even after he broke your set, you would be outraged. Why are you so docile when you give up your child to a government agent called a schoolteacher?

I want to open up concealed aspects of modern schooling such as the deterioration it forces in the morality of parenting. You have no say at all in choosing your teachers. You know nothing about their backgrounds or families. And the state knows little more than you do. This is as radical a piece of social engineering as the human imagination can conceive. What does it mean?

One thing you do know is how unlikely it will be for any teacher to understand the personality of your particular child or anything significant about your family, culture, religion, plans, hopes, dreams. In the confusion of school affairs even teachers so disposed don't have opportunity to know those things. How did this happen?

Before you hire a company to build a house, you would, I expect, insist on detailed plans showing what the finished structure was going to look like. Building a child's mind and character is what public schools do, their justification for prematurely breaking family and neighborhood learning. Where is documentary evidence to prove this assumption that trained and certified professionals do it better than people who know and love them can? There isn't any.

The cost in New York State for building a well-schooled child in the year 2000 is \$200,000 per body when lost interest is calculated. That capital sum invested in the child's name over the past twelve years would have delivered a million dollars to each kid as a nest egg to compensate for having no school. The original \$200,000 is more than the average home in New York costs. You wouldn't build a home without some idea what it would look like when finished, but you are compelled to let a corps of perfect strangers tinker with your child's mind and personality without the foggiest idea what they want to do with it.

Law courts and legislatures have totally absolved school people from liability. You can sue a doctor for malpractice, not a schoolteacher. Every homebuilder is accountable to customers years after the home is built; not schoolteachers, though. You can't sue a priest, minister, or rabbi either; that should be a clue.

If you can't be guaranteed even minimal results by these institutions, not even physical safety; if you can't be guaranteed *anything* except that you'll be arrested if you fail to surrender your kid, just what does the public in *public* schools mean?

What exactly is public about public schools? That's a question to take seriously. If schools were public as libraries, parks, and swimming pools are public, as highways and sidewalks are public, then the public would be satisfied with them most of the time. Instead, a situation of constant dissatisfaction has spanned many decades. Only in Orwell's Newspeak, as perfected by legendary spin doctors of the twentieth century such as Ed Bernays or Ivy Lee or great advertising combines, is there anything public about public schools.

I Quit, I Think

In the first year of the last decade of the twentieth century during my thirtieth year as a school teacher in Community School District 3, Manhattan, after teaching in all five secondary schools in the district, crossing swords with one professional administration after another as they strove to rid themselves of me, after having my license suspended twice for insubordination and terminated covertly once while I was on medical leave of absence, after the City University of New York borrowed me for a five-year stint as a lecturer in the Education Department (and the faculty rating handbook published by the Student Council gave me the highest ratings in the department my last three years), after planning and bringing about the most successful permanent school fund-raiser in New York City history, after placing a single eighth-grade class into 30,000 hours of volunteer community service, after organizing and financing a student-run food cooperative, after securing over a thousand apprenticeships, directing the collection of tens of thousands of books for the construction of private student libraries, after producing four talking job dictionaries for the blind, writing two original student musicals, and launching an armada of other initiatives to reintegrate students within a larger human reality, I quit.

I was New York State Teacher of the Year when it happened. An accumulation of disgust and frustration which grew too heavy to be borne finally did me in. To test my resolve I sent a short essay to *The Wall Street Journal* titled "I Quit, I Think." In it I explained my reasons for deciding to wrap it up, even though I had no savings and not the slightest idea what else I might do in my mid-fifties to pay the rent. In its entirety it read like this:

Government schooling is the most radical adventure in history. It kills the family by monopolizing the best times of childhood and by teaching disrespect for home and parents. The whole blueprint of school procedure is Egyptian, not Greek or Roman. It grows from the theological idea that human value is a scarce thing, represented symbolically by the narrow peak of a pyramid.

That idea passed into American history through the Puritans. It found its "scientific" presentation in the bell curve, along which talent supposedly apportions itself by some Iron Law of Biology. It's a religious notion, School is its church. I offer rituals to keep heresy at bay. I provide documentation to justify the heavenly pyramid.

Socrates foresaw if teaching became a formal profession, something like this would happen. Professional interest is served by making what is easy to do seem hard; by subordinating the laity to the priesthood. School is too vital a jobs-project, contract giver and protector of the social order to allow itself to be "re-formed." It has political allies to guard its marches, that's why reforms come and go without changing much. Even reformers can't imagine school much different.

David learns to read at age four; Rachel, at age nine: In normal development, when both are 13, you can't tell which one learned first—the five-year spread means nothing at all. But in school I label Rachel "learning disabled" and slow David down a bit, too. For a paycheck, I adjust David to depend on me to tell him when to go and stop. He won't outgrow that dependency. I identify Rachel as discount merchandise, "special education" fodder. She'll be locked in her place forever.

In 30 years of teaching kids rich and poor I almost never met a learning disabled child; hardly ever met a gifted and talented one either. Like all school categories, these are sacred myths, created by human imagination. They derive from questionable values we never examine because they preserve the temple of schooling.

That's the secret behind short-answer tests, bells, uniform time blocks, age grading, standardization, and all the rest of the school religion punishing our nation. There isn't a right way to become educated; there are as many ways as fingerprints. We don't need state-certified teachers to make education happen—that probably guarantees it won't. How much more evidence is necessary? Good schools don't need more money or a longer year; they need real free-market choices, variety that speaks to every need and runs risks. We don't need a national curriculum or national testing either. Both initiatives arise from ignorance of how people learn or deliberate indifference to it. I can't teach this way any longer. If you hear of a job where I don't have to hurt kids to make a living, let me know. Come fall I'll be looking for work.

The New Individualism

The little essay went off in March and I forgot it. Somewhere along the way I must have gotten a note saying it would be published at the editor's discretion, but if so, it was quickly forgotten in the press of turbulent feelings that accompanied my own internal struggle. Finally, on July 5, 1991, I swallowed hard and quit. Twenty days later the *Journal* published the piece. A week later I was studying invitations to speak at NASA Space Center, the Western White House, the Nashville Center for the Arts, Columbia Graduate Business School, the Colorado Librarian's Convention, Apple Computer, and the financial control board of United Technologies Corporation. Nine years later, still enveloped in the orbit of compulsion schooling, I had spoken 750 times in fifty states and seven foreign countries. I had no agent and never advertised, but a lot of people made an effort to find me. It was as if parents were starving for someone to tell them the truth.

My hunch is it wasn't so much what I was saying that kept the lecture round unfolding, but that a teacher was speaking out at all and the curious fact that I represented nobody except myself. In the great school debate, this is unheard of. Every single voice allowed regular access to the national podium is the mouthpiece of some association, corporation, university, agency, or institutionalized cause. The poles of debate blocked out by these ritualized, figurehead voices are extremely narrow. Each has a stake in continuing forced schooling much as it is.

As I traveled, I discovered a universal hunger, often unvoiced, to be free of managed debate. A desire to be given untainted information. Nobody seemed to have maps of where this thing had come from or why it acted as it did, but the ability to smell a rat was alive and well all over America.

Exactly what John Dewey heralded at the onset of the twentieth century has indeed happened. Our once highly individualized nation has evolved into a centrally managed village, an agora made up of huge special interests which regard individual voices as irrelevant. The masquerade is managed by having collective agencies speak through particular human beings. Dewey said this would mark a great advance in human affairs, but the net effect is to reduce men and women to the status of functions in whatever subsystem they are placed. Public opinion is turned on and off in laboratory fashion. All this in the name of social efficiency, one of the two main goals of forced schooling.

Dewey called this transformation "the new individualism." When I stepped into the job of schoolteacher in 1961, the new individualism was sitting in the driver's seat all over urban America, a far cry from my own school days on the Monongahela when the Lone Ranger, not Sesame Street, was our nation's teacher, and school things weren't nearly so oppressive. But gradually they became something else in the euphoric times following WWII. Easy money and easy travel provided welcome relief from wartime austerity, the advent of television, the new nonstop theater, offered easy laughs, effortless entertainment. Thus preoccupied, Americans failed to notice the deliberate conversion of formal education that was taking place, a transformation that would turn school into an instrument of the leviathan state. Who made that happen and why is part of the story I have to tell.

School As Religion

Nothing about school is what it seems, not even boredom. To show you what I mean is the burden of this long essay. My book represents a try at arranging my own thoughts in order to figure out what fifty years of classroom confinement (as student and teacher) add up to for me. You'll encounter a great deal of speculative history here. This is a personal investigation of why school is a dangerous place. It's not so much that anyone there sets out to hurt children; more that all of us associated with the institution are stuck like flies in the same great web your kids are. We buzz frantically to cover our own panic but have little power to help smaller flies.

Looking backward on a thirty-year teaching career full of rewards and prizes, somehow I can't completely believe that I spent my time on earth institutionalized; I can't believe that centralized schooling is allowed to exist at all as a gigantic indoctrination and sorting machine, robbing people of their children. Did it really happen? Was this my life?

God help me.

School is a religion. Without understanding the holy mission aspect you're certain to misperceive what takes place as a result of human stupidity or venality or even class warfare. All are present in the equation, it's just that none of these matter very much—even without them school would move in the same direction. Dewey's *Pedagogic Creed* statement of 1897 gives you a clue to the zeitgeist:

Every teacher should realize he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of the proper social order and the securing of the right social growth. In this way the teacher is always the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of heaven.

What is "proper" social order? What does "right" social growth look like? If you don't know you're like me, not like John Dewey who did, or the Rockefellers, his patrons, who did, too.

Somehow out of the industrial confusion which followed the Civil War, powerful men and dreamers became certain what kind of social order America needed, one very like the British system we had escaped a hundred years earlier. This realization didn't arise as a product of public debate as it should have in a democracy, but as a distillation of private discussion. Their ideas contradicted the original American charter but that didn't disturb them. They had a stupendous goal in mind—the rationalization of everything. The end of unpredictable history; its transformation into dependable order.

From mid-century onwards certain utopian schemes to retard maturity in the interests of a greater good were put into play, following roughly the blueprint Rousseau laid down in the book *Emile*. At least rhetorically. The first goal, to be reached in stages, was an orderly, scientifically managed society, one in which the best people would make the decisions, unhampered by democratic tradition. After that, human breeding, the evolutionary destiny of the species, would be in reach. Universal institutionalized formal forced schooling was the prescription, extending the dependency of the young well into what had traditionally been early adult life. Individuals would be prevented from taking up important work until a relatively advanced age. Maturity was to be retarded.

During the post-Civil War period, childhood was extended about four years. Later, a special label was created to describe very old children. It was called *adolescence*, a phenomenon hitherto unknown to the human race. The infantilization of young people didn't stop at the beginning of the twentieth century; child labor laws were extended to cover more and more kinds of work, the age of school leaving set higher and higher. The greatest victory for this utopian project was making school the only avenue to certain occupations. The intention was ultimately to draw all work into the school net. By the 1950s it wasn't unusual to find graduate students well into their thirties, running errands, waiting to start their lives.

He Was Square Inside And Brown

Barbara Whiteside showed me a poem written by a high school senior in Alton, Illinois, two weeks before he committed suicide:

<p>He drew... the things inside that needed saying. Beautiful pictures he kept under his pillow. When he started school he brought them... To have along like a friend. It was funny about school, he sat at a square brown desk Like all the other square brown desks... and his room Was a square brown room like all the other rooms, tight And close and stiff.</p> <p>He hated to hold the pencil and chalk, his arms stiff His feet flat on the floor, stiff, the teacher watching And watching. She told him to wear a tie like</p>
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All the other boys, he said he didn't like them.

She said it didn't matter what he liked. After that the class drew.

He drew all yellow. It was the way he felt about Morning. The Teacher came and smiled, "What's this?"

Why don't you draw something like Ken's drawing?"

After that his mother bought him a tie, and he always Drew airplanes and rocketships like everyone else.

He was square inside and brown and his hands were stiff. The things inside that needed saying didn't need it

Anymore, they had stopped pushing... crushed, stiff

Like everything else.

After I spoke in Nashville, a mother named Debbie pressed a handwritten note on me which I read on the airplane to Binghamton, New York:

We started to see Brandon flounder in the first grade, hives, depression, he cried every night after he asked his father, "Is tomorrow school, too?" In second grade the physical stress became apparent. The teacher pronounced his problem Attention Deficit Syndrome. My happy, bouncy child was now looked at as a medical problem, by us as well as the school.

A doctor, a psychiatrist, and a school authority all determined he did have this affliction. Medication was stressed along with behavior modification. If it was suspected that Brandon had not been medicated he was sent home. My square peg needed a bit of whittling to fit their round hole, it seemed.

I cried as I watched my parenting choices stripped away. My ignorance of options allowed Brandon to be medicated through second grade. The tears and hives continued another full year until I couldn't stand it. I began to homeschool Brandon. It was his salvation. No more pills, tears, or hives. He is thriving. He never cries now and does his work eagerly.

The New Dumbness

Ordinary people send their children to school to get smart, but what modern schooling teaches is dumbness. It's a religious idea gone out of control. You don't have to accept that, though, to realize this kind of economy would be jeopardized by too many smart people who understand too much. I won't ask you to take that on faith. Be patient. I'll let a famous American publisher explain to you the secret of our global financial success in just a little while. Be patient.

Old-fashioned dumbness used to be simple ignorance; now it is transformed from ignorance into permanent mathematical categories of relative stupidity like "gifted and talented," "mainstream," "special ed." Categories in which learning is rationed for the good of a system of order. Dumb people are no longer merely ignorant. Now they are indoctrinated, their minds conditioned with substantial doses of commercially prepared disinformation dispensed for tranquilizing purposes.

Jacques Ellul, whose book *Propaganda* is a reflection on the phenomenon, warned us that prosperous children are more susceptible than others to the effects of schooling because they are promised more lifelong comfort and security for yielding wholly:

Critical judgment disappears altogether, for in no way can there ever be *collective* critical judgment....The individual can no longer judge for himself because he inescapably relates his thoughts to the entire complex of values and prejudices established by propaganda. With regard to political situations, he is given ready-made value judgments invested with the power of the truth by...the word of experts.

The new dumbness is particularly deadly to middle- and upper-middle-class kids already made shallow by multiple pressures to conform imposed by the outside world on their usually lightly rooted parents. When they come of age, they are certain they must know something because their degrees and licenses say they do. They remain so convinced until an unexpectedly brutal divorce, a corporate downsizing in midlife, or panic attacks of meaninglessness upset the precarious balance of their incomplete humanity, their stillborn adult lives. Alan Bullock, the English historian, said Evil was a state of incompetence. If true, our school adventure has filled the twentieth century with evil.

Ellul puts it this way:

The individual has no chance to exercise his judgment either on principal questions or on their implication; this leads to the atrophy of a faculty not comfortably exercised under [the best of] conditions...Once personal judgment and critical faculties have disappeared or have atrophied, they will not simply reappear when propaganda is suppressed...years of intellectual and spiritual education would be needed to restore such faculties. The propagandee, if deprived of one propaganda, will immediately adopt another, this will spare him the agony of finding himself *vis a vis* some event without a ready-made opinion.

Once the best children are broken to such a system, they disintegrate morally, becoming dependent on group approval. A National Merit Scholar in my own family once wrote that her dream was to be "a small part in a great machine." It broke my heart. What kids dumbed down by schooling can't do is to think for themselves or ever be at rest for very long without feeling crazy; stupefied boys and girls reveal dependence in many ways easily exploitable by their knowledgeable elders.

According to all official analysis, dumbness isn't *taught* (as I claim), but is *innate* in a great percentage of what has come to be called "the workforce." *Workforce* itself is a term that should tell you much about the mind that governs modern society. According to official reports, only a small fraction of the population is capable of what you and I call mental life: creative thought, analytical thought, judgmental thought, a trio occupying the three highest positions on Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Just how small a fraction would shock you. According to experts, the bulk of the mob is hopelessly dumb, even dangerously so. Perhaps you're a willing accomplice to this social coup which revived the English class system. Certainly you are if your own child has been rewarded with a "gifted and talented" label by your local school. This is what Dewey means by "proper" social order.

If you believe nothing can be done for the dumb except kindness, because it's biology (the bell-curve model); if you believe capitalist oppressors have ruined the dumb because they are bad people (the neo-Marxist model); if you believe dumbness reflects depraved moral fiber (the Calvinist model); or that it's nature's way of disqualifying

boobies from the reproduction sweepstakes (the Darwinian model); or nature's way of providing someone to clean your toilet (the pragmatic elitist model); or that it's evidence of bad karma (the Buddhist model); if you believe any of the various explanations given for the position of the dumb in the social order we have, then you will be forced to concur *that a vast bureaucracy is indeed necessary to address the dumb*. Otherwise they would murder us in our beds.

The shocking possibility that dumb people don't exist in sufficient numbers to warrant the careers devoted to tending to them will seem incredible to you. Yet that is my proposition: Mass dumbness first had to be imagined; it isn't real.

Once the dumb are wished into existence, they serve valuable functions: as a danger to themselves and others they have to be watched, classified, disciplined, trained, medicated, sterilized, ghettoized, cajoled, coerced, jailed. To idealists they represent a challenge, reprobates to be made socially useful. Either way you want it, hundreds of millions of perpetual children require paid attention from millions of adult custodians. An ignorant horde to be schooled one way or another.

Putting Pedagogy To The Question

More than anything else, this book is a work of intuition. The official story of why we school doesn't add up today any more than it did yesterday. A few years before I quit, I began to try to piece together where this school project came from, why it took the shape it took, and why every attempt to change it has ended in abysmal failure.

By now I've invested the better part of a decade looking for answers. If you want a conventional history of schooling, or education as it is carelessly called, you'd better stop reading now. Although years of research in the most arcane sources are reflected here, throughout it's mainly intuition that drives my synthesis.

This is in part a private narrative, the map of a schoolteacher's mind as it tracked strands in the web in which it had been wrapped; in part a public narrative, an account of the latest chapter in an ancient war: the conflict between systems which offer physical safety and certainty at the cost of suppressing free will, and those which offer liberty at the price of constant risk. If you keep both plots in mind, no matter how far afield my book seems to range, you won't wonder what a chapter on coal or one on private hereditary societies has to do with schoolchildren.

What I'm most determined to do is start a conversation among those who've been silent up until now, and that includes schoolteachers. We need to put sterile discussions of grading and testing, discipline, curriculum, multiculturalism and tracking aside as distractions, as mere symptoms of something larger, darker, and more intransigent than any problem a problem-solver could tackle next week. Talking endlessly about such things encourages the bureaucratic tactic of talking around the vital, messy stuff. In partial compensation for your effort, I promise you'll discover what's in the mind of a man who spent his life in a room with children.

Give an ear, then, to what follows. We shall cross-examine history together. We shall put pedagogy to the question. And if the judgment following this *auto da fe* is that only pain can make this monster relax its grip, let us pray together for the courage to inflict it.

Reading my essay will help you sort things out. It will give you a different topological map upon which to fix your own position. No doubt I've made some factual mistakes, but essays since Montaigne have been about locating truth, not about assembling facts. Truth and fact aren't the same thing. My essay is meant to mark out crudely some ground for a scholarship of schooling, my intention is that you not continue to regard the official project of education through an older, traditional perspective, but to see it as a frightening chapter in the administrative organization of knowledge—a text we must vigorously repudiate as our ancestors once did. We live together, you and I, in a dark time when all official history is propaganda. If you want truth, you have to struggle for it. This is my struggle. Let me bear witness to what I have seen.

Author's Note

With conspiracy so close to the surface of the American imagination and American reality, I can only approach with trepidation the task of discouraging you in advance from thinking my book the chronicle of some vast diabolical conspiracy to seize all our children for the personal ends of a small, elite minority.

Don't get me wrong, American schooling has been replete with chicanery from its very beginnings.*

Indeed, it isn't difficult to find various conspirators *boasting* in public about what they pulled off. But if you take that tack you'll miss the real horror of what I'm trying to describe, that what has happened to our schools was inherent in the original design for a planned economy and a planned society laid down so proudly at the end of the nineteenth century. I think what happened would have happened anyway—without the legions of venal, half-mad men and women who schemed so hard to make it as it is. If I'm correct, we're in a much worse position than we would be if we were merely victims of an evil genius or two.

If you obsess about conspiracy, what you'll fail to see is that we are held fast by a form of highly abstract thinking fully concretized in human institutions which has grown beyond the power of the managers of these institutions to control. If there is a way out of the trap we're in, it won't be by removing some bad guys and replacing them with good guys.

Who are the villains, really, but ourselves? People can change, but systems cannot without losing their structural integrity. Even Henry Ford, a Jew-baiter of such colossal proportions he was lionized by Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, made a public apology and denied to his death he had ever intended to hurt Jews—a too strict interpretation of Darwin made him do it! The great industrialists who gave us modern compulsion schooling inevitably found their own principles subordinated to systems-purposes, just as happened to the rest of us.

Take Andrew Carnegie, the bobbin boy, who would certainly have been as appalled as the rest of us at the order to fire on strikers at his Homestead plant. But the system he helped to create was committed to pushing men until they reacted violently or dropped dead. It was called "the Iron Law of Wages." Once his colleagues were interested in the principles of the Iron Law, they could only see the courage and defiance of the Homestead strikers as an opportunity to provoke a crisis which would allow the steel union to be broken with state militia and public funds. Crushing opposition is the obligatory scene in the industrial drama, whatever it takes, and no matter how much individual industrial leaders like Carnegie might be reluctant to do so.

My worry was about finding a prominent ally to help me present this idea that inhuman anthropology is what we confront in our institutional schools, not conspiracy. The hunt paid off with the discovery of an analysis of the Ludlow Massacre by Walter Lippmann in the *New Republic* of January 30, 1915. Following the Rockefeller slaughter of up to forty-seven, mostly women and children, in the tent camp of striking miners at Ludlow, Colorado, a congressional investigation was held which put John D. Rockefeller Jr. on the defensive. Rockefeller agents had employed armored cars, machine guns, and fire bombs in his name. As Lippmann tells it, Rockefeller was charged with having the only authority to authorize such a massacre, but also with too much indifference to what his underlings were up to. "Clearly," said the industrial magnate, "both cannot be true."

As Lippmann recognized, this paradox is the worm at the core of all colossal power. *Both indeed could be true.* For ten years Rockefeller hadn't even seen this property; what he knew of it came in reports from his managers he scarcely could have read along with mountains of similar reports coming to his desk each day. He was compelled to rely on the word of others. Drawing an analogy between Rockefeller and the czar of Russia, Lippmann wrote that nobody believed the czar himself performed the many despotic acts he was accused of; everyone knew a bureaucracy did so in his name. But most failed to push that knowledge to its inevitable conclusion: If the czar tried to change what was customary he would be undermined by his subordinates. He had no defense against this happening because it was in the best interests of all the divisions of the bureaucracy, including the army, that it—not the czar—continue to be in charge of things. The czar was a prisoner of his own subjects. In Lippmann's words:

This seemed to be the predicament of Mr. Rockefeller. I should not believe he personally hired thugs or wanted them hired. It seems far more true to say that his impersonal and half-understood power has delegated itself into unsocial forms, that it has assumed a life of its own which he is almost powerless to control...His intellectual helplessness was the amazing part of his testimony. Here was a man who represented wealth probably without parallel in history, the successor to a father who has, with justice, been called the high priest of capitalism.... Yet he talked about himself on the commonplace moral assumptions of a small businessman.

The Rockefeller Foundation has been instrumental through the century just passed (along with a few others) in giving us the schools we have. It imported the German research model into college life, elevated service to business and government as the goal of higher education, not teaching. And Rockefeller-financed University of Chicago and Columbia Teachers College have been among the most energetic actors in the lower school tragedy. There is

more, too, but none of it means the Rockefeller family "masterminded" the school institution, or even that his foundation or his colleges did. All became in time submerged in the system they did so much to create, almost helpless to slow its momentum even had they so desired.

Despite its title, *Underground History* isn't a history proper, but a collection of materials toward a history, embedded in a personal essay analyzing why mass compulsion schooling is unreformable. The history I have unearthed is important to our understanding; it's a good start, I believe, but much remains undone. The burden of an essay is to reveal its author so candidly and thoroughly that the reader comes fully awake. You are about to spend twenty-five to thirty hours with the mind of a schoolteacher, but the relationship we should have isn't one of teacher to pupil but rather that of two people in conversation. I'll offer ideas and a theory to explain things and you bring your own experience to bear on the matters, supplementing and arguing where necessary. Read with this goal before you and I promise your money's worth. It isn't important whether we agree on every detail.

A brief word on sources. I've identified all quotations and paraphrases and given the origin of many (not all) individual facts, but for fear the forest be lost in contemplation of too many trees, I've avoided extensive footnoting. So much here is my personal take on things that it seemed dishonest to grab you by the lapels that way: of minor value to those who already resonate on the wavelength of the book, useless, even maddening, to those who do not.

This is a workshop of solutions as well as an attempt to frame the problem clearly, but be warned: they are perversely sprinkled around like raisins in a pudding, nowhere grouped neatly as if to help you study for a test—except for a short list at the very end. The advice there is practical, but strictly limited to the world of compulsion schooling as it currently exists, not to the greater goal of understanding how education occurs or is prevented. The best advice in this book is scattered throughout and indirect, you'll have to work to extract it. It begins with the very first sentence of the book where I remind you that what is right for systems is often wrong for human beings. Translated into a recommendation, that means that to avoid the revenge of Bianca, we must be prepared to insult systems for the convenience of humanity, not the other way around.

END

*For instance, for those of you who believe in testing, school superintendents *as a class* are virtually the stupidest people to pass through a graduate college program, ranking fifty-one points below the elementary school teachers they normally "supervise," (on the Graduate Record Examination), and about eighty points below secondary-school teachers, while teachers themselves as an aggregate finish seventeenth of twenty occupational groups surveyed. The reader is of course at liberty to believe this happened accidentally, or that the moon is composed of blue, not green, cheese as is popularly believed. It's also possible to take this anomaly as conclusive evidence of the irrelevance of standardized testing. Your choice.