On the battleground of New York City's public school education, it is sometimes hard to discern who is the enemy and for what goals the combatants are fighting. Everyone asserts that he seeks only the education of the child. But the child, like the helpless civilian in any war, seems to be the casualty, while armies proliferate and battles are won and lost on paper. There are four major armed camps on the scene: the Board of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, the civil rights groups, and the fearful white community. On the sidelines, often changing their tunes to suit the occasion, are the real professionals; some of them at lower levels of the board hierarchy, some the university-based researchers and educators.

A current battle is being waged over the city's More Effective Schools program. Twenty thousand children attend the 21 schools in the program. The main differences between them and other elementary schools are: class registers with a maximum of 22, extensive guidance services; four teachers for each group or "cluster" of three classes; heterogeneous grouping of the children; additional health and community services.

The board, in spite of its own highly favorable evaluation, appears unwilling to expand the program. The civil rights groups are suspicious of it, as they are of any token program set forth by the board. The union, whose top leaders are increasingly concerned over the public's view of the union as just another greedy, welfare-minded labor outfit, has issued the battle cry: "Expiration or Death!" The white community is for the moment quiescent, torn between the high cost of financing the MES (over $200 annually more per child, plus untold future costs in capital outlay for buildings) and the seemingly pleasant solution of the problem of quality education without integration.

The teachers, and I am one, are like infantry anywhere, a mixed lot who do their jobs, love to gripe, and cannot, in a profound sense, afford to be any more objective than an infantryman in battle.

The Union and the More Effective Schools
MES is, as the UFT takes every occasion to point out, the brainchild of the union. In the spring of 1964, Superintendent Calvin E. Gross, under fire from civil rights groups for inaction, was unable to move his subordinates in the board, the Council of Supervisory Associations, and the United Federation of Teachers, followed the union's proposals in most details.

The parent committee at the union had included Si Beagle, now an Assistant Principal at MES 93 in Manhattan and head of the National Council for Effective Schools, Louis Hay, long associated with the Junior Guidance program for emotionally disturbed children, and two principals from the Harlem area, Elliott Shapiro and Edward Gottlieb, both "guidance-minded" and strongly committed to school participation in the community. All four men share a benevolently fanatic faith in the educability of the ghetto child, as well as a scepticism regarding the competence of the Board of Education.
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the concept of the cluster teacher so that individual attention can be given children within the classroom.

But again, the union, anxious to expand the program, does not wish to see changes made in its most basic assumptions and proposals. Perhaps it is too late for a disclaimer, but I do not wish to imply that there is only cynicism and self-serving in the union's support of the program. President Al Shanker can toss off other promising proposals such as pairing and educational parks as "mere slogans," but many of the union's leaders are strong believers in the More Effective Schools approach: it must work, it will work! That the results, as measured by the reading tests, have been below their expectations, has been genuinely and profoundly shocking to them.

In an attempt to find some answers, the union held a conference at Arden House in November, 1966. A little more than a quarter of those attending were classroom teachers. The others were supervisors, guidance people, guests from the universities or from out-of-state, and a dozen or so spouses. Time was short and the vision narrow. There was an airing of problems; some proposals of a patchwork kind were made; supervisors were damned; but the structure remained intact. In fact, Si Beagle spelled out the terms of our work: the original proposals have not been carefully followed; we must see what problems there are and insist that the original plan be followed in every school. And it was Beagle who coined the slogan: "Expansion or Death!"

The Administration and the More Effective Schools

It is interesting to note that in three areas the Superintendent's Committee for More Effective Schools went far beyond the union's original proposals. One area was that of special programs and procedure: such as an extended school day, weekend use of the school's facilities by the community, and special summer programs. But for want of funds, the ideas were not implemented. After-school study centers and a summer reading program do, of course, exist in many schools, but they are largely the same old tutorials, with an emphasis on voluntary participation and maximum attendance.

A second area was that of research and experimentation. The Committee proposed, "careful evaluation of the program as a whole from the very initiation of the project," as well as specific areas for active research and experimentation. Again, from lack of funds and lack of enthusiastic support in the participating schools, the ideas were not put to work.

A third area was in community relations. Included here was the goal of "total integration," as well as a number of proposals for the school to work with the community. Except for the appointment of a community coordinator in each school, there has been little movement in the direction of integrating the school with the community in which it functions. But here, lack of funds at the top of the bureaucracy is not the reason; it is rather a lack of commitment or interest at the bottom where it counts, among the supervisors and the teachers themselves. And this is true despite the fact that "community participation" has become the most salient problem facing the ghetto schools.

As everyone familiar with school administration knows very well, the principal is the linchpin of the system, certainly as far as teachers and children are concerned. The MES program has not changed this. The principal still sets the tone for his school. Within the restricted limits of who is available, he selects his staff; he determines the use of the specialists on the staff; he establishes the standards. In my first year in a More Effective School I saw the principal twice in the classroom. Once she stopped by to praise a clever bulletin board I had done in the hall; the second time was strictly from an old Bing Crosby God-is-not-dead movie, when I happened to be discussing the medieval church with a sixth-grade class just as she happened to be walking by with a covey of nuns who were visiting the school. She was a tidy administrator who could delegate authority, compartmentalize staff and children and guidance and community neatly, who had a very high regard for appearances, who did not trust her staff except in the hopeful, resigned way of mothers with young children, and for whom the process of education did not exist as an intellectual problem but only as a product to be sold by positive thinking.

Perhaps this principal is not typical of principals of More Effective Schools: But she shares with many in the administration of the city schools, a nonquestioning frame of mind: "this is what we have and this is what we will use." Indeed, New York's public schools, as far as I can see, are a vast mass of unused power: assistant superintendents to install what their districts need through the principals who battle for classified clerksdom, the teachers who behave like mice with un-fed cats, the children who are the most of them, to use their parents' power to save them. Thus essential aspects of the More Effective Schools program have not been the flexibility, the democracy of staff participation, the freedom from the curriculum in new ways, the research and evaluation of interaction with the community. The fault is not with the program but with the people.

Again, the statement of the problem determines the different solutions will be sought. The problem, in the eyes of the boldest, is what we are doing, but with the "educational, physical, social deficits" of the children. Therefore, the need is not for complete, but for compensatory educations of the community. We are shocked, to take a recent example, to hear that Head Start children are shown to have lost all the gains they gained from the Head Start program or the irreparable flaws in the question the crushing tedium and the punishing restraint of the classrooms of grades K-12.

This drive for discipline is as obsessive in More Effective Schools as elsewhere. Here too one hears early childhood teachers complain about the Head Start children's behavior at prekindergarten and kindergarten: They have "still or stand in line!" One of the most widely held, if not unshaken beliefs of educators everywhere is that education can only take place in order, in silence. Somehow it is always supposed that if children during the course of a lesson they cannot possibly be learning. Frequent, this demand for silence is enforced outside as well. Our district superintendent on his first visit to our school was to be gesturing with imperious disapproval at the shocking audacity of a student talking to a classmate as they moved from one classroom to another. His visit was a strong effort, still not totally successful on trying; to teach the children to walk in silence through the halls, to do the behavior beyond talking and, I must add, chewing gum, is far more evidence of emotional disturbance so deep as to require professional guidance, services on the spot.

Another crippling assumption of the schools is that reading must be taught within discrete and self-isolating, boundaries, such as speech or chinning, and that it has no relationship to the spoken language. As the assistant superintendent in charge of the More Effective School that reading retardation was the problem to overcome, instructed that reading must be taught by using the basal readers. The children work at their own pace, correcting their own work as more textbooks, especially in the new schools such as mine, are available for use in the classroom library, since the public libraries in our neighborhood rarely reach
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Perhaps this principal is not typical of principals of More Effective Schools. But she shares with many in the administration of the city schools a conform-

ing, non questioning frame of mind: "this is what we have been given; this is what we will use." Indeed, New York's public schools, from near the top all the way to the bottom, are a vast mass of unused power: from the power of assistant superintendents to insist on what their districts must have and do, through the principals who settle for glorified clerksdom, through the teachers who behave like mice with un-belled cats, to the children who have not learned, most of them, to use their parents' powers to save them. Thus some of the most essential aspects of the More Effective Schools program have not been used: the

flexibility, the democracy of staff participation, the freedom to depart from the curriculum in new ways, the research and evaluation process and the interaction with the community. The fault is not with the paper program, but

with the people.

Again, the statement of the problem determines the directions in which solutions are to be sought. The problem, in the eyes of the board, lies not with what we are doing, but with the "educational, physical, social and recreational deficits" of the children. Therefore, the need is not for compensation to over-

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others. Here too one hears early childhood teachers complain: "What did they teach them in prekindergarten and kindergarten? They haven't learned to sit still or stand in line!" One of the most widely held, if not unshakeable assump-

tions of educators everywhere is that education can only take place in quiet rooms, in silence. Somehow it is always supposed that if children talk to each other during the course of a lesson they cannot possibly be talking about the lesson. Frequently, this demand for silence is enforced outside the classroom as well. Our district superintendent on his first visit to our school was seen to be gesturing with imperious disapproval at the shocking spectacle of chil-

ren talking to each other as they moved from one classroom to another. After his visit there was a strong effort, still not totally successful (but we will go on trying), to teach the children to walk in silence through the halls. Any mis-

behavior beyond talking and, I must add, gum chewing, is generally felt to be evidence of emotional disturbance so deep as to require psychological, i.e.,

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Another crippling assumption of the schools is that reading is a subject to be taught within discrete and self-isolating boundaries, such as multiplication or

chinning, and that it has no relationship to the spoken language. Mrs. O'Daly, assistant superintendent in charge of the More Effective Schools, recognizing that reading retardation was the problem to overcome, instructed the schools that reading must be taught by using the basal readers. The SRA kits, where

children work at their own pace, correcting their own work and keeping their

own records, have also been widely used. People who would be horrified if you justified arts and crafts on the grounds that children enjoyed doing them and were quiet when so occupied will use those grounds to support the con-

tinued use of SRA, although more silent, mechanical, superficial busi-

work is the last thing our children need.

The ubiquity of the SRA kits points up another dimension of the allocation decisions made by the administrators of the More Effective Schools. The additional funds available for supplies and books have been spent largely for

more textbooks, especially in the new schools such as mine. As a result, in our school we are starved for books for a classroom library, which is important since the public libraries in our neighborhood rarely reach the kind of cir-
ulation that will raise the book-buying income to the level needed by a single school of hungry readers. Moreover, our school library shelves are nearly bare. Library books purchased with federal funds have arrived, but are locked up in a closet, waiting for some last bureaucratic blessing before they can be shelved and put in circulation. Clearly, in this school at least, the proposals in the plan for more efficient ordering of supplies has not been effective.

A teacher considering the needs of a particular group who asks for specific books and materials for these children, is faced with the regular procedure: she may ask for the materials to be ordered, but the order will not be filled until spring, and will be filled, if the school is lucky, sometime in the following school year. The procedure is the usual one for city schools; but the More Effective Schools were supposed to be an exception!

Supervisors below the principal work closely with the classroom teachers. But often their time is spent in settling quarrels among the teachers and in coping with discipline problems. One assistant principal complained that teachers were sending him chronically gum-chewers to deal with! In our school some of the assistant principals will teach children frequently: in demonstration lessons, or helping out when the substitutes cannot cover all classes, or as a matter of principle, for administrators often forget the climate of the classroom. They know their teachers far better than do most supervisors, and certainly they know the children better.

But the knowledge is of limited use. Even with the "no-prejudice" transfer clause, which permits either a teacher or a principal to request that a teacher leave, it appears to be very difficult to get rid of any but the most disturbed or ineffective teachers on the staff. After all, to ask a teacher to leave is to take a decisive stand which may be open to question and argument and resistance, and few principals seem to have the energy to spare for emotional battle.

Again and again the fault seems to lie not so much with the machinery as with the people using it, or afraid of using it, or ignorant of the ways in which it can be used. Solutions are sought in administrative terms. Gimmicks, such as over-head projectors, become the substitutes for genuine change of curriculum content. And in a showdown, the conforming unquestioning acceptance of the board's definitions of the problem, of the curriculum, and of the methods, prevails.

The showdown, for the More Effective Schools, is the city-wide reading achievement test. There is widespread belief that this is the yardstick by which we will be measured, and that the fate of the More Effective Schools' program lies in the statistical lap of the test results. The already narrow view of the curriculum, which imposes the basal reader sight-vocabulary approach on all, is narrowed still further. Reading is taught in the peculiarly sterile guise of "test-taking skills." For innocent children, reading must then become a strange and restricted process in which one reads a dozen sentences and then answers questions about them. We have added one more negative to all the reasons they already may have for not learning to read.

But the scores hang over us. If we teach children in smaller groups; if we give them SRA; if we teach them how to take tests: why do they not then learn?

It is the great irony of the whole process that the children we have served best in the program — the children three or four years or more behind in reading — cannot perform on the tests in such a way as to reflect that progress. If you give a nonreader a pencil and a test sheet, he will proceed to mark every answer, and by chance he will score the minimum on the test. If, a year later, you test him again, and he answers what he can, plus a few guesses, he will again score close to the minimum. But what appears to be a gain or even a loss of a few months on the reading test score is really a difference in performance of from one to three years. But the numbers are objective and implacable judges, and we will be judged by them. And because of that impending judgment, we tell ourselves that we dare not take chances. We point to the fine results in the first and second grades, where failure has not yet had a chance to chain the children; we turn away from the upper grades. ("I'm not so concerned with the fifth and sixth grades," a principal said, "I've given up on them a year or two. But the children coming up...")

One of the factors involved in the good performance must be the driving impatience of Hortense Jones, Di-rector Education in the MES, who plays with numbers, and programs and personnel, and who seems to have a psychological problem rather than an educational one, somewhat under her benevolent whip but they can take

What self-evaluation has taken place has been statistical, there is a reluctance to go beyond the despair of test results held out by the achievement of the lowest grades, to solve the age and difficult mixture of persons, or conformity, class size and content. While the lower grades, a confidence and faith, the upper grades sink deeper in the climate of these peculiarly sterile guise of instruction.

The Teachers and the More Effective Schools

When I expressed surprise once that the More Effective Schools were flooded with applications from teachers in other ghetto schools who had served over 30 years in Harlem schools and knew the devil you don't" — the devil being the city education system — as a result, many members of the staff are young, new. What they lack in experience they make up in enthusiasm at best, though, the exchange is not an equivalent one, for learn "on the backs of their children," as another old-timer, one of the More Effective Schools, and with enough hunches, that they may survive long enough to enrich the children with the exposure to visitors is nothing compared with other teachers. For many of the people who have becom-ers in the city-wide test. There is a strange social attitude that teachers should not interrupt the classroom; speak to the teachers or the children, only to each other. To how to be that of Sunday strollers viewing the caged animals.

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The Teachers and the More Effective Schools

When I expressed surprise once that the More Effective Schools had not been flooded with applications from teachers in other ghetto schools, an older teacher who had served over 30 years in Harlem schools said, “The devil you know is better than the devil you don’t”—the devil being the principal.

As a result, many members of the staff are young, newly-licensed teachers. What they lack in experience they make up in enthusiasm and energy. Even at best though, the exchange is not an equivalent one, for these young people learn “on the backs of their children,” as another old-timer put it. But in the setting of the More Effective Schools, and with enough help from supervisors, they may survive long enough to enrich the children with whom they work. Teachers on the staff, to visitors from all over the world who flow like lava through the halls and classrooms. There is a strange social attitude prevailing which determines that guests should not interrupt the classroom work; guests never speak to the teachers or the children, only to each other. The effect seems somehow to be that of Sunday strollers viewing the caged animals at the zoo.

But the exposure to visitors is nothing compared with the exposure to other teachers. For many of the people who have become teachers, the profession is one practiced in secret, behind closed doors, with carefully closed bits of information served out at lunch time. To be suddenly exposed to other teachers. For many of the people who have become teachers, the profession is one practiced in secret, behind closed doors, with carefully closed bits of information served out at lunch time. To be suddenly exposed to the personalities and biases of our peers becomes, for some of us, a trauma from which we do not recover easily. Because the cluster teacher’s role was never carefully defined, and because her functions as described could not be fulfilled—there is simply not enough time for her to do more than cover classes for a free period daily for the teachers, and help with the two reading periods—her’s has become an abrasive, frustrating job. Problems of discipline among children and of conflict among teachers are widespread. Where, because of a happy choice in members of the cluster team, it has worked well, it has justified all the preconceptions. But in most instances I know of it has not worked well.

To some extent the problems could have been minimized by longer orientation and instruction of the teachers in the possibilities of the program. The concept of 66 children with four teachers has been replaced by the more rigid and unworkable view of three classes of 22 with a fourth teacher available. Whether the cluster teacher will survive as a genuine teacher or as an administrative device will depend largely on the extent to which teachers and administrators free themselves from the often self-imposed limitations and narrow reading of the original plan, and forge new relationships within the scope of the plan. How free will we be to play with the numbers? Or will we let the numbers bind and restrict us? Within a cluster, can we group the chi-
childen so that there will be 30 in one group and 10 in another, if that will best serve the needs of the children? The answer at present seems to be "No": the book has predicted a maximum size of 22, and we must get along with that quantity.

Conflicts among the staff exist and always will, even in the best of institutions. But the conflict between teacher and child can destroy the child—if it makes education and its fruits unattainable. One of the sources of conflict, more fundamental than the clash of class values, is the clash of emotional styles.

In this country, being "educated" means having learned to use words to convey, to control, and often to deny emotions. When confronted as a small child by the conflicting evidence of words and of emotions, one learned to choose the words and to ignore or suppress the emotions. In the process words and emotions are often invested with emotional meanings they do not, in themselves, possess, as witness the hysteria aroused by the term "black power."

In the classroom, the teacher who has been educated in this way can empathize with verbally-oriented, "emotionally controlled" children, and they can understand her. But often the ghetto child has not learned to value words above feelings as the primary level of communication. He can be almost alarmingly sensitive to our feelings and moods, sometimes reading us far better than we can read ourselves. When our feelings contradict our words, he judges us, and if we are lucky, instead of fighting us, he will tune out our words—as we, tragically, tune out his feelings.

We cannot recognize love when it is tendered in any but middle-class coin. A young Negro teacher in our school was showing us a letter she had received from a child she did not know:

Dear Mrs. Shipley:

I like you very much. I think you are the prettiest teacher in the school...[and the much-erased and rewritten poignant last line] I also am a Negro.

A young teacher's first reaction: "You must show this to guidance. The child is sick." When others protested that it was a beautiful and moving letter, she backed down:

"I only meant she's on guidance. It would give the guidance counselor a new insight. All they ever hear are bad things."

It does not serve us to teach the children to differ from us if we do not know ourselves. Then all the well-intentioned courses in the world on the language deprivation, learning styles, economic status, cultural variations of these children will only serve to reinforce our view of ourselves as superior models, and make bearable and plausible our failures.

It is too optimistic to rely on staff selection to resolve the conflict as there are not enough teachers to choose from. But one of the proposals made at the Arden House conference is worth considering seriously: the proposal that teachers be given Sensitivity Training before assignment to the schools. Some of the conference time at schools could well be used to explore honestly our feelings and attitudes.

And the children... Whatever the family and the street have taught the child about himself and his world, it is we in the schools in those years before the sixth grade who have taught the child most efficiently and brutally that here, in this place, he cannot succeed.

Zenaida, who had moved back and forth between the Spanish-speaking schools of Puerto Rico and the schools of East Harlem, refused to work at all. Because she had assumed the total responsibility for her failure. Because she had taught them that they are dumb, "so stupid," in the felicitous phrase of a child about himself and his world! But the schools had given her seven years of school before this one: "I'm dumb." Lucy had no self-images that one could see. She was warm and loving, she could dance at parties and laugh—oh, how she loved the world and at herself! But the schools had given her seven years to learn that she was "dumb." She had accepted that terrible grace and resignation. She had learned what math she was reading. She had listened and looked, learning with her eyes books could not tell her. When finally she met, in this school could give her what she needed to make the leap into reading included faith and patience—then she could do it: she could, in place, take a chance on being dumb, and take a chance on it after all.

But no one had told her that it was the schools that had failed her, she had assumed the total responsibility for her failure. Because a strong positive self-image, she could bear that knowledge of her failure without being crushed. But there are not even in middle-class schools. And for most of the child is accompanied by anger, if they're lucky, or by apathetic taught them that they are dumb, "so stupid," in the felicitous one of our teachers. And we will not share willingly our enormous failure. We will only reinforce it.

To view the education of the children in the ghettos as some way house between the sick family and the sick community is ignoring defeat. The More Effective Schools have been effective in segments where education was not viewed as an ineffective or of a psychiatric service for profoundly disturbed and malfunctioning where the problem was not seen as "What's wrong with them?" wrong with us?"

Mrs. Gloria Channon was educated at schools in rural New Jersey and New York City. She has been an elementary school teacher for eight years in a middle-class school in Queens which, she writes, "I fled program promised professional excitement."
Among the staff exist and always will, even in the best of institutions, a conflict between teacher and child: if it can be ignored, or suppressed, the emotions. In the process words are given emotional meanings they do not, in themselves, possess. The human being is, they think they are dumb. When you talk to them about education, they have an enormous part in that failure. We will only reinforce it.

To view the education of the children in the ghettos as some kind of half-way house between the sick family and the sick community is to invite crushing defeat. The More Effective Schools have been effective precisely in those segments where education was not viewed as an ineffective custodial branch of a psychiatric service for profoundly disturbed and malfunctioning children — where the problem was not seen as "What's wrong with them?" but as "What's wrong with us?"

Mrs. Gloria Channon was educated at schools in rural New Jersey and at colleges in New York City. She has been an elementary school teacher for eight years, three of them in a middle-class school in Queens which, she writes, "I fled because the MES program promised professional excitement."

... Whatever the family and the street have taught the child, the child must be free to learn that he is not "dumb." Lucy had no other negative self-images that one could see. She was warm and loving, she could fight boys on the street, she could assume leadership in petitioning for a sixth-grade field day, she could dance at parties and laugh — oh, how she could laugh at the world and at herself! But in the schools had given her seven years in which to learn that she was "dumb." She had accepted that terrible self-knowledge with grace and resignation. She had learned what math she could without reading. She had listened and looked, learning with her eyes and ears what books could not tell her. When finally she met, in this school, teachers who could give her what she needed to make the leap into reading — and that included faith and patience — then she could do it; she could, in this protected place, take a chance on being dumb, and take a chance on not being dumb after all.

But no one had told her that it was the schools that had failed her. Always she had assumed the total responsibility for her failure. Because she had lived and loved and a strong positive self-image, she could bear that responsibility and the knowledge of her failure without being crushed. But there are not many Lucy's, not even in middle-class schools. And for most of the children, the failure is accompanied by anger, if they're lucky, or by apathetic despair. We have taught them that they are dumb, "so stooopid," in the felicitous intonation of one of our teachers. And we will not share willingly our enormous part in that failure. We will only reinforce it.