

Teachers Or Janitors?

Teachers at Acton High School were surprised last Monday when they were told that their main role in the school system was not to educate but simply custodial care.

"There is no cheaper or better way to look after our children than the school system," said John Boone, lecturer and history department head at LaSalle Secondary School in Kingston. "Teachers do it and they do it well, yet we all look down on this function."

Mr. Boone was talking to the teachers about roles and values in the school system in Ontario. He explained that the four roles of teachers were custodial care, classification, indoctrination, and education in that order.

He cited a recent court case in United States where the California supreme court noted that "the purpose of the school system is not to educate but look after the care and well being of a person."

He accused the school system of supporting a hierarchy or "class structure" in modern society by the use of classification and indoctrination.

"In the past when a person graduated from the four year program, a strange thing happened, he was stopped from entering a professional career," Mr. Boone said. "Can you imagine, by the age of 16 we teachers have determined the outcome on his life."

Using figures which he brought to add to his statement, Mr. Boone told the teachers that 90 per cent of the medical students were from professional parents in a profession like medicine or law.

"The reasons we have a hierarchy in society is to instill order and control," he said. "The school system is one of the prime examples of a hierarchy at work."

Mr. Boone explained that the levels were "pronounced" between the lowest level, teachers, the top, the minister of education. "The further up in the hierarchy you are, the more remote you become to the masses at the bottom," he added.

"The hierarchy is there, it perpetuates itself. You can be a rebel in a hierarchy until you threaten its existence, and then they get rid of you."

Mistrust, he told the teachers is created in a hierarchy. "Mistrust has created jobs in the system, useless jobs. It also wastes time and adds disorder to the system."

"I would like to see some very, very basic changes in the system," Mr. Boone added.

"We are the only profession where outside help, in the form of superintendents and administrators, come in and judge our work. I say we should get these 'expert' teachers into the class and show the new teachers how the proper method of teaching."

However, Mr. Boone expressed a very optimistic outlook for the future of the school system and for society as a whole. He told the teachers that they should never criticize a student for not knowing a subject or answer.

"The discovery of ignorance is the most beautiful thing available," he explained.

"This is your cause in life. The next 30 years are going to be fascinating, filled with convulsions of some sort within the system."

He told the Acton teachers that the education system was changing, as the people questioned and left their basic faith in God. He told the teachers that they should "be aware of the values you are trying to transmit to the students. We all want to pass on the basic values of love, understanding, and kindness, and we should try to."

Brightly, he added, "remember, nothing is inevitable as long as we are willing to contemplate about what is happening."

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