

Comment

In this issue two of our contributors are concerned with the question of schooling. Each in a different context (one urban England, the other rural Africa) criticises the school as an institution capable of attaining its supposed ends. In both cases, it is claimed, the school was designed as an educational institution which seemed relevant and useful to a particular group, in both cases an elite group, and it has been imposed without much adaptation on another quite different group with quite different capacities and problems.

It is to be noted that in neither case is there any rejection of 'institutional education'; for neither author can education be carried on without careful and intelligent organisation, without structures and planning. Both are aware that institutions simply are the ways in which people act together, whether with their contemporaries or with their predecessors and successors, and that without such cooperation there is no significant human action. Both writers in fact are mainly concerned with the new and more relevant forms that institutions must take. Theirs is not a romantic criticism of schools as such, but of the limited form of school that has been imposed on us.

Secondly it must be noted that in neither case is this simply a matter of readjusting educational methods to a new situation. It is not just a matter of asking whether school systems designed for middle-class children or European settlers are really suited to the unemployed of Liverpool or to Nigerian villagers; in practice, to ask this is also to question whether these systems were ever really suited in the first place to the middle-class children or European settlers themselves. We begin to realise that an education designed (even quite unconsciously) for the needs simply of a particular group must involve itself in contradictions. Education (which after all is only a name for an aspect of human growth, of human life) of its own nature must break out of the bounds of any kind of sectarian limitation. Class structured education is a contradiction in its own terms. It is not that education has to be spread uniformly over all classes, but that education can only become consistently itself through the elimination of classes.

With this in mind we should take a look at the world's largest and most comprehensive educational institution, or set of institutions, the Catholic Church. Leaving aside the obvious questions to be asked about the Church and schooling, about 'Catholic' institutions for the sons and daughters of the rich, or 'Catholic' institu-